

# GRIMM ENCOUNTERS III



JVC Parry Presents

Halloween encounters and  
mini-adventures



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# Grimms' Fairy Tales

The Grimms' Fairy Tales is a collection of tales written by the Brothers Grimm first published in the early 1800s. By the time the brothers were done they had created over 200 unique fairy tales that they thought were suitable for children.

Despite their intention to be for children, critics had other ideas. The brothers were slated for their stories, critics deemed both the content and creation inappropriate for children and if you read any of the tales, you might be inclined to agree!

Some of the better known tales, such as Snow White or Hansel and Gretel, are commonly told now throughout the western world in a more suitable form, but the original tales still hold some uncanny horror between the lines.

This product is inspired by the terror in these tales, and aims to expand on what the brothers created, warping their stories into something significantly more sinister.



# Synopsis

## TEN TERRIFYING ENCOUNTERS FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

If you need some horrifying and grotesque encounters for your table, look no further. This supplement is filled with ten haunting encounters based on classic fairy tales from the Grimm Brothers and their contemporaries. These encounters are perfect for dropping into horror themed games, those set in Ravenloft or the Shadowfell, or for your yearly Halloween Special!

A *Dungeons & Dragons* 5e supplement for characters of any level.

# Cover Art



Mary's Lamb © Anderson Maia  
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# Introduction

**G**rimm Encounters III is a *Dungeons & Dragons* 5th Edition supplement for characters of any level. It contains encounters that can be added to your campaign during travel or downtime, that will help to give your sessions a sense of horror and tension. These encounters will only take an hour or so each, and should be easy to drop into your game with little preparation.

Suggestions for adjusting encounter difficulty have been provided where appropriate in sidebars, making the encounters usable for parties of any level.

With *Grimm Encounters III*, I reached out to a group of talented writers both new and old, who I believed could write awesome encounters to further showcase their abilities, or help them break onto the scene. It would mean a lot to all of us if you were to check out our other work! The DMsGuild community continues to grow rapidly, and collaborations like these give us the opportunity to show off a little!

Thanks for buying *Grimm Encounters III*, we all hope you enjoy it!

## Tips for the DM

As with any adventure, *Grimm Encounters III* should be adapted to work for your group. If you don't like the way an element works, please feel free to change it. If encounters are too difficult for your players, remove monsters or replace them with an easier, but fitting foe. The sidebars should help with this. Similarly, if you would like to adapt *Grimm Encounters III* for your world, you can easily substitute appropriate plot hooks, NPCs, and items.

In order to deliver an optimum experience for your players, it would probably be best to read the encounters, in full, before you attempt to run them. There are traps and tricks that you will need to understand fully in advance.

These encounters and mini-adventures do not require characters to level up during them, but they could be used to help provide enough XP for characters to do so.

Text to be read aloud is in grey boxes. Feel free to tinker with this text to fit your needs, but try to keep the original message clear as it may contain important information.

All monsters, spells, magic items and conditions referenced in this adventure appear in a reference page at the end of the product, which details where they can be found.

Try to have fun running these adventures! It was highly enjoyable to create and play with my own group, and I hope that you can share in that experience!

## About the Authors

*Grimm Encounters III* is a compilation of works from several amazing authors. Some have been on the DMsGuild since its beginnings, others are totally new to the community. When putting together our authors, I wanted to ensure I included a diverse range of individuals.

### Alicia Furness (she/they)

Alicia Furness loves things that are dark, twisty, and rural. She especially loves hags. Alicia designs games about feminism, queerness, and class. Her work is influenced by her experience growing up in rural Canada. Now situated in Ottawa with her two cats and her partner, Alicia has too many opinions that she shares on twitter. Find her at @aliciafurness if you want to talk about hags.

### Cat Evans (she/her)

Cat is a weirdo from the UK who writes spooky adventures and other nasty things for RPGs. She has too many dogs and would very much like to be a night hag when she grows up. You can check out her work on DMsGuild as Catherine Evans or her stream of consciousness on twitter @perpetualgloom.

### Dan Hunt (he/him)

Ah, what defines Dan Hunt? Other than his big hair and round glasses, Dan is a huge fan of sci-fi westerns and eldritch fantasy. Working as a freelance content writer by the sea, he loves nothing more than consuming cartoons, playing videogames, and talking all things D&D 5e. *Grimm Encounters III* is his DMsGuild debut but hopes to be a part of many more projects, and one day release a series of children's books. Dan can be found @dan\_the\_hunt on twitter, at danhuntwriter.com, or in your local pub.

### Jessica Marcrum (she/her)

Jessica Marcrum is a lifelong fan of fairy tales, mythology, and fantasy. A former opera singer and current licensed social worker, she has contributed to several DMsGuild supplements including the *Uncaged Anthology*, *Grandmother Crookbesom's Book of Hags*, and *Bearthazar's House of Familiars*. She has also created the *College of Caterwauling* and the *Cat Burglar*. 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, angrynerdgirl on Twitch, or at jessicamarcrumwrites.com.

### JVC Parry (he/him)

JVC Parry has been writing for DMsGuild for around three years, and is probably best known for the *Call from the Deep* campaign, and his stand-alone adventure with Posion Potion Press *Shore of Dreams*. His hobbies are scaring people with daddy longlegs and watching horror films alone in the cinema. You can find his work on the DMsGuild under JVC Parry, on facebook as JVC Parry, and twitter @jvcparry.

## Ken Carcas (he/him)

Ken joined the Guild from almost the day it started, believing it to be the best thing for D&D since the 3.5e OGL. Downloading bits and pieces as he saw fit, he began to notice the poor quality in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and started messaging writers with their mistakes. Jeff C Stevens, followed closely by MT Black, were the first writers to take his comments seriously. He then started editing for the major creators you already know!

## Liz Gist (they/them)

Liz is a queer, agender artist and creator of various TTRPG content. They have always loved dark, twisted fairytales and sought to capture that dream-like quality in their work. As an abuse survivor, they take great joy in the idea of a high level party destroying a figure as vile as Bluebeard.

## Oliver Clegg (he/him)

Oliver Clegg is a man on the edge who creates content for the DMsGuild community content program and just spent ten minutes agonizing over the placement of the apostrophe and how to spell the word 'programme'. You can find him on twitter on @deathbybadger. Life is suffering.

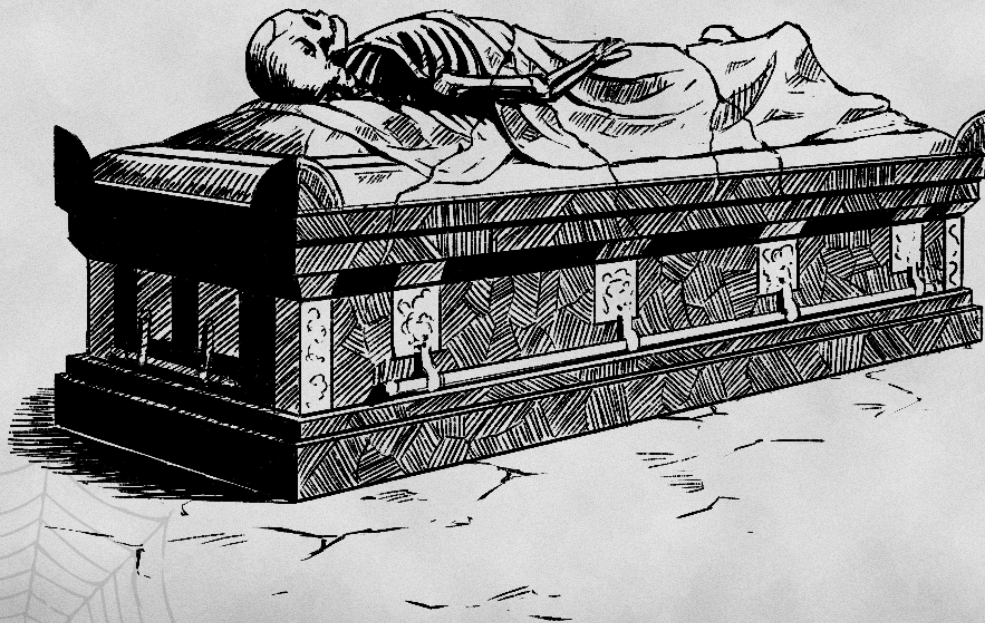
## Zeke Gonzalez (he/him)

Zeke Gonzalez is queer scientist studying fish vision who loves to infuse science and horror into his fantasy TTRPGs. He writes adventures & bestiaries for D&D 5e and can be found geeking out over #ScienceDnD and indie horror in equal parts at @FantasyEcology on twitter.

## Encounter Tables

The following table provides a list of the encounters, their authors, their challenge rating, and any content warnings.

Encounter Title	Grimm Tale	Author	Challenge Rating	Content Warnings
A Bride's Revenge	Bluebeard's Wives	Liz Gist	Tier 4	Implied domestic abuse, gaslighting
Cocoons	Rapunzel	Dan Hunt	Tier 2	None
Crumplestiltsbin	Rumpelstiltskin	Oliver Clegg	Tier 1	Child abuse
Cursed Copper	The Stolen Farthings	Ken Carcas	Tier 1	None
The Drowning House	The Louse and the Flea	JVC Parry	Any	Drowning
Lady Ironhand's Revenge	The Girl Without Hands	Cat Evans	Tier 3	None
Lights Out	The Blue Light	Jessica Marcrum	Tier 2	Interpersonal abuse
Nanny's Children	The Water Nixie	Alicia Furness	Tier 1	Child abuse
The Speaking Skull	The Singing Bone	JVC Parry	Tier 1	Murder Scenes
Thornbound Heart	Sleeping Beauty	Zeke Gonzalez	Tier 2	None



# A Bride's Revenge

**AUTHOR:** Liz Gist

**TALE:** Bluebeard's Bride

**TYPE:** Combat & Roleplay

**CR:** Tier 4

**CONTENT WARNINGS:** Implied domestic abuse, gaslighting

*I'd like to think I learned something valuable today; alas, my murdered remains are incapable of learning anything...*

## Premise

For decades, the death knight, Bluebeard has charmed women, married them, and then killed them, only to raise them under his control. Gradually, he is building an army of undead wives that he will one day use to take over the kingdom.

The party meet the latest of Bluebeard's unlucky brides, Fatima Harri, who seeks to end the death knight's terrible reign. In aiding Fatima, the characters encounter Bluebeard's other wives, and eventually the monstrosity himself.

## Bluebeard's Wives

- ✦ Collette (**ghost**, she/her, neutral good) The first, killed in a fit of rage; Collette now haunts her husband's mansion
- ✦ Ygraine (**vampire spellcaster**, she/her, neutral evil) Bluebeard's second wife, Ygraine nursed the rage that fills Bluebeard, convincing and enabling him to build his army
- ✦ Blanche (**boneclaw**, she/her, chaotic evil) Ygraine's first successful attempt to bring a bride back to life. Blanche is angry, vicious and bloodthirsty
- ✦ Rosalinde (**sword wraith commander**, she/her, chaotic evil) A princess exiled from her kingdom after a failed coup, Rosalinde leads the less intelligent of Bluebeard's wives, hoping to one day take over her home
- ✦ Ariane and Angele (**wights**, she/her, true neutral) Sisters who Bluebeard seduced, one after the other. They both hate Bluebeard, and will help the party with the promise that they can keep his home.
- ✦ There are also a number of wives who have not retained their intelligence or personalities, using **sword wraith warrior** stats.

## Encounter

The party has received a mysterious invitation to the wedding of a couple they have never met: Fatima Harri and Mr Fox. Written on the back of the invitation is the message: *My life depends on your attendance.*

From the outside, the small church certainly looks ready for a wedding. Garlands of flowers are draped across the stone walls and line the path. A banner hangs above the door, reading Fatima & Fox in curling, painted letters.

Inside the church is another matter. The pews are overturned and in disarray, flowers crushed and scattered underfoot. Blood is streaked across the floor, bodies crumpled amongst the chaos. A heavy silence hangs over the grisly scene, until a low groan splits the still air.

Shortly after the characters enter the church, 2d8 guests, now **zombies**, rise and attack. Every round for four rounds, another 1d6 **zombies** join the fight.

At the beginning of the fifth round, Fatima enters the church and joins the party in dispatching any remaining zombies. Fatima is a beautiful young woman who, unbeknownst to Bluebeard, has returned from the dead as a **revenant**. She wears a black velvet ribbon around her neck; while she wears this, she cannot be killed.

After the last of the guests has fallen, Fatima introduces herself and tells the party what happened: Having discovered his true nature before the wedding, she attempted to attack him during the ceremony, only to be killed and the wedding guests massacred. She awoke the next day and now seeks to bring an end to Bluebeard.

## Something Truly Terrible Inside

As a revenant, Fatima knows exactly where to find Bluebeard. He has returned to his mansion deep in the forest, where the rest of his wives also reside. There are no guards outside, and the doors are unlocked; Bluebeard is confident that anyone who comes stumbling into the mansion will be quickly dispatched by his wives. So far, this has been true.

When the party reaches the mansion, read or paraphrase the following:

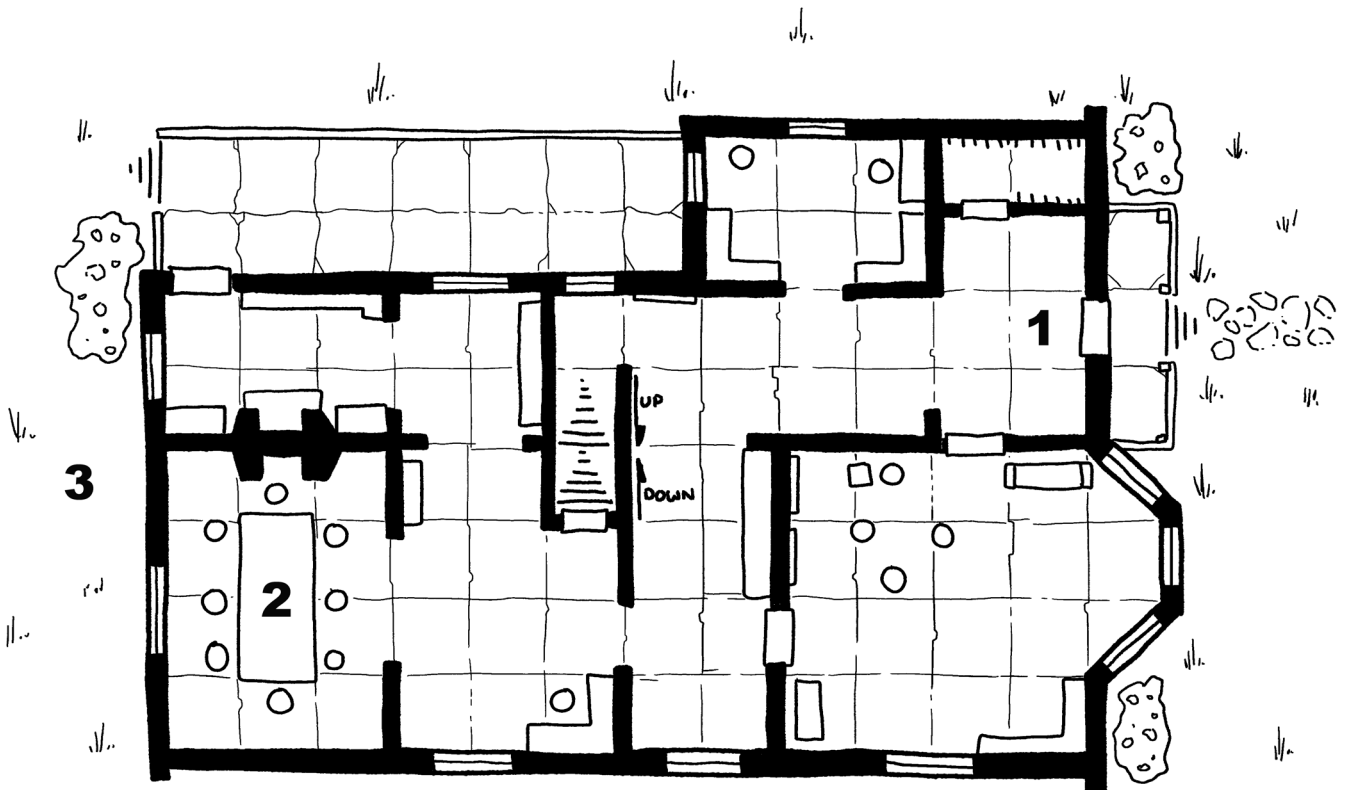
A large mansion sits before you, so covered in ivy that it almost blends into the forest around it. While once grand, the roof in need of repairs, and dust caked the windows that aren't missing glass. Upon closer inspection of the path you walk on, you notice fragments of bone strewn amongst the pebbles.

