

# THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

---



Accessible Adventure of the Week

# MAKE LIVES BETTER THROUGH D&D

This adventure is one piece of a movement within the D&D community to invite, encourage, and include those who have not been, both in the RPG community and nearly everywhere in real life. Wyrmsworks Publishing is dedicated to using RPGs to help *you* make lives better, to provide tools, training, and a community to this end. We believe that this will extend far beyond the ever-growing RPG community as more and more people learn, grow, and give and receive acceptance. If you want to help make that happen, we invite you to support the Wyrmsworks Publishing Patreon at <https://patreon.com/wyrmsworkspublishing> and enjoy the additional benefits we offer to our patrons. All of our Wyrmling-level patrons (\$9/month) get free access to our entire library, and we have other levels to get live access to our works in progress. 4K Combat Maps for this and other Adventures of the Week are available free to all patrons or [for purchase from our map store](#).

Sign up for our newsletter at <https://wyrmsworkspublishing.com> to get a free subclass immediately and a lots of other free tips and resources!

[Wyrmsworkspublishing.com](https://wyrmsworkspublishing.com) is the first place to get notified when our compendium of comprehensive game mechanics for including characters with disabilities, mental illness, and neurodivergence in fifth edition goes live on Kickstarter.

## "OUR LIVES SERVE AS EITHER A WARNING OR AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS." — TONY ROBBINS

This week's adventure, designed as Halloween approaches, explores abuse and trauma. Being a horror adventure, it plays out the effects of trauma and the concealment of trauma on a community in a visceral and memorable way. It serves as a warning—not only about the need for open communication with the people in our lives who may be experiencing trauma, but also our willingness to be available to them for help. I hope your players will experience this adventure with empathy and a resulting drive to be open to potential victims looking to them for help.

## CONTENT TRIGGER WARNING

This adventure includes death, violence, the undead, death of family, children in peril, psychological abuse of children, parents who disbelieve reports of abuse, and undead children. Because it explores realistic expressions of trauma, the Dungeon Master (DM) should discuss this adventure with players before deciding to use it. Success could be cathartic for some but tear open traumatic wounds for others.

To talk to your players about this adventure's sensitive content without spoiling the plot, you can ask them how they feel about a horror adventure involving child abuse, death, and zombies in various combinations. **If any players are even slightly uncomfortable with the topic, skip this adventure.**

If you choose to use this adventure, please make use of [safety tools](#).

# MY STUDENTS ARE MY TREASURES

**A** rural school is haunted by two banshees: former teachers who cared more about how their students made them look than the well being of the students themselves. Can you free the countryside from this threat?

This side adventure is designed for four to six characters with an average party level of 3, totaling roughly 16 levels.

## BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS

A rural school is known throughout the region for its excellence in education, preparing children to be sages, wizards, and professors of many academies throughout the land. Imra and Keniya Ensatra, two sisters who ran the school, took great pride in their work. They were pillars of the community, getting to know the parents, building trust with them, and giving the community a positive reputation throughout the region. But over time, it became clear that they were more motivated by others' perceptions of themselves than their students' success or health, often using shame or other abusive methods to force performance. Student reports to their parents would be met with disbelief, or something along the lines of, "They obviously know what they're doing. We know them, and they're so nice." Even parents who wanted to believe the truth were afraid to investigate, worried that the reports were true, and if they complained, the entire community would reject their families, and because of their silence, every parent who wanted to investigate felt alone and helpless. Eventually, one of their students, Kelvin Twoorb, couldn't tolerate the abuse anymore and murdered Imra and Keniya. The parents were shocked by Kelvin's actions. How could he do something like this to two pillars of the community who had shaped their children into responsible, successful people? A mob of parents formed and killed Kelvin, but he came back as a brukolaka: an undead entity fueled by revenge. The school was shuttered and left untouched after Kelvin's killing. In the nights following his transformation, children began to disappear. Rumors claim that Kelvin has been seen wandering the countryside, and conversations throughout the community assume that the blame rests on Kelvin. Parents claim to hear howling coming from the school, but when they investigate in daylight they find no clues other than blood, assumed to be that of the murdered teachers. When the party arrives, they see Dalruth, a local half-orc farmer, fleeing from skeletons. Once the party saves her, she begs them to save her community from Kelvin. As the party seeks Kelvin, they hear crying coming from the schoolhouse and childlike shapes walking toward them, which turn out to be attacking necropaidi—insentient, undead children. At the end, they find that the undead Kelvin seeks revenge on the parents for allowing the abuse to continue. What's more, the teachers have become banshees. They are the ones who collected the children and killed them with their wails, turning them into necropaidi to keep as their beautiful treasures.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

