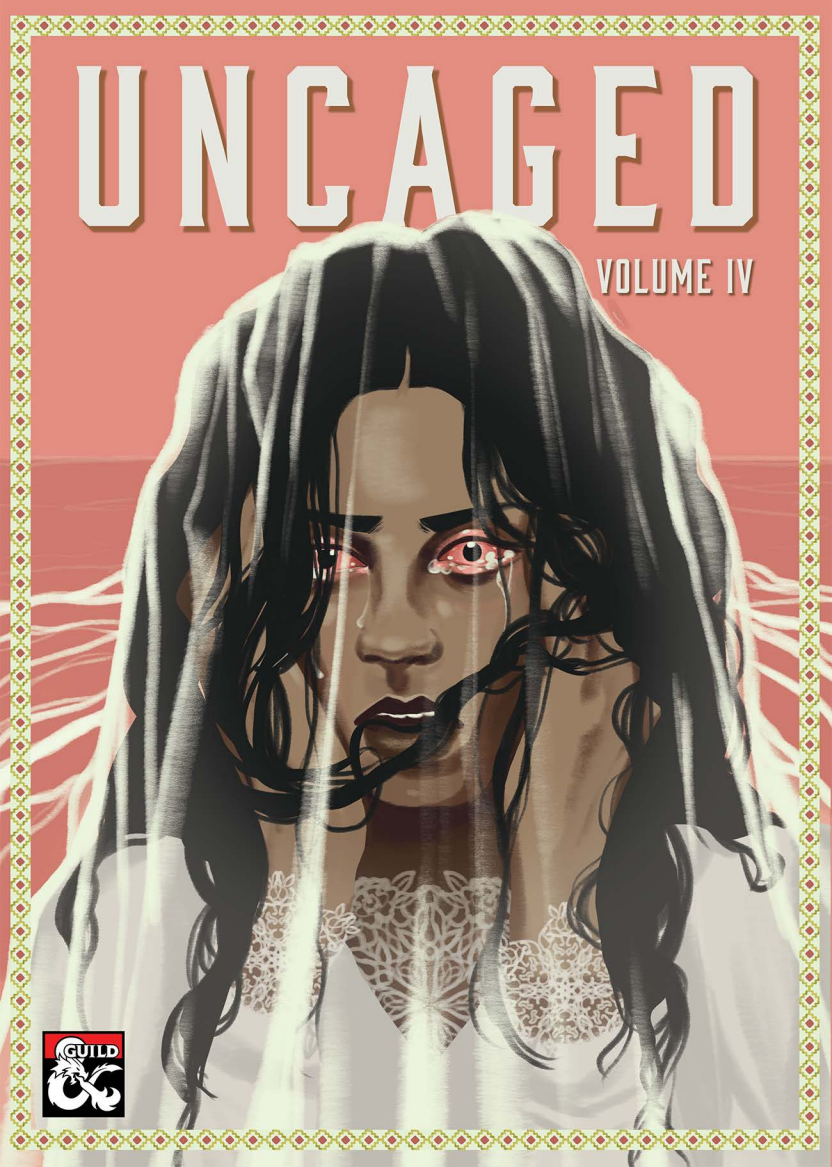
UNCAGED

VOLUME IV



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UNCAGED
ANTHOLOGY

PRODUCER'S NOTE

I can't believe we're here.

This project has been a whirlwind from the very first moment. More than 100 of us have spent a year and a half bringing this to life. Each volume was made with sheer force of will; there is nothing easy about facilitating a project like this. All I can really say is that this series was made with love and love is what brought us through the more challenging days of this project. I am forever grateful to everyone who believed in it. To every *Uncaged* contributor around the world, thank you so much and congratulations. Look at what we made together!

To everyone who supported *Uncaged* from day 1, thank you for welcoming this project into the *D&D* community. You've encouraged and empowered us.

Although this volume concludes our original four-volume series, I like to think that this is just the beginning. I have no doubt that the names you see on these pages will appear in numerous books and projects in the future. Our creators are fiercely and fearlessly changing the gaming and writing communities for the better. The face of our industry is forever altered. Medusa would be proud.

Ashley Warren, *Founder/Producer*



Special thanks to my husband, Andrew, and my mom, Paula, for their continued, unwavering support.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Our *Volume IV* cover illustration by Samantha Darcy features La Llorona, a figure linked to pre-Hispanic culture in Latin America. While there are different tellings of La Llorona, many of the legends describe her as a "wailing woman" seeking out children for sinister means.

In this volume, you can find a take on La Llorona in "The Village That Wept" by Jessica Marcrum. *Uncaged* Volume I includes "The Weeping Woman" by Kristina Sisto Kindel, which is also an adventure that makes La Llorona the central figure.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Uncaged*, an epic collection of adventures spanning the multiverse. Each adventure features creatures from the world's vault of mythology, folklore, fairytale, and legend—including the beloved mythos of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Many of the creatures may be recognizable, although some are lesser-known monsters. We are excited to illuminate these stories.

VOLUME OVERVIEW

Dungeon Masters will find adventures designed for Tiers 1 through 3. The adventures are not connected, although clever DMs are encouraged to find ways to weave the stories together to form a longer campaign. Regardless, every adventure is designed to be a one-session module that can be completed between 1 to 5 hours.

GENERAL NOTES

DMs will need the *Dungeon Master's Guide (*denoted as *DMG)* and the *Monster Manual* (denoted as *MM*) to run these adventures. Some adventures feature items or creatures found in *Volo's Guide to Monsters* and *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*; these are denoted with *VGtM* or *XGtE*. Creatures/monsters that are **bold-ed** are found in the *MM*. Items that are *italicized* are found in the *DMG*. Stat blocks are included for new or reskinned creatures.

Due to the nature of the anthology, some adventures are preceded with a relevant **content warning**. We encourage you to set clear boundaries and expectations at your gaming table, ensuring that our hobby remains inclusive and inviting to all.

Most of the adventures in this anthology rely on “theater of the mind” and do not include maps.

> Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players.


TIER 1



Illustration by Kawanabe Kyosai

A CLAWED BARGAIN

by Maxine Henry

Creature: *Hags* | **Levels:** *1–4*

SYNOPSIS

The party answers the call of a village struck by a mysterious illness—the villagers are slipping into comas and wasting away. When they finally die, the villagers are nothing more than taut skin over brittle bones. The village is divided; some blame a healer, others blame a hag bent on revenge.

This adventure is suitable for five players with an APL of level 3.

ADVENTURE HOOK

For traveling types: Your wagon broke its axle on the trade route, and Leayfen is the closest village with a blacksmith.

For knowledge seekers: Leayfen is known for the longevity of its villagers. Maybe there is a secret that could be learned or benefited from.

For adventurers: Leayfen is paying good money to anyone who can fix what ails them, literally.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Leayfen is a village on what used to be uninhabitable marsh. Over time, some say aided by mysterious powers, the village took root and flourished.

Three tendays ago, Donovar (governor of the prefecture) and his gravely ill wife, Yulis, visited Leayfen and stayed with Mayor Wills. Within the following tenday, Yulis was dead. Heartbroken, Donovar blamed the local healer, Button. Although Button protested her innocence, Mayor Wills, to placate Donovar, had Button arrested and without trial gave her fifteen public lashes as punishment. The following day, Calira, her apprentice, reported that Button had disappeared from the healer's clinic.

Within days of Button's disappearance people started to get sick. Then they started to die.

The party is asked to determine the source of the village's illness and fix the problem. Investigations in the village reveal tensions among the villagers, and other people who might have had it in for Yulis. The party needs to find Button and convince her to save the village. Roleplay can get the party through most of the adventure along with helpful NPCs. Puzzle experience is helpful, but if lacking, shouldn't prevent successful completion of the adventure.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Button, village healer (appears as human female, but is actually a **green hag**)
- Calira, apprentice healer (human female)
- Carnet, Wills' sister (human female)
- Donovar (human male)
- Iliscura, Carnet's maid (human female)
- Laemat, master of Iron Leaf Forge (halfling male)
- Penthis, co-proprietor of BlueWine (halfling male)
- Soras, co-proprietor of BlueWine (halfling male
- Stemion, Will's man-of-all-work (human male)
- Varnath, Yulis' grandmother (human female)
- Wills, mayor of Leayfen (human male)
- Yulis (human female)
- Opelan (halfling male with a headache)
- Tella (human non-binary with a broken arm)
- Glawa (human female) and her wife (Ennith, half-elf female)
- Nevret (halfling female) and her husband (Shiam, human male)
- Tilix (human male), his son, Lisni (human male), and his daughter, Dette (tiefling female)

CHAPTER 1 – MEDIC! WE NEED A MEDIC!

Welcome to Leayfen. From the approach, it looks like a prosperous village, with beautiful fields and farmland, and houses that are sturdily built and cheerily painted. However, as you get closer, you can see that the people are haggard. They look like they haven't slept well in weeks. You pass a graveyard that has people actively digging a new grave. At a glance, you spot seven new graves.

The mayor is happy to see you, meeting you as you enter Leayfen.

"I'm so glad you've come to find the cause of the illness that's been taking our villagers! We had begun to lose hope."

He leads you inside his home and offers you refreshments, introducing you to his sister, Carnet, who also looks glad to see you.

The mayor actively seeks out the party; they do not have to search for him. He tells the party:

- The sickness started two tendays ago.
- The sick people are being tended by Calira in their own homes.

Carnet interjects:

- The healer put dark magic on the village after she disappeared. She's the guilty one. She hates us and wants to kill us all. Just like she killed Yulis.

The Mayor does not appear to believe his sister, but does admit:

- Yulis is dead.
- Button was punished for the death.
- The sickness began after Button disappeared.

If the party asks about a reward, the mayor offers 10 gp to each character, as well as a *+1 dagger* to the party. The mayor offers to house the party at his home, or they can stay at the tavern at his expense. He wants this problem solved before anybody else dies.

At this stage, the party may want to visit the tavern, visit some sick villagers, or meet Calira.

THE TAVERN

BlueWine is the name of the tavern, run by Soras and his husband, Penthig. At any time of day, there are enough patrons available to exchange information with party members. If asked, Soras and Penthig tell the party:

- It's terrible about Yulis dying, and terrible that Button got blamed for it. Everyone knew she was the last person to visit Yulis before she died, but it wasn't like she had anything against Yulis.
- Never mess with healers, everyone knows that. It's like bargaining with a hag; you never win, not the way you wanted anyway.

The party also overhears snippets of conversations in BlueWine:

- Iliscura, Carnet's maid, was seen sitting in Donovar's lap more than once. Iliscura knows what she wants and isn't afraid to take it when it's available. Living with Carnet doesn't seem like paradise. Maybe she's hoping once things die down, Donovar will come back for her.
- Stemion, the mayor's man-of-all-work, does very fine ironwork. Maybe Master Laemat should take him on as an apprentice. The fireguard over there is one of his pieces.
- Did you hear that Varnath is leaving Leayfen? Wasn't she Yulis' grandmother? Yulis might have left town, but she always sent her grandmother presents during the holidays.

If the party goes to visit Varnath, Yulis' grandmother, she is in the middle of packing up her small household. She tells the party:

- The sickness in the village is the last straw. She's had enough and is moving.
- She never believed Button killed Yulis. They had been friends when Yulis lived in Leayfen, and Button sent regular packages of medicine to Yulis.
- Yulis wanted to be a healer before she left Leayfen and got married, as did Carnet.

THE SICK VILLAGERS

Here are some villagers that the party might want to visit:

- Nevret (halfling female) and her husband, Shiam (human male)
- Glawa (human female) and her wife, Ennith (half-elf female)

- Tilix (human male), who lives with his two small children, a son called Lisni (human male), and a daughter called Dette (tiefling female)

Successful Wisdom (Medicine) and/or Intelligence (Nature) checks (DC 12) reveal that the sickness:

- is a wasting one that burns up the afflicted individual from the inside out
- doesn't seem to be contagious; it's more of the body attacking the body
- is more of a curse than a natural illness

This information can be gleaned from Calira as well as her patients.

THE HEALER'S CLINIC

On the way to the healer's clinic, the party is attacked by six **twig blights**, and a **scarecrow**. Once finished with the encounter, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a metalwork amulet with twisting vines.

If the party is doing poorly in their combat encounter, **Calira** (**druid**) comes to their rescue. If the party fares well, they happen across Calira returning to the clinic after seeing a patient elsewhere in the village.

When the party arrives, there are a couple of patients already there. Tella has a broken arm, and Opelan is getting medicine for a headache.

For a low-tier party, this encounter could very quickly go south. Feel free to remove the scarecrow if needed, or have the apprentice deal with it.

Calira will answer questions, but only after tending to her patients. She does not mind if the party wants to look around at things. If party members try to help, they are able to help Tella and Opelan. The cottage is a one-story building with two rooms: one for patient-care, and a room that serves as Button's living space as well as a place to roll bandages and compound medicines.

Calira can tell the party that:

- The village is doomed unless a miracle happens. "That's the bargain: anybody harms the healer, it all falls apart."
- Button didn't kill Yulis. "People say she was the last person to see her, but how many other people were in the mayor's house? Any of them could have done it."
- If the party brings up the rumors of dark magic, Calira responds:
- "Dark magic? As if Button was that sort of hag. Those folks are just jealous that she won't teach them for free."

If the party shows her their amulet, Calira produces one similar, given to her by Button as a sign of apprenticeship. The difference is that the vines on hers actually move as if by the wind, while the vines on the found-amulet are static. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that Calira's amulet radiates abjuration magic and can be used as a direction finder. If the party asks where it leads, Calira says, "In case I'm in over my head, this leads to help."

In the middle of the conversation—once the above information has been shared—two incendiary devices are thrown through the window. One hits a pile of oiled bandages which immediately burst into flames. The other rolls across the floor, fetching up against the pile of wood near the fireplace. Fire begins to spread, accelerated by the supplies used to ply the healer's art. Along with the fire is smoke, making the clinic difficult terrain and obscured. Each party member in the cabin needs to succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 2d4 smoke damage.

When the party makes it out of the clinic, Calira is nowhere to be found. However, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that her amulet is on the ground near the forest. Successful Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Insight) checks (DC 12) reveal:

- how to use the amulet as a direction finder
- fading traces of a teleportation spell

The party can attempt to put out the fire, but nothing works. The clinic is a lost cause. Successful Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation) checks (DC 12) find many tracks, but none that stand out as belonging to the arsonist. The clinic was an oft-visited place.

CHAPTER 2 – CABIN IN THE WOODS

If the party uses the amulet as a direction finder, they follow it into the forest, which is dark and silent. No birds, no small critters move in the underbrush. After an hour of walking, the forest begins to spin around the party. This is a puzzle trap, with a 15 ft. radius from a point in the center of the party. If anyone is outside of this radius, it is as if the rest of the party has disappeared.

The answer to the puzzle involves turning things around in order to counter the forests' spinning. There are smooth rocks and vines lying in the clearing. Successful Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Insight) checks (DC 12) tell characters how to assemble the rocks and vines into the shape of something they can spin and how to twirl them in the opposite direction of the forest's spin. The party members may spin themselves or others also. The characters can spin successfully in the right direction with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. All checks are made with advantage for female characters.

If the party successfully solves the puzzle, the forest stops spinning, and a small cabin can be seen. A human woman of unremarkable appearance stands outside of the cabin. This is Button (**green hag**).

If the party is unable to escape the puzzle, after five minutes they fall unconscious from dizziness and wake up just outside a small cabin in the woods, with Button watching them from a rocking chair on the porch.

> *"You've gotten this far, which means there's some goodness in you. What do you want?"*

Charisma (Intimidation) and Charisma (Deception) checks automatically fail with Button. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her the party means no harm. If the party attacks Button at any time during the encounter, she drops her human appearance and reveals herself as a green hag, however, in contrast to the stereotypical image of a hideously deformed being of evil, Button looks rather like an older lady who is extremely tired of assumptions. If combat ensues, Button is joined in the first round by two other **green hags** (making a **coven**). They act as a group, and work to subdue, not kill, the party members. The party members wake up later outside of town. No matter what they try, they can't find the cabin again.

If persuaded, Button invites the party in and offers them a rich meaty stew. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check on the stew reveals it is made of squirrel and rabbit. In response Button laughs and says:

> *"What did you expect it to be? Entrails from dead villagers? And I suppose you think I should be hideous as well? Don't believe everything you hear."*

The one room cabin is spartan. There is a hearth with three chairs set around it. There is a table with freshly cleaned sharp tools on pieces of cloth. Bunches of drying herbs hang from the low ceiling. Button tells the party the following:

- Yulis was sick, but she didn't want to be healed. Button gave her some herbs for the pain. She would have died within the year; there was no need for anyone to kill her. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check says that Button has her ideas on who did it. If asked, she laughs and says the party needs to do their own homework.
- Button admits being responsible for the sickness in the village, but says the villagers broke the bargain they made when they hired her; the sickness is their just punishment. ("All the babies I cut out for them! All the health in that village. And what happens? This. Serves them right if they all rot.")
- If the party asks about Calira, Button tells them:
- "She's already been here and gone again. There's no way I'd let them hurt her. That's not what we do."

If the party asks Button to stop the sickness, and spare the villagers, she offers to bargain for the relief:

- Each of the party must give her "some of your vitality" (2 hit points from their hit points maximum), or
- Bring her, alive, the person who killed Yulis

If the party refuses, Button gathers her tools and walks out of the cabin. The conversation is done and she has work to do.

If the party agrees to give up some of their vitality, Button siphons off the agreed upon amount and tells them the villagers will be fine. Whoever is sick will get better.

If the party agrees to find the murderer, Button tells them they have 24 hours. No one will die during that time.

CHAPTER 3 – ON THE CASE

The forged amulet is a good place to start the party's investigation, as well as who might have had it in for Yulis, or Button for that matter. This might be a good time to remind the party of the conversations they overheard in BlueWine.

The town forge is called Iron Leaf, and is run by Master Laemat. If the party visits the forge, Master Laemat does not admit to making the amulet, and points to the list of commissions that need doing; he doesn't have time to play around. There are some examples of delicate ironwork on a bench, and when asked, Laemat says that they were done by an amateur, Stemion. "Too bad he's too old to be an apprentice. He might take my job."

As the party is talking with Master Laemat, Stemion enters the forge to discuss materials for a new project. If asked, Stemion tells the party that Carnet commissioned the amulet. "How did you get this? She said she loved it."

If the party talks to Iliscura, who can be found at the mayor's house, she admits:

- "Yes, Donovar visited me from time to time. We'd meet outside the village. His wife was too sick for... the usual. She didn't mind. She told me so."
- "No, he didn't promise me anything. He sent nice gifts though and he smelled nice."
- "Please don't tell Carnet! I haven't saved up enough to leave this position yet."

If the party investigates the mayor's house:

- The kitchen has a well-stocked pantry. On the back of the pantry door there is a list of people and the foods that they don't like:
- Wills: garlic;
- Stemion: cinnamon;
- Yulis: winterspice.

The mayor's quarters contain nothing useful.

In Carnet's quarters, her cosmetics' case has a hidden drawer protected by a needle trap. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check is needed to disarm the trap. If the trap isn't noticed or unsuccessfully disarmed, a successful Dexterity save (DC 12) is needed to prevent 1d6 poison damage. Once open, the hidden drawer contains a piece of paper with the following written on it: "Winterspice makes her very sick."

With only Carnet, the mayor, and the two domestic servants present, it isn't hard to investigate the mayor's house unseen. However, there is a chance that Carnet will discover the party doing so. If the party doesn't convince her that they are doing something innocent with either a successful Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check (DC 12), she will sense the game is up and leave the village immediately.

Confronted by proof, Carnet admits she murdered Yulis and shows no remorse. She was jealous of Button and tried to frame her. "But there are other ways of getting power." She attempts to cast *sleep* on the party and flee. (Carnet is an **acolyte**, with *sleep* as her only leveled spell.)

An honorable man, the mayor will give up his sister when confronted with proof of her guilt. Reassurance from a DC 12 (Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check from the party that Button won't kill Carnet, even though Button has offered no such guarantee, helps him sleep at night.

CONCLUSION

If the party completes their side of the bargain, positive changes in village health are seen within two days. Once villagers begin to recover, Mayor Wills gives the party their promised reward. While he is happy that the village has been saved, he is a sadder, perhaps wiser man.

REWARDS

Each player receives 10 gp. XP is given as follows in the tables below.

Monster Combat	XP
Twig Blight	25
Scarecrow	200

Social Encounter	XP Per Player
Investigating Leayfen	75
Successfully negotiating with Button	75
Determining the murderer	50

+1 DAGGER

Weapon (dagger), uncommon

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to InkPlots for critical assessments, Firefly Toys & Games for being a great place to game, and Phil Allison just because.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maxine Henry lives in South Carolina and dreams longingly of winter. She enjoys being on both sides of the DM screen and believes that RPGs can be life-changing for the better. In her spare time, she enjoys fiber arts and reading about cutting edge technology. She can be found on Ravelry as @clocke.





Illustration by Johanna Taylor



THE MIRACLE CURE

by KC Shi

Creature: *Doppelgänger* | **Levels:** *2–3*

CW: *Dysphoria*

SYNOPSIS

The scabbing plague has taken the backwater village of Hu Bian, and no one knows a cure. Only one person has recovered so far: a vivacious mercenary named Temulun, who fell ill while passing through town. After every available remedy failed, she heard an old folktale about a cure-all miraculous herb, said to grow deep in the neighboring marshes. She promptly packed her things, rode off, and returned a few days later fully recovered. No one has been able to find the panacea since, though, and when the party braves the inner marsh in search of more medicine, they instead discover a terrible secret. Temulun is not Temulun, and the thing in the village is only wearing her face…

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Miracle Cure is intended for Tier 1 characters, around 1st or 2nd level. Luoyang, the cleric responsible for tending to the sick, is desperate to recruit adventurers capable of surviving the fen where Temulun found the cure, and immediately approaches anyone who seems capable. Consider making the stakes personal—perhaps a character has a relative who is sick with the same plague, or a character shares Luoyang's deity and feels compelled to help a sister of their order. If altruism alone is not motivation enough, Luoyang also offers the treasures of her temple (i.e. magic items) as a reward to those who find the cure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure revolves around a version of the doppelgänger inspired by East Asian shapeshifting fox spirits like the kitsune and the huli jing. While these fox spirits can be both benevolent and malevolent, they typically appear as young, beautiful women in order to make men fall in love with them. In this adventure, the fox spirit takes the form of a beautiful woman so that she may love herself.

Though written for a wuxia-style world, the adventure can be reskinned for any other setting, so long as it retains the elements of (1) an isolated settlement, (2) a disfiguring plague with no known cure, and (3) a shapeshifting monster capable of taking the identities of others.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Luoyang** – A human cleric with a tendency to take on more responsibility than she can handle. She has taken the lead in tending to the sick, but she is overworked, exhausted, and—most importantly, to her—ineffective. She worships Shennong, the ox-headed God of Five Grains.
- **Temulun** – The one person in all of Hu Bian who has recovered from the plague. Endlessly optimistic, vivacious, and bombastic, she was a traveling sword-for-hire before she arrived in Hu Bian, but has become Luoyang's assistant while she recovers her strength. Temulun clearly has feelings for Luoyang, feelings which Luoyang reciprocates, but the cleric has too many responsibilities to spend much time with the mercenary.

CHAPTER 1 – IT'S GOOD TO BE ALIVE

The town of Hu Bian is but one of many small villages in the rural Black Eel Province, a region in the grip of a rapidly spreading leprosy-like epidemic called the scabbing plague. The plague has scourged town after town, and no one would ever have paid attention to another backwater falling to the disease—until rumors start to spread that someone in Hu Bian has been cured.

The adventure begins on the road, as the characters approach the village. Readaloud:

> You have traveled many li toward Hu Bian, feeling the roads give way to sucking mud, the air growing steadily hotter and more humid. The path through the province, never busy to begin with, is near deserted with the spread of the plague, and the wilds and all the things that creep within them have been allowed to swallow the trail. You are no sooner reminded of this than when you turn the bend, and see three lepers desperately dragging a web-encased fourth away from the undergrowth. Behind them, something eight-legged, venom-fanged, and huge emerges...

The four lepers (**commoners**) are fleeing a **giant spider**, and beg the characters to save them. If the characters succeed, the lepers thank them, and ask if they could travel together to the temple in the village for safety.

The leader of the little group, Qizhu, is a human so short and so obscured by bandages that they are often mistaken for a halfling or gnome. They explain that they and their companions have traveled all this way, despite the dangers, in search of Hu Bian's rumored miracle cure. If pressed, Qizhu admits privately that they do not believe they will ever find such a cure, but the mere possibility has given their friends such life and hope that the pursuit itself is worth something.

Rewards. Besides earning XP for defeating the giant spider, characters earn an additional 50 XP per NPC brought alive to the temple. Divide this bonus equally among party members.

HU BIAN

Built on the banks of the sluggish Grandfather River, Hu Bian is little more than a trading post for farmers from around the area to sell rice and other goods, as well as pay their respects to the ancestors and immortals at the local temple. When the party arrives, a sullen quiet hangs over the town, and even the healthy go about wearing cloth over their noses and mouths. The people of Hu Bian are, on the whole, not kind to strangers.

HARVEST TEMPLE

The Temple of Five Heavenly Virtues, or as it's better known, Harvest Temple, has become the central area where the sick are treated. When the characters first arrive, Luoyang is too busy to greet them, but Temulun is happy to welcome them to town and answer their questions. Temulun provides the characters with these pieces of useful information:

- The marsh just beyond town is known as Pilgrim's Grave, a fitting name. It is treacherous, maze-like, and infested with swamp monsters. Temulun lost her horse, Red Wind, during her first journey there and would have died herself if not for her incredible luck.
- The herb that cured Temulun, called the phoenix bloom, comes from a local folktale. No one has been able to find the herb since, but they have only been searching on the outskirts of the marsh. There is a copse located deeper within Pilgrim's Grave, elevated above the brackish water and untouched for generations, where both Temulun and Luoyang believe more of the herb might grow.

Temulun hesitates when questioned further about her own journey into the marsh, and insists that she was too sick and feverish to remember much of anything about her trip. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check indicates that Temulun is hiding something.

The lepers throughout the temple speak highly of both Temulun and Luoyang. Questioning them yields the above information, as well as stories of how impressive and charismatic Temulun was when she first rode into town.

While spells like *cure wounds* and *lesser restoration* alleviate the symptoms of the scabbing plague for a brief time, they have no permanent effect and do not cure the disease.

The characters can seek Luoyang out themselves, but if they do not, Luoyang approaches them by end of day. She enlists their help in searching the marsh for the phoenix bloom, and may offer the treasures of her temple as a reward. If asked about Temulun, Luoyang says that Temulun is dear to her, but admits that she has felt uneasy about her friend ever since her sudden recovery.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters agree to help Luoyang, their pivotal choice is who they want to bring with them, if anyone. Luoyang is an **acolyte** who could provide magical assistance, but whose absence from the village would be keenly felt, even if only for a few days. Temulun knows the swamp best, but is still recovering from her illness. Temulun's secrets might incline some characters, or Luoyang, if asked for her opinion, to leave her behind.

CHAPTER 2 – SEARCHING FOR A MIRACLE

"Pilgrim's Grave" has a twofold meaning. Originally named after the heroine of the folktale, who died her first death there before being given life again by the gods, the swamp has since become the burial ground of many more pilgrims journeying south to the temples on the other side of the marsh. Shrouded in mist and crowded with swamp cypress with roots as thick as an adult's waist, Pilgrim's Grave has rebuffed all other travelers who have attempted to search it.

GENERAL FEATURES

The path from Hu Bian to the copse in Pilgrim's Grave is about twelve miles long and takes eight hours of travel at normal pace through difficult terrain, but the path through the swamp is treacherous. Use rules for "Becoming Lost" (*DMG*), rolling on the Locations table after every four hours of travel.

If the characters bring Temulun, give them advantage on navigation checks for as long as Temulun remains with the party. Temulun grows increasingly nervous the closer the characters get to their destination. Once the characters pass the halfway point, she takes the next possible opportunity to separate herself from them, such as by insisting on splitting up to cover more ground, or sneaking away in the middle of the night. Temulun knows this swamp better than anyone, and tracking her down again after she flees requires a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check, with disadvantage if Temulun has more than an hour's head start. If the characters pursue her and succeed, though, skip to Chapter 3.

LOCATIONS IN PILGRIM'S GRAVE

Pilgrim's Grave is a dangerous place. Roll 1d8 to determine the party's location after every four hours of travel, unless they have reached their destination.

D8	Location/Encounter
1	A giant spiderweb, abandoned (unless the **spider** from Chapter 1 escaped alive)
2	An ancient rice paddy, now overgrown
3	An empty kobold campsite, meals left half-finished by a smoldering fire
4	A large and foreboding cypress, poisonous white flowers blooming around its roots
5	A collapsed hut by an old fishpond, 8 sp glittering in the water
6	2 **swarms of insects**, hiding in the rotting logs
7	6 **kobolds**, fishing in the marsh
8	1 **giant toad**, swallowing a slightly less giant beetle

THE COPSE

As the hill where the phoenix bloom is said to grow becomes visible, the characters stumble across a **swamp drake** (use the stats for **black guard drake**, *VGtM*), midway through consuming a fallen horse. It defends its prize fiercely, and attacks anyone who approaches it. The guard drake has no treasure, but its scales can be harvested and sold for a total of 15 gp.

A cursory inspection of the corpse reveals that the drake has already gotten three or four meals out of it. The dead horse matches the description of **Red Wind**, Temulun's missing steed.

Read the following once the characters bypass this final obstacle, and approach their destination (readaloud):

> The hill rises above the swamp, crowned by a circle of cypress trees growing beyond the brackish water. Crimson flowers, eye-wateringly bright, grow at the base of the trees, and many of those flowers have been plucked and scattered over a mound of freshly overturned earth. A sword, new but rusting quickly, has been sunk blade down in the mound, like a headstone.

The mound is a grave, beneath which the real Temulun has been buried. Her corpse has been eaten away by swamp creatures, but it is still recognizable. Alternatively, Luoyang (if she came) identifies the sword as Temulun's.

If Luoyang came, she is devastated and confused. She turns to the characters for consolation and advice, and internalizes whatever they tell her now—whether to harden her heart against the false Temulun and mistrust all it says, or to keep an open mind and get all the facts first.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the flowers have no medicinal properties.

DEVELOPMENT

Temulun is either in the temple, or at large, by the time the characters discover that she is not who (or what) she says she is. None of the villagers back in Hu Bian are strong enough to resist her if she becomes hostile, and so it is up to the characters to stop her—and to see if there is any truth at all to her miracle cure.

CHAPTER 3 – THE THING THAT I LOVED

The characters return to town. If Luoyang did not travel with them, she is the first to approach them, anxious to know how the expedition went. If the characters tell her about finding Temulun's body, Luoyang is distraught. She asks the characters for advice and follows their lead. Whether she traveled to the swamp with them or not, once Luoyang learns the truth she insists on staying with the party until they confront Temulun.

CONFRONTING THE DOPPELGÄNGER

Temulun is at the temple, cheering up the sick. If she fled from the characters in Pilgrim's Grave, she pretends that she got lost, but managed to return to town unharmed. She tells whatever lies she must in order to pretend that everything is still normal, until the characters force her hand, whether by threatening to expose her, presenting evidence that the real Temulun is dead, or something else. At that point, Temulun tries to take the characters (and Luoyang, if she is there) aside somewhere private before explaining herself.

Read the following if Temulun reveals herself peacefully:

> Temulun tenses, and then bows her head, her jaw sloping out as brown skin melts into matted fur. Temulun's appearance is not the only thing to change. In an instant her brash confidence evaporates, leaving a hunched, vulpine creature quivering in leathers two sizes too large for her.

When questioned, the doppelgänger tells the characters:

- She has lived in Hu Bian for as long as Luoyang, but the village was so small, and so hostile to strangers, that she could only ever observe from the outside. She longed desperately to be one of them. When the plague first hit, she was one of the first "lepers" to come to Luoyang's temple.
- She envied Temulun for her charisma, her immediate acceptance by the village, and (more than anything) her relationship with Luoyang.
- When Temulun rode into Pilgrim's Grave, the doppelgänger followed—but the doppelgänger never

hurt her. Instead, the doppelgänger fought off the swamp monsters before they could reach Temulun, so that the mercenary, half-dead of sickness, could reach the phoenix bloom hill unmolested. There, the real Temulun's strength gave out, and the doppelgänger buried her.

If pressed for a name other than Temulun, the doppelgänger insists that she is "nobody."

Roleplaying the Doppelgänger

The doppelgänger cringes, stutters, and whines once her true form is revealed. She possesses a desperate self-loathing, and more than anything, she wants to return to the Temulun persona, to feel comfort and confidence again.

The doppelgänger truly does not wish anyone harm, but fights to defend herself, or if she thinks that silencing the party is the only way to keep her secret safe. She never fights if Luoyang is present.

LUOYANG'S REACTION

If she is there, Luoyang's reaction depends on what the characters told her earlier. Her reaction is extreme if the party's actions do not match their previous advice. For example, she insists on killing the false Temulun if the party told her to steel her nerve but then decides to forgive the doppelgänger. Conversely she might leap to the doppelgänger's defense if the party told her to keep her mind open, but then takes violent action.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters are left to decide what to do with the doppelgänger. Who learns the secret? Where might the doppelgänger go? And, as a prompt for further adventures, where next can they look for a cure?

CONCLUSION

The end of the adventure can diverge wildly depending on the party's choices, but here are a few possibilities:

The doppelgänger is allowed to remain as Temulun, and her secret is kept from everyone except Luoyang. "Temulun" continues to live in Hu Bian, providing hope to the plague-struck lepers who travel to the village, while Luoyang works on an actual cure. The two of them grow distant as Luoyang cannot bear to be near the false Temulun without remembering her real lover is dead.

The doppelgänger's secret is exposed, and she is killed or driven out of town. The mood in the village plummets as the miracle cure is revealed to be a hoax, and the pilgrimage of afflicted to the temple stops. Luoyang starts on the long road of resolving her grief, as she returns to caring for a manageable number of patients, and work towards an actual cure begins.

The doppelgänger remains, but Luoyang insists she take another form out of respect for Temulun's memory. Luoyang's patients are distraught at Temulun's sudden departure (or disappearance), but hope remains in the cure. The doppelgänger struggles to feel the same level of comfort and confidence in her new body. Her relationship with Luoyang is marred, but recoverable.

No matter what, in the end, Hu Bian has no miracle cure. GMs can use the search for a cure as a thread to connect this adventure to a larger campaign.

REWARDS

So long as Luoyang survives to the end of the adventure, she keeps her word and rewards the characters for their assistance. She has a pitiful amount of cash to give: a mere 40 gp, to be split among the entire party. However, she also parts with three magical items her temple has guarded for generations: a *ring of warmth*, a *potion of heroism*, and a *sentinel shield*. The ring and the shield bear ox horn markings, matching those of her god.

If the party showed the doppelgänger kindness, and allowed her to remain in some form or another, she has nothing to offer but gratitude—but the gratitude of a mind-reading shapeshifter could always be useful in adventures to come.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure draws heavily from my personal experience with transness and dysphoria. It can diverge off-script pretty easily, but since it revolves around the personal drama of the two central NPCs, as long as you have a good understanding of the characters then the rest should follow. Thanks to my wonderful weekly group for being the best players a GM could ask for. <3

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Black Guard Drake

Medium (dragon), unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Resistances acid
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages understands Draconic but can't speak
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The black guard drake can breathe air and water.

Actions

Multiattack. The guard drakes makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.



"Spanish Dancer Wearing a Lace Mantilla"
Painting by Mary Cassatt



A DEADLY DANCE

by Connor Land

Creature: *Doppelgänger* | **Levels:** *3–5*
CW: *Violence against women*

SYNOPSIS

A rash of "unfortunate accidents" has befallen Nordfalia's court, leaving four servants and two nobles dead. During Nordfalia's Annual Royal Ball, the party must investigate people of interest to discover the murderer. While the manor is currently hosting some hidden doppelgängers, they turn out to be victims instead of monsters. The true killer, the characters may find, exemplifies a more conventional type of horror.

TONE

This one-shot is designed to be campy, melodramatic, and fun. Enjoy the games!

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The party receives a letter from Lady Regis Valentine, requesting their presence at court. She may have heard of the characters through their connections to nobility, previous monster hunting, or success in delicate diplomatic matters. If this adventure is being run as part of an ongoing campaign, this is a perfect moment to reference some of the characters' past deeds.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A group of doppelgängers, posing as both noble Court Ladies and peasant Handmaidens, have infiltrated Nordfalia's court. Leading them, Queen Xiomada Reyes (**doppelgänger**) sits atop her throne. But the doppelgängers are being hunted.

This story begins with one charismatic doppelgänger who fathered almost fifty children by human mothers. He left a string of broken hearts in his wake, and when the women saw doppelgänger children for the first time, they all gave them up to orphanages. As children, the dopplegängers found each other. They began presenting as human women, as their father gave them a bad association with human masculinity. In a dangerous world, the orphans vowed to secure their futures.

Two years ago, one of them disguised herself as a noble named Xiomada Reyes. The other doppelgängers disguised themselves as servants and royals under her leadership. They all schemed to have Reyes marry into fortune. Then they could take some gold, disappear, and go live safely elsewhere. A year and a half ago, Xiomada became Queen Reyes by marrying King Brightspear. After the wedding, the dopplegängers covertly took out a lump sum from the royal accounts, invested it, and have been collecting the interest ever since. Their wealth is almost great enough to leave.

Unfortunately, someone is ruining their plan. Mage Artemis Vaal, King Brightspear's mage, is a serial killer of women. Not even he understands, however, why his first few victims have turned into monsters upon death.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Lady Regis Valentine:** A noble matriarch from a long line. She has a patriotic interest in preserving Nordfalia.
- **Queen Xiomada Reyes:** A doppelgänger disguised as the second most powerful person in the kingdom.
- **King Alonnis Brightspear:** Ruler of Nordfalia and war veteran. He is known to be hot blooded, and can serve as a red herring villain for your party.
- **Royal Mage Artemis Vaal:** A strict believer in gender roles. Whenever he believes a woman is acting inappropriately, he monitors her. Should she prove to be a doppelgänger, he murders her.

NOTES FOR GAME MASTERS

Mysteries with multiple NPCs can be confusing. Use the following facts to guide, mislead, and surprise the party:

- Lady Valentine suspects a monster has killed the manor's women. In fact, Mage Vaal is the 'monster' while his victims are dopplegangers.
- Mage Vaal assumed his first victim was human. Now, after killing several women and seeing them turn into doppelgänger corpses, his misogyny has combined with anti-monster fervency.
- To avoid showing how much he knows, Mage Vaal tries not to give away too many details about the dopplegangers.
- Mage Vaal left his first victim in the forest. The others he's melted down in cauldrons, though he's kept small necklaces and keepsakes from each. Beyond the clues from the games, characters can detect Vaal's guilt by hearing a rumor about the stench in the dungeons (leading the characters to the cauldrons), seeing Vaal do lightning-based magic (matching the electrical burns on the corpses in the forest), or seeing him accidentally drop a memento from a victim.
- King Brightspear is this adventure's red herring culprit. The whole manor whispers about his rage, impulsiveness, and cruelty. If stalked, he should reveal himself to be boorish but pathetic. He is an angry war veteran, and detests that he cannot find the monster in his manor.
- All Mage Vaal's victims are doppelgängers. If a doppelgänger is stalked, they take a character to a private room and plead for help.
- Ten servants and five nobles comprise the rest of Queen Reye's doppelgänger retinue. They all suspect different humans in the manor of being the killer, because all of the dopplegängers distrust humans acutely.
- This adventure's doppelgängers are fundamentally sympathetic and good. They are, however, also chaotic. They love disarray, hedonism, and party harder than anyone.

PART 1: CLUE GATHERING

The party receives the letter, arrive at the manor, and are shuffled into a private study by an attendant. There, Lady Regis Valentine joins the party and briefs them on what she knows.

Read this aloud:

> A stately woman sporting several hats enters the study. She addresses you, "*Hello and thank you for answering my summons. I am Lady Valentine. Four handmaidens and two ladies of the Queen's retinue have vanished over the course of a month. I suspect an invisible monster stalks our halls, as some of the victims were seen in the manor minutes before their disappearances. I would like you to investigate during the party, find clues, and return to me when you know the culprit. Many of the manor's more colorful figures are running party games tonight. Nordfalian custom holds that winners may name their prize. Should you name information as your prize, these people could provide crucial clues. For conducting this investigation, I will dispense a hefty purse of gold into your possession.*"

Lady Valentine then answers any other questions the characters have, and then instructs them not to make contact with her until they choose a culprit. For details on her exact rewards, see the Outcomes and Rewards section. She can be found in the Grand Hall at any time.

When Lady Valentine makes her exit, servants enter. They set up partitions and offer myriad party clothes to the characters. After they have dressed, the servants direct the characters to the reception hall.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> You enter a soaring reception hall stuffed to the gills with the finely-bred and newly-minted. Dancers contort, a band plays, and an ever-shifting whirl of canapés and champagne channel through pods of people consumed with the taxing business of pleasure. Many party guests are masked or costumed. Somewhere in this den of delights, a killer lurks.

It is up to the party to decide how to proceed. Listed below are the games characters can play to gain clues. Should a character win a game, they may make a Charisma-based check of their choice with advantage to interrogate the game giver. If the character loses, they make their check with disadvantage.

FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

	Activity	Clue Giver	Location
1	Wizards' Contest (Magic)	Royal Mage Artemas Vaal	The Dungeons
2	Fermented Sundries Eating Contest (CON)	Knight Gwendoline Briar	Grand Hall
3	People Croquet (Attack)	Head of House Gerald Ninniejam	The Western Gardens
4	Bodice Partner Racing (DEX/STR)	Ladies Janeway and Kimberly Ajax	The Back Lawn
5	Blushing Poems (CHA)	Courtesans in Residence Jacob and Bella	The Study

FESTIVAL ACTIVITY DETAILS

1. Wizards' Contest (Magic)
Read the following description:

> In a large dungeon filled with skeletons, ancient torture devices, and bats, Royal Mage Artemis Vaal describes his game: two magic users battle to prove who is best.
>
> A magic-using challenger must bend their magic to upstage Mage Vaal. The challenger may go first or second. Each turn, a magic user can describe a magical display which roughly conforms to a spell they have prepared. After doing so, roll a spell attack. The magic user who rolls the highest attack for that turn wins the turn. The first participant to win three out of five turns wins the game.

Once the contest is over, have the character make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Provide them with a clue based on the result of their roll:
DC 6: Mage Vaal shows characters the results of a divination spell proving that there are multiple monstrosities in the manor even now. The spell only says these monstrosities are somewhere on the manor's grounds.
DC 15: Mage Vaal gives the character a bracelet which vibrates when the character is five feet away from a monstrosity.

2. Fermented Sundries Eating Contest (CON)
Read the following description:

> Knight Gwendoline Briar is unbeaten at Fermented Sundries. On the table before her rests an opaque bucket with a slit-top cover for participants' hands.
>
> Each challenger sits down with Knight Briar. The challenger and Briar take turns drawing and eating pastries from her bucket. Briar will allow the challenger to go first or second. Briar is a Gladiator with a Constitution of 18. Each time either participant eats a pastry, roll 1d8 to discover the effects of the pastry (see table).
>
> For bland and delicious pastries, participants get the good effects on successful CON saves. For dastardly pastries, participants avoid bad effects with successful CON saves. The first eater to fail three dastardly pastry CON saves over the course of the contest loses.

	Pastries	Effects
1	Chocolate Bonbon with salt paste center	Bland: Very salty. CON save 8. Subtract 2 from your next 1d8 roll.
2	Heart cookie with cherry jam center	Delicious: CON save 5. Cleanses the palate and grants a +3 to your next CON save.
3	Peach streusel muffin with bacon and black garlic	Delicious: CON save 5. Tastes great, but smells awful. Your opponent rolls their next CON save with disadvantage due to your breath.
4	Chocolate peanut butter cup with health potion flakes	Delicious: CON save 3. Roll your next CON save with advantage.
5	Sugar-glazed fermented pepper	Dastardly: CON save 14. The spice grants a -2 to your next CON save.
6	Strawberry macaron with fermented goat urine jelly	Dastardly: CON save 15. The 10 year old goat urine jelly makes you add 2 to your next 1d8 roll.
7	Shark-shaped cake with real fish eye on the outside and fermented shark flesh filling	Dastardly: CON save 16. The rotten shark gives you disadvantage on your next CON saving throw.
8	Jar of 10-year pickled boar brain with a hard candied-orange lid	Dastardly: CON save 17. Roll your next 1d8 with disadvantage.

Once the contest is over, have the character make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Provide them with a clue based on the result of their roll:

DC 8: Knight Briar reveals an old intelligence report: a group of face-changing monsters were spotted on the border. It was a few days before the new queen arrived in Nordfalia, which made Knight Briar's security detail hell.

DC 15: Knight Briar also confesses that she's cheating on her husband with a noble lady of Queen Reyes' retinue. During her trysts with Lady Lucia Gonzalez, Briar was struck by her lover's servants always coming in at just the right time, bearing exactly which refreshments were needed.



Photography by Michele Blackwell

3. People Croquet (Attack)

Read the following description:

> Head of House Gerald Ninniejam stands in a black tuxedo. In a reversal of authority, Gerald hits a croquet ball off of Baron Zon Giovon's body into various gates on the lawn.
>
> Two challengers act as partners. One is the hitter, and one is the tee. The hitter uses their normal attack bonus, but wields a mallet which deals 1d6 + STR/DEX damage. Gerald has a +3 to hit, and Zon has 60 HP. There are five gates. The first pair through all five gates wins.
>
> The challengers may go first, and each pair will alternate turns. At each gate, a pair first balances the ball somewhere on the tee. Then the hitter strikes the ball. Should their attack be a 16 or higher, they get through the gate. Any roll below 16 is a miss. Those who miss must wait for the other pair to attempt before they may strike again. Should a strike be a 5 or below, the hitter deals their attack's damage to their partner. On a success, a pair advances to the next gate. Should either pair's tee fall unconscious, the other pair wins by default.

Once the contest is over, have the character make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Provide them with a clue based on the result of their roll:

DC 7: Ninniejam knows the king bruises his dance partners. Also, just earlier tonight Ninniejam observed that Lady Maria Flores, a noble in Queen Reye's retinue, danced in a suspicious succession of styles, changing one after the other faster than anyone he's seen.

DC 15: Ninniejam also admits that once, when he danced with Lady Maria Flores, she brought him to her private quarters after the dance. Before anything beyond kissing happened, however, he ran off in terror. For a moment, he swore he saw his face where Lady Flores' should have resided.

4. Corset Partner Racing (DEX/STR)

Read the following description:

> On a verdant lawn you see a pale woman being carried in the arms of a strong partner wearing a frilly corset. They race against another pair until onlookers erupt into cheers.
>
> The married Ladies Janeway and Kimberly Ajax speed over the finish line, having just won another round of Corset Partner Racing. Janeway is a pale, deaf woman who manages to wear a ball gown in her wheelchair. Kimberly is a petite tan woman dressed in a tuxedo.
>
> This contest is designed to test a pair of challengers against the Ajaxs. From their example, you deduce that the game is designed for pairs of strong and dexterous challengers.
>
> The game consists of two parts: corset tying and a footrace. One dexterous challenger ties a frilly corset on their strong partner, then that strong partner picks up the other and carries them to a finish line. Beware, however, of the raucous partygoers lining the racetrack.

Conduct the game as follows:

1. On a gridded map, place the four contestants in a line. 50 feet away from them (12 movement squares) place a finish line. The race path goes in a straight line and is lined with drunken onlookers.
2. The champagne is popped, signaling the start. Corset tyers must tie as fast as they can. Janeway is a **noble** with a Dexterity of 16. Have Janeway and the tying character roll 3 contesting Dexterity checks. The first tyer to win two checks wins, and that tyer's pair surges forward 10 feet. The losing pair advances 5 feet.
3. The onlookers produce several articles of stretchy clothes (mostly undergarments) and stretch them as barriers across the racetrack. Kimberly is a **knight**. Kimberly and the strong character must roll 3 contesting strength checks to see who bursts through the lingerie first. The victor causes their pair to surge forward 10 feet. The losing pair advances 5 feet.
4. Janeway and the character being carried are given feathers from the audience to tickle the carriers. Both Janeway and the carried character make Dexterity checks. The higher number wins, and that pair surges forward 10 feet. The losing pair advances 5 feet.
5. The carriers both receive compliments from the onlookers on their corsets. Kimberly and the carrier character must make Charisma saving throws. The loser stops for a second to strut their stuff to the crowd's delight. The winner surges forward 10 feet, managing to charm the crowd on the go. The losing pair advances 5 feet.
6. This is the final stretch of the race. Have all four racers roll initiative. On each of their turns, have the racer improvise a DEX, STR, or CHA action which could help their pair win the race. The DC for all of these checks is 14, and each success helps the winning pair surge forward 5 feet. Improvise until a winner crosses the finish line.

Once the contest is over, have the character make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Provide them with a clue based on the result of their roll:

DC 6: Janeway and Kimberly explain that, when going to find their lost dog, they found a wretched animal corpse in the nearby woods.

DC 15: Janeway and Kimberly explain that, when going to find their lost dog, they found a wretched animal corpse in the nearby woods. Furthermore, the couple suspects that the corpse displays webbed burn marks similar to victims of lightning strikes.

Should characters investigate this debris, they'll find one corpse black, rough, and warped. On a successful DC 7 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the characters can determine the corpse is a doppelgänger. On a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they'll learn that the

doppelgänger was killed by the spell *lightning bolt*.

5. Blushing Poems (CHA)
Read the following description:

> Courtesans-in-Residence Bertrand and Lillian sit on chaise longue in the leather-appointed study. Bertrand is a man dressed in a web of silken ropes, and Lillian is a gender-nonbinary person wearing a blazer and leather pants. If any challenger can write a poem to make one of them blush, they'll spill their secrets.

Have characters each write a small poem. For each poem a character finishes and reads aloud, have each courtesan roll an opposed CHA roll against the character reading. A character may also roll Performance or Persuasion. Each of the courtesans have a +4 to CHA. Should a character not wish to write a poem, they may aid another character with a described action to give that character's reading advantage.

Once the contest is over, have the character make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Provide them with a clue based on the result of their roll:

DC 7: Three of the courtesans' clients have started acting oddly since the murders. One servant woman has started to crave macabre games of hide and seek, one large man has started acting as a beastly predator, and a final man has stopped showing up.

DC 15: The characters also learn that the first woman is Lady Lucia Gonzalez of Queen Reyes' retinue, the large man is King Brightspear, and the absent one is Mage Vaal.

PART 2: TESTING THEORIES

After completing the games in Part 1, characters receive a surprising note under one of their drinks:

"I cannot get away to meet you. Please slip a note onto the ham canapé tray making its way around, naming the culprit. You have an hour. I will advise you with my reply."

Characters may take this hour to test theories based on their clues. Let them seek out people, stalk them, or speak to them. See the Notes for Game Masters section for guidance on how NPCs might react to the characters' efforts.

PART 3: THE SHOWDOWN

A few minutes after a character submits their choice to Lady Valentine, have them feel a metal ball slip into their pocket. Inside is a note based on the culprit they submitted.

If the Party Submitted King Brightspear

"I will arrange for him to go to his chambers in ten minutes. He'll suspect the queen is taking a lover there. Extract a confession, but keep him alive."

Have the king be escorted by enough **knights**. When the characters accuse him, he should fly into a rage. Only a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check prevents him and his knights from fighting the party. If his rage is quelled, the king scoffs at the idea that he is guilty. "*I've heard the gossip about the bodies discovered in the forest. They were killed by lightning. I am no storm.*"

Characters may roll a DC 14 Charisma (Insight) check as the king tries to act nonchalant. On a success, they discover a wand in his pocket which he's trying to conceal: a wand with 10 charges of what appears to be *shocking grasp*. The king objects: "I've never used that on anyone. Mage Vaal gave it to me for protection against the monster!"

With a success on a DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check or a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the party can deduce that the wand is actually filled with 10 charges of *prestidigitation* made to look like sparks. Should they succeed in this, the King honestly tells the party he believes the mage set him up, and that Mage Vaal is the true culprit.

Should the characters fail their Investigation or Intelligence (Arcana) checks, or should the party simply believe the King to be the culprit, the wand is enough evidence for Lady Valentine to have the king arrested. See the "Outcomes and Rewards" section for further guidance.

If the Party Submitted Mage Vaal

"I will arrange for him to believe his dungeon is compromised. He'll retreat down there in ten minutes. Go there and extract a confession. Keep him alive."

They meet Mage Vaal in the dungeon and confront him. He fights to the last. During the encounter, have Vaal revel in his memories of killing women and

threaten to enjoy the characters' deaths just as much. Once he is subdued, or if the party needs help winning the encounter, have a doppelgänger servant enter the room. She changes her face to reveal her identity: Queen Reyes. She is a **doppelgänger**. The queen in the feast is a double. She'll explain any details about the doppelgängers the characters don't know, and then reward them with magical items. The party may present Vaal to Lady Valentine as the culprit. See the Outcomes and Rewards section for further guidance.

If the Party Submitted Any Doppelgänger

"I knew it was a monster. I will arrange for the culprit to flee to the servants' quarters downstairs believing their identity is known. Extract a confession, but keep them alive."

Have a doppelgänger servant enter the room. She changes her face to reveal her identity: Queen Reyes. She is a **doppelgänger**. The queen in the feast is a double. She'll explain any details about the doppelgängers the characters don't know. She promises magical items if the party brings justice for the dead doppelgängers (see the Outcomes and Rewards section). Queen Reyes suspects the culprit is either King Brightspear or Mage Vaal. She'll urge the party to find evidence to determine the culprit. Use the Notes for Game Masters section to guide characters as they sleuth for who of the two is guilty. After the characters decide, continue with Mage Vaal or King Brightspear's submission section above.

Should the party fight the doppelgänger, two **noble ladies** and two **handmaidens** join to balance the fight. If the characters subdue them then the party may present a doppelgänger to Lady Valentine as the culprit. See the Outcomes and Rewards section for further guidance.

Outcomes and Rewards

Culprit: King Brightspear — Lady Valentine gathers every partygoer in the Grand Hall. She announces: "With great regret, I must inform you that our king is to blame for the ghastly murders of late. Impartial outsiders have found incontrovertible evidence of his murderous rage. These outside heroes are to be commended, and our former king is to stand trial." Lady Valentine explains to the party that her family will oversee the transition of power to Queen Reyes, maintain order in the kingdom, and then gives each character 400 gp. She also allows each character to consult with an elven blacksmith, who fashions either a *+1 weapon* or *+1 armor* piece of each character's choosing.

Culprit: Mage Vaal — Lady Valentine gathers every partygoer in the Grand Hall. She announces: "With great regret, I must inform you that our mage is to blame for the ghastly murders of late. Impartial outsiders have found incontrovertible evidence of his sickening deviance. These outside heroes are to be commended, and our former mage is to stand trial." Lady Valentine explains to the party that she will take care to vet Mage Vaal's replacement carefully. She gives each character 500 gp. Queen Reyes then finds the party and voices her gratitude. She gives each character one vial of doppelgänger blood. When drunk, the blood gives the benefits of the spell *polymorph* to its drinker.

Culprit: any doppleganger — The fire is eventually put out, but when order is restored the Queen is gone along with her nobles and handmaidens. Lady Valentine gathers every partygoer in the Grand Hall. She announces: "With great regret, I must inform you that our queen was the leader of a monstrous conspiracy. Though a group of outside heroes came here to solve a murder, they ended up saving an entire kingdom from Queen Reyes' duplicitous deceptions. She will be hunted: these heroes should be commended." Lady Valentine explains to the party that her family will maintain order in the kingdom as the king finds a new queen. Lady Valentine then gives each character 400 gp. She also allows each character to consult with an elven blacksmith, who fashions either a *+1 weapon* or *+1 armor* piece of each character's choosing.

About the Author

Connor Land is a technical writer in the Netherlands who aspires to make fiction his job someday. He's finishing a novel, has GMed his own *D&D* campaign for three years, and desperately wants whichever Magic the Gathering cards are newest.

King Brightspear

Medium humanoid, lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 52
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15(+2)

Saving Throws Constitution +4, Wisdom +2
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common, one other language

Brave. King Brightspear has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Divine Right: As a bonus action, King Brightspear can point to one ally he can see within 30ft of him. That creature may make one attack action.

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) slashing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). King Brightspear rallies his troops with a short speech (possibly mocking the player characters). For 1 minute, all of King Brightspear's allies add 1d4 to each attack and saving throw. *This effect ends if King Brightspear is incapacitated.*

Mage Vaal

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 50
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities stunned
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common, one other language

Spellcasting. Mage Vaal is a 5th level spellcaster (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks) who needs only verbal components to cast his spells. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence, he favors lightning magic, and he has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mage hand, shocking grasp, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, suggestion*
3rd level (1 slot): *counterspell, lightning bolt*

Actions

Fist. Melee Weapon Attack: +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (3d4) lightning damage.

Noble Lady

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 35
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +6, Insight +3
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The doppelgänger can use its action to polymorph into a Small of Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Ambusher. The doppelgänger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

Surprise Attack. If the doppelgänger surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Read Thoughts. The doppelgänger magically reads the surface thoughts of one creature within 60 feet of it. The effect can penetrate barriers, but 3 feet of wood or dirt, 2 feet of stone, 2 inches of metal, or a thin sheet of lead blocks it. While the target is in range, the doppelgänger can continue reading its thoughts, as long as the doppelgänger's concentration isn't broken (as if concentrating on a spell). While reading the target's mind, the doppelgänger has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the subject.

Perfume Blast. The Noble Lady squirts perfume on one target within melee range. That target must make a DC 14 Constitution save. On a fail, that target is stunned. The target can make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.



Handmaiden

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 35
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Deception +6, Insight +3
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The doppelgänger can use its action to polymorph into a Small of Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Ambusher. The doppelgänger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

Surprise Attack. The handmaiden throws an ordinary object like a deadly missile. The missile has a range of 20 feet. On a hit, the target must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a fail, the target takes 1d6+4 damage and is knocked prone.

