

GAME SESSION 108: TEPEST -3

(This Ravenloft game was played Feb 2nd, 2025. Everybody is present except Philippe)

August 10th, 748, 10h30 am

They leave the church, planning to go to Kellee.

Suddenly, in the street, Tora hears this in Tepestani: "Aren't you coming to see your family when you come back to Tepest?"

He turns back to see his brother Luther! He hasn't seen him for 9 years (while Tora was away in Darkon, with memory changed). They notice that Luther wears the same Inquisition clothes as Wyan! Not so a surprise, Tora thinks, as Luther was very religious and judgemental when he was young.

They hug, and then Luther says "Kendrick, Owen" (the other two brothers of Tora) "and I live in Viktal now. Briggdarrow is very quiet, nothing happens there anymore, many have moved here. The parents are still in Briggdarrow. They're fine, you should give them some news!"

"Why did you never send us news in ten years?", asks Luther. Tora explains he traveled the world, but most of the time he was in Darkon "where after a time, you think you are somebody else."

Luther, alarmed: "do you mean you have been bewitched?"

Tora, starting to be angry "no"

Luther, scrutinising Tora: "Faith is an armor, and impure souls are naked before us."

Tora "I do not want to discuss that with you. I'm now a Paladin Hunter of the Dead, and that should be enough to prove my vision of the world."

Luther: "Even the slightest contact with the supernatural leaves a trace. We know where to look..."

Luther "where are you going now?"

Tora "None of your business"

Luther “I imagine you never had any news of our sister, Dominica?” (Tora’s sister, the last of the four Vimus siblings).

Tora: “No, but now I have to leave”, and he turns and walk away.

Luther watches the group leave, in a pensive mode.

The heroes return to the house to get Austizel and the horses.

11 am – they leave for Kellee.

In the forest, Macrazbunare changes shape to a great horned owl and watches the road, a few hundred feet ahead of the others.

2 pm Macrazbunare sees two brown bear cubs playing on the road. Going in the forest, 150’ from the road, he sees two adults, eating the carcass of a deer. The druid goes back to the heroes and tell them what he saw, after Exigu casts *speaks with animals* to understand the druid.

Macrazbunare suggests the heroes make noise, so the cubs flee the road to be closer to their parents.

Tora knocks his sword on his shield a few times.

This alerts the adult bears. One adult moves toward the cubs quickly. The other bear, the largest, listens, sniffs the air, then walk toward the heroes in a stealth mode.

Macrazbunare sees all this, warns his friends and the heroes flee, they back up 500’ on the road. When fleeing, they see a large bear erupts on the road. Its back is 10’ high!

After a few minutes, the bears regroup around the deer carcass.

Macrazbunare casts *entangle* on the bears, and then go back to tell their friends they can pass quickly.

DM note: *entangle* asks for a strength check, an easy feat for dire goblin bears ;)

The heroes drive their horses to great speed, but suddenly, a large bear blocks their way. It is angry, and the heroes notice from closer view that the bear is somehow corrupted! It also has old wounds marks on its side.

Macrazbunare casts *produce flame* in front of the bear, to frighten it, but it just bypasses the flames. Exigu tries to pass in front of the bear but the bears hits with a claw (-11). Austizel casts an *empowered lightning bolt* at the bear (-36).

Varadan gets down from his horse and transforms into hybrid wolf form. Tora dismounts too and hits the bear with two solid hits. Petrak casts *prayer*.

In the forest, they hear the whining of the cubs.

Then another large bear appears near the first one!

Macrazbunare direct his *produce flame* to damage the first bear (-10). This bear attacks Tora and grapples the paladin.

Exigu throws an arrow at the second bear, not wanting to attack the first bear and risks hitting grappled Tora. Austizel conjure *magic missile* at the grappling bear (-15). Varadan hits it too. Tora defends himself while grappled (two hits of his short sword, -13, -14).

Petrak casts *spiritual weapon* and hits the second bear (-7). This bear attacks Varadan (one claw and one bite)!

Macrazbunare starts casting a *summon nature's ally*. The grappling bear focus its attacks on Tora (-22 total). Austizel conjure a second *magic missile* at the grappling bear (-18) and this bears dies!

Varadan makes a flurry of blows on the last bear (-9, -9, -12). Tora hits it too with *smite evil* (-14, -14). Petrak redirect his *spiritual weapon* on the second bear (-8) and also hits with a mace (-12).

The second bear is angry and unleash its fury on Tora!

DM note: Tora now has only 8 hp

Macrazbunare ends his spell and a dire wolf appears! It bites the bear, and the druid also redirect his *produce flame* on the bear. Then Exigu hits with one arrow (-3) and the last bear dies!

In the forest, they still hear the whining of the cubs. Macrazbunare check on them and see they are still *entangled*. He watches them closely and do not see any sign of corruption on the cubs. He leaves them.

Petrak casts healing spells on Tora.

They examine the bears and the wounds on their side, made by blades and spears. There are no marks on the front of the animals, like if the bears were in a cage and someone would torment them? Goblins, they guess.

2h15 pm, they resume their travel to Kellee, again Macrazbunare scanning the road ahead.

A little past 8h pm, they arrive in Kellee. They go to the Hawk's Haven tavern and its owner, Gerard Ferrier, bids them "welcome again". The heroes also notice that the group of Inquisitors they met on the road (while they were battling goblins) are there, eating.

Seán: You had a good trip?

Tora : yes, just two bears corrupted by goblins.

Petrak asking Seán: Can we have one of your buggle? We notice the goblins are afraid of it?

Seán, with pride: yes, we always travel in strong force, and the goblins fear us. Ask for one in Viktal.

Petrak and Exigu notice that some inquisitors are staring at Austizel ...

The heroes get a table and order food.

Soon after, the inquisitors have finished their meal and they leave for their room, after saying "goodnight" to the heroes.

The heroes take two rooms: Austizel, Petrak and Tora, then Varadan, Macrazbunare and Exigu.

They make healing on Tora and Varadan, having noticed the bear's bite was rotten and could transmit disease. They find none.

August 11th, early morning

They notice that at the side of their door, there is a pot with mushrooms in them! Macrazbunare identifies these as fairy stools mushrooms...



When they are at the top of the stairs, they hear Ferrier taking to Seán.

Ferrier “no, you do it outside”

Seán “but it’s raining!”

