

ONE-PAGE ONE-SHOTS

VOLUME ONE

Self-contained adventures with endless possibilities.

ROBERT PEAKE

*Ten single-page standalone adventures
for the world's greatest roleplaying game*



CREDITS

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ON THE COVER

"Magic Splash" by Tan Ho Sim, from the Godbound Art Pack



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

Reading the Adventures.....4

Playing the Adventures 6

Adjusting The Difficulty.....6

Watching Examples.....6

The Adventures..... 7

Dungeons.....7

A Foul Wind 8

Mogga's Run 9

Shadows In The Cellars.....10

Echoes of Netheril 11

Cities 12

Justice Comes To Amphail 13

Nightmare On Helm Street 14

You Shall Go To The Ball 15

Wilderness 16

I'd Like To Thank The Little People 17

A Sinking Feeling.....18

The Gift Horse.....19

Appendix.....20

Adventure Elements.....20

Glossary of Abbreviations 20

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INTRODUCTION

Finally! Your friends want to play D&D for the first time, and they have asked you to be their Dungeon Master for a one-off adventure that will introduce them to the game. The only problem? You are slammed with work or study and can only squeeze in a few minutes to prepare.

Or perhaps it's game night, and shortly beforehand a player whose character is central to the adventure you have prepared lets you know they can't make it. You have to come up with a side-quest instead, and fast.

There are many reasons a DM might need to prepare a self-contained adventure in a hurry.

Unfortunately, reading through thirty pages or more of a typical published one-shot adventure, on top of the time it takes to research the monsters, learn the names of key NPCs, make your own notes, and customize a few details to put your own spin on the tale—can mean that what was meant to be a simple one-shot can actually take a long time to prepare.

In fact, sometimes one-shots take longer to prepare than the next episode of a campaign, since rather than teasing out existing threads, you are starting from scratch.

Luckily for you, you have a copy of *One-Page One-Shots: Volume One*. This collection of adventures will help you accommodate these types of situations and many more.

“So, are you feeling more like a dungeon crawl, a trek through the wilderness, or maybe a romp in the city?” you ask casually, as the players settle in and grab their beverages. Whatever they want, you now have it to hand in an easily-digestible format.

Each of these adventures is designed to give you, the DM, just what you need to be ready to play in a matter of minutes.

Skim the page. Get familiar with the creatures. Review the timings. Grab your copy of *The Spontaneous Dungeon Master's Companion* to bolster your confidence in unforeseen circumstances.

Now get ready to roll.

-Robert Peake, July 2020



<https://spontaneousdm.com/>

READING THE ADVENTURES

The following guide will help you understand the elements of each one-page adventure and how to make best use of them.

2. Focus – this is the type of central element in this adventure, one of the twenty-five combinations detailed in [The One-Page One-Shot Toolkit](#).

3. Location – where the adventure takes place, both generally (settlement, dungeon, or wilderness) and specifically (e.g. a city, ruined mine, or forest).

4. Mission – the “goal” of the adventure, which gives the characters their initial motivation.

5. Tier – the range of character level most appropriate for this adventure (**Tier 1:** 1–4, **Tier 2:** 5–10; **Tier 3:** 11–16; **Tier 4:** 17–20). See details on scaling the adventures in the next section.

6. Backstory – a brief explanation that gives background to the DM and sets the scene.

The screenshot shows a one-page adventure titled "Justice Comes to Amphail". It includes various sections: Focus (Dangerous Person), Setting (Settlement/Town), Mission (Defend Patron), Tier (Tier 1), Backstory, Interest (Hook, Rewards, Perils), Secrets (Twist), Start, ACT I (30m), ACT II (45m), ACT III (1h 15m), Keywords, and Tie-In. The adventure is set in Amphail, a town where a nobleman's daughter has been murdered, and the party is hired to investigate.

1 JUSTICE COMES TO AMPHAIL
Ravenna is an assassin with a grudge

2 FOCUS
 DANGEROUS PERSON

3 SETTING
 SETTLEMENT (TOWN)

4 MISSION
 DEFEND PATRON

5 TIER
 TIER 1

6 BACKSTORY
 The party's patron, Sir Godfrey (LN Noble), has received a death threat specifying that wherever he is, he will be murdered on the night of the new moon. He has fled Waterdeep to Amphail to lie low, and hired the party to protect him. Little does he know the assassin is in Amphail among them, and her motives are personal.

7 INTEREST
Hook: Hired by Sir Godfrey. **Rewards:** Expense-paid trip, reward money, Sir Godfrey's thanks, solving the mystery. **Perils:** Ravenna the assassin, The Spirit of Amphail (ghost), angry villagers.

8 SECRETS
Twist: The good guy is a bad guy and vice versa.
 Ravenna (CN Assassin with 36 hp while possessed; **Commoner** with 8 hp when exorcised) is the sister of Gilda, whom Godfrey caroused with and then left destitute with child this time last year. He has a reputation in Amphail for such behaviour, though the party may not know this at first. Ravenna is under the influence of The Spirit of Amphail (**Ghost**), who seeks justice and retribution. Ravenna, whom Godfrey has never met, is posing as a jolly barmaid in The Gilded Stallion, Godfrey's favourite tavern, where he plans to lodge for the fateful night.

9 SETTING
AMPHAIL
 The Gilded Stallion and surroundings is inhabited by terse farmers suspicious of outsiders. They all believe in the Spirit of Amphail. Godfrey is sweaty and nervous. The nights are eerily quiet. People have clearly fallen on hard times.

10 START
 The floor of the dimly-lit tavern is covered in straw, and through the lamplight the craggy faces of local farmers stare at you from their regular booths. More than anything, they grimace at the foppishly-dressed nobleman beside you, delicately sipping the froth from his ale and visibly sweating.