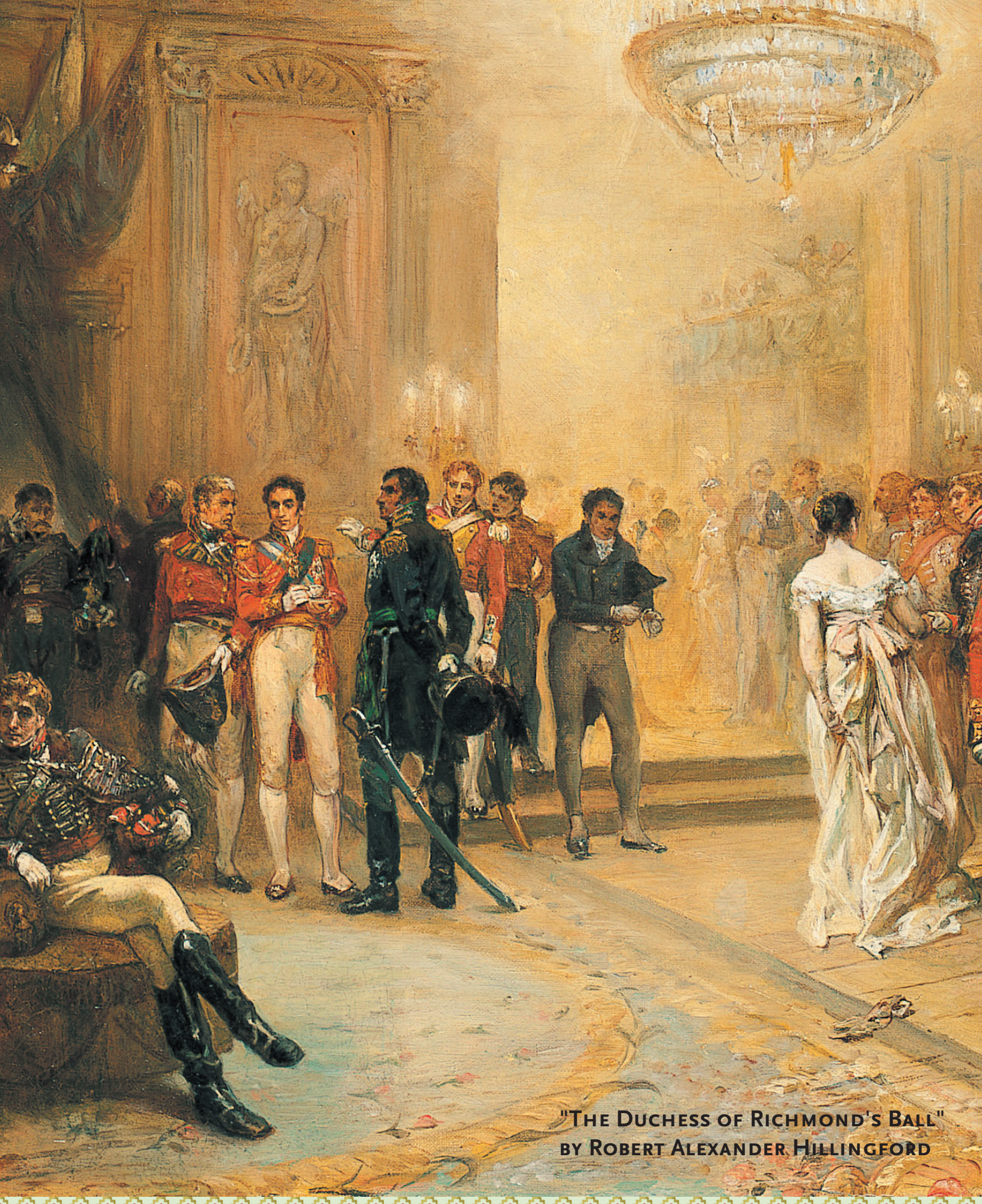
Actions

Multiattack. The doppelgänger makes one Surprising Dart attack and one Hit attack.

Hit. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Read Thoughts. The doppelgänger magically reads the surface thoughts of one creature within 60 feet of it. The effect can penetrate barriers, but 3 feet of wood or dirt, 2 feet of stone, 2 inches of metal, or a thin sheet of lead blocks it. While the target is in range, the doppelgänger can continue reading its thoughts, as long as the doppelgänger's concentration isn't broken (as if concentrating on a spell). While reading the target's mind, the doppelgänger has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the subject.

Surprising Dart. The handmaiden throws an ordinary object like a deadly missile. The missile has a range of 20 feet. On a hit, the target must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a fail, the target takes 1d6+4 damage and is knocked prone.



"The Duchess of Richmond's Ball"
by Robert Alexander Hillingford



Illustration by Sandy Jacobs-Tolle

THE BLOOD-STAINED SWEET TOOTH

by Cameron Blair

Creature: *Hag* | **Levels:** *4–5*
CWs: *Kidnapping and abduction, child abuse, blood, nudity*

SYNOPSIS

In a secluded, rainy land ruled over by Baron Von Ewanne, children are being stolen by an evil hag. No one dares follow the path adorned with skulls that leads deep into the ancient forest, where the hag lures children with candies and treats. Cries for justice ring throughout the Barony, and townsfolk call for adventurers to come and rescue the children. But stories of the matron from the woods tells a different tale...

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Blood-Stained Sweet Tooth is designed for four 4th-5th level characters. The leader of a remote Barony has sent out messengers to retrieve willing heroes to save kidnapped children from an evil and hungry hag. Adventurers may be enticed by the boons of the reward or seek to honorably save the ailing village from the monster.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The folk of The Barony are historically community-focused, aiding each other when in need. In recent years, the new Baron has divided the Barony's people by introducing new beliefs and traditions that encourage his own industrial expansion. More and more loggers come to whittle away at the great forests and the farmlands are overworked.

Some villagers still hold fast to the old ways, including ones who speak of an old woman of the woods who aids those in dire need. Now, with children going missing, villagers are divided between holding onto their traditions and tales and believing the Baron's words. Accordingly, the Baron rules with an iron fist, an approach he also applies to the investigation of the missing children.

In truth, the hag Nana Grace Gristlegums has long offered assistance to the village folks and seeks to continue that tradition through times of darkness. Her eccentric methods of providing aid within her haunting forest have not addressed the problems in the village. The Baron Von Ewanne's request for aid from adventurers is a ruse to quell the outcries of the court and distract his citizens from his dark rituals of siphoning magic from the blood of children.

CHAPTER 1 – THE BARONY

Readloud: The wind whips across your faces and a towering forest skirts your path on your approach to the secluded capital. The cloudy sky hangs low over the bustling streets as villagers move about, bartering over sparse amounts of food at the height of the harvest season. Coin changes hands as weary faces look up at you, a secret hope in their eyes. The bustle of business is only overshadowed by the sparse laughter of children darting around the street under the strangely persistent watch of every adult near them.

You receive a message directing you to the keep at the center of town to attend an audience with the Baron von Ewanne to obtain more details and guidance about the task.

BARON VON EWANNE

The adventurers find Baron von Ewanne (stat block in Appendix B) in the main council chamber, awaiting their arrival. He is as beautiful as he is intimidating. His raven hair matches his clothing, which accentuates his gaunt figure.

The Baron begins with a grandiose welcome, bol-

stering the heroes' egos with flattery. Once he finishes, he realizes that a young page girl is still in the hall. Upon noticing her, the Baron berates the girl for not leaving when the adventurers arrived.

After his outburst, the Baron gives the party the following information:

- The hag lures children with sweets to the edge of the forest where the children are kidnapped and eaten.
- Money has been stolen from the local coffers with each kidnapping.
- The Baron suffers from nightmares at the hand of the hag.
- Whenever the hag strikes, she turns the guards standing watch to stone.
- The Baron wishes to protect his people and urges the heroes to dispatch the hag and save any children they find in the forest.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the Baron is masking his true motives; if pressed for his true reasons, the Baron reassures the party of his love for his people. In reality, the Baron is running low on funds. After risking the livelihood of his community and subjects, the Barony has no money to pay the many debts the Baron has incurred.

The Baron insists there are plenty of families of missing children who will speak to the adventurers but suggests the party pursue the hag immediately. He points them to the forest.

THE MISSING CHILDREN

If players investigate the homes of richer citizens, each home paints a dastardly picture of the hag, emphasizing the blood of children on her hands and urging the heroes to bring her to justice.

If the party elects to investigate the homes of missing children, they find alleyways and homes with wary parents and the forms of petrified guards. Though reluctant to share, villagers reveal the following information if convinced with the required Charisma (Persuasion) check:

Check DC	Information Learned
DC 10	Children have always gone missing. Only now that children from the court have disappeared has the baron sent for adventurers.
DC 12	Old stories tell of the magic woman who lived in the woods who would fly to the families most in need and aid them. She would give just enough to see them through hard times.
DC 17	Children only started disappearing when the Baron came into power several years ago. The land became more grim and food has been scarce as more and more food is sent away to be sold to the Baron's merchant friends.

Each family's story is different, but every interaction points to the forest that parents have warned their children about, harboring evil monsters hungry to eat children.

If the party attempts to lay any sort of trap or lay in wait for the hag, the hag does not appear.

DEVELOPMENT

Whether the party investigates or not, the forest begins calling to them with howling winds and whispering trees. As the party ventures into the forest, continue to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2 – NANA'S FOREST

Once the characters have entered the forest and lose sight of the town, read the following:

> The whispers of the wind between branches sound like hushed secrets between conspirators. The crunch of leaves and twigs under your feet sounds like a herald of oncoming foes. Faint, child-sized tracks lead you deeper into the forest. You come upon a human skull on the ground, dripping blood from its eye sockets and a large, round lollipop, in its mouth. A sign near the skull points deeper into the woods: "This way to Nana's house."

The path is decorated with the same bright candies from the skull. If a character of any good alignment takes a candy and eats it, they gain advantage on their next ability check. If the character is of evil alignment, they must immediately make a DC 13 Constitution save or become poisoned. This poison effect can only be removed when the character has left Nana's Forest. The candy has no effect on neutral aligned characters. The signs along the path are easy to follow, but finding the next sign presents a challenge. It's recommended that the characters participate in two or three encounters depending on character level before proceeding to the encounter with Nana. Below are some recommended non-combat encounters but combat encounters can easily be used to harry the party as they travel through Nana's Forest.

After a number of encounters the characters come upon Nana's home. When this occurs, read the following:

> You push through another set of thick branches before delicious smells of fresh pastries startles you. A quaint cottage sits at the far end of a large clearing. A gentle smoke trail rises from the chimney top and an empty rocking chair rocks on its own on the vacant porch. In the clearing sits a large cauldron and a stool, the beginnings of a fire smolders under the cauldron. As you approach the cauldron, you spy an eye floating in the strange liquid and a small pile of bones upon the stool. At that moment... the door to the cottage slams open. *"Well hello dearies."*

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the bones and eyes belong to a goat.

FOREST ENCOUNTERS

D8 Result	Description	DC and Skill or Save	Reward
1	Two awakened trees arguing about philosophy prone to attack anyone who they disagree with.	-	-
2	Dead End path with a dangerous pit trap (*DMG*, "Adventure Environments").	DC 12 Dexterity save	-
3	A grove of whispering trees.	DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)	5 goodberries
4	The desiccated remains of a human.	-	-
5	A pair of small makeshift tents.	DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)	5 sp and a golden locket worth 10 gp
6	A stream dancing through the forest with children's footprints on either side.	DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)	A discarded child's toy
7	The distant scream of a child.	DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)	A shiny bauble dropped by a raven worth 20 gp
8	An illusion of a child running and laughing across the path.	-	-

NANA GRACE GRISTLEGUMS

The hag, Nana Grace Gristlegums (stat block in Appendix B), emerges from the cottage. At first, she appears to be an elderly human woman. She has short, gray, curly hair which accents her wrinkled, oval-shaped face. She wears a set of well-used spectacles, which almost distract from her lack of eyebrows, pale yellow eyes, and green-tinted skin.

If the party attacks, read tactics below. Otherwise, Nana expects the heroes to be here for the children and is wary of their motivations. She questions the party while offering them candies and pastries.

Nana asks the following questions:

- Do the party members have children of their own?
- What would they do to protect their friends and neighbors?
- How would they react if they had been tricked into hurting others for someone else's gain?

If the party's answers are empathic toward the children's plight, Nana informs the party that she has been stealing the children from the village to protect them from the Baron. Otherwise, see tactics below as Nana defends the children.

Nana explains the Baron's evil, which Nana witnessed firsthand. The Baron siphons magic from the blood of children to feed him power to overcome any responsibility for his brazen financial expansion. Nana details how the Baron has pushed the land to the brink of no return by overworking the fields and felling more trees than needed. During this conversation, the missing children appear from their hiding spots and gather around Nana, corroborating her story.

If the party questions why Nana doesn't defeat the Baron herself, Nana frowns and reiterates the danger of the Baron's power.

Nana then asks the party to save the village by placing an amulet around his neck to nullify his magic and bringing him to the village for justice. Alternatively, she says they can end his evil once and for all by killing him. Once the Baron is captured or killed, the community that Nana loves will be safe once more.

Tactics: If attacked, Nana immediately empties the contents of the cauldron and uses it to take flight. The cauldron flies 10 feet in the air and moves at a speed of 60 feet. Every time Nana is damaged, she must make a successful Constitution (Concentration) save or fall from the air. Nana attempts to disable opponents that seek to engage her in melee while focusing her damage on any ranged threats.

When Nana is reduced to 25 hp or lower, she entreats the characters to stop their aggression and allow her to explain her actions. If the characters continue to attack Nana, she flees to protect the children another day.

If the characters defeat Nana, lethally or non-lethally, a group of children emerge from the cottage and nearby foliage. The oldest child explains the dangers of the Baron to the party as Nana would have done and entreats the party to go and defeat him instead of hurting Nana anymore. If asked, several children agree to be returned to their parents but most wish to stay behind in the safety of Nana's cottage.

DEVELOPMENT

After the party resolves the encounter with Nana and returns to the village, continue to Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 – BLOODY REIGN

As the party exits the forest and return to the capital, read the following:

> Returning to the village, you can feel the weight of evil hanging over you. The clouds crackle with lightning and block almost all light. Empty streets and dimly-lit lanterns lead you through the streets littered with stalls with no wares to sell and haggard beggars on the streets to the shrouded citadel where the Baron's evil stirs.

THE POOL OF BLOOD

Upon the adventurer's return, the Baron's citadel is open and unguarded. The villagers have retreated to their homes and the party finds that all doors are locked save the entrance to the court chamber. If any children have returned with the party, they return to their homes to escape the Baron and the oncoming battle.

Inside the audience chamber where the characters met the Baron before, a sickly green light pulses from a staircase behind the throne. The staircase leads to the Baron's laboratory.

The laboratory is covered in loose papers and ancient tomes. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check imparts the rituals and runes needed to absorb magic from the blood of children. Additionally, with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a party member may find The Icon of Gore (Appendix A) and a diary in the Baron's hand. A door sitting ajar leads to the Pool of Blood.

If the characters read the diary, read the following:

> You leaf through the tattered diary of the Baron. Page by page, it details his trials as a leader. He spurns the villagers for being unable to meet his economic goals and blames them for his choice to harvest the magic from children.
>
> *"So it has come to this. None of them will further my goals or my power. Not even the nobles of this flea-ridden hovel of a barony will aid me. I still hear their derision ringing through my mind. That ends tonight. They will see the truth of my power, even at the cost of their children."*

The adventurers enter the Pool of Blood chamber, a room with a vaulted ceiling dominated by a pool of blood in the center. The Baron emerges from pool, drenched in blood.

Playing the Pillars

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

Combat. The Baron is a powerful magic user but a novice combatant. He uses his most powerful spells when threatened and targets the character who has dealt the most damage to him. He relies on Vampiric Touch and the magic of the Pool of Blood to keep himself alive.

For the party to place the amulet around The Baron' neck, they must hit with two grapple attacks — the first to restrain the Baron, and the second to secure the amulet around his neck. Once around the Baron's neck, the amulet makes him vulnerable to all types of damage and gives him disadvantages on all attacks.

Exploration. If the characters explore the base of the Pool of Blood, a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check finds an arcane gem that if destroyed prevents the Pool of Blood from making any lair actions. The gem has an AC of 15 and 20 hp.

Social. Unattacked, the Baron offers 100 pp per character for their silence and the delivery of all of the children to him. If the party agrees, the Baron attacks the party when they return with the children, never having intended to pay them. If the party refuses his offer, he immediately attacks.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party kills the Baron, proceed to *Conclusion - Part B*.

If the party disables the Baron with the amulet and bring him to unconsciousness, proceed to *Conclusion - Part A*.

CONCLUSION - PART A

The party comes forward with the captured Baron.

The air seems lighter as you exit the gates of the keep. A crowd of villagers have already gathered and stare blankly at you and the Baron, his head hung in exhaustion and defeat. Questions about missing children and the meaning of the Baron in chains are shouted as a din of fear begins to rise.

Before you fumble over your words, a middle aged woman steps out from the crowd raising her hands to calm the crowd. Suddenly, the children from the forest approach to reunite with their parents. A few moments of joy pass before the crowd's attention turns back to the Baron. Before anyone can say anything the woman steps forward again, "We can see to him dearies. He'll find justice with us." Just as you notice the greenish tint to her skin and the yellow of her eyes, you are whisked away by thankful villagers to celebrate the safe return of the children. There has not been a celebration such as this in the Barony for many years.

CONCLUSION - PART B

The party kill the Baron.

As the life fades from the Baron, you see the spirits of the murdered children escape into the ether. The pool of blood shrinks to nothing and the Baron's corpse shrivels to dust.

The dark clouds have parted once you leave the keep. You find a huddled crowd of fearful villagers to whom you relay the truth of the Baron. As you recount the Baron's end, a mysterious woman steps forward to reassure you and the crowd, "All families lose someone in these dark times, and we must take care of one another. The wounds will heal over time while we keep the memory of those lost and cherish those found again. We have much work to do before we return to happy days, but let us take joy in the small victories." As those words ring out, a crowd of happy children emerge from hiding places and reunite with their families.

Amid the reunion and after the villagers give their thanks and rewards, you catch a final glimpse of the woman who came forward smiling and handing a child a large lollipop. She turns to you with a warm smile, bespectacled face, and no eyebrows before you depart.

REWARDS

Characters who take part in this adventure may earn the following:

XP Rewards

If the party overcomes any of the following encounters, add them together and divide the total amongst all characters.

Encounter	XP
Awakened Tree	450
Village Guard	25
Villager/Commoner	10
Navigate through the Forest	100 per person
Nana	1,100
The Baron	2,300

Treasure

As a reward for completing the adventure, the villagers give the party 1,000 gp.

Icon of Gore

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

As a bonus action, speak this item's command word to stab the jagged amulet into yourself and sacrifice 25% of your life total. When you do this, gain advantage on all attack rolls and an additional 3d6 on damage rolls.

At the end of every turn, this item is active you take an additional 2d4 damage.

The amulet remains active until you speak the command word with a bonus action or until you fall unconscious.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Tales from all over the world portray elderly women as vicious, ugly, and even cannibalistic figures in the form of hags; stories about The Cailleach and Baba Yaga are prime examples of these traditions casting women of all ages as a burden upon men and greater society. I always found these stories to be derisive and inaccurate in light of the emotional and physical labor women do to support our society as a whole as well as the historical origin of witches. We rarely see old women portrayed in a fantasy setting outside of these tropes, or the accurate portrayal of powerful women derided by men in fantasy worlds, and I wanted to address those themes within this adventure. I wanted to challenge the adventurers to face these stereotypes head on and come to their own conclusion on hags, their motivations, and why they are portrayed as the villains of so many fairy tales of old.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cameron Blair has been a D&D fanatic since he can remember. He has started D&D clubs and constantly starts campaigns and one shots with friends as a professional game designer/voice actor. Cameron can be reached at @Cameron_Blair32 on Twitter and by email at cameronblair@outlook.com.



Nana Grace Gristlegums

Medium fey, neutral good

Armor Class 17
Hit Points 95
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Intelligence +3, Wisdom +4
Skills Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +4, Insight +4
Senses Darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spellcasting. Nana's is a 7th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). She has the following spells prepared.

1st Level (4 slots): *charm person, witch bolt, chromatic orb*
2nd Level (3 slots): *web, hold person, crown of madness*
3rd Level (3 slots): *counterspell, lightning bolt, misty step*
4th Level (1 slots): *phantasmal killer*

Mimicry: Nana can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check. (PHB, "Classes")

Actions

Wooden spoon/Claws: Melee weapon attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13(2d8+4) bludgeoning/slashing damage

Baron Von Ewanne

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 130(+29)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saves Wisdom +4, Charisma +5
Skills Arcana +3, Deception +6
Perception +2, Insight +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. The Baron is an 11th level spellcaster. His spell casting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, spell attack bonus +6). The Baron has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips: *message, friends, prestidigitation, fire bolt, poison spray*
1st Level (4): *ray of sickness, mage armor, magic missile*
2nd Level (3): *ray of enfeeblement, suggestion, phantasmal force*
3rd Level (3): *fear, fireball, vampiric touch*
4th Level (3): *phantasmal killer, blight*
5th Level (2): *scrying, dominate person*
6th Level (1): *circle of death*

Lair. Fighting the Baron in his lair is a dangerous affair. The pool of blood is where he obtains the bulk of his power and as such he has become attuned with the dark liquid. As he fights the adventurers he will call upon the pool to help him defeat his adversaries.

Lair Actions

On an initiative count of 10 (losing initiative ties), the Baron can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the Baron can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The Baron calls upon the power within the pool of blood to cast away attackers. Emanating from the pool of blood a tidal wave cascades towards any aggressors. Each creature within 15 feet of the pool of blood must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 2d8 force damage and is pushed 10 feet away from the pool. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't pushed.
- The evil magic of the pool reaches out to the Baron to heal his wounds. The Baron heals 2d8+5 hit points.
- The pool targets a single creature and curses it with the suffering of all its victims. Every attack made against the target deals an additional 1d8 necrotic damage. A *remove curse* spell ends this effect.



Illustration by Jack Holliday



"Banshee"
Painting by Louis Le Breton

MATHAR'S TEARS

by Matthew Moynihan

Creature: *Banshee* | **Levels:** *4–5*

SYNOPSIS

In the woodland village Mathar, children are succumbing to a sleeping sickness. Pulsing lights float around town at night and some claim a banshee has visited the houses of the suffering children. The characters come to investigate the cause of this sleeping sickness, and to save the children of Mathar.

In truth, a dark cult ritual perpetrated by one set of worried parents is affecting these children, and the banshee is mercifully helping them pass to the Astral Plane. Will the party defeat the banshee and doom the town, or end the cult ritual and save future generations?

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters stumble across the small town of Mathar. Blinking orbs of light lead them through the night, or their growing renown brings a letter requesting help, or Mathar just happens to be the next town along the road. In any case, the few residents left in Mathar plea for the characters to solve the mystery and save their town.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This is an adventure for 3-5 characters of 4th to 5th level. Mathar is a sleepy town with a storied past of druidic magic due to its location at the intersection of leylines. Wooden henges are built in the area to mark places of deep magic, faerie hills, cemeteries and the like. Though Mathar is inhabited by subsistence farmers, it is ripe with magic accessible for good or evil. While in the area, the magical energy is palpable. The potential of Wild Magic Surges is present for all spellcasters.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Aveen:** A female half-elf bard, and the proprietor of the Dog and Pony Inn. As one of the few spellcasters, she has fallen under suspicion in the town
- **Grata:** An elderly female elf, and the caretaker of the local temple. She is a grave cleric and Aveen's grandmother. Their family line has cared for the town since its founding.
- **The Loclans:** A family engaging in a cult ritual to keep their ailing son alive feeding off the life force or the town via a captured banshee.
- **The Duggans:** A family enduring the side effects of the Loclan's ritual. The two father's daughter is the most recent child to suffer the sleeping sickness.
- **Marin Shalay:** The young boy who was sacrificed to initiate the banshee life stealing ritual.



CHAPTER 1 – STOPOVER IN MATHAR

MATHAR'S TROUBLES

On their way into the village, the characters are passed by two farmers with their cart. The farmers are fleeing their ancestral home before their child falls to the sleeping sickness that has afflicted all of the children of Mathar.

What the Farmers Know

- The Loclan family was the first to be affected, the Duggan the last.
- Besides those, there are only a few families left, all worried for their children's lives.
- Aveen, the innkeeper, is offering a reward if someone can solve the mystery.
- Wails and cries are heard on the air at night; some say it's a banshee.

Cries in the Night

Throughout the adventure, once the sun is down, the characters might hear wails on the winds, as if a banshee is a long way off.

The farmers suggest they go see Aveen at the Dog and Pony to hear more about it.

THE DOG AND PONY

The small farming town of Mathar rarely accommodates more than a few travelers on their way between larger cities. The only place to stay the night is The Dog and Pony Inn: a worn wooden tavern, nestled in the scraggy farmland. The tavern contains just two bedrooms.

You approach the small collection of buildings that serve as town center. A creaking, weathered sign shows "The Dog and Pony." The streets are quiet and empty, save for occasional floating lights that appear as you make your way into the inn. The inn is empty as you enter, aside from a dark-haired female half elf, reading behind the bar. She looks up, surprised to see anyone come through her doors and exclaims, "*Adventurers! Blessings be!*"

What Aveen Knows

- A month ago, a local child, Marin Shalay, disappeared from his bed in the night. That's when the lights started appearing. He was never found, and his parents left town.
- The Duggan girl, another local child, is the most recent child to fall ill.
- The Loclan boy was the first child to be afflicted and died nearly a month ago.

DEVELOPMENT

Aveen points out the Duggan and Loclan houses. As two of the few houses with any lights on, they are easy to spot.

THE DUGGAN HOUSE

A few floating orbs illuminate the wide dirt roads, and iron horseshoes adorn the tops of every doorway. As you approach the Duggan house, you hear soft voices from within.

Inside, two men, Paric and Remy (**commoners**) sit at their daughter Bridig's bedside. She appears unconscious despite her wide-open eyes. They have tried all sorts of medical and magical means of reviving their daughter and are on the verge of taking her out of the village entirely. They don't know that the children are in a suspended state of undeath and taking their bodies from the town will bind their souls as mindless specters on the material plane. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals an aura of undeath and shallow breath like death rattles. They are desperate and offer all of their limited knowledge to the party:

- One of the floating lights appeared above Bridig before she went catatonic.
- People are leaving town to escape the sleeping sickness.
- The floating lights seem to gather around the cold iron quarry, the swamp, and Bashenge.

Otherwise, they have little to offer as they've spent their savings on attempts to save Bridig. They beg the characters to save their girl.

THE LOCLAN HOUSE

> The Loclan House is quiet. Thick cloth curtains covering the windows let only the dimmest flicker of light through.

Dayin Loclan, a haggard male human **cult fanatic**, who looks like a commoner by any measure, answers the door gruffly. He explains that he doesn't trust strangers given the village's troubles and is reluctant to let the adventurers in. If they do enter the house, they find a small living area filled mostly with a table and chairs. An iron hearth takes up much of one wall, though torches fill the room with dim light. To the other side, a small hallway leads to two bedrooms. If directly asked, Dayin gives the following information:

- Just over a month ago, their son, Rian, fell ill with the sleeping sickness, and died a week later.
- Maya was stricken with grief, but once she has recovered, they plan to leave Mathar.
- He suspects Grata is too old, and perhaps improperly performed a ritual, or that the iron miners encountered some being that made a deal that gave them plentiful yields at the town's future expense. His family was one of the original mining families, though he himself made his living as a blacksmith.

Dayin is lying; his boy has not died. If asked about symptoms the boy suffered, his answers are close, but not the same as Bridig's symptoms. He mentions his son's eyes closing, or other near misses. In truth, after the child contracted a more common but incurable disease, his parents initiated an occult ritual to draw life force from the benevolent banshee who came to carry their boy's soul into the afterlife. After trapping the banshee Dayin began the ritual, not knowing it would affect the town so. Upon discovering the side effects, he hid his wife, Maya, a female human **cult fanatic**, and child away in a secret basement for the son's "protection" and has continued the imprisonment of the banshee, hoping to find a way to save his child. Maya has been staying underground caring for her son and is unaware of the adverse effects of the occult life support.

If the characters attempt to investigate the house or move towards the bedrooms, Dayin tells them to stay away from his bedroom, as his wife Maya is inside grieving the loss of their child and should not be bothered. From the entryway, a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that there seems to be no food or standard goods in the house, and that the hearth has an iron base that seems clear of any soot. Dayin ushers the characters out at his first chance.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the characters have finished their investigation, night falls, and the floating lights shine as soft beacons in the distance, guiding them to Bashenge, the iron quarry, and the swamp.

CHAPTER 2 – BEACONS IN THE NIGHT

The following are several possible areas of exploration that can be visited in any order.

A. BASHENGE

When the characters approach Bashenge, read the following aloud:

> You follow the soft pulsing lights to the south end of the main thoroughfare, approaching Bashenge. A dozen log pillars encircle a graveyard and orchard at the south end of town. Soft orbs of light float throughout. A wooden temple sits outside of the circle. An elderly female elf greets you.

Grata, the attendant, greets the characters. She offers a brief history of the henge.

ROLEPLAYING GRATA

Grata is a welcoming and kind old elf. She is very proud of the henge. She has these tidbits of wisdom to offer.

- The henges are built on the intersections of ley lines: places of power.
- This henge was built as the town was founded, and her family has served as guardians.

- The town's dead are buried within the henge's circle to aid in their passing to the planes of the afterlife.
- The orchard offers fruits used in religious ceremonies and to feed the poor.
- Grata can cast *speak with dead* as part of funeral rites.

Grata happily lets the party explore Bashenge and answers any of their questions to the best of her ability. The lights concentrate over one section of the graveyard. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the graves in that area are unmarked. Grata explains that those graves are for travelers or adventurers who came through and weren't able to receive proper rites before they died. Though she performs funeral rites and tends the orchard, there are no rituals or spells she performs over the town.

The lights are souls trapped without proper rites in Mathar. Unknown travelers, the lost children, and any other unclaimed souls have turned to will-'o-wisps.

Bashenge

The local region prizes druidism, and worship revolves around nature filled areas. Small wooden "henges" are built on leylines and around faerie hills. Bashenge is the local holy place, graveyard, and orchard.

B. Iron Quarry

When the characters approach the quarry, read the following aloud:

> Soft light illuminates a meteoric crater northeast of Mathar. A path leads down into a quarry, with a small mining and smelting camp, unused and in disrepair.

Initially, the quarry is unremarkable except for the lights floating in its midst. The lights do not float as freely as they do elsewhere, but are more rigid as if trapped. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that though the quarry hasn't been mined in a generation, the ground is littered with the bones of adventurers or innocent passers-by. These sad souls perished at the mandibles and teeth of **rust monsters** that have overtaken the area after the quarry closed.

Any level of investigation reveals that iron was mined and smelted here within the last two months and attracts the attention of 1d6+1 **rust monsters** which hungrily come for the characters' weapons and armor.

Cold Iron

In Mathar iron is believed to influence supernatural spirits. This iron is used to make tools, weapons, the horseshoes found around Mathar, and arcane items for warding off and trapping supernatural beings.

C. Abandoned Houses

Characters exploring any of the abandoned houses run into 1d3 **specters**.

D. Swamp

When the characters approach the swamp, read the following aloud:

> A trail of floating lights lead to a swamp northwest of town. The air is warm and humid. The chirping of insects fills your ears. Amidst a hum of bugs, the sounds of jaws snapping and water splashing pierce the night. Ahead of you, a crocodile leaps out of the water snapping at four floating lights.

As they approach, the **crocodile** snaps one **will-o'-wisp** causing it to extinguish. No matter how the characters engage or don't, when the crocodile dies, the will-o'-wisps attack them.

Tactics: Will-o'-wisps fight defensively, attacking whoever is closest to the water. When there is just one left, it dives below the surface to escape. The character with the highest passive Perception notices a humanoid shape in the water as the will-o'-wisp blinks out.

Lost Soul

The party can pull the body of a young boy (Marin Shalay) from the swamp amid the bones of the crocodiles' previous meals. He wears tattered, fish nibbled clothes and iron bracelets and pendant. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine or Survival) check reveals his clothes are decayed as if in water for a month,

though his body is strangely well preserved. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals necromantic runes on the iron bracelets and pendant that adorn his body. The pendant glows with a faint light. If the characters do not choose to take it, the character with the highest passive Intelligence (Religion) hears cries asking for help coming from the pendant. The pendant seems to sway toward town when held in the air and glows with a faint light.

Any character (or Grata) who casts *speak with dead* gleans more of the boy's story:

- He was taken from his bed and thrown in a bag.
- Someone muttered strange words and she watched a light leave his body and enter into an amulet.
- He has been dark, cold, and wet since a banshee visited her in the swamp, but could not touch him, and let out a heartbreaking wail.

The Banshee

For added danger or another clue, the banshee may make an introduction when the body is removed from the swamp, or the pendant removed from his neck. The banshee may just appear momentarily, may envelope a will-o'-wisp, or may flicker in, unleash her wail, and disappear back to her prison.

Development

Any combinations of realizations could drive the characters to *Chapter 3.* In particular, the characters can follow the pendant, as it grows brighter the closer they come to the Loclan house.

Chapter 3 – Forged in Iron

The pendant leads them to an empty lot adjacent to the Loclan house. A secret entrance under the iron hearth leads to an underground cavern in which the Loclans have imprisoned the banshee; the pendant is drawn to the cavern, which lays underfoot.

The front and back doors of the Loclan house are locked and can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools. They may be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Upon entering, the house is empty. The bedrooms do not contain beds, and the house is devoid of most signs of inhabitance. Only a few mining tools can be found in a storage barrel. The pendant pulls and glows toward the iron hearth. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a circular plate on either side of the hearth with two indentations approximately three inches apart. Searching the hearth reveals an inscription: "*Footfalls forged in iron lead the way, luck or no, keep sprits held away*." The iron horse shoes found above Mathar's doors fit the indentations and can be turned as keys. This shifts the iron hearth and allows it to be pushed aside revealing a dark descending staircase.

If the characters picked the locks to enter the house, proceed to "Part A." If they forced their way in, proceed to "Part B."

The Hidden Chamber

Part A

As the characters descend the staircase, they enter a cold earthen tunnel. Torchlight flickers from a room thirty feet down the tunnel. Soft chanting echoes down the hall.

> Readaloud: As you approach you hear a young boy's voice. "*Mama?*" The young boy is shushed, and the chanting continues.

Inside the room, the Loclan's have made a makeshift home. The beds have been moved down and barrels of food and water line the walls. A feverish boy, Rian, lies in bed. Maya and Dayin Loclan stand in the middle of the room performing a ritual. Dayin wears an iron circlet. A circular iron plate is set in the dirt floor and covered in lightly glowing runes. As they complete the ritual, the runes flare up, and a banshee appears above the iron plate. Flickering motes of light begin to siphon from the banshee's form and into Rian's body, bringing color to his cheeks.

The characters now may choose to intervene with the ritual, or they may wait until the ritual is complete to confront the Loclan's about the effects of their actions.

PART B

Forcing their way into the house has made their presence known to the Loclans. By the time they arrive in the cavern, the banshee has been summoned and the energy is already flowing into Rian's form.

> Readaloud: You make your way down the staircase into a dark and cool earthen hallway. Torchlight flickers in the distance thirty feet down the tunnel. There is no sound besides the occasional crackle of a fire.

When the characters enter, read the following aloud:

> A makeshift home fills the cavern before you. A young feverish boy lies in bed in the corner and stores of food and water line the walls. A human man and woman stand in the middle of the room. The man wears an iron circlet on his head. They stand before an iron plate with runes carved in it. Before you can do anything, the woman speaks.

Roleplaying Maya Loclan

- She and her husband Dayin tried for years to have a child and finally did with Rian. He is their world. When Rian fell deathly ill, they couldn't bear to lose him, so they prepared a way to trap the banshee that came to ferry him to the afterlife.
- She doesn't know that the ritual is harming the other children or that it required Marin's life to complete. Dayin did the dirty work and is the only one to leave the house, and he hasn't told her. She has been here caring for Rian for the past six months.
- If she learns the cost of her son's life, she is heartbroken but without a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, she still fights for her son's life if he is threatened.

FIGHT FOR A LIFE

For combat, Maya and Dayin use **cult fanatic** stats with 50 hp. Dayin's circlet gives him control over the banshee. Because of their continual exposure to the banshee, the Loclan's are considered immune to the banshee's Wail and Horrifying Visage.

Tactics: As soon as combat begins, Dayin summons the banshee. She immediately wails and invokes Horrifying Visage before entering initiative order. In combat, Dayin attacks aggressively. Maya immediately casts *shield of faith* on Rian and protects him.

On the banshee's turn, Dayin commands it to attack. If the iron plate is destroyed, Dayin is killed, or the circlet removed, the banshee targets Rian and embraces him.

Non-Combat Tactics: This encounter can be solved through role-playing alone, if Dayin can be kept from instigating a fight. Roleplaying is encouraged rather than just dice rolls. Maya is moved by hearing of the pain and loss the ritual has caused in the town, and distrusts Dayin if she learns of Marin's murder. Roleplaying can lead the parents to accept their son's destined fate, and Dayin frees the banshee to do her duty. Successful Charisma checks or spells like *charm person* and *calm emotions* might be keys to keeping the conflict from boiling over.

DEVELOPMENT

Once Dayin dies or the circlet is removed, the characters effectively end combat/standoff. Maya will not attack unprovoked. Without the banshee, Dayin loses confidence. Once combat is resolved, proceed to the appropriate conclusion.

CONCLUSION

PART A

If the banshee is killed, Rian can be saved, but other children in the town remain sleeping and slowly die off. The floating lights dissipate and the town is cursed forever.

PART B

If the combat is complete and the banshee survives, there are two ways to free her. Either the rune can be broken (via melee attack that hits AC 20), or one of the characters can don the circlet and free the banshee.

If the banshee is freed and Rian is alive, the banshee floats toward Rian. As she approaches, calmness washes over him. She reaches out her hand and lifts him in a loving embrace, the light of his life slips from

Rian's chest and into the banshee. She lays him down lovingly on the bed and a tear falls from her. It solidifies through the air and strikes the ground with a clear ring. While the banshee was summoned as a terrifying force of death to be held at bay, she is actually a loving guide to the destined afterlife. The *banshee tear* and iron circlet can be collected.

The banshee reaches out and touches the glowing pendant. The glow fades into her form, as Marin's soul is taken under the care of the banshee, and another *banshee tear* is shed. When the banshee's work is complete, she fades into mist and disappears, the spirit of each child holding her hands. The will-o'-wisps fade from the town, and the sleeping children wake.

About the Author

Matthew Moynihan is a Los Angeles based writer. Please contact him on twitter (@DJMattsBoneJamz) with your thoughts on this adventure, or if you'd like to play a game!

Rewards

Circlet of Telepathy

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)
Once attuned, you can communicate telepathically with an ally within a one thousand foot radius.

Banshee Tear

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)
This strange gem can be embedded in jewelry. When the wearer deals a killing blow, the *banshee tear* absorbs a small amount of life energy to charge. Once charged, if the wearer would drop to 0 hp, they drop to 1d4 hp instead. The wearer must deal a killing blow again to recharge the gem.

Aveen's Offer

Aveen gives her life savings of 400 gp and a magic item of your choice as a reward for ending the sleeping sickness.






TIER 2



Illustration by Jennifer Peig

OF WEREWOLVES AND BIRTHDAY PARTIES

by Sarah Gray Harker

Creature: *Werewolf* | **Levels:** *4–6*
CWs: *Fantastical racism and possible mob violence*

For Shane. We have not lost you, merely gained another ancestor in our queer family.

SYNOPSIS

Three nights before the full moon, the party meets Kallista Shadowspinner, a monster hunter who is slightly out of her depth with a new werewolf that has appeared in recent months. With a town out for blood, increased bandit presence in the area, a prior promise to attend a birthday party, and only days left to get to the town and then get home, she needs help finding and dealing with the werewolf. As the party travels with her, it is revealed that she is a terrible monster hunter, in the traditional sense, and is, in fact, a werewolf herself. She explains that she is hoping to help this new werewolf find equilibrium before the town does something irreversible to them. Can the party work with one werewolf, find another, help them through the full moon, and get Kallista home in time for her Wolf's birthday?

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure requires the party to stay the night at an inn in a small town where adventurers are infrequent, but not unwelcome. They should be either looking for work or needing to fill some time. To foreshadow this during a longer campaign, have shopkeepers tell them that there is a dwarven smith named Shadowspinner who may be able to craft a specific magical item that they're looking for.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

There are many forms of lycanthropy, some as inconsequential as a head cold and others lifelong conditions that can manifest at any point in one's life. Being bitten by another were-creature is the most well-known way of developing the condition and is easily cured; however, there is no cure for those born with innate lycanthropy or those whose spirits have blended with spirits of the creature they transform into. The stigma that werefolk face means that most people do not openly share their status. It's not always easy living with lycanthropy, but despite the stigma, many werefolk live average lives once they have figured out how best to live with the beings that share their souls.

The Octodurus Township recently discovered that they had a werewolf in their midst, seen briefly fleeing town after transforming and consuming a local farmer's cow. They do not know who it is, only that given the howls and shrieks in the night mean the wolf must still be in their midst. This revelation that there is a new werewolf has left the areas around the town tense, suspicious, and scared. Bandits are taking advantage of this fear and increasing their activity ambushing those who would travel in the surrounding forests.

CHAPTER 1 – PARTY PLANNING AND PARTY CRASHERS

STRANGE INVITATION

The party arrives at a local inn in time for an evening meal and meets **Kallista Shadowspinner** (refer to "Roleplaying Kallista"), a fellow traveler on her way to Octodurus Township, more commonly known as Oak's Town, on urgent business. She is a monster hunter of moderate skill and heard there is a **werewolf** in the area—she wants to handle it before the full moon in three days.

Kallista looks thoughtful as she looks you over. She says to herself, *"Yes, help wouldn't hurt. Especially if I'm going to be home in time for the birthday party."*

If asked, she says that she had promised to be home for all birthday celebrations in her family. Otherwise, Kallista offers the party 63 gp and either a *periapt of wound closure* or "something my wife made." A successful DC 25 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Insight) check — DC 10 if using the magic item hook — confirms that her wife is Nadia Shadowspinner, a dwarf and maker of magical items.

Once the party has agreed to help, she excuses herself to bed.

ROLEPLAYING KALLISTA (SHE/HER)

Kallista Shadowspinner is an even-tempered, unimpressed, half-orc, half-tiefling woman who moves with subtle, self-assured strength. She is exceedingly tall, greying, and wears sturdy but well maintained traveling clothes. She values practicality and efficiency. As a result, Kallista is not one for subterfuge, preferring direct and open communication. She has a dry sense of humor and speaks bluntly.

Kallista used to be part of an elite military unit until about ten years ago. She will not reveal why she left the military, citing a "change in perspective," and has been a monster hunter for seven years. In reality, Kallista was turned into a werewolf and fled the army. She has found a balance between the wolf and herself and now teaches recently turned monsters how to cope with their change.

Bond: I owe my life to my community, especially my wife and my Wolf.

Ideal: No one is ever past helping.

Flaw: There is a right and a wrong way of doing things, and mine is the right way.

Kallista uses the **werewolf** stat block with the following modifications:

- Uses a sword instead of a spear
- Condition cannot be cured via *greater restoration*
- Languages: Common, sign, orcish, dwarvish, infernal
- Can speak in hybrid form, but not wolf form

INTO THE WOODS

En route to Oak's Town, the party should make a plan with Kallista for handling the werewolf. In the course of this conversation, establish that she isn't a good monster hunter, namely that Kallista:

- does not have a silvered weapon or similar specific tools
- doesn't know how to undo lycanthrophy
- frowns at every mention of killing the werewolf
- is more worried about the threat of the townsfolk than the werewolf themself

If the characters confront her about being unprepared, Kallista argues she is prepared. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that she's telling the truth AND doesn't have proper supplies for a traditional monster hunt.

AMBUSH

When the party starts to understand she is not the best monster hunter, through conversation or a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, attack them with a group of five to eight **bandits** and one **veteran**.

During this fight, describe that Kallista is struggling with something internally, and that the blows don't seem to be affecting her as much as they should. This fight should be a struggle, but not deadly.

When the first party member makes death saving throws or when the entire party is roughly at half health, regardless of Kallista's initiative order, read:



There is a loud, horrible cry from Kallista as her sword is knocked from her hand. *"Enough. We fight."* Then there is the sound of ripping as long claws start to grow. She swipes at her assailant and there is the noise of cloth tearing. She swipes again, and fur can now be seen in the rends in her shirt.

When the fight ends, read:

As the last enemy falls, the form of Kallista turns slowly to face the party, her claws slick with blood. Very slowly her face spreads into a grin, bearing sharp fangs. She takes a slow step forward and then she says in a gravelly voice, *"It's my birthday soon."*

Then she blinks a few times and her form condenses until there is just a woman, her clothes a bit tattered, standing in front of you.

Once the dust has settled, Kallista explains the following:

- She is a werewolf, having caught incurable lycanthropy ten years ago while serving in the military. When faced with her own death as a result, she fled.
- She and the Wolf are two relatively distinct beings and they view the Wolf as being akin to a wolf spirit. Their relationship was originally quite unstable, but thanks to Kallista's wife, they have learned to live in harmony after doing a lot of interpersonal work to find common ground.
- It is the Wolf's birthday party that she's promised to attend. As it is their 10th anniversary, the Wolf wants to celebrate with their family.
- She has no intention of killing this new werewolf. Instead, she wants to help them find the balance and stability she and her wolf have found, which most likely involves the werewolf coming to live with her.
- She needs help managing the townsfolk and figuring out who the werewolf is.
- She has no solid plan as to how to do this, but in her experience, being treated as normally as possible—such as being called by her full name and being told to put her clothes back on—has helped her snap back to herself.
- She does not want to tell the townsfolk that they are here to 'monster hunt' in hopes to not scare the werewolf.

If the party asks for more compensation, Kallista offers another magical item. If wanted, she can be persuaded with a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check to offer a custom item made by her wife or 250 gp. DMs can choose to design their own magic item or pick one from the appendices or the *DMG*.

If the party decides to attack Kallista or hunt the werewolf, Kallista flees and continues on her mission. Should the party continue to the village, they find her reasoning with the werewolf on the night of the full moon. More details in *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3*.

ROLEPLAYING THE WOLF (THEY/THEM):

Ferocious, efficient, and exceedingly literal, the Wolf's sheer strength and power are only limited by the fact that, ultimately, they are only a very scary, fairly goofy dog. They are inept with most social situations and unaware that they are terrifying.

DEVELOPMENT

They arrive in Oak's Town, either to help Kallista identify the new werewolf or to kill two werewolves.

CHAPTER 2 – LOCATION AND GUESTLIST

Time for the party to meet the town and find the werewolf. They have two days. Kallista investigates on her own during the first day and mentions any main suspects the party might not have met.

OAK'S TOWN

Oak's Town is a small, tight-knit community where everyone, town included, has a nickname. The people are friendly, though they warn about the "recent trouble" they've been having that they are "dealing with one way or the other." Because the town is so small, sneaking is going to be difficult but not impossible.

The townsfolk will gossip and, while most of it is unimportant, highlight the following suspects. Other, unimportant gossip may include affairs, children out of wedlock, and missing livestock. But none should be as pressing as the werewolf.

If the party has decided to go against Kallista, the town folks will mention seeing a large wolf the night before on the second day of investigating.

Honored Guests

Inchel "Crow" Vasilios (he/him) - Half Elf

Gossip:

- Crow arrived about three months ago, around the time the werewolf attacks started.
- Crow's a dashing criminal laying low for a while.
- There are strange moaning noises coming from his rooms.

Crow is a recent arrival to the town and has stayed a lot longer than expected. He's handsome, cocky, flirtatious, and finds this little town and their nicknames "charming." He spends most of his time at the local tavern telling wild tales to anyone who will listen. He deflects pointed questions with banter and is never one to deny any kind of gossip.

Crow fled his city when his relationship was discovered and his lover, a noble, shunned him. All his charm is hiding an incredible amount of pain. On the first night, he tries to seduce a character, no preference in gender(s), revealing that the noises coming from his room are a string of lovers. It is easiest to get the truth from him in a one on one interaction where he is shown compassion or tenderness. Characters can also confront him with a crumpled love letter, which they can find in his room if they succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Rose Marie "Mama" Granger (she/her) - Human

Gossip:

- Mama is having an affair with the woman who owns the general store.
- Mama's cattle have been attacked by the werewolf, but it always seems to be the best-fed cow, not just a random one.

Mama moved to Oak's Town when she got married. Now trapped in a loveless marriage, she is weary and wishes to leave with her children. To keep her family fed, she's been using the werewolf as a cover to slaughter a cow to sell and save for leaving her husband.

Helping her with chores makes her more willing to confide about how unhappy she is; however, she only admits to slaughtering cows if she is caught in the act of evaluating cows the first night, confronted with irrefutable evidence, or intimidated with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check by the party.

Abeline "Mouse" Pebblefall (she/her) - Dwarf

When introducing herself, she calls herself Abeline only to have Red, the storekeeper, call her Mouse and talk over her.

Roleplaying Abeline (she/her):

Out of respect for Abeline, the module will call her by her name. Everyone in town will call her "Mouse." Follow the party's lead when it comes to what name you use for her.

Abeline's quiet manner hides a sharp sense of humor and an even sharper mind. She's one to listen completely before coming up with a response, uses only as many words as are needed to communicate her point, and is polite to a fault. As a result, she is often talked over. Abeline is easily frustrated when she feels she is being not recognized for her thoughts and emotions, which her Wolf is latching onto and using against her. Aside from her Wolf, she is never one to use violence and would rather run away from what she can talk her way out of.

Abeline is a young dwarf with well-kept brown hair and beard. She appreciates quality items and dresses in beautifully made, though understated clothes. Her only adornment is a necklace with her late parents' wedding rings.

Bond: I try to live in a way that would make my parents proud if they could see me.
Ideal: All people, rich or poor, deserve respect.
Flaw: I would rather go along with others than make a scene.

Abeline uses the werewolf stat block with the following modifications:

- No carried weapons
- Languages: common, dwarvish, gnomish, elvish, and sign
- Can speak in hybrid form, but not wolf form

Gossip:

- About once a month, Mouse has been sneaking out of town to see a girl.
- Mouse has recently started eating meat despite being a vegetarian for years.

Abeline has lived at Oak's Town her entire life and is one of the kindest residents. Being a quiet person has earned her the nickname of Mouse, a name she resents. She's an assistant at the general store and is constantly talked over by Red.

Abeline is the werewolf. She was born with the condition, but her Wolf has been dormant until recently. After the death of her parents a few years ago, she was grateful for the help of her community as she grieved. However, as time passed, this went from helping Abeline to doing things for her, whether or not she wanted their help. She has started to resent those talking over her which has brought the Wolf out.

DEVELOPMENT

The party has selected a course of action for the night of the full moon, be that staying with their suspected werewolf, watching their house, or splitting the party to watch all three. Kallista goes along with the party's plan, reminding them she would much rather talk than fight. She quickly recognizes who is or is not a werewolf once the moon rises.

CHAPTER 3 – TWO WEREWOLVES AND A PARTY OF ADVENTURERS

MOON RISE

The energy is tense as the sun sinks down in the sky. Doors are shut tightly, windows barred, and by the time it is dark, the town is abandoned aside from a few of the town guards clutching their weapons.

As night falls, the town folks form a mob and make their way through the town. The mob consists of two **guards** and four to seven **commoners**. If the mob finds the werewolf, they attack. They can be talked down with a success on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Should a fight break out, Kallista turns into the Wolf and protects Abeline with her life.

If the party decided to kill both werewolves, Kallista is between the mob and Abeline, trying to reason with a hybrid form Abeline.

If the party does not locate the werewolf, their chosen candidate doesn't transform when the moon rises. Characters must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to realize their mistake and that they hear the yelling of a mob.

After the mob passes, they see the werewolf sneaking in the dark, trying to get out of town. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the werewolf is Abeline.

If the party manages to stay with Abeline in her home, she is not happy about it and she gets continually more ansty, especially when she hears the mob. She eventually excuses herself to the restroom. She actually leaves out the back door as she starts to transform trying to leave town, avoiding the mob.

CONFRONTATION

The werewolf is barely recognizable with the thick brown fur that is now covering her arms. She's keeping to the shadows and it is obvious that she is scared. (Mouse/Abeline) snarls, looking around for an escape.

Kallista holds out a hand that is sprouting fur as she starts to transform, saying, *"You're with friends."*

While this can turn into a fight, this confrontation should be a conversation. The party will need to address three out of four of the concerns below before she will accept help. This number will increase to all four if they do things to make her hostile or decrease to two if they do things that make her more receptive. If players are having trouble addressing these concerns in character, Kallista can be used to guide the conversation by mentioning that she has a space to figure out how to be a werewolf.

Abeline's concerns that she brings up and need addressed:

- Being able to accept her own anger and frustration
- Coming out to and being accepted by her community
- Recognition for who and what she is (name included)
- Finding space to figure out how to be a werewolf

Abeline is more receptive if adventurers:

- Call her Abeline, not Mouse
- Help her move to a secondary location
- Divert the mob to look somewhere else
- Offer her a cloak or similar covering article of clothing

The following makes her hostile:

- Drawing attention to her
- Fighting her
- Asking what her parents would think

If the characters succeed at this conversation, she accepts getting help and going with Kallista.

If the characters fail, she completely transforms into a wolf and attacks for a few rounds before running off into the woods.

Development

The night passes and the werewolf situation has been managed.

Conclusion: Party Favors

If the party has convinced **Abeline** to go with **Kallista**, they leave the following day. Kallista gives them a *ring of spell storing*, a *periapt of wound closure*, and any promised gold.

> The party can travel with Kallista and Abeline to her home for a reward from her wife. If Kallista has bonded with the party, the Wolf may invite them to their birthday party; look up Wolfenoot online for inspiration.

Rewards

If the party ran off or killed the werewolves, the town is grateful though mourns the loss of 'Mouse.' They give the party 200 gp.

Adventurers gain a total of 2,200 XP for the entire adventure.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

There are many different interpretations of the werewolf myth and what it may symbolize. Often the werewolf is used as a metaphor for Man vs. the animalistic "true nature" of man. Conflict is often seen in a negative light—something that must be powered through—instead of needing to kill or cure the wolf through violence, this story embraces the conflict as part of life. This adventure reframes that view of conflict to You and Me versus the Problem—in this case, Woman and Wolf vs the Problem: Learning to Live Together. Another focus of this story is the importance of and dignity given by being seen as you define yourself. In certain variations of the werewolf mythos, saying a werewolf's true name three times will bring them back to their senses.

However, my friends and playtesters have drawn their own meanings from this adventure. Some read a trans narrative, others read this as a metaphor for mental health. I wholeheartedly embrace these other interpretations. I encourage you to come up with your own meanings while enjoying a werewolf's birthday party.

I would like to thank my friends and loved ones for stopping me from eating dice and my cat, Connor, for forcing me to sleep at a decent hour. I would also like to thank every person who has ever drawn a werewolf in a party hat, you bring me an immense amount of joy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Illustration by Arthur Rackham

THE DIVINE ORDER OF THINGS

by Jamie O'Duibhir

Creature: *Night hag* | **Level:** *5*

CWs: *Physical abuse of children (non-sexual), domestic abuse, familial murder*

SYNOPSIS

In the sleepy, logging town of Oarsberg, adventurers notice there are 'MISSING' posters everywhere. The reeve's daughter, Octavia, has been missing for a week. Septima Priscius, the town reeve's wife, believes that Octavia is still alive even though the local townsfolk are not hopeful. Septima comes from an old family and is independently wealthy of her husband. The poster offers 5,000 gp for anyone who can provide information leading to her safe return. How far are the adventurers willing to go to find Octavia? The woods beyond the marked trees are dangerous. No townsperson goes beyond its borders. Tread carefully.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Choose your hook according to the general attitude of the party.

For the heroes: Septima will seek out the party and beg them to find her daughter. She will tell them how Octavia used to be such a brave little girl, how she would dare the other children to cross the trees that marked the limits of safety for their logging crews. She was the only one who would do it.

For the mercenaries: The missing poster specifies that people interested in collecting the bounty for the safe return of Octavia Priscius should speak to the reeve's captain of the guard, Laris. Just about everyone in town can point to where the reeve lives.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For this adventure, DMs should make the party aware that while there are multiple ways it can end that not all endings will be happy or satisfying. This is a narrative-heavy adventure. Their actions can have dire consequences, not just for themselves but for the people they interact with. This adventure is about challenging traditional D&D lore and the way it villainizes gender minorities. The party may be tempted to follow D&D lore in determining their course of action, but if they take their time to investigate, they will not make an irreversible mistake. This adventure is intended to subvert the "priest is good, lawful, and upright" while propping up the hag as the true and honest soul. The priest has all the hallmarks of traditional D&D clerics, but taken to an unexplored level of consequence.

CHAPTER 1 – THE LOGGING TOWN OF OARSBERG

A quiet residence of mostly half-elves and humans, Oarsberg is a logging town situated at the base of a mountain. The town is filled with the scent of freshly cut pine, birch, and spruce. The ground is muddy with roughly-hewn wood chips creating a main drag of road so that feet and carts alike don't slip. Rain is common here and the people are dressed for it in hooded cloaks. As the party walks into town, nobody seems to pay them much attention. Immediately to the left, the party can see the lights of an inn, The Needle Inn. There are missing posters on the door and wall which include a roughly-drawn sketch of a girl with half-elven features.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Choose one of the two subheadings below as a hook based on the attitude of the party.

A MOTHER'S PLEA (FOR A PARTY OF HEROES)

As the party enters the town, read aloud:

> A figure in a gorgeously adorned black with azure trim cloak, far too beautiful for regular use in the muddy streets of Oarsberg, approaches your party. Removing the hood reveals a slender face and sharp bony features of an elf. The elf speaks in deep tones with an accent of trills, "*Newcomers, hail and welcome to Oarsberg. I am in need of your assistance.*" She takes a second to look over the party, "*You all look to be capable of handling impossible tasks... my daughter, Octavia, is missing. People of the town believe she wondered beyond the boundaries of woodcutters and was eaten by wolves, but I can't accept that unless I have proof. Make no mistake, I believe she is still alive. You are the ones who could bring her back.*"

THE MISSING POSTERS (FOR A PARTY OF MERCENARIES)

Whenever it is most convenient, as the party explores, use the following:

> You see a poster ornately lettered with large words 'MISSING' and a passably identifiable portrait of a female half-elf child. The post gives the following details: "Daughter of our beloved reeve, Decklan Heren, has gone missing. REWARD of 5,000 gold for the person or persons who provide information leading to or the safe return of Octavia Prescius. Serious inquiries for the purpose of fulfilling this search may contact the captain of the guard at the constabulary on the northwestern end of town by the reeve's estate." The post is well constructed and has a type of protective veneer to prevent destruction by the weather. You can infer by the number of these posters and the quality that whoever the reeve is, they are more than capable of paying the sum offered for the safe return.

Septima Prescius (NG female elf **noble**).
Appearance: Her eyes are radiant emerald and her soil brown hair extends just beyond the shoulders and is kept in an elaborate braid. She is tall (6'0") and slender with taut skin and sharp edges to her bone structure. As a full elf, she is distinctly inhuman with her sleek body. Her shape is impossible by human standards. She has big, femme lesbian energy.
Personality: To the point and blunt.
Desires: To be reunited with her daughter, Octavia.
Secrets: The only thing she loves about her husband, the reeve, is her daughter. She'd just as soon leave him if she hadn't alienated herself from her family by marrying him.



Laris Morningsyawn (LG male half-elf **knight**).
Appearance: A well-trimmed, ash gray beard adorns the hulking figure. His face is weathered with age and possibly some ancient battles as his left ear is pockmarked as though acid had dripped across it. Laris's ears are far less pronounced than many half-elves and age presents itself across his face implying that his elven heritage is from several generations ago. He walks with the assistance of a gnarled, walking stick, although there is no visible injury that would indicate why he favors his left leg. He wears the sunflower yellow of the town guard but bears an orange embellishment at the shoulders seeming to indicate rank.
Personality: Surly, a bit of a grump who isn't amused by much of anything.
Desires: To leave this plane for the Feywild of his ancestors where he might die with something to smile about.
Secrets: He doesn't believe Octavia is alive and thinks Lady Prescius is lost in grief such that she cannot see reality.

DEVELOPMENT

Regardless of how they received the quest to find Octavia, a group of small children will run through town screaming of wolves crossing the border. The party can track paw prints on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. The tracks are deep in the mud and lead to the forest. They encounter a pack of five **dire wolves**. If the party is making quick work of them, feel free to have a wolf howl, which calls three additional dire wolves into the fray. This encounter is included to give the party reason to head to the apothecary. After the encounter is complete, **Laris Morningsyawn** comes running to meet up with the party accompanied by two guards. Upon seeing the wolves dispatched, he recommends the party heads to the apothecary for healing as well as an assortment of potions and things. If the party doesn't need healing, Laris will mention that the children love hanging out at the apothecary because the owner gives them sweets.