Ferrier “Outside, not in my inn”

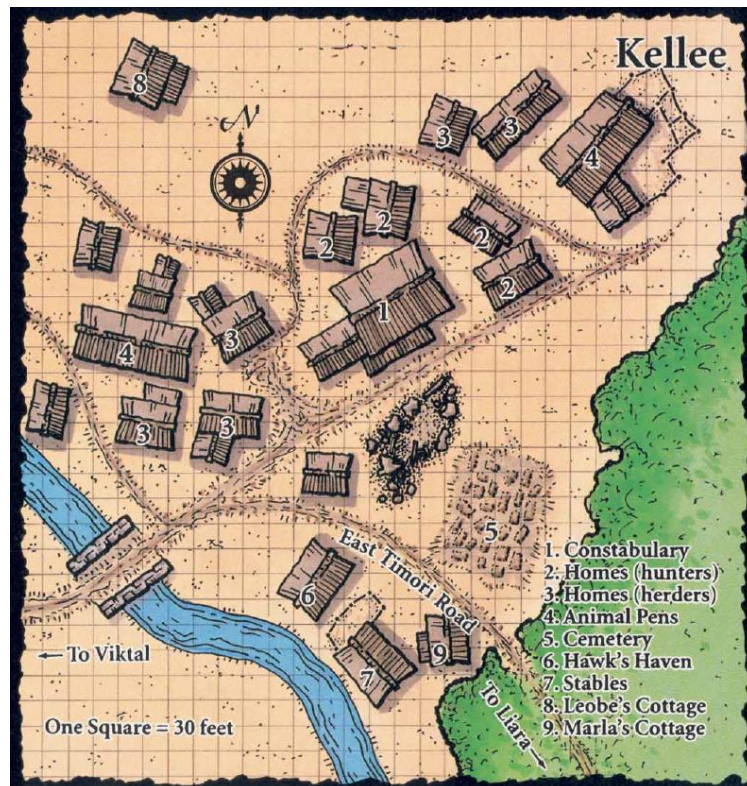
And then Seán leaves angrily.

Tora at Ferrier “Is there a problem with Seán?”

Ferrier “Yes, they did put those mushroom pots at your doors this morning, and he also wanted to ask you a few inquisition questions here. I said no, and that they should do it outside.”

Exigu goes outside to spy on Seán. He sees the inquisitor go to the stables. All the other inquisitors are there too, their horses saddled, ready to go. They talk but Exigu do not understand tepestani.

After a few minutes, he sees the inquisitors mount on their horses and leave in the Liara direction.



The heroes discuss. They wonder if they could blame the magical items on them for the possible mushroom growth?

Macrazbunare casts *diminish plants* on the mushrooms, making them a third of their size. “even if it grows, it will remain small”, they think.

Exigu goes in the forest, in the Liara direction, to make sure the inquisitors did really leave. He follows the trace a few thousand feet and knows the inquisitors did not turn back.

They decide to go talk to Loebe, who knew Bryonna when she was young. On the way, they cross path with a woman, who salutes them politely. Kellee is quite different from Viktal, they think.

Loebe's cottage is not as carefully maintained as the other houses in Kellee. Weeds sprout up in several places, and one of the building's two windows has a broken pane. All in all, it would be easy to dismiss the place as abandoned.

A 60ish years old, unkempt man sits on the front porch. His weathered face is almost lost behind a bushy, gray-streaked beard and a wild mane of hair. With grim determination, this unkempt man tinkers with what appears to be a broken animal trap. He seems to take no notice of the heroes, not even looking up to acknowledge their arrival.



As they approach, however, he growls in a strong voice. "I'm busy. Go away."

Petrak "we are here for Bryonna, and we think you can help us"

At the mention of the girl, the large man puts his work aside and looks up with wide eyes. Despite their hardness, they look oddly compassionate. "Come inside. I knew Bryonna when she was a wee one. I've heard what's going on in Viktal. That priest, Wyan, has it all wrong. How can I help ya?"

They ask him what he knows about Bryonna.

Loebe "She was born about twenty years ago. Don't you believe any nonsense ya might hear 'bout her bein' a fey. My wife and I raised her at one point, and that kid's as human as I am. Her parents were killed by goblins when she was six. Ermintrude, a ranger who lives in the woods t' the north of here, managed to rescue her. Bryonna lived with her 'til she was 12, but Ermintrude thought it best fer the child t' grow up with normal folk then. She did ask me and my wife, and she lived with us until my wife died. She was 17 then. Two years ago. Then Bryonna moved to live in the big town, Viktal"

Heroes "we need proofs, can you testify for Bryonna?"

Loebe “I tried. When the inquisitor came to Kellee her’ and asked around who knew something about Bryonna, I came and testified. But the priests started askin' me what my relations with the fey was. All that time I spent in the woods, they was beginning t' say I must deal with them somehow, too. They also told me I have a bad reputation in Viktal, so they basically dismissed all t’positive things I said about Bryonna”

“The feys? Ain't nothin' more than a fancy name Wyan created for the creatures of the forest. They ain't got no use for us villagers. They do not care about us, that's why they live in the woods!”

“They are so superstitious, they even believe that if you bring the murderer to the corpse it killed, blood will suddenly start to exit the wounds !”

Exigu “did Bryonna ever speak to people of passage, people that she didn’t know?”

Loebe “not that I know”

Exigu “did Bryonna ever go meet people in the forest?”

Loebe “not that I know”

The heroes tell him they would like to speak to Ermintrude and Loebe agrees to guide them to her house in the forest.

But before they leave Kellee, they will speak to Marla first.

Loebe “Marla? That old mean goat! She shames the men of Kellee into maintaining her cottage for her, posing as a poor ailing widow who has only a short time to live. Then she uses the free time to gossip...”

They go meet Marla.

Macrazbunare will use this time to try to find fairy stools mushroom in the forest with Loebe (they do not find any).

Just before opening the door, Petrak discretely casts *zone of truth* (DC 15) on her cottage.

This elderly woman lives in a meticulously kept cottage. Marla is a small, frail-looking woman, her grandmotherly features topped off with a bun of white hair. When the heroes arrive, Marla is very curt with the heroes - threatening to beat them for tracking mud into her home.



But she offers tea to the heroes. She asks if they have time to help an old woman in her daily household tasks?

When they state they wish to talk about Bryonna, her tone changes to a conspiratorial whisper:

“When the inquisitors came to Kellee about this case, I told 'em Bryonna was one of the fey! Years ago, a friend of mine – Winona, she is now dead, poor thing - asked me to watch Bryonna one hour as she had things to do in the village. Bryonna was, what 4? 5 years old?” (the heroes notice this detail is wrong, since Bryonna came to Tepest when she was 6). “So, watch her I did, except for five minutes where I went to put a kettle of water on the fire to make myself some tea. I might be doin' a friend a favor, but I was still going to have my noontime tea, heh! When I came back to Bryonna's bed, she was a monster! She had eyes the size of saucers, sickly green skin, and needle-sharp teeth! A goblin monster!”

