THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

by Fenway Jones

Creature: *Chimera* | **Levels:** *5 - 10*

SYNOPSIS

The adventurers are called to Dragons Breath to help Echidna, the ringmaster of a circus. They are asked to complete a series of tasks for the circus, talk to patrons of the local tavern, and finally protect the main act during the opening night of the circus. It's all fun and games until the dragon shows up.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters have been called to the Dragon Milk Tavern in Dragons Breath. They were summoned by someone called Echidna to assist with 'the mother of all monsters.'

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Mother of All Monsters Circus has arrived in the village of Dragons Breath. The whole town has been expecting the most exciting, thrilling, and daring performance ever with the announcement of a new main attraction. There have been problems with the circus workers in the past, but nothing like there is now. The characters must fix these problems and make sure no others arise, so that the circus can continue to come back and maintain its amazing reputation.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Echidna (LN female):** Ringmaster of the circus, she is very protective of the creatures in her care and will not under any circumstances tolerate them being hurt or killed. She uses the stats of a **marilith** but has only two arms. Being half snake, and half human, Echidna's form is tall and monstrous, but despite this, she possesses an intense, sensual beauty. She is also highly intelligent.
- **Delphyne (female human):** The shapechanger of the circus, Delphyne is unknowingly being controlled by the cyclopes, who were given the technology by a rival circus to wreck the circus. She is able to turn into a brass dragon.
- **Medusas:** The medusas—Medusa, Sthenno, and Euryale—are sassy, cold, and demanding when they want something, and vengeful towards anyone who tries to tell them 'no.'
- **Harpies:** The harpies are three flying creatures that cannot talk and can only communicate through motions. They can only open their magically sealed mouths for food. They serve as mimes for the show.
- **Fates:** Three older ladies whose names are Clotho (the Spinner), Lachesis (the Alloter) and Atropos (the Inflexible). They're very blunt when asked questions. They have one eye to share between them and all talk by finishing each other's sentences.
- **Dryads:** The dryads are shy and nice, as long as nature is not harmed in their presence. They are all female.
- **Sirens:** The flirtatious sirens are the best vocal performers around, so they make a great opening act.
- **Cyclopes:** The cyclopes are the guards of the circus. Unbeknownst to the characters, the cyclops guards have recently learned that Echidna intends to fire them because they have been too brutal with the guests and the circus acts. As retaliation, they are trying to wreck the circus with the help of a rival circus. To this end, they have placed a charm medallion around the neck of Delphyne, who is actually a dragon, and intend to use her in their scheme.

Chapter 1: The Mother of All Monsters

The characters arrive in the village of Dragons Breath on the first day of a tenday-long circus named the Mother of all Monsters, and promptly receive a request to join the ringmaster at the local tavern: the Dragon's Milk Tavern.

At just 40 feet by 50 feet, the Dragon's Milk Tavern is a small but cozy bar. Wooden floors line the inn with marble-topped tables placed haphazardly throughout the taproom. On the wall facing the door rests an impressive marble-topped bar.

Echidna greets the characters with a warm, inviting smile, and asks for their help with a few tasks:

- She wants the townsfolk to be excited for the night's show.
- She does not want anyone to know what she has planned as the main event until it happens; however, she will tell the characters what it is if they agree to help (a chimera that she thinks people will enjoy). There are very few chimeras in the world and the fact that she has one in her circus will be a big draw. The people know that there is a new main act, and she wants to capitalize on the excitement.

She asks them to do three things for her:

- Check in with each of the acts to see if they need anything and ensure they are ready for the show. She gives the characters a description of each act.
- Spread news throughout town about the show and its exotic new attraction.
- Attend the show that evening and make sure everything goes as planned, especially when the chimera is unveiled. Also, if something goes wrong, they are to subdue, but not kill, the chimera.

Echidna offers each character 500 gp if they complete her jobs.

Chapter 2: I'm Done Playing Games

The characters attend to the first of Echidna's requests: visiting each of the main acts to ensure they are ready for the show.

The camp smells slightly of sea water and dust, intermingling with the smells of circus animals. The entire camp is brightly lit from daylight, and, unless noted otherwise, each tent has drift globes which provide bright illumination to the tent's interior.

Echidna wants the characters to check on six acts, in any order. Each of the six tents the characters may visit are 50 feet by 50 feet and 25 feet high. The content and decor vary based on which act the characters are visiting.

Having the characters complete all six parts may take some time; if the players are ready to move on, or you are short on time, select a few to run, and briefly summarize the others. Keep track of the characters' successes or failures during each of the challenges, as this becomes important later.

The six circus acts are:

- *Snake Charmers.* Medusa and her sisters charm snakes to the delight of the audience. They also perform *hold person* on volunteers from the audience.
- *Mimes.* A clamor of harpies serves as the circus' mimes.
- *Hypnotists.* A harmony of sirens perform hypnotism for the circus.
- *Plant and Light Show.* A brace of dryads performs an act of plants and lights.
- *Transformations.* A human woman named Delphyne changes her shape to that of a ferocious dragon to the delight of the crowd.
- *Fortunes.* The Fates spin their yarn and read the possible futures of audience members.