How do the players find themselves in this tragic situation? If this adventure is used in the Ravenloft setting, the mists can simply transport them to the middle of a field where they see Dalruth being chased by skeletons. Otherwise, they meet Dalruth on the road, and if they don't help, they will find themselves attacked by the necropaidi.

## WHERE ARE WE?

This adventure takes place in a rural region dotted by farms and inhabited by artisans who transport their goods to nearby villages. This adventure works well in the *Ravenloft* setting, especially Borca, Dementlieu, Hazlan, or Kartakass, where parents strive to give their children a chance at being numbered with the elite—or the sisters could be the darklords of a completely different domain of dread.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### SKELETON

*Medium undead, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (armor scraps)

**Hit Points** 13 (2d8 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Damage Vulnerabilities** bludgeoning

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak

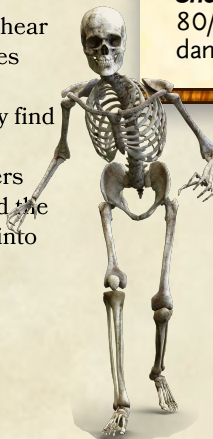
**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Actions

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Shortbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.



## BANSHEE

Medium undead, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 12  
**Hit Points** 58 (13d8)  
**Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +2, Cha +5  
**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks  
**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison  
**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** Common, Elvish  
**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)  
**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Detect Life.** The banshee can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The banshee can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

### Actions

**Corrupting Touch.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) necrotic damage.

**Horrifying Visage.** Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the banshee that can see her must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the banshee is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the banshee's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours.

**Wail (1/Day).** The banshee releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

## BRUKOLAKA

Medium undead, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 10 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)  
**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons  
**Condition Immunities** necrotic, poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** the languages it knew in life  
**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Aura of Truth.** The Brukolaka radiates a constant *zone of truth* aura in a 30' radius (spell save DC 12).

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the Brukolaka to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the Brukolaka drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Turn Resistance.** The Brukolaka has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

**Empowered by the Truth.** When a necropaidi is destroyed within one mile of a brukolaka, the brukolaka experiences the necropaidi's Being Seen feature, but instead of being stunned, the brukolaka gains 1 temporary hit point.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The Brukolaka makes two attacks, one with its claws and one with its life drain touch.

**Life Drain.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

The Brukolaka is an undead half-elf that was abused in life, but when seeking help, was disbelieved. It has returned to seek vengeance on those who would not believe the abuse.



## DALRUTH

Medium humanoid (half-orc), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 10  
**Hit Points** 4 (1d8)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Intimidation +2, Nature +2  
**Senses** passive Perception 10  
**Languages** any one language (usually Common)  
**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Relentless (Recharges after a Long Rest).** If Dalruth is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, she can drop to 1 hit point instead.

### Actions

**Unarmed Strike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* [STR 1] bludgeoning damage.

## NEGROPAIDI

Small undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 10 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 13 (3d6 + 3)  
**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Damage Immunities** poison  
**Condition Immunities** poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9  
**Languages** understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak  
**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Being Seen.** The necropaidi is an embodiment of the trauma inflicted on it in life and serves as a cocoon to the soul of the child, protecting them from further abuse, yet still anchoring them to the material plane. Once their abusers are destroyed, their body crumbles to dust, and the closest sentient being experiences a vision of the trauma they experienced and must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or be stunned for 1 round, overwhelmed by the truth.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The Necropaidi makes two claw attacks.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) slashing damage.

