

THE STARLIGHT RELIC

BY ASHLEY WARREN



DEEP IN THE FOREST OF MAGRA LIES A RELIC
MADE OF BOTH SHADOW AND LIGHT

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A POWERFUL RELIC LOST TO TIME...

SUMMARY

There is a legend of an ancient relic, an item called the Starlight, said to contain both infinite light and eternal darkness — an item so powerful it could help bring an end to the ongoing war between angels and demons.

A dense forest surrounds the city of Magra, a place known for its spired buildings and talented artisans. The Magran Forest not only provides artisans with the materials for their trades, but protects and hides the ruins of a long-forgotten temple, said to have once served an old, ancient deity that precedes the existing pantheon.

When luthier Vela Kapra learns of the temple's location by accident, she knows this is where the ancient relic known as the Starlight can be found. But this information is dangerous, for there are many who would die to find the Starlight — and just as many who would kill for it.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Luthier Vela Kapra has reached out to the characters, via handwritten letter, asking for their help with a delicate matter — retrieving an ancient item from the Magran Forest, which is said to house wonder, secrets, and of course, danger. (A copy of this letter is included in this module.) There is a reward for completing the task: **1000 gp** and a **custom wooden item**, crafted and enchanted by Vela herself. To accept the quest and get more information, the characters may travel to the city of Magra and visit Vela's shop. In her letter, she requests discretion about the matter.

If the players have completed the previous one-shots in this world — *A Night of Masks and Monsters* and *Labyrinth of Thorns* — they can visit Magra after their adventures in St. Valentine. However, it is not necessary to follow this trajectory, especially since there is a level jump between the previous story and this adventure.

This adventure is recommended for level 7 characters in a party of 4 or more, and level 8 characters in groups of 3 or fewer.

THE WAR OF EMBEREZ

This module is a stand-alone story and does not require the following lore. However, it's included here for additional context. This module is part of a longer campaign called *A Requiem of Wings*, which follows a long-lasting conflict between seraphim and monsters, and the realm caught in between.

The war embroils all of **Emberez**, the demiplane that is home to Magra. On the side of the seraphim are celestials, angels, and individuals who support and champion gods of the pantheon; the opposing side is led by demons and those excluded by the seraphim, including hybrid creatures, chimera, and werewolf. Emberez has been split into two territories: West Emberez, currently the seat of the seraphim order called the **Aureum**, and East Emberez, currently under the domain of the demons known as the **Malum Animus**.

But the war in Emberez is not a simple war, for the angels are not always good and the demons are not always evil. The Aureum Empire once controlled most of Emberez, but the Malum Animus rebelled, and the territories shifted, splitting Emberez in two. Still, the Aureum's former influence is evident throughout much of Emberez.

SCALABLE DIFFICULTY

This is an adventure that encourages exploration and problem-solving. There are several combat encounters available depending on the characters' choices.

FOR AN EASIER GAME

Should the characters want to spend more time exploring rather than fighting, use the **Additional Random Encounters** table on pg. 10 to add some non-violent encounters to the forest and the ruins. These can also replace the enemies encountered in the *Following the River* passage.

FOR A MORE DIFFICULT GAME

Should the characters crave more carnage, consult the **Additional Random Encounters** table on pg. 10 and pepper these throughout their journey. A mix of the hostile enemies should be sufficiently challenging for level 7/8 characters.

Another option is to make the character of **Sira** more antagonistic. She is not characterized as such in the module, but she can easily become a more formidable enemy with a few personality changes (and her affiliation with the **Aureum** can be omitted entirely).



SCENE 1 — THE CITY OF SPIRES AND STRINGS

Magra is a medium-sized city surrounded by dense forest filled with large, ancient trees. The forest has given its residents reliable access to crafting materials, and as such, the city is home to many wood artisans, including luthiers, toymakers, and carpenters.

This has attracted other crafters, including jewelers, clothiers, and papermakers, and Magra has a vibrant outdoor market that remains functioning year-round, despite the frequent drizzle.

Magra is a very old city, yet there is something *haunted* about it, resulting in a darkly beautiful place. Its many buildings are tall, with towers that taper into sharp points capped with spires that protrude upward. Much of its architecture is influenced by the capital of East Emberez, Ravukoi, which is also the seat of the Malum Animus. Throughout its history, Magra has changed hands between the Aureum and the Malum Animus several times, and the appearance of the city reflects that, clearly favoring its demonic influence.

ARRIVAL IN MAGRA

A horse-drawn carriage deposits the characters at Magra's north gate. Tall stone walls surround the perimeter of the city. From here, the faint sound of axes on wood can be heard. Guards, dressed in black high-necked coats with silver buttons, peer over the parapet. Pointing their wooden crossbows at the characters, the guards will demand to know their purpose for being in Magra.

IF THE CHARACTERS USE DISCRETION:

If the characters heed Vela Kapra's request and use discretion – by saying they are there to visit her shop and not giving out additional information about the purpose of their visit — the guards will acquiesce and will open the gate.

IF THE CHARACTERS SHARE THE TRUE NATURE OF THEIR VISIT:

If the characters are not discrete, the guards will still acquiesce and open the gate — but a black crow will begin following the characters. A **DC18 Perception check** will alert the characters to the presence of the crow. The crow is, in fact, an **imp**. Imps have been assigned to the guard posts and barracks throughout East Emberez, and they can take many forms. They act as spies in service to the Tsarina who rules Ravukoi.