CHAPTER 2 – HOSPITALITEA

The apothecary is at the northwestern edge of the town near the forest. It is a small and cozy looking hut with a warm, wood stove fire crackling. There is a sign hanging above the door that reads, "Hospitali-Tea Apothecary." The owner of the establishment, **Mrs. Nobbit (**NG female appears human but is a **night hag)** is an elderly woman with weathered skin, silver-white hair, and grey clouds over her eyes. She greets the party with a warm and sympathetic welcome, offering to dry their outer clothing by the wood stove, and pouring them each a warm cup of nettle tea. On a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check, it is clear that Mrs. Nobbit is hiding something, but not what she is hiding. On a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the character notices a faint shimmer indicating that there is some form of illusion magic surrounding Mrs. Nobbit.

MISSING?

The party notices that there are no missing posters inside the apothecary nor did they happen to see any outdoors. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that a poster once hung on the door. All that remains is a nail and scrap of the same ornate parchment. The party can purchase general supplies from Mrs. Nobbit. She has a number of sweets, treats, and fun bobbles that would be appealing to children in her shop. The shop is brimming with stuff and things, but it is peculiarly organized and neat. If the party chooses to ask Mrs. Nobbit about Octavia she will feign ignorance at first and then say,

> *"I wouldn't be too concerned about little Octavia, my dears. Many of the children come into my shop for candies and toys. They are such well-behaved little people it is hard to imagine that one of them would go missing if they wanted to be found. If you really want to know more about the children, I suggest you speak with the priest who runs the orphanage. All the children of the town play together with the orphans when they come down from the mountainside."*

See "Development" if the party should wish to investigate Mrs. Nobbit further.

THE HOME OF DIVINE ORDER FOR WAYWARD CHILDREN

The orphanage is set on a small plateau along a windy path up the mountain. The townspeople glare at the party as they make their way up, but don't say a word. On a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check on townspeople the party may speak to, they all agree that there is something sickeningly strange going on up at the orphanage. There are no lights coming from inside the building, which resembles something like a small castle or royal outpost. The grounds are overgrown with weeds and rusty metal bars reinforce the doors and windows. It is clear that no one has made the effort to maintain the exterior of the building and that it was originally something other than an orphanage.

> At the entrance, there is a sign that has three words: 'DISCIPLINE. ORDER. REFORM.' The knocker creaks and sticks when you try to use it, but eventually allows you to make a thud indicating your presence at the door. A tall, balding person answers and welcomes you inside. The interior is dark and cold. The children walk with deliberate steps through the hallway and do not look at you as you stand in the atrium.

The children never speak, run, or smile. Despite the children's reserved demeanor, Boris is quite warm and welcoming. He speaks as though he was hoping the party would drop in on the orphanage. A DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he uses this overly friendly persona to hide his inner feelings. There is no indication as to what he really feels, only that he is hiding something from the party. A DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this orphanage was previously an outpost for a military installation and later abandoned for a forward operating base several miles west of the town. A DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) reveals the patron god Treffington mentions, Troullihon, is likely either a local deity or a regional variation on one of the lawful deities from a more well-known pantheon.

Boris Treffington (LN male human **gladiator**).
Appearance: Boris is a balding human man of lanky stature in neatly kept robes indicating his priestly calling. He appears to be healthy and fit despite his gaunt facial features and deep-set green eyes.
Personality: Stern and abrupt.
Desires: To maintain order and total discipline within the orphanage.
Secrets: Doesn't seem comfortable with the party's presence and does not want to show them around the orphange due to the torture chamber in the basement where he imposes his brand of discipline, order, and reform.

See "Development" if the party should wish to investigate the orphanage further.

DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Nobbit: The party may decide to investigate further into Mrs. Nobbit. Asking the townspeople about her reveals nothing of consequence. They all report that she is a lovely lady who has been in town for the last ten years. No one knows where she lives though. The party may wish to follow her on her way home, which leads them into the forest and to a large and dilapidated cottage. (See *Chapter 3: Mrs. Nobbit's Cottage*.)

Orphanage: The party may decide to further investigate the orphanage in which case they need to divert Boris Treffington's attention or otherwise detain them while others explore. (See *Chapter 3: The Orphanage Basement*.)

CHAPTER 3 – CONFRONTING THE TRUTH

At this time, the party has committed themselves to a certain line of investigation. They may choose to investigate Mrs. Nobbit, the orphanage, or both. The following outlines what the party finds with each line of investigation.

MRS. NOBBIT'S COTTAGE

The party may choose to follow Mrs. Nobbit back to her cottage half a mile into the woods. No wolves or other dangers present themselves as they follow her. The cottage is rather large for a single, old woman; it looks large enough for four or five times the amount of people. It bears the mark of weather and, despite being run down, looks to be an inviting place. The party discovers that the front door is not locked. They enter to find that the kitchen is filled with cooking implements all cleaned and ready to be used. They hear Mrs. Nobbit's voice from what appears to be the living room, but do not see her immediately. As they approach, they see what appear to be rudimentary desks and children sitting at them one of whom is clearly Octavia. When they enter the living room, the party sees a chalkboard with words and definitions scrawled neatly across. A blue hag stands looming in front of the board writing something.

"*Welcome,*" says the hag in Mrs. Nobbit's voice. "*As you can see, I was just in the middle of a lesson with the children. I can assure you that there is no danger, except perhaps—*" The hag turns around to face the children who seem unfazed by her ghastly appearance, "*the 40 lines of parchment that demonstrate your knowledge of our town's history. Due by sundown two days from now. Supper will be ready in an hour. You may go now, children.*"

If the party chooses to enter conflict with Mrs. Nobbit, she has the same stats as a **night hag**. If the party decides to make an effort to try to understand the situation, Mrs. Nobbit explains that she has been smuggling children out of the orphanage after the children showed up to her shop with bruises under the sleeves of their shirts. Octavia came to her after hearing from the other orphan children that Mrs. Nobbit has a safe place she could go to escape her father's drunken rage. Mrs. Nobbit agrees to send Octavia home if the party swears to confront the reeve and tell Septima why Octavia left.

THE ORPHANAGE BASEMENT

If the party chooses to continue to investigate the orphanage, the party needs to get away from Boris. Characters can distract Boris on a successful DC 18 Charisma (Performance) check, detain him on a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check, or a character can sneak away on a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Failing any of the above check results in Boris realizing what the party is trying to do. He flees and the party must follow him down to the basement door which is now ajar. Upon entering the basement, Boris (**gladiator**) grabs a shield and spear off the wall.

Any characters who successfully separate themselves from Boris are noticed by the children who silently lead the characters to the basement door which is locked. The characters who encounter the door see that the door has a three-part mechanism. The first part is a combination lock requiring three numbers to unlock. Any three sequential numbers between 1-9 unlocks the first step. The second portion appears to be a thumbtack with a smudge of dried blood next to it. One character must prick their finger and place the blood on the spot where the dried smudge appears next to the tack. The third part is a circular piece that has a line running through the center. It would appear that turning it 90 degrees would align the line in the circle with the horizontal line that runs across the entire locking mechanism. If the party is stuck on what to do, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is sufficient to provide them with a hint as to the function of one step of the mechanism.

No matter how the party enter the basement, read the text in the following box.

As you carefully take steps down into the basement, you hear a rattling sound. Just as soon as your feet hit the bottom step, a series of ever-burning torches come alight revealing small cages. Some of the cages are empty, but a couple contain skeletons, and one contains a small child who is pale and sickly in appearance.

Either path to discovering the basement results in a fight with Boris who uses the **gladiator** stat block. Boris either attacks the party when the enter the basement or quickly notices that he has been tricked and engages whichever party members are with him. The sounds of the fight are easily heard by any characters in the basement.

If the party liberates the children and defeats Boris Treffington, then the children huddle around the characters, silently embracing them. One of the children hands a random character a necklace, which has an ornate bronze medallion with a *hag eye* that follows the character. The child explains that the necklace was given to them by Mrs. Nobbit as a way for her to keep an eye on the terrible things that were happening inside. Mrs. Nobbit used the medallion to decide who to get out of the orphanage next while staging horrible accidents to make it look like the child had died due to the horrific creatures living in the woods such as dire wolves.

DEVELOPMENT

After their investigation, the party returns to town to report to Septima and collect their reward. The trip back to town is uneventful.

CONCLUSION

If the party sided with Mrs. Nobbit: The party is able to return to town with little Octavia in tow. The whole town crowds around in awe. Septima thanks them all. Revealing why Octavia went missing causes Septima to banish the reeve. The townspeople appoint Septima as their new reeve.

If the party sided with Boris Treffington or simply killed Mrs. Nobbit to get Octavia back: Septima thanks the party and gives them their awards. A few months later, the party receives tragic news from a townsperson in the form of a letter that both Septima and Octavia were murdered by Decklan Heren, the reeve, in a drunken fit. If you're not incorporating the one-shot into a larger campaign, feel free to conclude the story with that.

REWARDS

Creature	XP
Dire Wolf (x5)	200
Night Hag	1,800
Gladiator	1,800

Items

5,000 gp

Hag eye (if Mrs. Nobbit survives)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thank you to my lover, spouse, and friend Nicole, who constantly encouraged me to keep writing even when my depression and anxiety were telling me to quit. Two years of flexibility, love, and trust. Here's to many more with you. Thank you to everyone in the *Uncaged* Anthology for being the wonderful humans that you are, but especially Ashley who believed in me when I had no published work and said "sure, come write with me!" Thanks to the folks have hyped up our work on social media, wrote reviews, and covered our work in the press. Thanks to my editor, you make my writing worth reading.

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Jamie O'Duibhir is an ordained minister and generally cantankerous individual. Her passions are for immersive video and tabletop gaming, environmental reclamation, ecological anarchism, prison abolition, unions for everyone, the end of crapitalism, and pizza. You can find her on twitter @irreverendjamie.



Illustration by William Bouguereau



Illustration by Wouter Florusse

TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE KNIGHT ERRORS

by Aaron King

Creature: *Night hag* | **Level:** *5* | **CWs:** *Alcohol and alcohol consumption*

SYNOPSIS

Benoite the Between spent her youth on the run. That changed when she learned to mix oneiric drinks from the dreams of pleasant nuns. Now she's in charge of The Knight Errors, a bar that serves up visions from willing sleepers alongside bizarre cocktails. Benoite gets to watch it all without being seen, her *hag eye* hanging above the barroom like a sleek, black disco ball.

But what happens when Benoite's eye is stolen? Dreamers are thrown into terror, and the hag herself is becoming more and more agitated. Can adventurers retrieve the eye before she does something she'll regret? Cursed thieves and family drama come together in "Tell Me What You Know About The Knight Errors."

ADVENTURE HOOK

After a night of strange dreams, adventurers learn of disruptions at a local tavern that serves up visions with its drinks. They're asked to recover a stolen item to calm the tavern owner, a night hag who is a conductor of dreams.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Benoite the Between is the child of a night hag and a frost giant. She spent her youth hiding from her parents' peoples and adventurers. One night, a group of nuns entered Benoite's isolated cave to seek shelter from a storm. Benoite watched them bed down and, when they slept, she entered their dreams. There, she found them drinking oneiric cocktails and singing. Realizing the joy that drinks and dreams can bring, Benoite set up a tavern.

Fur-clad waitstaff serve customers who view the happy visions of willing dreamers. Benoite watches the goings-on from her jet black *hag eye* that hangs above the bar, made content by the happiness she brings.

But when her eye is stolen and Benoite's anxiety leaks into the previously pleasant dreams, the party is tasked with retrieving it while navigating an uncommon family dynamic.

CHAPTER 1 – THE KNIGHT ERRORS

As the characters sleep, each of their dreams is interrupted by a large blue woman in seal skin with white fur trim. At 10 feet tall, thick with muscle, and with a twisted face and a missing eye, the woman is hard to miss as she stalks through background imagery, obviously looking for something. She moves from one character's dream to another until exiting the final dream through a large wooden door, seams fuzzed with frost. Above the door are the words "The Knight Errors."

There's a chance that characters have been to the tavern called The Knight Errors before. If not, they've probably heard of it. If they haven't heard of it, it's not hard to ask around. Some things they might know:

- The bar is kept chilly year round.
- Willing dreamers put their sleeping thoughts on display for the enjoyment of others.
- It's considered prestigious for politicians to view the dreams of their people or to take a further step and volunteer their own dreams for entertainment (and to prove they aren't power-hungry).

Benoite keeps invading the dreams of the characters until they decide to investigate The Knight Errors.

On entering The Knight Errors, the characters are each charged a cover of 5 gp and given cheap but clean capes for warmth. Tables are all carved from single slabs of wood, and the decor is made of intricately carved rough black stone. Permanent magical lights in shades of blue and purple have started to condense into dripping luminescence. The largest wall has thick panes of ice-veined glass that look upon comfortable

sleepers. Above each sleeper, their dreams emerge from colored smoke like fuzzily projected movies. Each sleeper is given a percentage of the door charge. Waiters in fur pass back and forth with brightly colored drinks with ice like shards of quartz.

The Dreams

The dreams on display are all pleasant and happy. Before describing them, make sure to read the room. Have you asked your players about trigger warnings? If not, keep the dreams simple: restful moments in beautiful scenery, calmly perfect musical performances, and so on. If you know your players well, feel free to branch into food, childhood games, or romantic endeavors.

While watching the dreamers, the clouds begin to buzz, and, after a moment, a crash is heard, far off as though in another room. Soon after, one or more of the party is approached by Frigid Margaret (neutral good female dragonborn **priest**), head bartender.

Margaret introduces herself and claims she resigned from the priesthood, but she still has some magical abilities. She's very calm but can turn on a stare scary enough to stop ruffians in their tracks. She's sinuous with pebble-like scales.

Margaret's a good judge of character and, having watched the party explore the bar, tailors her approach to the party's attitude. Have they done anything demonstrably greedy? Good-spirited? Community minded? In any case, Margaret asks them to track down Benoite's missing eye and offers money, magical trinkets, and/or use of The Knight Errors's dream facilities (see Rewards). She may also bring up how dangerous the eye could be in the wrong hands.

She doesn't tell the party anything about Benoite, instead asking them to track down a black orb that's key to the bar's dream chambers. The eye went missing two nights ago; no locks or windows were opened or broken, and the bar has a single notable competitor, an oneiromancer named Grandmother Shi.

Development

If the party immediately investigates Grandmother Shi, go to Chapter 2. However, they might also investigate The Knight Errors. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Investigation) check reveals that, without a doubt, no one broke in; the only thing out of place is that a number of bottles have been moved to clear space on the shelves, and those shelves could serve as a ladder to climb toward where the eye once hung.

If someone uses *detect magic*, there is a faint trail of illusory magic that can be followed. If that's done, jump to Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 – Grandmother Shi

Grandmother Shi lives in a series of sub-basements beneath a boarding house. She claims this gets her closer to the sleeping god at the center of the earth. She's easy to find, offering her services as a dream interpreter and sleep doctor.

The first floor of Grandmother Shi's is for customers: huge throw pillows embroidered with dream creatures, hanging diaphanous curtains, and the faint smell of lavender. The color scheme is a brownish purple with accents of gold and red.

Grandmother Shi (neutral female human **mage**) is middle-aged with medium brown skin. Her fingers are long and dextrous, and, while the skin of her face is lightly wrinkled and seemingly tired, her eyes are bright. She casts her spells through a pink quartz orb with worn runnels like a brain's. Her spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *shocking grasp, light, mage hand, mending*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, sleep, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion, locate object*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, vampiric touch, remove curse, bestow curse*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *dream*

If the party mentions The Knight Errors or describes the eye, Shi immediately asks if they know about Benoite. Whether they do or not, Shi speaks to Benoite's hag/giant heritage; Shi believes that Benoite is a liar who is plotting something dangerous.

However, Shi wasn't involved in the robbery. That someone else has stolen the eye worries her. If the

party agrees to bring the eye to her instead of Benoite, Shi agrees to use her magic to locate it. Using a modified version of *locate object*, she causes a cloudy vision to emerge from her orb. It shows what seems to be two small spheres floating at knee height. The spheres enter The Knight Errors with a visiting customer and, much later, they float out with the eye under cover of darkness. While the eye has since moved out of Shi's range to detect, she can point the party to the strange orbs. They're in a warehouse in the city; jump to Chapter 3.

Dream Tower Break-In

Some players might want to break into Shi's tower to see if she's behind the crime. Fill the lower floors with illusory pleasures, magical traps, and a troupe of **grell** diplomats who are feeding on legally acquired dreams.

Development

Characters who play a rogue, charlatan, or criminal recognize the spheres as a kind of smoke bomb; otherwise, characters who make a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check can identify the item. These bombs are a signature of Gracelove Soldshort, a halfling thief cursed with invisibility and blindness.

Chapter 3 – The Blind Eye-Thief

Gracelove Sellsort (neutral female halfling **assassin**) tried to set up on the turf of a powerful magical mafia. When the mafia found out, they seemingly blessed her with permanent invisibility. However, the invisibility also affected her eyes, rendering her permanently blind. She only does jobs where she can know the layout of a place in advance, allowing her to grab her target and walk out.

Gracelove agreed to steal the eye in return for getting her curse removed. The removal is a slow process that has already begun—her feet are visible. She's hiding out until the process is complete, sleeping in an abandoned warehouse where she's intimately familiar with the layout. If anyone enters, she bides her time, waiting to attack until she has the advantage. Gracelove's stat block has the following changes:

- Due to her blindness, her attacks have disadvantage.
- She carries two *smoke bombs*, one-use items that can be activated with an action. Doing so creates *fog cloud* as the spell. She uses these if the party finds a way to circumvent her invisibility.

Gracelove doesn't fight to the death. If she cannot drive the party away and if she's reduced to a quarter of her health or less, she asks for respite and reveals who hired her. If the party is inclined to kill her, remind them that Gracelove has information they need and that they can deal nonlethal damage.

Development

Gracelove stole the eye for an old woman named Leonie who has set up a small campsite outside of town. Gracelove can give the party directions. If she's bribed, likes the party, or is intimidated, she mentions that she became lethargic and almost fell asleep while transporting Benoite's eye to Leonie.

Chapter 4 – A Mother's Point of View

The mastermind behind Benoite's missing eye is her mom, Leonie (**night hag**). She took the eye so she could see the world from her long-neglected daughter's point of view. She couldn't bring herself to talk to Benoite because she was afraid of rejection and anger. She just wanted to borrow it, but she fell victim to the curse of the eye and has been asleep for a full day. When the party arrives at her campsite, they find her in a tent. The eye is nowhere to be seen. Above her, a cloud of dreams roils. It's a portal; the front image of the dream is the same frost-licked doors the party saw in their dreams. The party can open the doors and enter.

In Dreams:

While in the dream realm, the characters have all their equipment, abilities, etc. They've physically entered the dreams as though traveling to another plane. If anyone is killed, however, they're expelled from the dream, appearing back in the campsite, unconscious but stable. As the party explores the dreams, have figments from their opening dreams appear randomly throughout.

The Dream Dungeon—First Room

The doors don't open into The Knight Errors. Instead, it's a cave furnished with hand-carved furniture covered in furs. Everything is too big for the party, as though they're children. Once they enter, the doors behind them are no longer there. The room's occupants are a **frost giant**, a **night hag**, and a sleeping

child. In the logic of the dream, the hag feels like the sleeping woman in the campsite, and, if the party has met Benoite, the baby reminds them of her.

The two are arguing; they've been working together to terrorize a nearby dwarven settlement, but the giant wants to return to his people, taking his child with him. The hag demands the child remain with her. The child's heritage is solely frost giant, born from the giant's now-dead wife.

On the other side of the cave is a human-sized trapdoor set in the floor. On a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check, characters can sneak into the trapdoor. On a failure, the hag and giant will unite to fight the party. Both creatures stop fighting when brought to half health or if the baby is endangered.

The hatch opens to descending steps, emerging into the top floor of a stone tower. Outside is a forest peppered with birdsong. From the top floor, the party can see a knight on a horse, lance angled at a large humanoid form on the ground.

THE DREAM DUNGEON—SECOND ROOM

If the party continues to watch, they see ice creep out from the cowering person, engulfing the knight. The horse bucks, throwing the frozen knight to the ground, and runs off. The form is Benoite, looking more hag-like than when she was a child.

If they run down and interfere, the knight (male half-red dragon **veteran**) dismounts and turns to attack them. His horse (**nightmare**) also attacks. Sometime during the fight, Benoite disappears. If the party is victorious, they can follow the sound of laughter deeper into the dream.

THE DREAM DUNGEON—THIRD ROOM

In the woods, the trees begin closing together until they form a bark-covered cave. Inside are six sleeping human nuns. Benoite, a bit older than before, is watching as dreams bubble up from the nuns, joining together above them. Inside the dream, the nuns are drinking strange cocktails, gossiping, laughing, kissing.

If the nuns are awoken, they become angry and attack with stats as **ogre zombies** and **minotaur skeletons**. However, the happy dreaming nuns emerge from the dream as miniature versions of themselves, helping to distract the attacking versions, giving the creatures disadvantage on their attacks.

Whether the nuns are attacked or are left alone, Benoite leaves through a rose-shaped opening that blooms at the back of the wooden cave.

THE DREAM DUNGEON—FINAL ROOM

At the center is a sleeping Leonie. A present-day version of Benoite sits on her mother's chest; she has both eyes. She's angry that her mother was never around, returning only to steal the eye. If a fight breaks out, Benoite is a **night hag** with the following addition: ***Multiattack:*** Benoite makes two claw attacks.

Whether dream-Benoite is defeated or talked down, she leaves her eye behind. The party is suddenly in the camp, eye in hand. Leonie can now be awoken.

Leonie appreciates being freed and admits her approach was wrong. She begs the party to install her own eye next to Benoite's when they return it, plucking it from her head. This way, she can continue to see her daughter's good works. If the party agrees, Leonie warns them of the curse on Benoite's eye, recommending they pass it around between them as they carry it back. If the party refuses, she remains silent on the topic, and she might plot future revenge on them. Regardless, she doesn't interfere with their departure.

CONCLUSION

Anyone other than Benoite who holds her eye will suffer 1d8 of "sleep damage" every ten minutes. If this amount surpasses the bearer's hp, they fall asleep as the *sleep* spell. This "damage" disappears at 8 points per hour spent not carrying the eye.

If the eye is returned to The Knight Errors, Margaret will dole out the promised reward. Each character can choose one of the following:

- An unthawable ice crystal worth 500–1,000 gp that can also be used as any gemstone spell component of equal or lesser value
- An item from Table C or D (*DMG*, "Treasure")
- An ongoing gig as a hired dreamer at The Knights Error, which can supply the character with a comfortable lifestyle (*DMG*, "Between Adventures") and a variety of quest hooks

However, if the party met Grandmother Shi, she considers the characters her enemies. She never attacks them directly but might help their enemies enter their dreams.

If the eye is given to Shi, she destroys it, absorbing its power. She becomes an on-call seer for the char-

acters, able to identify magic items, locate objects and people, and cast divinations. Once she destroys the eye, her divination spells have double the normal range. If this happens, Benoite gives up on The Knight Errors, leaving it to melt.

Lastly, if Leonie's eye is hidden in The Knight Errors, it might cause nightmares to invade the sleepers' dreams, or Leonie might be tempted to get closer to her daughter.

Reconciliation:
The conclusions above assume the party does what a single NPC asks. A party seeking solutions outside of specific requests might, for instance, try to reconcile Benoite and Leonie. This is great! However, it's much harder to solve for as a DM, especially if this adventure is being run as a one-shot. If that's the case, consider the following approach:

Ask each player for a reason Benoite and/or Leonie might have to reconcile. Once everyone's had a chance to provide one, each player that answered gets to describe a moment or scene showing the mother and daughter coming together or healing. The first scene is a year down the line, the next scene a year later, and so on. Consider offering extra scenes to players who showed kindness, empathy, or insight while interacting with Benoite and Leonie.



About the Author

Aaron King is an RPG writer in Minneapolis.

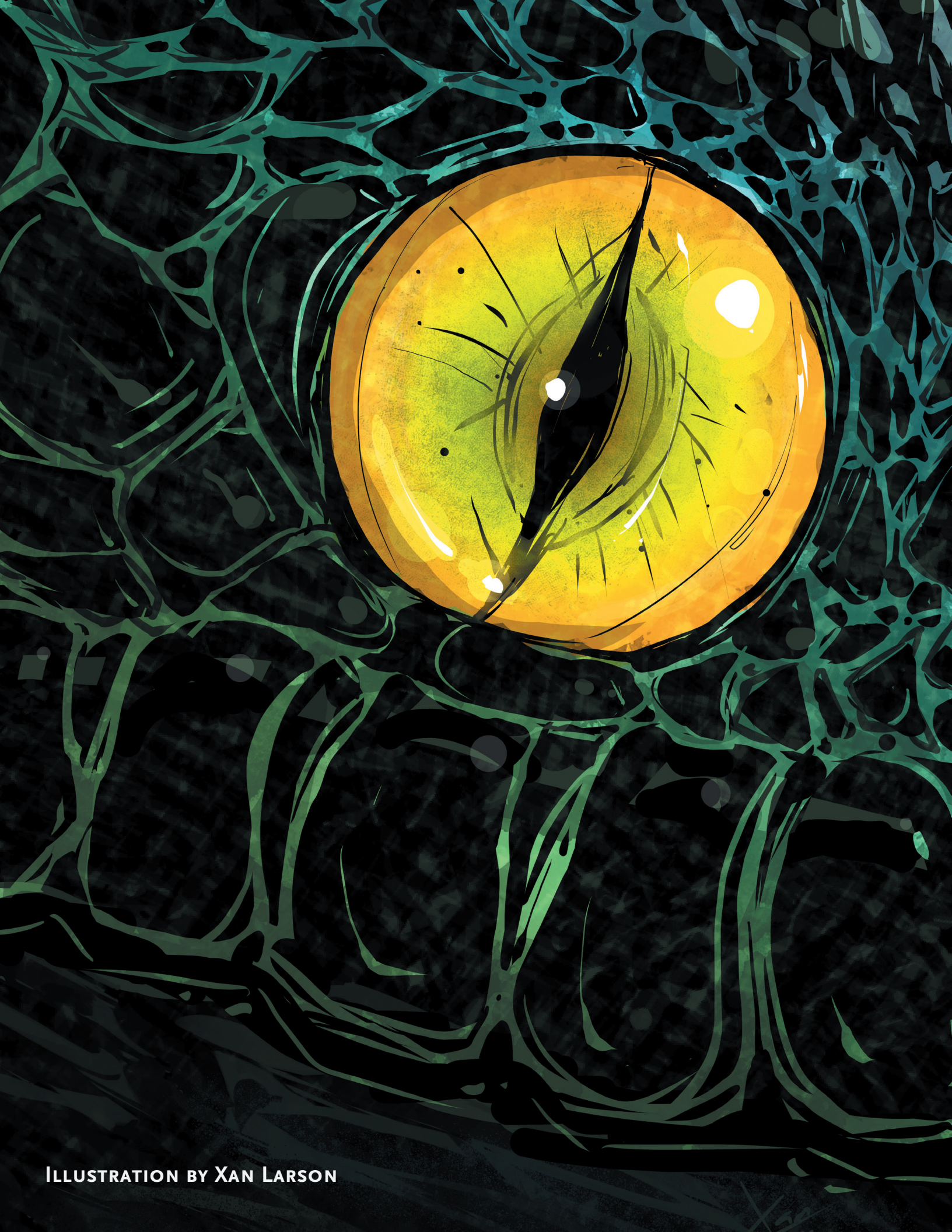

Illustration by Xan Larson

PARADISE REMADE

by Laura Dunson & Johnny Caputo

Creatures: *Eve & the Serpent* | **Levels:** *5–6*
CWs: *Sexism, violence against women, and colonialism*

SYNOPSIS

Elderlen has lost its priestess. For generations now, the village has survived famine and drought through the work of deep fertility magic—magic made incarnate by a tribute each generation. As long as the tribute remains within Elderlen, the village thrives. This generation's priestess, a young woman named Eonna, has been kidnapped by a serpent who lives in a nearby den. With the priestess gone, Elderlen begins to suffer. The adventurers are tasked to rescue Eonna so the blessing can be restored.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is for 5th level adventurers. They may be traveling near Elderlen when they encounter a skirmish involving young Jareth.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Elderlen's prosperity is rooted in an old fertility magic through the generational sacrifice of a woman who dedicates her life to the temple—never allowed to leave, have a romantic partner, or pursue personal interests. Because of this, Elderlen avoids hardship and thrives in impossible conditions. The people ascribe this blessing to the gods and are petrified of losing the blessing.

NOTEWORTHY PERSONS:

- **Eonna:** This generation's priestess; determined, just, seeks freedom.
- **Vyron:** The Temple Priest; proud, seeks power, fears life without the blessing.
- **Jareth:** A young boy who works at the Temple; eager to prove himself.
- **Drrkek:** An elderly Aarakocra librarian serving the Giant Serpent; wise and compassionate.

The dry air parches your lips as you travel the road, the region's drought catching your lungs. The nearby town of Elderlen sits atop a nearby hill.

As the road curves, you hear sounds of yelling up ahead.

A boy, 12 years old, faces a pair of rugged men, his horse frightened. One of the men pulls the boy from his horse, the other has a knife. *"You garbage Elderlens,"* the man snarls. *"What are you gonna do without your guards?"*

When approached, the men attack the party. Use **bandit** stats. After combat is finished:

The boy scrambles to his feet. *"Thanks! This never would have happened when our guards were here. But now with Eonna gone—"* He gasps. *"Wait, you're adventurers! Could you help us?!"*

The boy is Jareth and he tells them he works for Elderlen's Temple. He was tasked with riding to the nearest town to bring back some of Elderlen's warriors, who are on a goodwill mission to neighboring communities. Elderlen's priestess, Eonna, is missing, and they need people to bring her back. The temple priest, Vyron, can tell them the rest. If the party chooses to follow:

As you approach the town, you notice the crops along the path are wilted and dying. Elderlen is decorated for a festival—swaths of bright cloths and flowers decorating every door—but the flowers hang dead and withered. Terrified people dart from door to door, ignoring you and speaking in whispers.

Elderlen contains many of the common shops/craftsmen. Most people are nervous and distracted, and often choose not to offer services.

CHAPTER 1 – A LOST HOPE

Although it's difficult to keep up with Jareth as he weaves through crowds, you manage to follow until you reach the temple at the center Elderlen. A statue stands at the entrance to the temple: a rendering of a hand reaching towards the sky, as though plucking fruit from a tree. Around the hand are statues of young maidens, each with a tattoo of flowers or tree branches painted along the right side of her face.

Jareth leaves you little time to inspect the statue, however, and ushers you into the temple. The temple is brightly lit, with mosaics of blue skies and lush farmlands. A mirroring image of a hand is painted on each wall. As you enter, you see Jareth greet a middle-aged man in robes.

"Jareth," the man begins. *"Who—"*

"Vyron, these are heroes," Jareth interrupts. *"They stopped bandits. They could be the ones to rescue Eonna!"*

The man, Vyron, looks to you. *"Are you adventurers then?"*

Vyron offers to hire them. He offers 50 gp each if they return Eonna. Vyron explains:

- The nature of the fertility magic (see Background).
- Eonna hasn't been seen since last night. When the priests searched her bedchamber for her, they found a snake. The temple believes this is a sign that she was kidnapped by a nearby evil serpent.
- Jareth can show them to the serpent's den.

FINDING THE WAY

With Jareth's help, the way is simple enough. Past the farmlands into the forest, the den is about a two hour ride. Jareth tells them stories of the serpent, of how no one has seen inside the den and returned. The path slowly leads downhill until they reach thick brambles and brush.

Jareth finds a small snake, then directs the adventurers to follow snakes towards the den. He informs them that he will head to the next town to try to find Elderlen fighters and bring them back to help with the rescue. Following the snake will take them to the den.

ENTERING THE DEN

As you venture forward, the brush becomes more and more tangled until you are climbing over roots and under low branches, uncertain if this is still the way. Then the brush parts and you see a door, half-buried into the earth.

The door hosts an ornate carving of a three-headed serpent. As you approach, the middle head becomes animated and speaks in a hissing voice: *"Knowledge seekers find haven, all others must flee. To gain entrance, answer riddles three."*

Regarding the door: Each head speaks a riddle, one at a time. The adventurers can guess once per riddle. Once all three riddles have been answered, for each incorrect answer one of the heads open up and a **constrictor snake** will slither out and attack. If all three riddles are correct or when all snakes are defeated, the door opens.

The Riddles:
Iron roof, glass walls, sheds light in darkened halls. (Lantern)
Two houses for sand, though both joined in one. The more still I stand, the quicker I run. (Hourglass)
I have rivers without water, forests without trees, mountains without rocks, towns without houses. (Map)

DEVELOPMENT

The door opens. Continue to *Chapter 2*.

CHAPTER 2 – A DISCOVERED TRUTH

If a character asks an NPC about the serpent's den moving forward, they explain that this is The Temple of Knowing, a safe haven for scholars and seekers. Led by the wise Great Serpent, it is where Pilgrims come to seek knowledge or better themselves.

****Regarding Enemies:*** From this point forward, no enemy/NPC attacks unless they are attacked first or otherwise specified.

> The tunnel ahead of you is dark and cool, a stone passageway with a network of ivy hiding the ceiling from view. It is quiet except for the occasional rustling of leaves. The passage ends at an old wooden door.

With any success on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, the party notices four poisonous snakes in the ivy above them.

THE PILGRIMS' PATH

> The door opens into a large hall with pale lighting from torches. Hanging on the walls are beautiful, intricate tapestries of nature scenes, overlaid with small black script. As you enter, several of the tapestries seem to glow with a soft light. At the far end stands another wooden door with a guard on either side. They notice as you enter, but do not react.

Note on the tapestries: Each tapestry represents a different sort of homeland/landscape the pilgrims have come from (deserts, mountains, islands. etc.). When the adventurers enter, their names appear on tapestries. This is to honor the many places pilgrims hail from.

The **yuan-ti pureblood** guards seem practically bored and don't address the party unless addressed first. When addressed, the Yuan-Ti simply ask: "What do you seek?" In any combat, the Yuan-Ti attempt to diffuse violence using *suggestion*. If that fails, they fight. The following might occur:

- The party mentions Eonna and the Yuan-Ti inform the party that she is there of her own free will. The Yuan-Ti believe this wholeheartedly and will argue that no one would ever be kidnapped here.
- The party can state any sort of knowledge they seek to be accepted through the door.
- These Yuan-Ti guards are easily bored and will eventually allow for any question be considered a "pursuit of knowledge" and let them through.

THE LIBRARY

As you enter through the door, you are welcomed with warmth into a cavernous room. Mahogany shelves line the walls, covered with books, scrolls, drawings and models. Long tables host mountains of texts, but a few are flowing with food. The room is filled with gentle conversation. Creatures of incredibly diverse races fill the library, almost too many to see at once. You see elven wizards deep in study, mother and child gnomes sharing a book, tortles talking animatedly with mousefolk, a warforged meticulously crafting a model of a flying ship. Two guards stand at the end of the hall near another door.

None of the people here seem to notice your arrival, with the exception of a tall, elderly aarakocra, her head and plumage similar to an owl's. *"Welcome to the Temple of Knowing,"* she greets you warmly. *"I am Drrkek, the Head Librarian here. How may I direct your search?"*

Regarding Pilgrims: These are peace-seekers, not fighters. They are friendly, busy, and conflict-averse. The guards attempt to fight only after using *suggestion* to diffuse situations.



If the characters inquire into the Great Serpent: "The Serpent has been the caretaker of knowledge for as long as we can remember. Through its long life the Serpent collected knowledge from all over the world. This is its home, a place for others to learn in peace."

When asked about Eonna, Drrkek responds thoughtfully: "I know she's in here somewhere, let me see if I can find her for you." Drrkek leaves to find her, and while they wait the characters can engage with pilgrims. Roll a d6 to determine encounters:

d6	Event	Loot
1	Blind old tinkerer showing them parlor tricks	A trick coin
2	An overly-enthusiastic mapmaker	Map of new location (DM's choice)
3	Painter creating an elaborate masterpiece	Small bottles of paints
4	Mother and child linguistic experts	*Helm of comprehending languages*
5	Young sorcerer making potions	*Potion of healing*
6	Grumpy wizard hoarding spell scrolls	2 *spell scrolls* (rec. levels 1 & 2)

If asked about Eonna, other pilgrims direct them back to Drrkek. After two encounters:

Drrkek appears at your side. "*Yes, I found Eonna. It is time for her audience.*" She motions to the other side of the library, and you see a human woman, with a tattoo of ivy along her face, entering through the other door.

DEVELOPMENT

As the party approaches the next door:

The guards eye you cautiously. "*An audience is taking place,*" *one says grumpily.* "*The Great Serpent will never bar someone from the Garden, but you are not to disturb the audience.*" With a warning scowl, they allow you through the door.



CHAPTER 3 – A NEW KNOWLEDGE

The door opens into a lush jungle. Plants and trees twist together, blocking out any view of a ceiling, or perhaps, a sky. Brilliantly colorful flowers bloom and the chirps of birds fill the air. A pathway leads from the doorway deeper into the jungle. Peculiar patches of light glow from the ground, as though someone had buried sources of light.

When the characters approach one of the buried light sources, they find orbs rooted in the ground. When anyone touches an orb, it disintegrates into ash and they hear a voice. These orbs contain answers—truths or bits of knowledge, in a wide range of languages. Some possible phrases include: "The cure is in the water," "The Queen will survive her heir," "Strength will not prevent the war."

Regarding the Orbs: Please feel free to use this for character development. When a character approaches an orb containing their answer, the orb grows into a tall flower. See Eonna's below orb for flavor text.

As the adventurers continue they approach a clearing.

THE GREAT SERPENT

The trees part ways into a vast dome, jungle enclosing the space. The orbs in the ground glow, casting a hazy light. At the center stands Eonna. But she is not alone. Towering in front of her is the Giant Serpent, coiled with its massive head lowered to her. It is incredibly old, scales dulled with time. Between the two of them a tall flower has blossomed, a white orb glowing at its center. The priestess reaches out and touches the orb.

The orb dissolves, and a collage of images and sounds burst to life:

- Eonna as a young child with tattoos red and fresh.
- Eonna, slightly older, being scolded by Vyron, "*You know you cannot leave our lands. We will never survive without you.*"
- Meetings of men, with Eonna sitting silently. The men say, "*We must share our fortune with the other towns. They're just savages now, trying to survive on strength alone. We will help them thrive.*"
- Then a flurry of images— flashes of conflicts and battles, crying and screaming, a dozen women marked with fresh red tattoos on their faces.
- Even the moment you were sent to rescue her shows in the vision. There is fire, and the sound of clashing swords, then the vision vanishes.

Where the orb was, a lush fruit appears.

The serpent does not move but regards you calmly. Eonna faces you. "*I won't return. My people have grown arrogant and cruel—using this blessing to trap me, to force their will on others. They believe they are better, divinely enlightened. But it is time they learn to live like the rest of the world.*"

If characters ask Eonna any questions, she elaborates on the town's tyranny in trying to conquer neighboring communities. Once she has fully expressed she won't return, continue to the following:

The sounds of the jungle are pierced by loud shrieks from the entrance. Drrkek bursts into the clearing, panting and bloodied, accompanied by Yuan-Ti guards. *"We tried to stop them,"* she gasps. *"They're here to—"*

She stops with a gasp, an arrow piercing her shoulder. She falls to the ground, grasping her shoulder, breathing heavily.

The Yuan-Ti back up towards the Great Serpent, hissing with weapons bared, as warriors enter the clearing, each wearing Elderlen's symbol of the hand reaching upwards. Jareth follows behind, looking terrified and holding a small dagger.

"Thanks for clearing the way, brothers," the lead warrior calls to you.

Eonna spits in rage. *"You rats will do anything to get what you want, won't you?"*

The warrior looks at Eonna, then looks back to you, ignoring her comment. *"Let's kill these monsters together, shall we?"*

THE CHOICE

The party can choose to fight either the warriors or the Giant Serpent and Yuan-Ti:

- If they choose to fight alongside the warriors against the Yuan-Ti and Giant Serpent, use **giant constrictor snake** and two **yuan-ti pureblood** stats.
- If they choose to fight against the warriors, the Giant Serpent vanishes into the jungle. Use **knight** and two **scout** stats.
- Jareth is a **commoner** and can be convinced to not fight.
- Eonna uses a turn to heal allies using *cure wounds* (+3 for spellcasting mod).
- **Note:** If characters have avoided most conflict so far, add either an additional Yuan-Ti or an additional knight.

DEVELOPMENT

The battle is over. A side has won. Continue to Conclusion.

CONCLUSION

OPTION A: Characters help the warriors and slay the Giant Serpent.

As the battle ends, a warrior dashes towards the flower bearing its new fruit. One slice of the warrior's blade and it falls to the ground, dissolving to ash. Eonna cries out in despair and tries to flee. The warrior catches her easily and binds her arms. *"No running now,"* he says. *"It's time for you to come home."*

The warrior smiles grimly and turns to you. *"Thanks for the help. Let's get her back."*

Eonna fights each step of the way, but the warriors are brutal and cold as they drag her away. One of the warriors sees Drrkek, wounded and panting, and kills her with a final blow.

As you travel with the warriors back through the library door, you enter the scene of a massacre. Pilgrims everywhere lay bloodied and dead. The warriors seem unaffected. As you exit the Temple, Vyron awaits you with more warriors.

The priestess spits at him in rage. *"I will never stop trying to flee. As long as this magic lives, I will seek to end it."* She turns to you, enraged. *"But the blood is on your hands. What happens next is your fault."*

The priest smiles at her, then turns and hands you satchels of gold. *"Ignore her. She's just being dramatic."* The guards lead her away, and it is clear you are not welcome to return.

OPTION B: Characters help Eonna and defeat the warriors.

As the battle ends, Eonna looks to you wearily. "*Thank you... for seeing the truth.*" Eonna approaches the fruit that blossomed in the heart of the flower and, without hesitation, takes a bite.

There is a faint rumbling in the earth and Eonna's tattoos begin to glow a violent emerald green, before fading into a dusty brown shade before vanishing entirely. She reaches a hand to touch her face and sighs, relieved. "*I'm free. And finally, they will be too.*"

Two pilgrims rush into the clearing. One helps Drrkek to her feet, quickly casting a healing spell to mend wounds. "*It's time for you to go, Eonna,*" Drrkek calls out. "*More will come.*"

Eonna nods to them, then turns to you. "*I have little to give, but it is yours. Thank you for all you did.*" She hands you a pouch, then returns to the pilgrims. One begins to speak, then Eonna and the second pilgrim vanish.

The remaining pilgrim and Drrkek turn to you. "*You must leave.We must prepare.*" As you travel through the library you see many pilgrims injured but healing one another. They nod thanks to you as you pass.

You exit into the blinding light of the outside world, and before you can turn back the door is sealed, sinking deeper into the brush as though the earth itself had swallowed it whole.

REWARDS

Elderlen's Priest's Reward	50 gp each
Eonna's Thanks	40 gp, a *potion of clairvoyance*, and a pair of *sending stones*

AUTHORS' NOTES

Femininity and knowledge are both often demonized and seen as dangerous. We see this clearly in the story of the Garden of Eden where Eve chooses knowledge and freedom and is branded as evil for doing so. But Eve's actions in the Garden allowed us a greater gift than passive obedience—it allowed us the opportunity of growth, a chance to change and become the people we choose to be. So thank you, Eve, for the chance for us to be more. For inspiring so many of us who refuse to be who the world tells us we must.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Laura Geary Dunson is a mental health therapist who uses games and stories in therapy. Find her on Twitter @lauragdunson.

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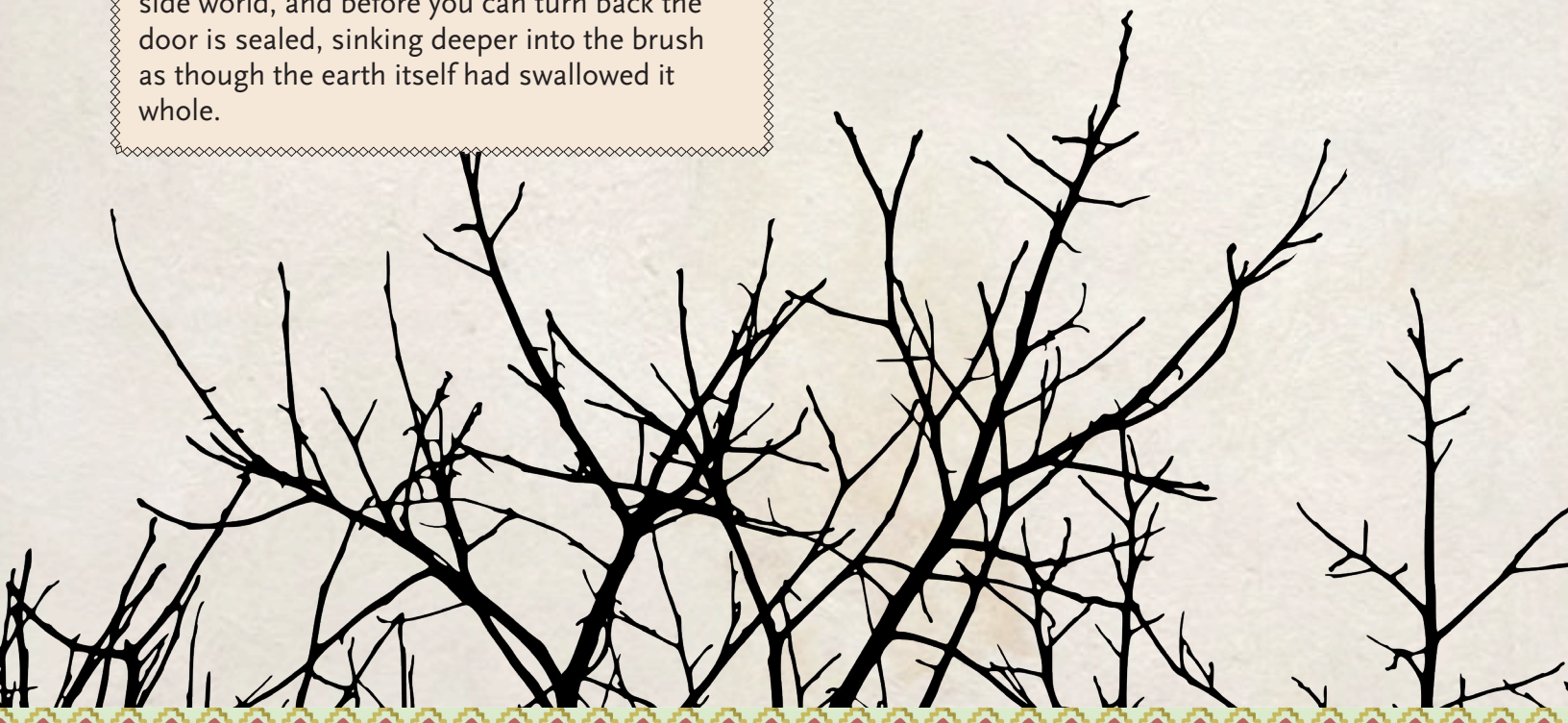



Illustration by Kayla Cline

OCEANS OF STONE

by Jo Kreil

Creature: *Medusa* | **Level:** *5–7*

SYNOPSIS

The characters save a woman who suffers under a terrible curse caused by the jealous and vindictive Umberlee. Appearances are not always what they seem, and it is up to the characters to break this curse, saving two lives in the process.

This adventure is written for four characters of 5th level. DMs can easily modify the encounters for larger groups using the encounter building rules in the *DMG*.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Characters stumble upon a veiled woman being attacked by members of the local sea god(dess)'s church. This can be either purely by accident or when following rumors of a medusa in the area; the ambush can take place on a lonely road in the countryside as well as in a city, especially a city or road along the coast. Locations along the Sword Coast, especially near Waterdeep or Baldur's Gate, work best in the Forgotten Realms. If the adventure is set in Ravenloft, Mordent or Darkon works best. For Eberron, any major city along the coast will do.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Malissa was a young maiden, the daughter of a local sailor, who would spend a lot of time down at the docks watching for her father's ship to return to port. One day, Malissa met another young woman, a burly sailor by the name of Ella. The two fell in love over a week, both finding comfort in each other's arms.

However, there was another who sought Malissa's affections. High Priest Volok of Umberlee sought Malissa for himself and was not about to see her lost to him because of some drunken sailor. Volok approached Malissa and made his intentions known, but she swiftly rejected him. Enraged at being rejected, Volok called upon Umberlee's power and placed a terrible curse on Malissa: "As I can not gaze on your face, so shall no one else ever be able to gaze on your visage without regretting your folly."

Umberlee's curse manifested itself by turning Malissa into a medusa, a snake-haired creature who turns people into stone by glancing at them. Malissa fled home and into the arms of Ella. Unfortunately, this meant that Ella was the first victim of Malissa's petrifying gaze. Volok's curse had claimed Malissa's true love.

Malissa fled once again, taking the stone statue that was Ella with her. However, worshippers of Umberlee have been in hot pursuit. Ambushing Malissa, they stole the petrified Ella and carried it away to Umberlee's temple to deliver the former sailor to Volok.

CHAPTER 1 – THE VEILED WOMAN

The characters find Malissa being attacked by several members of Umberlee's church. After the fight, they learn Malissa's true nature and the events that have led her to now.

As the characters are traveling along, they hear the sounds of fighting and a woman shouting for help. Rounding a corner, they see a woman dressed in a head to toe veil standing next to an empty handcart. Surrounding her are 4 **cultists** and a **cult fanatic**. Each of them is dressed in the blue and green robes of the Church of Umberlee and wears the sea goddess's holy symbol around their necks. They try to catch Malissa in any area attacks or go for her with their weapons unless a character is in their way; if that happens, they then attack that character. It is obvious that Malissa is

their primary target. Malissa keeps her veil on for the entire fight. Her stats are as of a normal **medusa** with the following changes:

- Malissa is Neutral Good.
- Malissa does not have access to a short bow or short sword currently.

A CRY FOR HELP

After the cultists are defeated, read the text below. Malissa reveals her true nature and the characters have a chance to learn her sad story.

As you finish off the last of the cultists, you turn to see the veiled woman hanging back. While you can't see her face, her entire body language is one of fear. Before you can do or say anything, one of the Umberlee followers springs out from his hiding place brandishing a knife and lunging at the veiled woman. She steps back, dodging the knife blow from the cultists. Lifting her veil, you are surprised to see that she is not human at all. Her hair is made up of withering and hissing snakes, her skin scaly, and her eyes that of a serpent. A medusa!

The cultist doesn't have time to scream as his flesh quickly petrifies, turning him into a stone statue. You can feel your own limbs starting to stiffen as well until the medusa drops her veil, once again covering her face. She turns to you, raising her hands in a peaceful gesture.

"I mean no harm! Please! My name is Malissa and I need your help." She pauses, waiting to see your reaction.

"I wasn't always like this. I was once a human, but a jealous man turned me into this. Now I can't even look at those I love without endangering them. The man who did this to me has kidnapped her and spirited her away. Please, can you help me?"

If the characters accept her plea for help, she tells them the whole sad tale. Malissa asks them to sneak inside the Sea Goddess's Temple, find Ella and if possible potentially find a cure for her condition. However, Ella is the more important thing in her mind and that is her number one concern. She does not have much in the way of a reward to offer, though she tells them the Church of Umberlee is known for its wealth and they are welcome to anything that is found inside. If the characters insist, she offers them her life savings which only amounts to about 20 silver pieces.

Setting 'Oceans of Stone' Outside the Forgotten Realms

This adventure is written with the Forgotten Realms in mind, where the worship of Umberlee is common and an accepted fact of life. With few, if any, changes it can easily be converted to Eberron or even Ravenloft. The adventure just assumes that there is a sea god(dess) and that it is set along the coast. Whether that be inside or near a city is up to the DM.

In Eberron, Umberlee becomes the Devourer. Few other changes need to be made. The DM might want to channel the pulp nature of Eberron and set the temple on an island in the middle of a raging sea, making an entire adventure out of getting there safely.

In Ravenloft, there is no established sea god. However, due to the entrapping nature of the Mists, Umberlee can still be used. Alternatively, the DM can instead use a Lovecraftian style cult with Umberlee being replaced by a slumbering eldritch being trapped beneath the waves. Another option is to replace Umberlee with the Eternal Order of Darkon, which believes that one day the dead will walk out of the ocean to reclaim this world from the living. This puts a more necromantic spin on this oceanic religion.

DEVELOPMENT

The location of the temple is an open and known fact. Set in the dock area of the closest major settlement, the characters can find it with little investigation. While the temple itself is open to worshippers, there are plenty of areas which are locked to the public. It is likely in one of these private areas that the statue that was Ella is located, as well as any potential cure. In fact, Ella is hidden away in the vaults of the church of Umberlee. While the characters can try the sneaky approach, they may also decide to kick open some doors and start attacking Umberlee's worshippers. Either way, there are plenty of surprises awaiting them.

CHAPTER 2 – TEMPLE OF UMBERLEE

The temple of Umberlee is a large structure, right near the ocean and the docks. Often the members of the church sell their blessings to local ships, promising that those who fail to donate to Umberlee will be destroyed in horrible storms, by massive waves, or horrible aquatic monsters who lurk beneath the surface. Many of the priests who live and work here come and go as they are often asked to come along on ocean voyages to give Umberlee's blessings, so there is no surefire way to tell how many priests the characters might encounter.

The entire temple is decorated on the outside in sea shells, sea glass and various statues showing Umberlee's might. The temple is entered through two large wooden doors, carved with magnificent waves and decorated with a variety of sea creatures. During the day, the doors are left unlocked for worshippers, but at night, the doors are locked. It requires either a DC 30 Strength check to force them open, or a DC 20 Dexterity check to unlock with thieves' tools. It is a beautiful temple, despite the furious and dark nature of the goddess herself.

1ST FLOOR

1. The Main Hall: This room is dominated by a large statue of Umberlee which presides over the room. Offerings and gifts are left at the foot of the sea goddess's statue. Around the room are three small pools, each of them filled with salt water and containing various ocean predators. Sometimes visitors throw food into these pools to feed Umberlee's chosen. This room contains three **priests** at any given time. If the characters enter during the day, there is likely to be 1d6 **commoners** here giving praise to Umberlee. If a fight breaks out here, the priests try to push the characters into one of the three small pools. At the DM's discretion, the commoners may either flee or join in on trying to sacrifice the characters to Umberlee's predators.

   In addition to the entrance, there are four other doors out of this room. Two smaller doors on the south wall flank the statue of Umberlee which lead to the priests' quarters. Another door to the east leads to the temple's private dock. A door to the west leads to a staircase leading down to the 2nd floor.
2. Pool #1: This pool contains 6 **giant crabs** which live in this pool, dining on various small fish and snails that the priests keep stocked in this pool.
3. Pool #2: This pool is home to a pair of mated **reef sharks** who circle around their home waiting for delicious things to be dropped in. Anyone who falls into this pool, including priests, finds themselves being hunted by the sharks.
4. Pool #3: This pool contains a single occupant, a **giant octopus** who is a favorite of the temple's priests.
5. Priest Quarters: Here, the temple's priests and acolytes live and sleep when they are not serving Umberlee's will. A row of beds and sea chests are in this room along with a table and chairs for the priests. At anytime during the day, there are 1d3 **priests** and 1d3 **acolytes** in this room. At night, this number doubles as most of the priests are here sleeping. Breaking in during the day means they are asked to leave, with the priests resorting to violence if the characters refuse. At night, they instantly attack, launching to the temple's defense—although stealthy characters may be able to get a drop on the sleeping clergy.
6. Private Dock: This door opens into a small private dock which opens into the ocean. The dock is enclosed in a porch which is walled off except for the side which opens into the sea. During the day time, two **guards** stand watch here. Three **acolytes** are also here fishing for the temple's cook so fresh seafood can be served for the mealtime.

   Sometimes the Temple of Umberlee hosts various evil aligned sea creatures to forge secret allegiances which can be used to cause sea-based accidents when sailors don't pay up. If the adventurers come in here during the evening, they stumble upon one such meeting. Entering at evening finds a **priest** meeting with a **sahuagin priestess** and her two **sahuagin** bodyguards. They immediately attack as soon as they see the characters are not of this temple.
7. Staircase to Second Floor: This staircase descends down into the second floor, and is lit by torches along the wall.

2ND FLOOR

8. Eating Area: The staircase descends into an eating area with tables. A small kitchen is to the west with another door on the other side of the room from the staircase. In the evening, 1d3 **priests** and 1d3 **acolytes** are having dinner here.

9. The Kitchen: A true wizard of food works here—a **mage** by the name of Godiva who works to create meals for the hungry clergy. She is not interested in dying for Umberlee and surrenders if dropped to below half her hit points. Her spellbook is also her cookbook, and is propped up on a reading stand.

10. Archpriest Volok's Chambers: This is where the Archpriest rests. The door is locked and requires a DC 15 Dexterity check to unlock with thieves' tools, although it can be opened with the key that Volok carries. The room contains a rather lovely bed, a sea chest which contains Volok's belongings (DC 15 Dexterity check to unlock with these tools) and a gorgeous suit of armor decorated with images of the ocean, clutching a decorative trident.

Volok doesn't trust his fellow worshippers so he has a few surprises in store here. The room contains a **rug of smothering** at the foot of the bed. Furthermore, the armor and trident are actually an **animated armor** and a flying trident (use **flying sword** stats). A pair of cutlasses (also **flying swords**) hang over a fireplace. Opening the sea chest reveals 100 gp and 400 sp in several coin purses.

11. Hidden Shrine & Treasury: Here, characters find a large pair of bronze doors decorated with scenes of Umberlee's greatness. Behind these doors, there is a flight of stairs which opens into a large saltwater lake below. At the center is an island on which Archpriest Volok kneels in front of an altar to Umberlee. Swimming in the water are three **hunter sharks**. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a row of platforms hidden beneath the surface of the water that the characters can walk across without having to swim. The sharks still attempt to attack the characters as long as they are in the water, though the sharks have disadvantage if the character is on the platform.

Archpriest Volok talks to the characters, telling them that yes he has the antidote, but he refuses to give it up unless Malissa promises to be his and only his. Also, the statue of Ella has been hidden somewhere safe so they can't find her. If the investigators set foot on the island, he attacks and attempts to push the characters off the island into the water for the sharks.

Archpriest Volok

Medium human, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (17 with shield of faith)
Hit Points 65
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+2)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +3
Skills Deception +3, Religion +4
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Infernal
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. Archpriest Volok is a 9th level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, resistance, sacred flame*
1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, sanctuary, shield of faith, thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *aid, blindness/deafness, hold person*
3rd level (3 slots): *gust of wind, shatter, water walk*
4th level (3 slots): *control water, freedom of movement, guardian of faith*
5th level (1 slot): *call lighting*

Actions

Trident. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d5) piercing damage, or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if wielded with two hands to make a melee weapon attack.

Treasure: Archpriest Volok has two vials on himself. One is a *potion of stone giant strength*, and the second is a *potion of remove curse*. This potion removes any one curse laid on the drinker. It can be used to reverse Malissa's affliction or save Ella. There is only one dose, so a tough decision must be made.

12. Temple Vault: The vault which contains the temple's treasures is actually hidden under the island. There are only two ways into the vault: the first is by swimming down and accessing it through an underwater vault door. The characters must avoid drowning by either holding their breath or taking some over precaution while also avoiding the sharks to enter inside. The second is a hidden entrance on the island itself, accessible by the altar. Searching the altar with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a hidden pressure piece which, if activated, swings the altar aside to reveal a staircase descending down into the vault.