“Then, even worse, I then saw it change into Bryonna!”

“Needless to say, I ran to get the militiamen! But when I came back with them, Bryonna was sleeping. The impertinent militiamen saw a normal child sleeping and they blamed me, and told me to stop making up stories!”

“That was the last time I watched over this monster! I knew from that day that Bryonna wasn't normal! I was told that her parents died in a goblin attack, but I know exactly who really killed them. It had to be that ugly Bryonna! But no one here would listen! That ugly scar is a way for her to gain our sympathy! But I know the truth! At least now she's been exposed by the inquisition!”

“Hopefully, Mayor Ferrier will have enough sense to let Wyan's priests come to town and ferret out others like her who are still hiding here, like this Loebe huntsman! I saw him walk bare foot in the snow without shivering, no man can do that! Not normal! Watch him!”

Zone of Truth: no lies. They thank Marla and leave.

Petrak knows that if Marla is convinced her story is true, the spell won't notice anything wrong.

Exigu says there are stories of children switched at birth by monster looking like normal children. They live a normal life in their human family and then later they become monstrous. May be that is what happened here?

9 am They leave with Loebe on horses, the huntsman leading them to Ermintrude's cottage. There is about 3 miles to go there.

They discuss Marla's tale with Loebe. He insists that Bryonna's childhood was normal, and that indeed, Marla did watch over Bryonna a few times. "But now that you know Marla, you'll understand it wasn't the best place to put a child, even temporarily. Marla made them clean her house!". They also learn that Ermintrude leaves Kellee sometimes for 2-3 weeks, and when she had Bryonna with her, she made arrangements in town and Bryonna had someone to watch her.

They ask more about Ermintrude.

Loebe "She's one o' the kindest, gentlest individuals I know. It's little wonder she's called it quits 's far as us 'civilized' types go. She mighta gone a bit strange 'cause she's always alone in the forest, but she's got so much heart and hatred of goblins, that even that Wyan fellow could see she ain't no fey."

Loebe himself knows very little about Ermintrude's history. He first encountered her when she arrived from Tepest about 12? 13? years ago, with a young 6 years old, scarred child in tow. Loebe and his wife helped her taking care of Bryonna as Ermintrude often goes in the forest to hunt goblins. Otherwise, she leads a quiet existence in the forest, rarely interacting with other Tepestani.

Loebe: "About three years ago, Wyan and his priests decided Ermintrude was *consorting with the fey* and they captured her. Knowing she had done nothing wrong, she let herself be captured as she didn't want to injure these fools. I went to Viktal to testify for her, but they took it badly and have been looking at me strangely ever since. But anyway, after several days of interrogation Wyan set her free, proclaiming that she was not consorting with the fey of the forest. I know Ferrier did strongly object to her imprisoning, and that led to a cold between Wyan and Ferrier."

"Some people in Viktal say openly they think Ermintrude secured her freedom by putting a spell on Wyan. Nonsense! In any case, Ermintrude is one of the few people in recent years to escape Wyan's biased brand of justice. Good for her!"

He adds “when the inquisition came here for the Bryonna case, I did testify, as well as Ermintrude, Gerard Ferrier and of course Marla did. The only negative testimony was that of Marla, it was full of inventions and grotesques opinions, but it is the thing they thought was closer to the truth as they see it.”

Varadan “their justice is quite arbitrary”

Loebe “Indeed, I think so. But these fools justify possible mistakes by sayin’ *It is better to condemn one guilty person too many, than to let a witch go free to corrupt a thousand souls.*”

10h30 am Ermintrude lives in a small cabin well hidden in the woods. The trip from Kellee is 1h30 to get there.

Loebe: “the goblins are afraid of her and don't go there”

When the heroes arrive in sight of a well-maintained little cottage, a woman gets from behind a tree and shows herself, bow in hand.

Her, while looking at the heroes: *Oh it's you, Loebe! What wind brings you? Come inside and drink tea.*

Ermintrude makes a small gesture with the fingers of a hand, meaning “friends”, and Loebe makes the same gesture, confirming “friends”. But the heroes did not notice, as they were busy watching her. She is quite tall (an inch over six feet), broad shouldered, and she is quite muscular and fit. She has a light leather armor and a long sword at the belt. She has long brown hair and dresses for camouflage in the forest. She is not really attractive but is strong and charismatic due to her confidence and presence. The heroes give her about 45 years of age.

She waves at them to get inside. The interior of the 1-room house is both rustic and functional, imbued with the smell of wood, leather and dried herbs. Three walls are made of solid logs and one wall is made of stone (the one with the fireplace). The walls are decorated with hunting trophies, and animal engravings on driftwood. A large stone fireplace occupies a central place, used as much for warming as for cooking. Next to it, a shelf filled with pots. A massive table made of rough wood is covered with woodworking tools. The bed is simple but sturdy, covered with thick bear furs and a linen sheet. A small skylight lets in light filtered through the canopy, casting shifting shadows inside, like an echo of the wild world surrounding the house... Near that skylight, a small aviary with six local birds.



Ermintrude, to Loebe, while making tea: *What's up? Still brooding? You should try to meet someone...*

Loebe answers *Are you available?*

She laughs – *If I was 20 years younger, maybe...* (a joke because Ermintrude looks much younger than Loebe)

Loebe – *Get lost, Ermintrude* (last part in Tepestani)

She serves tea and they all get seated around the small house.

Loebe *I come to give you news of Bryonna. She is now in prison under the temple of Belenus. Wyan has passed his judgment and will burn her in a few days if he doesn't see evidence to the contrary by then.*

Ermintrude: *Shit, shit, shit. I knew about Lorelei's accusations, but I didn't know Bryonna was judged. The shitty little priest!*

She then talks they should make a plan to go to Viktal to get her out of prison, but Loebe discourages her: “there are too many of them, and they don't like us there. It won't help Bryonna. We'll do that if we don't find proof of Bryonna's innocence.”

Loebe – “these people want to help Bryonna and wanted to talk to you”

Varadan “in fact, we do not know what is going on”

Tora “we are looking for the truth”

Exigu “we are not from Tepest”

Ermintrude “where are you from?”

The heroes answer they are from Gundarak, and Tora say he is from Briggdarrow.