The crow will not go near the characters, but will linger nearby, perched on available ledges or tree branches. Should the characters try to attack the imp, see stats in the *Monster Manual*, pg. 76. Although the imps can speak, they will not communicate with the characters unless they also possess an imp or a magical familiar. Regardless, the imp will never initiate conversation. The DM may decide if and how the characters can interact with the imp.

MAGRA MARKETPLACE

Read or paraphrase the following:

You step through the open gates and onto a wide main street, paved with cobblestone. It is raining, and the cobblestone is slick underfoot. Lining this thoroughfare are merchant tables set up under red tents. Each tent sports a lantern that illuminates the merchants' wares. The aroma of warm pastries, cooked meat, and hot wine permeates the atmosphere, mingling with the scent of petrichor.

The merchant tables include the following:

- **Jewelry and gemstones:** an assortment of metal and gemstone necklaces and rings. This booth is run by **Gabinka** (gnome **commoner**). Each item costs **3 gp**.
- **Clay mugs and flatware:** a selection of kiln-treated clay items. This table is managed by **Johanna** (human **commoner**). Each item costs **1 gp**.
- **Knitwear:** hats, scarves, gloves and other knitwear. This table is managed by **Antonina** (half-elf **commoner**). Each item costs **5 sp**.
- **Stationary:** an array of fine stationary. This table is managed by **Havel** (elf **commoner**). Consult **Adventuring Gear** in the *Player's Handbook*, pg. 150, for pricing.
- **Pastries and hot wine:** simple snacks for shoppers. A round pastry and a cup of wine costs **5 cp**. The treats are dispensed by **Wizdil** and **Nella** (halfling **commoners**).

Any of the merchants will be happy to point the characters in the direction of the luthier's shop, and will share that Magra is a city known for its artisans, particularly wood artisans like Vela Kapra, who source their material from the forest. Vela is well-respected in the city.

The characters may choose to skip the merchant tables altogether and proceed through the city. Magra's streets, called *cestas*, are each named after a type of wood. Either way, Vela Kapra's shop can be found by continuing down the main street, and taking the second right onto **Willow Cesta**.



MAP OF MAGRA'S MARKET DISTRICT

KEY:

- A: FRONT GATE
- B: OUTDOOR MARKET TABLES
- C: MAPLE CESTA
- D: WILLOW CESTA
- E: SPRUCE CESTA
- F: OAK CESTA
- G: BOW & STRING



BOW & STRING

Read or paraphrase the following:

The buildings of Magra loom protectively over the streets. The cestas are warmly lit by the lanterns that hang in front of each storefront and residence. A lovely melody from a stringed instrument emanates out onto the thoroughfare, and seems to be coming from a cesta on the right. A wooden sign, with the words BOW & STRING carved into it, hangs outside of a shop.

The door to Vela's shop, **Bow & String**, is propped open. Inside, a woman with short black hair stands behind a wooden counter, playing a quick folk tune on a balalaika. The woman is **Vela Kapra**, expert luthier and musician.

Bow & String is a workshop with a loft, and there are worktables covered in tools and projects in process. Various wooden instruments — lutes, violins, lyres, and so on — hang on the walls, all beautifully crafted and painted. Vela will enthusiastically greet the characters, welcoming them into her shop. She will usher them inside out of the rain and close the door behind them.

"Thank you for coming to help me. I need your help retrieving an item from deep within the Magran Forest. The item is an ancient relic called the Starlight, which many have assumed to be just a legend. But I know the Starlight is real, and now I know where it is!" — Vela Kapra

THE STARLIGHT

Vela doesn't know exactly what the Starlight *is*, only what it does. The Starlight has the ability to cast radiant light or magical darkness, depending on its target. This light or darkness can be used to automatically repel celestial and demonic creatures: the darkness will keep seraphim at bay and the light will hold off demons. What makes the Starlight coveted is that the light and darkness expands to engulf however many people it detects — which means it can repel entire legions and armies, acting as an impenetrable force shield, emitting light or shadow for as long as it is activated.

By obtaining an item that can be used to defend, rather than attack, Vela hopes that the ongoing war between celestials and demons can come to some sort of diplomatic solution. She is a supporter of the Malum Animus by default, for she is a **werecat**, and the Aureum considers were-creatures to be abominations. However, Vela does not approve of everything the Malum Animus does, and hopes for peace across Emberez. This is information she will only share on a successful **DC15 Persuasion check**.

THE LOCATION OF THE STARLIGHT

Vela says to follow the river, which starts outside of the back city walls and leads into the forest. It pours into a pond hidden among the ruins of an ancient temple, which served a god far older than the gods worshipped by the Aureum. Vela suspects the god it once served is now a being that some warlocks regard as a patron; however, Vela doesn't know much more about the temple, other than the existence of it.

If asked how she came by this information, Vela will go to the counter and gingerly pull out a scroll, water stained and worn from time and neglect. Unfurling it reveals that it is sheet music, with lyrics written in Sylvan. If a player knows Sylvan, they can read the lyrics. Or, the DM can choose to have Vela relay the Common translation:

THE SONG OF THE STARLIGHT

- O winged beings, do you hear
The voice of the forest, the trees that sing?
Where river rushes over weir
Where blue and green pour into spring —
Awaiting you is ancient starlight
Evermorning, evernight
- O winged beings, what shades your eyes
A luminous ring or obsidian horns?
I maintain my cimmerian guise
My roses bloom among my thorns —
For I care not about your making
Your wings are hapless, mine for taking
- O winged beings, come claim your gift
Lost in the willow, maple, spruce
For only you can close the rift
An outstretched hand awaits your truce —
- But winged ones, be forewarned
A danger protects the thing you seek
For should my temple incur your scorn
A beast will rise, with heads and teeth...