Entering into the vault reveals an incredibly realistic looking statue of a young woman. This is Ella, turned into a statue accidentally by Malissa. Also present is the following: a chest containing 500 gp, another chest containing 5,000 sp, and an urn full of gems which includes 6 tourmaline each worth 100 gp.

CONCLUSION

The characters can finally make their way back to Malissa with a potential cure and hopefully with Ella as well. Transporting the statue of a person is difficult, though doable. She has a difficult decision to make, which provides an interesting roleplaying situation as the characters help the medusa explain her situation and hopefully settle down safely with Ella.

The adventures may also have made an enemy out of the Church of Umberlee, which may cause problems for them throughout the coasts of the Forgotten Realms.

Characters should earn an extra 200 XP each for rescuing Ella and another 200 XP for bringing back the *potion of remove curse*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A self-professed Anglophile, Jo will talk about queer design, transgender rights and game design to anyone who will listen, and sometimes even to those who won't. Her favorite hobbies involve rolling dice, gazing up at the stars and cursing at her gaming console. Her writing is powered by copious amounts of Roy Rogers and Lady Grey tea.





Illustration by David Markiwsky

DANGEROUS DEALINGS WITH DRYADS

by S. L. Parker

Creatures: *Dryad* | **Level:** *5*

SYNOPSIS

When a group of adventurers investigate a legend in the nearby forest, they find more than a mythical treasure. As well as the expected pixies, sprites, elves, and dryads, the adventurers encounter a hidden evil causing chaos for those within the forest. This two-to-three-hour adventure is designed for four 5th level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

For druid or elven characters: The characters know of the Oakshire Timberlands and know the woods to be full of fey creatures thanks to a hidden portal to the Feywild. For the most part, the fey in the woods are peaceful and simply turn intruders around with harmless magics. However, lately characters have heard rumors of corruption spreading from the portal and causing the fey creatures to do evil things. The character has come to the forest in order to investigate this corruption and stop it from spreading.

For other characters: A posting on a local job board sought willing adventurers to search the Oakshire Timberlands in exchange for gold (if they live to collect it). The job posting requires that adventurers assemble in The Drunken Crow tavern in the town of Faecrest on a specified day, where the employer will meet them.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The area around Faecrest has always been strange. Few people know about the portal to the Feywild deep within the Oakshire Timberlands, and the fey creatures prefer it that way. A conclave of human and elven women guard the portal. Adventurers who wander into the Oakshire Timberlands are judged on their morals and depending on the ruling, are either invited into the conclave as full-time residents, sent away, or, in the worst case, killed. Lately more deaths have occurred in the forest due to a corruption spreading through the area, turning creatures, including the dryad Ixia, into evil killing machines. Only when Ixia is defeated can the forest begin its journey back to normal.

CHAPTER 1 – THE DRUNKEN CROW

The party gathers in The Drunken Crow tavern. Ellyn the innkeeper, a blonde, half-elven woman, approaches them. She tells the party:

- She's made a bet with her friend, Avery, that the legendary treasure in the Oakshire Timberlands is real, and she wants the adventurers to go and find it. She is embarrassed to admit that this is the sole reason for the job posting.
- She will pay the adventurers 100 gp for their troubles, and if they find the treasure they're welcome to keep it.
- The treasure is in the heart of the forest.

Ellyn doesn't know what resides in the Timberlands and has been afraid of them since her mother went missing there years ago.



ROLEPLAYING ELLYN

Ellyn has lived in Faecrest her whole life. She doesn't have much worldly knowledge beyond the running of her tavern and life around Faecrest. She is easily embarrassed but always willing to lend a helping hand.

Ellyn warns the party that the Timberlands get cold this time of year and recommends they purchase some warm furs. She has sets of winter clothes for sale at 1 gp a set. If anyone in the party is not properly dressed, there are consequences discussed in *Chapter 2*.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the party has all the information they need to begin their expedition, proceed to *Chapter 2*.

CHAPTER 2 – INTO THE OAKSHIRE TIMBERLANDS

As the party sets off into the forest, read the following:

> Snow dusts the branches of the tall pine trees as well as the ground below your feet. The thick underbrush is hard to navigate through due to the near freezing weather.

TRAVERSING THE OAKSHIRE TIMBERLANDS

There is no track for the party to follow, so the party must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check to find a safe path. If the check fails, the party stumbles into a thicket of thorns and each player must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

After failing the first Wisdom (Survival) check, the party then must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check to reorient themselves. If they fail, they exit the forest near the village and must start over, this time making the check at DC 15. The party must repeat the check once more after an hour of travel. The DC resets to 13 after a success.

HARSH WEATHER

If a character doesn't have the appropriate clothing to withstand near freezing temperatures, they must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw every hour of travel (maximum of two). With each failure, the character gains one point of exhaustion.

SOUNDS IN THE WOODS

As the characters travel, they infrequently hear something moving behind them or catch a glimpse of a shape darting behind the trees around them. They are being followed by a **dryad** who is curious as to who these intruders are but has no desire to make her presence known. If the party reacts violently to her, she flees into a nearby tree and goes to warn the conclave in the middle of the forest of these intruders. If this happens, the conclave is on edge when the characters arrive. If the party treats her kindly or simply ignore her, she stays around them until they encounter the **mammoth** (see below).

FINDING THE FEY

Read the following:

> The dull trek through the trees is interrupted by the explosive sound of tree branches being smashed and torn by something large charging at incredible speeds. The sounds get louder and louder until their source is upon you. A mammoth rampages through the trees, a web of sickly, black lines turning its eyes dark and threatening. It focuses on you all and prepares to charge.

Have the party roll initiative. Roll initiative for the **mammoth** and another for a **winter eladrin** (*MToF*). The eladrin arrives on her turn, during the second round of battle. Read the following:

> As you're fending off the furious creature, a voice breaks over the sounds of fighting. *"Don't you dare kill that mammoth,"* it yells, and you see a feminine elven figure with blue skin and white hair break through the trees, weapon at the ready. *"Just knock it out!"*



If the party leaves the mammoth alive, the eladrin introduces herself as Briwena and asks the party to follow her further into the forest or leave now. If the mammoth died, she orders them to follow her.

If the party attacks Briwena, two **treants** arrive and attempt to beat the characters into submission (i.e. doing non-lethal damage to knock the characters out). Whether the characters win, lose, or surrender they are carried out of the forest and are met with hostility if they ever try to return. If they come back, the fey fight to kill. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces them to take the characters prisoner and lead them to the conclave.

ROLEPLAYING BRIWENA

Briwena is a headstrong winter eladrin who does not tolerate disrespect. She listens and cooperates with those she's neutral or friendly with, but shows no mercy to those who have wronged her.

DEVELOPMENT

When the party reaches the conclave, proceed to Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 – THE DRUID CONCLAVE YA'LUNE

After a few more hours of travel led by Briwena, the party reaches the conclave. Read the following:

> The Eladrin leads you further into the forest until you come upon a large clearing. Human and elven women stop what they're doing to look at you. Though the ground is free of growth, the sky above is covered by a canopy of interwoven tree branches. Wooden huts and fur-lined tents surround a large central tree that extends into the sky, green and leafy even in the cold weather. Pixies and sprites climb about the tree, and a group of them approach you, led by a pixie atop a violet fairy dragon.

Briwena walks straight to the oak tree.

The **pixie** is Tess, the leader of the conclave. Tess questions the characters about their earlier interactions with the fey and is especially interested in why they attacked the dryad and/or killed the mammoth. If the party spared the mammoth, proceed to 3A. If they killed it, attacked the dryad, or otherwise lost the favor of the fey, proceed to 3B.

3A. FRIENDS OF THE FEY

Tess greets the characters politely and asks why they are in the forest. After they explain, have one character make a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Reduce the DC or award advantage if multiple characters contribute positively to the conversation. If the check fails, Tess politely asks the characters to leave and never return. If they resist, Tess becomes harder to reason with. Allow the characters one more check (this time at DC 16). If they fail that one, the fey start to force them out but are interrupted (see **Helping the Fey**).

If Tess doesn't have the characters thrown out of the forest, she provides the following information:

- Some sort of corruption is spreading through the forest creatures and making them extremely aggressive.
- The corruption is spreading to the Dryads, presumably because of their deep connection with the forest itself.

- The conclave has existed for generations, run by women who flee from their abusive homes, unhappy lives, or simply wish to get away from the pressures of city life.

ROLEPLAYING TESS

Tess is a reasonable creature, as far as pixies go. She is slow to anger, which makes some unfortunate souls think they can manipulate her. She always makes them wish they hadn't.

If the characters mention being hired to search the forest, Reyna, an elven woman, approaches and asks whether Ellyn sent them. Reyna explains that Ellyn is her daughter and asks if the characters could do her a favor. If they agree, she gives them a letter addressed to Ellyn and asks them to take it to her. Reyna has 50 gp she'd be willing to part with as payment, but only offers if the characters ask for a material reward. If the characters open the letter, they find it written in elven as it talks about how Reyna is still alive within the forest and offers Ellyn the chance to join her.

After this exchange, proceed to **Helping the Fey**.

3B. FOES OF THE FEY

Tess greets the characters with anger and disdain. She argues with everything the players say and can only be appeased by a successful DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Whether the check succeeds or fails, the scene is interrupted by Sylrora's arrival (see **Helping the Fey**).

HELPING THE FEY

The meeting with Tess is interrupted by yelling. Read the following:

> Your conversation with Tess is brought to an end as an elven woman rushes into the clearing with tears streaming down her face.
>
> *"Help, please! It's Ixia! She's been corrupted!"*

The woman is Sylrora. She is hysterical, crying about how Ixia has been corrupted and needs help. Tess either asks the party for help or orders them to redeem themselves by saving Ixia.

DEVELOPMENT

When the party follows Sylrora into the forest, proceed to *Chapter 4*.

CHAPTER 4 – IXIA THE CORRUPTED

Sylrora leads the party deeper into the forest. If questioned, she reveals that she and Ixia were on a date when the dryad suddenly became violent. She says it seemed like Ixia was fighting with something inside her as one moment she was threatening Sylrora and the next telling her to run away.

While they travel, the party hears someone talking ahead. This is Ixia, having a back and forth conversation with herself. She alternates between threatening to storm into the conclave and kill everyone there, and protesting that everyone she cares about is in the conclave and she should go far away so as to not hurt them.

Read the following before the party enters the clearing:

> The volume of the argument rises as you approach a clearing. Through the break in the trees, you can see a humanoid figure pacing back and forth. Her arms are crossed over her chest as if to hold herself back and you can see sickly black veins running across her arms and up her neck, contrasting her green skin. The dryad mutters to herself in elven,
>
> *"Do it, go, kill them."*
>
> *"No, no, I can't. Sylrora's there. Tess is there. Everyone."*
>
> *"Do it, they're parasites."*
>
> *"No, I won't."*
>
> Her eyes flicker around at the trees, the color changing from a pure forest green to an unnatural blackish purple.

Ixia attacks the party as soon as she notices them. Sylrora begs the party not to kill her, before hiding in the trees away from the fight.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT

Use Adventurer's League rules to calculate the Average Party Level if the party composition is different to that described in the Introduction.

For Very Strong Parties: add two **vine blights**
For Strong Parties: add two **twig blights**
For Average Parties: Ixia (**dryad**) and one **twigblight**
For Weak Parties: remove the **twig blight**



AFTER THE FIGHT

When Ixia is reduced to 0 hit points, Sylrora comes out of hiding and rushes over to her, holding her in her lap and checking her to make sure she's alive. She asks the party to help bring her back to the conclave, so their healers can try to reverse the corruption. The party may try to ward the corruption off themselves, but they are unable to do so.

Back at the conclave, Tess is grateful to the party for letting Ixia live. If Tess asked them to help, she offers them the fabled treasure of the Oakshire Timberlands: a *mantle of spell resistance*, a *rust bag of tricks*, and three *potions of greater healing*. If they were ordered to help, Tess offers them no reward beyond leaving the forest alive, and pretends not to know about the treasure if the party asks.

Tess asks that they tell no one of the conclave in case it endangers their members or other people, especially now the corruption is spreading to more creatures than just animals.

DEVELOPMENT

With treasure or without it, the party leaves the forest and heads back to the Drunken Crow Inn.

CONCLUSION

Whether the party wishes to tell Ellyn of the treasure or not is up to them, but if they have the letter for her, she shows great appreciation, giving them an extra 50 gp for their troubles. She'll ask where the characters got it, and if they reveal the truth, she appears doubtful, but accepts the answer. If the characters lie, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check, or she does not offer the extra gold for the letter.

With the vast Oakshire Timberlands behind you, you settle into a booth in the tavern, your drinks and rooms provided free of charge by the grateful Ellyn. You rest in the tavern, but you can't help but think about what this corruption means for the hidden forest conclave and what you might face in the future.

REWARDS

Characters who complete the adventure may earn the following rewards:

Gold:

Completing Ellyn's Job posting: 100 gp
Reward from Reyna for delivering letter: 50 gp
Delivering Reyna's Letter to Ellyn: 50 gp

XP Rewards:
Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Not frightening the dryad following them in the woods:	100
Saving or killing the mammoth:	2,300
Peacefully interacting with the conclave:	100
Saving Ixia:	2,900
Delivering Reyna's letter:	100

Treasure rewards:
Cloak of Spell Resistance
Bag of Tricks (rust)
3 Potion of Greater Healing

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S. L. Parker is an aspiring novelist and passionate *D&D* Dungeon Master. She spends most of her free time writing or playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with her friends. As a feminist, she uses her writings to empower women and advocate for equality.



Ixia the Corrupted Dryad

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 60)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Elvish, Sylvan
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Spellcasting. Ixia's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). Ixia can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *druidcraft, thorn whip*
3/day each: *entangle, goodberry, plant growth, spike growth*
1/day each: *barkskin, pass without trace, shillelagh*

Legendary Resistance (1/day). If Ixia fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Ixia has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Speak with Beasts and Plants. Ixia can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language.

Tree Stride. Once on her turn, Ixia can use 10 feet of her movement to step magically into one living tree within her reach and emerge from a second living tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger.

Actions

Club. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh.

Thorn Whip. Melee Spell Attack: +6 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, and if the target is Large or smaller, the target is pulled up to 10 feet closer.

Fey Charm. The dryad targets one humanoid or beast that she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see the dryad, it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature regards the dryad as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the dryad's control, it takes the dryad's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can.

Each time the dryad or its allies do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the dryad dies, is on a different plane of existence from the target or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the dryad's Fey Charm for the next 24 hours.

The dryad can have no more than one humanoid and up to three beasts charmed at a time.

Legendary Actions

Ixia can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Ixia regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Cantrip. Ixia casts *thorn whip*.
Move. Ixia moves up to her speed without provoking opportunity attacks.
Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). Ixia casts plant growth or spike growth, assuming she has at least one use left.



Illustration by David Markiwsky

THE VILLAGE THAT WEPT

by Jessica Marcrum

Creatures: *La Llorona* | **Levels:** *5–8*
CWs: *Violence, infanticide, racial discrimination, war, colonialism*

SYNOPSIS

An expansionist army has been conquering large portions of the land. The war between the indigenous peoples and those seeking conquest is at a stalemate for now, but the fear of war hangs over everyone. Your party arrives at the small town of Contrerasan, strangely empty of indigenous people, where rumors of a "wailing woman in white" who drowns children has every family fearful of the river. Will your party end this banshee menace, or will they join her in her quest for vengeance?



ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is designed for Tier 2 characters and is optimized for 4-5 party members with an average party level (APL) of 7. The characters might be a group of wandering adventurers, refugees fleeing their own conquered village, or deserters from the invading army. If the characters are wandering mercenaries, they will be treated with open arms by the village locals. Indigenous refugees will be treated coldly, and deserters may wish to pretend to be "on leave."

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The setting is a small riverside village reminiscent of mid-16th century Mexico. The buildings are clearly made in an earlier (possibly Aztec-inspired) architectural style, with hangings and furniture that don't match the exterior. The town was clearly built by an earlier people than the current inhabitants. As most villages are full of invading colonists and indigenous people, Cotreresan stands out as an anomaly, being populated solely by colonists.

Locations of Note

- Saloon
- Place of worship
- Several small farmhouses (approx. 30)
- Hacienda in the process of being built, somewhat distanced from the town
- Garrison near the hacienda
- River
- Abandoned fishing cottages (approx. 8)

Potential NPCs to Encounter

- *Alonso the Barkeep* – (LN human male **commoner**) well-meaning but insensitive, anxious when the topic turns to the missing children.
- *Esteban the Stableboy* – (CG human male **commoner**) older than he looks, very anxious, works for Alonso but wants to be a soldier. Lost both of his younger siblings to La Llorona.
- *Sister Inès* – (NG human female **priest** Light Cleric), firmly believes the children are in a better place, regrets the captain's actions
- *Martín & Miguel* – (2 LG human male **commoners**) a farming couple who refuse to let their five children out of sight. The most recent family to lose a child.
- *Ana* – (CN human female **commoner**) former fisher, among the first to lose her children, wracked with guilt.
- *Bastía & Leonor* – (2 LN human agender & female **commoners**) unconcerned couple who firmly believe that only the children of abusive parents are abducted. They have three children. Bastía presents as agender.
- *Sgt. Elvira Ruiz* – (NG human female **bandit captain**) leader of the guards and fiercely dedicated to the conqueror's cause.
- *Captain Contreras* – (LE human male **knight**) approx. 70 years old, tall, handsome, and charismatic. Banner is red with a large golden sun.
- *La Llorona* – (**banshee**) formerly a tribal leader, long flowing hair and a white nightdress.

Chapter 1 – A Village in Mourning

The characters arrive at a solemn village near a large river. The mood is somber. If characters choose to explore, they note that there are far fewer children than they would expect to see in a town this size. Most children are kept close to their parents, instead of working in the fields as is customary.

Investigating the Village

Option One: Place of Worship

Upon arriving to the place of worship, characters may make a successful DC 15 History/Perception/Religion check to note that the building is dedicated to the religion of the invaders, though the structure of the building is much older.

Characters encounter Sister Inès praying at a large shrine covered with trinkets, toys, and sweets. She tells them that children have been vanishing for decades. Every family in the town has lost at least one child to "the wailing woman in white." If asked why she has the shrine, she explains that the living need a place to mourn while they await their "glorious reunion." She speaks negatively of the genocide and Captain Contreras.

Investigating the building, characters find books heavily denouncing "native" witchcraft. Other books are focused on prayers for the dead, putting undead to rest, and a newer pamphlet detailing how the true god(s) hate the river and all who go near it. An additional pamphlet details religious prohibitions against eating fish.

Option Two: The Saloon

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the exterior is not only much older than the interior, but the foundations were built by the indigenous population, while the interior walls and décor are newer and made to suit the styles of the invaders. Several animal heads hang on the walls along with multiple flags of the conquering country and draped red banners depicting a sigil of a golden sun. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Insight) check or asking locals at the tavern reveals the banner is that of Captain Contreras. Succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, characters find some of the pamphlets warning against fish that were also found in the religious building.

Alonso the Barkeep welcomes them. He is happy to tell the characters the history of the village, starting with colorful descriptions of the glorious early local skirmishes of the invaders against the local folk culminating with the terrible heartbreak of Captain Contreras.

Alonso tells the adventurers that after what seemed like endless battles, Captain Contreras had created a peace treaty by marrying the indigenous Chieftain's daughter. After a few years of peace, the Captain learned that he had been deceived, for who he had been told was a princess was a monstrous witch. The witch took her children to the river where she used fearsome water magics to murder them. Turning her magic on her husband and attacking him, Captain Contreras was forced to kill his once-beloved wife. To pay for the crimes of the witch and the deceit of the Chieftain, the captain had his elite guard purge the entire indigenous population.

Alonso tells this story with excitement, not realizing he may be horrifying refugee adventurers by gleefully describing a massacre of their people. If the characters decide to ask him about the missing children, he suddenly finds other customers to wait on. Convincing him to speak about this requires a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. After passing the check, he opines that the witch cursed the river.

If it is evening or later, Bastía is there. At night, they are joined by Leonor. Bastía quietly confides that in their opinion, only abusive or negligent families have lost children. They proudly tell the characters that they let their children roam free because they have nothing to fear. If characters ask about the "wailing woman in white" or the cursed river, Leonor (if there) dismisses it as nonsense made up by guilt-ridden grieving parents. Bastía admits a certain suspicion about the water being cursed, noting the decimation of the village's fishing industry.

Working in the stables is Esteban. He enthusiastically greets the characters regardless of their origin and begs them to find the reason for the disappearances. He offers the characters all the money he has: five silver pieces and a promise to perform a great service for them once he is old enough to be a soldier. Esteban mentions that the first children to disappear were from fishing families.

OPTION THREE: FARMHOUSES

Characters who explore the town find several dozen farmhouses, many of which are abandoned. With a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Martín & Miguel can be approached. If it is daytime, they are, struggling to do farm work while simultaneously keeping their children either in their arms or within arms-reach. With a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check or if the characters agree to help them on the farm, they tell the characters that almost every family has lost a child since the "founding" of the town, as well as describing the loss of their own child.

If it is daytime, the characters encounter Bastía & Leonor at their home instead of at the saloon. Characters meeting them here notice that their children play freely in the garden.

Wandering the streets, the characters meet Ana. If they offer her coin, she tells them she doesn't deserve it and attempts to continue on her way. If asked about the missing children, she falls to the ground weeping and clawing at her face. With a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the characters can discern that she was a fisher and the first to lose her children.

OPTION FOUR: GARRISON

If the characters approach the garrison or the watchtower, they encounter stiff resistance to questioning from the guards on duty. A successful DC 22 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces them to answer. Staying long enough to distract a guard will capture the attention of Sgt. Ramirez. She implies that this is a great opportunity for them to either prove they're "not like other natives," redeem themselves as deserters, or prove their mettle to a powerful army. She speaks of Captain Contreras with the utmost respect and tells the characters that if they achieve their goal, they may be rewarded by him personally. She advises the characters to start at the abandoned fishing village.

OPTION FIVE: HACIENDA

The Hacienda requires a succeeding on a DC 28 Dexterity (Stealth) check to investigate at this time. Characters must break in, evading multiple guards and Captain Contreras himself. Characters who choose to confront the Captain need to pass a DC 28 Charisma (Persuasion) check to explain why they are in his house to not be arrested on the spot. Jailbreak side quests may be utilized at DM's discretion. If characters have met with Sgt. Ramirez, they may tell Captain Contreras that they are investigating the disappearances of children. Captain Contreras tells the characters his sad story, nearly identical Alonso's version. He strongly encourages the characters to go to the river and eliminate this unholy menace.

DEVELOPMENT

Once characters have investigated as much as they would like, they should have the following information:

1. Captain Contreras married a princess/witch to end a war. This backfired.
2. A purge of every indigenous person in the village followed.
3. Nearly every family has lost at least one child to the "wailing woman in white."
4. The "wailing woman" is generally seen by the river.
5. The river is generally regarded as haunted or cursed.

If characters are missing any of this information, have Sgt. Ramirez or Esteban appear to give them guidance. By this point, it should be clear that their investigation must take them to either the fishing cottages or the river.

CHAPTER 2 – FISHERMAN'S WAIL

The fishing village is on the way to the river. Wooden huts are falling apart and the area reeks of dead fish, rot, and decay. It appears abandoned for decades. This part of the river is stagnant, overgrown with moss and reeds. No matter the weather prior, it is cloudy and ominous here.

The following monsters are found in the fishing village:

- Revenants of Infants – **crawling claw**
- Revenants of Children – **ghoul**, except elves are not immune to the DC 10 Constitution save
- River Guardian Spirit – NG **water weird**

SEARCHING THE COTTAGES

While searching through the dusty cottages, characters may make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to realize they're being watched. When they interact with a child's object (moldy doll, child-size fishing rod, etc.) Revenants of Children and Infants will appear (2 Revenants of Infants per adventurer, 1-2 Revenants of Children per player, varying with party strength). They are dripping wet, have rotted pale skin, and clearly died by drowning.

Tactics: The Revenants cannot be reasoned with and will swarm the party, crying for help while utilizing their claws. The Infants are fast and harder to hit, while the Children will hold to the legs of the party members if possible.

FIGHTING THE REVENANTS

Throughout the fight, the characters hear a distant woman wailing. Those with over a 15 passive Perception see an outline of a white dress or feel wet hair dripping on their backs.

At intervals throughout the fight (DM's may choose to make this after botched rolls), they will hear La Llorona crying. Use any or all of the following:

1. "Betrayed….we were all betrayed…"
2. "Gone…all gone…my people…"
3. "A maid to wed / a bride to bed / and children slaughtered after…"
4. "Will their tears drown you? Will your own?"

THE RIVER

To continue to the river, the party finds an abandoned boat in the fishing village and can attempt to patch it with a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. If this fails, they can return to the village to ask Sgt. Ramirez to lend them a boat, or go for a wet walk. With the shore fuzzy in the distance, the River Guardian Spirit rises in front of the characters and attempts to dissuade them from their course.

AMBUSH BY THE RIVER GUARDIAN

Tactics: The River Guardian's goal is to protect La Llorona from invaders. If the party is composed of refugees, they may attempt to convince it that they mean her no harm during the fight with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If they are mercenaries/adventurers, they will have a harder time with a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Deserters cannot convince the River Guardian and will have to defeat it to cross the water. In battle, it utilizes Constrict frequently.

DEVELOPMENT

After vanquishing the River Guardian, the river becomes placid. The moon shines brightly and a ghostly woman in a white dress rises from the water. La Llorona extends her arms to the party, tears streaming down her face, and beckons them to her.

CHAPTER 3 – A CRY FOR JUSTICE

La Llorona yearns for the justice she has been denied for decades. If characters do not immediately attack her, she tells her story and ask a favor in return.

Potential Monsters
La Llorona – **Banshee**
Captain Contreras – **Knight**
Guards/Recruits – **Guards**
Soldiers – **Veterans**
Townsfolk – **Commoners**
Children – **Commoners** with the following changes: Dex +2, AC 8, and 2 hit points

LA LLORONA'S TALE

La Llorona tells the characters that decades ago, she was a Chieftain who approached Captain Contreras with a deal: she would marry him, and his army would leave her village in peace. They married as equals, and her people became known as The Unconquered. Rumors spread that her village was inspiring other tribes to rebel. In retribution, her entire village was slaughtered in a single night. Knowing she could never overpower her husband and his troops, she took her two small children to the river and drowned them, vowing that no child of an invader would come of age on her land. As she prayed for strength to the River Guardian Spirit, she was killed by her husband.

La Llorona asks the characters to grant her peace by killing the entire village in retribution.

If characters choose to kill everyone in the village: Proceed to **Conclusion A**.

If characters attack La Llorona: Proceed to **Conclusion B**.

If characters convince La Llorona that Captain Contreras is at fault and is the only one who needs to die: They need to pass a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check or heavily role play. Proceed to "Infiltrating the Hacienda."

INFILTRATING THE HACIENDA

The party can get inside the hacienda with a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) check, a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion/Intimidation) check, or bribery of 50 gp. The hacienda has two soldier guards at every door that will have to be snuck past or fought through if the party hasn't persuaded the initial guards they belong there. Captain Contreras himself will fight nearly to the death, at which point he can be kidnapped.

DEVELOPMENT

Once Captain Contreras is kidnapped and returned to La Llorona, proceed to **Conclusion C**.

CONCLUSION A

The characters will need to kill:

- 30 soldiers and 20 recruits in the garrison
- 10 soldiers and 20 huards at the Hacienda
- 30 commoners (including Chapter 1NPCs)
- 14 children (including Esteban)
- Sister Inès
- Sgt. Ramirez
- Captain Contreras

Once the entire town has been killed, La Llorona appears, her white gown soaked in red, and express confusion that she still feels empty inside. She asks the characters if she is any better than her husband and if they are any better than the invaders. She thanks them for trying, offers them a *decanter of endless water* to aid them in their coming battles, and disappears into the mist.

CONCLUSION B

After defeating La Llorona and finding a *potion of poison* and *ring of waterwalking* on her body, the characters return to town, and receive their monetary reward from Sgt. Ramirez. A feast is thrown in their honor, Captain Contreras gives them a commendation of valor, and the families of the town offer thanks.

The player who strikes the killing blow on La Llorona is now cursed to hear her cry and feel dripping water whenever they make all future first attack moves.

CONCLUSION C

La Llorona calls Captain Contreras a traitor and a murderer, before using Corrupting Touch and drowning him. She thanks the characters, but states that her vengeance quest has been in vain and her land is irrevocably changed. She offers the characters her *necklace of prayer beads* and leaves, saying that she will offer strength to surviving natives to continue in their fight against oppression.

Upon returning to the village, the party is paid by Sgt. Ramirez, but asked to leave quietly due to the sudden disappearance of their Captain. As they leave, Esteban and village children offer them flowers.

REWARDS

XP Rewards: Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Revenants of Children (**ghoul**)	200 (each)
Revenants of Infants (**crawling claw**)	10 (each)
River Guardian Spirit (**water weird**)	700
Captain Contreras (**knight**)	700
La Llorona (**banshee**)	1,1
Sgt. Ruiz (**bandit captain**)	450
Sister Inès (**priest**)	450
Recruits/Guards (**guard**)	25 (each)
Soldiers (**veteran**)	700 (each)
Commoners/Children (**commoner**)	10 (each)

TREASURE REWARDS

Item	Value
Esteban's Life Savings	5 silver
Sgt. Ramirez's Reward	150 gold
Decanter of Endless Water Conclusion A Only	-
Curse of La Llorona: Conclusion B Only	-
Potion of Poison Conclusion B Only	-
Ring of Waterwalking Conclusion B Only	-
Letter of Commendation: Conclusion B Only	-
Necklace of Prayer Beads Conclusion C Only	-
Soldiers (Veteran)	-
Commoners/Children	-

AUTHOR'S NOTES

La Llorona is a Mexican myth of "the weeping woman in white" who drowns children. While the most persistent myth is of the scorned woman who drowned her own children and is barred from heaven until she finds them, some Catholics believe that she drowns abused children and helps them find peace in the afterlife, while others believe she is the spirit of Mexico mourning the loss of independence and lives at the hands of Cortez. Thank you to Ashley for this amazing opportunity, to Dr. Melissa Garr for all of the help with research on the cultural history of La Llorona, to my lovely friends for telling me about the project and believing in me, and for my wonderful spouse without whom none of this would be possible!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Marcrum is a lifelong fan of myths, fantasy, and gaming. A former opera singer and current licensed social worker, she has had the good fortune to GM for several fantastic groups of adventurers over the last several years. Though Chicago-raised, she currently lives in Pittsburgh with her spouse and their three fat cats. She can be reached at @Miss_Jess03 on Twitter or on her website at jessicamarcrumwrites.com.



Illustration by Franz Richard Unterberger



Illustration by Gwendy Bee

DRAGON REBORN

by Phil Allison

Creature: *Adult Bronze Dragon, Dragonborn, Medusa* | **Levels:** *5–10*

SYNOPSIS

Lady Cupriom, the local governess of Ipridias, has called for adventurers to help rid the area of a menace called the Silver Serpents. There have been attempts on her life and she needs a strong party to root out the source and stop the attacks. However, the party may find Cupriom's intent is not what she portrays.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Highly Recommended. For established parties, their renown has reached Lady Cupriom. She has asked that they come to her manor in Ipridias, where she would like to enlist their services for matters of personal protection.

Chosen Ones. For new parties, each member receives a personal invitation to a special counsel being held by Lady Cupriom of Ipridias. She has heard much about their brave endeavors and seeks their services for matters of personal protection. They can do introductions while waiting for her.

This adventure is for characters at 5th to 10th level, optimized for five level 8 characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago, when the Ipridias region was settled, a bronze dragon became its guardian. She fell prey to hags, who devised a way to separate her soul in half. They placed each half into phylacteries that were bonded to vassals; the evil half to a dragonborn, the good half to a medusa. The vassals are immortal while the halves are intact. If killed, the vassals respawn after 1d4 days. If a phylactery is destroyed, that soul-half perishes, and the other half possesses its vassal. The vassal is then all that remains of the original dragon, never complete. The vassals each wear the phylactery around their neck as an ornately mounted crystal on a golden chain.

Soon after the separation, the dragonborn tried to kill the medusa, hoping to be free of a longing desire to be whole. The medusa fled into hiding and solitude, fearing for her life.

The dragonborn took charge over Ipridias and plotted against the medusa. The medusa hid deep in the nearby foothills and won the loyalty of minions who vowed to protect and aid her.

For decades, the dragonborn has sought mercenaries to slay the medusa and return the phylactery to herself so she may destroy it. None have succeeded. She seeks help under the guise of preventing a personal threat to herself and recovering a family heirloom.

Once finding the medusa's lair, if they are willing to listen, the party finds out the truth. The medusa tasks them with discovering the solution to releasing the soul and rejoining the halves, making her whole again. The key may lie in the lair of the hags, west of Ipridias.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Lady Cunshu Cupriom** (Kun-shoo Cup-REE-ohm) – copper dragonborn. She is haughty and formal. Her words are polite, but her mannerisms curt. She requires the service of the party and no more. She rules over Ipridias almost as a tyrant. People who question her tend to end up missing.
- **Faoysn Stanus** (Fae-o-sin Stan-us) – **medusa**. She is entirely silver-white in color. The snakes on her head lay back and away from her face, like cornrows. She wears a veil to protect others. Compassionate and caring, she seeks her soul-half to be rejoined with Cupriom's so she can be complete again. She tries to aid Ipridias' people when she can.
- **Lady Aoysu Brinjao** (Ae-oi-SOO Brin-jow) – adult bronze dragon who is the combination of Cupriom and Stanus.

CHAPTER 1 – THE CHARGE

Once the party is gathered at Lady Cupriom's manor, read or paraphrase:

> The manor of Lady Cupriom sits on a small rise overlooking the town of Ipridias itself. It is spacious and luxurious, but not ostentatious. Having been let into the house, you are asked to wait in the atrium. It is a large welcoming area whose ceiling vaults a second story lined with lacquered bannisters that continue down either side of the grand staircase in front of you.
>
> After some time, a dragonborn appears at the top of the steps and begins to descend. Her teal-colored robes complement the copper in her scales. A dark gem mounted in an ornate setting hangs from a necklace down the front of her dress. It seems to glow from within. A slight smile touches the corners of her mouth.
>
> *"My apologies for keeping you waiting. Affairs of state intrude upon my time. I am the Lady Cunshu Cupriom, governess of Ipridias and its provinces."*

Cupriom asks that the party introduce themselves, nodding to each as they do so. She relays the following information to them through conversation:

- There is a group that has threatened her life called the Silver Serpents.
- They are headed by a medusa who seeks to take over the land.
- She has sent spies and assassins, but Cupriom has so far been lucky and avoided death.
- They stole a precious heirloom: a pendant very similar to the one that she wears around her neck. It is valuable to her family and she would love it returned.
- She can reward the party handsomely for the returned heirloom and proof of the death of the medusa.

If the party accepts, she provides room and board for them in the Dragon's Wing Inn in town. She assumes they would want to get an early start the next day and may need provisions this evening, so she does not want to keep them.

INN FOR THE NIGHT

The Dragon's Wing Inn is a large establishment in town run by Finrian Yul, a young gnome with light hair and colorful tattoos on her arms. Her partner is a small slender human woman named Siricia Solas, who cooks for the inn. The few patrons seem very somber and quiet. Characters can find out:

- Cupriom sent an edict that the characters have one night of free room and board.
- Cupriom runs a pretty tight town. Most residents turn in early.
- She taxes heavily but protects the town.
- If you don't cross her, you are okay.
- She has sent townspeople to retrieve her heirloom, but none have returned.

Everything is not great in Ipridias. People feel the pressure of how they are governed.

That evening or the next day, characters are able to purchase anything from the *PHB* costing up to 100 gp in town.

DEVELOPMENT

They set out the next day to find the lair.

CHAPTER 2 – THE LAIR

The medusa's lair is almost a day's journey. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check finds it somewhat easily; otherwise it takes longer, into the evening and another day.

> Ahead is a small cave opening in a boulder-strewn ravine. You might have missed it, had you not been looking for it.

The entrance is almost blocked by boulders. Two are **galeb duhr** sentries. Their tremorsense makes sneaking past impossible unless the creature is flying and invisible. If the party is detected, the sentries wait until they are 10 feet away, then stand up and ask them to state their business. They only speak Terran. They do not attack first but deal non-lethal damage in defense. If they overpower the party, they take them directly to Stanus, bound and gagged. If the party tries to pass by them, the sentries try to stop them and signal their intent to escort the party. If the party talks to them and communicate that they seek audience with Stanus, they take them to her. They make small-talk about how generous the medusa is. If the party escape into the tunnels, the sentries do not pursue.

SCOUTING THE LAIR

Stanus's lair is an old cave that she has repurposed as her hideout. She resides deep within a central cave through various tunnels. The tunnels wind and lead to other caves containing minions and some unexplored areas. If the party got in without an escort, they find themselves inside wandering around. They could have a random encounter with one or more of the following.

D8	Location/Encounter
1-2	4 **gargoyles** & 3 **basilisks**. The gargoyles owe a debt to Stanus. They do not attack first but taunt the party.
3-4	2 **ropers**. They occupy an unused side cavern.
5-6	A deva named Ghiril, in human guise, has brought counsel and hope to Stanus recently. He asks the party to talk with Stanus. He defends himself if attacked.

GUARDIANSHIP

> As the tunnel widens out ahead, you see a large stone snout protruding into the hallway. It appears to be part of a dragon carved of stone.

Just before Stanus's living area, a stone golem shaped like a dragon and called Eliase guards the entryway. If the sentries bring in the party, they are turned over to the golem, otherwise, the golem is blocking the entryway and looks expectantly at anyone approaching.

Eliase understands Common. It guides the party to Stanus if allowed but defends itself if attacked. Stanus hears any combat from within and calls out for all to stay their weapons and come in and talk.

HEARD, NOT SEEN

> The tunnel opens into a large, dimly-lit cavern. There are stone statues of humanoids, many in a pose of attack. In the middle of the cavern is a sanctorium enclosed with diaphanous drapery on all sides. A voice comes from within, *"Please, I mean no harm. I could use your help."*

Faosyn Stanus's cave measures 50 feet by 50 feet and has a 30 foot ceiling.

The party may come in attacking. If so, Stanus tries to stop them, but protects herself. If alive, Eliase and Ghiril come to Stanus's aid in combat. If Stanus dies, but the phylactery is not broken, she respawns in 1d4 days within 5 feet of the phylactery. Her body rapidly decays, falling to dust within 24 hours.

If the party agrees to talk:

- Stanus wears a veil and asks the party to come in if they wish.
- She tells the story of her split soul (see **Adventure Background**).
- Cupriom has sent adventurers after her before. Some she was able to send away, some remain as statues because they refused to give up the attack. All feared Cupriom enough to never return to her, which is why she sought outside adventurers.
- She asks if the party is willing to help her by finding the hags and possibly how to break the curse.

If the party agrees, she tells what she knows about the last location for the hags and gives them her phylactery. She plans to sneak into Ipridias with Ghiril's help to be nearby if the party is successful.

Soul Phylacteries

Each phylactery is a gem about 2 inches in diameter encased in a rectangular metal cage with intricate fretwork all around the tresses. Each one has AC 10 and 30 hit points. If it is destroyed, without properly releasing the soul (see **Riddle Solution**), that soul-half is destroyed. Cupriom's gem is darker in color, and Stanus' is lighter. Anyone directly holding a phylactery has an alignment shift. Stanus' shifts to lawful good, Cupriom's to lawful evil. Once in the jewelry box, the shift reverses.

DEVELOPMENT

Depending on the party actions, here are some possible outcomes:

- **Help Stanus.** The party searches for the hags. Proceed to **Chapter 3.**
- **Stanus dies.** The party kills Stanus, but saves the phylactery. They return to Cupriom. Stanus may respawn before they arrive. Proceed to **Chapter 4**.
- **Phylactery destroyed.** The party destroys the phylactery. Stanus collapses into dust and Cupriom immediately feels the loss. She is elated, but also empty. Proceed to **Chapter 4**.

If Stanus is killed, but the phylactery intact, you can let the party find a journal written in Draconic relaying her situation. This leads them to decide whether to help.

TREASURE

If Stanus was killed, use Scouting the Lair to get the party out. There are a few handfuls of gems and gold and other items lying around worth about 1,500 gp.

CHAPTER 3 – HAGLIDAY

It takes one to two days to find the hag's cottage. It appears abandoned, but the hags are on holiday and have left Axitare, their **erinyes**, to protect things. When the party approaches the cottage, read:

> As you approach the cottage, a winged humanoid in filigreed armor and a horned helm touches down in front of you. *"Sorry"*, he says, *"We are currently closed."*

The party has to subdue, kill, or bribe Axitare to get into the cottage. A bribe worth 300 gp suffices. His literal command was "do not let anyone in." If the party gets past him and in, he gives up the fight.

SCRIBBLE SCRABBLE

The cottage door is locked. A successful DC 15 thieves tools check, or DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check opens the door. Inside, a successful DC 16 Wisdom (perception) reveals a hidden floor panel. Underneath is a tome written in Abyssal. Some pages are missing, burnt, or blank. The others are in rhymes. One is titled, "Sundering Undone," with the following still legible:

> Bound apart for all time, but to reverse, heed this rhyme
>
> To them come a sweet release, that are suffused by a grease
>
> Two are together struck by a spark that warm the broken heart.
>
> Then by passionate, searing heat, embroiled in flame, do they meet.
>
> In the blush a hammer strike sets them both to flight.
>
> Now are freed two halves of soul, that with a boom will make whole.
>
> Within a frame are they sealed.

- While searching the cottage, a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a clay pot of fat. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a small, tarnished hammer made of solid silver. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)

check discovers a half-hidden jewelry box, and a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) reveals it is a perfect size to fit the phylacteries.

RIDDLE SOLUTION

The party needs the fat, box, and hammer. They also must have both phylacteries in their possession. With these items, the riddle can be solved when the following steps are taken:

- Place both phylacteries into the jewelry box.
- Next, pour the fat into the box.
- Set the fat on fire. It burns with a purple tinge.
- The box starts glowing bright red. Striking it at this point with the hammer causes it to explode into fragments, doing 2d6 piercing damage to anyone within 10 feet.
- The soul halves are released, any vassals present fall unconscious, mists coalesce. In a storm of power the halves merge and an adult bronze dragon forms.

If needed, the party can make Wisdom (Insight) checks to solve the riddle. If the process is done incorrectly or incompletely, any hammer strike does 2d6 damage to the struck phylactery (or both if in the box together). The phylacteries show visible signs of any damage done. The phylactery has 30 hit points, if it reaches zero it is destroyed (see **Soul Phylacteries** sidebar).

TREASURE

The hags have 800 gp in gems and coins hidden throughout the cottage. The hammer is worth 250 gp after it is used.

DEVELOPMENT

The party must return to Cupriom and somehow get her phylactery from her. Stanus should already have handed them hers.

The party must come up with a plan to get Cupriom's phylactery from her. She does not willingly hand hers over. She wants to destroy the other one, hoping to destroy that part of the soul. The party must plan to trick her or take it by force. If they attack her, she is a mage and has three **invisible stalkers** that guard and defend her.

CONCLUSION

SCENE A. AIDING STANUS

If Cupriom is subdued or killed, the party can attempt to rejoin the phylactery together. See **Riddle Solution**. As they finish the solution, or if they have problems solving it, bring in Stanus to observe or help interpret the riddle. Once rejoined, the **adult bronze dragon** Lady Aoysu Brinjao appears.

> The dragon shakes its head, then stands tall. It shimmers and transforms into a tall bronze woman with striking features, wearing armor trimmed in copper and silver. She looks at you and smiles.
>
> *"I am whole. I am reborn! My gratitude is beyond what words can express. I do not yet know all I can do, but this I can. I name you heroes to Ipridias. Honor will always be yours. Stay as long as you like, whenever you like at my expense. My manor is always open to you. You shall not pay for food or room while here. And we shall have a feast in your honor! I will right that which Cupriom sundered."*

She presents the party two purses, each containing gems worth 1,000 gp. She throws a feast for the party and the town and starts working to make reparations with the people of Ipridias.

SCENE B. STANUS KILLED

Stanus was killed and the phylactery brought to Lady Cupriom. She is very grateful to the party and stares transfixed as she receives the phylactery. She dismisses and ignores the party and a guard leads them out, giving them a pouch of gems worth 1,000 gp.

> The guard leads you out of the manor and bids you on your way. Just before he turns he says, *"I fear that now she has her heirloom, she may turn her attention more to the townsfolk."*

Scene C. Phylactery Destroyed

The broken phylactery is brought to Lady Cupriom. She has a very dark and hollow look. Her mannerisms are very enigmatic and curt. If the party begins to explain, she says, "I know," drops a purse with 1,000 gp in it, bids them good day, and leaves.

A guard leads you out. As you go, he whispers, *"She changed recently. Her mood is dour and harsher than before,as if she is empty inside. I fear for the future."* He leaves you at the gate and bids you to never return.

Rewards

Characters may earn the following rewards in this adventure:

Combat Rewards

Characters mediating their way out of a fight should receive the same or similar experience.

Foe	XP per Foe
Galeb duhr	2,300
Gargoyle	450
Basilisk	700
Roper	1,800
Deva	5,900
Stone Golem	5,900
Medusa	2,300
Erinyes	8,400
Mage	2,300
Invisible Stalker	2,300

Non-Combat Rewards

Task/Accomplishment	XP per Character
Solving the riddle	400

Treasure

Item/Area	GP Value
Medusa Lair	1,500
Hag Cottage	800
Silver Hammer	250
Final Reward	1,000 or 2,000

Author's Notes

I am excited to see parts of society working to put all humans on an even platform and remove the idea that one race, sex, or class is better than another. I am honored to be surrounded by strong women and progressive men who want things better for everyone, not just themselves. I am also thankful to my wife who helped me work through ideas for this story and wrote my bio.

About the Author

Currently a software developer, Phil Allison enjoys the thrill of playing games, as well as the frustrating delight of both DMing and writing modules. He organizes League play at many local conventions.

Phil also believes that gaming can be a way to enact social change, and help people form community bonds. This is one reason why he volunteers with local schools' student gaming groups and has encouraged younger gamers to step up and DM for their peers. The other reason is because gaming can be a lot of fun, and why shouldn't everyone have fun? He has also been instrumental in facilitating a local Adventurers League group, where the goal is inclusive and friendly gaming for all.



Lady Cupriom

Medium humanoid (Dragonborn), neutral evil

Armor Class	12 (15 with mage armor)
Hit Points	40 (9d8)
Speed	30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving throws	Int +6, Wis +4
Skills	Arcana +6, History +6
Damage Resistances	Acid
Senses	passive Perception 11
Languages	Common, Draconic, Sylvan, Abyssal
Challenge	7 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*
4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*
5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

Breath Weapon. Lady Cupriom can use her action to exhale destructive energy in the form of acid in a 5 by 30 ft. line.

Each creature in the area of the exhalation must make a Dexterity saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is 13. A creature takes 3d6 damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Dagger. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Lair Actions

Lady Cupriom's mansion acts as her lair.

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Lady Cupriom takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- Cupriom creates fog as though it had cast the fog cloud spell. The fog lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- A thunderclap originates at a point Curpiom can see within 120 feet of her. Each creature within a 20-foot radius centered on that point must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (1d10) thunder damage and be deafened until the end of its next turn.





Illustration by Gwendy Bee

THE LYING, THE LICH, AND THE WARZONE

by Jesse Jordan

Creature: *Lich* | **Levels:** *12–16*

CWs: *This module includes elements of harassment, sexism, abuse, and slavery, which can be omitted if they make anyone at the table uncomfortable.*

SYNOPSIS

Having found their way to a long-abandoned dwarven outpost, the party finds themselves stepping into a veritable warzone. The Knights of the Shining Way, a martial order comprised of devotees to a bastard demigod named Gjorve, are laying siege to the outpost, which has since become the lair of Azaelia Greywind—a powerful lich and the one responsible for the untimely death of their beloved god.

Given two very different sides to the same story, the party must decide what is truth and what is fiction. They find themselves forced to choose sides—and paths—as they navigate through the dungeon and the tale that unfolds therein.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The outpost should be in a remote location. As such it can be introduced several ways:

- The party sees the siege camp from the road as they travel
- The party discovers the 'wrong set' of ancient ruins on their quest
- The party finds the knight's offer on a bounty board, offering a wage of 1,000 gp a head to any who help their cause
- The knights mail one or more party members the offer directly

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The module begins in earnest as the party joins the knights in their attempt to progress through the dungeon that is Azalea's Outpost. Throughout their adventure the characters discover two very different sides of the conflict's origin, forcing them to make a final decision: do they side with Azaelia or the knights?

Chapter One: Siege begins with the party allied with the knights. The narrative is delivered through the the knights speaking, or through the illusion of Azaelia as she projects herself to the party.

Describing Azaelia

When describing Azaelia's illusion, its description should roughly match the depiction of the art at the beginning of this module, but specific details are up to interpretation. Have Azaelia twist and distort her illusion to convey different emotions; anger illuminates her eyes, her glow softens with sadness, etc.

The characters can declare their allegiance Azaelia and switch sides at any time during Siege, triggering a special instance of combat against the knights. Azaelia teleports in at the end of the first round and casts teleport on her turn, transporting the party and herself to her study. Once this happens, continue to *Chapter Two: Reinforcements* where the party must now defeat the knights.

Gjorve was dangerously obsessed with Azaelia. His fixation led to him forcing Azaelia to complete a series of impossible tasks in a misguided effort to have her fall in love with him. When she emerged victorious and still rebuked him, Gjorve attacked her in a fit of rage and unleashed the full measure of his godly power against her.

As she was consumed by divine flames, a darker power offered Azaelia a chance to turn the tables on her attacker by transforming the holy blaze into the fires of undeath. Azaelia agreed and used her newfound powers to defeat, dethrone, and ultimately decapitate Gjorve. Her vengeance exacted, Azaelia retreated to the wilderness, where she claimed the abandoned dwarven outpost as her own and began her unlife as

an ever-burning lich. She has since devoted her time to converting the outpost into a makeshift library to further her studies on monsters and sentient monstrous races.

The party should have no reason to know the truth about the obscure and long-dead Gjorve. This leaves the decision making process up to the party's interpretation of the information they are given or are able to uncover.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The module contains the small order of knights and Azaelia. Captain Cavanaugh leads the order and is the only knight that has to interact with the party. If the party interacts with any of the other knights, use the information below

- **Azaellia Greywind:** "Centuries ago. I was a wizard of some renown. As my mastery over my craft grew, so too did my reputation—which is how the petulant, sniveling ma-child Gjorve came to hear of me. Bastard son of a god, he had deluded himself into believing that I owed him thanks for my talents in pyromancy."

  "He became enamored with me. No, that's the wrong word. He became obsessed, persuading himself and any who would listen that I *belonged* to him somehow, that I was madly in love with him, and that my exploits were all done to glorify his name. When I publicly scorned him, he became furious. He arranged to have my friends kidnapped and imprisoned, using them as bait to lure me into completing a series of damned near impossible tasks. Of course, in all his *mercy*, he gave me the option to simply give myself to him in exchange for their freedom. I refused. I also accomplished his idiotic series of trials, and shamed him in front of his own court. In response, he harnessed the powers of his lineage and seared the skin from my bones. The last words I heard him utter were that if I couldn't be his, I might as well be dead. Pretty fair if you ask me."
- **Captain Cavanaugh:** "I have no doubt that the lich thinks herself to be in the right. Knowing the truth as I do, I assure you her ravings are nothing but the theatrical delusions of a hysterical madwoman."
- **Brother Michael:**
  "The lich is an unholy abomination."
  "She cannot help but be dishonest - it is their way."
  "Perhaps she will find peace from her lies in death."
- **Lieutenant Chadwick:**
  "We will show this vile temptress the error of her ways - by any means necessary. It is our duty."
  "A woman who lies about a great man. How typical."
- **Sir Lawrence Henklesworth:**
  "Personally, I've always felt that women and magic don't mix. Too much raw emotion, it's just unsafe."
  "Gjorve was a handsome man. She should have just given herself to him."
- **Jude Silverhand:**
  "In my clan, a woman such as her - or what she was - would have been honored to be chosen by a demigod."
  "All of this because of one spiteful girl. Bah, wasteful."
- **Mac Orkinn:**
  "Gjorve and his followers are no friends to my people, but so long as I do the order's bidding, they treat me well."
  "Unrequited love is a theme in many love ballads, no?"
- **Sir William Veshaun:**
  "Gjorve could have had any woman in the land, yet he chose her. She should have rejoiced, not resisted."
  "My wife would never speak thusly, she knows better."
- **Lord Richard Satchel:**
  "There is a reason only men are permitted in our order - women are too unstable to be allowed such power."
  "No offense, but that's quite a stupid thing to say."

CHAPTER 1 - SIEGE

The party arrives at a siege camp outside the doors of a dwarven outpost, a reverse tower carved into a stone formation in a remote prairie. Several large and ominous-looking armored wagons are seen just outside the camp. The party arrives just in time to witness the illusory projection of Azaelia matter-of-factly telling the knights that she has no problem killing every single one of them.

Azaelia (LN female undead human **Appendix A**) is wearing the *Lichfire Pendant*, and notices the party the minute they enter its range. She says aloud that she hopes the party will listen to reason, then disappears. The knights sheathe their weapons and welcome the party with open arms and bright smiles, thanking them for joining against Azaelia, who they insult extensively. The knights offer to share their ample provisions and have their priests tend any wounds.



INTERACTING WITH THE KNIGHTS DURING THIS CHAPTER:

The knights are dismissive and rude. With minimal prompting, **Captain Cavanaugh** (LE male human knight) reveals the knights' version of Azaelia's origin as an expositional monologue. He should be portrayed as boisterous and arrogant as he tells the following version of the story:

"In life, this abominable lich was a power-crazed sorcerer with little magical talent and ridiculous ambitions far beyond her capabilities. When word of Gjorve's mighty exploits reached her, practicing her feeble craft in squalor, she became obsessed with him. She plotted to bewitch and seduce noble Gjorve in a bid to steal his power for herself. Gjorve, kind of heart and full of pity for the poor wench, constructed a series of arcane tests for her as a generous attempt to help her increase her spellcasting abilities.

Rather than complete the tests fairly, the witch cheated at each of them. She stole bits of Gjorve's power from each test she corrupted. Armed with a god-killing poison and a woman's deceitful nature, she lied to Gjorve and requested an audience with him.

Once they met, she demanded that he relinquish his godhood unto her. Gjorve taught the poor simpleton the perils of divinity, explaining to her that the merest portion of his power would shatter her feeble form. She gave him an ultimatum - she would kill him and take it for herself, or he would have to kill her. Rather than raise his hand in violence against a lowly woman, Lord Gjorve—the greatest of us all—knelt at the witch's feet allowed himself to be slain. This is why we honor him still, and have come to this place to avenge him!

Brother Michael expects to be able to open the gates shortly, but from there, there's no telling what sort of foulness awaits inside. Our order is mighty, but we are few in number. Will you join us? We will pay you, of course."

INTO THE LAIR

The outpost door opens and the knights and the party are free to enter. **Brother Michael** (LE male human **priest**) leads the party into the Antechamber with the knights in tow. At the base of the stairs (Appendix C), Brother Michael triggers a trap. A pair of stone pillars emerge from the walls, crushing his skull. As he drops dead, the trap resets and Azaelia appears stating the following in a dry tone:

> *"Dwarves call that trap the 'last thought,' which is somewhat amusing. Of course, it's not nearly as amusing as thinking that an order of 'noble knights' would put their priest and a pack of strangers at the front of their marching order when they expect danger at every turn. It's almost as if they see you as disposable. Something to consider. Something else worth considering is the truth."*

Azaelia then tells her story in full (see **Dramatis Personae**), answering any questions the party may have. If she convinces the party to join her side, she appears and teleports them to her study as described in the Adventure Background. Continue to *Chapter 2: Reinforcements*.

Last Thought

Mechanical Trap

This trap is activated when an intruder steps on a hidden pressure plate, releasing a pair of crushing stone pillars.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the pressure plate, as well as blood stains on the walls.

The trap activates when more than 20 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, causing the pillars to shoot forward. Each creature in the line of fire must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save and no damage on a success.

A successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check allows the character to wedge an object under the pressure plate, which prevents the trap from resetting

If the party remains unconvinced and does not change their loyalty, Captain Cavanaugh interrupts the conversation by throwing a lance through Azaelia's illusion. Azaelia shakes her head and dispels the illusion. He smiles brightly at the party and assures them that she is lying, then asks how they should navigate around the trap.

When the party clears the trap, Captain Cavanaugh orders some of the knights to return Brother Michael's body to the camp. The knights all curse Azaelia and continue to demonize her, blaming her for their comrade's death.

Cavanaugh rants about Azaelia as the party moves through the room, pausing only to remind them that the healing services of the priests of the order are available should they require them. The room itself is finely carved dwarven stonework. The floor is stained a rusty red in places, discarded gear and random bits of equipment are scattered throughout the room. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a gilded leather bag. Roll 1d4 on the following table to determine the bag's contents:

D4	Result
1	*Scroll of enlarge/reduce*
2	A box containing 1d12 gems carved into de tailed animal shapes, each worth 1000 gp
3	A *figurine of wondrous power* (type chosen randomly)
4	All of the above

A **hydra** under the effect of pass without a trace lies in wait in a hidden alcove just above the door. The hydra waits to see how many characters approach the door before dropping from above to attack from behind. It may be fitting to have the hydra tearing many nameless knights to pieces for dramatic effect in place of getting a surprise round. The hydra lands in such a way that it positions itself directly behind the party. Cavanaugh assists the party in combat. After the hydra is defeated, Azaelia appears, eyes blazing, and mourns the creature as if it were a beloved pet. She glares at the party and utters the following:

"You'll spill blood over the lies of these pompous men in their polished armor? How far do you intend to take this charade - from my doorstep to my chambers? Are you prepared to take it to to your deaths? Open your eyes and think for a moment. I was there, I know what happened."

If the players are still loyal to the knights, Azaelia will once again tell them her side of the story in an effort to convince them to join her. If they do not, the captain shouts at her to go away and instructs the party to scout out the next room, saying he'll be back with something that will show the lich they mean business.

The exit door can't be opened by any means. In a few minutes, the captain and the knights return with a **hill giant** led by chains and bound in shackles. The giant is obviously neglected and wounded, but the captain pays it no heed and dismisses any inquiries about it, explaining that is one of the siege implements he brought along.