**Cry of the Unheard.** The Necropaidi emits a scream of lament and anger. Creatures within 30 feet of the Necropaidi must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of the Necropaidi's next turn. This ability recharges every sundown.

Necropaidi (both singular and plural) are undead children who were murdered by someone they trusted. They are mindless and can be controlled by any sentient undead within one mile that knows their name, obeying simple commands. If multiple undead try to control them, a contested Charisma (Persuasion) check will determine the dominant force.

While they understand any languages they knew in life, they are only able to speak their last words, which they speak calmly to those controlling them and scream at any they're sent to attack.



## A BONE TO PICK WITH YOU

The characters see a half-orc woman, dressed in overalls and a rough-linen shirt rolled up to the sleeves and carrying a bucket, running toward them, being chased by skeletons.

The clouds hang low in the sky over the farms that form a clearing several miles wide, surrounded by dark forest. As you walk along the road separating fields filled with ripe vegetables, you see adults working among the rows, ignoring you. The sounds of vegetables being plucked from the vine are suddenly interrupted by a shriek, running footsteps, and rattling behind you. A female half-orc dressed in the same style of farming clothes as the others is sprinting towards you, carrying a quickly emptying bucket of water and screaming as she flees from three sword-wielding skeletons.

Given the opportunity, she will attempt to put the party between herself and the skeletons, causing the skeletons to attack the party if necessary to get to her.



## GROWING DESPAIR IN THE FIELDS

Once the party saves her, the half-orc farmer, Dalruth, asks for the party's help.

Still shaking in fear as her water bucket rattles on its metal handle, she says, wiping tears away, "Thank-you so much! You are a blessing, and so powerful! If you made such short work of those...those...things...maybe you can help us!"

She tells the party about an undead creature in the woods just beyond the fields that has been sending skeletal minions to attack the village, and is now stealing their children during the night. If the party is reluctant, she says, "We don't have much money, but we'd all work together to compensate you for your efforts!"

Dalruth is reluctant to share more details, but when pressed, she tells them that the attacks began a few weeks ago. A teenage boy, Kelvin, shocked the community by rebelling against his teachers and murdering them — "...and they were such wonderful teachers, known far and wide for their results! And they constantly talked about how proud they were of their students!" Unwilling to admit that Kelvin was killed by a mob, she'll explain, "The militia caught Kelvin and brought him to justice, but apparently his murdering soul hasn't had enough, so he came back to haunt us!" Two days after his death, his parents were found dead, and two of the children from the village disappeared during the night. Now, two children disappear every night, and more adults have been found dead.

Any questions about the school will reveal that nobody has gone into the school since discovering and burying the teachers. If asked, members of the community will say that one of the parents was walking a little one to school and discovered the carnage just quickly enough to slam the schoolhouse door, keeping the rest of the arriving children out and sending them to get their parents.

Questions about the teachers reveal that they were elven sisters who took pride in their work and pushed every child to achieve their potential, and there was no arguing with their results — most of the children who attended the school would go on to become highly-respected scholars, taking their mental scars with them into new classrooms.

If asked about their methods, all Dalruth will say is, "The kids would complain that they were strict, but there's no arguing with their results. They put our village, and our children, on the map! But this isn't about the teachers — Kelvin must be stopped..or that thing that used to be Kelvin!"

Other parents will give similar responses to questions, and will be reluctant to allow the party to talk to their children, who are all being kept in their homes for safety.