If asked how she came by this document, Vela says a mysterious customer sold it to her the other day for next to nothing, and Vela had it translated by a cleric she trusts at one of the city's temples, so she assumes the translation is correct.

HOW DOES VELA KNOW THE LOCATION?

If asked how she knows the Starlight is in Magra's forest, Vela will say that the forests of Magra are unique — various types of trees grow in close proximity. Deep in the forest are thickets comprised of willow, maple, and spruce trees, and Vela thinks these thickets may hide the temple and subsequently, the relic.



SCENE 2 — JOURNEY TO THE FOREST

Vela promises to reward the characters with gold and a custom item when they return. She directs them to the south gate of Magra, opposite of where they entered the city, which opens into the forest. She suggests stopping at one of the woodcutter camps and asking for tips for navigating the forest. Vela herself has only visited the forest on a few occasions, and does not know much about the threats within. She will ask that they return the Starlight to her and she will take it to the clerics. A **DC15 Insight check** will confirm that Vela is honest and earnest in her plans.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE WARLOCK

When the characters exit Bow & String, a hooded figure in the alleyway will try to get their attention. As they pass the alley, heading toward the back gate of the city, the figure will whisper, "Pssst!"

AN OFFER OF AID

"I heard your conversation with Vela, about going to the temple in the forest. I can help — I have a map of the forest and can lead you to the temple. If you help me get there, I'll help you find it." — The mysterious woman in the alley

The woman's name is **Sira Harisa**. Sira is a half-elf **warlock**, which she is not afraid to share if the characters ask, and she says the temple in the forest was built to serve her patron: the Archfey. She has wanted to visit the temple since she was a child, but only learned the location a fortnight ago.

"My patron recently came to me in a dream. That has only happened to me once before, when I was 10 years old — the night I first learned of the Archfey and became their servant. I dreamed of a forest, lanterns hanging from the tree branches, lighting my way. I had left my notebook open on my nightstand, and when I awoke, there was a map." — Sira

Sira claims to have no interest in whatever Vela wants — she just wants to visit the temple, which would be a dangerous journey to embark on alone. (A **DC18 Insight check** may hint that this might not be entirely true.) Thus, she hopes to share her knowledge of the temple's location in exchange for help trekking through the forest. As a sign of good faith, she will show the characters the map. Curiously, however, when the characters look at it, the ink marks swirl and rotate on the page. Sira will wonder if her patron intended for only she to see it.

Bringing Sira along is, of course, entirely optional. Her map will make it easier for the characters to traverse through the more dangerous parts of the forest, but they are fine to continue unaccompanied. If the characters continue without Sira, she will bid them good luck and will leave the alley. However, Sira will begin following the characters from a distance (see Sira's stats on pg. 15.) DMs may choose to pepper in some **Perception checks** (DC20) throughout the journey to see if characters sense they are being followed.

A BEACON AMONG SHADOWS

Much of what Sira says is true. Sira is, indeed, a warlock, but her patron is not a fey being; she is a **celestial warlock**, working on behalf of the **Aureum**, and her patron is a celestial being. (If characters have completed the *A Night of Masks and Monsters* module, they may recall a character named Eya Harisa — Sira's younger sister.)

Sira is the one who sold Vela the *Song of the Starlight*, knowing that the luthier would likely recognize the legend and feel motivated to act. Knowing that the forest is dangerous for solo travelers, Sira seeks help venturing to the temple.

Despite her mission, Sira has no intention or desire to hurt the characters — she just wants the Starlight for the Aureum. If she travels with the characters, she will do her best to get to know them, protect them, and serve as an ally.

WHO IS SIRA'S PATRON?

Sira's patron is a **solar** only referred to as the Harbinger. As children, Sira and Eya were rescued from an orphanage in Ravukoi by the Harbinger, and have served the solar ever since, who in turn grants them power.



THE WOODCUTTER CAMP

Heading south on the main street that cuts through the city will take the characters to the back gate. Guards will open the large wooden doors as they approach.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The tree line starts about a half a mile out from the gate. Clustered near the walls of the city are small wooden cottages, where the woodcutters live. Coming from the east, a river runs parallel to the wall and curves, heading south into the forest, and a saw mill has been constructed on the banks. There are several piles of logs near long wooden worktables. Many of the carpenters are taking a break, sipping from flasks or whittling.

If the characters choose to speak to one of the woodcutters, they can approach the idle workers. An older dwarf woman with curly red hair will glance up as they approach. Her name is **Drez Rezek**, and she is the manager of the camp.

"Travelers, aye? You have that look about you." — Drez

Drez is keen-eyed and detail-oriented, which makes her an effective leader among the carpenters. She is used to consulting with travelers; adventurers visit the Magran Forest somewhat regularly, hoping to bring home a piece of wood or catch a glimpse of a fey creature.

If the characters ask for advice on navigating the forest, Drez will offer the following tips to avoid getting lost or running into certain dangers. However, despite her knowledge of the forest, Drez is not familiar with the temple or its location.