If characters attempt to stake out the mansion, they must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check once they get within 10 feet of the exterior or draw the attention of Blanche, who sneaks up on the party and attacks. Characters with a passive Perception of 17 or higher notice Blanche sneaking up on the party in time to avoid being surprised when she attacks.

Characters encounter Bluebeard and his wives in the following locations:

### 1. Foyer

The front hall of the mansion lies empty, with bones and signs of old violence marking the floor. If the characters are not quiet in their entrance, Ariane and Angele come to investigate the sounds.



## 2. Dining Room

Ariane and Angele start out in the dining room, seated at the dining table with a map spread out between them. They have marked each location that Bluebeard has taken a bride from and are attempting to figure out where he will go next, so that they can warn people in advance. They recognise Fatima and apologise that they could not warn her in time.

The sisters eagerly offer to aid the party in destroying Bluebeard, on the terms that they are allowed to keep the mansion after he is gone.

If the party accepts their offer of help, the two wights move to the front room of the house, where numerous boxes and cloth-draped furniture are stored, searching for armour and weapons to aid them in the fight to come. When they join the party again, they are wearing simple chainmail and each carry a sword.

## 3. Bone Pit

If the party do not draw Blanche's attention, she is found behind the mansion, mindlessly hacking away at a pair of bodies brought back from the wedding. She attacks anyone who approaches her on sight.

## 4. Sitting Room

Rosalinde watched the party approach from the bay windows of the sitting room. On hearing them come upstairs, she calls them to come and speak with her. Rosalinde attempts to convince the characters that she hates Bluebeard and Ygraine and regrets the violence they have made her commit. If the characters do not believe her, use a contested Charisma (Deception) check against their Wisdom (Insight) check.

If the party does not believe Rosalinde, she attacks and shouts for 1d6 **sword wraith warrior** wives to join her from the surrounding bedrooms.

If the party fail to determine that Rosalinde is lying, Collette surges through the walls from her usual hiding place (area 5 on the map), declaring that Rosalinde is a liar and cannot be trusted. The characters have a choice whether to believe Rosalinde or Collette - if they remain loyal to Rosalinde, Collette disappears in a fit of woe. If they side with Collette, Rosalinde summons 1d6 wives and attacks as above.

## 5. Collette's Resting Place

Because she was killed before Ygraine developed her talent for bringing wives back to life, Collette is not under her husband's or Ygraine's control. She is mournful and slow to trust, and spends most of her time in the small room which her body - now little more than a skeleton - was bricked into after Bluebeard killed her.

If she has not done so already, Collette emerges to speak to the party once Rosalinde and the more mindless wives have been dealt with. She tells the party everything, taking care to highlight Ygraine's power. She also explains that both Bluebeard and Ygraine can be found in the cellar.

## 6. Ygraine's Sanctuary

If the party enters the cellar during the day, Ygraine can be found in her coffin, which sits in the middle of a pool of blood. A **cadaver collector** guards her while she is in this state and attacks on sight. Ygraine emerges from her coffin after 1d4 rounds and joins the fight.

When a living creature enters the pool of blood for the first time on a turn, or starts its turn there, that creature must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 2d8 necrotic damage, and have their hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction to a creature's hit point maximum lasts until the creature finishes a long rest, or with greater restoration. Creatures must repeat this save every time they start their turn in the pool, or whenever they enter it.

At night, Ygraine is in the same space, but busy with her necromantic experiments. The cadaver collector stands dormant in area 6a, but responds to any call for help from Ygraine.

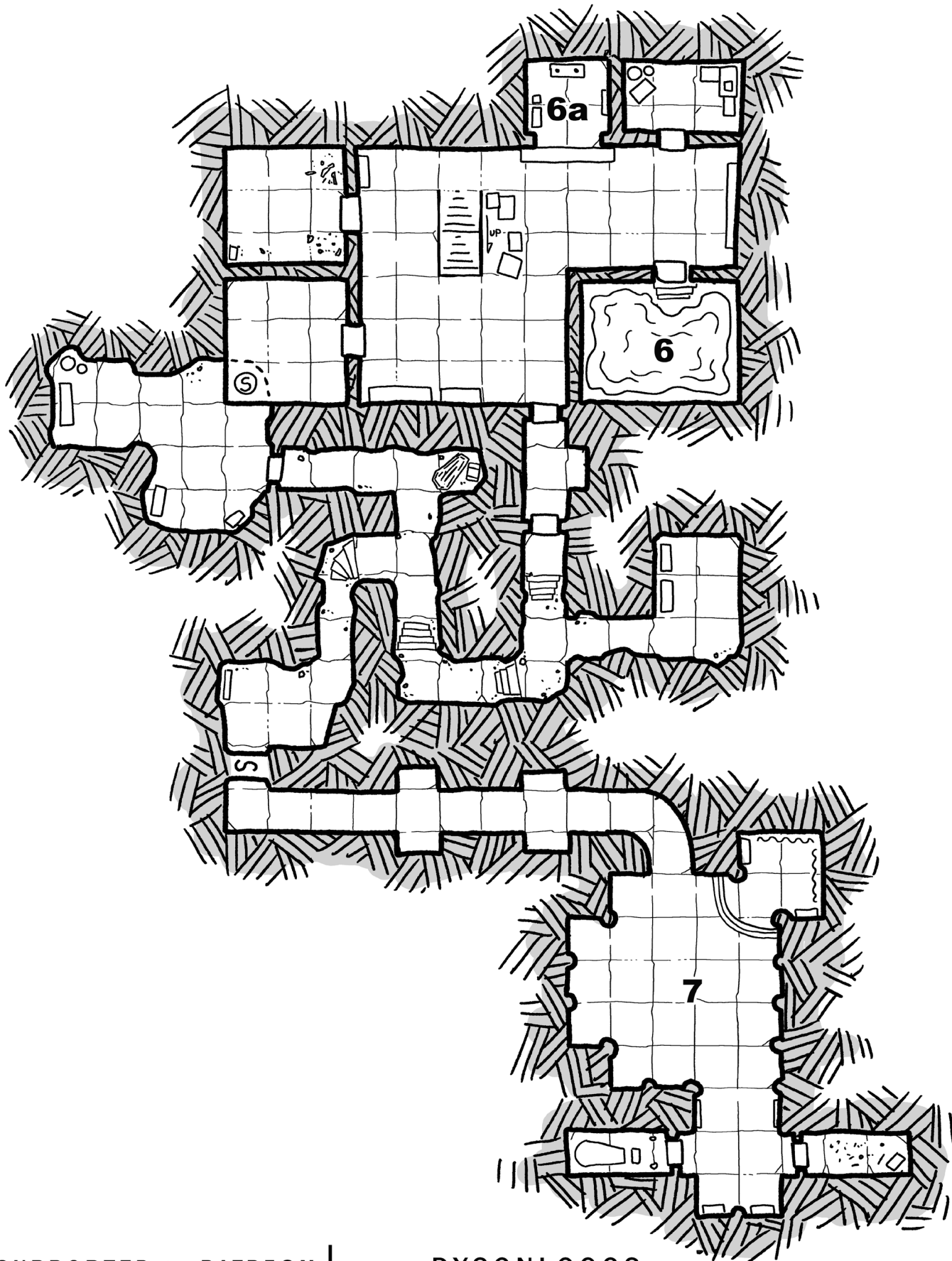
Ygraine speaks to the party initially, and is especially curious as to how Fatima is still alive, but attacks when their purpose in the mansion becomes clear. Once her hit points have been reduced below 100, Ygraine uses her shapechange ability to transform into a cloud of mist and retreat to area 7 to warn Bluebeard.

If Rosalinde is with the party at this point, she puts on a show of attacking Ygraine with everyone else, but her attacks should be rolled with disadvantage, as she isn't trying particularly hard. With each attack, she must also make a contested Charisma (Deception) check against Ygraine's passive Perception. If Ygraine believes that Rosalinde is genuinely attacking her, she shouts for the cadaver collector to focus on her. Otherwise, she allows the ruse to continue.

Characters may use their action to perceive if Rosalinde is genuinely fighting on the party's side; this is a contested Charisma (Deception) check against the character's Wisdom (Insight) check.







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## 7. Inner Sanctum

If Ygraine retreats, she leaves the secret entrance open behind her. Otherwise, any of the accompanying wives explain that the iron cup hanging above the stone door must be filled with blood, which none of are able to give. 10 hit points worth of blood must be spilled, or the party can choose to fill the cup from Ygraine's pool.

If Ygraine retreated from combat, she has warned Bluebeard of the characters' imminent arrival and he is prepared for them. He expresses surprise at Fatima's presence, considering she was dead the last time he saw her, and offers her a place at the head of his army - which Fatima promptly refuses. Once Bluebeard reaches half his hit points or Ygraine dies, he calls forth 1d4 **flameskulls** that typically burn in sconces on the wall.

If Rosalinde is with the party, she attacks alongside Bluebeard, specifically targeting any spellcasters with healing or control spells.

Fatima focuses all of her attention on Bluebeard himself, while Ariane and Angele focus on Ygraine.

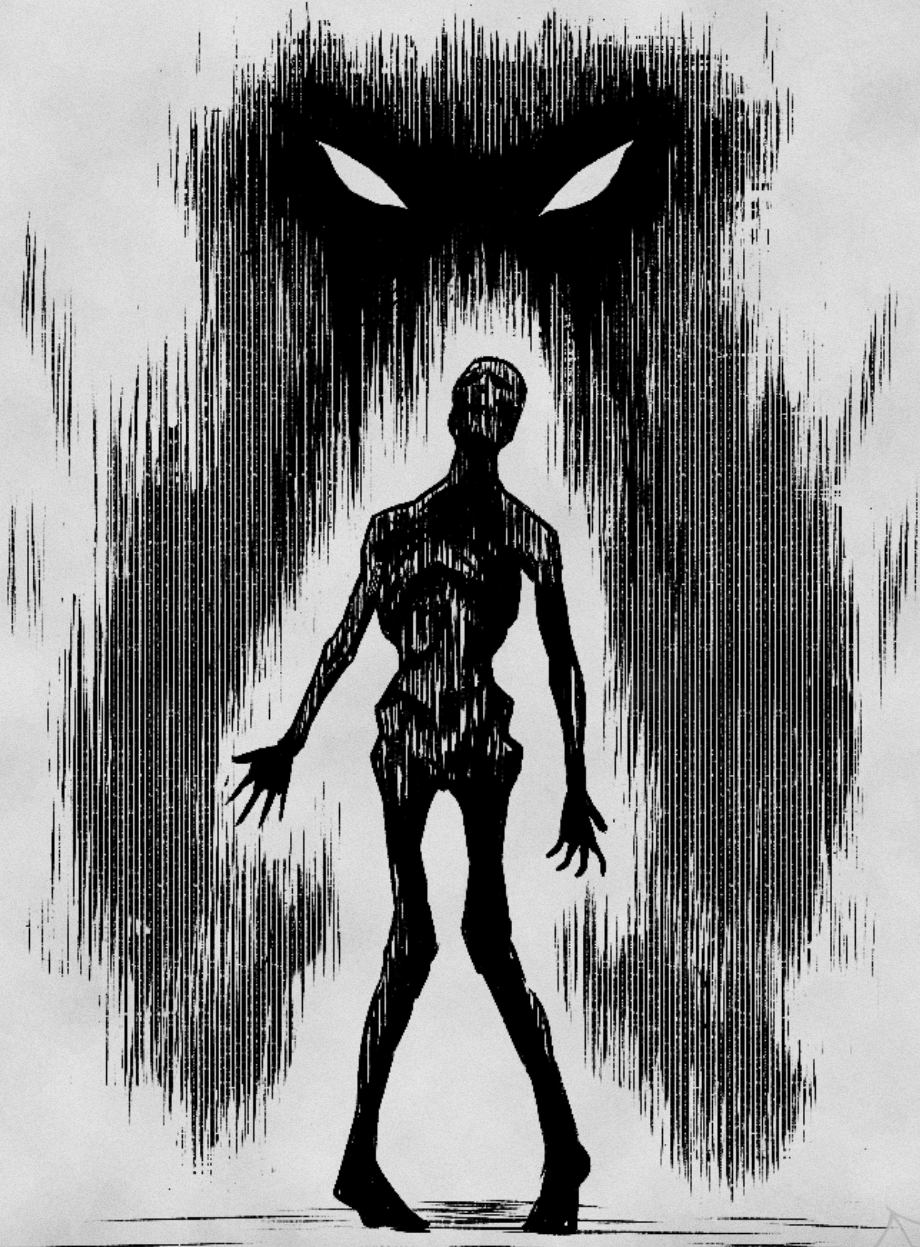
## Resolution

The encounter finishes when Bluebeard dies, all of the adventurers die, or some/all of them flee. If Bluebeard is left with any dead adventurers, he raises them from the dead under his command and uses them and his remaining wives, including Fatima if she did not escape, to attack the nearest city one month later.

If Bluebeard and Ygraine are killed, Fatima explains that her soul can now rest. With a smile on her face, she thanks the party once more and removes the ribbon from her throat, causing her head to fall off and her body to collapse to the floor.

If Fatima is destroyed in battle but the party is victorious, she approaches the characters the next day to thank them, and removes the ribbon as above.

**Treasure.** Bluebeard's inner sanctum is filled with decades of ill-gotten goods. Roll on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge CR 17+ table in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine what the characters find within this space.



# Cocoons

**AUTHOR:** Dan Hunt

**TALE:** Rapunzel

**TYPE:** Combat & Exploration

**CR:** Tier 2

*Living tendrils of hair choke a lone tower as adventurers from all over are drawn near by the beckoning songs sang on the breeze.*

## Premise

Just off the beaten track, into the ancient woodland bordering a city, a lone spiralling tower stands in a clearing with sweet melodies pouring from its window. No doors or windows can be seen from the ground, and the place is covered with crusty, old vines. However, on closer inspection, what first appeared as vines are revealed to be long tendrils of hair cascading down the sides of the tower.