Ermintrude at Petrak “you are from Gundarak too?”

Petrak “I was born in Forlorn,”

She looks at Petrak – “is your name Petrak?”

Petrak, surprised, nods.

Ermintrude is surprised too “Your father's name was Antenor and your mother Dryoma?”

Petrak, very surprised, nods again.

Ermintrude “You look a lot like your father! I've seen you when you were little, but you don't remember, I guess? I used to trade game to your father in exchange for his vegetables.”

She adds “You know what, that means Bryonna is your sister!”

DM note: 20 years after the seed, now we close an adventure hook arc!

Follows is a discussion of Petrak's background. From the character's background, made in 2003 by Petrak's player:

Where is your family? When he was a teenager (DM: at the beginning of it - 12 years old, year 735), his family was killed by a horde of barbarian goblins. Thanks to the help of his dog, he was able to escape the massacre. His parents were followers of Ezra and it was at the temple of Ezra that he spent his childhood. To avenge his parents, he trained to become a fighter. Being constantly with the disciples of Ezra, this motivated him to become a priest.

What do you look like? (...) He kept a scar on his thigh from his encounter with the barbarian goblins.

And from session 5 (played in 2004!), in Vincenzo's House of the Mist in Evil Eye: “(inside the box) Petrak sees a similar scene, a very large barbarian goblin emerges from the mists and attacks him (Petrak's family was decimated by goblins). Petrak slays the creature and is struck with a new certainty: he has a sister somewhere. It is a surprise as he thought that the whole family except him was dead.”

Ermintrude adds “I saved Bryonna from the goblins. She was scarred in the face as well as emotionally. She didn't talk for years after that. I had to give her a name, so since she didn't talk, I gave her the name Bryonna. Later, when she started speaking again, she told me she liked this name and never wanted to tell me her real name. What is it?”

Petrak “it is Fiona”

DM note – of course I had to stretch and add flesh to Petrak's background :)

Varadan “What were you doing in Forlorn?”

Ermintrude “I was and adventurer, like you, I guess”

Varadan “where do you come from?”

Ermintrude "Nova Vaasa"

Tora asks how druidic magic is seen by the population in Tepest. She answers “mostly bad, unless it is for healing. The Inquisition do not understand the source of the druidic magic, nature, and often confuses it with magic from feys living in the woods. Same thing with the Hala priestess. The orphanage in Viktal closed early when the Inquisition started. These fools have the thinking that *If the Hala priestess had the power to help, then by extension, they had the power to harm*, making them suspicious, not thinking that this could apply to any priest, even Belenus! But I guess the Hala priestess, calling themselves *witch*, didn’t help their case... But to answer your question, any magic not from Belenus is suspicious!”

Ermintrude asks the heroes for a summary of all their findings and observations about the Bryonna and Lorelei case. The heroes tell her everything they know, not skipping any details.

Ermintrude at Petrak: “You have red hairs, do you make magic spontaneously? Not from your Ezra faith?”

Petrak “Yes, I can make flames appear. I can do it since I was young, may be in the first year after the goblin attack on my family. I was 13.

DM note: Petrak has the *red head* feat and chose *produce flame* as the innate spell. Some players are surprised of this, as Petrak’s player kept it quite secret.

Ermintrude at Loebe “do you think Bryonna can cast magic too?” but Loebe and Ermintrude say they never saw any magic coming from Bryonna, or did she show any interest from her about magic.

Exigu “Could it be that Bryonna can also cast a spell like *charm person*, without realising she is making magic?”

Ermintrude “but these spells have limited duration, like hours or days. You say Henrick is still in love with Bryonna, I doubt a minor spell would last that long.”

Exigu “are there real feys in the forest?”

Ermintrude “yes, but they are rare! I saw a dryad once, in the north, and once a small” (she makes a gesture meaning about 2 feet tall) “butterfly winged creature. But it did flee when it saw me”

Exigu “do you know about the mushroom called fairy stools?”

Ermintrude “yes”

Exigu “do you think magic items could make them grow?”

Ermintrude “I do not think so”

Varadan “the druid’s shape changing ability?”

Ermintrude “Not that I know. It reacts to supernatural magic”

Varadan “at which distance from such a creature does it react and grow?”

Ermintrude “Not sure, but my guess is that it is a few feet only, perhaps less than 5”

Varadan explains his own condition – werewolf with a successful Moonchild path.

Ermintrude “Yes I think the mushroom would *detect* you.”

Varadan “but not a druid?”

Ermintrude “No, not a druid. I think it works with supernatural, or magical creatures. Sometimes I think it somehow align with what people of Tepest think is dangerous! Druidic magic is divine magic, not arcane. Divine magic is not dangerous to them, Arcane is”

She also says that the mushroom grows **hours** after being subjected to something that make them react. So it’s a poor detection device. Then the mushrooms shrivel and die in 48 hours.

Macrazbunare wants to experiment with these mushrooms, and Ermintrude say there is a patch not too far from her cottage. The heroes ask her to gather some.

11h am Macrazbunare plant the mushrooms in 8 small patches, all 30 feet apart. Then a hero goes to the first patch only, and stays there a few minutes, then he comes back. Then another hero does the same with the second, and so on. And then Loebe and Ermintrude do the same.

Meanwhile, Ermintrude say she is convinced that a supernatural force is responsible for Bryonna’s situation. “Either Bryonna is being manipulated, or Lorelei is. Or there is no supernatural and Lorelei is just lying. Which will be harder for you to prove.”

She thinks about the oracle on Castle Island in Lake Kronov. “She could help. They say she’s a bit crazy, but her oracles are reliable. She could help us by clearly identifying the source of the problem?”

“I’ve never met her myself, but friends have. She will surely ask for something in return, but you can’t prepare, it is always different...”

Loebe says that 4 years ago a tiny island appeared in Lake Kronov about halfway between Viktal and Briggdarrow after a particularly foggy night. There is a ruined castle on it. It is known to be the home to a fey temptress or the ghost of a woman, according to other stories. Fishermen have named the temptress the Lady of the Lake, and that if one ever hears her singing while sailing upon the waters, one needs to start praying loudly to Belenus or fall under her spell.

The lake’s fishermen treat it with distant respect. They avoid casting their nets too close to the island, and murmur prayers or apologies if they must navigate close to her island. Some occasionally leave small gifts—a handful of berries, a pebble polished by the current—on an old floating log, hoping to curry favor and avoid her wrath.

Lake Kronov is 12 miles long, and about 6 miles from Viktal and the same distance from Briggdarrow. Starting from whichever, it will take about three hours to row.