DREZ'S FOREST TIPS

- Some of the trees are marked with **Dethek** runes, left long ago by the race of dwarves who fled the nearby Kol Mountains during the eruption of the Kol Ogon volcano. Drez will show the characters a key used by the woodcutters who are not of dwarven heritage. Reading the runes aloud makes the marked tree glow, providing a useful visual trail of bread crumbs. The tree will stop glowing when the rune is repeated.
Note for DMs: Dethek shares roots with Common, so the key can be used to translate into Common words. This follows the existing canonical lore about Dethek.
- Keep an eye out for poisonous and dangerous mushrooms, including **gas spores**, **shriekers**, and **violet fungi**. The deeper you go into the forest, the more common these mushrooms are.
- There are dangerous creatures that live in the forest, including feral werereatures and other demonic entities.
- The forest houses fey creatures, including **faerie dragons**, **pixies**, and **dryads**. These creatures are revered by the local community. Although the forest can be dangerous, not all creatures within it are harmful, and communing with the trees can reveal wondrous sights.
- When in doubt, follow the river to find your way out.

Drez respects the forest, for it provides her with the materials for her livelihood. She asks that the characters also treat the forest with respect.

DREZ'S RUNE KEY

NOTE: Each rune corresponds with a letter of the Common alphabet. The runes that represent W, X and Z are the same. Learn more about Dethek at <http://forgottenrealms.wikia.com/wiki/Dethek>.

Г Л П Т I X J Y O Q J L S # + 7 4 0 C F I II Y Y E Y

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

SCENE 3 — INTO THE TREES

Read or paraphrase the following:

You step into the tree line and immediately the sound of the city and the woodcutters begins to ebb. There is a pleasant quiet that engulfs you, replacing the sounds of people with the sounds of nature — rustling foliage, low chirps, flapping wings. The river continues straight, heading south.

The trees in this part of the forest appear to be primarily spruce conifers. They grow close to one another, and their needled branches block out much of the natural light. It is quite shaded already, even just inside the tree line.

Note for DMs: The following passages outline two routes — following the river or following Sira's map — depending on the characters' choices. After the encounters in each section, the separate paths will converge.

FOLLOWING THE RIVER

Based on the lyrics in *The Song of the Starlight*, Vela has recommended that characters follow the river to find the temple and the pond. The river rushes with an eager current. Looking upward, clusters of wide-eyed owls are gathered on tree branches, peering at the characters.

A **DC16 Perception check** may also reveal the presence of a black crow, if the Tsarina's imp is spying on the characters.

About a mile ahead, the forest quiets more, settling into an eerie silence. A **DC20 Perception check** may alert the characters to a quick shuffling noise. The noise is **Sira**, but the characters will not be able to see her, only hear her movement, and may suspect that they are being watched or followed.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE DISPLACER BEASTS

After a mile, a low growl emerges from the shadows. Crouched near a tree is a creature with sleek, blue-black fur. What looks like a panther is in actuality a **displacer beast**, with six legs and two tentacles that reach out like tendrils of smoke. The beast will bare its teeth at the characters, preparing for an attack, and **another** will appear beside a nearby tree. See the displacer beasts' stats on pg. 16. (Be sure to note the beast's **displacer** quality in the stats.)

After this encounter, the river begins to curve to the west. The trees lining each side of the river bend toward each other, reaching their branches out, forming a woven canopy. As such, it is quite dark here. Several specks of light appear about thirty feet up ahead, twinkling a pleasant golden.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE WILL-O'-WISPS

The lights are not helpful lanterns, pointing the way. They are **will-o'-wisps**. Only two will attack the characters; the others will wink out. See stats on pg. 16.

FOLLOWING SIRA'S MAP

If Sira is in tow, they can use her guidance on avoiding danger. Her map directs the characters to the south west, away from the river for several miles, avoiding two areas where she says the map indicates some sort of danger.

The way is clear for about two miles. Eventually, though, the trees seem to grow denser as the characters head further into the forest, making it harder to navigate. A trodden trail appears to wind through the wider parts of the trees. It gets darker the further they trek.

After another half mile or so, the thicket opens into a small clearing, about 7 feet wide. A tree has fallen over into the damp underbrush, and the log has begun to rot. Atop the log is a small circle of **foxfire** (bioluminescent fungi), which glows brightly in the dim forest.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE FAERIE DRAGON

Spiky cones will begin to rain down on the characters; they can make a **DC15 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid getting hit, but the cones are more of an annoyance than anything.

A **DC16 Perception check** will reveal the presence of a tiny violet **faerie dragon**, perched in the tree branches above. Once it is spotted by the characters, it will fly down and stand in the center of the foxfire ring.

The faerie dragon speaks Draconic and Sylvan, but will not speak unless it is spoken to. It is quite old, despite its wee size, and has seen many things in the forest. However, it will not give any help or information without an offering, which can include any sort of shiny trinket or tasty treat.

Once satisfied, the faerie dragon will point to a nearby tree in the clearing. The tree is marked with a Dethek rune, spelling out the word **LIGHT**.

The characters will have to translate the runes. If they speak the word aloud, like Drez instructed, the tree will glow.

If they do not have the rune key, characters with linguistic abilities or spells can attempt to translate.

Regardless, after attempting to help, the faerie dragon will fly back into the forest after several minutes.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE MUSHROOMS

Deeper in the forest, where there is less light and soil is damp from the river overflow, the characters may come across a ring of **violet fungus**. There are ten mushrooms that appear to be normal mushrooms. Characters can spot this with a **DC16 Perception check**. If they do not detect it and move within 10 feet of it, they will be **surprised** by the violet fungi attack. See stats on pg. 17.

AT THIS POINT IN THE STORY, IT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY TO ALTER THE PATH BASED ON SIRA'S PRESENCE.