Once climbed, a beautiful yet bedraggled middle-aged woman sings as she brushes streams of her hair by the fire, welcoming guests to sit and rest after climbing up her hair. But not all is as it seems. A mystical spider's web of hair engulfs the upper floor to the tower. Here, her stewing victims hang from the ceiling in oozing cocoons. Unravelling the mystery, the bedraggled woman's true identity is found to be a carnivorous hag!

## Adventure Hooks

- ◆ *The Damsel in Distress.* Local rumours tell of mysterious and beautiful melodies drifting on the wind. Many have followed them to its source, an ancient tower, but there's no apparent entrance.
- ◆ *A Wicked Witch Stealing Children.* The characters meet a weary-looking tradesman, who's searching for his child. The babe was taken from him after he and his wife made a deal with a witch to take food from her garden. After months of searching, he presumes the child dead, but believes the witch must still be out there.
- ◆ *The Hag with The Hair.* Scarred and covered in pieces of long, matted hair, an adventurer stumbles into a tavern with a broken leg screaming in pain. They say they've just escaped within an inch of their life! A woman in a tower with long hair captured their party, keeping them all captive in cocoons. He cut his way free and jumped from the top of the tower, but his allies are still up there.

## Encounter

While in the vicinity of the tower, characters should only be able to hear the soft tones of singing in the woods at night. At first, the melody surrounds them like whispers in their ears... Nothing too ghostly, but a definite air of sorrow hangs on each note.

As the characters approach and the singing becomes louder. Creatures within 1,000 feet of the tower must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw unless the creature is deafened or has their ears covered. On a failure, the creature is charmed. While charmed in this way, the creature cannot speak and is hypnotically drawn to The Valley of the Destitute Tower through a short stone tunnel on a nearby rockface. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw each time it takes damage, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature becomes deafened, the effect ends for it. Charmed creatures behave strangely when they reach the tower (see below).

On a success, the creatures are immune to Ra Pun'Zel's Song of Woe for one hour. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a clue to the sound's source; mice scurrying along the floor in the direction of the tower, or long strands of hair hanging from nearby trees.

Should the DM wish for their characters to come across The Valley of the Destitute Tower more organically, rather than approach due to the Song of Woe, the characters may stumble across scurrying mice, hanging hair, or another method.

## Valley of the Destitute Tower

Through a tunnel carved out in deep gouges, opens a dark, barren clearing walled in by cliffs on all sides. Burnt grass and curled up flowers crunch like bone under every step.

In the centre of the clearing stands a stout tower with a pointed top, no higher than three or four floors. The tower crumbles in the middle as it is choked by sickly, black vines. There are no doors, and only a single window at the very top from which the vines protrude, weaving in and out of the cobbled exterior, and cascading down the tower.

As you watch, scurrying mice squeeze their way into small cracks in the building's structure with such desperation that it peels the fur from their body.

**Ashen Ground.** At the base of the 80 ft. tower, the ground is smooth and grey. Any sudden movement disturbs the ash scattered all over the floor, thick like snow. Years ago, a cavalry came to burn the hag in the tower, but they were ambushed by her tendrils of hair. Dropping their torches, the surrounding forest was set ablaze and crumbled to ashes, leaving a dead surrounding to the once well-hidden tower.

**Hair Vines.** Characters can clearly see the black vines that weave out of the window, through and round the tower, and along the floor like an infection. These vines are actually the sensitive feelers of the dreaded Ra Pun'Zel. Her hair spans the entire valley – from the moment the characters arrived, she knew they were coming.

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check allows characters to identify the vines as unnatural due to their silky texture. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the characters recognise that the vines are hair. Tugging or cutting the vines causes them to recoil and slither back towards the tower. If the characters witness this, they gain advantage on any checks associated with the vine's true nature.

## Charmed Creatures

Creatures charmed by Ra Pun'Zel's song begin to sob and repeatedly mutter: *Let down your hair, let down your hair*. Their chant grows louder as they get closer to the tower until they reach the bottom, at which point they start desperately clawing at the walls; attempting to climb up.

As charmed characters scratch at the tower, characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 16 or higher notice vines moving along the floor and wrapping around the begging creatures. Charmed creatures are willing targets for Ra Pun'Zel's Hair-Raising Grasp, and are pulled into the window at the tower's top unless the characters intervene. Each character can take one action to prevent this.

Characters who wish to feign being charmed to be picked up can do so with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check. Characters have advantage on the check if they mutter 'let down your hair' while doing so.

Details on breaking Ra Pun'Zel's Hair-Raising Grasp can be found in her stat block.

## Uncharmed Creatures

Characters who succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check discover enough footholds in the cracks in the tower's masonry to attempt to climb it. Each character must succeed on three Strength (Athletics) checks to scale the tower to its window. With fewer holds the higher they get, the DC for the checks increases with each success.

The DC for the first check is 12, then 14, and finally 16. If a character fails a check by 5 or more, they slip and fall, but are caught by one of the tendrils of hair, and are affected by Ra Pun'Zel's Hair-Raising Grasp.

## Lair of Ra Pun'Zel

For this section there are two possible outcomes: hear the crone's story and persuade her to cut her evil locks of hair or defeat the hag in her lair.

Sitting on a stool by a lowly lit fire is a dishevelled woman of middle-age dressed in an ornate purple gown. Softly, she hums a tune, brushing and brushing at a blanket of grey-black hair. With each passing of the comb, the blanket purrs and wriggles with delight.

As you enter, the woman looks up and beckons you over with brush in hand. The floor around her is covered in the same hair spread out like a web.

**Cocoons.** The room is dimly lit by the fireplace. Characters with darkvision notice six-foot cocoons hanging from the rafters overhead. The cocoons occasionally twitch, causing a goeey liquid to seep from their folds.

A creature in a cocoon takes 3 (1d6) acid damage at the start of each of their turns.

**Hair.** The walls and floor are cloaked in thick, greying hair, enclosing the circular room.

If characters enter the chamber via Ra Pun'Zel's Hair-Raising Grasp, they join the cocoons in the ceiling and must stealthily cut their way out with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they are caught, they instantly provoke combat.

## Tale of Ra Pun'Zel

Should the characters make an offering to hear her story, Ra Pun'Zel, referring to herself as "The Damsel", desperately regales them with the tale of her kidnapping as a child. DMs should relay the following information:

- ✦ She never knew her real parents, but she was cared for by a witch.
- ✦ As a young woman, she began to learn magic.
- ✦ A prince once feigned love to gain a lock of her magical hair.
- ✦ When the witch told her to beware, Rapunzel killed her by pushing her from the window.
- ✦ The witch was right, and when the prince tried to get her to leave the tower, a cavalry was waiting below to shave her, capture her, and farm her enchanted locks.
- ✦ Ra Pun'Zel destroyed them all, burning the wood in the process.
- ✦ Afterward, she presumed all creatures to be evil and that they only wanted her for her hair.
- ✦ Short on food, she began to lure adventurers with her voice to feast on their flesh, planning to one day leave and find a new tower.

**Roleplay.** The characters might wish to attempt to convince Ra Pun'Zel that not all adventurers are evil, and that her hair could be used for any number of good deeds.

- ✦ Adventurers must supply THREE examples of good deeds, or uses of her hair that would contribute to the better development of nearby towns. These might include, but are not limited to:
  - Her hair could be woven into magical items, imbue potions, and be studied for arcane advancements.
  - The strength and durability of Ra Pun'Zel's hair would be a sturdy fibre woven into the garments of soldiers and guards.
  - The hair's healing qualities could help the sick and wounded.
- ✦ Any additional artefacts creatures can bring to support their claims will also benefit.
- ✦ Players lose her favour if they imply her hair would be good for punishment or entertainment, as she does not want to be seen as a tool or joke of any sorts.
- ✦ If the party is deemed in good favour, the players gain advantage on their DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) checks for her to leave, however if she is put into a bad mood then players are given disadvantage, provoking combat on a fail more than 5.

**Combat.** If at any point combat is initiated, use the stat block in the appendix.

## Level Adjustments

**Deadly.** Ra Pun'Zel is accompanied by two **ettercap** minions and four **giant spider** pets. They try to keep the characters from attacking the hag by restraining them with their webbing.

**Hard.** Ra Pun'Zel is accompanied by four **giant spider** pets. The spiders try to keep the characters from attacking the hag by restraining them with their webbing, but flee if reduced to half hitpoints or less.

**Medium.** Run the encounter as written.

**Easy.** Reduce Ra Pun'Zel hitpoints to 88, and remove her Legendary Actions.

## Resolution

Depending on the actions of the characters, the encounter could end one of two ways.

### Success

Whatever the means of success, whether they defeat Ra Pun'Zel or talk her over to the lighter side of life, the party receives the following rewards:

- ✦ *hair of the hag* (see appendix)
- ✦ 200 gp
- ✦ a lockbox of letters between Ra Pun'Zel and the fabled prince
- ✦ free hospitality at the next nearby town or village the party enter (if they can provide proof they 'defeated' the local legend)

If the encounter was a part of a side quest storyline rather than a random encounter, the quest giver rewards the party with an additional 200 gp and a *cloak of protection* they tugged from a deceased companion who fell to the hag.

### Failure

Should the party fail to defeat the hag and escape with their lives, persuade the characters that Ra Pun'Zel died as the tower fell. As they escape, the black vines holding the tower aloft come loose as she is integrally bound to it. The tower crumbles and seemingly fall on her, giving them an easy escape route.

In following sessions, alert players that the songs are no longer heard in the wood, however new rumours arise of a vampiric courtesan has been heard to set up trade deep in Baldur's Gate. Should they meet, she is instantly recognisable but with much shorter hair as she has set up her new lair in the upper level of a brothel.

## Appendix

### Hair of the Hag

*Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)*

While attuned with this item, you have complete control over your hair. The hair cannot be cut. As well as commanding its length and colour at all times, you gain access to the following additional properties:

- ✦ The hair acts as protective tendrils that attack any hostile threats within a 10ft radius. To hit and damage, it uses your Strength modifier + proficiency bonus, and can grapple one creature at a time.
- ✦ Within a 10 ft radius, you can use your action to control your hair like a hand. You can use it to manipulate an object, open an unlocked door or container, stow or retrieve an item from an open container, or pour the contents out of a vial.
- ✦ You gain blindsight up to 30 ft. radius and cannot be surprised.
- ✦ As an action, the hair can be used to regain 2d6 hit points once per short rest.

**Curse.** The hair of the hag is cursed. Once attuned to the item it cannot be removed unless targeted by a remove curse spell. Whatever the hair deems to be hostile it attacks, from a light threat to physical advancements, the hair will protect its wielder.



## Ra Pun'Zel/Hair Hag

Medium fey, neutral evil

**Armour Class** 15 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 130 (20d8+40)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +5, Wis +5

**Skills** Deception +6, History +4, Insight +6, Perception +5, Stealth +4

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire, psychic; slashing from magical attacks

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning and piercing from nonmagical attacks

**Condition Immunities** deafened, frightened, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** Ra Pun'Zel's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *chaos bolt*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*, *thaumaturgy*  
3/day each: *darkness*, *sleep*  
1/day each: *bestow curse*, *slow*

**Spider Climb.** Using her hair, Ra Pun'Zel can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Sensory Follicles.** While in contact with her web of hair, Ra Pun'Zel knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Hair Walker.** Ra Pun'Zel ignores any movement restrictions caused by her hair.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Ra Pun'Zel makes two attacks with her claws or hair-raising grasp.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Hair-Raising Grasp.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained as the hair forms into a cocoon. Ra Pun'Zel has ten strands of hair, each of which can grapple one target.

**Song of Woe.** Ra Pun'Zel sings a melancholic tune that entices creatures to their doom. Every creature within 1,000 ft. of Ra Pun'Zel that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw against her call or be charmed until the song ends. Ra Pun'Zel must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue singing. It can stop singing at any time. The song ends if Ra Pun'Zel is incapacitated.

While charmed by Ra Pun'Zel, a target is incapacitated. If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away from Ra Pun'Zel, they must move on its turn toward Ra Pun'Zel by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. 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 Ra Pun'Zel, a target can repeat the saving throw. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw each time it takes damage, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature becomes deafened, the effect ends for it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to Ra Pun'Zel's song for the next hour.

### Legendary Actions

Ra Pun'Zel 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. Ra Pun'Zel regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Behind the Veil (Costs 2 Actions).** Ra Pun'Zel's hair sweeps her up and protects her, giving her +5 AC until the start of her next turn and restoring 2d6 hitpoints.

**Untameable Hair.** Ra Pun'Zel creates a cocoon and tears it apart, spraying congealed ooze in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4 (1d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

**Knotts in the Weave.** A web of Ra Pun'Zel's hair creates ridges and snags on the floor, making the ground difficult terrain.

# Crumplestiltsbin

**AUTHOR:** Oliver Clegg

**TALE:** Rumpelstiltskin

**TYPE:** Combat & Roleplay

**CR:** Tier 1

**CONTENT WARNING:** Child abuse

*"Fol-de-rol- oh how glad I am that no-body knows that my name is Crumplestiltsbin, lah-de-dah, floop-de-doo."*

## Premise

A long time ago, a gnome inventor created a device to turn straw into gold. It was invested with a powerful devil to power the effect (activated by placing straw inside it). Shaped like an ugly trash can with crab-like legs, the bin was bound only by the threat of its true name *Crumplestiltsbin* being used against it. When the gnome died, the bin was freed to enact evil of its own volition. Being a devil, it hungers for the taste of human souls, and is particularly partial to babies - it often uses its power to vomit gold to make evil bargains with mothers-to-be, offering to turn straw to gold in exchange for their firstborn.

## Encounter

The characters are approached by a known NPC or friend, who asks them to intervene on behalf of a friend who has just given birth to a baby girl. The mother, it is explained, has made a deal with a devil during her pregnancy to give the baby up, but now wants to renege on the deal, believing she has made a terrible mistake.

If the characters choose to intervene, they find the mother (LE female **commoner** of any race) in an opulent house of some description, weak from labour (four levels of exhaustion). The baby is in her arms, and she weakly pleads with the characters to help her.

At the stroke of midnight, there is a clanging sound at the door. Read or paraphrase the following:

A whistling clanking sound is coming from the front door. A whimsical and tinny voice is singing a song.

"I've come to claim what's good and mine  
Claim your baby, just in time  
As we agreed, the deal was struck  
For gold and greed you've come unstuck  
I've come to claim that baby mine  
Delicious tiny souls and rhyme  
What more could please a bin like me  
To dine al fresco, all for free"

## What's My Name?

Crumplestiltsbin is delighted at all the mess it has caused, and is more than happy to parlay with the characters on behalf of the mother. It reminds the characters that all infernal deals are kept by the Nine Hells, and there's nothing it can do about that... unless the characters were to guess its name correctly. This is a stipulation, it explains, built into the contract.

Characters who succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check can discern that this loophole is there solely so that the creature can revel in the desperate attempts to guess an entirely unguessable name before it eats the baby anyway. There is no evidence as to the name of the bin-like creature purely from observation, and the bin knows this. It takes some time to remind the new mother of the rules:

- ✦ She gets three guesses
- ✦ She has three hours to deliberate
- ✦ The devil returns each hour to hear one guess
- ✦ If she fails all three guesses or refuses to guess, the baby is forfeit

The devil delights in the awful predicament it has caused, and pootles outside into the street to allow the mother to think on it.