To avoid going back to Kellee and meet the inquisition, they decide to sleep in the forest here, and leave tomorrow for Briggdarrow.

While they are waiting for the mushrooms to react, Ermintrude goes in the forest to hunt for dinner, and asks Exigu the ranger if he wants to come along. They walk silently in the forest, and then hunt a deer by tracking it, then they see the animal and kill it with arrows. Exigu thinks he could not use Ermintrude's bow, that he is not strong enough. Ermintrude and Exigu gut the animal, and she puts it on her shoulder, wrapped in a skin.

When coming back, they see two goblins on the deer trail. They are talking. Ermintrude silently drops the deer, then look at Exigu and makes a swift "kill" move with her finger at her throat. Exigu agrees and prepare his bow. They stealthily get close to the goblins and then launch their arrows. The goblins drop to the floor. Exigu and Ermintrude approach. They see one goblin is still alive, but quickly dying from the loss of blood. When the goblin sees Ermintrude, Exigu sees fear in the creature's eyes. It ignores Exigu so the goblin fears Ermintrude. The goblin tells her in common "The three sisters..." but Ermintrude cuts short the sentence by swiftly killing it with her long sword. Exigu notices the sword glows blue! He looks at Ermintrude for explanations, but she says nothing, and after a moment, she goes back to the deer.

Later, at the cottage, Exigu tell what happened during the hunt, while Ermintrude and Loebe are preparing the stew. What is the three sisters? A reference to Ermintrude, Bryonna and another girl?

Later, Petrak asks Ermintrude "what is the three sisters?"

She swiftly answers "No idea", then a moment later "you do not need to know that", and she walks away without telling more.

They check on the fairy stools test patches: none changed except Varadan's mushroom patch which has doubled in size! It really detects lycanthropy! They think it took the mushrooms about 8 hours to grow.

They sleep and regain their spells early next morning.

August 12th, early morning

7h am. They leave Ermintrude's cottage, after thanking her. Petrak tell her that they will possibly do a *sending* spell with her after talking with the Lady of the Lake, and explains her how it works.

At 8h30, they drop Loebe at Kellee. "Good luck", he says to the heroes.

4h30 pm On the trail, they pass where the battle with the goblin happened. Macrazbunare in bird form notices two neat circles of dead fairy stools mushrooms.

5h30 they arrive in Viktal, where they meet the guards at the end of the bridge, and they have to give their names. The guards also ask which god do the heroes worship? Tora answers that all are praying Ezra. The guards then ask them which Ezra Cathedral Tora considers his home port. He answers that it is the one in Mordent.

When the guards understand that the heroes do not want to enter the city of Viktal but only pass outside the city walls and travel to Briggdarrow, they let the group go.

8h30 they arrive in Briggdarrow and find the local inn, the Spider House. They put the horses in the barn and Macrazbunare cure them with his belt's *goodberries*, as today's trip was very long, and the horses are more than exhausted.

Inside the inn, the owner Keirwyn is surprised to see Tora after all this time.

The tavern part of the inn has only two other patrons, a man and a woman, talking.

The heroes take two rooms and a meal (5 gp total). During the meal, Keirwyn speaks to Tora.

Keirwyn "how much time have you been away, I lost count"

Tora "9 years"

Keirwyn "you know that your parents are still living here?"

Tora "Yes, I plan to visit them soon"

DM note: Tora's player did not know what will follow. His PC went away for 9 years, and he had no contact with his family since. By email, we built his family in Tepest, and I asked him the permission to batter some of them ;) First, his brother Luther is in the Inquisition and ...

Keirwyn "and my sincerest sympathies for the loss of your sister Dominica..."

Tora "what?"

Keirwyn "we really miss her here. She was very appreciated here at the inn, and she really knew how to tell a tale"

Tora tells him he does not know anything about her death.

Keirwyn says that he is sorry to be the one to tell him about Dominica's death. "Two years ago, Dominica was working on a project close to her heart: collecting little-known folk tales related to faerie creatures and magic. Although these subjects were taboo in Tepest, she believed that they were an integral part of the history and identity of the people. You know her, she was very curious and go-getter"

"But one day, she was found dead in the forest. I know your brother Owen did lead the search, he can tell you more."

"However, her interest in these tales attracted the attention of the Inquisition, and they told her to stop working on this subject. When she was found dead, the Inquisition claimed that Dominica had been punished for seeking contact with fey. According to them, Dominica was the victim of a fey she wanted to contact."

Tora "I was away for too long, thank you for telling me all this".

GAME SESSION 109: TEPEST -4

(This Ravenloft game was played April 27th, 2025. Everybody is present but Sylvain, Exigu's player, who is played by Martin for this game)

Send by email before the game:

Heard in the streets :

"Witches deserve neither pity nor respite. They must be purified by fire to save their souls... or at least to save our lands."

"There is no redemption for those who sell their souls to the darkness. They leave behind only death and desolation."

"Between dusk and dawn, it is dangerous to venture into the woods or moors of Tepest. It is believed that fairies and creatures of darkness are particularly active at these times."

August 12th, 748, 9h00 pm

The heroes are eating at the tavern, and they discuss about what to do next. Tora says he has to go see his parents, inquire about Dominica's death, but the urgency is first saving Bryonna.

Tora asks Keirwyn where is Dominica buried? The inn owner answers that she was interred in Briggdarrow's cemetery. He adds that the Inquisition at first didn't want her buried in the church-maintained cemetery, but somewhere outside the town. He adds that Tora's father made them change their minds, and he had to use all his influence.

They talk about the usefulness of casting the spell *Immerse Mind* on Dominica's corpse.

August 13th, 748, 9h00 am

Tora goes to see his parents, after being gone for ten years! They are happy to see each other. Seeing them, Tora finds they have grown older much more than he expected.

Beric Vimus (now 68 years old), Tora's father, explains that Dominica's death shattered Lydia (Tora's mother, now 65 years old, but looking 10 year older). She now lives in fear for her remaining family, especially Tora, who has gone far away.

Beric was a lumberjack, now retired due to his age, Beric also serves as a father figure to the village's youth, teaching them about the trees.

Lydia is an herbalist. Gentle, insightful, and stubborn in her own way. Lydia is a keeper of local traditions, with an exceptional memory for medicinal herbs and ancient tales. Although she has reduced her activities, Lydia is still consulted by the villagers for remedies and spiritual guidance. Because of her herbalist work, she remains in constant fear of the Inquisition. They often ask her questions about her work.