Dwarven Fire Box

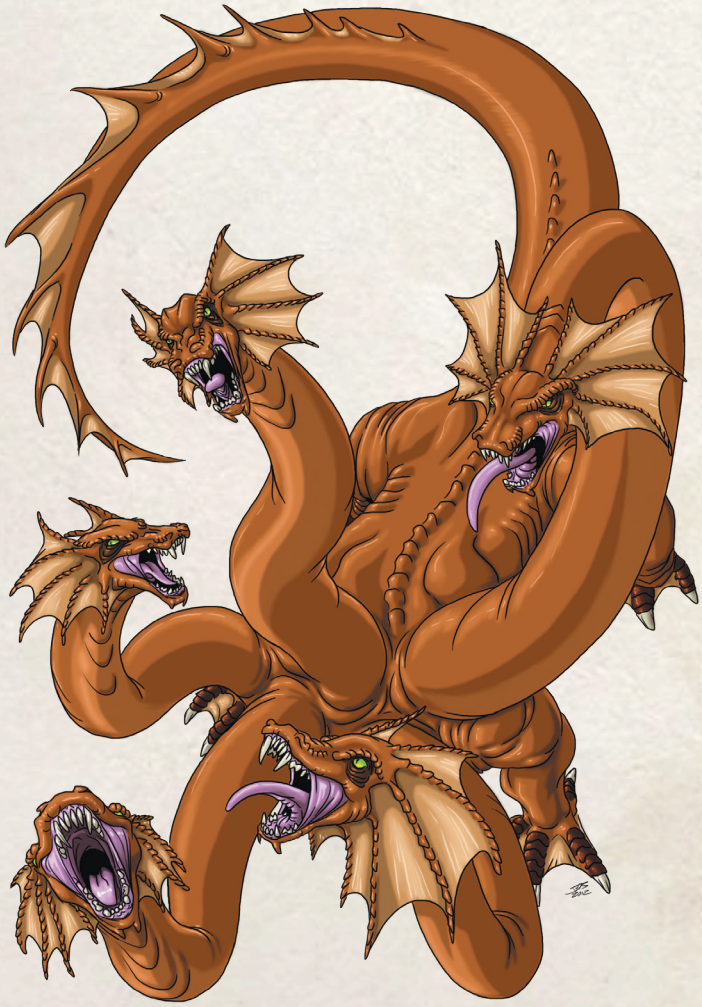
Mechanical Trap

When a creature moves in front of one of motion detectors mounted above three sets of nozzles mounted on the wall, each nozzle releases a 10 foot wide gout of flame.

A successful DC Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the valves above each set of nozzles, which can be turned to disable that set.

The trap activates when someone passes in front of the nozzles. Each creature in the fire must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) fire damage and being set on fire on failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) turns a set of nozzles disabling the trap before the flames are able to trigger.



The captain orders the giant to smash through the door, which it does before stumbling into the hallway beyond. The giant takes a few steps before a series of clicking sounds are heard and the giant is bathed in flames. Howling piteously, the giant staggers backwards and falls to the ground, alive but horribly burnt. Before the party can intervene, the captain executes the giant. Wiping his sword clean, he complains that he'll have to get a new one now.

The party finds Azaelia's projection waiting for them at the other side of the trapped corridor. She says she regrets that the giant was collateral damage, and, while she would prefer not to have to kill the party, she will have no choice but to do so if they continue.

The characters may interact with Azaelia. If they do, she provides more details of her origin before Captain Cavanaugh enters, denouncing everything Azaelia says. He should be portrayed as frenzied and frantic, as if he were an oversized child throwing a temper tantrum. Azaelia's illusion merely shakes her head at the party and disappears.

The room contains a teleporter between two vats filled with a sinister bubbling ooze, which is actually 4 **gibbering mouthers**. As they approach the teleporter, Azaelia appears one last time. She makes a final appeal

to the characters' sense of reason, which also serves to distract them from the gibbering mouthers as they approach her.

When they are within range, have one or two named members of the knights die to the mouthers before initiative is rolled.

The teleporter is activated by pressing two large stone buttons, one of each lie at the bottom of each vat.

DEVELOPMENT

Activating the teleporter brings the party to Azaelia's study. Proceed to *Chapter 3: Showdown - Allied with the Knights.*

CHAPTER 2 - REINFORCEMENTS

After Azaelia teleports the party to her chambers, she might suggest they take a rest. Once they are ready for combat, they must use the teleporter to be sent to the teleportation chamber. When they do so, they encounter the knights and must defeat them in battle. If the hill giant has not died already, it fights alongside the knights. They must navigate their way past the traps once more until they reach the Siege Camp.

When battling the knights, place 4 **knights**, 4 **veterans**, and 1 **priest** within the teleportation chamber, adding a second wave of reinforcements if necessary.

Once the party moves to the Knight's Camp, proceed to *Chapter 3: Showdown - Allied with Azaelia*.

DEVELOPMENT

Reinforcements end when the party causes the Showdown. If the party somehow changes allegiance again, they resume their efforts completing Siege from their current position.

CHAPTER 3 - SHOWDOWN

ALLIED WITH THE KNIGHTS

Taking place in Azaelia's study, the party must face Azaelia and two **shield guardians**. One guardian has *fireball* and the other has *counterspell* prepared thanks to their *Spell Storage* ability.

Tactics. The guardian with *fireball* should ruthlessly attack the party, while the guardian with *counterspell* should rush Azaelia's side, where it engages in combat while remaining within 5 feet of her. Azaelia begins the battle with *mirror image* and *fire shield* active.

ALLIED WITH AZAELIA

The party exits the citadel and reenters the knight's camp, facing what remains of the knights. Place 4 **knights**, 3 **veterans**, and 1 **priest** in the camp, along with Cavanaugh (wearing the *Fist of Gjorve*) who begins the battle standing on top of the Bound Dragon (**Appendix A**).

CONCLUSION

Once the Showdown has finished, either Cavanaugh or Azaelia thanks the party for their assistance while uttering one final curse to their defeated foe.

REWARDS

ALLIED WITH THE KNIGHTS

Captain Cavanaugh offers the party his *Fist of Gjorve* and pays them as promised. Cavanaugh also offers the party control of the outpost, stating that it saves him the trouble of demolishing it.

ALLIED WITH AZAELIA

Azaelia gives the party her *Lichfire Pendant*, and suggests they loot the knights and their camp. She can assist them with magic-based requests the DM deems acceptable, including future aid in battle should the party call via the *Lichfire Pendant*.

Azaelia can resurrect dead characters using a unique combination of magic and herbalism. On revival, the body of the character is infused with magic. They gain the Magic Initiate feat, though they are limited to choosing spells from the sorcerer spell list.



Lichfire Pendant

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A silver amulet in the shape of a skull whose eyes are constantly burning orbs of harmless blue flame, the pendant grants the wearer truesight (60 ft.) while worn. The pendant holds two charges and can be used as a spellcasting focus.

As a bonus action, the wearer can expend one of the amulet's charges to cast the firebolt cantrip using Intelligence as their spellcasting modifier for the attack.

The wearer can concentrate for one minute to expend two charges to summon the illusory projection of Azaelia for one minute. While present, Azaelia answers any question the wearer asks, and can reference the books in her library to make one Arcana, History, Medicine, or Nature check with advantage before leaving. Azaelia can be asked to teleport to the wearer's location to assist them in their next battle. However, doing so causes the amulet to disintegrate.

The amulet regains two charges at sundown, its flames reigniting as it does. The amulet has 5 hit points and an AC of 20.

Fist of Gjorve

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A pair of silver gauntlets with golden inlays. There is the depiction of a smug face within a shining sun on both palms. So long as the wearer is wearing only light armor, the gauntlets grant +1 bonus to AC. The gauntlets hold five charges.

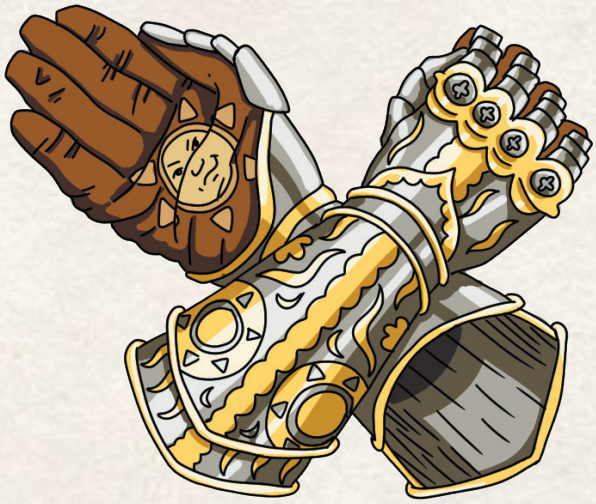
As a bonus action, the wearer can expend a charge to have their attacks deal an additional 1d4 radiant damage for 1 minute. For every two additional charges the wearer expends, the damage increases by an additional d4.

As an action, the wearer can expend four charges to cast *guiding bolt*, using Charisma as their spellcasting modifier for the attack.

As a ritual, the wearer can spend ten minutes and expend five charges to cast *commune*, but only to summon a male deity.

The wearer makes all Charisma checks at disadvantage when the target of the check is female for as long as they remain attuned to the gauntlets.

The gauntlet regains 1d4+1 charges at dawn.



Author's Acknowledgments

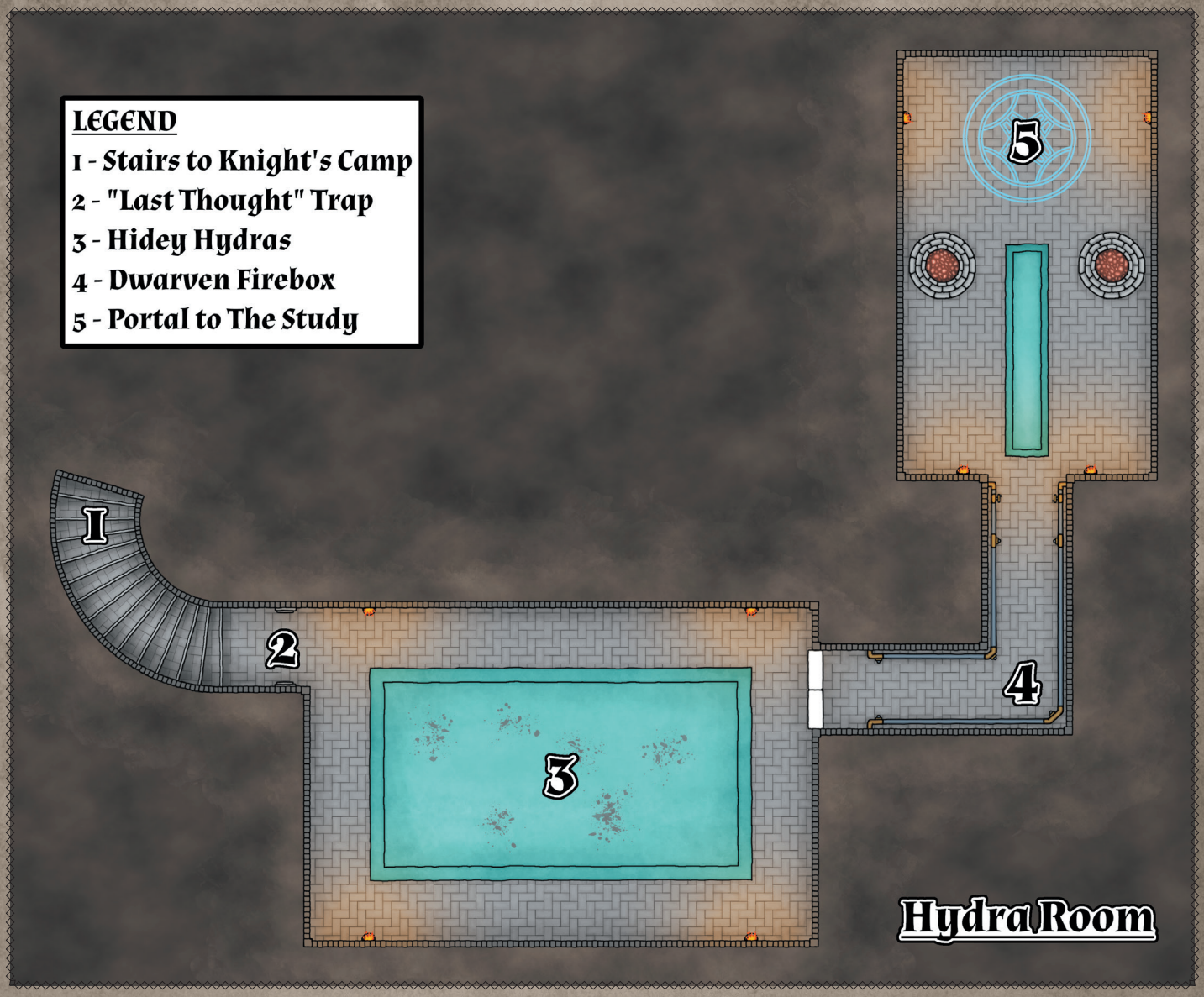
My first thank you is to Ashley Warren for giving me the opportunity to participate in this anthology. I'd also like to thank Gwendybee, Zeshio, and Taylor Clark for working with me to create the wonderful artwork featured in this module. Finally, thank you to Jess Washburn for making sense of my words as always.

Author's Notes

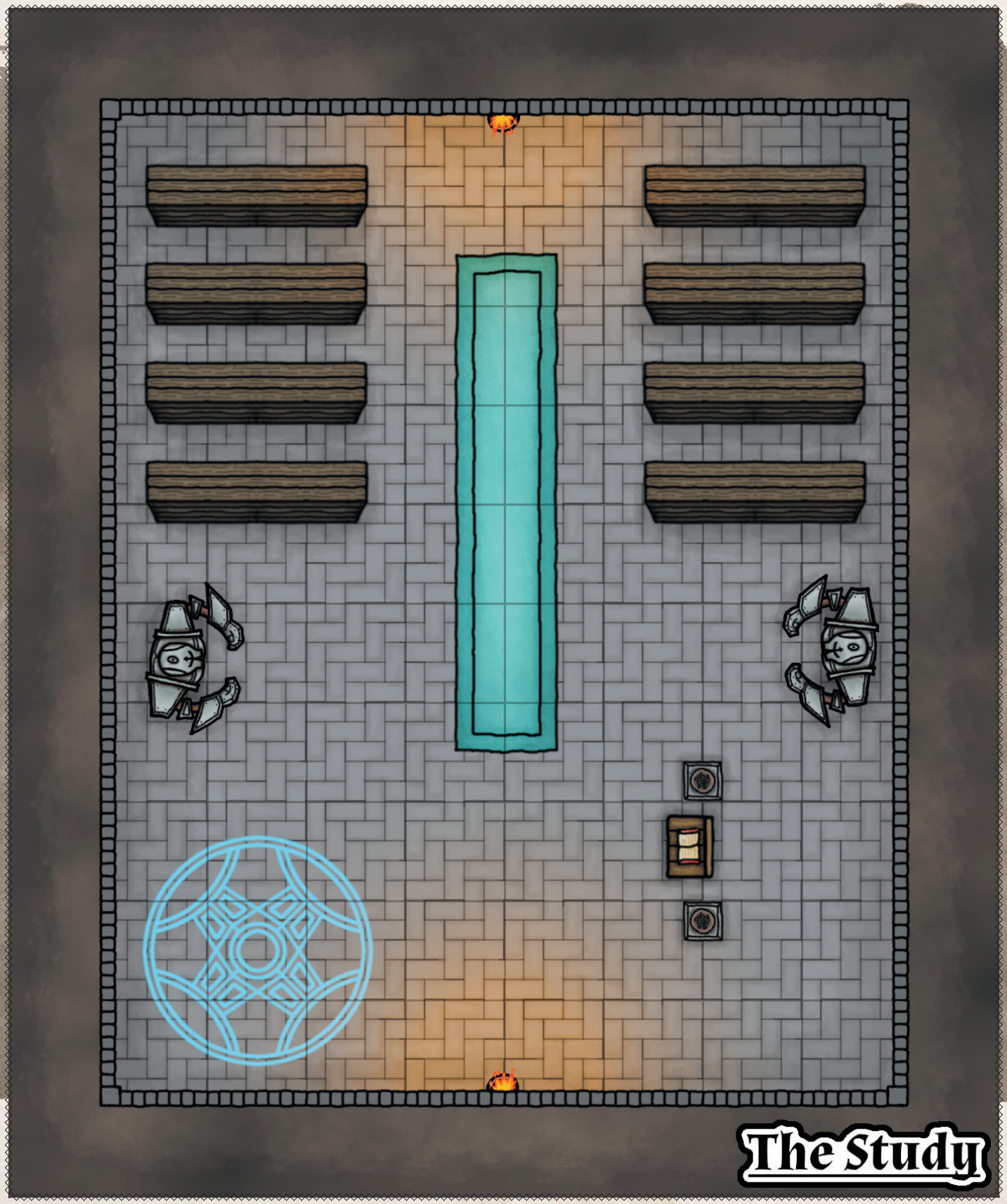
My inspiration to write this module came from several places. First, from recent political events involving a certain world leader and a supreme court justice whose name was recycled in the module. Second, from the stories tagged on #BelieveWomen and #ListenToWomen tags on Twitter. Early feedback I received on this module was that I should have included a tapestry that depicted the story, or had a neutral storyteller do so, something for the players to interact with in order for them to find out the story. This confused me deeply, because I had included something for the players to interact with and learn from; her name is Azaelia Greywind, and she is not to be trifled with.

About the Author

Jesse Jordan is a writer, dungeon master, dad, and a fourth thing. He can usually be found spouting nonsense on Twitter under the alias @JesseNeon.



Map by Northern Cartography



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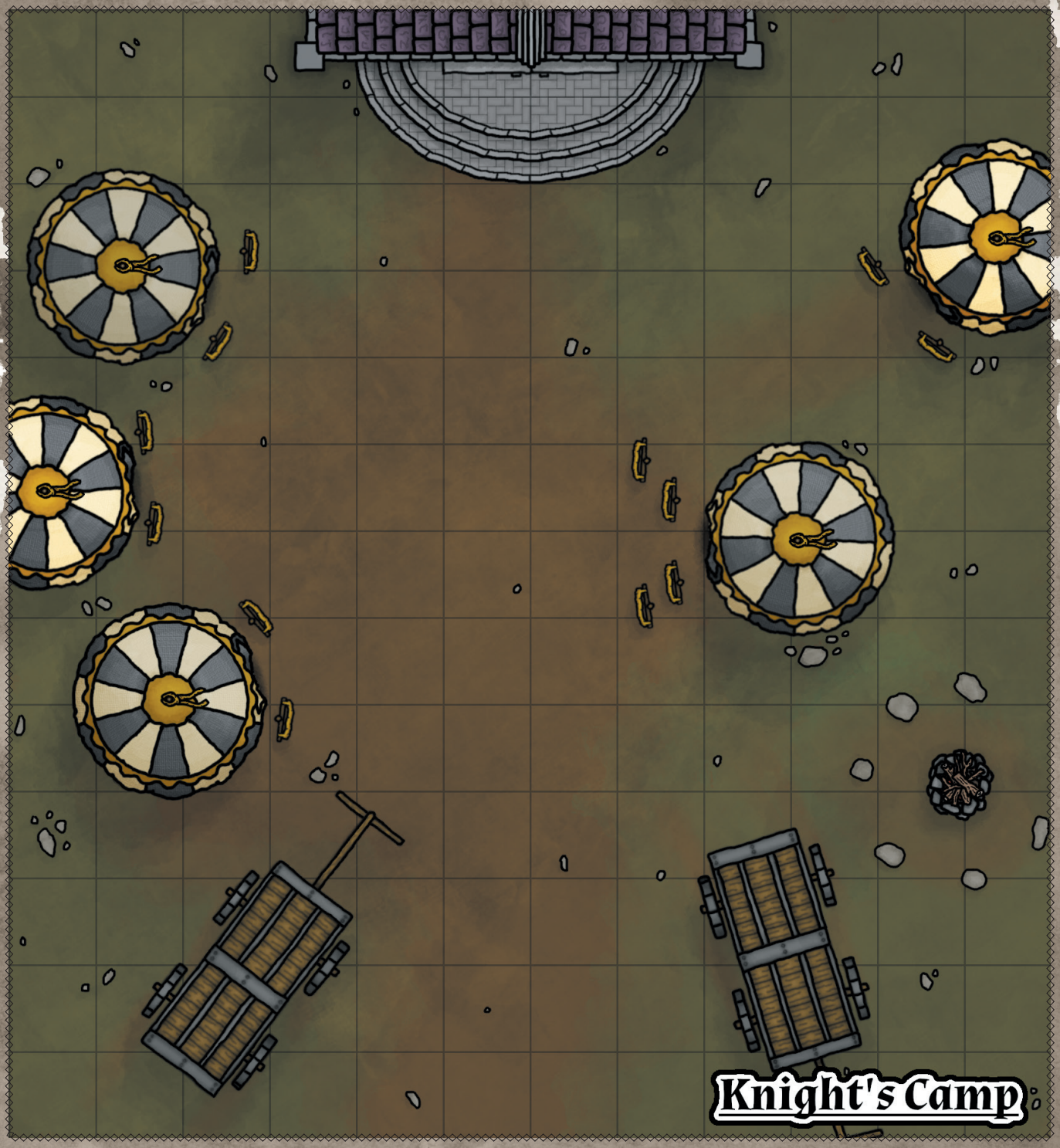

Map by Northern Cartography



Illustration by Dean Spencer



PHILOMELA AND PROCNE

Illustration by Kayla Cline | Stats by TK Johnson

In Greek mythology, Philomela was known as the "princess of Athens." Her older sister, Procne, was the queen of King Tereus. Although the actual legend defines Philomela's story as one of violence at the hands of Tereus, we've reimagined the sisters as celestial warriors and preserved what we find most compelling about the mythology: the transformation of Philomela and Procne into birds. You can use these stat blocks to introduce these powerful birdlike warriors into your campaigns.

Procne

Medium celestial, chaotic good

Armor Class 18 (Plate)
Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws	CON+4, WIS +4
Skills	Athletics +5, Intimidation +5
Damage Resistances	nonmagical slashing/bludgeoning/piercing damage
Senses	Passive Perception 12
Languages	Common, Elvish, Celestial
Challenge	8 (3,900 XP)

Brave. Procne has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Flyby. Procne doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when she flies out of an enemy's reach.

Relentless *(Recharges after a Short or Long Rest)*. If the angel takes 21 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

Innate Spellcasting. Procne's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *command, heroism, light*
3/day each: *compelled duel, protection from evil and good, suggestion*
1/day each: *banishment, teleport*

Actions

Multiattack. Procne makes three melee attacks with her vorpal longsword.

Vorpal Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 13 (3d8) radiant damage. When Procne rolls a 20 on an attack roll with the longsword, the target is decapitated. (At your option, the attack can instead deal an extra 6d8 slashing damage.) A target is immune to this effect if it is immune to slashing damage, has legendary actions, doesn't have or need a head, or if you decide that the target is too large for its head to be cut off by the longsword.

Philomela

Small celestial, chaotic good

Armor Class 15 (customized mithral half-plate)
Hit Points 36 (8d6+8)
Speed 20 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws	DEX +2, WIS +6
Skills	Perception +2
Damage Resistances	nonmagical slashing/bludgeoning/piercing damage
Senses	Passive Perception 16
Languages	Celestial, Telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge	4 (1,100 XP)

Shapechanger. Philomela can use her action to polymorph into her harpy form form or back into her true hawk form. Her statistics, other than her size, are the same in each form.

Keen Sight. Philomela has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Magic Resistance. Philomela has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. Philomela makes two attacks: two with her claws (harpy form) or one with her claws and one with her beak (hawk form).

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 12 (3d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.




TIER 3



Illustration by Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett

CURSED HEARTS

by Caroline Amaba

Creature: *Mandurugo (Vampires)* | **Levels:** *6–8*
CWs: *Missing persons*

SYNOPSIS

Rumors of marriage, monsters, and murder linger about the streets, all of which revolve around a central point: the Bayani Family, the founders and governors of Nayyor. There are whispers blaming them for the disappearance of suitors and townsfolk. While most of the family seeks to defuse the tension, one family member weaves her way out of an ancient curse and control the town.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Nayyor is known for its welcoming community, but something has put everyone on edge lately. Even so, it makes a great rest stop and is widely known for The Shooe Inn: the party may simply be passing through. The characters may also be dispatched to investigate rumors of missing people.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Cursed Hearts is a non-linear adventure that relies on investigation and social interaction more than combat. Combat with Mandurugo: Irene can be deadly.

The party can pursue many avenues of investigation, all within town. Investigations can take one in-game day or several, serving as a full-day play session or two smaller ones.

About Mandurugo

Mandurugo are one of many bloodlusting creatures in Tagalog folklore, akin to European vampires. While Filipino mythology paints mandurugo as evil, this adventure features their "human" side.

CHAPTER 1 – WHODUNNIT

This chapter covers the main family, backgrounds and motivations, and current events.

THE BAYANI CURSE

A woman tasted the blood of her lover. Try as she might to resist, she gently consumed their blood every night. The lover acquiesced. One day, the craving consumed her. She feasted with tears in her eyes, and yet her lover gave themselves willingly. A dark and ancient force saw beauty in the woe and cursed the woman and her descendants forevermore. Thus the first mandurugo came to be.

Women of the Bayani family are cursed as mandurugo, and this fact has been kept secret for generations.

The Bayanis developed artifacts to keep the curse at bay. Every Bayani wears a unique signet or crest, and the women's crests are enchanted with curse-suppressing magic.

THE FAMILY

The current governing family members are:

- **Doña** (daw-nyah) **Judee** (LG human **noble**): the current, beloved governor. Judee doesn't study magic, believing "Nayyor comes first," and acquiescing to the curse. Her artifact is her wedding band, set with a lovely emerald.
- **Don Paolo** (NG human **noble**): Judee's husband and head of Nayyor's Town Guard. Paolo knows about the curse that affects Bayani women. His wife's failing health is his priority. His (non-magical) signet matches Doña Judee's.
- **Lady Marisol** (NG human **mage**): their daughter, idolizes her mother, and admired by many. She is secretly seeing Alexi Roxas. Her artifact is an ornate necklace with many small emeralds.

- **"Tita"** (tee-ta) **Irene**, (LN human **archmage**), Judee's sister and advisor. Irene is seen as Nayyor's charismatic "Tita" (aunt). Her artifact is a pair of emerald earrings.

The family are defended by esteemed Maharlika (vassals/personal guard), led by **Alexi Roxas** (NG nonbinary human **assassin**), Marisol's childhood friend and secret lover. Alexi knows about the curse and is sworn to secrecy.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Doña Judee has fallen ill. Four months ago, she became bedridden with a seemingly incurable illness. Townsfolk delivered gifts and condolences to the Bayani estate. Others keep a wide berth due to the disappearances of Marisol's suitors.

Arranged… murders? Tita Irene has been arranging Marisol's marriage "for the family." Three suitors have called in the last three months. The last two went missing at the estate, thus painting Marisol as a suspect. The Town Guard haven't found a culprit. The first suitor was Maximo Prodiga, the son of a mayor from the next town over; the other suitor was Ash Reyos, the young entrepreneur of an up-and-coming merchant family that would regularly visit Nayyor for business (they have not visited since).

Three locals have also gone missing. There is no proof it is linked to the suitors, but it hasn't made anyone feel better about either situation. No bodies have been found despite the Town Guards' best efforts. The people missing have been determined to be:

- Vinky, one of the grocer's assistants who cleaned the store
- Matteo, an unemployed street gambler
- Mallo, one of the graveyard keepers

A grave robbery. After the first suitor's disappearance, the Bayani Mausoleum was desecrated and looted. The mausoleum is open to the public, but such vandalism would have been unthinkable until now.

MACHINATIONS & MOTIVATIONS

Tita Irene is the mastermind behind it all.

WHY?

Irene believes Judee is stymying Nayyor's potential through isolationist policies. Despite Irene's clandestine schemes, she cares for her people. To Irene, Nayyor should be a seat of power, not just a home.

Judee believes the family curse is unbreakable. Irene vehemently disagrees. Instead of searching for a cure, Irene has grown impatient and shifted focus towards experiments in controlling the curse.

HOW?

Unleashed magic. Irene's main experiment involves controlling Marisol's curse and *mandurugo* form. Irene has magically tampered with Judee and Marisol's jewelry. The augmented magic drains Judee's life force. Additionally, when the urge to feed arises, the power of Judee's curse transfers to Marisol and causes Marisol's necklace to "overload."

Irene doesn't care who Marisol weds and is framing her niece: she wants Judee and Marisol out of the picture so she can have control of Nayyor. Marisol "lost control" and fed on the last two suitors, and when she is discovered as the murderer, she will be locked up and have no credibility. To Irene's dismay, Marisol somehow covered her tracks (Alexi fabricated a story about an escaping culprit while the two of them figure out a better long-term solution).

Maharlika and mandurugo. Irene had several Maharlika loyal to her "ransack" the Bayani Mausoleum. She then "investigated the robbery," recovering artifacts for "safekeeping." She uses these for experiments that her sister would not condone.

She also developed a potion that turned her Maharlika into **mandurugo spawn**. They feed at night while on patrol and are the cause of townsfolk going missing.

This potion doesn't affect Bayanis. Paolo just gets nauseous.

PUPPETING THE PLAYERS

Irene finds ways to deal with characters interfering in her affairs. She might frame them for murder, seed rumors to turn the town against them, or support them in accusing Marisol.

Publicly, Irene is always polite and courteous, acting as a favorite auntie. She works hard to endear herself to the party while secretly doing everything possible to further her agenda.

CHAPTER 2 – INVESTIGATIONS

WELCOME TO NAYYOR

> Nayyor was said to be welcoming, and those rumors seem to be true. Guards patrol along the large, wooden ramparts, yet the gates are wide open. Even more surprising, despite your distance, guards manning the main gate wave to you.

Nayyor is a travelers' respite, befitting any well-traveled road.

Two welcoming guards (NG human **veterans**) are at the gate. If asked about the disappearances, they frown and inform the party of the ongoing investigations: Nayyor has been uneasy as of late, and no one is used to serious trouble. Patrols have been more frequent, especially around the Bayani Estate.

RUMORS

Talking to locals or eavesdropping reveals:

Irene's matchmaking game:

- Many townsfolk are entertained by the matchmaking, like following a soap opera
- Irene is looking for another eligible bachelor

Secret lovers:

- Talking with or eavesdropping on Nayyor guards reveals Marisol and Alexi are having a secret relationship
- Some of the guards think Alexi is covering up for Marisol

Grave robberies:

- The grave robberies are serious. Nayyor has a tradition of leaving gifts at family members' graves, and people are concerned that these will be stolen. Most are upset because of the disrespect towards the deceased
- The Town Guard is dealing with additional accusations of grave robbing, all unsubstantiated and each one less plausible than the last
- Some believe the desecrated mausoleums are the source of Doña Judee's illness

Marisol's investigations:

- Postings around town ask for any information about missing people
- Marisol and Alexi are coordinating the search for the culprit(s)
- Many believe Marisol and hope she clears her name; few think she is guilty and covering her tracks

***Mandurugo* and missing people:**

- In the evening, characters hear parents tell their kids to "get inside before the *mandurugo* get you!"
- Most townsfolk can describe what a *mandurugo* is but get fuzzy on how someone becomes one. Some confuse it with the "typical" vampire. Everyone knows that they are not susceptible to sunlight and disguise themselves among the populace
- Some adults have become paranoid that their neighbors might be *mandurugo*
- Folks come home before sunset due to people going missing at night, even when just out for a walk
- Nanay Ligaya at The Shooe Inn says she's seen one!

THE SHOOE INN

> The delicious smells of a home-cooked meal lead you to an octagonal building. The sign outside shows an intricately carved carabao with the words, "The Shooe Inn." Two canvas curtains that serve as the door are tied back, a warm glow beckoning you to come inside.

The clientele boasts just as many locals as travelers ("nobody cooks like the Shooes!"), many being merchants, swords-for-hire, guards on break, etc. Rumors (above) can be heard here.

The Shooes can provide modest rooms and fantastic meals at cost (Chapter 5, *PHB*).

THE SHOOE FAMILY

The Shooes are good friends of the Bayanis but don't know about the Bayani curse. Currently, Kuya Mikee (outgoing barkeep, eldest brother, NG human **commoner**), KayKay (sister, cook, NG human **commoner**), and Nanay Ligaya (their mother and host, CG human **commoner**) run the inn.

While the party dines, Nanay comes to check everyone is comfortable and stays to gossip, as she loves chit-chat:

> *"Hoy, so, the other night? During my daily walk around the graveyard, I saw one! Oh, you know! A mandurugo, ha! Maybe it was the light, maybe seeing things. After you eat—yes eat!—you can maybe see what is going on? Oh! Also, do me a favor—check in with the Bayanis for me—I've been so busy! Please, bring them this stew!"*

If it is already dark, she recommends going "tomorrow, *after* breakfast."

The Shooes are worried about the Bayanis but remain neutral. They will lodge the party, provide information, and wish them luck, but will not aid them.

NAYYOR CEMETERY

> Many generations of Nayyor's families are resting in the large graveyard, which is framed by the woods behind it. It is well kept and organized, small parcels delicately placed around various gravestones. The row of larger, ornate Bayani mausoleums—once proud and grand—now suffer, defaced and damaged.

A DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check exposes one damaged, once-magical necklace, similar to Marisol's. It is similar to the artifacts found in Tita's office.

THE BAYANI ESTATE

> Despite the size of the estate, the mansion emanates coziness. There are well-dressed guards along the path to the manor, where a middle-aged woman stands at the door, waving you inside.

The woman at the door is Tita Irene, who has heard of the party's arrival ("Word travels fast here, ha!"). She hosts them in the sitting room (see **Appendix**), personally fetching Paolo and Marisol and sending the butler to fetch wine and bread.

Throughout this visit, Tita Irene is outgoing and charming, discreetly sizing the characters up.

A frazzled **Paolo** greets the party. When asked about any rumors, he confirms:

- In truth, the suitors were violently murdered
- They haven't been able to find traces of the missing travelers and locals
- Alexi has patrols outside of Nayyor, searching for the murderer(s)
- Several doctors have seen Judee; no one can figure out what is wrong
- He hasn't, and won't, let any magic-users see her in fear of revealing the family curse.
- He and Irene are running Nayyor in Judee's stead

Paolo graciously accepts help finding the murderer(s) and encourages the characters to talk to Marisol for more information. Paolo has the Shooes accommodate them and promises to pay the party 1,000 gp when they catch the culprit(s).

Marisol, calm and poised, walks the party through both incidents:

- The first suitor was dismissed with no issue
- During the murder of the second suitor, Alexi arrived late, only seeing a possible culprit escape from the window (Alexi says exactly the same thing)
- Marisol was not present at the time of the attacks. This is a half-truth, and a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check discerns this: Marisol didn't have control of her body, but was indeed in the room
- The attack happened inside the estate. Maharlika on patrol that night have been interviewed and questioned. Nobody besides Marisol and Alexi saw the culprit

Privately, Marisol hesitantly suggests she is suspicious of Irene's recent behavior and has been trying to hint at this to her distracted father.

An audience with the Doña. The characters may want to see Judee, but Paolo won't allow magic-users near her. He can be convinced to let them in with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check, under the condition he and a retinue of Maharlika are present.

Paolo limits their time to a half-hour. Judee can softly answer the following:

- Nayyor is a matriarchy. Marisol is next in line (Irene would be next if Marisol is gone)
- She doesn't know about the murders. If told, she believes her daughter is innocent
- She knows the true lore of *mandurugo*, but won't reveal the family's secret

SEARCHING FOR EVIDENCE

The locations of clues in the estate are marked on the map (see **Appendix**) and are detailed below.

The family portrait. Characters who make a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notice that Bayani family members all possess a unique, but similar, piece of jewelry.

The guest bedroom. The murders occurred here. There are signs of violence (despite Marisol and Alexi's best efforts):

- A boarded up window (temporarily dressed with curtains) is damaged from the inside. Found with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Marisol explains that the window was shattered during the first incident. She feigns ignorance of more recent damage
- A blood-stained, javelin-sized puncture through the head of the mattress. This is obvious if the covers are removed
- A large, black-blue feather, found on a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the character has heard of *mandurugo*, a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check confirms the feather comes from one

Tita Irene's Office. Locked (opens on a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools) and off-limits to guests. There are two guards at this door at all times. Inside the study, a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a number of dirty artifacts (from the mausoleums) mixed with her personal accoutrements.

The desk has a locked drawer. A successful DC 18 Dexterity check with thieves tools unlocks it and reveals a mostly-used potion. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals its volatile, poison-like nature. This is the potion that Irene has developed to enthrall and transform her Maharlika.

The Experimental Potion

The characters may simply believe the potion is the poison that got Doña Judee ill. Spending at least one hour of uninterrupted study of the potion and making a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check will reveal its more transformative nature. It has lost some of its potency, since it's only an experimental batch.

If a character drinks the potion, they must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. Upon failure, the character will lose half of their max hit points, and they are poison*ed* until they take a long rest. If they succeed the saving throw, the character will go to 0 hit points, but are stable. The character will be considered a **mandurugo** type creature for the next 24 hours (they cannot tell anything has happened). If Tita Irene uses her Order Spawn action, she may choose what action that character takes.

CHAPTER 3 – CONCLUSIONS

OPPOSING TITA

If the characters find Irene guilty, and tell Marisol, she has the Maharlika detain Irene. Marisol hopes to make her confess to Paolo with the party's help. With enough evidence and compelling arguments, Paolo is convinced. Irene will be imprisoned. The family will figure out what to do with her privately.

While Charisma (Persuasion) checks could be made here, the players should be encouraged to come up with a convincing argument. Bonuses or penalties can be applied to a roll based on the argument, or it can be done the other way around, where based on the result of the check, the argument could become more or less favorable to Paolo.

Here are examples of arguments the players could make to oppose Tita Irene:

- Irene created a poison to kill Judee in order to gain mayoral power. Paolo has tunnel vision with

matters concerning his wife, and this will be very convincing to him
- Irene has changed the enchantments on the family crests that keeps the curse at bay (assuming the characters have figured out the curse). She has used artifacts from the family mausoleum to aid her in this research. The players will need to have found the clues in Tita Irene's office
- Marisol was not in control of herself that evening due to the curse. This assumes the characters have gotten this information somehow. This is the least convincing argument, but the characters can also highlight that Marisol does not want to be matchmade by Tita Irene

If Irene is killed, the Bayanis aren't pleased and reward less (if any) gold, assuming the party can prove Irene's guilt. The family thanks them for their time, however.

If the characters tell her Judee's ring has been tampered with, Marisol reverses the curse on both artifacts, and Judee heals in a week.

If Irene determines the party suspects her, she escapes within 48 hours. She might grow suspicious if the party is snooping around her office or the graveyard or consulting with Marisol or Paolo more than her. Before then, she attempts to convince them of her innocence, even telling the characters that Marisol is a dangerous **mandurugo** as a scapegoat.

Marisol's Guilt

If Marisol is confronted about her hand in the murders, she confesses to Paolo. They will "figure out the politics" after the party leaves. Nobody in town will believe Marisol is a murderer, let alone a *mandurugo*.

If Marisol is killed and Paolo finds out, he exiles the characters from Nayyor without pay.

Siding with Irene

If the characters think Marisol is responsible for the murders, Irene won't stop them. She "assists," telling Paolo that his daughter is guilty, and Paolo sadly locks Marisol up. Irene pays them an extra 1,000 gp for capturing the terrifying creature (assuming they don't know the entire family is cursed).

Fighting Mandurugo

If the party fight Irene and/or Marisol, use the *mandurugo* stat block on page 134.

Fighting Irene. If confronted alone, Irene attempts to bribe and threaten the characters. If they insist on fighting, she transforms, even during the day. She manages this by transferring her sister's power to herself via modified ring.

Whenever Irene takes damage, Judee takes 2 points of psychic damage (from a starting total of 20 hit points). Irene tells them this, and if Judee dies she cannot be magically revived due to their curse. This can be prevented by removing Judee's ring. If removed during the fight, Irene takes 15 points of psychic damage. 1d8+4 Maharlika **mandurugo spawn** come to Irene's aid after one round.

If Irene thinks a fight is likely, she flees to the graveyard, where she gains the following Lair Action. In addition, all *mandurugo* creatures have access to their Regeneration ability in the daytime.

Tita Irene's Graveyard Lair Action

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Irene takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Irene can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Ruins of the family mausoleum are magically hurled at creatures within 50 feet of Irene. Each creature in range must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. Those who fail take 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage and are knocked prone; those who succeed take half damage and are not knocked prone.

The Bayani mausoleums flash with magic, and each mandurugo creature within 50 feet of the ruins gains 16 (3d8 + 3) hit points. This includes characters who have received the *mandurugo* trait from the Experimental Potion.

Fighting Marisol. Marisol's stats are the same as Irene's, with the following changes:
- Constitution 17 (+3), 128 (17d8 + 51) hit points
- No Legendary Resistance. Does not have Order Spawn as a Legendary Action
- No "Birds of a Feather" Action
- CR 12 (8,400 XP)

If Irene knows the party is going after Marisol, she triggers the overload no matter the time of day, forcing Marisol into *mandurugo* form. Also, if Alexi isn't already present, they arrive to protect Marisol (fighting to the death) after one round of combat with a squad of Maharlika (3 human **knights**, 1 human **mage**, 1 **bandit captain**). They have not partaken in Tita Irene's *mandurugo* draught.

REWARDS

Treasure

If the characters sided with Marisol and Paolo, they receive the 1,000 gp as Paolo stated. If they sided with Irene, they will at least receive 2,000 gp—the characters have the chance to negotiate with Irene.

The magical artifacts from Irene's office won't be helpful since they are Bayani-curse specific. The Bayanis encourage returning the items: they won't "buy" these items off the characters, but insist that returning helps protect their legacy (and secrets). They offer 200 gp for securing these items.

ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCE

Encounters	XP per character
Irene brought into custody alive	500
Confronting Marisol about her guilt	200
Meeting Doña Judee and discovering the "broken" ring	200
Discovering Marisol's modified jewelry	200
Each clue in the Guest Room	50 each
Finding stolen artifacts	300

AUTHOR'S NOTES

First off, many thanks to Nat, for getting me involved. For reading and flavor affirmation, Martin and Alex. Alex gets even more thanks for the editing and brainstorming sessions over wine. Scott and his crew for playtesting. My D&D group for believing, and the *Uncaged* writers for their eyes as well! Also, thanks to Jesse whose art and love of our culture helped inspire me to write this (and work on uncodexed). Lastly, Maximo D. Ramos for compiling Philippine lore into his tome, *The Creatures of Philippines Lower Mythology (1990)*. This book has serves as a springboard and research for this and other works I write. This project has helped me delve deeper into my cultural roots.

In the future, I hope to release a campaign-version of this story and a few more!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Amaba is a software engineer by day, gamer-of-all-trades all other times. *Uncaged* is her first DMs Guild publication, but she has published a few creatures on Medium.com in her publication uncodexed, the first entry featuring another creature of Filipino mythos, the *bungisis*.

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Mandurugo (Tita Irene)

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 144 (17d8 + 68)
Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dexterity +9, Wisdom +8, Charisma +9
Skills Deception +8, Insight +8, Perception +8, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons
Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, One other local language
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Flyby. If the mandurugo moves by flying at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.If the creature is knocked prone, the mandurugo can continue its movement in a straight line without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Shapechanger. At night, the manurugo has the ability to revert into its true bird-like form (during the day, it must be its human-like disguise). The mandurugo usually must do so in order to feed. This can be done as a free action.

While not in true form, the mandurugo loses its ability to fly. She can also only take Actions of its disguise form (or class), and her Strength reduces to 17 (+3).

Innate Spellcasting. The mandurugo's Innate Spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect magic, hex, pass without trace, prestidigitation*
3/day each: *counterspell (as 5th level), dispel magic (at 6th level), fear, sleep, vampiric touch (as 5th level)*
1/day each: *dominate person, phantasmal killer (as 6th level), power word stun.*

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the mandurugo fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Regeneration. The mandurugo regains 15 hit points at the start of her turn if it has at least 1 hit point and it is night.

Mandurugo Weaknesses. The mandurugo has the following flaws:

Night Form. The mandurugo can only be in its true form at night (after sunset and before dawn).

Bloodthirst. The mandurugo must drink at least one pint of blood at night, and can only do this in its true form.

Actions

Multiattack. The mandurugo makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Unarmed Strike (Wings, Claws). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the mandurugo can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

Piercing Tongue (Bite). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft. Hit: 12 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the mandurugo regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Frightening Presence. A creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of the mandurugo and can see and be seen by it,must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. If a saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature suffers the effects of the mandurugo's Death Glare as if it failed the saving throw. Otherwise, a creature that fails the save becomes frightened and has its speed reduced to half.

Death Glare. The mandurugo targets one frightened creature she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see the mandurugo, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or drop to 0 hit points.

Birds of a Feather (2/day). The mandurugo magically calls 3d4 swarms of crows (ravens). The called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds, acting as allies of the mandurugo and obeying her commands. The beasts remain for 1 hour, until the mandurugo dies, or until the mandurugo dismisses them as a bonus action.

The swarm of crows acts like a familiar (see Find Familiar) for the mandurugo, but they cannot be temporarily dismissed (once dismissed, this action must be taken again).

Legendary Actions

The mandurugo can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The mandurugo regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Piercing Tongue (Costs 2 Actions). The mandurugo makes one bite attack.

Innate Spellcasting. The mandurugo may cast a spell from its spell list that has a casting time of 1 action or bonus action.

Move. The mandurugo moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Order Spawn (Recharge 5-6). If mandurugo spawn are present, up to 1 target spawn may take an Action instead of the mandurugo taking this legendary action.

Unarmed Strike. The mandurugo makes one unarmed strike.

Mandurugo Spawn (Maharlika)

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (breastplate)
Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dexterity +6, Wisdom +3
Skills Athletics +7, Perception +3
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, One other local language
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the mandurugo spawn hits with it (included in the attack).

Loyal Bravery. The mandurugo spawn has advantage on saving throws against being charmed and frightened

Regeneration. The mandurugo spawn regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and it is night.

Actions

Multiattack. The mandurugo spawn makes two attacks, only one of which can be a claws attack.

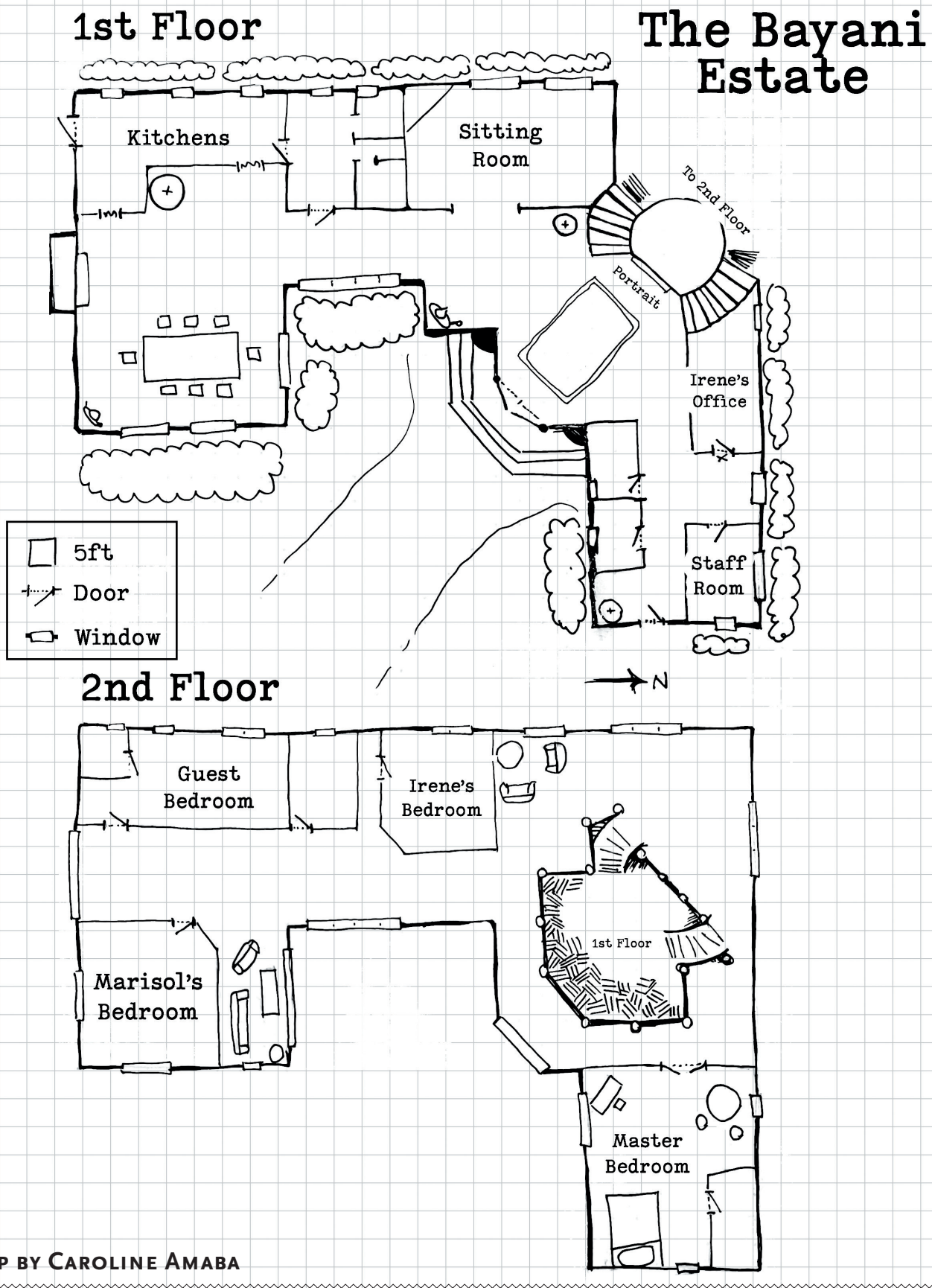
Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.



MAP: NAYYOR & THE BAYANI ESTATE



Map by Caroline Amaba



Illustration by Anthony Alipio

A RIDDLE IN TIME

by Anthony Alipio

Creature: *Gynosphinx* | **Level:** *11*

SYNOPSIS

A pensive gynosphinx convenes with her past selves in search of the answer to an important riddle.

Each sister-self in turn reflects on an encounter from their recent memory, as they consider how to solve the riddle.

After each has weighed in, the four-faced god appears and passes judgment on the sphinx.

Has her time as a divinely appointed guardian taught the sphinx wisdom or folly?

A Riddle in Time is a 3-4 hour adventure for 4 player-monsters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For nearly three millennia, the gynosphinx has faithfully stood guard, not just against unworthy intruders at the gate she was tasked to protect, but against the temptation to pursue a freedom she has never known.

On occasion, the gynosphinx passes the time by visiting herself at various points in her life to have conversations with herself.

Through these conversations and a review of various encounters with gateseekers over the years, the players in this adventure explore the nature of duty versus freedom from the sphinx's points of view.

USING THIS MODULE

In this adventure, each player roleplays the same gynosphinx from different moments in time.

There is no "adventure hook" per se for why the sphinx would be drawn to the adventure. The adventure — and adventurers—come to her (literally!). That said, each temporal instance of the sphinx does have distinct motivational factors. Assign an instance to each player, or have them choose. From youngest to oldest, they are Sister Pure, Sister Curious, Sister Inspired, and Sister Defiant. Sister Undecided is and NPC controlled by the DM until the final chapter. Review the player-monster handout for details on each sister and for additional context to help frame the adventure.

RUNNING THE GAME

You can run this player-monster adventure as a one-off, completely separate from any current campaigns, to take a break from the norm.

Alternatively, you could orchestrate a tie-in to an existing campaign: perhaps your party has just met a free-roaming, celestial gynosphinx in the upper planes; or they've entered an abandoned temple and have an out-of-body experience, each one merging with the consciousness of a different sister-sphinx; or maybe an encounter with an amulet-wearing manticore (see *Chapter 3*) is just around the corner.

SETTING THE MOOD

There's a mood we want to create for this module. I call it "collective introspection," which is just a fancy way of saying, "we want the players to think out loud and have an open dialogue about their shared experience as a sphinx."

Of course there's also combat and riddles, spells and claws, crits and fumbles, and all the rest that goes into a good adventure. But this collective introspection lies at the heart of the central conflict.

CHAPTER 1 – SISTER, SISTER, SISTER, SELF

In which the gynosphinx gathers her selves for a conference, a hero is tested, and a riddle is asked.

This chapter introduces the key story and gameplay elements: temporal shifts, sister-selves, gateseeker encounters, and the Maker's riddle. The following chapters explore and build on these concepts.

YOU. ARE. A SPHINX.

You are a Sphinx. Timeless beauty and terrible beast, you have served dutifully for nearly three millennia, guarding a mystical portal and testing the worthiness of those who seek it.

You were called into being by the divine, and that spark of life still courses through your veins, though the deity that granted it has long since passed from memory. Over the years, you have learned to while away the hours by a simple trick of time travel. You visit with your past or future selves, referring to each other as "Sister," and together you reflect on the various encounters you've had along the way. You find this often provides a fresh perspective and gives you interesting insights to consider.

You are of course wise enough to recognize the dangers of fiddling with the stream of time, so you take careful precautions, and when returning to your own time, you cast a spell of forgetfulness on yourself. As ever, your duty remains, for you are a Sphinx.

A GATHERING OF SISTERS

Sister Pure, you have emerged from your pocket dimension, having sensed the imminent arrival of a lone gateseeker. You stand amidst the ruins of an ancient temple, your lair.

As the seeker approaches, several of your sisters also arrive, cloaked in invisibility and traveling on the ethereal plane. This is not the first time a sister-self has come to observe one of the seeker trials, but never have there been so many at once. However, there is no time for questions. The seeker arrives, and you trust your sisters will not interfere, just as you would not interfere, were you in their place.

The sisters may send telepathic whispers to each other using the *message* cantrip. The players can all confer with one other, in character or out of character as needed. If the sphinx engages in combat, can opt to take turns making combat actions for the sphinx.

THE WAR HERO

A seasoned dragonborn warrior, **Thaxus Aurellus,** seeks an audience with the gods. He wishes them to put an end to the civil war which is currently ravaging his homeland.

He is tired of war and has lost many loved ones on both sides of the conflict.

Trials of Worthiness

Players can choose to use the trial script from their player packet, or adapt it as they see fit.

Based on their assessment of the gateseeker(s), players chooses the type of trial (power, intellect, or spirit), or they can allow the seeker to choose.

- Generally, a **trial of power** is some physical contest (e.g. direct combat, a show of strength, etc.).
- For a **trial of intellect**, the players may come up with a riddle on the spot, or they can use the example provided. If the players create their own riddle, allow them to give the gateseeker advantage or disadvantage on the Intelligence check as they see fit.
- A **trial of spirit** is the test of two doors. One leads to the upper planes, one to the lower.

At the end of each trial, the sphinx decides the gateseeker's fate. Some examples include:

- Open the correct gate and grant thempassage.
- Attack to kill them.
- Attack, incapacitate, and teleport them far away.
- Allow them to leave of their own accord.
- Allow them to enter the wrong gate and close it behind them.

If given the choice, Thaxus picks a trial of power to play to his strengths as a warrior.

- **Trial of Power.** In direct combat against Sister Pure, Thaxus wins if the sphinx falls below 15 hit points.



- **Trial of Intellect.** Present Thaxus with a riddle, for which the answer is "dove." He solves it on a successful Intelligence check contestested by Sister Pure. (Example: "The olive branch is my sceptre, and all look to me for peace, but I am no monarch. What am I?")
- **Trial of Spirit.** Thaxus chooses the correct door on a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Religion) check. Due to his noble intentions, the gods grant him advantage on the roll.

Note:
While the Religion proficiency is generally applied towards Intelligence ability checks (knowledge and recall of religious lore, practices, etc.), here it is applied towards a Wisdom check as it is a more faith and intuition based application of the proficiency (see variant rule, *PHB* p.175).

DEVELOPMENT

Once the encounter with Thaxus is ended, the three future sisters step into the material plane, and Sister Undecided can explain she has gathered the sisters to pose this riddle:

"I have the strength to break solemn vows, and leverage enough to topple gods; the lowest slave inherits me at birth. What am I?"

Ask Sister Pure to answer. She can consult with the others, but she must decide the answer to give. Do not reveal whether the answer is right or wrong; simply record her answer and proceed to the next chapter. The others will provide their own answer after their respective encounters.

CHAPTER 2 – CHALLENGING A MINDSET

In which the middle sisters contemplate the riddle in light of their most recent encounters.

THE TREACHEROUS BARD

Sister Curious, as you consider the answer to the riddle, you reflect back to the last gate-seeker from your own time...

A bard and her band of not-so-merry players approaches the sphinx's lair.

Note:
The bard approaches first. Her companions follow, carrying a large net and cloaked by an invisibility spell. Unfortunately for them, the sphinx's truesight defeats the subterfuge, and the treachery is laid bare.

Trella Birdsong, mastermind behind the Black Peregrine Players, hopes to sweet talk her way into getting what she wants: passage to an enchanted grove in the upper planes. Their current employer, a lich, needs the flowers of the rare ylang-ylang tree as a reagent for a nefarious ritual.

If diplomacy fails, her invisible compatriots plan to snare the sphinx with the net and force her into granting them passage. Trella's fear of the lich is quite the effective motivator, but she retreats if defeat is imminent. If offered, she chooses a trial of intellect, as she relies on her wits to overcome obstacles.

Trials:

- **Power.** In direct combat against Sister Curious, Trella and the Black Peregrine Players win if the sphinx falls below 10 hit points. Alternatively, Sister Curious can offer Trella passage if she attacks and successfully subdues all her companions. As this is the sphinx's memory, have the players control the players as they fight Trella.
- **Intellect.** A riddle, for which the answer is "water," and which Trella solves on a successful Intelligence check contestested by Sister Curious. (Example: "Treacherous are my ways, and I slip through fingers that grasp tight, yet a simple barrier holds me in check. What am I?")

- **Spirit.** Trella chooses the correct door on a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Religion) check.

DEVELOPMENT

When the flashback ends, Sister Undecided asks Sister Curious to give her answer to the riddle.

THE GREENHORN ADVENTURERS

Sister Inspired, you consider your younger Sisters' answers, and question the elder's motives in asking this riddle across time. It can't be coincidence you were invited to participate moments after your recent encounter...

An old monk named Oben Akebbi, Killian Rove, a wagon driver, Grraugh the bugbear wagon guard, and a young farmer named Cade Hearthstead approach the sphinx's lair. They are fugitives from a vast and oppressive empire, and have come seeking a divine artifact located in the upper planes, which is prophesied to restore balance to the lands.

It is clear their quest is noble, but what is equally clear is that they have almost no chance of success.

If offered, Oben chooses a trial of spirit, trusting in his Ki to guide them.

Trials:

- **Power.** Transport the party to the astral plane to face off against four githyanki pirates. As this is the sphinx's memory, have the players control the pirates as they attack the adventurers.
- **Intellect.** A riddle, for which the answer is "sun." (Example: "Rise and fall, my nation is a phoenix, reborn until the end of days. What am I?")
- **Spirit.** A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Religion) check identifies the correct door.

THE ANDROSPHINX

Moments after the trial begins, an androsphinx arrives. After observing the party for a short time, he grins and seems to come to some decision on a private matter.

The androsphinx assists the party in whichever trial they are taking:

- **Power.** The androsphinx enters the fray, using his own power to quickly turn the tide of battle and ensure the party is victorious in combat.
- **Intellect.** The party comes up with several answers (e.g. the emperor, the sun, a dragon, a vampire) and cannot agree on just one. As the party debates which answer to give, the androsphinx *commands* Oben to speak the correct answer.
- **Spirit.** Oben chooses the correct door; Killian chooses the wrong door; Grraugh looks intuitively at the correct door, but follows Killian; Cade chooses the wrong door, but Oben advises Cade to trust in himself. ("You must do what you feel is right, of course..."). The androsphinx roars at the party since most are headed toward the wrong portal, and they flee towards the correct portal instead.

Allow Sister Inspired to react. Is she glad for the interference? Angry or confused? Does she allow the party to enter the portal to the upper planes?

The sphinx, who introduces himself as Tristan, justifies his actions, arguing, "if they had not been worthy, I would not have assisted them." He once protected a sacred treasure in a lair of his own, but after centuries of "slaughtering innocents who only wished to better their lives," he simply walked away, taking the artifact with him. The amulet now hangs around his neck. He is now on a quest of his own: to destroy the artifact and gain true freedom. He leaves, promising to return after his quest is completed, and if she so desires, to take her with him to enjoy life as a free sphinx.