When the characters enter most tents, the tenants are very surprised.

Snake Charmers

The medusas' tent is filled with stone statues and tapestries depicting various Greek myths.

When the characters visit, Medusa and her sisters ask that the characters retrieve their favorite mango drink from Addy's 'One in a Melon' Drink Stand.

To obtain the drink, Addy, the store owner, insists that they win the best two out of three in a staring contest between her and three characters chosen to compete. Defeating Addy in a staring contest requires two contested checks: first a Wisdom check and then a Constitution check. Do not reveal the checks before the characters choose their champion.

Note: Medusa and her sisters have been changed and cannot turn people to stone; if someone looks them in the eye, and fails the associated saving throw, the character is affected as if by a *hold person* spell.

Mimes

The clamor of harpies includes three individuals: Alleo, Ocypete, and Celaeno. The harpies cannot speak, as their lips have been magically sealed.

The harpies are half-bird, half-woman creatures who are perched on a table spread with a full three-course meal which replaces itself if eaten. They can still eat the food but Echidna has magically sealed their mouths (so they can't sing to passersby). Echidna controls when this effect is active. The characters can figure this out if one of them has a telepathic ability, but only after they participate in the charades (see below). The harpies can inform them of their act, and the fact that they had their mouths sealed magically because they kept bothering the circus-goers with their song but they're not mad about the seal.

To get them ready for the show, the characters must help each of the harpies with a task.

- Alleo has a terrible knot in her shoulder that must be massaged out.
- Ocypete has a thorn in her wing that needs to be removed.
- Celaeno is sick and needs medicine to feel better.

To discern this information, the characters play charades. Split them into two groups. The first group assumes the role of the harpies. The second group represents the characters. Distribute *Player Handouts 1, 2, and 3* to each of the harpy players and commence with the game of charades until the characters know what each harpy needs.

The tasks can be completed with the following checks:

- A successful DC 18 Strength check or Wisdom (Medicine) check soothes Alleo's shoulder.
- A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates the thorn in Ocypete's wing. Once located, removing it is a trivial task.
- A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check locates a small bottle of medicine labeled "Celaeno." The harpy's mouth can be unzipped to feed her the medicine.

Hypnotists

The sirens almost never stop singing, and as such, the characters hear the song as they approach their tent.

- The inside of the tent is dimly lit.
- The song of the sirens is enchanting and when the characters first enter the tent, each must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they gain advantage on any Charisma checks made while interacting with the sirens, but disadvantage on all other ability checks.
- The sirens complain of sore throats, and ask the characters to retrieve an herbal remedy from I'm a Little Horse, an herbal remedy shop that travels with the circus.

A centaur named Nemon runs the shop, but before he will sell his remedy, he insists that the buyer defeat him in a challenge to deliver the better pick up line! Nemon always initiates the game, and you can use the pickup lines on *DM Handout 1* as inspiration. Each character can compete, with the players voting for the winner. Nemon always votes for himself, but the character competing against him does not get a vote. To win, a character must beat Nimon the best out of three lines.

DM tip: If you have children, or someone that is uncomfortable with the prospect of pick up lines, feel free to use jokes as an alternative.

Plant and Light Show

The dryad tent is decorated with trees and murals of nature. Within, the brace of nymphs lounge, talking and laughing amongst themselves. This air of carelessness is dispelled immediately if the characters ask if they need any help. The nymphs explain that they have been troubled by a group of monsters. They are not sure what they are, but they are not human and have been invading their training ground and started calling it their home. The monsters include four **hellhounds** and two **minotaurs**. To help the nymphs prepare, the characters must defeat these monsters.

The dryads don't need anything else from them, but reward the players with a *bag of beans* (*DMG*) and wish them a very nice goodbye.

Transformations

Delphyne's tent is decorated with a snake scheme. Upon entering, the characters are met by a gruesome

sight: a giant **king cobra** with two arms is locked in combat with two **cyclopes**, three **magma mephits**, and four **ice mephits**. The king cobra is Delphyne. Echidna previously told the characters that Delphyne is a king cobra, but they may also realize she is not the attacker but the one being attacked. Delphyne asks for the characters' help as soon as she sees them.

To help her, the characters must defeat the cyclopes and mephits. Once the monsters are defeated, Delphyne thanks the characters profusely and explains they came in to try and steal her necklace.

DM info: In reality, the attackers simply wanted to distract Delphine and get the necklace on her. They succeeded in this, although the magic of the necklace has made her think it was always hers. The necklace will be used as a controlling device in the final combat. The necklace has a symbol of a three headed dog with one head towards the ground, the second looking straight forward, and the third reared towards the sky. Detect magic shows the entire tent and circus as magical, and the necklace specifically as compulsion magic. Delphyne explains that it is just to keep her from transforming when upset. If asked what she transforms into she answers that the characters will see later.

Fortunes

When the characters visit the Fates, their tent is filled with objects made of a yarn that glows so brightly, it shines through the tent walls. The Fates only have one eye between the three of them, and occasionally one will take it out and hand it to another. As they speak, they finish each other's sentences.

