THE BREWSTER'S DAUGHTER

by John Tetzlaff

Creature: *Witch* | **Level:** *3*

SYNOPSIS

Konigsthron has nestled against the dark woodlands for centuries. It is largely a peaceful town, except during the renowned beer festival, Lord Gaffer's Cup. The finest breweries compete and for five years none have bested Black Hat Brewery, founded by Gwenna Cathain, a supposed hedge witch who saved the town from demonic incursion decades ago.

However, this has been a troubling year and the festival was nearly cancelled. Strange lights have been seen on the high hills, and terrible sounds echo through the haunted forest. Woodcutters have gone missing and now many wonder whether the old tales about Gwenna and witchcraft are true. When she is arrested at the festival the party must clear her name, and they discover that all hell is about to break loose.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This is a four hour adventure for a party of 3rd level characters. It begins when they encounter an abandoned grain wagon on the road to Konigsthron. Shadowed fiends have dragged the hapless wagon driver into the woods.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago Gwenna was a mighty druid who banished the demon Gnathus when he emerged from the Abyss in the woods nearby. All who fought Gnathus died, save Gwenna (who earned horrific scars) and Rodrick Ryemark, now Abbot of the Grey Cloister at Krakhelm Monastery. After the battle, Gwenna erected standing stones enchanted with eldritch power at the site to prevent Gnathus from returning. She then retired from adventuring and founded the brewery. Time, and the wounds she suffered, have nearly taken Gwenna's mind and now she lives a quiet life, sitting around the tap room of the brewery she founded, sharing stories of yore.

Decades have passed and the Black Hat Brewery has prospered. It is now run by Ravenna Cathain, Gwenna's daughter. Black Hat has become a commune of alewives (women brewers) and a refuge for orphans and outcasts. Gwenna taught those with the gift the ways of magic.

Rodrick is a grave threat to Konigsthron. He was bitten by Gnathus and his injury festered physically and spiritually. Unlike Gwenna, he succumbed to Gnathus's will and hears corrupting voices. He longs to open the gate for his master. He needs Gwenna out of the way if he is to unbind the sealing spell. As an upstanding abbot, none suspect his corruption. For years he has turned the town against Gwenna and now many suspect the Black Hats practice black magic.

Rodrick needs one last component to bring back Gnathus. He plans to poison the mayor to obtain it, and frame Gwenna so that she cannot prevent the summoning.

CHAPTER 1 – TROUBLE BREWING

Gnarled bows of ancient oak loom above as you travel down the muddy road. Storm clouds race over the encroaching hills. A gust of wind showers you with leaves as shadows dance across the forest floor. The branches seem to reach for you like knobby claws. A crooked signpost ahead reads "Konigsthron 5 leagues." Suddenly, you hear the pounding of hoof beats! Two draft horses gallop around the bend, whinnying in a panic. They are hitched together like a wagon team, but there is no wagon in sight.

The horses may collide with the party (DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to dodge or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage). A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check calms the horses. Around the bend the party finds an overturned wagon with bags of barley spilled on the road. Strange tracks surround the wagon and lead into the woods, and the imprinted soil looks corrupted. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check identifies four sets of tracks. A successful Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals what creatures made the tracks:

- DC 10: unidentified fiends;
- DC 15: **dretches**.

After investigating, they faintly hear the wagon driver calling for help from the woods, in the same direction the tracks lead.

If the party continues to Konigsthron, proceed to chapter 2. If they investigate, read the following aloud:

You follow the tracks for an hour occasionally hearing cries until you reach a clearing ringed by standing stones. The stones are carved with strange glyphs but have been covered by other symbols painted in blood. One of the large stones is cracked and fallen over. In the center a man is chained to a stone slab surrounded by capering demonic creatures. One of the fiends prepares to sacrifice him while the others chant.

The demons are four **dretches** led by one **maw demon**. The demons fight to the death.

After the demons are defeated, succeeding on the following ability checks reveals:

- DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana): The glyphs invoke extraplanar protection.
- DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine): The blood covering the glyphs is a few days old.
- DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation): Near the slab is a broken dagger with a pommel of adamantine carved into a horrific toothed grin.
- DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana): The pommel is the symbol of Gnathus, the Dark Maw.
- DC 15 Wisdom (Perception): There are several graves outside the circle, containing the remains of sacrificed humans. These are the woodcutters who have gone missing from Konigsthron.
- DC 13 Wisdom (Survival): There are very recent demon tracks and week old human sized shoe prints.