Tora asks his father if he thinks Luther or the Inquisition is involved in Dominica's death. Beric do not think so.

Beric tells Tora that Edric Windstone was the hunter that found Dominica's body in the forest.

Tora explains that he must now leave for the island on Lake Kronov, to see an oracle His father is very surprised by this and says "don't go there! It's very dangerous!". Tora reassures him.

At 9h30, Tora is back with the other heroes. They take Beric's rowboat and they start their trip on the lake. The lake is beautiful, and the mountains in the north sets a majestic landscape. They see fishing boats in the distance, when closer to Viktal.

Three hours later, they get near the island. The wind gets noticeably cooler as they get nearer. The island is small, has a few pine trees and there is a ruin on top of the island.



When the heroes are 500 feet from the beach, a sound is heard over the water, some kind of feminine voice, singing. It sends shivers down the heroes' spine, but it is inviting as well.

DM note : I used this sound for this encounter
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHbAbZRPza0>

In the notes of this wordless tune, the heroes hear promises of happiness, contentment, and eternal bliss. Immediately, their bad thoughts begin to drift away, swept away by this sweet music.

When they look back, mists seem to close in behind them, forming a circle around the island...

DM note: she is of course closing the border!

The heroes land on the pebble beach, near a trail going up to the ruin. The island is very calm. There is no sign of animals or insects, except for the birds flying above. Sometimes, the wind seems to whisper indistinct words. The group feels a strange mixture of wonder and unease, as if the island itself is watching them and sizing up their worth.

They secure the boat by dragging it on the beach.

When the PCs are on the island – a surprising figure appears 150 feet from the shore. She dances on the waters in the middle of the lake. Her beauty is unearthly and terrifying, like a golden mermaid, covered in jewels and gold, her movements fluid as if in a dream.



Also used these gif: <https://tenor.com/fr/view/jibaro-siren-spin-foxmel-gif-25741786>
and <https://www.tumqik.com/tag/Jibaro%20Siren>

DM note: this is of course borrowed from the “Jibaro” episode of Love Death & Robots, the great Netflix show. I thought it would fit better her role as an oracle in my campaign, and I think she was more suited in a fey land. No monster in the Lake also!

Her golden skin is similar to liquid gold, Her silver eyes are both fascinating and frightening, as if they contained unfathomable abysses. Her body is covered in jewels – she is adorned with necklaces, bracelets, pearls, stones, and tiaras.

She dances on water like this for about a minute, watching the heroes, then she suddenly stops. She waves her arms at the heroes and from her mouth goes a lurid scream – a piercing scream, of agony, and pain!



It is clearly a sonic force, as the heroes feel the physical shock of the wave of her voice.

Crazy eyed, Exigu and Tora start running in the water toward the fey! They appear charmed by her.

Macrazbunare throws a *magic missile* at her. She winces from pain. Varadan turns into hybrid wolf form, and tries to prevent Exigu from going in the water.

Austizel casts *shackle* on Tora and it works.

Exigu stops in his track and leaps at the fey's defense: he uses his bow to send an arrow on Macarazbunare! Varadan tries to grapple Exigu but it fails.

Macrazbunare throws another *magic missile* at her, and ask his wolf to attack Exigu "turn him to pulp!"

Petrak casts *Protection from evil*, then *Spiritual weapon* to attack the fey. Austizel attacks her with *magic missile* too.

They see her body turn into water and melt with the lake's water.

Meanwhile, Exigu throws three arrows at Austizel. Varadan misses grappling Exigu again. Macrazbunare uses a *hold person* but it doesn't stop Exigu either. Austizel tries grappling Exigu but fails too. Varadan misses grappling Exigu for a third time, and so does Petrak and Austizel do miss. Macrazbunare turns into a crocodile.

DM note: Martin is playing Exigu and has a series of many natural 20s on the dice to escape the grapple attempts!

Exigu is surrounded by the other heroes, he takes his war razor and attacks Austizel.

Then Varadan does successfully grapple Exigu, at last! With the help of the others, he then pins Exigu and they tie him.

Eventually, Tora and Exigu shakes off the effect of the charm spell. They explain they were about to swoon to the Lady of the Lake, and wanted to get near her so they could serve her.

They heal themselves from Exigu's damage.



Then they see her about 300' from the beach. Only her head is out of the water and she looks at them with curiosity.

Petrak – can we speak instead of attacking each other?

Tora – can we speak to the Oracle?

Hearing that, she slowly rises and walks on the water toward the heroes, and she stops 30 feet from the edge of water.



Her voice sounds like wind in the trees “It's been so long since people came to consult me as an oracle... Come closer, poor soul, come taste the answers you seek, but know that all knowledge has its price...”

Every hero has the impression that she is talking to him only.

“My answers await your questions, mortal. But... are you ready to offer me what I demand in exchange? Your pain, your silence... or perhaps your last breath?”

The heroes discuss on the questions they will ask her.

Meanwhile, she bites her tongue with her sharp teeth, and blood flows from her mouth: "Don't be afraid, come closer..." She smiles at the heroes like a cat would at a mouse.



She teases them even more : “I know your darkest desires, I feel them... I could give you what you want, but you will end up begging me to free you from it.”

Tora starts telling her a long story about their quest to save Bryonna, but it appears to bore her.

She yawns and interrupts him bluntly “ask your question!” then “For every answer to a question, an offering before!”

While the heroes discuss of the question, she says, again smiling wickedly, "You mortals are so predictable... Always begging for truths you can't bear. Are you sure you want to know? Really?"

The first question asked by the heroes is “who uses supernatural forces in the conflict between Bryonna and Lorelei?”

“In return for the answer”, she asks, “tell me a nightmare you had.”

Varadan tells her of the nightmares that plagued him and Tara Kolyana, when the Ghost Dancer waved a series of nightmares involving Strahd's wedding, a young Varadan and Tara as the bride (*game sessions 11 to 17*).

The Lady of the Lake appreciated the tale. Then she drops the answer: "Lorelei!"

They discuss their next question.

During that, she tells them menacingly "I see the threads of destiny twisting around you... but what will you be willing to sacrifice to untangle them?"

After more discussions, the second question asked by the heroes is "How to expose Lorelei's powers?"

The gold fey thinks for a moment, and asks "Can you bring a message from me to dangerous creatures?"

Varadan "Yes, we commit to it, but within our limits"

She opens her silver eyes wide and tells the heroes "You will soon meet the Three Sisters. Tell them I want to speak to them. In here!", then, smiling "Look for the invisible green child, a terrepopolo fey!"