THE MARKED TREES

If the characters use the Dethek key to translate the runes that correspond with the lyrics of *The Song of the Starlight* — or, if by chance, they speak the lyrics aloud while in the forest — they can be taken directly to the thicket that hides the temple. As Drez noted, many of the trees in the forest are marked with runes. Speaking the lyrics will cause all of the trees marked with those words to glow, illuminating the path to the temple.

If the characters don't have the rune key from Drez, but happen to say the lyrics aloud, the trees will illuminate.

If the characters make an attempt to use the runes to aid in navigation, a **DC15 Perception check** will spot a marked tree. The runes are fairly easy to spot, so this check can determine if they see the runes that will help light their way. Characters will likely not know that the song has this effect, so this check helps the DM choose which runes appear. Characters with linguistic skills can roll with advantage.

Note for DMs: You may choose to have characters roll a perception check each time; or, a high enough roll can be enough to spot multiple runes in one turn.

IF THEY SUCCEED ON THE PERCEPTION CHECK:

Characters will discover the rune that translates to the first word of the song: **O**. If they roll above a **20** on the initial roll, they can spot another nearby tree, marked with runes that spell out **WINGED**.

IF THEY FAIL THE CHECK:

Use the *Runes* list on pg. 20 to select a random rune. The tree will glow when the word is correctly translated and spoken aloud.

WHY ARE THE LYRICS MARKED ON THE TREES?

Sira is the only one who may have an idea of why the lyrics are engraved into the trees: she suspects the Archfey, to whom the temple in the forest serves, may have spoken to the forest dwarves in some way — perhaps in a dream, as is her patron's fashion. She muses that much in the forest may be touched in some way by her patron.

This confirms that *The Song of the Starlight* was written by whom she claims is her patron, which may spark another realization: that Sira was the one who sold the sheet music to Vela. This isn't a damning realization, but it may cause some doubt about Sira's true motivations. If she is questioned by the characters, she will be adamant that she only wants to find the temple. A **DC17 Insight check** will allow the them to sense that there is more that Sira is not sharing.

ADDITIONAL RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Should the journey warrant additional encounters, roll a **D10** or select from the table below.

	Creature	Monster Manual	Hostile?
1	Giant Owls (3)	pg. 327	No
2	Green Hag	pg. 177	Yes
3	Vine Blights (5)	pg. 32	Yes
4	Wereboar	pg. 209	Yes
5	Sprites (3)	pg. 283	No
6	Pixies (3)	pg. 253	No
7	Giant Wolf Spider	pg. 328	No
8	Ettercap	pg. 131	Yes
9	Myconid Sprout	pg. 230	No
10	Duergars (3)	pg. 122	Yes

SCENE 4 — THE TEMPLE OF THE ARCHFEY

The forest grows ever denser as the characters proceed through it. Eventually, they come to a thicket of trees with branches and roots entwined. The river, Sira's map and the marked trees will lead them to this point; based on their choice of navigation, DMs can determine when characters come to this location.

A **DC15 Nature check** will confirm that the thicket is comprised of three types of trees: a large willow flanked by a large spruce tree and a large maple tree.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you is a thicket so tightly woven that you cannot continue through. The river continues beneath it, trickling through branches just wide enough to permit small streams. Above you looms a large willow tree, a very different sight than the conifers that have so far canopied the path.

If the characters attempt to backtrack to find another entrance, they can continue traveling through the forest, but it is recommended that the DM roll for a **random encounter**. The characters will find that every route toward the supposed location of the temple eventually leads to an impenetrable wall of trees.

GETTING THROUGH THE THICKET

Although it is comprised of wood, the thicket cannot be penetrated by might or magic, nor be climbed over or under. Attempting to destroy the wood has consequences; if the wood is struck by a spell or a weapon, a root will reach out and *whack!* the character who acted, causing **1 point of bludgeoning damage**. Passage through requires strategic use of the items that just happen to be available.

A **DC13 Perception check** will draw characters' attention to four objects scattered around the base of the thicket. The objects are non-magical, but using them in some way will either prevent or allow them to proceed.

- **An axe:** A simple, rustic axe with a worn wooden handle lies forgotten in the underbrush. Using the axe is considered an attack, so the character who uses it will be hit for **1 point of bludgeoning damage**.
- **A tinder box:** A small metal box, containing a two matches and a striking block, sits next to the axe. Lighting a match and nearing the tree with fire is considered an attack, so the character who uses it will be hit for **1 point of bludgeoning damage**.

- **A clay bowl:** A very simple, crudely-made clay bowl is wedged between the river and the roots. The clay bowl can be used to scoop water and pour it on the tree, which will result in the thicket opening a foot wide. Additional pours will continue to open the thicket until it is 8 feet wide, allowing for passage through.
- **A marble tray:** A thin, round marble tray is upended on its side, stuck in the damp soil. A **DC13 Religion check** will reveal that it is an **offering tray**. Offerings such as flowers or coins will result in the thicket opening several feet: a coin will cause it to open the full 8 feet, where smaller gifts will cause incremental openings of 2 feet at a time.

A **DC16 Investigation check** will allow characters to find small runes, engraved vertically in the willow's trunk. There are quite a few runes in this row, and they spell out *EVERMORNING EVERNIGHT*. However, it will not be the tree itself that glows this time when the words are spoken aloud; instead, either the **marble tray** or the **clay cup** will begin to glow a luminous blue.