The man on the slab is Willem Fuller, an acolyte of the Grey Cloister and the driver of the wagon the party encountered. He was transporting grain to Krakhelm monastery. He thanks them and says Abbot Ryemark (who is in town attending Lord Gaffer's Cup) will reward the party for his safe return. Willem says:

"He'll know what to do about this evil. The monastery is favored to win the cup this year. If the witches don't beat us again. I'm sure they're to blame for this."

If pressed, Willem has no proof of this, but sanctimoniously dismisses any dissent.

DEVELOPMENT

The party arrives at the festival of Lord Gaffer's Cup.

CHAPTER 2 – THE CUP RUNNETH OVER

You arrive in Konigsthron at midday. The guards nod in acknowledgment as you walk through the open gate. Drunken revelers stumble down the street singing songs and clanking tankards as you pass. The town square is teeming with vendor stalls selling all manner of food and goods. Behind them are three large tents surrounding a stage. A grand red and gold tent sports the banner of the Golden Cask, a dwarf brewery. A large tent of plain white with a banner of looping red cord belongs to the Grey Cloister. The third is made of several dark gray sections of canvas secured around a collapsed tower causing the structure to resemble a witch's hat. That is the tent of the Black Hats.

Lord Gaffer's Cup is an Oktoberfest-like festival that takes up the square for a tenday. The festival concludes today with the award ceremony. Willem encourages the party to enjoy the festival and takes his leave, telling them to come to the Grey Cloister's tent to claim their reward.

The festival is open ended, with opportunities for social interaction, gathering information, shopping, drinking contests, and most importantly, meeting the main NPCs—Ravenna, Gwenna, and Rodrick.

THE BREWSTER'S DAUGHTER

The first encounter at the festival should be with Ravenna Cathain outside in the square. She is a woman in her thirties wearing a black pointed hat. She is entertaining a small crowd by singing a humorous song about the superiority of the Black Hat's brew. When she sees the party she welcomes them and hands them each a token for a free ale at the Black Hat's tent.

She is tough, friendly, and clearly knows how to handle a rambunctious crowd. It is important that Ravenna and the party develop a good rapport. Have her hand a few coppers to some child beggars (or some similar altruistic act) in the party's presence. After conversing with them she says that Gwenna, the savior of Konigsthron (her mum) would love to pour them a round herself and then leaves.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a strange symbol tattooed on her neck. It is like the glyphs on the standing stones. A successful Wisdom (Religion) check reveals it is:

- DC 12: associated with demons.
- DC 15: a ward against demons.

FESTIVAL ENCOUNTERS

D6	Result
1	An owl bear escapes its cage A pack of mime pickpockets target one of the party members
2	A merchant's stall starts on fire
3	A drunken nobleman throwing coins
4	A half-naked halfling jumps out of a window
5	A woman blows him a kiss as an enraged man grabs him on the street below
6	Gondol (see below) invites the party to the Golden Cask's tent

If the party asks festival-goers about the Grey Cloister or the Black Hats, they encounter a mix of reverence and suspicion. Many are wary of the Black Hats, but "rebellious" folk dislike the Cloister.

THE GREY CLOISTER

Volunteers in grey tabards serve ale to a subdued crowd as monks chant. The mood is that of a stuffy country club dining room. Willem finds the party and introduces them to Rodrick. If the party did not rescue Willem, a messenger approaches Rodrick with news that he is missing.

Rodrick is superficially cordial, but a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals an undercurrent of anger and fear. He gives each of the party 10 gp if they saved Willem. He suspects Gwenna is behind the witchcraft in the woods and wants proof. He says the party is ideally suited to help because they are not known in town. He offers the party 50 gp each if they bring him evidence incriminating the Black Hats.

Rodrick wears a *ring of mind shielding* to conceal his thoughts and alignment. He is behind breaking the standing stone, the sacrifices, and summoning the demons. His plan to bring back Gnathus is nearly complete. He needs one last component, life essence from the bloodline of the last creature Gnathus killed. The mayor is the son of a slain warrior from the battle.

BLACK HAT BREWERY

Ravenna is tending bar while Gwenna smokes a pipe in a rocking chair. Ravenna welcomes the party warmly. The Black Hats serve their brew to a lively crowd while a bard performs bawdy songs on a central stage. The mood is boisterous, fun loving, and a little raunchy.