DEVELOPMENT

When the flashback ends, Sister Undecided asks Sister Inspired to provide her answer to the riddle.

THE EVIL LICH

Sister Defiant, your sisters' answers tumble around in your thoughts, and you recall the events that led you to this moment...

An evil **lich** approaches the gate, flying in astride a blood red **nightmare**. While the lich has its own means of planar travel, it lacks knowledge of a specific destination that it seeks from the sphinx. The lich demands information about, and passage to the hidden dimension it seeks, insisting on a trial by power.

Trials:

- **Power.** The lich would most likely defeat Sister Defiant in a direct confrontation, and both the sphinx and the lich recognize this fact.
- **Intellect.** A riddle, for which the answer is determined by the players. If possible, they should keep the answer secret from the DM who must guess it. On a successful Intelligence check contested by Sister Defiant, the lich may ask three yes or no questions to help discover the answer.
- **Spirit.** The lich chooses the correct door on a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Religion) check.

DEVELOPMENT

When the flashback ends, Sister Undecided asks Sister Defiant to give her answer to the riddle**.**

CHAPTER 3 – A TOUGH CHOICE

In which the gynosphinx meets her maker and is presented with a dilemma.

This chapter reveals the origin of Sister Undecided's riddle and explains why she has gathered her sisters for a conference.

THE FOUR-FACED GOD

Sister Undecided falls silent for a moment, considering your answers. Then, she says simply, *"Come, walk with me a while and I will tell you a story..."*

Although many years passed, the androsphinx never returned to keep his promise. Then one day, the deity who created the gynosphinx so many years ago appeared to Sister Undecided at the planar gateway.

To Play A God:

- The deity's true name is lost to time, but the gynosphinx refers to them simply as Maker. The Maker has no discernible gender, and their face seems to shift and change, even as they speak, alternating among four distinct visages.
- The Maker (they/them) addresses the gynosphinx as Daughter.
- They felt her calling out to them for guidance, perhaps subconsciously.

Note:

If your world setting has a well defined pantheon, and you do not want to introduce any "old gods," feel free to substitute your world's deity of justice, balance, law or other similar domain.

THE MANTICORE

When asked for the reason for their visit, the Maker transported Sister Undecided to a manticore breeding grounds. There, she immediately recognized Tristan, somehow transformed into one of those feral beasts. He still wore the artifact on a chain around his neck, but as a manticore, was concerned only with his own base needs: food, shelter, progenation.

Sister Undecided and the Maker watched unseen for a time. Then the Maker posed the riddle: I have the strength to break solemn vows, and leverage enough to topple gods; the lowest slave inherits me at birth. What am I?

"I was at a loss for words, and the Maker must have anticipated this, for they said, "Daughter, you seem...Undecided." Then they advised me to seek counsel with you, my sisters, "one who is Pure, one who is Curious, one who is Inspired, and one who is Defiant."

As the sphinxes walk and talk, they experience the sensation of traveling through time and space, arriving together at the manticore breeding ground.

"And now having met and talked, I feel I know what I must do."

Sister Undecided drops her spell of *invisibility* and approaches the manticore that was Tristan. He has no recollection of the gynosphinx and attacks, provoked

and threatened by her sudden appearance and advance. However, Sister Undecided does not fight back. Instead, it seems she is determined to talk to him and try to convince him to give up the artifact.

DEVELOPMENT

Allow the Sisters to respond and react. If they do nothing, Sister Undecided—their very future—will surely perish. But if they interfere, it goes against everything they've done before. When this encounter resolves, proceed to the **Conclusion**.

CONCLUSION

In which the gynosphinx answers the Maker's riddle, and in so doing, discovers the truth of her own existence.

EPILOGUE

In the aftermath of the encounter with the manticore, the world disappears around all of you, and a voice enters your minds. You all instinctively recognize it as the Maker.

"Daughters, it is time now to go home, but we will speak again soon."

The Maker walks to each sister in turn, from youngest to oldest, and kisses their foreheads. With each kiss, that gynosphinx is returned to her own time, until only Undecided remains. If Undecided was killed by the manticores, the Maker calls her back into being for one more trial—hers.

Note: At this point, explain to the players that all of the past Sisters are incorporated into the eldest, so each now has an equal say in the decisions from here on out.

The Maker asks the gynosphinx for her answer to the riddle, and waits patiently for her to answer. This must be unanimous among the players.

While there are certainly some wrong answers, there are by design, more than just one right answer.

REWARDS

Character rewards are based on their answer:

- "Nothing" or "Time." The gynosphinx remains true to her original purpose and trusts that the gods are the ultimate authority in the universe. The Maker rewards her with a choice: return to her post and continue her good work there or live a new life in the upper planes as a celestial being.
- "Love" or "Passion." She has learned to value emotion over reason. The Maker gives her the choice to return to her post or roam freely upon the earth as a manticore, with no memory of her past life.
- "Free Will" or "Voice/Tongue," essentially an individual's choices/words/actions. She has transcended both her life of selfless servitude and the temptation of self gratification. The Maker grants her complete autonomy to choose her own destiny.
- In the off chance the players guess something that simply doesn't work, the Maker modifies her memory, kisses her forehead, and stations her back at the portal for another 3,000 years.

PLAYER REWARDS

I truly believe play is its own reward. However, if the players are also your regular PC party members, you can grant them each an inspiration point and/or XP for their engagement in this role-reversed adventure.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The sphinx in Oedipus Rex is painted as a malicious and emotionally unstable gatekeeper, barring the way to Thebes, ravaging the people with teeth and claws, and throwing herself to her own death when her riddle is answered. In other stories, sphinxes are wise creatures, gatekeepers of lost knowledge and arcane secrets.

But one thing that almost all the traditions have in common: the sphinx is a bit player, a one-line wonder, a mere stepping stone in some hero's journey. Never is she the hero of her own story. Never does she grow and change over time.

I wanted to challenge all these assumptions and preconceptions in my adventure, to explore the depth and breadth of this immortal creature who dedicates her life to guardianship. So powerful, yet so restrained, remaining always in the same place, doing the same thing, year after year. How does she persist without

going mad? What temptations does she face and overcome? What reward awaits such faithfulness?

Many thanks to Ashley Warren and all the participants and instructors of the RPG Writer Workshop, as well as all the awesome and helpful contributors to the *Uncaged* anthology.

A very special thanks to my wonderful family, without whose support and encouragement this adventure would not have been possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a 20+ year hiatus, Anthony Alipio is back at the table, playing, running, and worldbuilding for tabletop roleplaying games. He can be found on Twitter (@dm_fromscratch) and supported on Ko-fi (https://ko-fi.com/insomnia).

APPENDIX A – PLAYER-MONSTER PACKET

In this adventure, you and the other players will be playing as the monster (a gynosphinx) rather than as a party of adventurers.

You have been around for a long time. Almost three thousand years, in fact. You guard a planar gateway that can transport creatures to various places in both the upper and lower planes of existence. The ultimate chute and ladder on the material plane.

As a sphinx, both your martial and mental prowess are legendary. Would-be heroes and ambitious villains alike are drawn to you as if by magic, and this they perceive as destiny. These gateseekers arrive prepared to risk everything for the promise of fame, fortune, or the fantastic quest that lies just beyond.

The gateway is invisible until you unlock it, but its location is steeped in ancient magic, which serves as a signpost to those that seek it. Legends, myths, ancient texts, visions, and divination all help point the way as well.

You spend most of your time in a personal pocket dimension, waiting in near-stasis, until you sense a gateseeker approaching.

But there are times when you are not testing seekers, nor sequestered in isolation, and it is then that you visit with yourself, your sisters in time, taking advantage of temporal drifts that surround you and the sacred ground you protect.

During these conversations with your sister-selves, you reflect on your experiences, gaining insight and sharing wisdom from both past and future.

THE TRIAL OF WORTHINESS

When you were assigned as guardian to the gateway, the deity who created you also gave you a set of instructions, which laid the foundation for testing the worthiness of any who came seeking passage, and included the following words to be spoken at the beginning of the test. You can use this text verbatim, or adapt it as you see fit.

> "You seek the gate; I am its only key.
> You may prove your worth by a trial of power, intellect, or spirit. If you succeed, I shall grant you passage. If not, you shall face judgement, and the gate you seek will be closed to you."

Note:
As the sphinx, you can choose the type of trial based on your assessment of the gateseeker(s), or you may opt to have the seeker (the DM) choose.

ABILITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

As the **gynosphinx** in this adventure, your character sheet will be the stat block from the Monster Manual, with the following exceptions:

- You have the *message* cantrip.
- Each Sister has a slightly different list of spells prepared.



SISTER PURE (LAWFUL NEUTRAL)

Of those gathered, you are the youngest sister.

You have no secrets from your future selves, but you bring a refreshing perspective from their past. For you, your duty to the gods has always, and will always come first; it is your reason for being.



You have the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *mending, message, minor illusion*
- 1st level (4 slots): *identify, shield, unseen servant*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, suggestion*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse, tongues*
- 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, greater invisibility*
- 5th level (1 slot): *legend lore, modify memory*

SISTER CURIOUS (NEUTRAL GOOD)

Of those gathered, you are the second youngest sister.

You do your job, and you do it well. But you sometimes wonder why you must treat both good and evil creatures with equal respect. Could some things be more important than simply following the rules?



You have the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *message, minor illusion, prestidigitation*
- 1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, locate object, suggestion*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse, tongues*
- 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, greater invisibility*
- 5th level (1 slot): *legend lore, modify memory*

SISTER INSPIRED (CHAOTIC GOOD)

Of those gathered, you are the middle sister.

You have seen great heroes come and go; you have watched vile villains exert their will on the world for a time. You have met an androsphinx who has challenged your way of thinking. You protect the gate, but is it enough? Should you also protect those who can't protect?



You have the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *message, minor illusion, prestidigitation*
- 1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, gentle repose, suggestion*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse, tongues*
- 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, greater invisibility*
- 5th level (1 slot): *legend lore, modify memory*

SISTER DEFIANT (CHAOTIC NEUTRAL)

Aside from Sister Undecided, you are the oldest of the sisters gathered.

Your life of service has been long and thankless, and for one as ageless as you, time can be wearying indeed. You often wonder has it been worth it? Is there a greater purpose somewhere out there beyond the confines of your lair?



You have the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *message, minor illusion, shocking grasp*
- 1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, enlarge/reduce*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse, tongues*
- 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, greater invisibility*
- 5th level (1 slot): *mislead, modify memory*

SISTER UNDECIDED (NEUTRAL)

Undecided is the oldest sister, and the one who has gathered all the others.

She senses she has reached a crossroads and is concerned about their collective future. She seeks her sisters' perspectives on this riddle: I have the strength to break solemn vows, and leverage enough to topple gods; the lowest slave inherits me at birth. What am I?



You have the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *message, minor illusion, prestidigitation*
- 1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, locate object, suggestion*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, remove curse, tongues*
- 4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, secret chest*
- 5th level (1 slot): *modify memory, telepathic bond*

APPENDIX B – GATESEEKERS, GATECRASHERS, AND GODS

GATESEEKERS

The War Hero

Thaxus Arellus is a lawful neutral bronze dragonborn **champion** with these changes:

- He has these racial traits: He can use his action to exhale lightning in a 5 by 30 foot line (but can't do this again until a roll of 5 or 6 at the end of his turn); each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. He has resistance to lightning damage. He speaks Common and Draconic.

Thaxus is a skilled warrior and duelist. If he has a clean shot, he leads with his breath weapon and uses it as often as it recharges. At range, he fires crossbow bolts, dropping the weapon to draw his greatsword when closing to melee. As soon as he loses 20 hitpoints, he takes his second wind.

The Black Peregrine Players

Trella Birdsong is a neutral evil human **bard** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters)* with these changes:

- She has a Charisma score of 17.

Farguun is a lawful evil **duergar**.

Lyss Clairden is a neutral evil human **spy.**

Yyagrrn is a lawful evil deep gnome **xvart warlock of raxivort** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters)* with these changes:

- Yyagrrn has a Strength score of 10, and has a Dexterity score of 18.
- She has these racial traits: Gnome Cunning replaces Low Cunning, Stone Camouflage replaces Raxivort's Tongue, darkvision 120 ft., She speaks Gnomish and Undercommon.

The Black Peregrine Players devoutly follow Trella, as they are all either in love with her or admire her skill and ambition. If she attacks them, however, they retaliate in self-defense, pulling their punches just enough to incapacitate rather than kill outright.

The Greenhorn Adventurers

Oben Abbeki is a lawful good human **sacred stone monk** (*Princes of the Apocalypse)*.

Killian Rove is a neutral human **scout** with the following changes:

- Killian also speaks Goblin. He uses a light crossbow instead of a longbow.

Grraugh is a neutral **bugbear**.

Cade Hearthstead is a lawful good human **cultist** with the following changes:

- Cade has a Strength score of 12. He has proficiency in Insight instead of Deception. He uses a sickle instead of a scimitar.

Following the promptings of his spiritual ki energy, Oben initiated this quest, and was soon joined by Cade, whose farm was burned down by an imperial scouting party.

Killian and Grraugh were hired for transport to the fabled Temple of the Ancients, and though they appear to have little interest in the quest itself (besides the promise of more coin), they have no love for the empire, and are happy to play a part in its downfall.

In combat, the party fights valiantly, but they are obviously no match for the pirate raiders.

MONSTERS

The Astral Raiders

Githyanki Pirates

The **Githyanki Pirates** are lawful evil **githyanki warriors.**

These pirates are members of a raiding party, currently ransacking an abandoned smuggler cache on a small island in the astral plane. They are surprised by the sudden arrival of the sphinx and the gateseekers, but attack with gusto once it is clear the gynosphinx does not intend to interfere. They become confused and alarmed when the androsphinx arrives and attacks them, and attempt to flee back to their astral skiff.

The Lich

Lich and Nightmare

This lich is an ancient creature. Though not quite as old as the gynosphinx, it does remember the old gods and their eternal servants. It has no name (that it will reveal) and is a selfish, craven entity. It reserves the one sliver of kindness it still possesses for its nightmare mount.

The Rogue Sphinx

Tristan is a chaotic good **androsphinx** with no lair actions.

As an outward sign of his independence, the androsphinx has given himself a name: Tristan (after a particularly noble hero he regrettably killed in a trial of power).

In combat, the sphinx leads with a flame strike, targeting as many enemies as possible. He also makes liberal use of legendary actions to teleport to the enemy so he can wreak as much havoc as possible with his claws. If one or more of the seekers falls in battle, he casts spare the dying to stabilize them and ensure they survive. He even conjures a heroes' feast for them afterwards.

The Feral Manticores

Manticore

If he feels threatened, the manticore that was Tristan attacks, and calls two of his mates to assist. He is no match for the sphinx, but feels emboldened in his own territory. He jealously guards the shiny trinket around his neck, though he has no clue what it really is. The Maker seems unconcerned that the artifact remains with the beast, considering it sufficiently guarded enough to prove the worth of any seekers.

THE FOUR-FACED GOD

The Maker

The Maker is one of the forgotten ones, a pantheon of ancient deities whose influence on the world was already waning millennia ago, when the Maker called the gynosphinx in this adventure into being. They are immortal and still have a home in the upper planes, but are no longer actively worshipped by any religions.

The Maker has no discernible gender, and their face seems to shift and change, alternating among four distinct visages. Law, Justice, Balance, and Faithfulness are their domains.

The Maker has no stat block, so the DM is free to embellish their divine powers as needed.

UNCAGED

GRIMOIRE

A collection of Uncaged-themed resources for Dungeon Masters and Players

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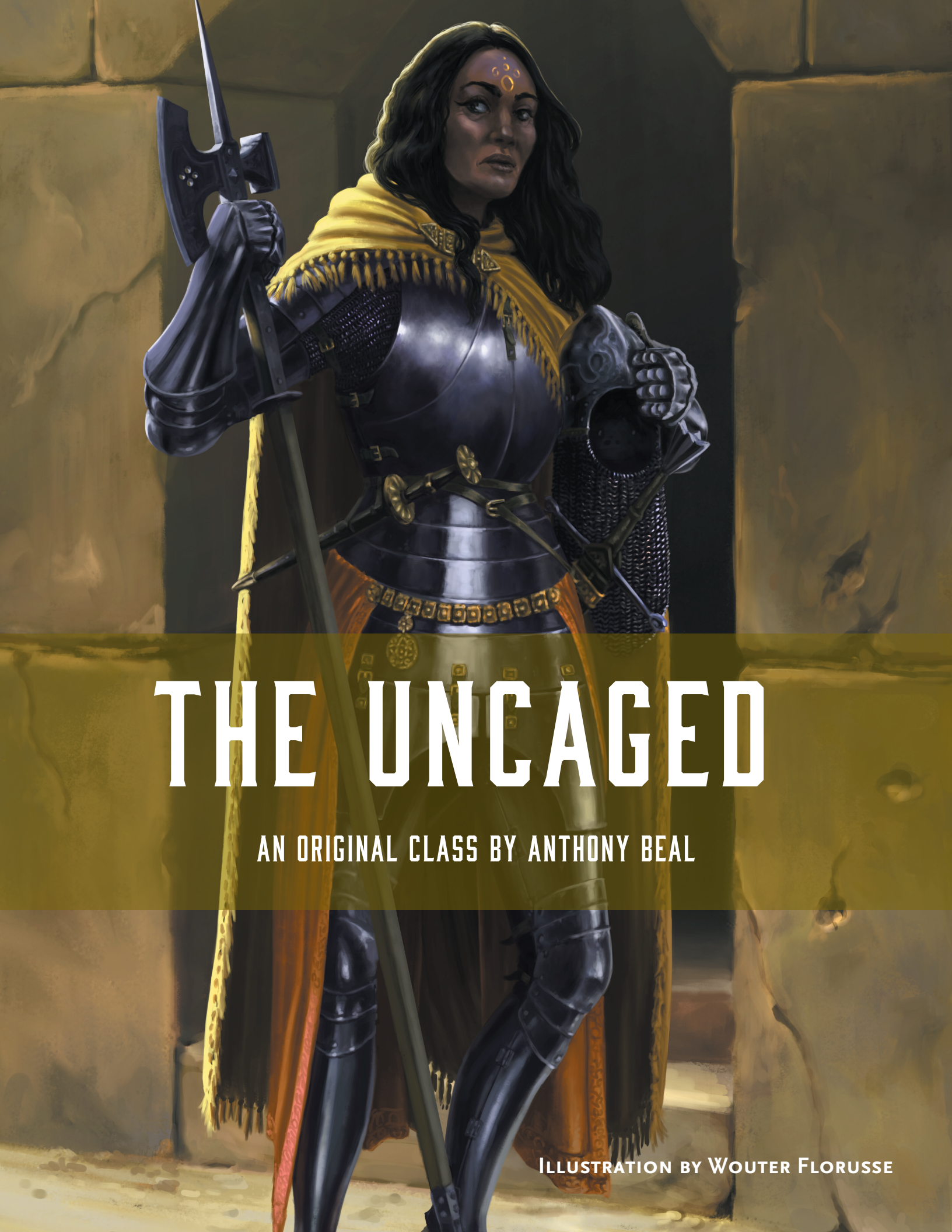


THE UNCAGED

AN ORIGINAL CLASS BY ANTHONY BEAL

Illustration by Wouter Florusse

Throughout the multiverse, there are those who find themselves consistently underestimated. These individuals are overlooked for a variety of social, political, and economic reasons. They exist on the fringes, their voices unheard in the cacophony of the universe. Sometimes, however, the universe hears their cries. It bends itself around them, breaking them from the shackles of silence. Unfettered and free, these newly freed individuals are the uncaged.

The uncaged find themselves somehow removed from the normal binding of fate and destiny. Their strange and unique abilities allow them, many for the first time, to bend the universe to their choosing. They were part of the voiceless masses, suddenly given the power to act when they usually could not.

Power from the Masses

Though their power comes from bending the weave of fate to their will, most uncaged will tell you that their actual power comes from the people. The masses that can sometimes fade into the background as world shaking events occur are the backbone of why they do what they do. The uncaged remember that they too were once forgotten, and the destiny that they forge is often in remembrance of that. Most uncaged eschew the pomp and fame that comes from adventuring, focusing instead on the common people and their plight. They are the voice of the masses, reminding their companions that actions have consequences, outside of just the movers and shakers. As often as they can, an individual uncaged will try to let these unknown masses speak for themselves, lending their strength to them to ensure that they are heard. Their compassion for the downtrodden can turn to righteous anger when they see those who are abused by a system meant to "keep them in line." More than one revolution has been sparked but the anger of a member of the uncaged.



Art by Alison Huang

Unknown Destiny

Destiny for the uncaged is mutable; a block of clay that they choose to mold how they will. Uncaged tend to be drawn to places and people that speak to the life they had before their unbinding. They find solace in addressing the problems they saw in their life that they lacked the power to change.

Often though, uncaged find ways to insert themselves in conflicts and issues where the plight of the masses could or is being overlooked. Always on the lookout for a new cause to fight for, uncaged tend to be more sensitive to the ebb and flow of events and conscientious of how those events will affect those who are often forgotten.

Creating an Uncaged

When you sit down to create your uncaged character, consider what type of life they had before the shackles of fate unbound them. Were they living a life among the common folk, unable to rise above their station because of a broken system? Perhaps they were unfairly stigmatized due to something about their heritage or superstitions about their bloodline? They could even have been part of the gentry, silenced by societal rules and etiquette.

Another thing to consider is the event that caused them to become unbound from fate's grasp. Was it interacting with a powerful magical artifact gone wrong that blasted them out of the normal weft and weave of fate? Perhaps it was a moment of strength; an instant where they found themselves standing up for themselves or someone else? Rarely, some uncaged are plucked from fate by a divine being, simply to shake up the status quo. Knowing how your character became unbound can give you insight into their personality and what (or who) it is that they fight for.

The Uncaged

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	Fate Points	Uncaged Fates
1st	+2	Uncaged Fates	1	1
2nd	+2	Fighting Style	2	1
3rd	+2	Uncaged Destiny	2	1
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	2
5th	+3	Extra Attack	3	2
6th	+3	Sacrifice Fate	4	2
7th	+3	Uncaged Destiny feature	4	2
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	5	3
9th	+4	Fate Touched	5	3
10th	+4	Necessity of Fate	6	3
11th	+4	Uncaged Destiny feature	6	3
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	7	4
13th	+5	Unstoppable Force	7	4
14th	+5	Far Traveler	8	4
15th	+5	Uncaged Destiny feature	8	4
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	9	5
17th	+6	Manifest Fate	9	5
18th	+6	Clarity	10	5
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	10	5
20th	+6	Unbound Fate	10	5

QUICK BUILD

You can create an uncaged quickly by using the following suggestions. First, choose either Strength for melee weapons or Dexterity for ranged and finesse weapons your highest ability score. Make Charisma your second highest ability score and Constitution your third highest. Finally, select either the Hermit or Urchin background.

CLASS FEATURES

As an uncaged, you gain the following class features.

Hit Points
Hit Dice: 1d8 per uncaged level
Hit Points at 1st level: 8 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 + your Constitution modifier

Proficiencies
Armor: Light armor, medium armor, shields
Weapons: Simple weapons, martial weapons
Tools: None
Saving Throws: Dexterity, Charisma
Skills: Choose any three

Equipment
You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background:
(a) scale mail or (b) leather armor
(a) one martial melee weapon and a shield
(a) a shortbow and 20 arrows or (b) two simple weapons
(a) a dungeoneer's pack or (b) an explorer's pack

UNCAGED FATES

Starting at 1st level, being untethered from fate allows you to exert your will upon it. Each time you finish a long rest, you choose a number of uncaged fates to activate. The maximum number of active uncaged fates you can have is listed under the Active Fates column of The Uncaged table.

For example, at 4th level you have 3 fate points and can have up to 2 active uncaged fates. You can have 1 active uncaged fate with three points invested or 2 active uncaged fates with at least one point invested in each. Each time you finish a long rest, you can choose to activate different uncaged fates using your fate points.

For example, at 4th level you have 2 fate points and can have up to 2 active uncaged fates. You can either have 1 active uncaged fate with two points invested, or 2 active uncaged fates with 1 point invested in each. Each time you finish a long rest, you can choose to activate different uncaged fates using your fate points.

FIGHTING STYLE

Starting at 2nd level, you adopt a fighting style as your particular style of fighting. Choose one of the following options. You can't take a fighting style option more than once, even if you later get to choose again.

Archery
You gain a +2 to attack rolls you make with ranged weapons.

Dueling
While you are wielding a melee weapon in one hand and no other weapons, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.

Great Weapon Fighting
When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack you make with a melee weapon that you are wielding with two hands, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or a 2. The weapon must have the two-handed or versatile property for you to gain this benefit.

Protection
When a creature you can see attacks a target other than you that is within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. You must be wielding a shield.

UNCAGED DESTINY

Starting at 3rd level, you have unlocked yourself from the wheel of fate, allowing you to blaze a unique path. Choose an Uncaged Destiny from the following: the Bulwark, the Liberator, or the Orator. Your Uncaged Destiny grants you features at 3rd level, and again at 7th, 11th, and 15th level.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

Starting at 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or two ability scores of your choice by 1. You cannot increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

EXTRA ATTACK

Starting at 5th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

SACRIFICE FATE

Starting at 6th level, you can temporarily sacrifice one of your uncaged fates to aid your allies. As an action, you sacrifice one of your active uncaged fates. That fate becomes inactive, and you lose the benefits it provided you. You produce one of the effects below. The power of these effects increases the more fate points invested in the sacrificed uncaged fate.

Cleanse. You end one of the follow conditions per fate point invested in the sacrificed uncaged fate for all friendly creatures within 30 feet of you: charmed, confused, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, and stunned. The conditions ended are the same for every creature.

Halt. Each hostile creature within 30 feet that you can see cannot take reactions and has it's movement speed reduced by 5 feet per fate point invested in the sacrificed uncaged fate. This effect lasts for 1 minute or until you can no longer see the creature.

Uplift. For 1 minute, friendly creatures within 30 feet of you cannot roll lower than a 4 + 2 per fate point invested in the sacrificed uncaged fate on any saving throws they make.

You can only sacrifice one uncaged fate using this feature. You regain the benefits of the sacrificed uncaged fate and the use of this feature when you finish a short or long rest. You only regain one sacrificed uncaged fate per short rest.

FATE TOUCHED

Starting at 9th level, your connection to fate allows you to temporarily alter that of another. If you have unspent fate points, you can use an action to touch another creature, investing a fate point in them. When you do, the target creature can re-roll one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw before their next long rest. The creature chooses which roll to use. You

regain the use of fate points invested this way when you finish a long rest.

NECESSITY OF FATE

Starting at 10th level, you can concentrate on your connection to fate to reconfigure your uncaged fates. By spending 1 minute in meditation you can invest unspent fate points or move fate points in your active uncaged fates, up to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). You can use these points to activate different uncaged fates or to increase the potency of uncaged fates you already have active, but any uncaged fate that is already active cannot have its fate points invested reduced below 1.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

Starting at 13th level, fate sees to it that nothing can hold you back. When you suffer the restrained condition, your movement speed is only reduced to half, attacks against you do not have advantage, and your attacks do not have disadvantage.

FAR TRAVELER

Starting at 14th level, you can go where you are needed, no matter the distance. You can cast the spell *teleport* or *plane shift* without the need for material components or expending a spell slot. You must travel with the spell. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

MANIFEST FATE

Starting at 17th level, your control over fate allows you to cascade the benefits of your uncaged fates to others. As an action, you choose one of your active uncaged fates to sacrifice. When you do, you grant the benefit of the sacrificed uncaged fate to a number of creatures you can see, up to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). Creatures gain this benefit for 1 minute or until you are unconscious or killed.

You can only sacrifice one uncaged fate using this feature. You regain the benefits of the sacrificed uncaged fate and the use of this feature when you finish a short or long rest. You only regain one sacrificed uncaged fate per short rest.

CLARITY

Starting at 18th level, your time spent steeped in fate and destiny gives clarity and focus to danger. You gain proficiency in one additional saving throw of your choice. When you make a saving throw that you are proficient in, you treat any d20 roll of 9 or less as a 10.

UNBOUND FATE

Starting at 20th level, you have mastered control of your own fate, making it everything you wish for it to be. Choose one uncaged fate. You permanently gain the benefit of that uncaged fate at it's highest level. This uncaged fate does not cost you fate points and does not count toward your total number of active fates. The fate you gain from this feature is considered active and can be sacrificed.

UNCAGED DESTINY

Each uncaged chooses their own path to walk once freed from the binding of fate. Though they are each unique, most find themselves drawn toward an ideal that helps to guide them.

THE BULWARK

The destiny of the bulwark is to protect those who cannot fight for themselves. They walk a path of defense, hoping to shield the voiceless long enough so that they can be heard.

Defensive Master
Starting when you choose this destiny at 3rd level, your destiny is strengthened by your connection to fate. For each of your active uncaged fates, your AC increases by +1.

Imposing Defender
Starting at 3rd level, you stand in defense of those who cannot defend themselves, taking the blows meant for them. As a bonus action, you can make a Charisma (Intimidation) skill check, targeting a number of hostile creatures you can see equal to your Charisma score modifier (minimum 1).
Each targeted creature must make a Wisdom saving throw, the DC of which is equal to your Intimidation skill check. On a failed save, the targeted creature has disadvantage on attacks against any creature other than you until the start of your next turn.

Shield of the People
Starting at 7th level, you have become a beacon of the strength of speaking out against injustice and ensuring that those voices are heard. Friendly creatures within 30 feet of you whose CR is 1 or lower are immune to the frightened condition. This increases to friendly creatures who are CR 2 at 11th level, and CR 3 at 16th level.

Never Falter
Starting at 11th level, you remain committed to the defense of others, able to push yourself past your limits. When an attack would reduce you to 0 hit points, you can choose to immediately sacrifice one of your active uncaged fates to remain in the fight. When you do, you regain hit points equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1) per fate point invested in the sacrificed uncaged fate.
You can only sacrifice one uncaged fate using this feature. You regain the benefits of the sacrificed uncaged fate and the use of this feature when you finish a short or long rest. You only regain one sacrificed uncaged fate per short rest.

Guardian of Destiny
Starting at 15th level, you have become the living embodiment of the defense of others so that they may find their own voice. As an action, you bend fate to become the most important thing on the battlefield. Until the start of your next turn, your speed becomes 0, you cannot take reactions, your AC increases by 2, and you gain resistance to all damage.
For the duration, hostile creatures cannot target anyone other than you with attacks. If a creature uses a spell or spell like ability, it must be centered on you. Any additional creatures that are affected by a spell or spell like ability have advantage on their saving throws. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

The Liberator
The destiny of the liberator is to lash out at the darkness that holds others down. They walk a path of combat, hoping to break the chains of oppression by force.

Master of Arms
Beginning when you choose this destiny at 3rd level, you use your ability to manipulate fate to aid you in combat. For each of your active uncaged fates, you add +1 to the damage of your weapon attacks.

Quick Striker
Starting at 3rd level, you can use the flow of fate around you to quickly redirect your attacks. On your turn, when you make a weapon attack and miss, you can immediately make another weapon attack against a different creature within 5 feet of the first.

Force of the People
Starting at 7th level, you have become a beacon of action for those are oppressed, inspiring them to act. Friendly creatures within 30 feet of you whose CR is 1 or lower add your Charisma modifier (minimum 1) to their weapon attack rolls. This increases to friendly creatures who are CR 2 at 11th level, and CR 3 at 16th level.

Opportune Moment
Starting at 11th level, you can gauge the momentum of a battle, choosing a moment to turn the tide. As a bonus action, you can sacrifice one of your active uncaged fates to try and end a fight quickly. When you do, for 1 minute you increase your critical hit range by 1 per fate point invested in the sacrificed fate.
You can only sacrifice one uncaged fate using this feature. You regain the benefits of the sacrificed uncaged fate and the use of this feature when you finish a short or long rest. You only regain one sacrificed uncaged fate per short rest.

Champion of Destiny

Starting at 15th level, you have become a living champion of destiny, a forceful hand to shatter the chains of oppression. When you take the Attack action on your turn, you can make 3 weapon attacks instead of 2. Additionally, as a bonus action on your turn, you can infuse your strikes with the zeal of destiny. Until the start of your next turn, you maximize the damage dice on your weapon attack damage rolls.
Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

THE ORATOR

The destiny of the orator is to speak out against the oppression that they see. They walk a path dedicated to uplifting those who have seemingly lost all hope.

Master of Benevolence

Beginning when you choose this destiny at 3rd level, your presence alone offers comfort. For each of your active uncaged fates, friendly creatures within 30 feet of you that regain hit points gain an additional +2 hit points.

Spellcasting

Starting at 3rd level, your ability to unwind fate gives you a limited ability to manipulate the arcane. For the rules on spellcasting, see Chapter 10 of the *PHB*, and Chapter 11 for the bard spell list.

Cantrips. You learn 2 cantrips from the bard spell list.

Spell Slots. The Orator Spellcasting table shows you how many spell slots you have to cast spells of 1st level or higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a spell slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all your expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

For example, if you know the 1st level spell *healing word* and have a 1st-level and 2nd-level spell slot available, you can cast *healing word* using either slot.

Spells Known at 1st-Level and Higher. You know 3 1st-level bard spells of your choice.

The Orator Spellcasting table shows you when you learn more bard spells of 1st-level and higher. Each time you learn a spell, it must be of a level for which you have spell slots. For instance, when you reach 7th level in this class, you can learn 1 new spell of 1st or 2nd level.

Whenever you gain a level in this class, you can replace one of the bard spells you know with another bard spell. The new spell must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

Spellcasting Ability. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for your bard spells, as you pull your magic by bending the forces of fate. You use your Charisma whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. Additionally, you use your Charisma modifier to set the DC of bard spells that you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

Respite of the People

Starting at 7th level, you have become a beacon of comfort for those who have seemingly lost all hope. Friendly creatures within 30 feet of you whose CR is 1 or lower are immune to the diseased and poisoned conditions, and creatures already diseased or poisoned have the condition temporarily suppressed. This increases to friendly creatures who are CR 2 at 11th level, and CR 3 at 16th level.

Cascade of Hope

Starting at 11th level, you can sacrifice a part of yourself to ensure that others have a chance to stand. As a bonus action, you can sacrifice one of your active uncaged fates to reinvigorate your allies. When you do, all friendly creatures within 30 feet of you immediately heal 10 hit points per fate point invested in the sacrificed fate.

You can only sacrifice one uncaged fate using this feature. You regain the benefits of the sacrificed uncaged fate and the use of this feature when you finish a short or long rest. You only regain one sacrificed uncaged fate per short rest.

Ambassador of Destiny

Starting at 15th level, you have become the living embodiment of the power of speaking out and making the voiceless heard. As an action, you create an area of neutrality in a 30 foot sphere centered on you. Once activated, the sphere does not move even if you do. For 1 minute, creatures that are within the sphere cannot be targeted by hostile actions (including spells)

The Orator Spellcasting

Orator Level	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	1st-level	2nd-level	3rd-level	4th-level
3rd	2	3	2	-	-	-
4th	2	4	3	-	-	-
5th	2	4	3	-	-	-
6th	2	4	3	-	-	-
7th	2	5	4	2	-	-
8th	2	6	4	2	-	-
9th	2	6	4	2	-	-
10th	3	7	4	3	-	-
11th	3	8	4	3	-	-
12th	3	8	4	3	-	-
13th	3	9	4	3	2	-
14th	3	10	4	3	2	-
15th	3	10	4	3	2	-
16th	3	11	4	3	3	-
17th	3	11	4	3	3	-
18th	3	11	4	3	3	-
19th	3	12	4	3	3	1
20th	3	13	4	3	3	1

and cannot perform hostile actions (including spells). You designate which creatures can enter the sphere and which cannot. If a creature leaves the sphere and takes a hostile action, it cannot re-enter the sphere.
Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

UNCAGED FATES

Below is a list of the Uncaged Fates that you can activate by investing your fate points in them.

Adept

When you activate this fate, choose one skill or one set of artisan's tools that you do not have proficiency in. For each fate point that you invest in this fate, you gain a +2 bonus to skill checks you make with that skill or set of artisan's tools.

Brute

When you activate this fate, your critical strikes continue to inflict pain on your enemies. When you score a critical hit on a weapon attack, that creature takes an additional 1d8 of the weapon's damage type at the start of its next turn per fate point you invest in this fate.

Defender

When you activate this fate, you can use an action to create a sympathetic link between yourself and another creature that you can see. Until the start of your next turn, your AC is reduced by 1 per fate point you invest in this fate, and the target creature's AC increases by the same amount.

Emissary

When you activate this fate, you can always find the right words to help you through any situation. For each fate point you invest in this fate, choose one of the following skills: Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion. When you make a skill check in one of the chosen skills, you treat any d20 die roll of 7 or lower as an 8.

Gatekeeper

When you activate this fate, you stand at the precipice of life and death, helping yourself and others cling to life. You and creatures within 30 feet of you add +1 to

your death saving throws for each fate point you invest in this fate.

Hierophant
When you activate this fate, you mind expands and connects more clearly to the universe. For each fate point you invest in this fate, you gain access to the following spells:

1 fate point: *detect evil and good*
2 fate points: *augury*
3 fate points: *clairvoyance*

You can cast the spells from this uncaged fate once per day without the need for material components or expending a spell slot.

Martyr
When you activate this fate, you can use your own vitality to help heal those around you. As an action, you choose one creature that you can see within 30 feet of you. You expend your hit dice and the creature regains hit points equal to the roll. For each fate point you invest in this fate, you can expend 1 hit die per use of this ability.

Pathfinder
When you activate this fate, you excel at making sure that you reach your goal. You always know the general direction of something that you seek, but not the distance it is from you. For each fate point you invest in this fate, you know of one hazard that stands between you and what you seek. This information is not specific, and may require interpretation, but is always truthful.

Runner
When you activate this fate, you move with greater speed and alacrity. Your base walking speed increases by 5 feet and you gain a +1 bonus to your initiative rolls for each fate point you invest in this fate.

Scholar
When you activate this fate, you can ease the communication between yourself and others. You can read and write one additional language of your choice for each fate point you invest in this fate.

Shieldbearer
When you activate this fate, you manipulate fate to help shield yourself from damage. For each fate point you invest in this fate, choose one damage type you have resistance to from the options below:

1 fate point: bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing
2 fate points: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison
3 fate points: force, necrotic, psychic, radiant, or thunder

Traveler
When you activate this fate, you become more adept at moving through different terrains. You choose an addi-tional movement speed, either climbing or swimming. Your movement speed in your chosen type increases by 10 feet per fate point you invest in this fate.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

When the idea for the *Uncaged* first formed, it was born from the love and admiration I felt from all the wonderful people and community that *Uncaged* anthology had become. That sense of community, of unheard voices coming together to create, reignited my own passion for writing.

To give back to all these wonderful folks from around the world, I created a class that wasn't just inspired by them, but was them, as I had come to know and see them. In hindsight, I shouldn't have been surprised by what happened next. The first thing the *Uncaged* community did was to immediately decide that they wanted to share the class with the world. To say that I panicked would be an understatement.

With time, it became clear that the same things that had inspired me to write the class were the exact same things that caused everyone to want to share it. The themes of diversity, compassion, and most importantly visibility, are echoed not only in the class, the volumes of *Uncaged*, but in the community that birthed them both. So, I set to work, crafting the best version I could. The class grew in complexity (which makes sense, humanoids are complex creatures) but ultimately, became something wholly unique to the world of D&D.

The *Uncaged* anthology was founded on the belief that every creature in the multiverse has a story, even the monsters. The Uncaged class is a reflection of the wonderful diversity of the creators that stood ready to raise a voice for the voiceless. I hope that when you play this class, you feel the spark of all of them, and that they inspire you to tell your stories the way they inspired me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Beal lives in Northern Ohio. A hopeless romantic who enjoys a good slasher, when not writing he can usually be found reading a comic or singing a Taylor Swift song off-key. He can be reached @ajbeal85 on Twitter.





"The Lorelei" by Helen Stratton

CHARACTER RACES, SUBCLASSES, AND PATRONS

LORELEI

By Jessica Marcrum

Sitting high up on the rocks, overlooking the river, the lovely lorelei sits. She sings in that golden voice of hers, combing her hair, paying no mind to the countless shipwrecks beneath her rock. Poor sailors never stand a chance. If you happen to sail down a lorelei's river, be sure to stuff your ears with wax before you get in sight of her.
-- Heinrich Liebesliede, bard and sailor

Lorelei clans live in small family units in rocky terrain overlooking rivers, spending their time singing and communing with the river. When provoked, lorelei react with powerful magical and musical attacks, turning their enemy's environments against them.

RIVER GUARDIANS

High on rocks overlooking swiftly flowing rivers, lorelei clans make their home. Each lorelei takes turns acting as lookout, leading many who encounter them to mistakenly believe there is only one lorelei per river. Overseeing the well-being of the aquatic life, they react violently to any who overfish or pollute their waters. Sailors who survive an encounter with a lorelei quickly learn to steer clear of their waters, and legends of the fearsome singular lorelei grow.

Rivers protected by lorelei are notable for being remarkably clean and teeming with wildlife. In return for their protection, riverfolk gift the lorelei with gems, pearls, and other treasures of the waves. Lorelei adorn themselves with these treasures, as well as trading them to local rock gnomes for gold, silks, and other goods.

Though they live on rocky shore, lorelei consider themselves part of the water and keep out of land disputes as a general rule. Rare exceptions may be made when their gnome trading companions or particularly devoted sailors are at risk. Lorelei defend their allies as devotedly as they defend their rivers. Many a foe has dropped their weapons and fled when faced with a battalion of armored lorelei singing in unison.

MUSIC MAKERS

Lorelei love nothing more than sitting on rocks overlooking their rivers and creating music. From an early age, they are trained in the art of song. As soon as they can walk, young lorelei join youth choirs. These choral groups form their social hierarchy, with stronger singers gaining higher societal standing from an early age. Uniformity of sound is stressed in order to maintain the illusion of one lorelei per river, and many a teenage lorelei has rebelled against their conductor, clan, and parents by attempting to find their own voice.

To prove themselves worthy of the lookout position, a lorelei must demonstrate they can sing what is known as the Golden Song. This song has the power to lure fisherfolk, sailors, and wanderers alike to be dashed upon the rocks to their death. Meant solely to be used as a weapon, absent-minded lookouts have been known to sing it to themselves, inadvertently killing dozens of sailors before their watch is over.

MUSES OF MYTH AND MYSTERY

Bards, poets, and lovers have all been inspired by the image of a solitary woman singing atop a cliff. Paintings, poems, and songs depicting the lorelei lookout abound in riverside towns. Younger lorelei are fascinated by art featuring them and may gift an artist with a lock of hair in return for a copy of "their" poem, song, or image. Older lorelei are less easily swayed and more inclined to critique the artist's technique, offering particularly harsh criticism to composers.

The lorelei encourage the idea of a solitary female singer, believing that the less known about their society and numbers, the safer they and the river they protect are. To feed into the image, lorelei encourage clan members to wear similar hairstyles and clothing. Those on watch typically style their hair in long ringlets and wear layers of sheer silks that catch the wind. The power of myth is stronger than that of sight, and lorelei of all genders are frequently mistaken for beautiful maidens by overeager sailors.

SECLUDED COMMUNITY

Apart from their families, lorelei meet few outsiders apart from gnome traders and the occasional romantic. Lorelei adventurers are typically those who strained against their culture's uniformity and sought independence. Dubbed "soloists" by their clans, they are seen as charming oddities. Soloists are welcome to return to their home clan, but are no longer allowed to serve as lookout in case they are recognized from their journeys.

Lorelei adventurers are frequently confused that those they encounter cannot communicate with aquatic creatures, swim, or have their affinity for music. Accustomed to living in small clans, large cities and political struggles both baffle and excite them. While thrilled to meet fellow artists, they are especially hostile to any looking to dominate or destroy an aquatic area.

As long as a lorelei is near a river, they will always have enough fish to eat. This leads to them frequently forgetting to pack food when traveling. Additionally, accustomed to spending long hours alone on watch, lorelei can entertain themselves with their thoughts for hours. As a result, some lorelei adventurers appear rude or airheaded.

LORELEI PERSONALITY

Due to their solitary, homogenous, musical upbringing, a lorelei might have motivations and mannerisms much different from an adventurer with a similar background. You can select, roll, or adapt a lorelei-specific quirk from the Lorelei Quirks table.

LORELEI QUIRKS

d8	Quirk
1	You become agitated when you can't hear running water and complain endlessly about how quiet everything is, even when in a noisy city.
2	You constantly sing or hum to yourself.
3	You love bedecking yourself in gems, baubles, and other shiny things.
4	Your hair must always be immaculate. You constantly fiddle with a brush or comb.
5	You live in your own world and don't notice others addressing you until at least the third time they say your name.
6	You sleep best when at least partially submerged in water.
7	You attempt to form every group you encounter into a choir or band.
8	You grow bored easily and wander off in the middle of conversations.

LORELEI NAMES

Lorelei given names are often descriptions of significant musical or social accomplishments. They take their family names from their home rivers, which can become confusing when multiple lorelei families live along the same river, every family leader referred to as Mother/Father/Zaza Rhine, etc.

Birth Names: Aloisa, Arietta, Cort, Edel, Evi, Fischersfürchte, Goldenese, Kunstina, Liederling, Locken, Milo, Nixie, Operelia, Reinhilde, Reize, Schiffersangst, Selig, Strom, Valda, Verlin, Walburga, Wetzel, Willia, Zahn

LORELEI TRAITS

Your lorelei character has the following racial traits.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution increases by 1 and your Charisma increases by 2.

Age. Lorelei reach physical maturity around age 16, but frequently stay with their family until the age of 100, at which point they are considered adults. They can live to be 750 years old.

Alignment. Lorelei tend toward neutral alignments, taking little interest in the world outside their river. More adventurous lorelei embrace their chaotic neutral side, embracing the ebb and flow of their home river.

Size. Lorelei range from under 5 to over 6 ft. tall with shapely builds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 ft., and you have a swimming speed of 30 ft.

Amphibious. You can breathe air and water.

Control Earth and Water. A child of the rocks overlooking a river, you can call on the magic of elemental earth and water. You can cast create or destroy water with this trait. Starting at 3rd level, you can cast meld into stone with it, and starting at 5th level, you can also cast control water. Once you cast a spell with this trait, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Emissary of the River. Aquatic creatures have an extraordinary affinity with your people. You can communicate simple ideas with creatures that can breathe water. They can understand the meaning of your words, though you have no special ability to understand them in return.

Golden Song. Famous for your voices, you may lure your enemies to death with the power of song. Once per long rest, you may sing your golden song. Every humanoid and giant of your choice within 30 ft. of you that can hear the song must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 plus your Charisma bonus plus your proficiency bonus) or be charmed by you. You may continue singing on subsequent turns as a bonus action. A target that successfully saves is immune to your song for the next 24 hours.

While charmed by you, a target is incapacitated. If the charmed target is more than 5 ft. away from you, it must move on its turn toward you by the most direct route. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into damaging terrain, such as lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than you, a target can repeat the saving throw. A creature can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

At 5th level, your range increases to 60 ft, at 10th level to 120 ft., at 15th level to 240 ft., and at 20th level to 500 ft.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and Aquan.



MISTRESSES OF STONE

by D.E. Chaudron

Medusae (otherwise known as 'gorgons', not to be mistaken with the bullish creature) are a fading breed in most well-known in Ravnica. Found almost exclusively in the undercity, medusae wander dark labyrinths and rot pits with equal grace, bringing a certain nobility to the diseased and abandoned corners frequented by the Golgari. Beautiful yet terrifying, many medusae prefer a life in the shadows, where the constant attention they draw from other guilds is mitigated.

VENOM AND VIGOR

A medusae's most prominent feature is her serpentine hair, a host of snakes that emerge from the scalp and appear to have a life of their own. While rumors abound of solitary medusae that speak to these snakes, they are simply another part of a medusae's body, and any independent intelligence is an illusion. Their hair manifests in a diverse spectrum of colors, although green and black scales are the most common amongst them. Many medusae style their snakes with rings of metal or polished stone. A medusa's skin ranges from pale alabaster to obsidian, with most in the shades of gray in between. Regardless of tone, their green blood provides a particular tinge to it when exerted or otherwise agitated.

HEARTS OF STONE

Medusae are known for their cold demeanor and exacting wit—there are some who would rather be turned to stone than face a medusae in such a contest. They have high standards for both themselves and others, but deeply value loyalty and community. In this day and age, medusae are also deeply practical, driven by necessity. They have not survived so long to be extinguished now, and are thus willing to make deals with unusual allies, no matter if other guilds—or their own—raise a brow.

LAST OF THEIR KIND

The heyday of the medusae is long over. Once as common as centaurs or goblins, the slow collapse of their dynasties reached a head when the Sisters of Stone Death, a quintet of medusae serving Svogthir, rose up and overthrew him. The Golgari parun was immune to their petrifying gazes, but they imprisoned Svogthir in the depths of the undercity, sealed away with every bone in his body shattered.

Yet the Sisters' rule over the Golgari was short-lived. Savra, sister of the current guildmaster Jarad Vod Savo, saw to their swift collapse, and eventually only a single Sister remained. Many other medusae perished in the conflict, until the remaining dynasties fled into self-imposed exile, waiting for the dust to settle around the guild's conflicts. Those who survived did so in the most dangerous, desolate corners of the undercity, and some medusae have not seen the light of day in centuries.

GUILD ALLEGIANCES

Due to proximity and alignment with their natural abilities, most medusae who join a guild are members of the Golgari. They tend to be anchors for the swarm, figures of long-lasting power despite their dedication to the cycle of death and rebirth. Those who prefer law to nature can be found in small numbers among the Orzhov, and a few good-hearted medusae belong to the Selesnya Conclave, hoping to become the seed that will restore their people. There are rumors of medusae in House Dimir and the Simic Combine, but if so, they keep their presence as secret as possible.

NAMES

Medusae are often gifted the names of fallen relatives at birth. Although they do not have formal family names, those who see a need for one often turn their mother's name into a matronymic. Given names lean on Ss and As, well-suited to the particular dialects of Common and Sylvan that medusae speak. A medusa's name gives no indication of gender.

Medusae Names: Akhyla, Ashar, Cassia, Elessa, Hellas, Isanthe, Jazia, Laska, Lexa, Lysandra, Nezha, Nisha, Phys, Tellesse, Samilla, Taslima, Zahra.

MEDUSAE TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 2, and your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Age. While medusae physically mature at the same rate as humans, they can live to over 500 years old. The wisdom of elder medusae is highly prized, and the loss of the very old or very young provokes an almost desperate grief among them. There are simply not many medusae left, despite their longevity.

Alignment. While the most notorious medusae in history aligned with evil, as a whole they are a lawful species. The natural order of the world appeals to them, as do institutions that are as immovable and immortal as stone.

Size. Medusae range from 5 to 7 feet tall, and possess an innate grace regardless of weight or frame. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and Sylvan. Medusae script tends to be sinuous and highly stylized, but is legible by anyone also fluent in the language.

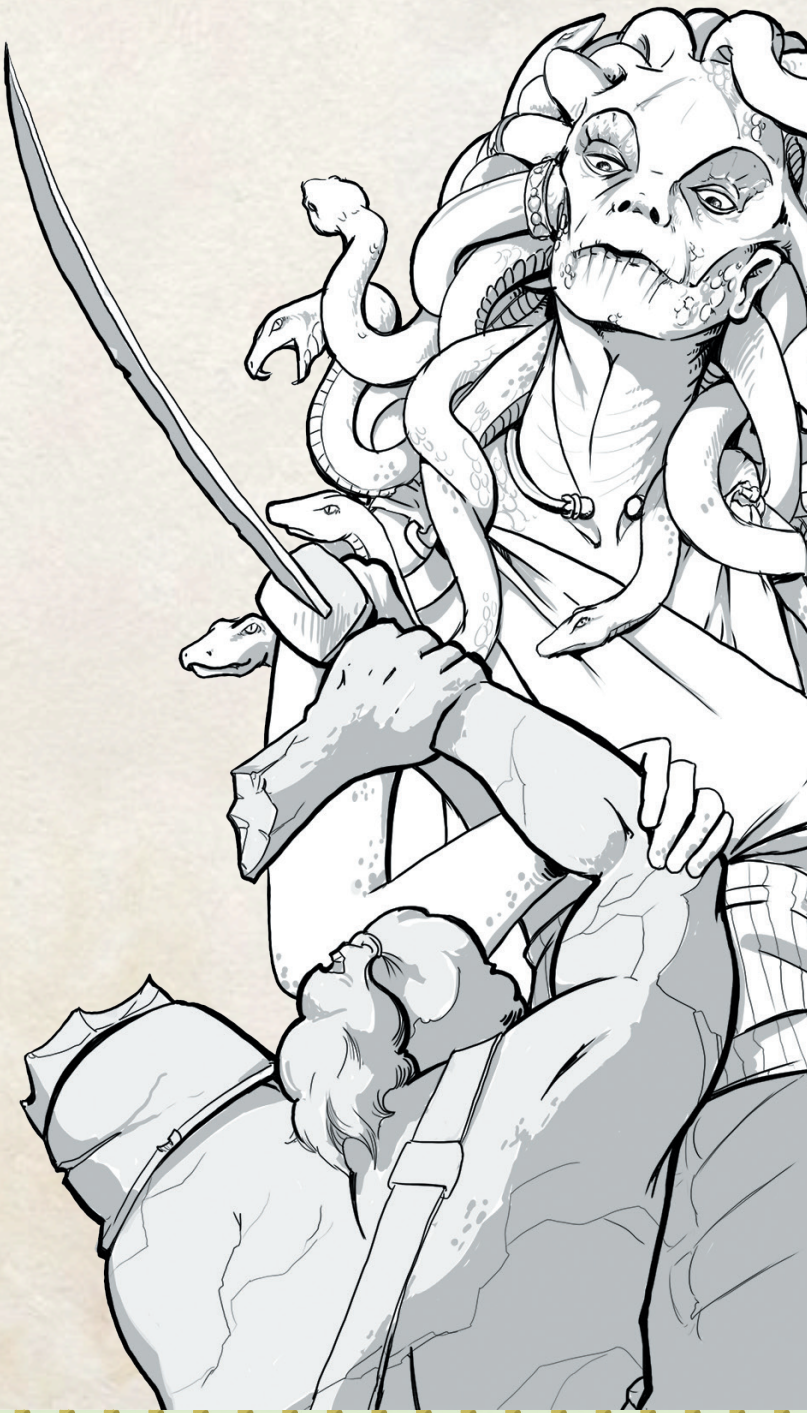
Treasure Sense. You have proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: History, Investigation, or Survival.

Petrifying Gaze. You use your action to Paralyze a creature within 30 feet. This creature must be able to see you, and must roll a Constitution saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. On a failed save, the creature is Paralyzed until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, it shakes off your gaze without effect. After you use your gaze, you can't use it again until you complete a short rest.

At 7th level, your gaze can Petrify creatures instead of Paralyzing them. If the creature fails its save by 5 or more, it is instantly turned to stone. Otherwise, it is Restrained, and must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a failure, it is Petrified. On a success, the effect ends. A creature can avert its eyes to avoid your gaze. If you use your gaze to Petrify, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.

Snake Hair. Your snakes are natural melee weapons, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. If you hit with them, you deal 1d6 poison damage + your Dexterity modifier, instead of the normal damage for an unarmed strike. On a critical hit, the target is Poisoned. At the end of its next turn, the target may make a Constitution saving throw to shake off the condition.

*Y*our hair is dextrous enough to manipulate objects that weigh a pound or less, and perform the following simple tasks: lift, drop, hold, push, or pull an object or creature. It cannot hold a weapon, shield, provoke a grapple, or perform the somatic components of a spell.



SHIELD MAIDEN

MARTIAL ARCHETYPE

by Asa Wheatley

The Shield Maiden is a natural born warrior. Her furioristiy in battle in matched only by her bravery on the field. Those that choose this path are said to be blessed by the Valkyries themselves.

SHIELD MAIDEN FEATURES

Fighter Level	Feature
3rd	*shield bash, unflinching bravery*
7th	*fury of the Valkyries*
10th	*war cry, shield bash* (2d4)
15th	*overwhelming strikes, shield bash* (3d4)
18th	*perpetual defence, shield bash* (4d4)

SHIELD BASH

Starting at 3rd level, you have honed your skills with a shield, enough to be able to use it in battle for both defence and offence. As a bonus action you can make a Shield Bash attack. Dealing 1d4 bludgeoning damage on a hit. You are proficient in these attacks and they are based off strength.

When you hit a creature with your Shield Bash attack they must immediately make a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + Strength Modifier + Proficiency Bonus) or be knocked prone.

The damage dealt by your Shield Bash attack increases when you reach certain levels in this class, increasing to 2d4 at 10th level, 3d4 at 15th level and 4d4 at 18th level.

UNFLINCHING BRAVERY

Starting at 3rd level, you are impossible to shake and your skills in battle make you one to be feared. You gain proficiency in the intimidation skill if you do not already have it and you are now immune to the frightened condition.

FURY OF THE VALKYRIES

At 7th level, as a bonus action a Shield Maiden can call upon the powers of the Valkyries and imbue herself with their Fury. For 1 minute your bonus to all damage rolls based off Strength is doubled. When the Fury fades the Shield Maiden is left physically drained and they immediately suffer 1 point of exhaustion.

WAR CRY

At 10th level, when an enemy creature you can see targets you with an attack you can use your reaction to let out a furious war cry. The creature is taken off guard and their turn immediately ends before they can complete the attack. You can then immediately take your turn despite where you fall in the initiative order. Your placement in initiative goes back to normal in the following round of combat.

Once you have used this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

OVERWHELMING STRIKES

At 15th level, your mastery of battle allows you to overwhelm your enemy. If you hit a single creature with three or more melee attacks on your turn they must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + Strength Modifier + Proficiency Bonus). On a failure, the target is overwhelmed by your attacks, they have disadvantage on all attacks made against you and you have advantage on all attacks made against them until the end of your next turn. If they attempt to move out of your combat range before this effect has faded they can only do so if they first take the disengage action.
You can use this feature twice, and you regain all expended uses of it when you finish a short or long rest.

PERPETUAL DEFENCE

Starting at 18th level, your skills with your weapons and shield are unmatched, using them for both offence and defense simultaneously. You can no longer be flanked and all attacks of opportunity against you are made at disadvantage.

WARLOCK PATRON: THE DULLAHAN

by Judy Black

Deep in a forgotten woods you made a deal with a dark fae, the Dullahan. The headless horsewoman's motives are her own but you now serve as a sword for her mysterious purposes. The Dullahan seeks a balance between life and death, good and evil. She walks a path of neutrality and has no fear of using force to keep that balance.

The Dullahan is a hunter who rarely loses her prey. With her loyal steed at her side, she travels for days on end to find her target. Her warlocks can handle a sword and are determined, capable hunters.

A bond with a Dullahan creates a close connection to the Shadowfell. As your pact grows stronger your skin begins to take on a grey pallor and your emotions dim over time.The Dullahan usually only appears to fey-touched but has been known to reach out to mortals of all races and creeds.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

Your pact with the Dullahan lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a Warlock spell. The following spells are added to the Warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level	Spells
1st	*compelled duel, false life*
2nd	*hold person, moonbeam*
3rd	*phantom steed, speak with dead*
4th	*arcane eye, shadow of moil*
5th	*flame strike, contagion*

BONUS CANTRIPS

At 1st level, you learn the booming blade and chill touch cantrips. They count as warlock cantrips for you, but they don't count against your number of cantrips known. You gain proficiency with medium armor, shields, and martial weapons if you don't already have it.