The devil happily makes other deals, but the limits of the deals are as follows:

- ✦ It refuses to make a deal that reverses or counters the effects of a previous deal
- ✦ It prefers to make deals that involve turning things into gold
- ✦ The only price it accepts is that of a newborn, on the stroke of midnight after it is born

## Rattle & Roll

Crumplestiltsbin is not the smartest or the savviest of bins in the world. As soon as it gets around a corner away from the house it starts singing to itself. Read or paraphrase the following:

"Oh, what a lucky bin I am  
Delicious babies, yum yum yum  
Delectable children in my tum  
Oh what a lucky bin I am  
Fol-de-rol oh how glad I am  
That nobody knows  
That my name is Crumplestiltsbin  
Lah-de-dah - Floop-de-doo"

If the bin notices it is being watched, and the characters threaten to reveal its name to the mother, it flees and does not return for the baby.

## Confronting Crumplestiltsbin

If the party guess the wrong name three times, fail to guess, or otherwise allow the mother to renege on her deal, the baby is incinerated in infernal flames and turns to ash. This includes taking up arms to defeat the bin in combat with the intent to free the mother from the contract.

If the characters guess the name “Crumplestiltsbin”, the bin is distraught. Read or paraphrase the following:

“No!” the bin screeches, sulphurous smoke pouring from every orifice. “No, no no no no!” It smashes a metal foot through the floor, which becomes stuck, and rotates in circles around the stuck leg.

“This isn’t fair!” it pouts, stamping and clanking, until something gives way inside it and it explodes in a controlled but decidedly upset fashion. Pieces roll across the floor.

## Resolution

If the party succeed in preventing the baby from being stolen by the Nine Hells, they may have made some powerful enemies. Did a senior devil desire that particular soul? Why?

Either way, they must still choose whether or not to destroy the malevolent Crumplestiltsbin (if it did not explode in the process) before it acquires yet more victims.

At your discretion, perhaps the mother of the baby has some of the gold she originally bargained for stashed away somewhere as a reward.

In most cases after destruction, Crumplestiltsbin reforms in the Nine Hells, and attempts to find a way back to the material plane, hell-bent on vengeance.

## Appendix

### Crumplestiltsbin

*Medium construct (devil), lawful evil*

**Armour Class** 17 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Con +4, Wis +0

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren’t silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralysed, poisoned, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 5 (700 XP)

**Immutable Form.** Crumplestiltsbin is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

### Actions

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Belch Molten Gold (Recharge 4–6).** Crumplestiltsbin belches molten gold in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures that fail the saving throw take an additional 1d10 fire damage at the start of their next turn unless the molten gold is removed, excepting which it cools and causes that creature to be blinded permanently until it is removed.





# Cursed Copper

**AUTHOR:** Ken Carcas

**TALE:** The Stolen Farthings

**TYPE:** Roleplay (Possible Combat)

**CR:** Tier 1

*"...it's not in the stealing, it's in the retrieving..."*

- Mora Early (slightly modified)

## Premise

This is my take on what may have been originally seen as a childhood mistake that eventually came back to haunt all concerned.

The encounter involves a couple of coins, in this case two copper pieces, and runs along somewhat similar lines as the Grimm tale, the true story begins after what occurs with the spirit if the party refuse to give back what's rightfully not theirs to keep.

As for the horror factor, this encounter depends on what direction the DM wishes to take and how innocent or wicked the DM wishes Cursed Copper to appear to their players.

## Adventure Hooks

- ✦ The party have recently completed a quest for a benefactor and have been invited over for dinner as part of collecting their reward. The events below occur during that dinner.
- ✦ The party seeks refuge for the night at an outlying homestead from a dreadful storm. The events below occur when the party stay the night.
- ✦ (In this Adventure Hook there are 2 ghosts; the primary ghost associated with the rumour and the ghost of another unfortunate soul.) The party hear rumours of a ghostly apparition connected with a recently vacated house and decide to investigate. The events below occur during that investigation (the party may not encounter the rumoured ghostly apparition (the primary ghost) but a returned spirit (the unfortunate soul) that died at the hands of the true ghostly apparition which is the cause of the initial rumour – see Possible Outcome: My Precious, AH3 for more details).



## Setup

However you wish to get the party involved, the premise will mostly be the same:

- ✦ The party stumbles upon an area where they witness a spirit moving purposely towards another location (see The Beginning - A Ghostly Apparition below).
- ✦ The apparition can be of any gender, age, or race as it will behave the same in all situations to come.
- ✦ Upon arriving, the spirit feverishly, and without sound, attempts to retrieve 'something' from the place where it has been hidden or left. The 'something' in question (see New Magic Item: Two Copper Coins) are in a position that is difficult for the spirit to retrieve (the original Grimm tale has the coins hidden between two floorboards which the spirit cannot move).
- ✦ Once a character investigates the scene, one of the following occurs at the DM's discretion:
  - The spirit breaks into a rage and attacks the character in an attempt to protect its treasure (see Possible Outcome: My Precious below). If the spirit is killed, proceed to A Never Ending Story.
  - The spirit pleads with the character for assistance, indicating the hidden spot where the coins are located:
- ✦ The coins:
  - If the coins are freely returned to the spirit then see Possible Outcome: Freely Given and Freely Returned below.
  - If the coins are withheld from the spirit then see Possible Outcome: My Precious below.
  - Should the spirit not retrieve the coins and die in its attempt to recover them then see A Never Ending Story below.

**Note.** The ghostly apparition, in all sections presented below, is unable to speak (hence the reference to the silent screaming, etc.). It is up to the characters to discern what the spirit is trying to convey, as well as allowing the DM to practice their skill at mime. If the players attempt to have their characters use letters, similar to a Ouija board, with the ghostly apparition pointing to the correct letters to spell out words, it appears to not understand the written text and/or has forgotten how to convey meaning through text. This is especially important if a character dies after the 7th day (refer to New Magic Item: Two Copper Coins for details) as it now allows the player the ability to try and express what their character wants without the use of speech!

# Two Copper Coins

*Wondrous items (coins), rare (cursed)*

These rare copper coins have a chance of originating in any culture and amongst any race. No one truly knows how they came to be, just that they are always naturally created as pairs and, until freely given away, together and on their own in some charitable way, they always bestow upon their owner ill-luck that results, over time, in a tragic end.

These copper coins always appear in pairs. If found separately, or should the coins be separated but chance or in the situation of being used as part of a transaction, they will magically cause themselves to be reunited within 3 (1d6) days.

For example, one coin separated, as part of a transaction with the blacksmith, may be returned to the original owner as change in a tavern the blacksmith just happens to be drinking at, thus reuniting the pair of copper coins once again.

Should the coins be used as part of a transaction that involves other currency, again, they will find their way back to their original owner.

Extending from the example above, should the newly reunited coins be used as part of a purchase for a fine wine costing 5 copper pieces, used to celebrate a victory from a recently completed quest, the original owner could have the 2 cursed copper coins returned the following day as part of the reward involving a coin purse containing their bounty for that job well done.

Casting *detect magic* will reveal both coins radiate transmutation magic. An *identify* spell cast on either coin reveals the true nature of the coins, what the curse involves, how the curse can be broken and what happens if the creature retains the curse up to the 7th day after first 'finding' them. No spell, short of a wish or similar will reveal how the coins can be destroyed.

The coins will unconsciously bestow upon their owner a continuous series of unconnected bad luck and ill tidings over the next 6 days. This could start out as something minor as a lost bet. This will expand over a number of days to maybe a minor scuffle where the owner of the coins may take some form of minor damage. Eventually, the owners' string of bad luck will begin to take a toll on their personage, with them taking potentially life-threatening damage. Eventually, on the 7th day, the owner will meet a fatal end and die (no Death Saves here) from obvious or suspicious circumstances (use your imagination); but the curse doesn't end there.

Within 24 hours of the death, the spirit of the owner will return, unknowingly drawn to the cursed coins and the cause of their death. It will seek out the coins and attempt to retrieve them, at whatever cost. It knows the direction of each of the coins, should they have since been separated, and will seek out each individually. The spirit cannot truly die until reunited again with the coins, returning 24 hours later should it have been previously killed in an attempt to regain one or both of the coins.

The curse is broken for the current owner in the following ways:

- ✦ Whilst alive, the owner freely gives both coins away, together, in some charitable way.
- ✦ The spirit is reunited with the coins and will pass them on to the first person willing to take them of their own free will.
- ✦ A *remove curse* cast on the coins will detach the coins from the owner, whilst destroying the coins in the process.

Freely handing the coins over to another willing receiver automatically transfers the curse to the new owner.

## Encounter

Read or paraphrase the following to the character with the highest passive Perception score:

You catch the briefest glimpse of movement to one side of the area. Looking in that direction, you just see a ghostly apparition moving with purpose before disappearing from sight. As you search around, it appears that the others within the room are none the wiser of what you have seen.

Should a character ask what the ghostly apparition (or spirit) looked like, have the character make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, the character gains a strange insight into the height, build, and clothing of the spirit. If the check succeeds by 10 or more, they also intuit the gender of the spirit.

It was a brief sighting at best and should be implied that the character may not totally be sure that what they did see was really there.

Obviously, the party may or may not investigate the ghostly apparition. Should they choose not to investigate, one of the following occurs (each of the following relates to one of the Adventure Hooks (AH#) above:

**AH1.** The party hears a scream from somewhere within the building. Their host, looking concerned, moves to investigate, inviting the party to accompany them if they wish. On approach to the area, they see one of the house staff running towards them in hysterics. As she flies past, she screams something about a ghost further down the hall. If stopped, she gives the party a hurried description of what it looks like and where it can be found. She refuses to accompany the party, and is excused by the host.

**AH2.** A young girl, no more than 6 years old and most likely the daughter of the party's hosts, walks into the room and calmly states, "(insert recently departed elder child's name here - X) is in my room". The hosts look worried but claim that it can't be as (X) died several days ago. The child continues, insisting that they should come and see. The hosts, looking concerned, move to investigate, inviting the party to accompany them if they wish. The young girl grabs hold of the hand of the most friendly character (possibly the character with the highest Charisma score) and accompanies them to her room.

**AH3.** The party hears a faint screech from further into the building. Moments later, several rats are seen racing into the room, heading for the nearest exit. Each rat has unnatural white fur and moves with rigid years of old age. The retreating rats pose no threat to the party. As the party moves to investigate from the direction the rats came from, they see the withered form of a recently deceased rat. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Medical) check reveals that although recently dead, the rat appears to have died of old age. The rigor mortis in its body appears to have been unnaturally accelerated for the condition of the corpse (the result of the ghosts Horrifying Visage ability on a creature with a small life span).

## The Investigation

What follows should fit with any of the Adventure Hooks presented above. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the area, the air around you takes on an unnatural cold. The hairs on the back of your hands stand rigid, and there is an eerie prickle at the base of your skull. Rounding a corner, you come upon a tranquil, yet disturbing, scene. Before you is a translucent and pitiful creature, silently clawing at the area before it. The wretched phantom doesn't appear to have notice you enter, or is simply ignoring you.

Accurately describe what the ghostly apparition looks like and the scene that is playing out before them, based on the chosen Adventure Hook.

Depending on the actions of the characters, move to one of the Possible Outcomes (A or B, with C to possibly follow) below.

## Resolution

What follows will give examples of what occurs if you are using either of the Adventure Hooks above.

### My Precious

**AH1 or AH2.** Your host gasps with surprise as they explain the image before the party is their wife (or husband, lover, child, etc.). The host beckons forward, attempting to beseech the phantom of their dearly deceased as to why they have returned. The **ghost** turns, silently screams in rage, and moves to attack.

**AH3.** This section is a little loose as it depends on the direction you have chosen:

- ◆ The ghostly apparition is the cause of the hauntings and simply keeps haunting the scene as it can't get to the coins. In this case, the ghost turns, silently screams in rage, and moves to attack.
- ◆ The apparition seen by others is a spirit trapped in the recently vacated house and can't leave until the cursed coins are passed on to another. In this case, the trapped spirit may either choose to aid the party or keep out of their way whilst the party take on the raging ghost that is moving to attack them.

At this point, with either of the scenarios above, combat will ensue as the ghostly apparition has been driven supernaturally mad by not being able to retrieve the coins. Use the following Level Adjustments (based on there being 4 party members), depending on which Tier your players are playing within:

**Note.** What is presented below is a possible play as to how combat could occur. As the actions of the characters cannot be taken into account (each group may approach the situation differently, take what's present below as an example and change to accommodate your players actions).

## Level Adjustments

**Deadly.** The ghost only uses its Possession action, jumping from character to character, in an attempt to regain the coins. Once it does so, the ghostly apparition disappears and the last unfortunate character becomes the new owner of the coins.

**Hard.** The ghost blindly attacks each character once using its Withering Touch before only using its Possession action (as per Tier 1 Deadly above).

**Medium.** The ghost has 60 hit points, and blindly attacks each character once using its Withering Touch before only using its Possession action (as per Tier 1 above).

**Easy.** The ghostly apparition has 80 hit points (maximum) and proceed to First Round below:

## Actions in Combat

**First Round.** It uses its Horrifying Visage action on the party then uses its movement to use its Incorporeal Movement ability to move beneath the ground, ending its turn, taking 5 points of damage.

**Second Round.** The ghostly apparition continues to use its Incorporeal Movement ability to stay within the ground and attacks the nearest character from below using its Withering Touch action. It continues to stay beneath the ground, taking 5 points of damage at the end of its turn.

**Third and Further Rounds.** As per Second Round above until the party retreats from the area, at which time it retreats itself to a safe location to heal. Should it drop to ½ hit points or less (40 hp or less), it will attempt to use its Possession action of the least Charismatic of the party and attempt to regain the coins with little regard to the body it presently possesses. It attempts doing this until either it regains the coins, the party retreats, or it dies in the attempt.

If, at any time, the ghostly apparition is reduced to 0 hit points during Part A – My Precious, the party are free to do as they please, but Part C - A Never Ending Story occurs in 24 hrs.

## Freely Given, and Freely Returned

This section can be added for additional roleplaying, or to remove the blood and gore aspects. The intent is to allow for a 'peaceful' resolution to the encounter, where the coins can be retrieved, without combat, allowing the DM roleplay the entire scenario.

**AH1 or AH2.** Using this option with the ghostly apparition pleading for assistance allows for the party to (hopefully) complete this section in a non-combat fashion through roleplay. Despite this, combat may still occur if:

- ✦ The party are slow in handing over the coins.
- ✦ The party appear apprehensive in wanting to help once they have the coins.
- ✦ The party take too long to work out the significance of the coins.
- ✦ The party refuses to hand the coins over once they have them.

If any of the above occur, the apparition becomes agitated at the time it is taking for the coins to be passed across. If the characters don't take the hint, it thrusts out its hands in a gesture for the party to hand over the coins. If they still keep the coins then revert to My Precious until the coins are in the hands of the now aggressive ghost, at which time, the attacks stop.

**AH3.** This section runs akin to AH1 and AH2 above, except if you include the addition of the extra ghost (the unfortunate soul mentioned above); this then requires its own section (which you are currently reading). There are a number of ways this section could play out with the addition of an extra ghost (the unfortunate soul), of which I will touch on a couple of them below.