If the party decides to find evidence for Rodrick, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an empty vial underneath the bar next to an amulet with the symbol of Gnathus. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals it contains wyvern poison residue, which is exceedingly deadly even in small amounts. If the party confronts Gwenna or Ravenna with these items, they both claim to have never seen them before, which is confirmed by a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

THE GOLDEN CASK

Dwarven pipers drone out incredibly loud drinking songs. In order to drink from Moradin's cup, characters must prove themselves worthy in the eyes of the dwarves. Use this tent for drinking games, feats of strength, etc. If the party investigates the Black Hats here, they meet a dwarf named Gondol who helped Gwenna erect the standing stones. He knows about the corrupting nature of demonic wounds but he vouches for her character. "She has a will of iron, that one. She would not succumb."

THE CUP CEREMONY

When the party has had their fill of the festival, great horns sound the beginning of the award ceremony. After the requisite speeches, Mayor Jeralt Bandraddon invites Rodrick, Gwenna, and Ulbrecht Three-Casks to the stage. Jeralt quaffs a tankard from each brewery, first the Golden Cask, then the Grey Cloister and, as he moves to drink from the Black Hat's tankard, he staggers and collapses. Gwenna cackles as Rodrick looks alarmed. The mayor spits blood into the crowd showering a nobleman, who screams.

Chaos ensues. Gwenna looks shocked; Rodrick dives forward, seemingly to offer aid, and begins muttering an incantation. A successful Intelligence (Religion) check reveals:

- DC 13: Rodrick is not performing healing magic.
- DC 20: Rodrick is performing a demonic incantation.

Gwenna understands what he is doing and claws at him, screaming "Gnathus! Betrayer!" As Gwenna tears Rodrick's robe, a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals an unnatural wound on his torso. Ravenna and the mayor's guards rush the stage. After a brief struggle, Rodrick loudly accuses Gwenna of poisoning the mayor and witchcraft. The guards arrest Gwenna while Ravenna protests. Rodrick is whisked away by his monks.

The party can save the mayor's life with a *protection from poison* spell, paladin's Lay on Hands or similar poison countering abilities, but he inexplicably remains in a coma. If the party interferes with Gwenna's arrest or threatens anyone on stage a large number of guards appear and Ravenna makes it clear they are making things worse, imploring them to stop.

DEVELOPMENT

Ravenna asks the party for help. She believes Rodrick framed Gwenna and offers the party 20 gp each if they find evidence clearing her.

CHAPTER 3 – TOIL AND TROUBLE

What really happened: Rodrick used a hat of disguise to appear as Gwenna and planted the poison on the mayor's tankard prior to judging. He then placed the empty vial and the symbol of Gnathus in the Black Hat's tent. Rodrick, disguised as Gwenna, bought the poison from a shady apothecary some weeks ago.

Investigation can reveal the following clues.

Clues:

- Stitcher the apothecary sold the poison to Gwenna but thought something was strange about her appearance.
- Rudiger the Naive witnessed Rodrick change form before entering the apothecary's shop.
- Feldspur, still drunk from the festival, witnessed Gwenna in two places at once, in the Black Hat's tent and in the alley outside the tent this morning.
- A child, Inna, and an animal saw Gwenna change back into Rodrick as he was leaving the mayor's tent.
- Hirjolf, acolyte of the Grey Cloister has seen Rodrick leaving the monastery at strange hours.
- The *hat of disguise* used by Rodrick can be placed

in the Grey Cloister's tent or in his quarters in Krakhelm Monastery, depending on where the party looks for clues.
- The incantation Rodrick used when he took the mayor's essence required a stick doll, which he hastily hid beneath the stage or in the Grey Cloister's tent.
- A book of black magic is hidden in Rodrick's quarters in the monastery.

Gwenna is held under guard in the local jail. The party may try to convince the city watch to release her based on the evidence they find. They may try to bypass the guards and break Gwenna out of prison. They may attempt to bribe the guards. When in doubt, DC 10, apply advantage or disadvantage to relevant skills. If the party is stumped or has no evidence, Ravenna proposes a bribe. A bribe of 200 gp will convince the guards to look the other way while she escapes.

By whatever path, the party should end up near Gwenna with Ravenna. Gwenna is very weak and rambling about Gnathus, saying that Rodrick is at the standing stones and there is no time to lose. Hearing this, Ravenna takes her mother back to Black Hat Brewery (if possible) and prepares to battle Rodrick. Gwenna is too old for battle and remains at the brewery.