THE TEMPLE RUINS

Read or paraphrase the following:

Through the opening in the thicket, you see a stone archway and crumbling stone walls that appeared to have once formed a hallway. Not much of the structure or roof have maintained their integrity, but a few scaffolds remain. Above you is the open sky, and about fifty feet ahead, the river pours into a deep blue pool.

It is best to describe this place at night, for the sky overhead is full of stars, a wondrous sight seen through the remaining stones of the temple. The river continues through the opening, trickling over a stone weir.

EXPLORING THE TEMPLE

If Sira has accompanied the characters, she will earnestly thank them for their help finding the temple. She will begin looking around, genuinely awe-inspired by the ruins. The characters may also choose to explore. The ruins are mostly overgrown with foliage, and no furniture remains. After centuries of neglect, the temple is now but a stone skeleton.

THE MAIN HALL

The hall through which the characters entered leads into a large area. The pond fills much of what was once the main hall of the temple. A rectangular stone perimeter surrounds the pond, and there are some remnants of stone trenches, once used for offerings.

THE SACRIFICIAL ROOM

To the left of the main hall is another chamber, with a few arched stone scaffolds overhead. In the center of this "room" are three stone cairns: burial mounds. The center mound contains human bones and several copper coins. The other two contain one **ghoul** each, which will spring up and attack (see stats on pg. 17).

Also in this room are some crudely-fashioned knives, which can be found with a **DC17 Investigation check**. The knives are stained with crimson, for they were once used in ancient sacrificial rituals (this can be confirmed with a **DC15 Religion check**).

THE PRIEST CHAMBER

Behind the main hall, opposite from the initial entryway, is a small chamber that once served as living quarters for the priests who led the temple. There is little in this room but new saplings growing from the fertile soil. A **DC17 Investigation check** will reveal a rotted wooden chest sunk deep in the ground. Inside is are two items: a **Robe of Stars** (*DMG*, pg. 194) and a **psaltery** in impeccable condition. The ancient instrument has the same qualities and attunement requirements as an **Instrument of the Bards** in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pg. 176, but contains the following spells:

- *Faerie Fire*
- *Protection from Evil and Good*

Once the items are removed from the chest, the wood chest will completely crumble.

FINDING THE RELIC

The Starlight is in the main chamber, on a stone pillar submerged in the pond. The pond is deceptively deep: about 30 feet.

A **DC15 Investigation check** will alert the characters to a faint glow that emanates from the center of the pond. Touching or moving the water in any way — including via a spell, such as *mage hand* or *unseen servant* — will cause rippling waves to appear on the surface of the pond. *The Song of the Starlight* alludes to what will emerge...

ENCOUNTER WITH THE HYDRA

The ground around the pond begins to tremble, so much that some of the remaining stone walls of the ruin begin to crumble. The five heads of a **hydra** will emerge from the depths and attack.

Sira can aid in this fight against the hydra, if the DM chooses, even if she has not accompanied the characters.



SCENE 5 — LIGHT AND SHADOW

After the hydra is defeated, an impenetrable glowing mist will encompass the pond, and the corpse of the hydra will be pulled back into the depths. No additional creatures emerge if the water is disturbed, but after several moments of silence, the surface will once again ripple as something else emerges from the center...

THE STONE PILLAR

A stone pillar will rise upward 4 feet, as if pulled by an invisible string. The runes for the word *STARLIGHT* are inscribed vertically on the pillar. Speaking this word will cause the runes to glow, and the top of the pillar will rotate, revealing a small 7 inch x 7 inch chamber. Inside the chamber is a simple white candle, about 6 inches tall, made of tallow. The wick is charred, and dried beads of wax have poured down the column. (If the characters skipped speaking to Drez and never received the rune key, speaking the word "Starlight" OR rolling a **DC20 Investigation check** will have the same effect.) The unassuming, used candle is the **Starlight**.

USING THE STARLIGHT

The Starlight is the only relic of its kind. It is deceptively delicate but curiously, the wax doesn't chip away and the wick doesn't break. The candle only takes wear when it is used, which it appears to have been at some point.

Characters who are either celestial- or demon-adjacent (included, but not limited to: aasimars, tieflings, or even paladins, clerics, or warlocks who follow certain deities or beings) may be inexplicably pulled toward the Starlight, feeling a strong desire to use it in some way. For characters who fit this description, attunement to the Starlight is instant. For other characters, attunement takes one hour.

There is a simple triggering action: when the candle is held out toward a demon- or celestial-adjacent person (or perhaps both), the Starlight works automatically, casting the necessary light or darkness to repel the target 10 feet.

FIGHT FOR THE STARLIGHT

Sira, regardless of whether she joined the group or followed close behind, will make an attempt to take the Starlight. The characters may recall that Sira insisted she had no interest in the relic and may be curious why she now wants it. If she senses a potential conflict, Sira will attempt to cast **hold person** (4th level; see *PHB*, pg. 251) on four of the characters (they can evade this by passing a **DC14 Wisdom saving throw**). If she is able to hold an entire party of four, she will take the Starlight. If not, she will plead for it, going so far as to offer healing to an injured character as a sign of good faith.

"I don't want to hurt you. This isn't your war. You have done Emberez a great service by finding the Starlight, but I must take it. The Malum Animus must not obtain this relic, for they will only use it to destroy the Aureum and all who side with it."
— Sira

The characters have several options:

COMPLYING WITH SIRA

If the characters want to give Sira the Starlight, she will thank them and will place the candle inside an ornate brass lantern, tucking it into her cloak. She will tell them the truth about her patron and her alliance to the Aureum, and will offer to escort them back to Magra.