- ✦ **The Ghostly Apparition Is Not The Enemy.** In this scenario, the additional ghost (the unfortunate soul) proves to be the problem. If the characters free the coins, the additional ghost attacks them in an attempt to retrieve the coins for itself. Combat ensues until the additional ghost is destroyed. At this time, play out Freely Given and Freely Received.
- ✦ **Trickery and Subterfuge.** In this scenario, the DM relies on the fact that the ghostly apparition cannot speak to allow the additional ghost to trick the party into doing what it wants. As the party enters onto the scene and finds the ghostly apparition pledging for help, the additional ghost appears and states that it was killed and the same will occur if the party helps retrieve the coins. It attempts to convince the party into helping it destroy the ghostly apparition and therefore allowing itself to pass on to the afterlife in peace. Should the additional ghost get its way and the ghostly apparition dies, the additional ghost does pass on, but A Never Ending Story plays out in 24 hours.

## A Never Ending Story

In all scenarios here, something has occurred that has resulted in the ghostly apparition dying before the coins can be freely and willingly handed over to a party member. Should this occur, as per the curse upon the coins, the ghostly apparition reappears and begins to track down the coins. The following are possibilities of what may happen within your game:

- ✦ **The Coins Are Still In Their Original Location.** In this case, the ghostly apparition simply returns to the place of the coins. The scenario will play as per normal but should the person responsible for its death appear on the scene, it will be aggressive from then on (only play My Precious from here). It's up to the DM on how they choose to progress based on the actions of the party, especially the actions of the party member responsible for its death.
- ✦ **The Party Have The Coins.** In this case, the ghostly apparition is not bound to the location, but is instead bound to the coins. Eventually, the ghostly apparition will seek out the party, and the party member with the coins, and attempt to retrieve them. How you choose to play this out is up to you but remember, the party have not only killed the ghostly apparition but have also 'stolen' its property, thereby not allowing it to pass on. Aggression seems the logical choice here but you should use your imagination to come up with inventive ways to show the party they may wish to reconsider their actions.
- ✦ **The Coins Have Been Passed On.** In this final case, the party has gained the coins but not the curse and, in turn, have used the coins as part of a purchase or somehow departed with the coins in some fashion. When the ghostly apparition appears within 24 hrs., it will seek out the coins and not the party themselves. This allows the DM the freedom to have the ghostly apparition move about and cause as much or as little havoc as they deem fit. Eventually, the party should receive information that obviously shows that the ghostly apparition has returned. If they choose to intercede then play it out based on the party's actions. Make them see the error of their ways (NPC's die gruesome deaths as a result of their actions). If the party choose not to interject and solve their initial problem, eventually the problem resolves itself with the ghostly apparition passing the coins on to another ... but ... news eventually finds its way to the party showing a similar situation has occurred.

## Conclusion

Once the coins are within the possession of a party member, continue the adventures of the party as intended, interjecting doses of bad luck and ill-tidings until either the party work out the curse of the coins or the curse runs its course and the party member in possession of the coins dies on the 7th day.

# The Drowning House

**AUTHOR:** JVC Parry

**TALE:** The Louse and the Flea

**TYPE:** Roleplay

**CR:** Any

**CONTENT WARNINGS:** Drowning

*The house is alive, but can the party find out why?*

## Premise

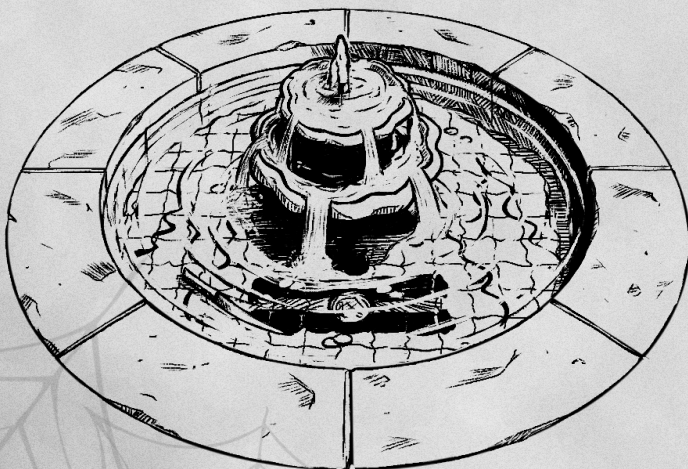
While walking through idyllic countryside the characters are disturbed by the sound of horrific screaming from a nearby cottage. Upon entry, the characters find that the cottage is slowly filling with water from some unknown source. The source of the screams are a family trapped within the house, who are being terrorised by animated objects. Once they enter, the characters too will be trapped. To escape, the characters must pacify the the objects through roleplay. Each characters gets one action each round, during which they can quiz one of the items about what has happened.

## Playing up the Horror

Because of the fantastical nature of this encounter, the horror might not be apparent. In order to make this a truly scarring encounter, the DM should play up certain elements.

The first should be the imminent risk of drowning. Constantly remind the characters that the house is filling up all around them. Items begin to float around on the water's surface, the young boy struggles to keep his head above the water, one of the women gets trapped beneath the stairs and drowns. These are all excellent ways to evoke horror.

The other side of the coin is panic. The objects behave erratically and nonsensically at times, slamming into the characters from nowhere, or trapping them in rooms while laughing with insanity. The whole encounter should be extremely stressful if you want it to leave a lasting memory of horror!



## Encounter

During this encounter, the characters will encounter many animated objects. Each of these objects cannot be killed and do not have stats. Attacking them causes them to become inactive for a round, after which they reanimate. The objects have personalities and memories, and bully the characters in any way they can including trapping them in rooms, tripping them up, and otherwise flustering them.

While travelling through the countryside, the characters hear horrific screaming from a nearby cottage. Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly a chilling scream rips through the fields. Searching for the source of the horrific wailing, you notice an idyllic cottage. The initial wail is joined by two more blood curdling screams as you approach.

## Kitchen

When the characters enter the cottage, read or paraphrase the following:

In the centre of the cottage's kitchen is a small family - two middle-aged women and their young boy. The three are being terrorised by an assortment of objects who whack them into submission each time they try to move from their covered pose. With an almighty crash, the door slams shut behind you, and you hear the grating of a bar being drawn from the outside. It is then you notice the inch of water around your boots.

**Objects.** The family are being attacked by an assortment of animated kitchen goods including rolling pins, chairs, a table, a stove, and several brooms. These animated objects prevent the family from escaping while the cottage slowly fills with water. Once the characters enter, the objects do the same to them.

The natural leader of the objects is the stove, who has the personality of a burly woman who brooks no nonsense. The table is second in command; a confused and angry old man. The four chairs are a pack of snide bullies. The brooms are daft and do whatever they're told. The rolling pins cackle constantly in manic laughter.

**Family.** The family are Maegra and Sabine Windhelm, and their young son Jakob. If questioned, the three explain that they become lost last night during an evening walk, so sought shelter in the cottage. They planned to make their way home in the light today, but were attacked by the objects when they tried to leave. They've no clue why any of this is happening to them.

**Water.** The cottage is rapidly filling with water from the well in the basement (see below). The bottom floor of the house fills in two rounds. The top floor in another one. If the characters don't manage to solve the puzzle fast enough, they'll drown along with the family.

## Upstairs

Thrashing around the room is an animated rug, which appears to have been singed by the fire, and is spreading smoke throughout the chamber. Up against the far wall is a bed which shakes violently every time the rug comes near.

**Objects.** The rug has the personality of a timid young man, and is in extreme pain. In order to sooth the rug, he must be doused with water. The bed is a frantic individual who shudders every time it is approached, and screams madly whenever questioned.

## Downstairs

The basement of the house is entirely flooded and pitch black. The freezing water chills you to the bone.

**Water & Light.** In order to explore the basement, characters must find a way of lighting it, and swim down into the room. At the bottom of the stairs is a well from which a strong current erupts as it continues to vomit forth water. The well's personality is stoic and overly-logical.

## Solution

In order to escape the house, the characters must get the rug from the bedroom on the first floor and douse it with water. The rug was burned by the fire, and has been crying ever since. It's cries animated all the other objects, and eventually the well decided to flood the house to soothe the rug. The characters can learn this information by questioning the objects, who respond with the last line of a cumulative story:

Rug is burning.  
Bed is rocking.  
Pins are rolling.  
Brooms are sweeping.  
Chairs are rattling.  
Table is creaking.  
Stove is stewing.  
Well is weeping.

For example, if the characters ask the stove what's going on, she might respond;

"Oh you insolent little halfwits. I happen to be stewing because the table is creaking if you must know!"

This should prompt characters to ask the table why it is creaking, giving them the next clue. Eventually they'll be led to the rug (who's burning) and should be able to solve the puzzle. Remember that the characters have three rounds to act before the house fills completely with water. Talking to an object requires an action.

## Resolution

Either the characters manage to solve the puzzle and douse the rug with water, or they drown. If the rug is doused it calms down, and the other objects slowly return to their inanimate state. Eventually all the water drains back down the well, and the door unlocks, allowing the characters and the family to leave.



# Lady Ironhands' Revenge

**AUTHOR:** Cat Evans

**TALE:** The Girl Without Hands

**TYPE:** Combat & Roleplay

**CR:** Tier 3

*Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.*

## Premise

Ginevra Ironhands is a cold, angry woman. When she was a girl, her father Clariu Miller sold her to a devil in exchange for riches and cut off her pure, clean hands so she couldn't fend off the fiend. Forty years later Ginevra, now a fiendish warrior with magical, iron gauntlets in place of her hands, and the leader of a band of infernal mercenaries, returns for vengeance against her father and the town where she grew up.

Hired to protect the town of Napoca, the characters must hold off the infernal siege from sundown to sunrise.

## Encounter

The characters' role in the story is confined to one night. They are in town for the midwinter solstice (the longest night), when Ginevra Ironhands returns to besiege Napoca.

## Shoot the Messenger

Napoca is a prosperous town in the middle of its midwinter festival. A bonfire burns brightly in the town square, mulled cider is freely passed around and the whole town - roughly 500 people - are in a fine, festive mood.

Tell the characters they are each in town to visit someone and ask each player to briefly describe who, and why. Your players have now created most of your NPCs for you, and built their own motivation to see the adventure through.

Allow some time for the characters to socialise with their contacts and each other and to meet Clariu Miller (he/him; lawful evil human **warlock of the fiend**), now the mayor of Napoca. Clariu is tipsy, and treats everyone like a long-lost friend. He's warm and personable, with a fondness for dad jokes. When events are in full flow, read or paraphrase the following:

The crackling of the bonfire intensifies. The heap of wood belches choking, sulfurous smoke and sheds sparks that send onlookers scrambling out of the way, beating flames out of their hair and clothing.

An **imp** emerges from the smoke, clutching a scroll. From its perch on top of the bonfire, it addresses the crowd, focusing particularly on Clariu. The imp reads from the scroll:

Strategos Ginevra Ironhands hereby claims the town of Napoca in the name of the Nine Hells, in due payment for the town's rancid history and the stained souls of its people. As is tradition, the Nine Hells offer a bargain: if Napoca can repel our hellish forces until the natural sunrise, we relinquish our claim.

Clariu immediately orders the imp captured, and—when it is either captive or dead—offers the characters whatever price they name (up to 5,000 gp) to help defend the town. Characters who haggle increase the reward by 5% for every 1 point by which they beat Clariu in a contested Charisma (Persuasion) check.

## Questions

Characters who interrogate the imp learn some or all of the following, depending on the result of a Charisma (Intimidation) or other appropriate ability check.

- ◆ DC 12: Lady Ironhands is honorable: she keeps her promises and makes good on her threats. She does not make bargains.
- ◆ DC 14: She leads a company of over 50 well-trained fiends, mostly **merregons** and **bone devils**
- ◆ DC 16: They will arrive in less than an hour, coming from the forest surrounding the village
- ◆ DC 18: Lady Ironhands is a powerful fiend (a **narzugon**) but she was once human

Questioning Clariu or the townsfolk has little benefit. Clariu has suppressed the memory of what he did to his daughter, and the only other person who knew (Clariu's wife) left town soon after Ginevra was taken.

A few elderly folk vaguely remember that Clariu had a daughter, one or two may recall that she was called Ginnifer, Jenna, or something of the sort, but all believe, or have convinced themselves, that the girl died nearly forty years ago.



## Defences

The characters can make any preparations their own skills, spells, and equipment allow, and have access to any resources reasonably available in a small, forest community. Every act of preparation increases Napoca's Defence Rating (DR), reducing the number of devils who breach the town's defences.

- ✦ The townsfolk form a militia and man the crumbling remains of the town's walls, granting the town DR 2.
- ✦ Each character who is not questioning Clariu, the townsfolk, or the imp, can take one action to increase DR.
- ✦ Players should describe the action, and it must plausibly help to defend the town; "I rally the townsfolk with an inspiring speech" qualifies, as does "I use hallucinatory terrain to reshape the forest paths" or "I set up traps on the main road into town"; "I cast mage armor on myself!" does not. The degree of success matters more than the specific action.
  - Success at DC 10 grants +1 DR
  - Each additional 2 points on the check (round down) grants another +1 DR (e.g. a total of +3 DR for a roll of 15).
  - Spells of 2nd level or below grant +1 DR
  - Spells of 3rd level or higher grant +1 DR per level of the spell above second (e.g. +3 DR for a 5th level spell)

## The First Wave

When the players have had some time to prepare, the first wave of devils arrives. Six units, as detailed below, enter from different points on the map (DM's choice) and make their way to the town square. Players can spend DR to reduce the number of devils, as detailed below, to reflect the effects of prepared defences (e.g. devils are shot by waiting archers, or caught in traps).

- ✦ Units coming from the north, south, or west reach the square in four turns; those coming from the east arrive in six turns.
- ✦ Each devil kills one townsfolk every round they are not engaged with a player character (the bone devil kills three per turn).
- ✦ The townsfolk do no appreciable damage, beyond contributing to the town's DR.

**Units 1-3:** Five **merregons** (or **barbed devils** if you don't have *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*). 1 DR = 1 merregon/barbed devil.

**Units 4-5:** Four **cambions**. 2 DR = cambion.

**Unit 6:** One **bone devil**. 6 DR = 1 bone devil.

## Go Big or Go Home

This is a town under siege by devils. Be creative, be gory, be grotesque in describing the ferocious devils and the delight they take in killing and maiming. Kill at least one of the characters' NPC contacts if they don't take specific measures to defend them. Shock value is your friend.

## Eye of the Storm

Once the characters defeat the first wave, they have about fifteen minutes to heal up, rebuild defences, etc. DR spent to reduce the number of devils does not replenish: traps have been triggered, barriers breached, and so on.

Each character may make a single ability check (the ability and skill used should be determined as above; the DC is 14) or cast a single spell to repair/restore/reset defences. Each successful check adds +1 DR.

## Lady Ironhands Rides

During the characters' preparations a horn sounds, like the screaming of a thousand souls in torment. Pools of magical darkness spread over points on the outskirts of town, and begin to move inwards. Lady Ironhands and her elite troops have arrived.

Again, players can spend DR to reduce the number of devils, representing the efficacy of the remaining defences. Unit 8 cannot be reduced in this manner.

**Units 1-4:** Two **white abishai** (or three **barbed devils** if you don't have MtoF). 1 DR = 1 abishai/barbed devil.

**Units 5-7:** One **black abishai** (or a **banshee** and 3 **shadows** if you don't have MtoF). 1 DR = 1 abishai/banshee, or 2 shadows.