They ask a third question "how can we capture this terrepopolo fey?"

She replies with a sharp toothy smile: "are you willing to do a task for me, when I will call on you, at anytime in the future?"

Varadan "if it respects our values, yes"

Her "I accept this limitation. A cold iron cage would keep it captured."

They have their answers. They thank her for her oracle and prepare to leave.

Then Tora sees the fey is looking at him, eyes wide, serious looking, and he hears her voice *in his head*:

Your sister danced beneath the moon,

Where the forest breathes and shadows embrace.

The thread of her destiny, woven then severed by greedy hands,

Is in the hands of ancient spirits, hungry for power.

But listen, Tora!

Your sister's song is not extinguished.

It still echoes in their claws,

a flickering flame, captured.

The shadow weavers, in their lair, still laugh,

Their web stretches!

Will you save her soul,

Or will you fall into the trap she could not escape?

Then the fey once again liquefies to pure water and melt with the lake.

DM note: the Lady's stats, where I started with this D&D Beyond siren stat block <https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/2663570-marina-kresnova-siren> and added stuff and adapted it to my game.

And for the third question "offering" – a task to be called for later -, I have no idea what I will do of their promise, but I'll find out something eventually :)

Lady of the Lake (Jibaro)

Medium Fey, Neutral

Armor Class 22, 17 natural

Hit Points 112

Speed swim 40 ft, walk 30 ft.

STR 15 **DEX** 18 **CON** 16 **INT** 19 **WIS** 14 **CHA** 18

Saving Throws FORT +7 REF +8 WILL +8

Damage Resistances Fire; Water based spells, Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Mental Fortitude. She has +12 advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *Charm person, fog cloud, greater invisibility, Water Breathing* (on victims)

Multiattack. She makes two claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage. **Stupefying Touch** (If hit, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until the start of her next turn)

Luring Scream. She has a magical scream of agony and pain whilst she dances desperately. Every creature within 300 feet of her that can hear the scream must succeed on a **DC 22 Will** saving throw. On a failed save, a target is charmed. While charmed by her, a target must move on its turn toward her by the most direct route (walk or swim). A creature can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it. A charmed creature is also compelled to use any and all of their actions to violently attack any creatures within 5 feet of them if they appear as menacing her.

Amphibious. She can breathe air and water.

Lake Form (Su) She can become one with the lake. She can completely merge with it. Her body and all her gear meld into the water, as per meld into stone.

Darklord she has been cursed to inhabit the island forever. If she ventures more than a quarter mile from it in any direction she is suddenly teleported back to its shore.

Closing the Borders

When the Lady wishes to seal her domain, she sings a sorrowful dirge. The Mists rise from the lake, about 500' feet around the island. The Lady's song evokes all the hidden secrets and emotions within intelligent creatures attempting to cross the border. If they do not turn back, their frustrations and sorrows consume them; all such creatures automatically gain the Suicidal Thoughts madness effect. This madness effect cannot be removed until those affected return to the Island.

They decide to explore the ruins. The majority of the castle is nothing more than a collapsed pile of broken stone and debris but a two stories building is still standing.

1 Entrance : three wide steps lead up to a pair of weathered iron doors. The doors are artfully crafted to resemble the faces of hideous, fanged beasts. Their lolling tongues curl into knockers, which long ago rusted into place. The hinges are likewise corroded, though they show signs of occasional use.

This door opens with some difficulty. As the portal is pulled open, the hinges groan loudly in protest.

2. Lobby (20 x 10) The crumbling walls of this room are painted with fading blue and white swirled patterns. The floor is covered with a mosaic that depicts a maelstrom of water draining into the gaping maw of some unknown monster. All that is seen of the monster are its fangs and the darkness of its gullet.

Austizel casts *detect magic* – nothing.

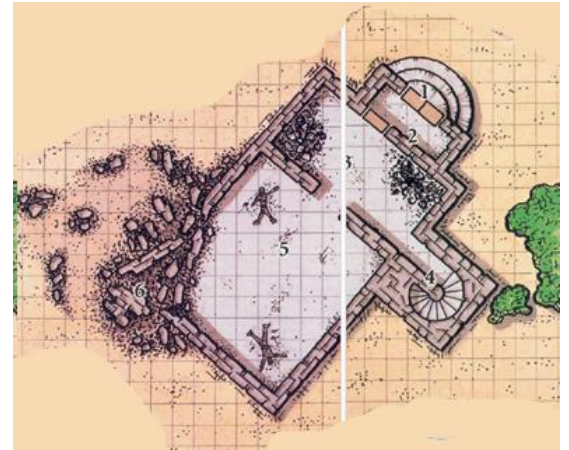
3. Sitting Room (40 x 20) It is impossible for the heroes not to wrinkle their noses in disgust as they examine this room. The air here is heavy with an oily smell of filth and decay. Bloated black flies buzz to and fro, seeming to revel in this offensive stench.

The frayed remains of what was once a fine rug cover the center of the floor of this chamber. A table and three chairs stand in one corner, all gray with rot. To the south, a short hallway draped with spider webs ends at a battered door. Heading west, farther into the ruins, is a wide archway. A moldering burgundy tapestry hangs across this portal, held in place by rusted hooks that look about to collapse.

5. Ballroom (40 x 50) The instant that they enter this room, a terrible stench of rot and offal washes over them. It is impossible not to gag and retch as this odor threatens to overwhelm them. Hearly as revolting as the smell is the droning of flies - legions of which take wing upon your arrival.

Varadan is *sickened*! The source of this odor is impossible to miss. Two rotting bodies of men lie against the far walls. Their skin is dotted by sickly white maggots and black flesh-eating beetles.

A low moan, one that speaks of endless pain and suffering, fills the air. Whirling, they see that it comes from one of the corpse. With great, sobbing gasps, the corpse turns



towards you and lifts his hand slowly. Maggots drop from the revolting figure as he turns his baleful eyes on you. Although it seems impossible, the movement of this rotting creature makes the air in this place even more difficult to breathe.

The heroes realize the rotting man is still alive! Petrak casts *cure light wound* on him (+13). He gets better but is still feeble.

Him, with difficulty – where is she?

Varadan – in the lake. Do you want to go back to Briggdarrow with us?

Him – no, I want to stay here. I can't leave her! I want to see her now!

They learn that his name is Elyas. Varadan, pointing at the other person – who is he?

Elyas – His name is Zak. He is an idiot, it was me that she loved, not him. But he kept saying it...

The inspect Zak's body, to see knife wounds in his back...