As a thank you, she will award the party with an **Amulet of the Aureum** (+3 to AC).

NEGOTIATING WITH SIRA

Sira is a tough sell, so characters will have to be clever to convince her to leave the Starlight with them. Demonstrating that they will be careful with the Starlight is helpful toward their cause, but being careless with it will anger her.

HELPFUL BARGAINS:

- Promising to keep it protected and safe;
- Promising not to use it;
- Promising to use discretion and not tell anyone else about the relic;
- Promising to deliver it only to Vela, who she thinks is trustworthy, knowing Vela will then take it to the clerics in Magra for safekeeping.

REPELLING SIRA

If Sira has failed to obtain the Starlight before a player can take it, the characters can use it against her. Holding it out toward her will repel her, and they can make an escape. Activating the Starlight against Sira will cause a dark cimmerian shield to emerge from the wick, keeping her at a 10 foot distance that she cannot close. It will remain activated until they stop holding it out.

When it is no longer activated, additional wax will have poured down the base, making the Starlight an inch shorter.

FIGHTING SIRA

Sira can be fought. To Sira, killing is a last resort, so she will engage reluctantly in combat. If she is defeated, the following items can be looted from her body, along with the Starlight.

- An Amulet of the Aureum: once golden, now black;
- A Cloak of Protection (see *DMG*, pg. 159);
- A blue velvet pouch containing **10 gp**;
- A note from her sister, Eya, which reads: *Be careful, sister. Come back to me. May the Harbinger protect you.*;
- The map of the forest and the ruins, now readable by others.

CONCLUSION

After their activities in the forest, the characters can head back to the city to recover from their battles and, if successful in obtaining the Starlight, can receive their reward. Something feels different about the forest now; all of the thickets leading into the temple are now open, and the trees overhead have parted just slightly, allowing a bit more light to pour in.

As the characters leave the ruins, a **DC14 Perception check** may call attention to three **dryads** who form from the three trees in the thicket. If spotted by the characters, they will nod to them and hum a strange and lovely, but haunting, melody as they depart and head further into the forest, away from the temple.

RETURNING TO VELA

The characters can return to Vela to share the results of their endeavor.

IF THEY BRING HER THE STARLIGHT

If the characters present her with the Starlight, Vela will be very grateful. From behind her counter, she will retrieve an iron-wrought lantern into which she will put the candle. Then, she will give the characters the **1,000 gp** and will allow them to choose an item that she will gladly craft and enchant for them. (See table on the right.)

IF THEY RETURN WITHOUT THE STARLIGHT

If the characters return without it, or choose not to give it to her, Vela will be sorely disappointed. Unless the characters can provide some proof that they found it (Sira can even serve as a witness), Vela will not offer them the full reward. As a thanks for their effort, she'll give them **200 gp** instead (she will give them **500 gp** if they give her the **psaltery** found in the temple ruins).

She will not be angry or hostile, but sad, assuming that the song was incorrect, and maybe the Starlight was just a legend after all.

If they say they gave it to Sira, Vela will not offer any reward. Instead, she offers a word of advice:

"In Magra, openly proclaiming an alliance with the Aureum is very dangerous. The Malum Animus has spies and assassins everywhere. But the Aureum, despite their sanctimonious attitude toward the rest of us, also plays dirty. Be careful who you trust." — Vela

THE END

VELA'S OFFERINGS

Each item will automatically attune to the character who selects it. More than one player can select the same item, and DMs are welcome to allow for other requests if they seem reasonable. All of the items are small and can be held in the palm of a hand.

Wooden Item	Enchantment
Cup	+3 to Survival
Small box	+3 to Investigation
Animal figurine	+3 to Animal Handling
Flute	+3 to Performance
Talisman	+3 to Religion
Six-sided dice	+3 to Deception
Model ship	+3 to History
Engraved coin	+3 to Persuasion
Collapsing toy	+3 to Insight
Mortar and pestle	+3 to Medicine



CHARACTERS

MAGRA MERCHANTS

GABINKA

Gabinka is a **gnome woman** who makes and sells jewelry. She enjoys collecting gems and crystals to make her goods. She is very friendly and eager to talk to visitors about Magra.

JOHANNA

Johanna is a **human woman** who sells clay goods. She is a touch haughty, although her appearance belies this, as she is somewhat unkempt from spending time at her kiln.

ANTONINA

Antonina is a **half-elf woman** who makes knitwear. She is constantly knitting, even while talking to customers, and is rarely seen without needles and yarn in her hand. Her whole ensemble is comprised of her creations: knit dress, knit hat, knit gloves, and several scarves.

HAVEL

Havel is an **elf man** who manages a stationary table. He is not very talkative, but it comes from shyness more than judgement. He is very passionate about stationary and appreciates those who share his love for the written word.

WIZDIL

Wizdil is a **halfling man** who runs the wine stand. He has wispy grey hair that stands straight up. He can be a bit grumpy, depending on how much wine he has consumed.

NELLA

Nella is a **halfling woman** who runs the pastry stand beside Wizdil. Her disposition is considerably friendlier. She has grey hair pulled into a bun, and she wears an apron covered with flour.

VELA KAPRA

Vela Kapra is a middle-aged woman with pale skin and black wavy hair cropped short. She has very striking cat-like green eyes, in part because she is a **werecat**, although she does not offer that information freely. Her alliance to the **Malum Animus** is tenuous. She dreams of a united Emberez, but the Aureum has forced her hand since they exclude werefolk.