**Unit 8:** Lady Ironhands, a **narzugon** (or **erinyes** if you don't have MtoF), mounted on a **nightmare** and armed with a **flame tongue longsword** (+2d6 fire damage to every target it hits). Accompanied by a **chain devil** commanding twelve lemures.

Unit 8 arrives five rounds after the others, and heads straight for the town square, or wherever Clariu is waiting.

When Lady Ironhands comes face to face with Clariu she removes her helmet, revealing a grey, stone-like, but still human face, and asks "Missed me, father?"

Clariu remembers her at this point and, if asked, either he or Lady Ironhands explain their history. Lady Ironhands is cruel, bloodthirsty, and will not be swayed from her vengeance: she claims that the whole town benefited from her father's deal, growing prosperous from the money he

## Changing It Up

Remind the players that for every round they wait for the fiends to come to them, more townsfolk die (two for each abishai, one for every other fiend). Ideally, you will be able to split the party up and have them face off against raging white abishai, or be stalked from the shadows by unseen black abishai. Unlike the gore of the first wave, this time the characters should feel genuine fear.



invested, and that she deserves to kill every one of them.

Ironhands does, however, offer the characters a deal. If they let her take the town, they can summon her and her company of devils (soon to be replenished to full strength) once in the next one hundred-and-one years.

## Resolution

There are several possible resolutions, most of which are neither straightforwardly “success” or “failure.”

### Napoca is overrun

The characters try to defend Napoca from the fiends, but are overrun. In this outcome, the characters are probably dead or incapacitated. The population of Napoca are brutally tortured, dismembered, and executed by Lady Ironhands and the surviving devils.

### Napoca stands

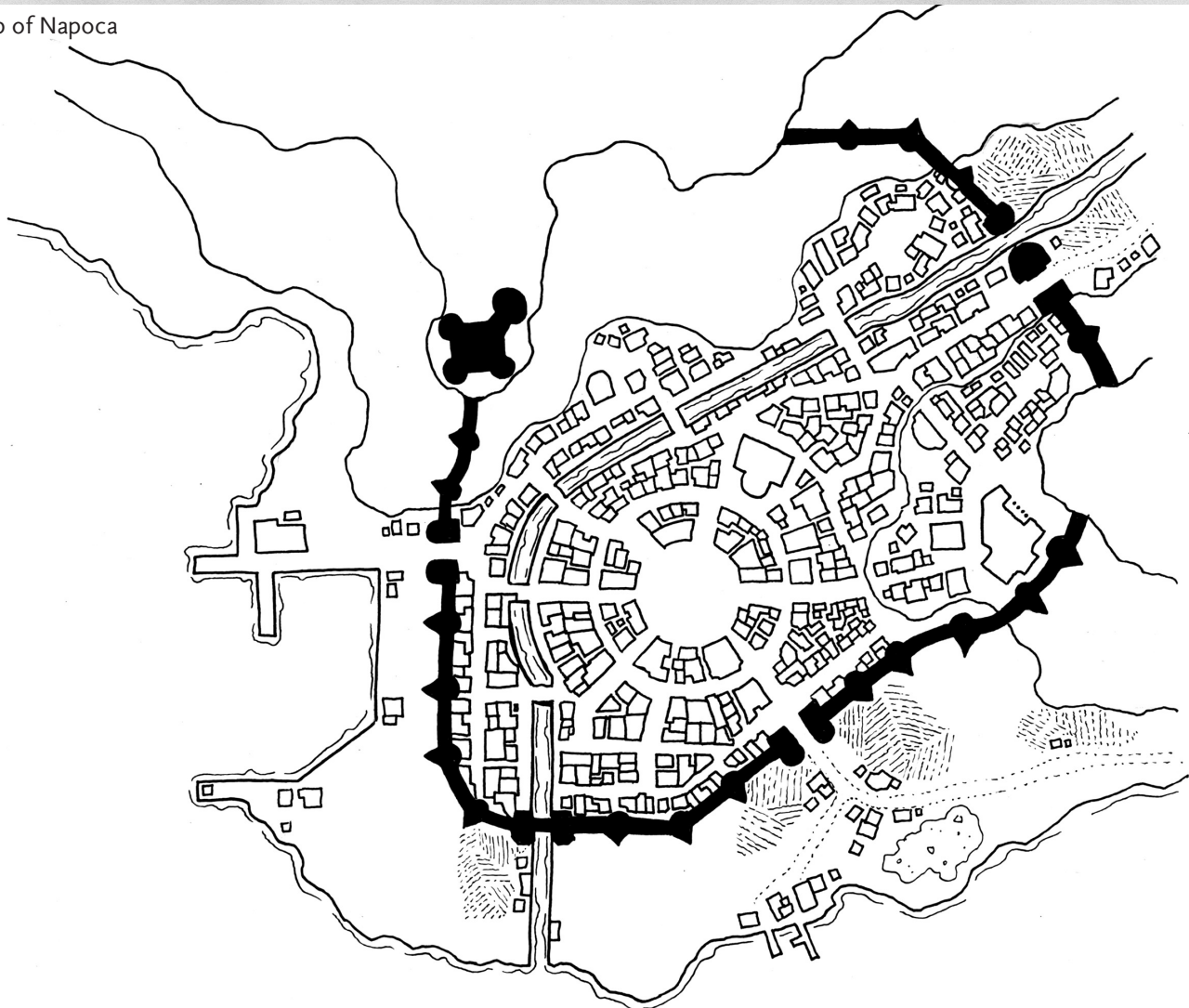
In spite of the townsfolk’s transgressions, the characters staunchly defend them and fend off the fiends. They receive rewards from Clariu Miller, and can loot Ginevra’s hands and her *flame tongue* longsword.

### Napoca is betrayed

The characters sympathise with Lady Ironhands or allow the town to fall for some other reason. Lady Ironhands and the surviving devils torture, dismember, and kill the townsfolk. Ginevra rewards the characters with:

- ✦ A contract to call on her fiendish mercenaries once, for any reason, within the next one hundred-and-one years.
- ✦ A *Soul Coin*. If you have access to *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, use the rules in that book; otherwise characters who hold the coin sense the doomed, fearful soul trapped within. The coin has three charges, each of which can be expended to gain 1d10 temporary hit points. When all three charges are expended, the soul within the coin is destroyed.

Map of Napoca



# Lights Out

**AUTHOR:** Jessica Marcrum

**TALE:** The Blue Light

**TYPE:** Combat, Exploration, & Roleplay

**CR:** Tier 2

**CONTENT WARNING:** Interpersonal Abuse

*She did everything that he ordered her to do, without resisting, silently, and with half-closed eyes.*

## Premise

King Nikolaus von Lichtenblau (he/him NE male human **veteran**) gained control of his kingdom through the power of the mysterious blue light. Acquired from a witch's well, the blue light summons a magical dwarf and whoever controls the light controls the dwarf. King Nikolaus took advantage of this to execute the witch, repeatedly assault the princess while she slept, and eventually take the throne, claiming the princess as his bride.

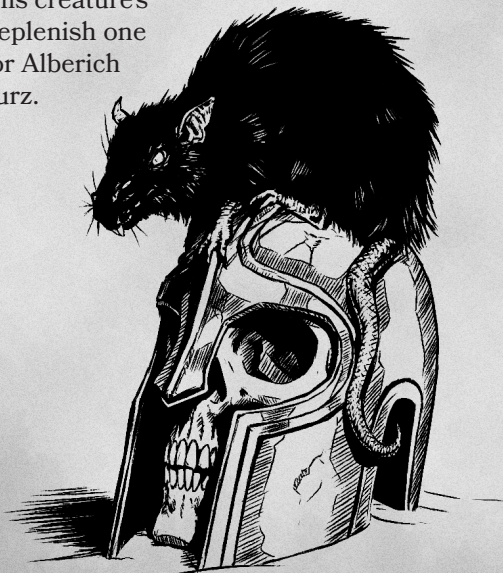
Ten years later, the witch, never truly dead, has returned to her full power. The kingdom is collapsing under King Nikolaus's cruel rule. The witch wants her light back and is willing to work with strangers to bring the king to justice.

The castle is a haunted house full of horrific illusions meant to entertain the king and torment the queen. To acquire the blue light, adventurers must brave the nightmares inside the castle.

## The Blue Light

The Blue Light is a **will-o'-wisp** with the following attack option instead of Consume Life:

**Summon Alberich Gausamkurz.** As a bonus action, the blue light can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit 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 blue light regains 10 (3d6) hit points. As a bonus action, the blue light can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points and is dead. This target cannot be a creature formerly targeted by the blue light. The blue light can consume this creature's energy to replenish one spell slot for Alberich Gausamkurz.



## Encounter

Adventurers encounter Oma Mittenwald (she/her NE **green hag**) in the guise of an elderly elven wizard in a forest on the edge of a small kingdom. She offers to read their fortunes or provide a snack for their journey. Those who take a fortune receive a card reading dealing with great destiny and ending strife. Those who take a snack receive two rations. Oma laughs at the mistrust of those who refuse. This choice affects rewards later in the adventure.

Oma then challenges the characters to retrieve her blue light and destroy the corrupt King Nikolaus. In return, she offers them magical treasures and a future favor. Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check know that Oma is not all she seems, but genuinely wants their help. She provides directions to the castle and a golden lantern to capture the light.

**The City.** The city of Kriegsberg is in shambles. Shops are closed, the cobblestones are cracked, and the air smells of decay. Displaced and dying residents lie in the streets while flies walk on their bodies. Characters with passive (Wisdom) Perception of 15 or higher see commoners hiding inside abandoned shops. They run if approached. If pacified with *calm emotions*, they warn to be wary of “the wicked dwarf and his light.”

The castle gate is guarded front and back by two knights wielding swords. When characters get within 30 ft. of the gate, the guards command they stop moving and turn around. Characters must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to realize these guards are **animated armors** holding **flying swords**. If characters continue to move toward the castle, the constructs attack.

Characters who choose to avoid this fight may climb the gate. They must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check, or take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall on a failure.

Inside, the castle smells musty, and a chill wind blows at seemingly random intervals. The castle is affected by *guards and wards* and **specters** roam the halls in pairs. Additionally, there are *glyphs of warding* (spell save DC 14) cast by Alberich Gausamkurz in each room. Roll a d6 to see which glyph is triggered.

### d6 Spell

1	<i>summon lesser demons</i>
2	<i>major image</i> : King Nikolaus on his throne or Queen Elsebeth weeping
3	<i>dissonant whispers</i>
4	<i>shatter</i>
5	<i>phantasmal force</i> : a spiked cage erupts around the character
6	<i>enemies abound</i>

After successfully navigating two glyph rooms, the characters arrive in a room with a spell glyph, a **swarm of rats**, and a **giant spider**. Throughout the fight, they hear the sound of a woman crying coming from the next room. After the fight, the *hat of vermin* can be looted from this room.

## Meeting the Queen

Adventurers who follow the source of the crying find a beautiful bedroom. Inside is Queen Elsebeth (she/her LG human **noble**), crying in front of a mirror that reflects a distorted image of a bruised, emaciated, much-older woman in a dark cell. She is frightened of the adventurers and calls for help. Adventurers can pacify her with *calm emotions*, succeeding on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince her they mean no harm, or through excellent roleplaying.

If she deems the party trustworthy, the queen tells them she has been a prisoner of her husband for ten years and suffers innumerable abuses at his hands. He systematically slaughtered her entire family, leaving her all alone. Terrified to leave her own room, she dreads his visits, yet also believes that she is incapable of surviving without him. She has never lived outside the castle and now, she has no one but him. She is convinced she deserves her fate and becomes angry if adventurers attempt to persuade her otherwise. Additionally, Queen Elsebeth is exhausted by nightmares and struggles to focus throughout the conversation.

If adventurers fail to calm Queen Elsebeth, she continues to yell for the guards. Two **animated armor** with three **flying swords** arrive and are hostile to the party.

If the party chooses to inspect the mirror, they must succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check to realize it is enchanted to reveal how the viewer sees themselves. The mirror has an AC of 13 and 10 (3d6) hitpoints, but breaking it does not remove the enchantment.

The queen's wardrobe has a false back that leads directly to the throne room. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check or by establishing good rapport with Queen Elsebeth. Otherwise, adventurers must travel through two more glyph-warded rooms to reach the throne room.

## Confronting the King

King Nikolaus sits on a massive throne in a darkened room. On either side of him sit two **shadow mastiffs** and two **shadow mastiff alphas** that can only be seen by characters with a passive (Wisdom) Perception of 18 or higher. If the party has come through Queen Elsebeth's bedroom passage, he accuses them of violating the queen. Otherwise, he demands to know what the intruders are doing in his home. While characters answer, he brings out a pipe to smoke, lighting it with the **blue light**, and summoning **Alberich Grausamkurz**. The king demands Alberich entertain him by slowly eliminating the unwanted guests.

The king cannot be convinced by any means to give up the blue light or Alberich, though if adventurers attempt to convince him, he appears to consider the idea for his own amusement. He revels in displaying his own power and appears to have forgotten he owes everything to Alberich. He is convinced Oma Mittenwald is dead on his orders.

**Tactics.** The mastiffs and Alberich fight to protect the king. The mastiffs attack from stealth, attempting to surprise the party. The blue light stays mainly out of range, only entering combat to feed on life energy to heal

themselves or replenish Alberich's spell slots. If at any point the blue light is killed, the king resummons it using his lighter. King Nikolaus attempts to avoid combat, hiding behind his throne.

**Victory.** If Alberich is eliminated and the blue light is grappled or reduced to 10 hitpoints or fewer, it can be trapped using the lantern. If the king is killed, Alberich stops fighting. He informs the adventurer who strikes the killing blow that as the new controller of the blue light, he is at their service.

## Resolution

If the king is killed, *guards and wards* and all *glyphs of warding* immediately drop from the castle. Queen Elsebeth shakily takes the crown and vows to be a better ruler than her husband or her father. She expresses her desire to burn the castle to the ground. She offers the party 500 gp in gems from the treasury. Oma Mittenwald awaits the party outside. She thanks the party for destroying a nasty king and returning her unfaithful servant. She tells the adventurers she owes them a favor and gives them a gift based on the choice they made when they met her:

- ◆ Fortune-telling = *deck of illusions*
- ◆ Rations = *bag of beans*
- ◆ Neither = *gem of brightness*

If the blue light is captured and the king is left alive, the magical effects are still in place. Oma awaits the party outside (see above for her interactions).

If the party simultaneously kills the blue light, the king, and Alberich Grausamkurz, they are unable to retrieve the blue light for Oma Mittenwald. The spells haunting the castle end (see above for Elsebeth's reaction). Oma is furious, but agrees a deal half-done is better than none at all. She gives them a reward based on their first interaction (see above), but has no future dealings with them.

If the party meets up with Oma Mittenwald and refuses to return the blue light, they gain the services of the blue light and Alberich Grausamkurz, but the eternal enmity of Oma Mittenwald.

If the party dies attempting to retrieve the blue light from the king, their spirits become part of the castle as ghosts or specters, doomed to haunt the next group of adventurers sent by Oma Mittenwald.

Depending on whether they are alive or dead, all NPCs may return to either thank the party or seek vengeance upon them.