The Fates are upset, as one of the circus performers stole their yarn of fate. They know it was Lingoth, an acrobatic tabaxi, who is always trying to bother them. Without their yarn, the Fates cannot perform.

To retrieve the yarn, the characters must visit Lingoth's wagon. The wagon proves to be much larger on the inside than outside, and it is packed full of yarn. The yarn of fate is prominently displayed on a pedestal in the middle of the room.

Lingoth denies stealing the yarn, but is willing to play a game for it. The game is called Malarkey, and the rules are detailed on *Player Handout 4*. The tabaxi is willing to play best two out of three games.
He gifts them a set of weighted dice.

Once they return to the Fates with the yarn, the women give each character a piece of clothing made from yarn attuned to their life force. The clothing is of extraordinary quality and very comfortable, and allows the wearer to roll an extra 1d6 when spending hit dice. If it is ever destroyed, it causes the character to age at ten times the normal rate.

Chapter 3: The Rumor Mill

The characters travel around the village and spread rumors about the show. Echidna suggests that the tavern would be the best place to start.

Objectives

The characters must think of one or more rumors to spread about how amazing the circus's finale will be, and spread these rumors around town. Allow the characters ability checks that fit the rumors they concoct. The number of tickets they sell depends on the result of their check.

- DC 12: 1 ticket
- DC 15: 3 tickets
- DC 18+: 5 tickets

Do not allow any checks until after the characters have spread their rumors, and give advantage (or disadvantage) for particularly good (or bad) rumors.

Rewards: Characters get 2 gp for each ticket that they sell.

Chapter 4: Their Final Act

Once the party has seen to the needs of the acts and gotten the town excited about the circus, it's time to skip forward to the main event. The characters must make sure that nothing happens to disrupt the show.

The red and white striped tent is 80 feet tall and 120 feet in diameter. A large stage dominates its center, with rows of chairs on risers surrounding it. The ground is packed dirt, with a few tufts of grass jutting up here and there. The tent's large entry flaps are tied open, providing an overflow area when all the seats have filled. A cyclops stands by these flaps, arms crossed before it and wearing a pendant with the same symbol as the one that Delphyne was wearing (a three headed dog with one head towards the ground, the second looking straight forward, and the third reared towards the sky).

Sunlight pours into the tent. A few drift globes illuminate what would be the darkest spots. The sounds of people cheering and the smells of popped corn and sugary desserts fills the air.

DEVELOPMENT

The six minor acts of the show perform without event. Finally, the chimera is introduced. The crowd goes wild with excitement, but the loud noises and bright lights cause the chimera to rampage. As the characters move to deal with it, Echidna shouts a reminder to make sure that the chimera is not killed.

OBJECTIVES

Characters must defeat the chimera and any other creatures that join without killing them (except the cyclopes). If the characters failed all of the checks in any creature challenge in Chapter 2, one creature from each failed challenge joins the fight. A harpy joins if they fail the harpies, all of the Fates join as one combined invisible stalker if they failed to retrieve the yarn, and a dryad joins if they fail the dryads.

Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher notices the cyclopes encouraging the crowd, and that the cheering is upsetting the chimera. The chimera attacks anyone and everyone, causing the audience to panic, making the entire tent difficult terrain.

Delphyne joins if the characters attack the cyclopes. For Delphyne, use the stats of a **young brass dragon** without the use of wings.

CONCLUSION

If the characters kill the chimera or any of the other acts, they gain the bane of the creature that died. The character who made the kill has disadvantage on all Charisma-based checks when interacting with creatures of that type.

Echidna pays them but docks 100 gp for each creature killed (except the cyclopes).

REWARDS

Each player receives 4,000 XP for this adventure. Each character gets their article of clothing made out of the yarn of fate. One person in the party also get Lingoth's magic dice as well as the *bag of beans* that the dryads give them, and one of the characters gets a set of weighted dice.

Each player also receives 500 gp from Echidna (possibly less if they kill any of her precious creatures), plus twice the number of tickets sold during *Part 3*.

PICK-UP LINES

- Girl, I must be a paladin because I wanna lay my hands on you.
- Hey girl, can I make a save vs. awestruck?
- Hey girl, are you a fighter? 'Cuz I never wanna (c)leave your side.
- Hey girl, I hope you're a druid, 'cuz this animal wants to be... handled.
- You must be a controller, because your AC so low I gotta hit that.
- Girl, are those paladin pants? Because you're looking lawful good in 'em.
- Baby, for you I'd turn a Bag of Holding inside-out.
- Are those Astral pants you're wearing? Because your ass looks out of this world.
- Did someone cast Sacred Flame on your face? Your smile is radiant.
- Girl, you must be a gibbering mouther, because your voice drives me crazy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fenway Jones is a 16 year old dungeon master and writer from Michigan. She is a Silver bestseller on the Dungeon Masters Guild with her adventure "Dead Men Feel No Cold," and a Copper bestseller with "Left Black and Blue." She is also the founder of Jasper's Game Day and known as 'The Teen DM' on Twitter. She can also be found at Jasper's Game Day on Facebook.