Vela is a talented luthier and woodworker. Her passion for making instruments stems from a childhood love for music, and she is able to play many instruments with ease. Her artisanry is renown throughout Emberez, and she is frequently commissioned to create instruments for prominent people. The balalaika she is playing when the characters enter her shop is for the Tsarina of Ravukoi.

DREZ REZEK

Drez Rezek is an older **dwarven woman** with thick, curly red hair. Her skin is weathered from her career spent outside as a woodcutter. She wears simple linen clothes and a thick leather apron. She comes across as gruff but means well, and is glad to help travelers traverse the forest safely.

SIRA HARISA

Sira Harisa is a young **half-elf woman** with olive skin and dark features, and wears a black cloak that mostly obscures her features. Sira is a **celestial warlock** and a scout for the Aureum. She was given *The Song of the Starlight* by her sister, and sold it to Vela in hopes that the luthier would seek help in finding the Starlight. While in Magra, she claims her patron is an archfey.

SIRA HARISA

Half-elf celestial warlock, chaotic good

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 49 (11d8)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +6

Racial Trait Advantage on saving throws against being charmed, darkvision 30 ft.

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Elvish, Celestial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Healing Light. Sira can heal wounds using 1d6, four times a day.

Spellcasting. Sira is an 11th-level spellcaster, and her spellcasting ability is Charisma. Spell DC14, +6 to hit with spell attacks.

Actions

Sacred Flame. *Cantrip.* The target must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 radiant damage.

Flame Strike. *Spell.* Reach 60ft. A vertical column of divine fire roars down from the heavens in a location you specify. Each creature in a 10-foot-radius, 40-foot-high cylinder centered on a point within range must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 5d6 fire damage and 5d6 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much on damage on a successful one.

ENEMIES

DISPLACER BEAST

Large monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Avoidance. If the displacer beast is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Displacement. The displacer beast projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while the displacer beast is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

Actions

Multiattack. The displacer beast makes two attacks with its tentacles.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

WILL-O'-WISP

Tiny undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19
Hit Points 22 (9d4)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	28 (+9)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Consume Life. As a bonus action, the will-o'-wisp can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 points and is still alive. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the will-o'-wisp regains 10 (3d6) hit points.

Ephemeral. The will-o'-wisp can't wear or carry anything.

Incorporeal Movement. The will-o'-wisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they are difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Variable Illumination. The will-o'-wisp sheds bright light in a 5- to 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius. The will-o'-wisp can alter the radius as a bonus action.

Actions

Shock. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:** 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Invisibility. The will-o'-wisp and its light magically become invisible until it attacks or uses Consume Life, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

All creature stats are property of *Wizards of the Coast* and can be found in the *Monster Manual*.

VIOLET FUNGUS

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 18 (4d8)
Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened
Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

False Appearance. While the violet fungus remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus.

Actions

Multiattack. The fungus makes 1d4 Rotting Touch attacks.

Rotting Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

GHOUL

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

HYDRA

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Hold Breath. The hydra can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has five heads. While it has more than one head, the hydra has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious. Whenever the hydra takes 25 or more damage in a single turn, one of its heads dies. If all its heads die, the hydra dies. At the end of its turn, it grows two heads for each of its heads that died since its last turn, unless it has taken fire damage since its last turn. The hydra regains 10 hit points for each head regrown this way.

Reactive Heads. For each head the hydra has beyond one, it gains an extra reaction that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

Wakeful. While the hydra sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

Actions

Multiattack. The hydra makes as many bite attacks as it has heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

All creature stats are property of *Wizards of the Coast* and can be found in the *Monster Manual*.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THIS ADVENTURE WAS WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY ASHLEY WARREN.

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PRINTOUT: LETTER FROM VELA KAPRA

Hello, travelers! My name is Vela Kapra, and I am a luthier in the city of Magra. Word of your bravery and cunning has traveled far, and I hope you will assist me with a delicate matter: retrieving an item from the Magran Forest. I would be glad to reward you with 1000 gold and custom items that I will craft for you. Plus, Magra is a lovely city and well worth visiting.

Should you want to help, you can hire a carriage to bring you to Magra. I've enclosed gold to cover the expense of your trip. My shop is called Bow & String, and you can ask any of the merchants or guards to direct you to it.

Looking forward to meeting you all!

Sincerely,

Vela Kapra

P.S.

I ask that you use discretion about this matter. There are spies in Magra who will not hesitate to follow you.

PRINTOUT: MARKED TREE RUNES

THIS IS A LIST OF RUNES THAT CAN BE FOUND ON THE MARKED TREES.

Print out this page and fold under the translated word so players can not see it while they are translating. Repeated words in *The Song of the Starlight* have been omitted.

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USE THE EMPTY BOXES TO CREATE YOUR OWN RUNES!

WONDER AND DANGER AWAIT IN THE FOREST

There is a legend of an ancient relic, an item called the Starlight, said to contain both infinite light and eternal darkness – an item so powerful it could help bring an end to the ongoing war between angels and demons.

A dense forest surrounds the city of Magra, a place known for its spired buildings and talented artisans. The Magran Forest not only provides artisans with the materials for their trades, but protects and hides the ruins of a long-forgotten temple, said to have once served an old, ancient deity that precedes the existing pantheon.

When Iuthier Vela Kapra learns of the temple's location by accident, she knows this is where the Starlight can be found. But this information is dangerous, for there are many who would die to find the Starlight – and just as many who would kill for it.

An adventure for level 7 characters.



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