# Alberich Grausamkurz

Alberich is tied to the blue light. Even if he is killed, he is immediately resummoned when the blue light is lit, returning at full health and with all his spell slots replenished. He cannot be summoned while the blue light is active.

## Alberich Grausamkurz

*Medium humanoid (duergar), lawful neutral*

**Armour Class** 11 (14 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 71 (11d8+22)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** Wis +6, Cha +3

**Skills** Arcana +2, Deception +6, Nature +2, Persuasion +6

**Damage Resistances** poison

**Condition Immunity** charmed, paralysed, poisoned

**Senses** Darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Dwarvish, Undercommon, Sylvan

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Duergar Resilience.** Alberich Grausamkurz has advantage on saving throws against poison, spells, and illusions, as well as to resist being paralyzed.

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, Alberich Grausamkurz has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Alberich Grausamkurz's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15), requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*, *mage armor* (self only), *silent image*, *speak with animals*  
1/day: *conjure fey*

**Spellcasting.** Alberich Grausamkurz is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He regains his expended spell slots when he finishes a short or long rest. He knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *eldritch blast*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *vicious mockery*

1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): *blink*, *charm person*, *dimension door*, *dominate beast*, *faerie fire*, *fear*, *hold monster*, *misty step*, *phantasmal force*, *seeming*, *sleep*

**Grimoire of the Light (1/day).** Using the power of the Blue Light, Alberich Grausamkurz can summon an unearthly glowing grimoire that contains any one spell up to 7th level that he does not currently know. He can cast this spell as an action. As soon as the spell is cast, the grimoire vanishes in a flash of blue light.

## Actions

**Multiattack.** Alberich Grausamkurz attacks twice with his cudgel or javelin.

**Enlarge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** For 1 minute, Alberich Grausamkurz magically increases in size, along with anything he is wearing or carrying. While enlarged, Alberich Grausamkurz is Large, doubles his damage dice on Strength-based weapon attacks (included in the attacks), and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with advantage. If Alberich Grausamkurz lacks the room to become Large, he attains the maximum size possible in the space available.

**Cudgel. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or 10 (2d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage while enlarged.

**Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage while enlarged.

**Invisibility (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** Alberich Grausamkurz magically turns invisible until he attacks, casts a spell, or uses his Enlarge, or until his concentration is broken, up to 1 hour (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment Alberich Grausamkurz wears or carries is invisible with him.

## Reactions

**Misty Escape (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** In response to taking damage, Alberich Grausamkurz turns invisible and teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. He remains invisible until the start of his next turn or until he attacks, makes a damage roll, or casts a spell.

# Nanny's Children

**AUTHOR:** Alicia Furness

**TALE:** The Water Nixie

**TYPE:** Combat & Exploration

**CR:** Tier 1

**CONTENT WARNING:** Child Abuse

*Some people say children should be seen and not heard.  
Nanny Bogfoot makes that happen.*

## Premise

The small town of Hollow Swamp has been stressed by a spate of disappearances. Children have been going to the forest to play or work, but then are never seen again. This has happened cyclically for the past hundred years, but neither the children nor their bodies have ever been found. Now, the Mayor's daughter has disappeared, and the characters have been hired to find her. In exchange for her safe return, the mayor is offering 500 gp and his most prized possession, a *lantern of revealing*.

The area around Hollow Swamp is perpetually grey, cold and wet. The town is named for the wetlands it sits next to. Locals swear that at night, you can hear a child's laughter floating on the air from the north of town. The feel of this encounter should be gloomy, miserable, and unsettling.

## Encounter

In this encounter, the characters must navigate the swamp, find the mayor's daughter, and confront the monster responsible for it. The creature is Nanny Bogfoot, a witch who lures children to her lair and turns them into household items after working them almost to death.

### Into the Woods

The woods around Hollow Swamp are dark and foreboding. The smell of the swamp is a pungent mix of stale water and decay. The silence is punctuated by the sound of your boots in the water, and the screeches of unidentified creatures in the distance.

Inside the swamp is an old well. Adults from Hollow Swamp have never found the well, despite searching the area thoroughly. Nanny Bogfoot uses magic to keep the well hidden from adults, so that only children can see it.

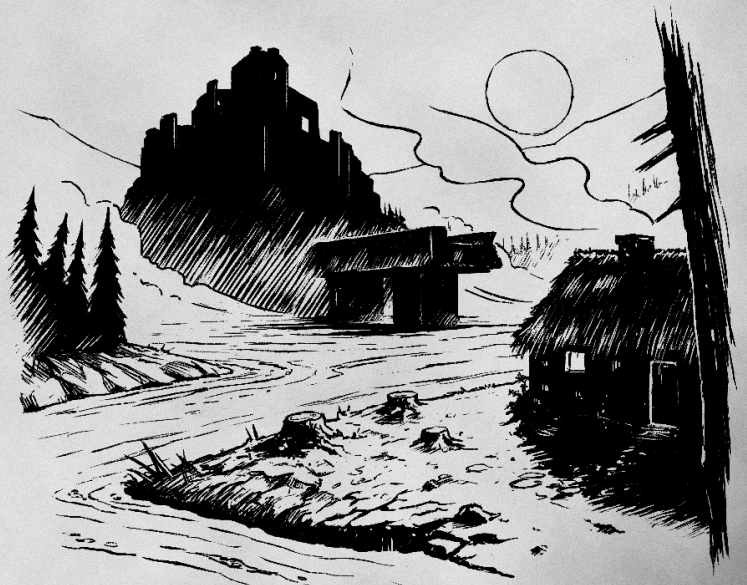
A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies wards made of sticks that hang from the trees. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the wards are designed to keep something hidden. The characters can find the area of the well by making three successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) checks to follow the wards to the well.

Each failed check triggers an encounter; choose from the options below. If the characters cannot succeed three checks, then find the well but gain a level of exhaustion.

- ✦ Sticking out of the mud is a porcelain doll. The top right corner of the doll's face is missing. The first character to touch the doll hears a voice in their head "first we work, then we play, and Nanny keeps the creatures away." The doll's smile widens into a horrifying visage for a split second before returning to normal. A creature who sees the visage must succeed a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or be filled with mistrust and believes that everyone is out to get them. This effect lasts until the creature sees Nanny Bogfoot.
- ✦ An unsettling childlike shadow stalks the characters as they move through the swamp. The shadow begins to whisper the characters darkest secrets and innermost fears. Each character must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened. The shadow remains for 1d4 hours.
- ✦ The silence of the swamp is punctuated by joyous laughter. Characters who follow the laughter can find the source; an awakened tree. The tree doesn't answer any questions, it only laughs. If the characters laugh with the tree, the laughter becomes ghastly, and eight **twig blights** erupt from the swamp water and attack the characters.
- ✦ A swarm of small black flies (**swarm of insects**) emerges from the water, buzzing with excitement. As the characters watch, the flies spell out "Nanny wants you to stay." The flies then attack the characters.

Once the characters have succeeded on three Survival checks, they enter a small clearing. The well is in the clearing, but it is invisible to adults. The well is hidden with illusion magic. It can be identified with a *detect magic* spell, and can be rendered visible again with *dispel magic*. Otherwise, the characters can see footprints that lead to the well and disappear. The well can be physically touched, even though it cannot be seen.

As the characters get closer to the well, they hear the voice of a young girl calling for help.



## Down the Well

The characters must climb down the well to find the girl and rescue her. The bottom of the well is 25 ft. down. Characters can climb down with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, or they can rappel down by rope.

The well is cold and damp, and bugs scurry to and fro. At the bottom of the well is a long hallway with a light at the end. The light comes from Nanny Bogfoot's lair. The lair is a medium size cavern (40 ft. across) that Nanny Bogfoot has made a home in. It's sparsely decorated, with a table and 2 chairs, a bench covered in herbs and pants, a large cauldron filled with water, and a child-sized bed. Hanging on the wall are various items including a hairbrush, a fire poker, a frying pan, and a rusty axe.

Sitting at the table is a small girl. She works diligently on a piece of sewing, but looks up when the characters enter the room. The girl is Hanna Richter, the mayor's daughter. Hanna knows the following information:

- ✦ Nanny lures children with singing and toys
- ✦ She works the children near to death
- ✦ She uses magic to make sure they never leave and she finds a way to make them remain useful
- ✦ Hanna isn't allowed to touch the items on the wall.
- ✦ She needs help to climb out of the well and escape

Once the children are near death, Nanny Bogfoot turns them into items she can continue to use. The items on the wall were all once children.

As the characters try to leave with the girl, read or paraphrase the following:

As you turn to exit the unsettling room, you see a horrifying creature standing behind you. Nanny Bogfoot has returned home. The haggard, old crone stands a mere five feet tall, with cascading hair that looks like seaweed, and ragged clothes made from river plants. She is covered in greenish-grey scales. She looks at you strangely, before twisting her face into a horrifying visage, and lashing out with her claws.

Nanny Bogfoot is a **sea hag** with the following changes:

- ✦ She is resistant to damage done to her that isn't from one of the items on the wall.
- ✦ If reduced to 0 zero hit points by a weapon OTHER than one of the items on the wall, she instead is reduced to 1 hit point. Nanny Bogfoot can only be killed by one of the items on the wall.

**Tactics.** Nanny Bogfoot uses her claws as much as possible, but once she is reduced to 15 hit points or less, she begins to use her death glare, unless doing so would put her at risk. Nanny Bogfoot's Horrific Appearance is in play for the whole combat.

**Nanny Bogfoot's Lair.** Nanny Bogfoot's lair has the following action: Each round, on initiative count 20 (losing ties), the cauldron burps out two bullywugs. The bullywugs place themselves between the characters and the girl to

guard her from being taken. This continues until either Nanny Bogfoot is dead, or the cauldron is destroyed. The cauldron is a Large object, has an AC of 16, 45 hit points, and a damage threshold of 10.

The items on the wall have the following stats:

- ✦ The hairbrush has the stats of a dagger.
- ✦ The fire poker has the stats of a javelin.
- ✦ The frying pan has the stats of a club.
- ✦ The rusty axe has the stats of a handaxe.

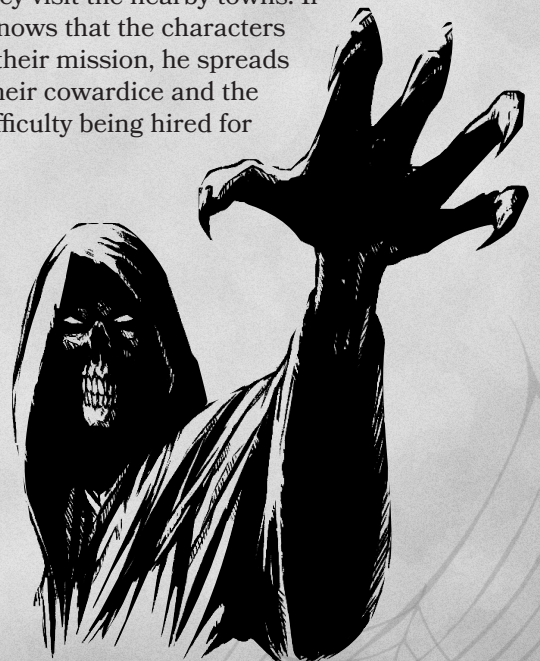
A character with proficiency in simple weapons is also proficient in the items from the wall. Each item is considered a magic weapon, and does an additional 1d6 of damage of the associated weapon's type. A creature who attunes to the items discovers they are sentient, and they can talk to the children trapped inside.

Once Nanny Bogfoot and the bullywugs have been defeated, the characters can take Hanna home.

## Resolution

If the characters successfully defeat Nanny Bogfoot and free Hanna, the mayor rewards them with the gold and magic item he promised. Additionally, the characters can keep any of the items they used to defeat Nanny Bogfoot. The residents of Hollow Swamp are eternally grateful to the characters, and should the characters need a place to stay in the future, they can always find a resting place in Hollow Swamp. Additionally, the residents of Hollow Swamp might ask the characters to help them find a way to restore their children, so they are no longer trapped inside the items.

If the characters were slain by Nanny Bogfoot, or if they abandon the mission and leave Hanna to her fate, the hag continues to take children, eventually creating a coven so she can extend her influence over the whole of Hollow Swamp. If the characters abandoned the mission, they hear tales of the horrors of what has happened at Hollow Swamp if they visit the nearby towns. If the mayor knows that the characters abandoned their mission, he spreads rumour of their cowardice and the party has difficulty being hired for new jobs.



# The Speaking Skull

**AUTHOR:** JVC Parry

**TALE:** The Singing Bone

**TYPE:** Combat & Roleplay

**CR:** Tier 1

**CONTENT WARNING:** Murder scenes

*The deeds of the damned are spoken by the dead...*

## Premise

The characters are invited to the court of the local Queen along with several other adventuring bands, hunters, and knights. The Queen puts a reward of 250 gp on the head of a giant boar that has been terrorising the nearby farmers.

While the characters are undertaking the task, an unscrupulous individual named The Bloody Knight magically recreates the boar's head, and claims the prize for themselves.

The characters have the opportunity to expose the fraud after undertaking a grisly investigation, which uncovers the brutal murders that The Bloody Knight committed to cover their tracks. The adventure culminates with the discovery of a bone, infused with necromantic magic, that relays the truth to the Queen.

## Encounter

The adventure begins when the characters are invited to attend the court of the local Queen. When they arrive, read

You emerge into the Queen's court to find it filled with an unusual assortment of adventurers, hunters, and knights. As you push your way to the front of the crowd, the Queen rises from her gilded throne and begins to speak.

"Brave warriors, you have been summoned here today to take care of some miserable business. As I'm sure you have heard, the far reaches of my kingdom have been laid waste by a monstrous boar. I, the queen, hereby announce that they who should bring me the head of the beast, shall be rewarded with two-hundred and fifty pieces of gold."

or paraphrase the following:

While they are still at court, the characters have the chance to talk to some farmers who were attacked by the boar. They describe its hideous appearance; bones protruding from its flesh, three sets of monstrous tusks, and a hide thicker than cured leather. The characters can also be given the last known location of the boar; two days ride east of court.

The creature devastating the kingdom is a **giant boar**, and should be no match for the characters. If the party are of 1st level, or have fewer than four members, consider using the **boar** statistics, with maximum (21) hitpoints.

## Battle with the Boar

Once the characters arrive at the boar's location, read or paraphrase the following:

The land around you has been churned up as if by a battalion of soldiers. The earth is gouged and rutted all around and, mixed in with the soil, are the remains of unfortunate farmers who couldn't flee fast enough. Here and there you spot a stray eyeball or hand trampled into the dirt.

**Tracks.** Characters who search the area for tracks can attempt a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, they follow the tracks back to the boar's lair. On a failure, the boar ambushes them in their tracks.

**Lair.** The boar's lair is a reeking cave in the nearby woods. Any creature other than the boar that starts its turn within 10 feet of the cave must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the hezrou's stench for 24 hours.

The cave is 20 feet tall, 40 feet wide, and 40 feet deep. If the characters succeeded on their Survival check, the giant boar is slumbering atop a mound of bones and gore, giving the characters a chance to surprise it.

If the characters failed their Survival check, the giant boar ambushes them on the trail. Characters with a passive Perception of 13 or higher hear the boar charging toward them through the undergrowth.

**Victory.** Once the characters have killed the boar and chopped off its head, they can return to the Queen for their reward.