If the party manages to talk to any children, the children will be reluctant to say anything. They know that, when they've told the truth before about their teachers, they've been ignored or even punished for lying. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal the fear and signs of abuse. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check will convince a child to talk about the teachers, at which point they'll say things like, "They told us we were worthless unless we could do the assignments. They would point to Kelvin, who had trouble reading, and say, 'Do you want to be like him?' Kelvin was nice. He was like a big brother to us and would yell at the teachers when they were mean to us. We *did* want to be like him, but we knew the teachers didn't want to hear that, so we'd always say we didn't."

## ROTTEN FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR

If the party investigates the school during the day, they will find only blood stains. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Investigation) check will reveal that, based on the location of the blood stains and how fresh they are, there's more than just the blood from the teachers' murder.

If the party goes near the schoolhouse at night, they hear crying coming from the schoolhouse and childlike shapes walking toward them, which turn out to be six **necropaidi** coming to attack them. As they approach, and while they attack, the necropaidi will each repeatedly scream a different statement—their last words before they died: “Teacher! Stop! That hurts!” “I’m sorry, Miss Ensatra!” “Please stop! I won’t do it again!” “Ow! No! No!” “Mommy! Help!” “I’ll be good! I promise!” “I’m sorry I asked you to stop!”



If they defeat the necropaidi, the teachers—two **banshees**—will attack, preferring to wait and attack within the schoolhouse but not limited to it. While the banshees are attacking, they will scream phrases like, “Our treasures! They were so beautiful! They made us so beautiful!” They value the children above all else, not for their own value, but as expressions of their own success and the respect given to them.



If the party enters the woods, they will find Kelvin, a **brukolaka** who seeks revenge on the parents for allowing the abuse to continue. Because of the dark forces that raised him, revenge motivates him primarily, and he will not rest until he has his revenge.

Kelvin is not interested in destroying the banshees if the party tries to enlist him. As far as he thinks, he has already killed them, and their condition is their punishment for their abuse. If the party reveals to him that the teachers are still hurting the students, he will attempt to control the necropaidi against the banshees but then will turn them against the adults in the community. He will avoid hurting the living children, but his thirst for vengeance results in recklessness that may cause unintentional harm.

Kelvin's motivations are clear in confrontations with others, saying expressions like, “They/you wouldn’t believe me! Now the truth will destroy you as the sisters destroyed the children! They did nothing wrong! It’s not their fault!”

## OLDSCHOOL

Once the conflict is resolved, the parents thank the party and pay them 30 sp for their help, all they could afford. As the party leaves, they hear Dalruth telling the other parents, “We should be hearing back any day now on that new teacher. She’s the daughter of Imra Ensatra, and I hear her mother taught her everything she knows.”



# CREDITS & COPYRIGHT

- Lead writer, editor & developer: [Dale Critchley](#)
- Editor & Sensitivity Consultant: [Naomi Hazlett](#)
- Artwork public domain illustrations by [Adina Voicu](#), [gene1970](#), [Enrique Meseguer](#), [Parker West](#)
- Thanks to the [It's a Mimic podcast](#) for the necropaidi idea.

## AUTHOR BIO

Dale Critchley is the owner, lead writer, and chief tea drinker at [Wyrmsworks Publishing](#). He's been playing tabletop role-playing games since 1982 and launched Wyrmsworks Publishing as a hobby in 2001 to share his homebrew resources with the world. In 2021, after seeing the power that a TTRPG group can have to change the lives of the participants for the better, he rededicated Wyrmsworks Publishing to focus on using TTRPGs to intentionally improve the lives of others and turned a hobby into a full time pursuit.

## THE GAINING ADVANTAGE SHOW

What happens when people decide to level up their play by using the game to improve the lives of others? And how can YOU do the same with your game? Subscribe via [YouTube](#) / [Podcast](#)

## LEGAL

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, Ravenloft, Eberron, the dragon ampersand, Ravnica and all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries.

This work contains material that is copyright Wizards of the Coast and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

All other original material in this work is copyright 2021 by Wyrmsworks Publishing and published under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