DEVELOPMENT

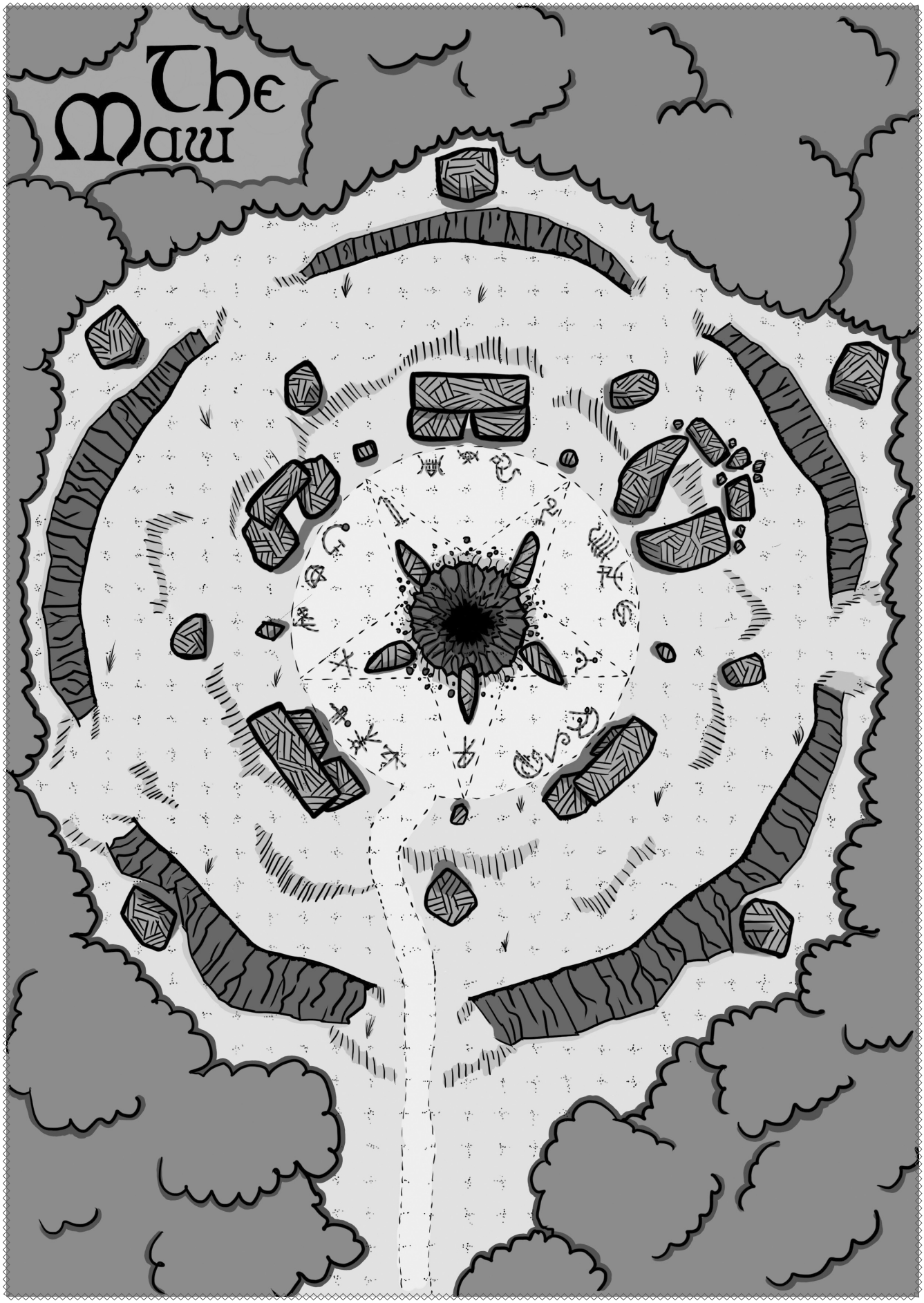
When Ravenna readies the Black Hats for battle, she asks the party to ride with her Black Hats on their *brooms of flying*.