## The Bloody Knight

When the characters return to court with the boar's head, read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive triumphantly at the court and are permitted entry to the throne room, where the Queen greets you with a scowl.

"Consider yourselves lucky I don't have you imprisoned on the spot. The real boar's head has already been delivered by The Bloody Knight. Do you take me for a common fool with a loose-tied coin purse?!"

Even after the characters tell their story of slaying the boar, the Queen is entirely disinterested, suggesting that they take up their quarrel with The Bloody Knight. If the characters try to find The Bloody Knight in court, it is easy for them to do so. They are currently picking out a new, red-plumed helmet for themselves from the royal armoury with the gold they just acquired. Any challenges to the knight are met with scoffs and dismissals. Without any real proof, the characters must bide their time to seek revenge.

## Murder Investigation

During the night, the characters are awoken by a messenger from the Queen. The messenger carries a note which reads:

Please report to the Captain of the Guard immediately. We are in need of further assistance. Consider this an opportunity to earn my forgiveness.

When the characters arrive at the barracks, they are escorted to the Captain who fills them in on the following details:

- ✦ Two murders have been committed in the city overnight
- ✦ The first discovered was of a man named Sylvester Sly, who was found in a back alley near the Grand Market by the city guard.
- ✦ Sylvester was infamous on the black market as a man who can find things for sale, no matter how obscure.
- ✦ The second was a visiting halfling named Beryl Copperbark, who was found in a rented room in The Silver Acorn by the tavern owner.
- ✦ Beryl was a vendor of taxidermy who was selling her wares in town for a few days before heading back to her forest hunting lodge.
- ✦ The two murders could be linked as they were both carried out in the same way; decapitation.

## Sylvester Sly

When the characters arrive at the crime scene, read or paraphrase the following:

A grisly sight confronts you as you enter the back alley. The headless corpse of a portly man, dressed in black, hangs by a chain from an archway. Resting at the man's feet is his head. Its features are contorted into a grim visage of shock, the eyes still open.

Characters can attempt certain ability checks as they search the crime scene, allowing them to uncover information:

- ✦ **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.** Sylvester has a receipt tucked into his top pocket for a boar's head trophy, issued by Beryl Copperbark.
- ✦ **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check.** Sylvester was killed by a stab in the stomach, and was decapitated after death. A subsequent DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he must have known his killer, as the wound could only come from someone stood at arms length, as if having a conversation.
- ✦ **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check.** A curious onlooker can be seen skulking in a nearby entrance. A subsequent DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) check forces the onlooker to reveal that they saw Sylvester Sly meeting with someone three days ago in this same place. They were tall and clad in armour.

## Beryl Copperbark

When the characters arrive at the crime scene, read or paraphrase the following:

As you ascend the stairs to the rented room of The Silver Acorn, the stench of death fills your noses. Opening the door to the room reveals a hideous scene. Lying in the bloodstained bed is the corpse of an elderly halfling woman. Resting on the bedside table is her head.

Characters can attempt certain ability checks as they search the crime scene, allowing them to uncover information:

- ✦ **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.** Beryl is lying atop a long red feather. A subsequent DC 12 Intelligence (History) check lets a character remember The Bloody Knight buying a helmet with similar plumage the previous day.
- ✦ **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check.** Beryl was killed by decapitation.
- ✦ **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.** Beryl carries an invoice book in a jacket pocket that details selling a boar's head trophy to a Sylvester Sly.
- ✦ **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check.** Bloody footprints can be found near the room's only window. Characters can follow them to a third murder location (see below).





## Necromancer's Grave

The characters can discover this location by following the bloody footprints from The Silver Acorn. If they fail to find these themselves, have a member of the city watch point them out. Once the characters follow the footprints, read or paraphrase the following:

You follow the bloody footprints to one of the slow moving rivers that flows through the city. As you approach the bridge, the footprints descend down the bank into the water and disappear. Following the trail, you discover another ghastly murder scene. A bloated human corpse is curled up beneath the bridge, cradling its flayed skull in its hands.

Characters can attempt certain ability checks as they search the crime scene, allowing them to uncover information:

- ✦ **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.** The body is wearing robes embroidered with bones, and carries a black leather book. A subsequent DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it to be a necromancer's spellbook.
- ✦ **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check.** The body has been killed at least three days ago.

Once the characters have finished investigating the scene, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, a gravelly moan fills the frigid night. The groaning echoes beneath the bridge, rising to a cacophonous scream. The wailing stops as abruptly as it began, but is soon replaced by a rasping voice.

"Ah! Dear adventurers, searching the grave,  
Of one who was tricked before being slayed.  
Please lend me your ears, and do listen right,  
For only I know what has happened this night.  
A stuffed boar's head, turned back to flesh,  
And a bloody knight's coin purse at once was refreshed."

Turning, you realise that the source of the hideous lymeric is, in fact, the severed skull of the corpse.

## Resolution

By returning to the Queen with the necromancer's decapitated head, and the clues that the adventurers have gathered from the crime scenes, they can convince her majesty that The Bloody Knight has deceived her by buying a boar's head from Beryl Copperbark through Sylvester Sly, and paying a necromancer to turn it back to flesh. This was the proof given to the Queen that the boar had been slain, and thus earned the reward. However, when the characters returned with the real head, The Bloody Knight became nervous. In a fit of paranoia, they found and killed Sylvester, who they paid for the head, then tracked down Beryl who had sold it in the first place. Covered in blood, the knight then went to the river to wash themselves clean, and to revisit the scene of their previous crime - killing the necromancer who created the boar's head in the first place.

With this new information, the Queen rewards the characters with their promised reward of 250 gp. In addition, she asks the characters to track down the Bloody Knight and bring them to justice. For a quick resolution, use the **knight** statistics. Otherwise, you could have the knight flee the city, and get revenge on the characters at a later date.

### Level Adjustments

**Deadly.** Replace the giant boar with a **chimera**. Use the **death knight** stats for The Bloody Knight.

**Hard.** Replace the giant boar with a **chimera**.

**Medium.** Run the encounter as written.

**Easy.** Replace the giant boar with a **boar** with double hit points. Use the **guard** stats for The Bloody Knight.



# Thornbound Heart

**AUTHOR:** Zeke Gonzalez

**TALE:** The Sleeping Beauty

**TYPE:** Combat

**CR:** Tier 2

*A handsome wizard requires help from the party to free his true love from a wicked fey, but Crooked Cristofer's sinister garden draws unexpected blood.*

## Premise

This encounter takes place when the characters visit a tavern.

On his first birthday Briar Rosebloom (neutral good human **druid**) was cursed by Crooked Cristofer, an **annis hag**, so that he would fall into a slumber of eternal nightmares on the day when Briar felt the stirrings of true love in his heart. As with all such dark pacts, the only way to break the curse is with true love's kiss. Twenty-one years later, Briar met Nim Dreamwalker (he/him/his; chaotic good half-elf **apprentice wizard**) at his parent's inn *The Little Rose*. The moment Nim's eyes locked with Briar's own, the quickening of love stirred within Briar. Instantly, Briar tumbled to the floor in deep sleep. Crooked Cristofer appeared and capered and cackled as thick, thorny brambles grew to enclose the small tavern.

What even Briar does not know is that Crooked Cristofer cursed him because he was born with a great deal of untapped magical potential. The thick brambles and vine blights that now lurk within *The Little Rose* are not servants of Crooked Cristofer but subconscious manifestations of Briar's power brought forth by his unending nightmares.

## Encounter

The encounter begins when the characters approach the overgrown tavern.

### The Meeting

The curse activated two days ago and Nim has been preparing himself to save Briar since then. When the characters arrive at the tavern, Nim is working himself up to re-enter *The Little Rose* when he notices their equipment and approaches them. When this occurs, read or paraphrase the following:

Before you lies the desecrated husk of The Little Rose tavern. The slouching structure is wreathed in a thick mass of thorny brambles and emits a dim and nauseating green light from within. A handsome half-elf approaches and speaks into the eerie silence:

"You lot have a good look about you... Any chance you've got experience slaying foul creatures?"

Nim introduces himself as a traveling wizard and shares the entire story of his meeting with Briar Rosebloom, and Crooked Cristofer's curse. He has been told of Briar's curse and admits he wishes to save the handsome barman, but he doesn't want to enter *The Little Rose* alone.

A DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Nim is terrified of Crooked Cristofer and the brambles encircling *The Little Rose*. A check that succeeds by 5 or more reveals that he too feels the spark of true love within his heart.

Nim offers the characters a *ring of warmth*, his most prized possession, if they help him save Briar.

## Breaking & Entering

Once the party agrees to help Nim, explain to your players that breaking into *The Little Rose* is a skill challenge.

**Players.** The goal of the skill challenge is to successfully avoid the thorny brambles and sickening light while trying to enter the sealed tavern. During the skill challenge each character can make a check using a skill they are proficient in. However, once somebody makes a skill check, that person cannot make the same check again. Checks are made by the characters around the table until the party accumulates six successful checks or three failed checks.

Any skill can be used if the characters make a good case for it. Example checks include:

- ◆ **Acrobatics.** Jumping and leaping among the branches to the roof of the tavern.
- ◆ **Persuasion.** Convincing the group of a new or unique path of entry.
- ◆ **Athletics.** Breaking a door or window to the interior.

**DM.** The DC for success in this skill challenge is 12. The party must accumulate six successes to win. If a character fails a skill check during this challenge, roll on the Consequences Table (Appendix) to determine the outcome. Some DMs may find that this skill challenge is more interesting if each failure has a unique consequence. In that case, if you roll the same consequence twice, choose an unused consequence instead.

If the party accumulates six successes, they succeed on the Breaking & Entering skill challenge, and are able to safely enter *The Little Rose*.

If the party accumulates three failures, they fail the Breaking & Entering skill challenge. This means that the party is hurt by the twisting bramble surrounding the tavern, and each character must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a character takes 18 (4d8) piercing damage. On a success, a character takes half damage. In either case, the character is able to enter the interior of *The Little Rose*.

## The Little Rose

Thick vines cling together throughout the interior of The Little Rose, and thorny brambles are draped across the walls. Lying collapsed in the center of the room is a beautiful young man. He appears to be struggling in the midst of a terrible nightmare.

While the figure on the floor matches the description of Briar Rosebloom, it is actually Crooked Cristofer, who is using *disguise self* in an attempt to lure Nim into his devastating embrace. Crooked Cristofer has dragged Briar's sleeping form behind the bar. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check realizes that the figure on the floor is an illusion disguising a much larger creature. Unless the characters intervene, Nim races to the figure's side. If this occurs, read or paraphrase the following:

Nim lands on his knees beside the beautiful man and reaches down to embrace him, only to rear back in horror as the figure's body bulges and twists, reaching to return the embrace with its enormous gray claws.

In combat, Crooked Cristofer attempts to use his crushing hug on Nim. Should Nim be beyond his reach, he instead utilizes his multiattack on the closest enemies while cackling gleefully.

When combat begins, the vines in the room reveal themselves to be four **vine blights**. They join the fray by lashing out randomly at the closest creature. Crooked Cristofer is aware of the fact that these are unconscious manifestations of Briar's innate druidic talent and positions himself to make it appear as though the blights are his servants who he is directing to attack the characters. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Investigation) check becomes aware of this deception. This bond between Briar and the blights manifests as if each blight shares the effect of warding bond with Briar. Whenever Briar takes damage from this bond, he cries out in his sleep. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 14 or higher hears these cries and can identify Briar's location.

Once combat begins, Nim desperately and randomly searches the interior of *The Little Rose* for Briar Rosebloom, and recognizes the aforementioned sounds of pain as Briar's. Once Nim finds Briar, he uses his action to press true love's kiss to Briar's forehead, causing Briar to wake up. When Briar awakes, the vine blights and other plants on the interior of *The Little Rose* wilt away. After awakening Briar is unable to use his spellcasting abilities, so instead throws steins of beer at Crooked Cristofer (+1 to hit, 1 bludgeoning damage). Once Briar is awakened, Nim begins slinging spells at Crooked Cristofer in earnest.

## Resolution

Hopefully the characters realize that something is greatly amiss, and are able to strike down Crooked Cristofer, safely wake Briar Rosebloom, and protect Nim Dreamwalker. If so, Nim happily hands over his *ring of warmth* as he and Briar wander off hand-in-hand. If Briar dies, Nim is heartbroken and refuses to relinquish the *ring of warmth*, instead giving the party 50 gp as a hollow thanks for protecting him. If Nim dies but Briar is awakened, Briar keeps Nim's spellbook as a memento of their encounter and gives the party 50 gp as thanks for their part in awakening him.

## Appendix

Skill Challenge Consequences:

d6	Consequence
1	Your activity attracts the attention of a thick, thorny vine which swings in your direction (+6 to hit, 2d8 slashing damage) before retreating.
2	Your activity causes loosened boards and shingles to fall from the roof, causing a distracting clatter in the tavern. The next character must subtract a d6 from their skill check.
3	Thorny vines emerge from beneath The Little Rose and swipe at everyone's feet. All characters must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save and half damage on a successful one.
4	The activity around <i>The Little Rose</i> has attracted four <b>guards</b> who believe that you are responsible for its current state. The skill challenge cannot be continued until they are dealt with accordingly.
5	Crooked Cristofer summons 1d4 <b>will-o'-wisps</b> , which float through the walls of the tavern to attack the characters.
6	You glance into the interior and catch a glimpse of a nauseating green light. You take 11 (2d10) psychic damage.



# Appendix Reference Page

## A Bridge's Revenge

boneclaw	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.121
cadaver collector	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.122
flameskull	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.134
ghost	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.147
revenant	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.259
sword wraiths	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.241
vampire spellcaster	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.295
wight	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.300
zombie	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.315

## Cocoons

ettercap	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.131
giant spider	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.328
Ra Pun'zel	page 14

## Crumplestiltsbin

commoner	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.345
Crumplestiltsbin	page 16

## Cursed Copper

ghost	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.147
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## The Drowning House

none

## Lady Ironhand's Revenge

banshee	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.23
barbed devil	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.70
black abishai	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.160
bone devil	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.71
cambion	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.36
chain devil	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.72
erinyes	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.73
imp	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.76
merregon	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.166
narzugon	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.167
nightmare	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.235
shadow	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.269
warlock of the fiend	<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> p.219
white abishai	<i>Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes</i> p.163

## Lights Out

Alberich Grausamkurz	page 28
animated armour	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.19
flying sword	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.20
giant spider	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.328
green hag	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.177
noble	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.348
shadow mastiffs	<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> p.190
swarm of rats	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.339
will-o'-wisp	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.301

## Nanny's Children

sea hag	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.179
swarm of insects	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.338
twig blight	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.32

## The Speaking Skull

boar	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.319
chimera	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.39
death knight	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.47
giant boar	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.323
knight	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.347

## Thornbound Heart

annis hag	<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> p.159
apprentice wizard	<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> p.209
druid	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.346
guard	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.347
vine blight	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.32
will-o'-wisp	<i>Monster Manual</i> p.301



# CAN YOU BRAVE THESE GRIMM ENCOUNTERS?

Can you face the horror of Bluebeard  
and his disturbed wives?

Can you save lost children from a  
gruesome death in the bottom of  
a well?

Can you solve a string of hideous  
murders to find the perpetrator?

Can you uncover a trash can's  
true name?

Prove it.