Varadan, at Elyas : what happened to you?

Elyas – “sometimes she was mean to me, but she showed me love afterward”, while showing the bite marks on his arms and legs. It could have been inflicted by the fey.

Elyas slowly gets up and leaves the heroes by walking outside the ruins. “where is she?”, he asks a few times.

4. Gallery (top of the stairs) (15 x 15) The stair is a cracked and faded pattern of green, blue, and white tiles.

Top of the stairs: Another pair of bodies, both long dead and decayed to little more than skeletons, lay just past the doorway to this room. Both wear the crumbling remains of studded leather armor and hold rusting scimitars in their mummified hands. A rusted dagger is driven deep into one body's left eye socket, while the other's throat was slit from the blood stains on his armor.

Rubbles in a corner. They find an iron strongbox containing one hundred twenty copper pieces, forty-four gold pieces, a rough cut sapphire (worth 20 gp), a ring (faint evocation), and 3 potions (*CSWounds*, *Haste*, *Water Breathing*)

They take everything and plan to ask the fey if it is alright with here that they take it.

They get down the stairs and walk toward their boat. They pass Elyas, who is walking slowly toward the beach, muttering something about his love for the Lady of the Lake.

When at the boat, they see her head out of the water, about 150 feet away. The mists around the islands have dissipated away.

They ask her if they can keep the items they found in the ruin, but she waves “no” with her head. They leave the magical items on the beach, drag their boat to the water, and start rowing back to Briggdarrow.

1h30 pm – they leave the island, under the gaze of curiosity from the Lady of the Lake.

After an hour, the island is now far. It is then that the heroes realize that they remember everything that happened, but they cannot remember what the Lady of the Lake look like? How strange is that?

At 4h30 pm, they are back to Briggdarrow. They go meet Edric Windstone, the hunter who found Dominica’s body in the woods.

Edric is an old man, calm and always thinking before he speaks. Tora remembers that he was soldier before retiring.

From him they learn that two years ago, Dominica was working on a project close to her heart: collecting little-known folk tales related to faerie creatures and magic. Although these subjects were taboo in Tepest, she believed they were an integral part of the people's history and identity. However, her interest in these tales attracted the attention of the Inquisition... Dominica was reportedly seen venturing alone into a secluded part of the forest, near the ruins of an ancient stone circle said to be haunted by faerie spirits. She was seeking to confirm a local legend for her research. That day, she did not return.

A search was organized by the inhabitants of Briggdarrow, with Owen's help (Tora’s brother), but the Inquisition came in too, and possibly spoiled the investigation site with many horses traces.

Edric found her body at the foot of an ancient tree, in a strange state: her skin was pale, her hair white, and she appeared to have been dead for several days despite her recent disappearance. Her body was very light in weight? There was no traces of violence on her body. Beside her, a notebook containing notes on fairy creatures was found, as well as a strange symbol carved into the bark of the tree. He draws it for Tora:



Tora asks about the notebook, but Edric thinks the Inquisition took it.

They ask Edric about the location of where the body was found. He speaks of an old stone circle, north of Briggdarrow and Tora remembers the place. They thank Edric for his time.

They get on horses and move in the forest toward the stone circle's location.

The circle is about 30' in diameter. There were possibly runes, or inscriptions, but they now have been erased by time. There are no herbs or moss growing between the stones inside the circle.

Near the circle, they find a bundle of six red roses, with a card! Tora reads it "Dominica, I will never forget you" signed "F".

The bundle was found near a tree on which they see the runic mark that Edric draw. It was made a long time ago, more than 5 years, and with something sharp, possibly a dagger.

Tora tries *ghostsight* – nothing.

Austizel casts *See ethereal resonance*: "a scrutinizing eye", "many people with hoods and torches", and the last images he sees is blood spilled on the stone circle.

They lift a stone to look underneath – white worms, nothing more of note.

6h00 pm, they are back in Briggdarrow and they head for the cemetery. They find Dominica's grave. Tora tries *ghostsight* here, focusing on the grave and not the cemetery, and again he sees nothing.



Tora goes to see his parents and ask who is that "F" who did leave roses for Dominica? Beric thinks it must be Finnian Woodrider, a leather worker who was engaged to Dominica. He lives in Viktal but he was seen in Briggdarrow yesterday for business.

Later, in town, they cross a strange procession – a dozen people of the Inquisition showing around the body of a woman on a carriage! They are led by an old priest, which Tora remembers as being Tiberius Anton. There are about 20 villagers following the procession. The Inquisition warns people of the danger of consorting with feys!

From talking with the people following the carriage, Tora learns that at noon was the execution of a young woman (Gameline Lightfoot) who was tried and found guilty four

days ago of “aggravated witchcraft”. She was hanged. When the twitching stopped, the body was cut down. The noose was left around the neck and an iron nail hammered into the chest, reportedly to keep the corpse from getting up and walking around. The priests present entreated Belenus to protect the citizens of Tepest from the feys.

The heroes follow the body carried through town, in a slow procession at the head of which Anton offered yet more prayers — these ones asking that the villagers would be granted strength to turn away the temptations of the feys. Then the procession goes outside Briggdarrow, and, at a crossroad, where a shallow grave was dug before this day, the body is deposited within it, face down. Another iron nail is driven into its chest, more prayers were offered — ones designed to keep the now-soulless body from rising to menace the living — and then the grave is closed.

While others were shoveling dirt to fill the hole, Anton offered a last warning to the people of Tepest: “She was a witch! Their art is an art of lies, woven with blood, bone, and human suffering. They steal children in their sleep, replacing them with monsters with human faces. They cast their spells with a mere glance. The weakest fall under their power without ever understanding what has struck them. Pray Belenus for strength!”

By now, it was close to sunset, and the villagers quickly returned to their homes to prepare their evening meals.

7h30 the heroes are back to the Spider House inn.

Inside the tavern is a group of men, drinking and mourning. One of them says “My daughter was a witch, and I didn’t see it! How evil and clever was she! Thank Belenus the Inquisition found her before she made more trouble! I trust the priest! She confessed everything!” They remember seeing him at the procession.

The heroes do not speak to them. They eat and climb to their room.

They remember they promised Ermintrude that they would contact her after meeting the oracle. They cast *sending* to her: “We met the oracle. Lorelei is under the influence of an invisible fey, a terrepopolo? We need to investigate more”

Ermintrude sends her replies about a minute after: “Vistani term for unseen small evil fey? Could need the help of the Three Sisters? Come here to discuss? Perhaps check Bryonna in Viktal?”