CHAPTER 4 – FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE

A frothing portal glows in the center of the standing stones. Demonic chanting fills the air. *"Gnathus! Gnathus! Gnathus!"* A black cowled figure raises his arms and pulls back his hood. *"Welcome,"* Rodrick smiles. *"I am glad you have come Ravenna. Bear witness to his return."* Rodrick's smile grows impossibly large as his teeth turn into massive fangs. He contorts in agony, growing to massive size, his flesh splitting, exposing blackened muscle beneath. The portal begins to widen as Rodrick's underlings charge forward. A massive demonic hand reaches out of the portal, snatching a cultist who screams as he is dragged into the Abyss.

The portal starts at a 5 foot radius and expands by 5 feet every two rounds (or at a rate the DM deems appropriate). The arm of Gnathus reaches through the portal once per round. His arm has a reach of 30 feet from the portal edge. Divide the circle into 6 segments, roll 1d6 and target a creature at random within reach. It will not grab Rodrick. If it grabs a cultist, demon, or Black Hat, it drags them through immediately. If it grabs a character or Ravenna, a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw is required to dodge. On a failed save, the target takes 2d8 bludgeoning damage and is grappled. After three rounds, they are dragged through the portal and are gone. Each round, a grappled character may use their Action to make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If they succeed on the check, they escape the grapple. The arm has AC 12, and if it is hit by a spell or attack, it drops any creature it is grappling. While the arm is grappling a creature, it cannot attempt to grab another.

Make it clear that if the portal gets too wide Gnathus will emerge, but this does not happen during the encounter. Demons can continue to emerge from the portal. The portal closes if Rodrick or all the cultists are incapacitated. Have the players control the Black Hats in combat. The cultists do not attack but will defend themselves.


The
Maw

Creatures in this Encounter:

At the beginning of this encounter, characters face:

- 2 **manes**: spawn more from portal as needed
- 1 **bloodhawk** per character (demonic appearance): spawn more from portal as needed
- 1 axe-wielding zombie woodcutter per character (as **zombie** but does 1d8+1 slashing damage)
- 8 **cultists**
- Rodrick (**manticore** stat block)

Allies:

- 1 Black Hat per character (**acolyte** on *broom of flying*)
- Ravenna (**druid**)

CONCLUSION

Gnathus Thwarted

If the party stops Gnathus, they are handsomely rewarded by the people of Konigsthron. Lord Gaffer's Cup is renamed Lady Gwenna's Cup.

Gnathus Triumphant

If Gnathus emerges, it takes over Krakhelm Monastery and sends a horde of demons against Konigsthron. Ravenna and the Black Hats resist, asking the party for help. You are encouraged to develop the adventure further, allowing them a further chance to defeat Gnathus.

REWARDS

Treasure	
Save Willem	10 gp each
Find evidence for Rodrick	50 gp each
Find evidence clearing Gwenna	20 gp each
Defeat Gnathus	Ravenna's *broom of flying* Rodrick's *ring of mind shielding* 500 gp each

Experience (XP):	
Chapter 1	
Maw demon	200
4 Dretches	50 each
Save Willem	300
Chapter 2	
Resolving Random Encounters and the festival	50-100 each
Chapter 3	
Free Gwenna	300
Chapter 4	
Rodrick	700
Zombies	50 each
Manes	25 each
Blood Hawks	25 each
Cultists	25 each

AUTHOR'S NOTES

In the call for *Uncaged* pitches, the second entry in the list of female mythological creatures is witches. There is no witch entry in the *Monster Manual*. I found this fitting. Women accused of witchcraft were not extra-planar beings or brides of demons, they were just people. Often, they were women who were considered different or odd and lived in a society that punished those differences. Sometimes their only "crime" was standing in the way of the power and wealth of others.

Brewing as a profession was almost entirely performed by women dating as far back as ancient Sumeria (1800 BCE). In Europe in the 16th-17th centuries, beer production began to industrialize, and the craft became more male dominated. Traditional brewers were considered a threat to these operations and propaganda was created associating them with witchcraft. The trappings of medieval women brewers are still associated with witches today, though the association with brewing has largely disappeared.

Broom: An ale stake was placed above the door when fresh ale was for sale.
Cat: Brewers kept cats to keep rodents out of their grain stores.
Cauldron: Used for boiling wort.
Pointed Hat: Alewives wore tall pointed hats when selling beer in order to stand out and be easily visible.

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Charles Van Slambrouck is a hematopathologist, artist, and general nerd who has been a passionate player and GM of TTRPGs for 25 years. He lives in Chicagoland with his amazing wife, two incredible children, and two yorkies.