STURDY HUNTER

At 1st level, you are prepared for battle and gain proficiency with medium armor, shields, and martial weapons. You also gain proficiency in the Survival skill if you don't already have it.

SHADOWY ESCAPE

At 6th level, you are a shadow in combat. When you take damage you can use your reaction to teleport up to 60-feet and are invisible until the start of your next turn. Once this feature has been used, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

DARK RESISTANCES

Starting at 10th level, your patron's influence has fortified your body. You gain resistance to necrotic damage and are immune to poison and disease.

BEHEADING CRITICAL

Starting at 14th level, your connection with the Dullahan has imbued your attacks with deadly force. When you score a critical hit while wielding a blade, roll another d20, on a 19 or 20, you behead the enemy. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



WARLOCK PATRON: THE ENDLESS FOREST

by Alison Huang

You have pledged yourself to the Endless Forest, the collective embodiment of all trees. The Endless Forest is unaligned and does not have any motives beyond the continued health and safety of trees. Instead, you are tasked with helping out individual trees and forests that call out for help. Your connection causes you to instinctively know if trees in your general vicinity are in distress, as well as receive visions of forests that are particularly in distress.

Being bound to an unaligned force can have an effect on your personality and identity. As you are part of a larger network, you may lose your sense of individuality, or purpose outside of your duties to the Endless Forest. However your relationships with other people will remind you who you are.

The Endless Forest tends to choose those who are fey, or have fey ancestry. However, on rare occasion, those who become lost deep within forests may be offered a way out, if they swear themselves to the Endless Forest.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Endless Forest lets you choose from an expanded list of Spells when you learn a Warlock spell. The following Spells are added to the Warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level	Spells
1st	*create or destroy water, cure wounds*
2nd	*barkskin, spike growth*
3rd	*plant growth, speak with plants*
4th	*freedom of movement, grasping vine*
5th	*tree stride, commune with nature*

BONUS CANTRIPS

At 1st level, you learn the *druidcraft* and *shillelagh* cantrips. They count as warlock cantrips for you, but they don't count against your number of cantrips known.

NATURAL UNDERSTANDING

At 1st level, you can communicate with plants as if you share a language. You also gain proficiency in the Nature skill if you don't already.

TRAVERSE THE FOREST

At 6th level, the environment around you moves to let you pass. Moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs you no extra movement. You can also pass through nonmagical Plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines or a similar hazard.

In addition, trees can help you get to where you need to go. On your turn, you can spend 10 ft. of your movement to step magically into one living tree within 5 ft. of you, and emerge from a second living tree within 60 ft. of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5ft. of the second tree. Both trees must be large or bigger.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

ENDLESS ASSISTANCE

Starting at 10th level, the forest helps share the burden of maintaining your focus. You can add your Charisma modifier to saving throws made to maintain concentration.

In addition, you are immune to poison and disease.

CALL OF THE WILD

Starting at 14th level, your bond with the Endless Forest allows you to call upon the trees themselves. You can cast *druid grove*, *transport via plants* or *wrath of nature* without expending a spell slot or requiring material components. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

WARLOCK PATRON: THE UNBOUND

by Ally Sulentic

Long ago, an ancient queen was cursed. Some stories say it was well-deserved punishment for her misdeeds, and others say a jealous god lashed out at her over a perceived insult. Whatever the origin, the creature that became the Unbound found herself caught in the talons of a spell that left her bound in a prison of her own body, her heart turned to stone and her blood to poison.

As her frustration grew, so did her power, until she learned to harness the curse she was bound with and broke free, becoming something more than she once was. Since then, she has sought to tear down those that would see her bound once more and free those who are chained by both physical or mental oppression.

The Unbound is by nature a chaotic force, seeking to circumvent the law where its heavy hand stifles the free will of the people. Those sworn to the Unbound champion freedom and choice, using her powerful gifts to remove unjust bonds and turn them back on the jailers.

The Unbound looks for agents among the downtrodden and oppressed, harnessing their desire for justice into a well-honed weapon. Though rare, her favorite agents are drawn from the ranks of the oppressors, now no longer blind to the tyranny of their former lives.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Unbound lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a Warlock spell. The following spells are added to the Warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level	Spells
1st	*color spray, snare*
2nd	*protection from poison, spike growth*
3rd	*meld into stone, remove curse*
4th	*freedom of movement, stoneskin*
5th	*greater restoration, transmute rock*

BONUS CANTRIPS

At 1st level, you learn the *poison spray* and *mold earth* cantrips. These cantrips count as warlock cantrips for you, but they don't count against your number of cantrips known.

UNCAGED AND UNBROKEN

At 1st level, you gain advantage on saving throws against being restrained or paralyzed by magical means.

POISONED BLOOD

At 6th level, your bond to the Unbound infuses your spells with a fraction of her poison. When you hit with an attack, you can use a bonus action to add poison damage equal to your proficiency bonus to that attack's damage. Once you have used this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

THE QUEEN'S MIRROR

Starting at 10th level, when you are the sole target of a damaging spell you may spend a reaction to divert this spell to another creature within the original spell's range. The diverted spell acts as though you were the caster: You must hit your target with a spell attack in order to successfully divert it, and the saving throw is based on your warlock spell save DC.

In addition, you are immune to poison and gain resistance to poison damage.

HEART OF STONE

Starting at 14th level, the Unbound's stone heart beats in your chest, and nothing can hold you back any more. When you deal poison damage to a creature, you can restrain them as part of your action. At the end of their next turn, they must make a Constitution saving throw against your warlock spell save DC, removing the restrained effect on a success and becoming petrified on a failure. The petrification lasts until the creature is freed by *greater restoration* or similar magic. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

In addition, you are immune to becoming paralyzed.

NPCS AND CREATURE STAT BLOCKS

THE THREE PRIESTESSES

by Elise Cretel

TEMPLE PRIESTESS

A priestess releases a bow string as a fiery arrow strikes a ritual target. The rhythm of the falling sistrum cymbals ring throughout the temple as strings and drums follow the procession of priestess walking through the gardens toward the stone stairs of the temple. The evening air is scented with spices and incense. The music continues as priestesses carrying flowers and other offerings gracefully step onto the cool marble floors of the goddess's sanctuary.

The sun begins to dip into reds and oranges of the horizon as the temple's fires are lit. Logs crackle and embers drift into the atmosphere. The priestesses circle and begin to sing for the goddess as followers continue to bring offerings. Wisps of incense and embers spiral toward the star studded heavens as arcane energy builds.

The temple priestesses tend to the temple grounds and protect the temple's texts and sacred mysteries. They live in a world of symbolism, research, and insight. They use their knowledge to guide others in their community and to help those in need. The priestesses also study the weave and its arcane power and are powerful spellcasters. Others hunt, prepare meat, or work on crafting projects on the temple grounds in an effort to support their community and patron deity.

HIGH PRIESTESS

Priestesses escape the searing solstice sun in a hidden cave beneath the sands. They knock with a password to gain entrance to a secret chamber. The high priestess stands before an altar covered with scrolls and small statues. Priestesses stand along the walls bearing the symbols of their deities as a blindfolded women walks before the high priestess and takes a knee. Dim lamps flicker across the cave wall as the priestesses procede in mysterious dialogue. Soon after, the lamps go out and the door is opened toward enlightenment.

The high priestess wears fine gold trimmed robes and a headpiece bearing a solar disk and horns. She is the leader of the temple complex and gives guidance to other priestesses and those seeking enlightenment. She maintains the secrets of her goddess and leads the temple rituals. She has been imbued with powerful magic after years of arcane study.

BATTLE SORCERESS

She wipes dirt and sweat from her brow as creatures begin rising out of the earth. The battle sorceress draws her sword, glowing with arcane magic and readies for an attack. Magic of the weave manifests with every strike of her sword. Her weapon is flung across the ground out of reach and she stumbles backward after a strong blow. In the center of the chaotic sounds of swords and drawn blood, she pauses in mindfulness and calls her swords name. The sword is summoned back to her hand. The sword, her arcane focus, is summoned back to her hand. Electricity fills the air as it drags an unwilling creature toward her for the final blow.

Temple Priestess

Medium human, lawful good

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 220 (20d8 + 130)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Intelligence +8, Wisdom +6
Skills Arcana +8, Religion +8, Insight +6, Investigation +8, History +8, Medicine +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common and one language of any choice
Challenge 10 (5,900 xp)

Neith's Blessing. All temple priestesses are proficient in short bows and longbows.

Gift of Heka. All temple priestesses are protected with a resistance to all magic.

Wadjet's Eye. Priestesses receive visions from their deity of worship. Offerings can be brought to the priestess and patrons shall receive one vision into the future. Priestesses warn that adventurer's actions can change the future it is known.

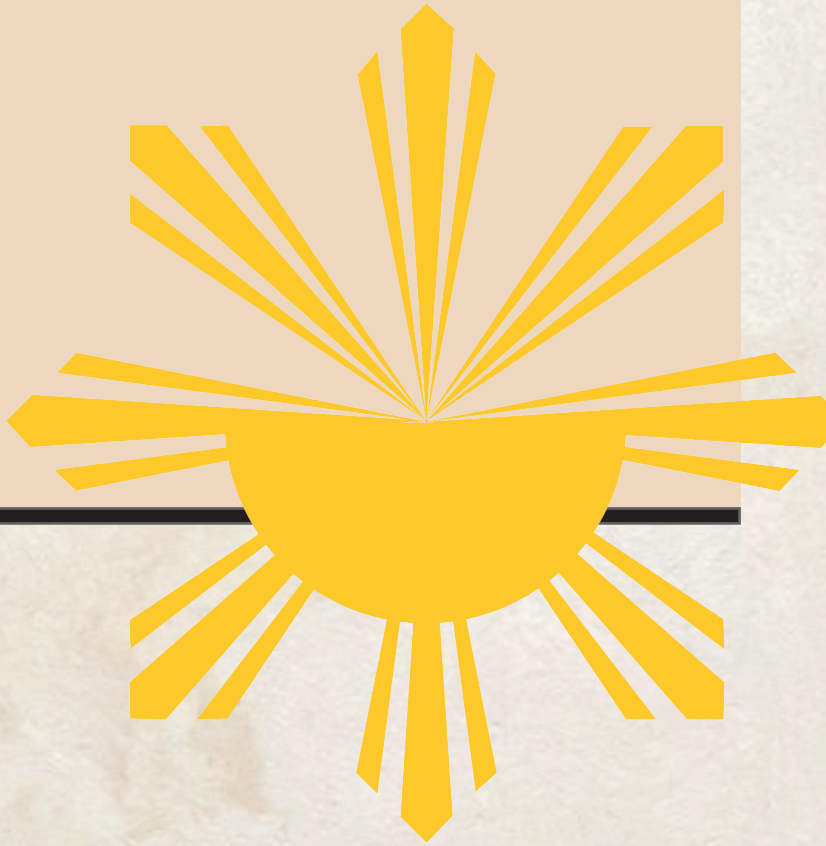
Song of Hathor. All temple priestesses have a proficiency in musical instruments and a +5 in performance.

Actions

Multiattack. The temple priestesses possess great arcane power and receives a bonus action to cast an additional spell twice per long rest.

Spellcasting. Temple priestesses are 15th level spellcasters. Their spellcasting ability is intelligence (spell save DC 16), +8 to hit with spell attacks. Priestesses have the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, dancing lights, mending, minor illusion, message*
1st Level (4 slots): *chromatic orb, fog cloud, fury bolt, shield, sleep*
2nd Level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, flaming sphere, gust of wind, invisibility*
3rd Level (3 slots): *counter spell, dispel magic, sand storm*
4th Level (3 slots): *banishment, confusion*
5th level (2 slots): *nile surge, telekinesis*
6th level (1 slot): *shield of the ancients*
7th level (1 slot): *plane shift*
8th level (1 slot): *sunburst*



High Priestess

Medium human, neutral good

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 340 (30d8 + 205)
Speed 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Intelligence +11, Wisdom +6
Skills Arcana +11, Religion +11, Insight +11, Investigation +11, History +11, Nature +11
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common and one language of any choice
Challenge 18 (20,000 xp)

Neith's Blessing. All temple priestesses are proficient in short bows and long bows.

Ultimate Gift of Heka. The high priestess is protected by the goddess and immune to magical attacks.

Shield of Hamuset. As a reaction, the high priestess can cast a shield covering a 10 foot radius that lasts until her next turn offering a +6 to AC to all allied characters inside. Creatures hostile toward the high priestess within the shield or who try to enter the shield must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creatures are forced out of the shield and take 15d8 radiant damage. On a success they are forced out of the shield and take half damage. Any creature making a melee attack to creatures in the shield takes 3d8 radiant damage.

Song of Hathor. The high priestesses have a proficiency in musical instruments and singing and has a +11 in performance.

Heh's Incarnate. As an action, the temple priestess raises her arms and focuses on the arcane. Suddenly arcane storms fill the skies and rain heavily pours, causing the entire area to flood 1d4 feet for one minute, creating difficult terrain. The high priestess and any temple priestesses in the area immediately levitate above the water for the duration of the flood. Any loose items on characters that are submerged drift 10 feet away and sink to the ground. When the water recedes, the rain stops and colorful lotuses begin to spontaneously grow in the area.

Actions

Multiattack. The high priestess possesses possess great arcane power and receives a bonus action to cast an additional spell.

Spellcasting. The high priestesses is a 20th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is intelligence (spell save DC 19), +11 to hit with spell attacks. The high priestess has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion, message*
1st Level (4 slots): *chromatic orb, color spray, detect magic, feather fall, fury bolt, shield*
2nd Level (3 slots): *alter self, darkness, hold person, invisibility, levitate*
3rd Level (3 slots): *glyph of warding, hypnotic pattern, sand storm*
4th Level (3 slots): *arcane eye, hallucinatory terrain*
5th level (3 slots): *nile surge, wall of force*
6th level (2 slot): *chain lightning, shield of the ancients*
7th level (2 slot): *prismatic spray*
8th level (1 slot): *sunburst*
9th level (1 slot): *prismatic wall* (4d8+6) slashing damage.

Battle Sorceress

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt armor)
Hit Points 155 (15d8 + 88)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Intelligence +6, Wisdom +6
Skills Athletics +6, Arcana +6, History +6, Survival +6
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common and one language of any choice
Tools Smith's tools
Challenge 6 (2,300 xp)

Summon Sword. The battle sorceress can mentally or verbally call the sword's name to summon it back to her hand within a 100 foot radius.

Disarm. The battle sorceress can use an action to disarm her opponent's weapon. The target must make a strength saving throw against the battle sorceress's spell DC. On a failed save, the battle sorceress takes their weapon.

Telekinesis. Once per long rest, the battle sorceress can cast telekinesis, without using a spell slot, as an action.

Actions

Multiattack. The battle sorceress can make two Arcane Sword Attacks or two Great Sword Attacks.

Spellcasting. The battle sorceress is a 3rd level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is intelligence (spell save DC 14), +6 to hit with spell attacks. The battle sorceress have the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, booming blade, green flame blade, lightning lure, sword burst*
1st Level (4 slots): *chromatic orb, earth tremor, expeditious retreat, thunder wave*
2nd Level (2 slots): *cloud of daggers, Maximillian's earthern grasp*

Arcane Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* This attack has a 5 foot reach and can hit one target with a +6 to hit. On a successful attack, the target takes 19 (3d8+6) slashing damage and 9 (2d8) of one of the following arcane damage types (player's choice): fire, cold, radiant, or lightning.

Silver Great Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* This attack has a 5 foot reach and can hit one target with a +6 to hit. On a successful attack, the target takes 24 (4d8+6) slashing damage.



Horatio Trans Rights

They/Them/Theirs, Tiefling
Medium humanoid, neutral good

Armor Class	18 (chainmail and shield)
Hit Points	70 (10d8 + 20)
Speed	30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws	Dexterity +7, Charisma +8
Skills	Insight +6, Medicine +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +8, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances	fire
Senses	darkvision 60 ft.
Languages	Common, Common Sign Language, Infernal, Dwarvish

Innate Spellcasting. Horatio's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Horatio can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *vicious mockery*
1/per day: *burning hands*

Spellcasting. Horatio is a 5th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Horatio has the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, message, prestidigitation*
1st Level (4 slots): *comprehend languages, cure wounds, featherfall, heroism*
2nd Level (3 slots): *heat metal, see invisibility, zone of truth*

Protection Fighting. While wielding their shield, when a creature Horatio can see attacks a target other than them that is within 5 feet of them, Horatio can use their reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll.

Master of Benevolence. Friendly creatures within 30 feet of Horatio that regain hit points gain an additional 6 hit points.

The Defender. As a bonus action, Horatio can create a sympathetic link between themself and one creature that they can see. Until the start of Horatio's next turn, their AC is decreased by 2 and their target's AC increases by 2.

The Gatekeeper. Horatio stands at the precipice of life and death, helping themself and others cling to life. Horatio and creatures within 30 feet of them add +1 to their roll for death saving throws.

Respite of the People. Friendly creatures within 30 feet of Horatio whose CR is 1 or lower are immune to the diseased and poisoned conditions, and creatures already diseased or poisoned have the condition temporarily suppressed.

Actions

Multiattack. Horatio makes two melee attacks.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Long Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) slashing damage.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage. The target must make a DC 14 strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

HORATIO TRANS RIGHTS

by Sarah Gray Harker

Race: Tiefling
Gender: Nonbinary
Hair Color: thick and black
Skin Color: dark red, almost black
Eye Color: gold
Build: Muscled
Clothing: Practical clothes; hates wearing shirts
Age: 27

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:

You see a tall tiefling wiping sweat from their brow as they pause from the metal they are hammering. When they see you looking at them, they nod in acknowledgment and you are struck by their beauty. They have two sets of horns, one set goes up, the other curls down, thick black hair, and piercing gold eyes that seem to see your soul. Despite the noise from the forge, as you get closer to them, you can't help but feel calmed by their presence.

Ideals: My talents were given to me so that I could help the world.
Bonds: I created a masterwork and I will go to any length to find someone worthy.
Flaws: My need to win arguments can hurt my friendships.

Background or History:

Horatio was born in, Segundo, a town whose main industry, mining and metalworking, was overseen by the town's mayor. The mayor was also the town's judge, the owner of the tavern and the local mines where Horatio worked as a child, and the warden of the jail. Horatio was taken in by the town at a young age was given a job in one of the mines. However, Horatio's eye for detail and deft hands got the attention of one of the smiths who advocated for them to become a smith. Horatio was then confronted with the disparity between their previous life in the mines and their new life. The more they experienced and the more people they talked to, the less they could accept the situation that the town was in. The more they talked of change, the more confused they grew as people told them not to try to change the status quo. Knowing that this oppressive government should not be normal, Horatio worked tirelessly to strengthen their community until, as a town, they were able to force the mayor out of Segundo. The town offered Horatio the position of mayor once it was vacant, but they emphatically declined. Now Segundo thrives as a city, known for its prosperity, equity, and metalwork and Horatio is merely another member of the community.

INTERACTIONS:

Horatio's Sheild:

Horatio carries a heavy shield that is wrapped with oilcloth and padded with leather. It is never far from their person and they will say that is their masterwork. They do not show the shield to anyone else and are deeply upset if players try to sneak a peek at the design. The shield is silver, when uncovered, depicts a tiefling woman whose eyes are covered with a cloth, holding a torch aloft in one hand, and a sword in the other. The flame and eyes are made with jewels.
When they are spending a few days in a town, they will work on it at the local forge or jeweler's shop. This shield will never be ready in Horatio's mind until they find the right person to give it to. Horatio is certain that they will know who it is when they meet them as they will be someone who needs protection and inspiration to control their own fate. Horatio's gift of the shield can start another character's journey to also become Uncaged.

Horatio's shield uses the stats of a +3 shield.

Local Artisan and Local Legend:

Horatio is usually in their hometown, but they like to travel in short bursts to help another community organize itself. If the adventurers come to a town or city that has an oppressive government, Horatio can be found in meeting spaces. While they are there, they will work in a forge as a guild artisan and will not draw much attention to themself. If the party seeks Horatio out, they will be honest about the fact they did help overthrow a local government and they emphasize they are here to help, not to take the spotlight. Alternatively, adventurers can go to Horatio's hometown and ask them to help the party liberate another town.
Otherwise, Horatio acts like an average artisan. They can do repairs on armor or weapons and be commissioned to make shields. They are a slow worker, but their creations are worth the wait as they are almost flawless.

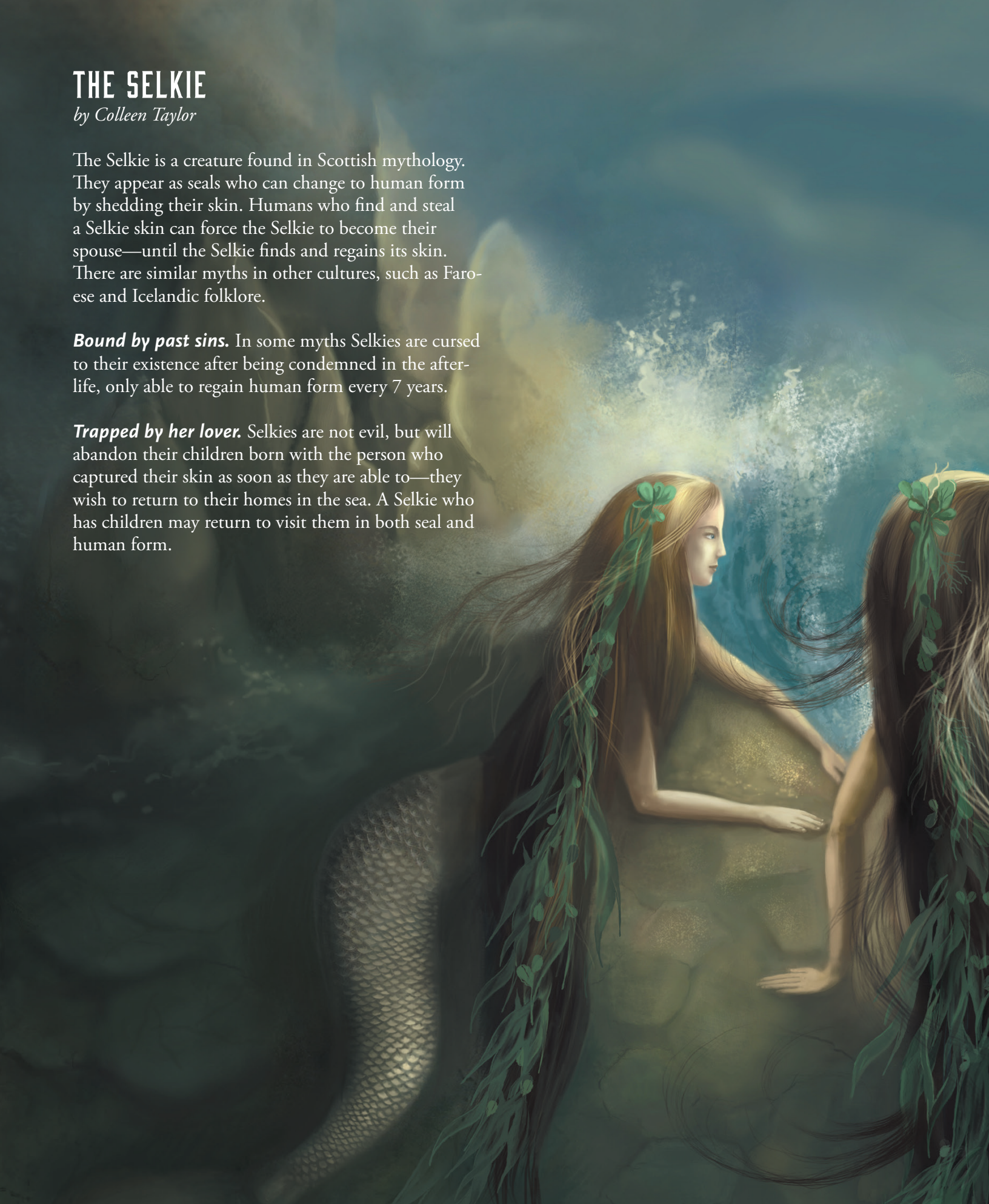
THE SELKIE

by Colleen Taylor

The Selkie is a creature found in Scottish mythology. They appear as seals who can change to human form by shedding their skin. Humans who find and steal a Selkie skin can force the Selkie to become their spouse—until the Selkie finds and regains its skin. There are similar myths in other cultures, such as Faroese and Icelandic folklore.

Bound by past sins. In some myths Selkies are cursed to their existence after being condemned in the afterlife, only able to regain human form every 7 years.

Trapped by her lover. Selkies are not evil, but will abandon their children born with the person who captured their skin as soon as they are able to—they wish to return to their homes in the sea. A Selkie who has children may return to visit them in both seal and human form.



Selkie

Medium humanoid, chaotic good

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Constitution +4, Charisma +5
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Aquan
Challenge 1 (200 xp)

Innate Spellcasting. The selkie (human form)'s spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She regains expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following spells:

At Will: Animal Friendship, Comprehend Languages, Healing Word
3/day Each: Enthrall, Silence

Speak with Beasts. The selkie can communicate with aquatic beasts as if they shared a language.

Actions

Drown. *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, one target. Hit: 13 (3d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Change Form. If the selkie has access to it's skin, it may use an action to don the skin and change to it's seal form. If the Selkie has access to both forms, it is a CR 3 creature (700 xp).

Selkie (Seal Form)

Medium beast, chaotic good

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Strength +5, Charisma +5
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Aquan
Challenge 2 (450 xp)

Speak with Beasts. The selkie can communicate with aquatic beasts as if they shared a language.

Graceful Swimmer. When in the water, the selkie does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Actions

Change Form. If the selkie has access to it's skin, it may use an action to don the skin and change to it's seal form. If the selkie has access to both forms, it is a CR 3 creature (700 xp).

Multiattack. The selkie makes 2 melee attacks. Only one of these can be a Slam.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, one target. Hit: 10 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage. In order to use this attack, the selkie must move 10 feet in the direction of the target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage.

THE SHADOW HAG

by Emily Smith

The Shadow Hag is a forgotten spirit of the Shadowfell, forged from bitter hatred and unending darkness. She is one with the night, entrapping children and the lost in veils of shadow, and dragging them from their home realms into the land of the spirits.

Shadow Hag

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 168 (12d12 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dexterity +8, Wisdom +7, Charisma +9
Damage Resistances Necrotic, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Infernal, Common, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 12 (8,400 xp)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the hag's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the hag can take the Hide action as a bonus action. Her stealth bonus is also improved to +8. Shadow Step. While in dim light or darkness, the hag can teleport as a bonus action up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space she can see that is also in dim light or darkness. She then has advantage on the first melee attack it makes before the end of the turn.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the hag has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Hag Coven. When hags must work together, they form covens, in spite of their selfish natures. A coven is made up of hags of any type, all of whom are equals within the group. However, each of the hags continues to desire more personal power.

A coven consists of three hags so that any arguments between two hags can be settled by the third. If more than three hags ever come together, as might happen if two covens come into conflict, the result is usually chaos.

Hag Eye (Coven Only). A hag coven can craft a magic item called a hag eye, which is made from a real eye coated in varnish and often fitted to a pendant or other wearable item. The hag eye is usually entrusted to a minion for safekeeping and transport. A hag in the coven can take an action to see what the hag eye sees if the hag eye is on the same plane of existence. A hag eye has AC 10, 1 hit point, and darkvision with a radius of 60 feet. If it is destroyed, each coven member takes 3d10 psychic damage and is blinded for 24 hours.

A hag coven can have only one hag eye at a time, and creating a new one requires all three members of the coven to perform a ritual. The ritual takes 1 hour, and the hags can't perform it while blinded. During the ritual, if the hags take any action other than performing the ritual, they must start over. Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *darkness, disguise self, etherealness, invisibility, misty step*
2/day each: *plane shift* (self only)

Shadow Hag Items. A shadow hag carries two very rare magic items that she must craft for herself. If

either object is lost, the shadow hag will go to great lengths to retrieve it, as creating a new tool takes time and effort.

Shadowstone: This lustrous black gem allows a shadow hag to become ethereal while it is in her possession and grants her truesights. The touch of a shadowstone also cures any disease. Crafting a shadowstone takes 30 days.

Wreath of Shadows: The wreath of shadows functions as a crown worn atop the hag's head. It sheds shadowy wisps in a 5 foot radius around the hag, obscuring her position and causing any creature to have disadvantage on attack rolls against her. If she takes damage, the property ceases to function until the start of her next turn. This property is suppressed while she is incapacitated, restrained, or otherwise unable to move. Crafting a soul wreath of shadows takes 10 days and a humanoid sacrifice (whose shadow is captured and used to make the wreath.

Shared Spellcasting (Coven Only). While all three members of a hag coven are within 60 feet of one another, they can each cast the following spells, but must share the spell slots among themselves:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp, toll the dead*
1st level (6 slots): *bane, detect magic, identify, inflict wounds, ray of sickness*
2nd level (5 slots): *blindness/deafness, detect thoughts, mirror image, ray of enfeeblement*
3rd level (5 slots): *bestow curse, counterspell, fly, life transference, lightning bolt*
4th level (5 slots): *banishment, blight, freedom of movement*, shadow of moil, stoneskin**
5th level (5 slots): *cone of cold, danse macabre, negative energy flood, scrying, wall of force*
6th level (3 slots): *circle of death, soul cage*
7th level (3 slots): *finger of death, teleport*
8th level (3 slots): *mind blank**
9th level (2 slots): *foresight, psychic scream*

*The hag casts these spells on herself before combat. For casting these spells, each hag is an 18th-level spellcaster that uses Charisma as her spellcasting ability. The spell save DC is 117, and the spell attack bonus is +9.

Actions

Multiattack. The hag casts one spell or uses a Strength Drain attack.

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 19 (4d6 + 5) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse one round later, and is under the shadow hag's control.



THE VALKYRIE

by Colleen Taylor

The Valkyrie is a creature of Norse mythology, the 27 shield maidens of Odin. They can be seen upon white steeds over or walking across battlefields. Acting as both choosers of the slain and psychopomps, the Valkyrie determine who lives and who dies then transport the person to an afterlife - some to Valhalla and others to Folkvangr.

Independent Actors. The Valkyrie oversee the battlefield on behalf of Odin, but they are not bound to his will. It is the Valkyrie who decides the fate of each warrior, and they may defy Odin when it suits them.

Mortal Curiosity. A Valkyrie may become enthralled by a mortal and take them as a lover. Sometimes the Valkyrie remains with the lover beyond the initial encounter and may bestow gifts upon them, watching over them in battle or granting prowess in combat.



YUKI-ONNA

by Collette Quach

The Yuki-Onna is a yōkai, or spirit, found in Japanese folklore. Tales of the snow spirit are found all across Japan with their own interpretations of her. Some legends say that they are the spirits of women who perished in the snow. Others speak of a solitary spirit who appear to lone travelers trapped in snowstorms.

Aspect of winter. With skin pale white that matches her kimono, stark black hair and piercing violet eyes, the yuki-onna inhabits the snowy mountains and forests away from civilization. Those who have encountered a yuki-onna say her skin and breath is chilling as the winter wind.

Benevolent spirit or reaper of souls. Like the cold winter months, the yuki-onna can be harsh as a blizzard or soft as a snowflake. She may freeze those who threaten her, trapping them in the cold forests forever. Or she may entrap those with her beauty to steal away their life force with a kiss. She may also guide those who respect her to safety out of her domain. The tale is up for you to decide.

Valkyrie

Medium humanoid, lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 225 (30d8 + 60)
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Strength +10, Constitution +9, Wisdom +10, Charisma +8
Damage Resistances lightning, necrotic, thunder
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages All
Challenge 18 (20,000 xp)

Innate Spellcasting. The Valkyrie spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She regains expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following spells:

At Will: *Thunderwave, Shatter, Spiritual Weapon*
3/day Each: Chain Lightning, DImension Door, Dispel Evil and Good
1/day Each : *Sunburst, Control Weather*

Glorious Mount. The Valkyrie's mount is part of her, and has no separate statistics. It is what grants her the fly speed of 60 ft.

Magic Weapons. The Valkyrie's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Marked for Death. The Valkyrie targets one creature she can see. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of the Valkyrie for 1 minute. While frightened this way, the target must take the Dash action and move away from the Valkyrie by the safest available route on each of its turns, unless there is nowhere to move. Further, the target takes 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on each of its turns while frightened this way. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effects on itself upon a success.

Multiattack. The Valkyrie makes 3 melee attacks or 2 ranged attacks.

Starforged Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10+4) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 22 (4d10) radiant damage.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and stunned for 1 round.

Javelin of Storms. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage, plus 22 (5d8) lightning damage.

Yuki-Onna

Medium undead, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 115 (12d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11 (+1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wisdom +5, Charisma +8
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages The languages she knew in life
Challenge 11 (7,200 xp)

Innate Spellcasting. The yuki-onna spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She regains expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following spells:

At Will: *Ice Knife, Ray of Frost, Chill Touch*
3/day Each: *Mirror Image, Misty Step, Vampiric Touch*
1/day Each : *Wall of Ice, Cone of Cold, Ice Storm*

One with the Snow. If the terrain is snowy, misty step can be used to up to 60 ft. Additionally spells that do cold damage gain an additional damage die.

Misty Escape. When it drops to zero hit points outside their resting place, the yuki-onna transforms into a cloud of mist or snow instead of falling unconscious.

While it has zero hit points in mist form, she can't revert to a humanoid form and must reach her resting place within 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in its resting place, she reverts to her humanoid form. She is then paralyzed until she regains at least 1 hit point. After spending 1 hour in her resting place with 0 hit points, she regains 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The yuki-onna makes 2 melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 4 (2d6) cold damage.

Cold Breath. The yuki-onna exhales an icy blast in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 50 (11d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Draining Kiss. The yuki-onna kisses a creature charmed by it or a willing creature. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 45 (9d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to zero.

MAGICAL ITEMS

Bands of Unity

Wondrous item, uncommon

Made of woven cords in different hues, these bracelets are created with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, one week of labor, and 2 gp in material costs which are consumed in the process. When two characters wear bands crafted by one another, they may exchange either one message (each) or 5 hit points (either way) per day. No one knows how many bands have been created, or how many are in use.

— *by Margaret Mae*

Boots of Marching

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Once attuned, these boots provide advantage on checks and saves against states of continuous damage or persistent strain including long travel, torture, or brainwashing. The boots also allow the wearer to ignore one level of exhaustion for a 24 hour period. Once used to ignore exhaustion, the boots require one week to recharge and cannot be used to gain advantage on any check or save during that time.

— *by Margaret Mae*



Bracers of Protection

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A pair of leather bracers lined with flexible metal plates. Protective runes are embroidered along the edges in delicate gold thread. Once per short rest, the wearer can use their reaction to intercede when an ally within 5 feet is hit by a ranged or melee weapon attack and redirect the attack to themselves instead. If the attack would still hit the wearer, the damage is reduced by 10 + the wearer's Constitution modifier. If the damage is reduced to 0 and it was a ranged attack, the wearer can catch the missile if it is small enough to hold and the wearer has a free hand. The wearer also has a +1 bonus to AC. Can't be attuned while wearing the *tiara of command*.

The assassin's crossbow bolt flew through the night air directly towards the harpy princess' throat. It was a good shot. The princess was unarmed, distracted, and about to die. But before the bolt could find its mark, an arm shot out from behind the princess and grabbed it out of the darkness. The ever-vigilant bodyguard. She snapped the bolt in two, and as the princess clung to her in fear, she sent the other guards into the dark to find the would-be assassin. Before the night was over, she'd make them pay for what they'd tried to do to her princess.

— by Megan Irving

Breath of Fire

Wonderous item, rare (Requires Attunement)

This ornate necklace of bronze wire and amber-hued stones allows the wearer to spew a torrent of searing flame from their mouth in a 5 by 30 ft. line, much like a brass dragonborn's breath weapon..

Each creature in the area of the exhalation must make a saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your Proficiency Bonus. A creature takes 2d6 fire damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. The damage increases to 3d6 at 6th level, 4d6 at 11th level, and 5d6 at 16th level. Enemies who have verbally taunted or otherwise attempted to intimidate the wearer or a creature of the wearer's choice have disadvantage on the saving throw.

After you use the necklace as a weapon, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest. The stones glimmer like coals until it recharges.

— *by Margaret Mae*

Circlet of Preservation

Wondeous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Once attuned, this circlet issues subtle reminders about the need for recovery, the validity of small efforts, and the benefits of rest.

These reminders can be sought out by the player or issued at the DM's discretion, and may take the form of encouraging whispers or more indirect signs based on your situation and preferences

— *by Margaret Mae*

Clue by Four

Weapon (any simple weapon that deals bludgeoning damage), uncommon

This battle-worn wood was once a two by four, but having been handled as an improv weapon for years, it is now seasoned and balanced for hand to hand combat. On a hit with an attack roll of 20 or higher, the clue by four deals an additional d4 psychic damage.

— *by Margaret Mae*

Cloak of Pockets

Wonderous item, legendary

A cloak of sturdy, flowing material with an ample wide hood, this cloak has 17 pockets (the same number as the 19th century men's suit), 14 of which can be used to store one cubic foot or 10lbs each of material. At 4th level the 15th pocket becomes available, allowing the wearer to store 10 cubic feet or 100 pounds of material. At 8th level the 16th pocket becomes available, providing spell components with a value of up to the square of the caster level in gp per long rest which disappear if not used by the next long rest. At 16th level, the 17th pocket manifests and may contain a boon at the DM's discretion. The cloak always weighs only 5 lbs.

When anyone comments on the cloak's appearance, if the wearer replies "...it has pockets" the cloak itself is flattered. Roll a D4 to see which effect takes place:

d4 Roll	Result
1	The cloak sparkles faintly for 6 seconds
2	The cloak billows gently as though ruffled by a summer breeze
3	The air around the cloak smells mildy of lavender for 6 seconds
4	The clock purrs very quietly to itself

— *by Margaret Mae*

Coat of Arms

Wondrous item, rare

A coat with two pairs of extra sleeves. Donning the coat causes the wearer to grow extra pairs of arms which fill these sleeves. These arms function as normal arms.

— *by S.T. Mannell*

Devil Effigy

A small effigy of a devil carved from black ice gleams from a snowdrift. When within 15ft of the item, you must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw if you can see it. On a failed save, you believe the item is either incredibly valuable and should be coveted, or incredibly dangerous and should be destroyed. If the effigy is destroyed by any means, the one who destroys it is plagued with nightmares of laughing demons. This effect can end if they are targeted by a Remove Curse spell or similar magic. The effigy is a Tiny object with 15 AC, 100 HP, and immunity to all non- magical attacks and damage.

— *by Yubi*

Disintegrating Wand

Wand, rare

This wand has 3 charges. While holding it, you can expend 1 charge as an action to cast the disintegrate spell from it. The wand regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Curse. The wand is cursed. The first time it is used, the wand flashes green, and turns into a pile of fine, gray dust. Brother, when it disintegrates, it disintegrates!

— *by S.T. Mannell*

Elixir of Recovery

Wondrous item, rare

When you drink this potion, you recover all expended hit dice and remove one point of exhaustion. Agitating the dull, midnight-blue liquid causes it to shimmer in iridescent swirls.

— *by Margaret Mae*

Emerald Compass

An emerald compass, the hands carved from slivers of bone. This compass always points in the direction of the nearest demon within 1 mile. While within 1 mile of a demon, the compass drips with blood.

— *by Yubi*

Glove of Enforced Propriety

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This delicate glove is infused with shocking electrical energy. Worn by those who cannot trust the world to keep its hands to itself, it brings an unwelcome surprise to wandering hands.

While wearing this glove you may use an action to cast the Shocking Grasp cantrip.

— *by Mellanie Black*

Gloves of the Unseen

These elegantly stitched gloves hold the symbol of Loki, God of thieves and trickery on their back. They give you a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with unarmed strikes. They also have two additional abilities.

Razzle Dazzle. When you hit a creature with an unarmed strike you can attempt to disorient your opponent with a flurry of hand movements and cast Blindness/deafness at 2nd level with a range of touch. Once you have used this ability you must take a short or long rest before you can use it again.

You Are Unable To Perceive Me. As an action you wave your gloves in front of your face and recite the enchanted words 'you are unable to perceive me' immediately casting Mirror Image at 2nd level. Once you have used this ability you must take a short or long rest before you can use it again.

— *by Asa Wheatley*

Hammer of Freedom

Weapon (any hammer), uncommon (requires attunement)

This hammer feels lighter than it looks, almost as if several other hands are helping you lift it. A dwarven saying is engraved on its head: "Nothing to lose but our chains."

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

As a bonus action on each of your turns, you can use the Hammer of Freedom to instantly break any nonmagical chains. In addition, the Hammer of Freedom does maximum damage to structures.

If you are attuned to the Hammer of Freedom and the Worker's Sickle, this weapon bonus to attack and damage rolls increases to +2, and it can break even magical chains.

— *by Awkward Bard*

Hint Axe

Weapon (any axe), very rare (requires attunement)

With a handle hewn from a well-worn clue by four, the hint axe has been crafted to heighten that weapon's abilities. On a hit with an attack roll of 20 or higher, the hint axe deals an extra d6 psychic damage. The hint axe also has 5 charges. While attuned to it, you can expend 1 charge to cast wrathful smite on a successful hit. The axe regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.

— *by Margaret Mae*

Medusa's Grace

Wonderous item, rare

This necklace is adorned with a snake draped around the gold chain. If you are wearing this necklace, you automatically succeed against one Petrifying Gaze attack from a medusa. The necklace regains this ability daily at dawn.

— *by Bianca Bickford*

Opal Lenses

Requires Attunement

A pair of glasses with lenses made from black opal. When you wear these glasses for the first time, you immediately become attuned to them and cannot remove them, unless if you are targeted by a Remove Curse spell or similar magic, or you die. While attuned to them, you can see through all darkness, both magical and non-magical, to a distance of 120ft, and you cannot be blinded by magic. You can also see invisible creatures as a hazy, smouldering outline of their true shapes and cannot be surprised by invisible creatures. However, you have disadvantage on any checks and attack rolls that rely on sight while you, or the target of the check or attack roll, are in sunlight. In addition, you are vulnerable to radiant damage even if you were previously resistant. If you were immune to radiant damage, you are now resistant to it instead.

— *byYubi*

Ring of Wielding

Ring, very rare (requires attunement by a Wizard)

While attuned to this golden ring set with emeralds, a Wizard can magically command a weapon to do their bidding. As an action, the wearer may target one weapon within 5 ft, which springs into the air and floats just beyond their fingertips. This weapon can then be used as though with proficiency.

Only one weapon can be wielded by the ring at a time. If the weapon is being held by someone else when it is commanded, they must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw against the wearer's spell save DC in order to keep hold of it

— *by S.T. Mannell*

Sacred Blade of the Lotus

Weapon (dagger), very rare (requires attunement)

A light golden blade encrusted with lapis stones and enamel engravings. A large lotus wraps around the decorative hilt, and it's perfectly sharpened blades glistens in the desert sun. These blades are commonly used by the temple priestesses for ceremonies and self protection. A powerful arcane magic flows through the blade during the full moon.

This enchanted dagger deals an additional 1d8 radiant damage and 1d6 poison damage. On a full moon, the dagger gains two charges which allows the wielder to cast the shield spell.

— by Elise Cretel

Staff of Attention

Staff, very rare

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

This staff has 10 charges for the following properties. The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +1 bonus to attack and damage roll but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d6 + 2 charges

Attentive Strike: When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 psychic damage to the target.

Spells: While holding this staff, you can use a bonus action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: command (1 charge), hold person (2 charges), ray of enfeeblement (2 charges), counterspell (2 charges), bestow curse (3 charges), hold monster (5 charges), force cage (7 charges), feeblemind (8 charges)

— *by Margaret Mae*

Staff of Isis

Weapon (staff), very rare (requires female wizard, warlock, or sorceress attunement)

A sturdy silver staff studded with coral and garnet stones. Delicately carved hieroglyphic spells climb to the large sapphire sphere embedded at the top. Silver lotuses interlace around the beautiful crystal. Its arcane power emanates from the sparkling stone.

This staff can be used as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 to attack and a +2 to AC.

This staff has 15 charges and you can use one charge to cast one of the spells below. The staff gains 1d10 charges at dawn.

Spells. While wielding this staff you can make a spell attack using your spell DC and spell attack bonus. You can use one or more charges to cast on the following spells: chromatic orb (3rd-level version, 3 charges), dispel magic (3 charges), banishment (4 charges), fire shield (4 charges), or chain lightning (8 charges).

Strike of Isis. You can strike the ground with the staff and use 6 charges to cast a web of lighting in a 15ft radius. All creatures must make a dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, creatures take 3d12 lighting damage and fall prone. On a success, creatures take half damage.
— by Elise Cretel

Stone of Haqet

Wonderous item, rare (requires attunement)
A frog carved from jade stone and blessed by the goddess of Haqet, the protector of pregnant creatures. Any creatures that are pregnant and attuned to this stone recieve +5 temporary hp every day at dawn. If you drop below 1 hit point, a protective green shield surrounds you and you are sustained at 3 hit points until aid is given.
— by Elise Cretel

Strange Charm

Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement)
While attuned to this pink charm bracelet, you gain the ability to swap places with creatures and objects of a similar mass to yourself. This could include enemies, allies, barrels, or a pile of grain sacks. Once per day, you may target a creature or object you can see, and trade places with them via magical teleportation.

You can take any number of other creatures or objects with you, so long as you are touching them. You must factor in additional objects or creatures when targeting something of similar mass to trade with. For example, a whole party using the Charm could only swap with another group of people, or a much larger object, like a horse-drawn cart. If the wearer tries to trade places with a creature or object that is too big or too small, the magic fails.
— by S.T. Mannell

The Nomad Emerald

This green crystal hums softly with a beautiful emerald light. The Nomad Emerald would normally sit at the top of a staff but can also be used as an arcane focus or embedded into another weapon the wielder is proficient with. Brought into the world by Skadi, God of earth and mountains it contains 5 charges. These charges can be used as as follows:

Extend. When you attempt to hit a creature with a melee attack that is an additional 5ft outside of your melee range you can use 1 charge to double the size of your weapon and extending your reach. You now have a combat rage of 10ft until the end of your next turn.

Empower. After you roll a melee or spell attack you can choose to give yourself an additional bonus to your roll equal to the number of charges used. You can choose to do this after you have rolled but it must be before the roll has been resolved by the DM.

Escape. You can use the Nomad Emerald to get yourself out of a difficult situation. As a bonus action use 2 of the Emerald's charges to immediately cast the spell *misty step*.

The emerald regains 1d4+1 charges after a long rest.
— by Asa Wheatley

The Spirit of Battle

Blessed by the Goddess of the Underworld Hel, the metal chain of this necklace is cold to the touch but as you wrap it around yourself the cold soothes you. Once per day, the first time you hit 0hp, a spirit version of yourself is summoned. This spirit is active until you are stabilized, revived or you die.
This spirit has the same stats as you with only the following changes;
The Spirit's attacks deal 1d8 bludgeoning damage despite the weapon it is wielding.
The Spirit can only move 5 ft from your body
Any effects that were present on your body do not transfer to the Spirit (including rage, haste, enlarge/reduce and similar)
The Spirit has no hit point total and is immune to all forms of damage and conditions.
This spirit acts on your turn after you make your death saving throw for that round. You make death saves as normal, if you stabilise or die the Spirit is drawn back into your body.
— by Asa Wheatley

Tiara of Command

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A delicate tiara set with bright blue gems and silver skulls. In bright light, it glows faintly. Once per long rest, the wearer can use an action to cause their voice to carry clearly twice as far as normal. This effect lasts until the end of the wearer's next turn. If the wearer succeeds on a DC 20 Charisma check while the effect is active, every ally who can hear them is granted advantage on their next ability check or saving throw. If at least half of the allies in earshot already respect the wearer, this roll is made with advantage. This roll can only be made once while the effect is active.

The tiara can't be attuned while wearing the bracers of protection.

The harpy wearing the glowing tiara flapped her powerful wings once, soaring easily above the rest of the loosely gathered flock. The other harpies grew quiet as their princess spoke, her voice magically amplified. She spoke of the battle to come, of the glory that would be theirs, of the legendary deeds they would perform that day. Her golden eyes shined with determination, and her clan found themselves nodding along with her. She was right - they would defeat their enemies, they would win what was rightfully theirs. With
her at their head, there was no way they could fail. They would faithfully follow her into any battle.

— by Megan Irving

Wadjet's Strike

Weapon (any sword that deals slashing damage), very rare (requires attunement)

Green gemstones form the eyes of a snake wrapping around the hilt of this golden arcane sword. Decorative scales are perfectly etched in the soft metal and glisten in the light. Those who are attuned to this sword gain a +2 to attack roles and immunity to poison and acid. A successful attack with this sword will deal an additional 1d10 poison damage and 1d6 acid damage. If a creature hit with this sword drops below 1 hit point, the creature will erupt dealing 2d10 poison damage to creatures in a 10 ft. radius.

— by Elise Cretel

Wavecrusher

This Warhammer, was crafted from the dense waters at the bottom of the deepest seas and blessed by Aegir, God of the sea and storms. When you attack with Wavecrusher you gain a +1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls.

On a hit with Wavecrusher if there is another creature within 5 ft. of your target you can force the additional creature to make a dexterity saving throw (DC13) or be hit by a torrent of sea water as it expels from the warhammer. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and half as much on a success.

— by Asa Wheatley

Worker's Sickle

Weapon (sickle), rare (requires attunement)

It is said that this sickle has been wielded many times throughout history against those in unjust rule. Despite looking worn, its blade is sharp and its handle is firm. Holding it fills you with hope for a better future.

This magic weapon has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action and expend a charge to rally your allies. Choose a number of creatures equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of one). For the next hour, creatures rallied this way are granted 1d8+3 temporary hit points and have advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

The sickle regains 1d3 expended charges at dawn.

If you are attuned to the Worker's Sickle and the Hammer of Freedom, creatures you rally with this weapon become immune to the frightened condition for the duration.

— by Awkward Bard

SEA HAG STADIUM LOOT LIST

from *Seven Tears by the Sea* (*Uncaged* Volume III)
by D.W. Dagon

These items are suitable for any sea hag or sea-side-themed adventure.

1d12	Magic Item	Class Requirement
1	Figurehelm	Barbarian
2	Sway of the Stowaway Swarm; a Sea Shanty	Bard
3	Withers-yoke Anchor of Aegis	Cleric
4	Elemental Siphon of the Endless Sea	Druid
5	Circlet of the Cephalopod Sanctum	Fighter
6	Smoothed Hellstone Shard	Monk
7	Torn Sail Cape	Paladin
8	Giant-Eel Trap	Ranger
9	Dire Cone Snail	Rogue
10	Golden Shell of Reformation	Sorcerer
11	Relic of the Amaranthine Mariner	Warlock
12	Magic Fishile	Wizard

Figurehelm

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a Barbarian)

An ancient helm which was once made from wood, though now petrified into stone. A figurehead protrudes from the front of the helm like a horn.

While wearing the Figurehelm and Raging, the attuned wearer gains the following abilities:

- Gains an extra 10 foot of movement speed
- Can move about an underwater surface (eg. ocean floor) at full movement speed
- Gains the ability to perform a Naval Ram attack.
- ***Naval Ram.*** The petrified figurehead horn makes for an effective ram, just like those used in naval warfare. When the wearer moves 20 foot in a straight line before immediately making an Unarmed Attack (a headbutt) the Figurehelm performs a devastating ram with the following statistics:

Attack Roll: Unarmed Attack + 3
Damage: 1d6 piercing damage + 1d6 bludgeoning damage + Strength Modifier



'Sway of the Stowaway Swarm' ~ A Sea Shanty

Wondrous item, rare (for use by a Bard)

A jaunty sea shanty is scrawled in magic ink upon this leather parchment. It narrates a short tale of a stowaway urchin who learns to befriend the rodents aboard a great sailing ship.

As an Action, a Bard may take out this item and spend one point of Bardic Inspiration to cast *Sing Swarm Shanty*. The Bard can continue to sing the 2nd and 3rd verse of this shanty on each of their successive turns for heightened swarm enthusiasm.

Sing Swarm Shanty
Casting Time: 1 Action
Range (Area): 50 ft (5-foot cube)
Components: Verbal
Duration: 1 minute
School: Enchantment
Spell Save: Wisdom
Effect: Control

You choose a medium-sized swarm of tiny beasts or enough tiny beasts that equal the volume of a 5-foot cube, that you can see within range. The swarm must succeed a Wisdom saving throw or be enraptured by the 1st verse of the shanty. This swarm loses initiative and can be controlled during the caster's turn. If the Bard uses their successive Actions to sing the 2nd and 3rd verse, the swarm gets to roll another Wisdom saving throw each time. If the swarm succeeds, it is no longer enraptured with the shanty and attacks the caster with Advantage until killed or dispersed. The Wisdom saving throw DC and control effect for each of the 3 verses is listed below.

1st Verse (DC 18 Wisdom Saving Throw)
"Big man don't respect no swarm of (name of tiny beast)!"
[tiny beasts screech a refrain not unlike "Aye o'rir, fum fi rye'o!"]
For the duration of this spell, you may command the swarm to move 15-foot in any dir per turn as a Bonus Action. They attack any creature who is within melee range at the end of the caster's turn.

2nd Verse (DC 14 Wisdom Saving Throw)
"But me an swarms bond o'er (something that rhymes with the name of the tiny beast)!"
[tiny beasts screech another refrain of "Aye o'rir, fum fi rye'o!"]

3rd Verse (DC 10 Wisdom Saving Throw)
"Heave and haul our woes and (something else that rhymes with the name of the tiny beast)!"
[both the Bard and the swarm of tiny beasts sing/screech the final refrain together]
"Aye o'rir, fum fi ryyye ooooooohhh!"]

When this verse is successfully sung, you may chant a command as a Bonus Action for the swarm to carry or lift an object or target that weighs up to 500 pounds. An unwilling creature that succeeds on a Dexterity saving throw equal to your Spell Save DC is unaffected.

The swarm can move the object or target by up to 10 feet within the spell's range. After this turn, you may issue this command again as an Action until the spell ends. When the spell ends or on your command as a free action, the object or target may be released.



Withers-yoke Anchor of Aegis

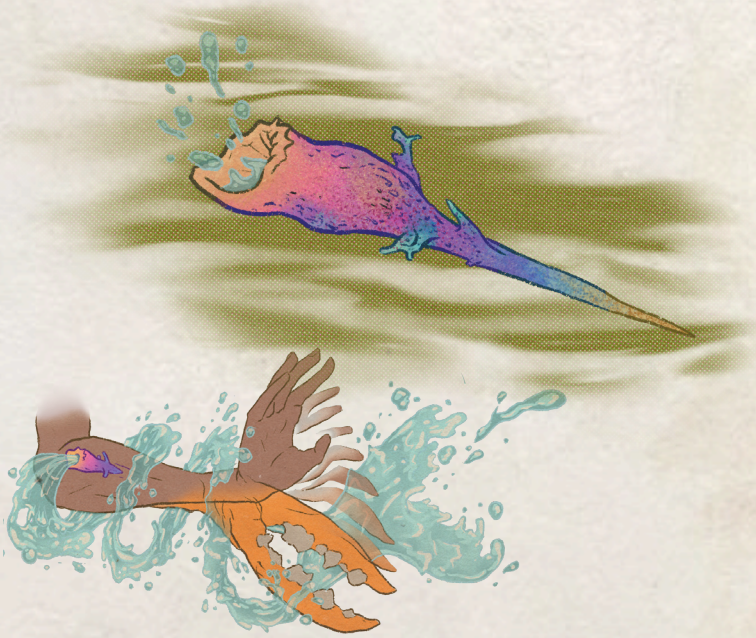
Wonderous item, rare (requires attunement by a Cleric)
This large, ornate anchor is affixed to a wither-yoke but instead of being fitted to a workbeast it is designed to be strapped to a humanoid's back.
As a Reaction, the wearer can point to a willing ally within a 30-foot range and tether them to the anchor with a spectral rope. This rope is semi-corporeal and has no physical presence apart from anchoring the ally to the Cleric. If a tethered ally is forcefully moved they cannot be moved anywhere beyond a 30-foot radius from the Cleric. If the force moving the ally is 500 pounds or more, both Cleric and ally are moved at half the distance. The tether can be disconnected as a free action if the ally or Cleric no longer will the connection to exist. The Anchor of Aegis can only tether one target at a time.



Elemental Siphon of the Endless Sea

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a Druid)

This object is a strange amalgamation of coral, shell, and organ. To fully attune to this item, it needs to be inserted into the skin like an intravenous needle; though completely painless. When attuned, it forms a symbiotic connection with the wearer. When Wild Shaping into a water-based beast, the Elemental Siphon of the Endless Sea unleashes a living current of water. As a part of the Wild Shape action, the living current provides a torrential watery medium to compliment the wearer's water-based beast form. When this happens the wearer have three turns of full swimming movement speed along the ground and through the air, to a height of 15 feet. If moving 10 feet immediately before making a melee or grapple attack whilst being assisted by the living current, the attack may be made with Advantage.



Circlet of the Cephalopod Sanctum

Wonderous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a Fighter)

When wearing this attuned item and activating their Second Wind ability, a Fighter may trigger the defensive magic of this circlet. When this happens an inky black-green cloud explodes forth from the Fighter. This magical ink cloud fills the space of a 15-foot cube with the Fighter in the center. The ink cloud is opaque and those inside are shrouded by magical darkness, obscuring any vision to the naked eye. The Fighter has Blindsight whilst in this cloud. The cloud drifts 5 feet per round during the Fighters turn, in a singular left or right direction the Fighter chooses when this ability is activated. After three turns this cloud fades from sight.



Smoothed Hellstone Shard

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a Monk)

Tempered and caressed by the tides of centuries, this furious shard of infernal origin rages quietly within its own smoothed surface.

When the attuned owner receives physical damage, they can focus and channel the pain directly into the shard to create an equal number of Fury Points (though still receiving the actual damage).

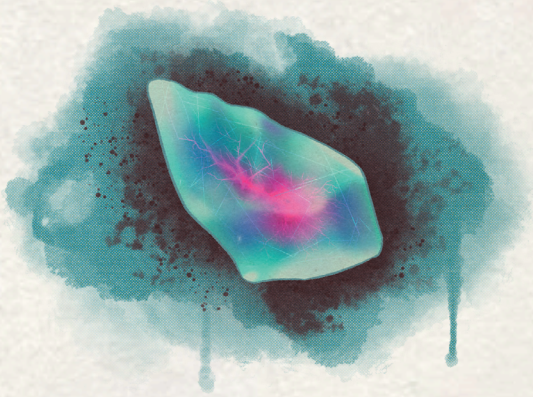
Fury Points and activating the Hellstone Shard: The hot violence within the infernal shard can be released when the Monk channels the untapped fury they have been so disciplined to contain. When the Monk makes an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw, they can activate the Hellsone Shard as a Reaction after they roll the die, but before the outcome is determined. When this happens the Monk must roll a percentile dice. If the number rolled is below the total amount of Fury Points, the Monk can roll an additional d20 to the attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, which they activated this reaction for. They can choose which of the rolled d20s is used to determine the outcome. After this

ability is used, the shard becomes inert for a week.

If the Monk rolls the percentile dice and rolls higher than the amount of stored Fury Points, they lose focus and lose one ki point. If the Monk has no remaining ki points to lose, they gain one level of Exhaustion instead.

The Smoothed Hellstone Shard can store up to 100 Fury Points. These may be reset to zero whenever the Monk chooses to do so during a short or long rest meditation. Resetting a shard containing 66 or more Fury Points back to zero changes the shard to a blue color. When this happens, a blue shard has 1 Calm Point which can be used by a Monk as a free action to restore 1 ki point. If a monk holding blue shard containing a Calm Point receives damage, the Calm Point is lost, the shard turns red again and begins storing Fury Points.

If a Smoothed Hellstone Shard accumulates 100 or more Fury Points, the shard feeds on the pain of all creatures in a 20 foot radius; dealing 2d6 psychic damage to each. If this happens and the Monk is conscious, the shard is appeased, turning blue and gaining 1 Calm Point. This Calm Point can be used, but the shard becomes inert for a week.



Torn Sail Cape

Wondrous item, uncommon (feeds on a Paladin's healing power)

Parts of this ministerial cape are fashioned from the torn section of a sail. The origin of the debris texture is unknown to this plane, but in another far realm the ship it came from is known as the Flying Dutchman. The ancient, otherworldly cloth floats as if being manipulated by an underwater current. When worn by a Paladin, the cape immediately attunes the Paladin to itself, tasting their healing power and clinging to its food source.

A Paladin wearing this cape may draw from their healing pool into the cape as a bonus action; feeding it. For every 5 points of healing fed to the cape, the Paladin gains 5 feet of flight, which do not count towards the Paladin's maximum movement speed, for this turn. If the Paladin uses this to gain height to make a leaping weapon attack, the cape performs a controlled descent, negating any falling damage equal to the distance flown and transferring it as damage rolled if the weapon attack hits successfully.



Giant-Eel Trap

Wondrous item, uncommon

This circular trap is crafted to be placed in front of giant eel burrows. The iron surface is rigid and designed to be easily camouflaged to any environment. The trap itself is large enough to trap a creature of large size or smaller.

Setting/Disarming the trap. A Ranger can set and hide this trap by performing a Wisdom (Survival) check over a 10 minute period. This becomes the set trap's Trap DC. The trap comes with chains and pegs to anchor it to a surface. A Ranger can disarm and pack the trap up in 5 minutes and doesn't require a skill check.

Detecting the trap. The Trap DC is compared with a creature's Passive Perception score to determine if it is seen or not. If the environment where this trap is set is the Ranger's favored terrain, the trap is undetectable by anyone but the Ranger.

Triggering the trap. If an object passes through the center of the trap, it triggers and spring-loaded claws clench inward. A creature which triggers this trap must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw equal to the Trap DC or take 1d6 piercing damage and stop moving.

Freedom from the trap. A creature can use its action to make a Strength check equal to the Trap DC to free itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 2 piercing damage to the trapped creature. Alternately a creature can also use its action to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Survival) cross-

skill check to disarm the trap and free itself or another creature within its reach on a success. If they fail this check the trap mechanism becomes locked up and can only be released by a Ranger or a blacksmith. The pegs which pin this trap to the ground can be removed but takes 10 minutes to do so.

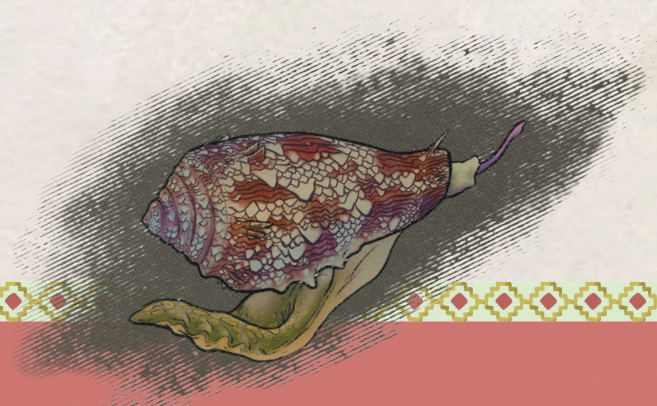


Dire Cone Snail

Living weapon (light crossbow), very rare

This rare mollusc handles like and weighs as much as a light crossbow. When held, it wraps its "foot" around the user's arm. Being such a shy creature, the Dire Cone Snail only reveals its proboscis when it knows it and its user are not detected; making it the ideal stealth companion. A person wielding this creature can use slight movements and gentle squeezes to communicate where the Dire Cone Snail needs to point its proboscis and when to fire poisonous barbs from it. The Dire Cone Snail only needs feeding infrequently and unlike its smaller counterparts, can live happily out of water for extended periods of time.

To make a ranged attack with the Dire Cone Snail, the user must make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to perform a ranged weapon attack. On a hit, the poisonous barb deals 1 piercing damage and 1d8 poison damage. For all other mechanical purposes (such as proficiencies), the Dire Cone Snail uses the same stats as a light crossbow. If one takes good care of the Dire Cone Snail, it will emit an echoed purring from within.



Golden Shell of Reformation

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement from a Sorcerer)

This burnt umber colored nautilus shell hangs loosely from thick, hardy twine. When fully charged and attuned, the shell pulsates with a subtle golden shimmer. The shell can hold 6 charges and is found fully charged. When the attuned sorcerer receives damage from an unfriendly source they can choose to cast *self-liquidate* with the golden shell. This spell uses up all 6 charges when cast. To gain back a charge, the sorcerer must submerge the shell in saltwater and expend one sorcery point into it by singing or humming to it for six minutes.



Self-liquidate
Casting time: Reaction
Duration: Instantaneous
Range (Area): Self
School: Conjuration
Effect: Teleportation

When receiving damage, as a Reaction you can instantly use all six charges from the Golden Shell of Reformation and explode into a torrent of seawater. Any creatures within 5 foot of your location must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become prone. When this happens you do not receive the triggering damage and instantly teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space that you could see. You arrive soaked and covered in seaweed.

Relic of the Amaranthine Mariner

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement from a Warlock)

This necklace is crafted from an ancient humanoid jaw. Weatherworn and petrified, the bone jaw has a stone-like texture and slivers of opalescent calcium marble the surface. When alone, the relic gives off a palpable presence, as if someone is there. Someone who walked a similar path to your patron.

As a Bonus Action, you can channel the raw energy from your Otherworldly Patron's essence. When this happens your physical appearance changes till the end of your next turn. On your next turn, your spells act as a conduit between this world and that of your patron; transforming matter itself. Any damage done to a creature on your next turn activates an effect based on your

Otherworldly Patron. You may activate the Relic of the Amaranthine Mariner once a week.

Archfey: Your eyes and hair glow or crackle with a likeness to your patron. Any time you damage to a creature during your next turn, their blood transforms into an insect which naturally inhabits the Feywild environment of your Archfey. If a character successfully rolls a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to catch one, the insect fades and returns to the Feywild and the character gains 1 point of Inspiration.

Celestial: Your entire form appears as a moving silhouette of colored light. Any damage you do to a creature during your next turn, their wound sheds light in a radius where the number of feet is equal to the amount of damage delivered. This light lasts for an hour.

Fiend: Your eyes appear as flames and your teeth lengthen into sharp points. Any damage you deal to a creature during your next turn causes the victim's flesh to be carved off; immediately igniting into a chunk of sulphurous cooked meat. If you consume a chunk of hellflame-grilled meat, you gain temporary hit points equal to half the amount of damage dealt for that attack. Temporary hit points do not stack and once consumed, the temporary hit points last for ten minutes.

Great Old One: Your face appears as if a wormhole into space; bending light and darkness from skin to stars. Any damage you deal to a creature during your next turn blasts off pieces of their body which immediately transform into crystals of a mineral not of this world. These are the frozen and petrified secretions of your Great Old One; frozen by the cold of space and hardened by solar radiation. The total value of these crystals is equal to the amount of damage dealt this turn in silver.

Hexblade: Rolling purple-black smoke billows and falls from your mouth and any weapons you carry. During your next turn, for every successful hit, you can shift your form to pure smoke and blades. When this happens, you can become a gaseous form and pass through any 5-foot space before reforming back to your physical state. If you use this to pass through the space of a creature, you may choose to deduct from your own current hit points and convert it into slashing damage to the target. You can do this as many times as successful hits during the same turn. Moving 5 feet in this form does not count toward your movement speed.

Undying: Your eyes appear to go clear and everything but your skeleton fades in and out of sight. During the next turn, when you damage a living creature, parts of your body become undead flesh. For each successful attack, you gain one point of Dead Zone. You may have an amount of Dead Zone points stored equal to half of your Warlock level.

Dead Zone. Your death-touched soul radiates "Dead Zones" which temporarily render parts of your own body as corpse flesh. When you get hit with an attack, as a Reaction you may use one point of Dead Zone to receive the hit but take no damage. This does not negate spell or ability effects, only damage however, it may negate spell or ability effects that only trigger when dealing damage.



Other: Your head appears in a magical display of likeness to your Otherworldly Patron. Your voice echoes with an unreal resonance. During your next turn every target you damage feeds your immediate patron's desires or purpose. Choose an extra Eldritch Invocation which you have the requirements for. You have this bonus invocation for the next 10 minutes multiplied by the number of targets you damaged this turn.

Wand of Magic Fishiles

Wand, uncommon

A simple wand that is in a constant waterlogged state. The projectiles of magical force conjured by this wand appear as colorful fish.

This item has 5 charges per day. When used as an action, it casts *magic missile* at 1st level, spending one charge from the wand. Additional charges may be cast at the same time to increase the level of this spell.

If a target is hit with three consecutive fish missiles, they are tainted with scale-stench for 8 hours. Those with scale-stench will get attacked by any cats in the nearby vicinity.



SPELLS

Claira's Cone of Hot

6th-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 action
Range: Self (60ft cone)
Components: V, S, M (a small metal tube or funnel)
Duration: Instantaneous
Classes: Sorcerer, Wizard
A blast of fire erupts from your hands. Each creature in a 60-foot cone must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 40 (9d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this spell is incinerated to ash and dies instantly.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 6th.
— by S.T. Mannell

Fury Bolt

1st-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 action
Range: 100 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

The power of the weave gathers and orange electricity surges through the nighttime air like a comet. On a successful spell attack, the target takes 1d12 lighting damage and 1d6 fire damage.

When casting this spell at a higher level, the spell increases by 1d12 for each spell slot beyond 1st.
— by Elise Cretel

Hafez' Covert Comprehension

2nd-level Divination (ritual)
Casting time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 hour (concentration)
Classes: Bard, Ranger, Wizard
Reveals the contents of a letter or book without opening it.
— by S.T. Mannell

Nero's Gaze of Beheading

7th-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 minute (concentration)
Classes: Warlock, Wizard
When a creature that can see the caster's eyes starts its turn, the caster can force it to make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw if the caster isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. If the creature fails the saving throw, and the creature has less than 100 hit points, the creature is beheaded, and instantly dies. If the creature fails the saving throw, and the creature has more than 100 hit points, the creature takes 7d8+30 points of slashing damage. In either case, if the creature succeeds on the saving throw, they take half as much damage.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its gaze to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see the caster until the start of its next turn, when it can choose to avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the caster in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

If the caster sees themselves reflected on a polished surface within 60 ft. of them and in an area of bright light, the caster is affected by their own gaze and must make the saving throw.
— by S.T. Mannell

Nile Surge
5th-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 minute
Range: Sight
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
The earth trembles as a 15 feet wide, 100 ft long muddy river crashes through the area. All creatures swept up by the arcane river must make a strength saving throw. On a failed save, creatures take 4d10 bludgeoning damage and are swept away 50 feet. On a successful save, creatures take half damage and are swept away by 20 feet before the murky river disappears back into the weave.
— by Elise Cretel

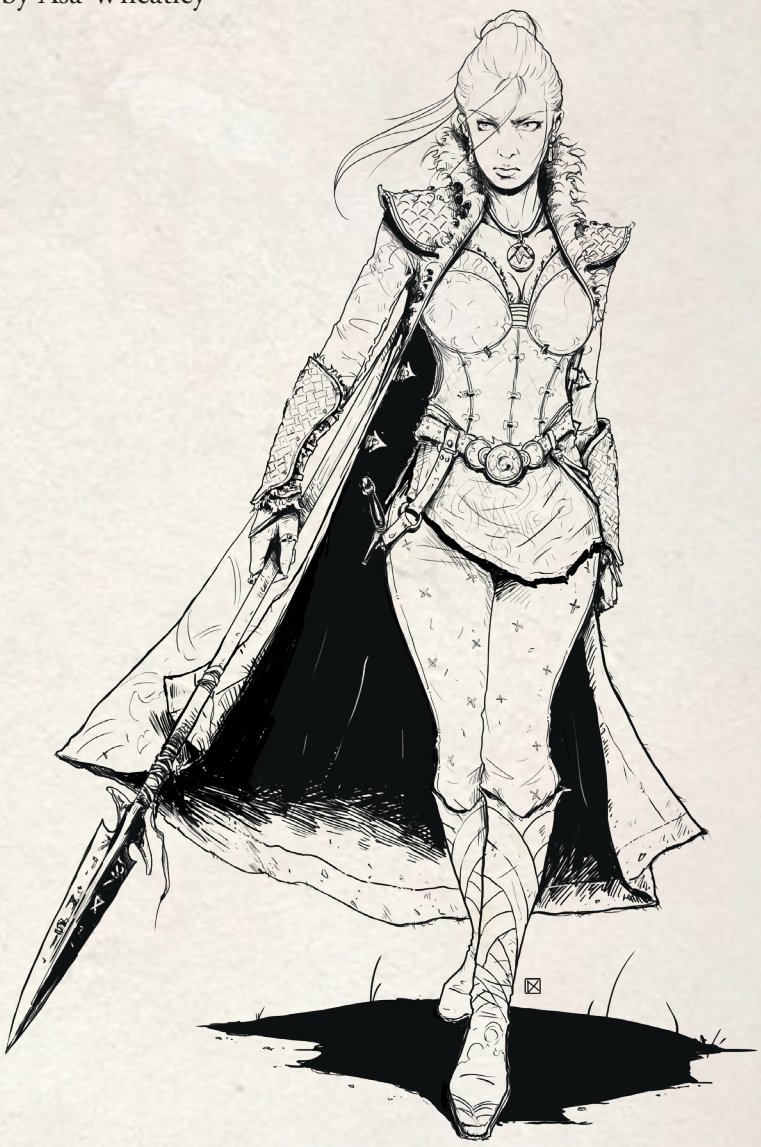
Sand Storm
3rd-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 action
Range: Self (15 foot radius)
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

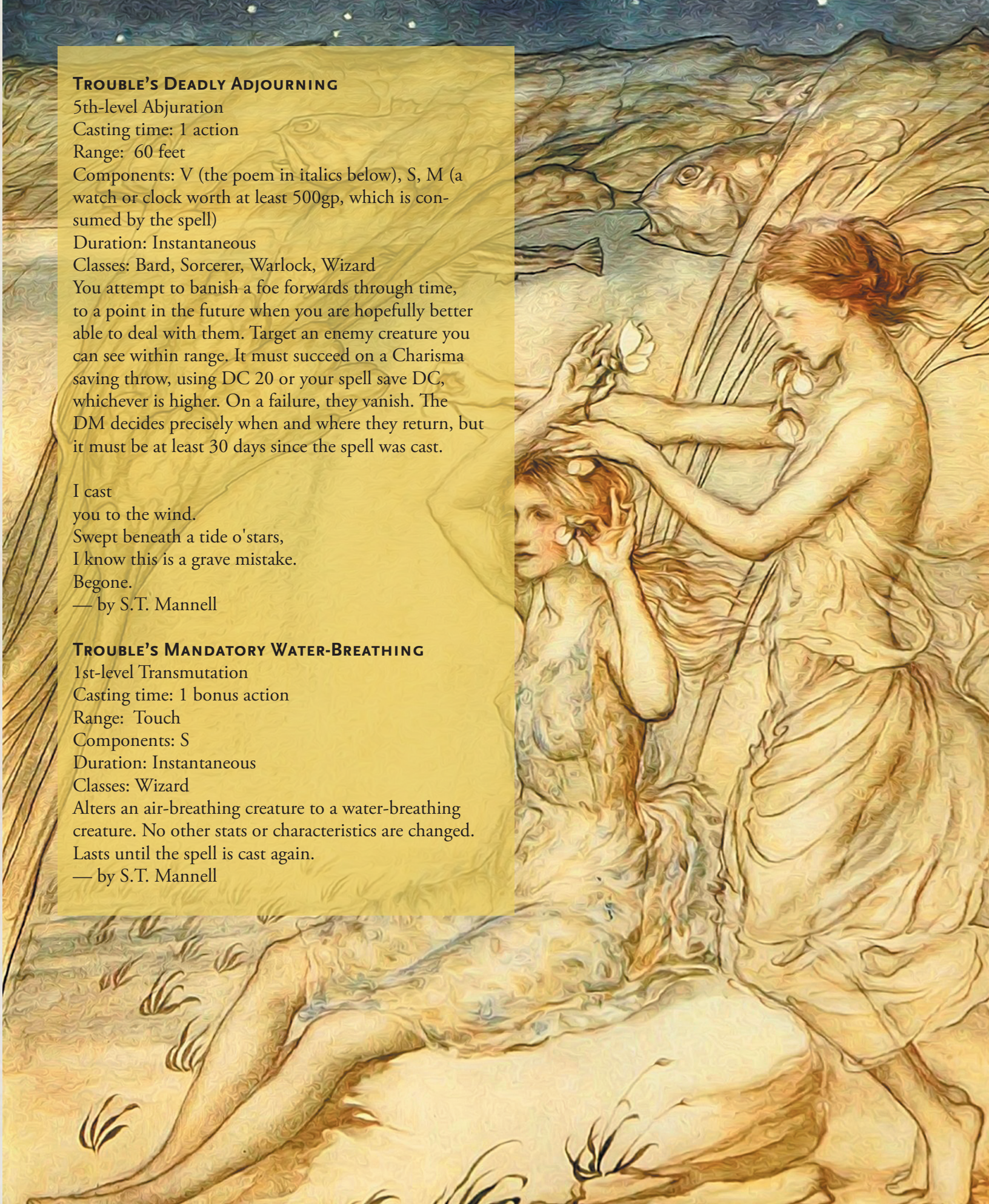
The fury of the desert goddess has awakened. Her arcane power surges through the shifting sands. A cyclone of sand and lighting rises from the earth, ready to repel any obstacles.

A massive cyclone appears in a 20 ft radius. Any creature or object that is caught in the cyclone area must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 3d8 lighting damage and is pulled off the ground 2d10 feet into the air by the cyclone and flung 30ft away to the ground. On a successful save, the creature takes 2d10 lighting damage, but remains on the ground. When the spell ends, this area becomes difficult terrain.
— by Elise Cretel

Shield of the Ancients
6th-level Evocation
Casting time: 1 minute
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M (Vile of sand)
Duration: 15 Minutes
You are surrounded by an aura of radiant light. Glowing orbs of protective energy pulsate around you. This shield grants a resistance to necrotic damage. Any hostile creature that steps within 10 feet of you takes 3d10 radiant damage. Any range weapons or spell attacks you utilize while the shield is activated deal an additional 1d10 radiant damage.
— by Elise Cretel

Valkyrie's Vengeance
3rd level abjuration
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (A bit of blue paint and a drop of blood from a fallen enemy)
Duration: 1 hour
You touch a creature and grant it the ability to avenge itself in death.The first time the target would drop to 0hp as a result of taking damage it can immediately take the attack action against their attacker if they are within range. Once this action has been completed the spell ends and the target immediately drops to 0hp.
— by Asa Wheatley





Trouble's Deadly Adjourning

5th-level Abjuration
Casting time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V (the poem in italics below), S, M (a watch or clock worth at least 500gp, which is consumed by the spell)
Duration: Instantaneous
Classes: Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
You attempt to banish a foe forwards through time, to a point in the future when you are hopefully better able to deal with them. Target an enemy creature you can see within range. It must succeed on a Charisma saving throw, using DC 20 or your spell save DC, whichever is higher. On a failure, they vanish. The DM decides precisely when and where they return, but it must be at least 30 days since the spell was cast.

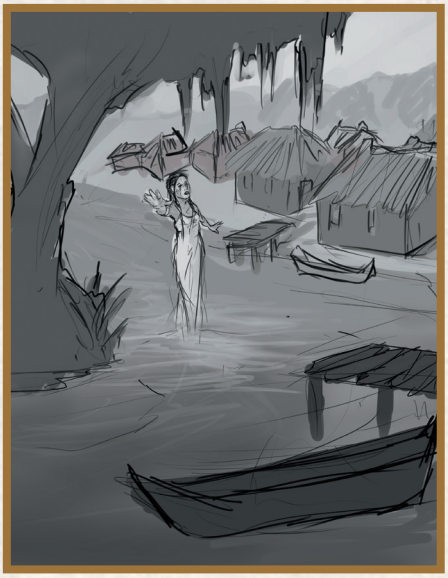
I cast
you to the wind.
Swept beneath a tide o'stars,
I know this is a grave mistake.
Begone.
— by S.T. Mannell

Trouble's Mandatory Water-Breathing

1st-level Transmutation
Casting time: 1 bonus action
Range: Touch
Components: S
Duration: Instantaneous
Classes: Wizard
Alters an air-breathing creature to a water-breathing creature. No other stats or characteristics are changed. Lasts until the spell is cast again.
— by S.T. Mannell

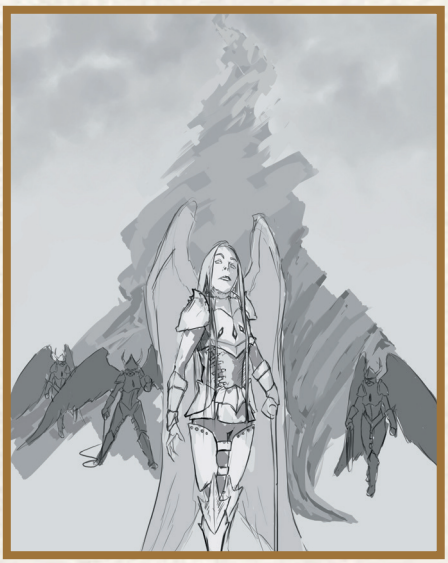
THE MAKING OF THE *UNCAGED ANTHOLOGY*

More than 100 creators from around the world came together to write, illustrate, edit, and design the Uncaged anthology series. We asked some of our contributors to share their behind-the-scenes progress pictures. Enjoy!









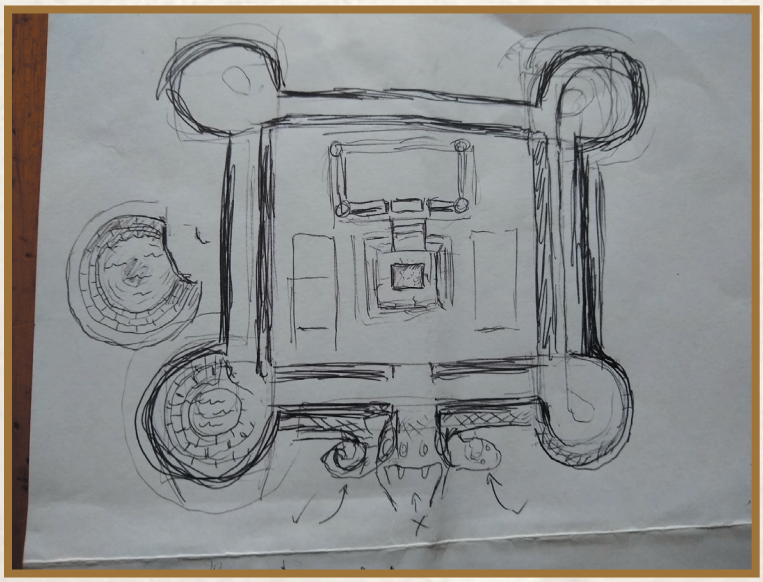


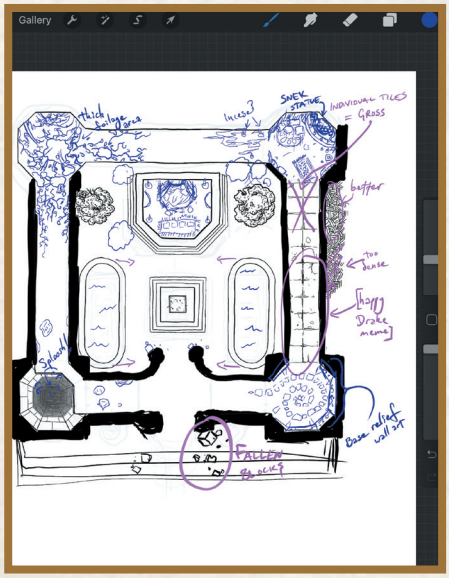
Artist: David Markiwsky
David illustrated many pieces in the *Uncaged Anthology* series, including the La Llorona piece in this volume and the erinyes in "Whatever It's Worth," Volume III.





Artist: D.W. Dagon
D.W. illustrated numerous pieces in the *Uncaged* series, including maps! D.W.'s work is featured in Volumes III and IV.







Artist: Jennifer Peig
Jennifer illustrated several pieces in *Uncaged*, including the Colchian Dragon from *Uncaged Volume II*.

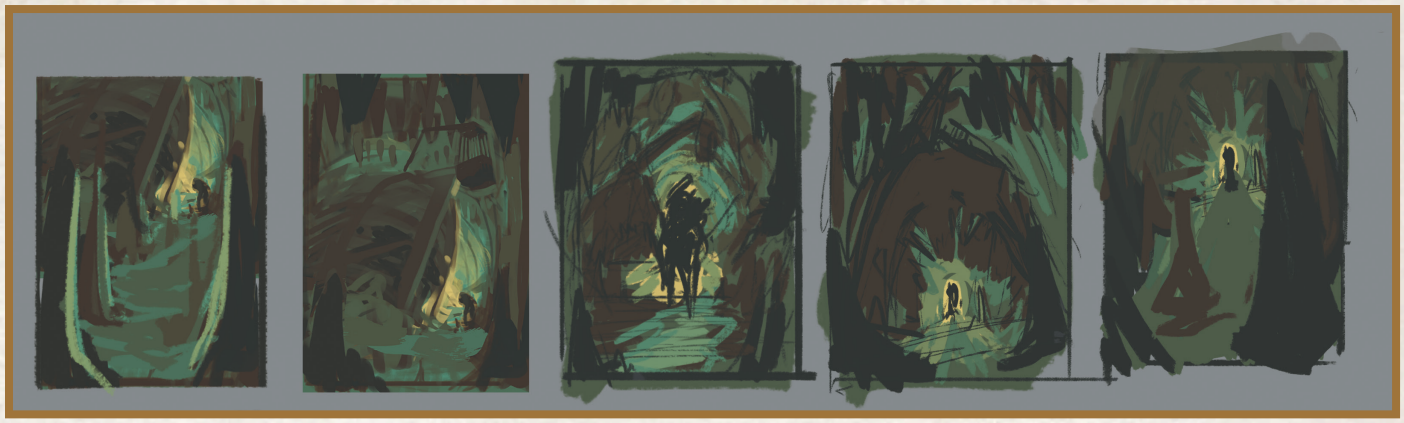


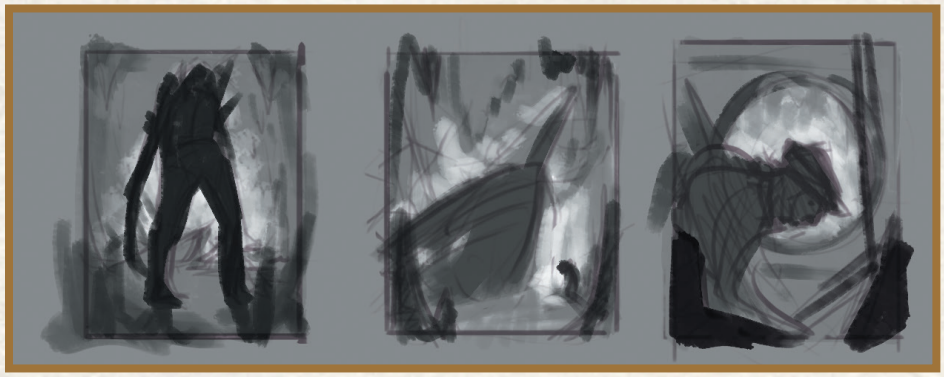






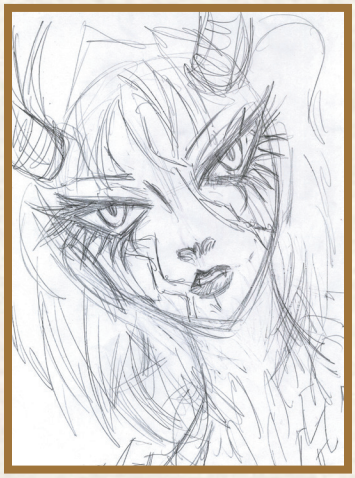
Artist: Johanna Taylor
Johanna illustrated the Lauma in *Volume I* and the doppleganger in *Volume IV*.



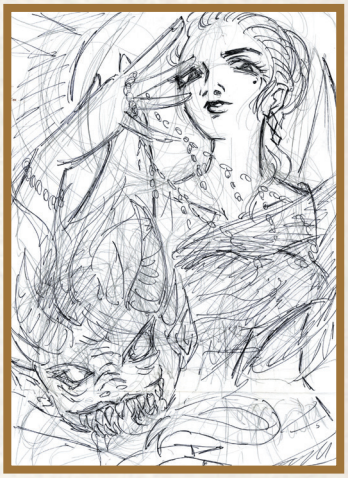


Artist: Gwendy Bee
Gwendy's art is feature in each volume of *Uncaged*.

Artist: Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett
Luciella's art is featured in each volume of Uncaged. Luciella also authored "Galateya's Will" in *Uncaged Volume I*.







FACES OF THE *UNCAGED ANTHOLOGY*

We couldn't fit all 100+ faces on one page, but we hope you enjoy this collage we've created to say "thanks" for supporting our project!



Anthony Alipio, Vol. IV contributor



Caroline Amaba, Vol. IV contributor



Collette Quach, Vol. III contributor



David Markiwsky, Vols. II-IV contributor



Dimitri Lambermont, Vol. II contributor



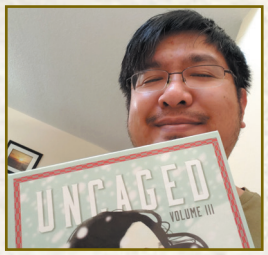
Emily Smith, Vol. I contributor



Eleanor Hingley, Vol. II contributor



Elise Cretel, Vol. I contributor



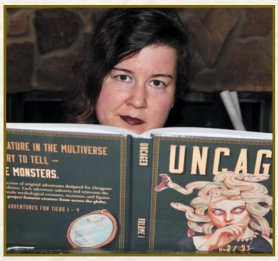
Jacky Leung, Vol. III contributor



Jameson Hampton, Vol. III contributor



Jazz Eisinger, Vol. II contributor



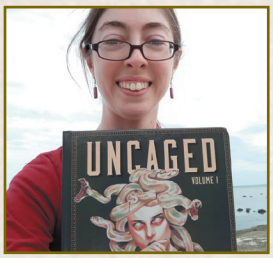
Judy Black Vol. I contributor



Kelly Mangerino, Vol. II contributor



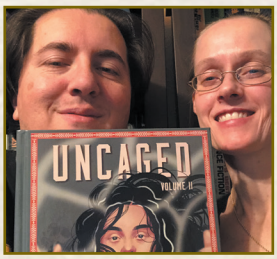
Lynne M. Meyer, Vol. I contributor



Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett, Vols. I-IV contributor



Miriam, daughter of Vol. II contributor Ben Eastman



Monica Evans and Tim Christopher, Vol. II contributors



Paige Ford, Vol. II contributor



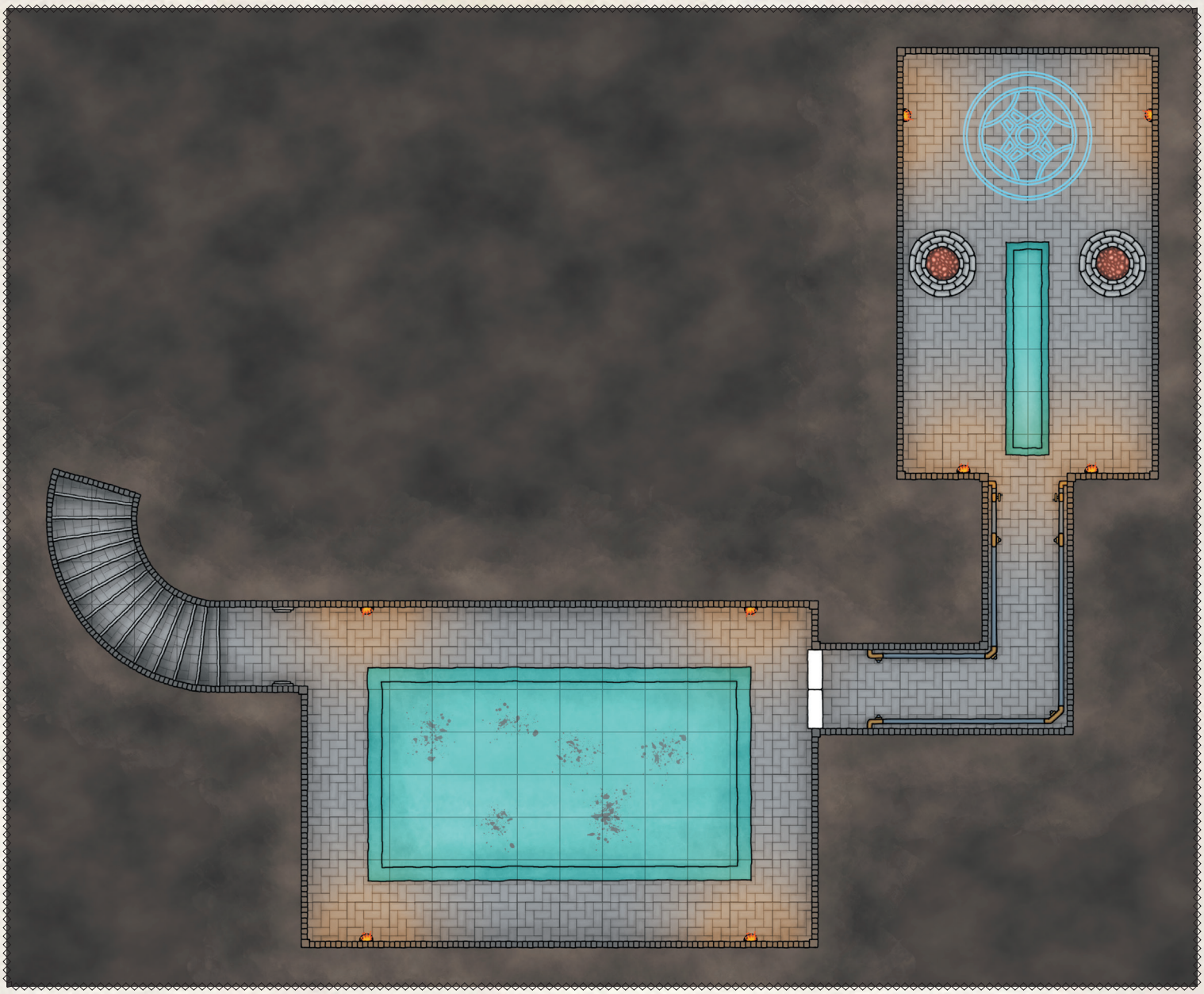
Paul Keiter, Vol. III contributor

Uncaged contributors Ink, Gwendy Bee, JessPak, and Jessica Marcrum are the cast of the show Threeflings, in which three tieflings embark on adventures from the Uncaged series.



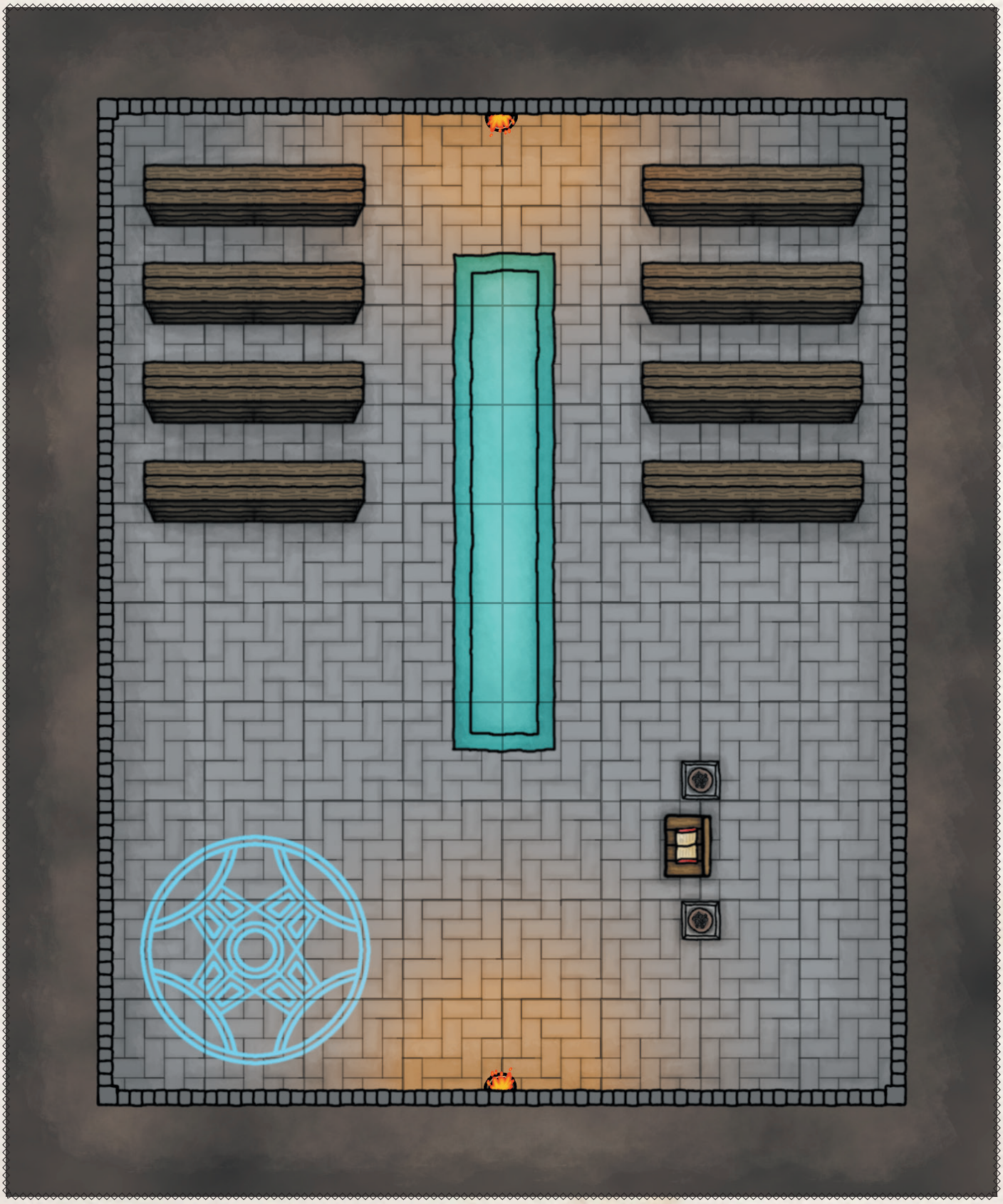
MAPS FOR PLAYERS

HYDRA ROOM (FROM *THE LYING, THE LICH, AND THE WARZONE*, PG. 115)

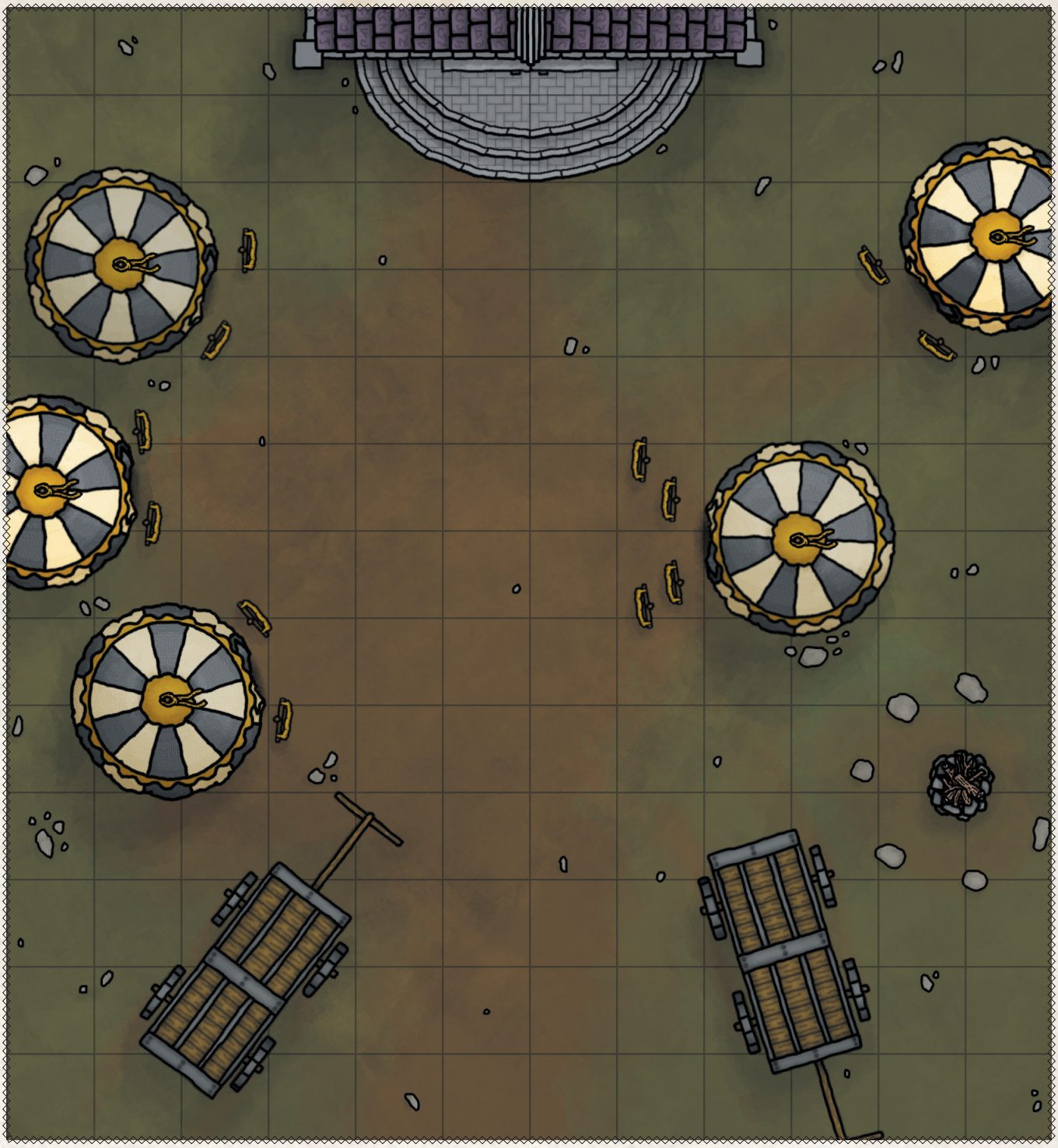


MAPS BY NORTHERN CARTOGRAPHY

THE STUDY (FROM *THE LYING, THE LICH, AND THE WARZONE*, PG. 115)

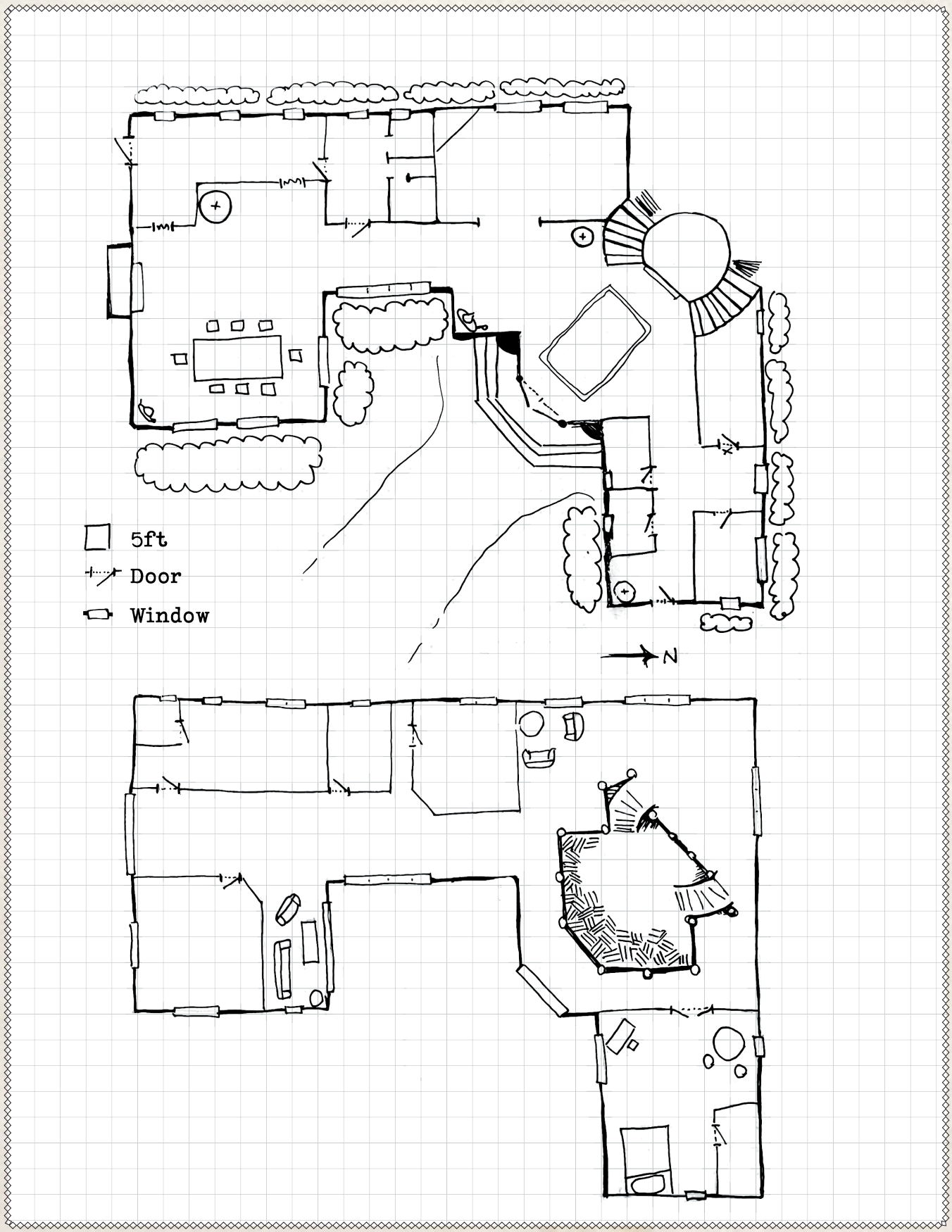


KNIGHTS CAMP (FROM *THE LYING, THE LICH, AND THE WARZONE*, PG. 115)



MAP BY NORTHERN CARTOGRAPHY

BAYANI ESTATE (FROM *CURSED HEARTS*, PG. 131)



MAP BY CAROLINE AMABA

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Alison Huang, who lives in Australia, has a deep love for narrative, especially non-violent and queer narratives. She usually expresses this through works of interactive fiction, which can be found at Drazillion.itch.io. Her Twitter handle is @Drazillion.

Ally Sulentic

As a child Ally Sulentic wished that she could spend her whole life writing and playing games and now as an adult she can't believe how lucky she is to do just that. Her work has been featured in several anthologies on the DMs Guild and in publications by both White Wolf and Pelgrane Press. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram as @theuselessbard.

Asa Wheatley

Asa Wheatley is a writer whose work ranges from indie comics to prose to TTRPG supplements. He's published multiple comics and anthologies including Tails of Mystery, Sprouting & Other Tales of the Curious and the upcoming Campfire Stories. More often than not his writing tends to lean towards horror, mystery and norse mythology. He can be found loitering on twitter @AsaWheatley.

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Colleen Taylor, Wizard at Law, is a public defender in Wisconsin, where she tortures her friends by giving NPCs extremely bad french accents and telling them what the local imports and exports are. She can be found on Instagram @crochetandcosplay where she posts projects and pictures of her cat, Mystra.

Collette Quach

Collette is a freelance writer and game designer. She has a strong passion for diversity and inclusivity either by creating or inspiring others to get into creating themselves. She strives to create diverse fantasy worlds that people of color and LGBTQ folks can see themselves in. Follow her on Twitter @colletteequach.

David Markiwsky

David is a writer and artist in Edmonton, Canada, with a moderate to unhealthy obsession with horror and all things Fey. You can find all his other *D&D* content on the DMs Guild and he can be reached on Twitter @DavidMarkiwsky

D.W. Dagon

D.W. Dagon is an Aussie, trans non-binary creator with a love for speculative fiction and weird fantasy. They love to dabble in illustration, adventure writing, and designing game mechanics. If they had one thing to say to a dear reader it would be,
"Get weird. Stay kind. I love you."

Elise Cretel

Elise Cretel works as a technical writer and editor in engineering by day and Dungeon Master at night. She is a DM's Guild featured author and Ennie nominated writer. She has contributed to top sellers such as *Undermountain: The Lost Chambers*, *Uncaged, The Great Dale Campaign Guide*, and more on the DM's Guild. Elise is the creator of The Red Knight Inn and her favorite *D&D* classes are Wizard and Psion. She is also published through HitRecord productions, and you can find Elise on Twitter and Facebook @DNDElise.

Gwen Bassett

Gwen ("gwendybee" across the web) is a freelance fantasy illustrator who will take any excuse to paint bright colors, flashy magic, and dramatic lighting. In her spare time, she likes to eat inadvisable quantities of dessert and pet other people's dogs.

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Jennifer Peig is a freelance illustrator and artist specializing in fantasy and folklore. She resides in Chicago with her ever-exuberant chiweenie pup. You can often find her scribbling furiously and consuming copious amounts of pastries under piles of blankets.

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Johanna Taylor is an ENnie award-nominated fantasy illustrator and concept artist working in video games. She has a passion for RPGs and has contributed artwork to gaming publications such as *Uncaged Anthology* Vol. I and *Rolled & Told* (published by Lion Forge Comics). She loves playing video games, Bollywood dancing, and feeding crows. She can be found on Twitter and Instagram as @johannamation.

Judy Black

Judy Black is a tabletop game fan and part of the Roll for Trouble Twitch channel. She's an author, nerd, and embodiment of chaotic good. You can find her online @judyblackcloud or join in her campaigns live @RollforTrouble. Visit her website to learn more about her books: judyblackcloud.com

Kayla Cline

Kayla Cline is an illustrator and graphic novelist, whose work frequently invokes gaming culture, the occult, and science fiction. Her work can be found at her website kaylacline.com.

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Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett is an aromantic and asexual author and illustrator based in Melbourne, Australia, who obnoxiously publishes under a name the length of an entire alphabet. You can follow her on Twitter or Facebook @luciellaes or at luciellaes.wordpress.com.

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Margaret Mae (she/her) is a practicing nerd girl who loves gaming, weightlifting, martial arts, DIY, deeply upsetting puns, and safe community spaces. Say hi to her on Twitter or Instagram @MargaretMaenad!

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Megan Irving is an Aussie who works with computers by day, and writes stories, games, and all manner of RPG content by night. You can find her work on the DMs Guild and DriveThruRPG, and her weirder stuff at https://mogibear.itch.io/. Her twitter handle is @mogibeargames.

Mellanie Black

Mellanie Black is a TTRPG designer based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. In addition to *Uncaged*, she's written has written for D&D Adventurers League in the Avernus Rising campaign. A half-elf warlock or tiefling cleric of Lathander (depending on whom you ask), Mellanie believes in TTRPG inclusivity and homebrews a special place in The Nine Hells for gatekeepers. Say hi on Twitter @MissBox.

Sandy Jacobs-Tolle

Sandy Jacobs-Tolle got into video gaming with an Atari 2600, tabletop gaming with *AD&D* 2nd Edition, and art since she ate a blue crayon in the first grade. She's done illustrations for Choice of Games, Threadbare, Motobushido, Circle of Hands… too many indie games to count. She'll also knit you a pair of socks if she likes you well enough. Portfolio at https://www.artstation.com/racerxmachina, Twitter: @racerxmachina

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Wouter Florusse is a freelance illustrator with a passion for history, fantasy and nature. He lives in Rotterdam, the Netherlands with his wife and two sons. In his spare time he engages in Historical European Martial Arts, plays tabletop roleplaying games and can be found wantonly drawing trees anywhere.

Xan Larson

Xan Larson is an illustrator, comic artist, mythological creature enthusiast, DM, and more. *Artist of If Dragons Were Horses*, *SVN*, *Deep False Waters*, and creator of the teacup almiraj and teacup wolpertinger. Follow on Twitter @PaleWhiteRabbit or Instagram @pale.white.rabbit.

ABOUT OUR COVER ARTIST

Samantha Darcy

Crafted from only the finest twigs and glamours, Samantha Darcy was well-nurtured in exchange for her father's freedom. She was beloved by all her neighbors, though her presence would frighten the livestock and cause the room to chill. The families would vie for her attention on the hot summers' days, and found they preferred the taste of soured milk. Samantha saw her first artistic inspiration behind their straining smiles, and delighted in drawing all their prettiest nightmares.

An illustrator for tabletop roleplaying games, Samantha has risen far above those humble beginnings. She has contributed to works both great and small, including the *Uncaged Anthology*, *Rolled & Told*, and countless commissions. She currently labors on the *Adventurer's Fashion Primer*, a book sorely needed by creatures of every type.

Samantha lives in a tower of toadstools and teeth, located somewhere in the strange wilds of Indiana. She dwells there with her loving husband—a musical clockwork filled with bartered voices, and their darling son—who she made herself, using only the finest twigs and glamours.

EDITORS

Dr. A. Kelly Lane, Ph.D.

Dr. A. Kelly Lane is a biologist and education researcher by day, a TTRPG player, GM, and streamer by night. Kelly loves playing games both live and in person. Being an avid promoter of all things inclusive, she couldn't pass up the opportunity to be involved with this wonderful project. The talent and kindness in this group have been astounding and Kelly has learned a great deal from those involved. You can find her @AKellyLane on Twitter where she discusses higher education, gaming, and inclusivity.

Ashley Warren

Ashley is the founder, creator, and producer of the *Uncaged Anthology*. She writes for Wizards of the Coast, Onyx Path Publishing, and more. Ashley is a cast member on *Tales from the Mists*, which airs on WotC's official Twitch channel. Additionally, she is the founder of the RPG Writer Workshop and the author of numerous titles on Dungeon Masters Guild. Her website is scribemind.com; Twitter, @ashleynhwarren.

Benjamin L. Eastman

When not delving dungeons, piloting starfighters, or interpreting the Prime Directive, Benjamin L. Eastman works as a mild-mannered attorney in the Maryland suburbs. A devoted friend of DeSoto, he thanks his wife and daughter for all the late nights he can play elfgames in their basement.

Bianca Bickford

Bianca is a lifelong geek living deep in the Heart of Texas. She can be found running around the jungles of Chult or pulling off the biggest heist in Waterdavian history. Bianca DMs for friends and one-shot adventures for girls ages 9 to 12 to introduce them to the imaginative world of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Her module "Maid in Waterdeep" was a part of *Uncaged* Volume 1. Find her on Twitter at @BiancaBickford.

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Brent has worked as a freelance fiction and TTRPG editor for the last thirteen years. He is currently an editor for On Spec Magazine, a Canadian quarterly publication of speculative fiction, and has edited for: Wayfinder (a magazine for the Pathfinder RPG); the Space: 1889 line for Clockwork Publishing; and the RPG Foreign Element for Mystic Ages Publishing. He is also the founder and curator for the Canadian Library of Roleplaying Games, and you can read more from him at renaissancegamer.ca.

Catherine Evans

Catherine has been playing and running RPGs since 1997, and she somehow always finds her way back to *D&D*. You can find her shamelessly self-promoting on Twitter (as @perpetualgloom) and writing dark fairy tales and outright horror on DMs Guild.

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Echo Roanoke (they/them) is a writer, editor, gamemaster, and game creator in Indiana. They graduated in 2011 from Eastern Illinois University with an MA in Literary Studies with Creative Writing Emphasis. They can be found on Twitter and Instragram at @echoroanoke.

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Jamie O'Duibhir is an atheist minister and writer. Her writing includes content for the DMs Guild, indie TTRPGs, nerdy news articles, poetry, and essays. She is an activist focused on trans liberation, immigrant rights, and prison abolition. She is also very gay. #RampUptheLesbians. Twitter: @irreverendjamie.

Jeff Ellis
Jeff has written and published multiple adventures using the Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition Open Gaming License to the Dungeon Masters Guild and is happy to be working as a contributing editor for the first time on *Uncaged*. He is humbled by all of the talent present in these anthologies and is honored to have helped in what little way he could. You can find out more about him on Twitter @manyeyedmonster.

Jessica Washburn
Jessica is an aspiring writer and copy editor who looks forward to releasing more projects and supplements for *D&D* 5e. You can find her on Twitter as @HealthPakStream. She may or may not be a halfling bard.

Jessica Ross
Jess is a teacher, editor, and podcaster. You can listen to her play *D&D* with some of her favorite ladies on d20 Dames and tune in while she GMs Blue Rose for some of her besties on Bitches & Liches. Check in with her shenanigans on her website writejess.com or on Twitter @writejessr.

Joe Nehmer
A nine-year-old boy in 1983. Glorious red box basic *D&D*. Elmore cover. What? No board?... what. is. this. So many summer days making spell books from chopped up looseleaf, and seeing dungeoneer and crusader alike fall to glorious *AD&D* deathtrap dungeons. Thrilled to be a contributing editor for the *Uncaged Anthology*!

Liz Gist
Liz is a hobbyist, artist, and freelance editor. They grew up fascinated with mythology and look for any excuse to burrow into that part of their psyche. Follow them on Twitter @crit_liz for puppy photos, mini painting, and far too many tiefling PCs.

Lynne M. Meyer
Bisexual interfaith and diversity educator and activist Lynne M. Meyer holds a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, and a Master of Jewish Studies from Spertus Institute. Lynne is a chronic illness warrior, devotee of Hekate, and lover of cats and good coffee. Her adventure appears in *Uncaged* Volume I. Connect with Lynne on Twitter @Lynne_M_Meyer.

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Michael Haney is currently finishing his creative writing degree from the University of South Florida. When he isn't writing about the occult or editing, he is devoting his free time to playing ttRPGs. You can find him on Twitter @michaelhaneyc.

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TK is a full-time southern gothic/dark fantasy writer and part-time eldritch horror. They have been derailing campaigns since early childhood, but their most diabolical plans are unveiled every Friday evening as DM in the Twitch actual play, Tales From the Mists. Their spooky stories can be found at www.tkjwrites.com. Legends say that you can find TK lurking in the hills of Kentucky with their familiar, Samson, when the moon is full, the fog is thick, and the harvest is ripe for the Ancient Ones' return.

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Anne Gregersen is a writer, university student, and dungeon master from the cold reaches of Scandinavia. When she isn't writing about looting monsters or surviving the apocalypse, she enjoys painting, reading trashy fantasy novels, and playing with her dog, Oscar. Follow her on Twitter @AnnesFlashBack for updates on all of the above.

Joff Brown

Joff has been flirting on and off with TTRPGs since 1985 and is currently in an impassioned relationship with D&D 5e. Born and raised in England and now a native of the Pacific Northwest, he spends his days cozying up to a cuppa tea, bonding over My Hero Academia with his daughter, and having alarmingly bad dice rolls. Like statistically? So bad. When he's not working as a graphic designer, he's sharing his love for D&D with multiple passion projects, most recently, the successfully crowdfunded Role Pins. Follow him on Twitter (@owlbare) for mental health reminders, positivity, and tips on how to make a killer pasta sauce.

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