11 Maps: town, tavern

12 ACT I (30m)
 Investigations in The Gilded Stallion and around town. Social interactions should be high DC, but may reveal more about the legend of The Spirit of Amphail, Godfrey's reputation, that Ravenna's jolly demeanour is just an act, or that Godfrey "knows" her sister. Godfrey encourages PCs to take watch outside tavern, at the main entrance, and outside his room. Ravenna plans to hide in his room just after closing time and stick him with a poisonous dart.

ACT II (45m)
 Ravenna attempts to kill Godfrey, then flee out the window. PCs may discover her, leading to a chase scene, or discover the deed and some clues the next morning or when they check on Godfrey. The poison will have paralysed but not killed him, such that he can be revived in Waterdeep (for a price, which his father will pay).

ACT III (1h 15m)
 The hunt for Ravenna is on, leading to a chase scene, investigation, and/or combat. If reduced to half hp, captured or on initiative count 10, Ravenna will revert to being a **Commoner** with 8hp (regardless of hp when reverting), but in doing so The Spirit of Amphail will appear and may attack the party. It will choose to flee rather than kill them once they have been sufficiently punished for interfering with the course of justice. The PCs may wish to remonstrate with Godfrey or visit Gilda upon hearing Ravenna's side of the story.

13 Keywords: revenge, undead, mystery, assassin, rural, horror, nobility
Tie-In: Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

14

1. Title and Subtitle – titles may contain clues or outright spoilers, so they should not be revealed to the players before the game. The **subtitle** follows the format of “[name] is a [type]”, specifying the specific **Focus** (2) of the adventure.

7. Interest – the **hook** gives likely reasons the PCs might get involved with this adventure to begin with; the **rewards** detail what they might gain in doing so; the **perils** are the dangers they could face along the way.

8. Secrets – these are events and circumstances as yet unknown to the PCs about what is really going on. Each secret could be revealed to the party in a wide range of ways, from discovering an artefact or note to an NPC explaining it. Leave your options open, so that you can reveal some secrets, no matter what the players choose to do. The **twist** is something that goes against the PCs' expectations. It will complicate matters in some way.

9. Setting – this is the exact, named location where the adventure takes place, along with a brief description to give it flavour.

10. Start – this “green text” can be read aloud at the very beginning of the adventure to kick things off. It generally begins *in media res* to draw the players in, and should be followed either by a flashback or brief explanation of how the PCs got there. This is usually best done collaboratively, allowing the players to explain why their PCs are here.

11. Maps – these are the maps you may want to have ready to ensure that, even if you are playing “theatre of mind” style, you have a consistent understanding of the physical space. Maps are not provided, but a Google image search on the terms provided plus the words “D&D map” or “5e map” will yield numerous results. Pick what you like best, and feel free to modify map images if they are too large (e.g. too many rooms in a dungeon, too vast, etc.).

12. Structure – the adventure itself is structured one of several ways: as a five-room dungeon, in three acts, or in one act and three rooms. Approximate timings are given for two-to-three hours of game play. Feel free to modify this for longer sessions. You may also want to pencil in clock times based on what time you start the session.

Adapt these to suit your needs, including scaling up or down encounters, DCs, and other game mechanics to make it suitably challenging for your group.

Use your copy of [*The Spontaneous Dungeon Master's Companion*](#) to feel comfortable allowing players to go “off-piste” where desired, bringing them back to the main story focus as appropriate. The adventure may go exactly as structured, or may veer considerably. This is what makes RPGs so much more satisfying than a pre-programmed computer game. Go with it, and have fun.

13. Tie-ins and Keywords – **tie-ins** are published campaigns and wider storylines into which this particular one-shot might fit well; **keywords** are words that give you a sense of what is involved in the adventure, to quickly decide if this is of interest.

14. Adventure elements – these are the specific game elements of an adventure present in this module; see the appendix for a key to the symbols used.

PLAYING THE ADVENTURES

Each adventure is designed to be played over a single session lasting between two to four hours.

Preparing for the session will involve deciding which adventure to run, reading it through, reading up on the creatures involved from the *Monster Manual* (indicated in **bold**), and making notes as appropriate of any modifications. It should typically take no more than twenty minutes.

I have play-tested many of these adventures with my home group. So, I'll tell you how I set up to play.

We play over Zoom. I place the notes over the keyboard of my laptop so that I can glance down at them or up at the players easily. I have the *Monster Manual*, DM screen, and *The Spontaneous Dungeon Masters' Companion* handy, off to one side. I have any maps and my notebook off to the other side. And, of course, I have lots of dice.

ADJUSTING THE DIFFICULTY

The tier indicated represents the “scope” of the adventure as indicated in the *Players' Handbook* p. 15. As an experienced DM, I often like to introduce my characters to creatures far above their challenge level. I sent a first-tier party into the nautilus of a mind flayer, for example. But I had a *deus ex machina* planned for when things went bad.

So, while each of these adventures involves reasonably “balanced” encounters (which my play-test group always survived), you may want to “beef up” an adventure for stronger players, or tone it down for weaker ones.

As a general principle, when up-scaling up from tier to another, you can double the number of hostile creatures and increase the specified DC by five. The same goes in the other direction—halving it, and decreasing DCs by five.

This may be too extreme at the topmost tier (i.e. from three to four or vice-versa), so use your discretion and as always consult the challenge rating guidance in the DMG if you are unsure about your approach.

WATCHING EXAMPLES

The adventure “A Sinking Feeling” has been recorded end-to-end – from the actual development of the rough notes using *The One-Page One-Shot Toolkit*, to a complete play-through, to a debrief session with the players afterward.

It is available on [YouTube](#). Sometimes learning by example is the best way to go. At minimum, I hope you will find it entertaining.

Now, on to the adventures...

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-TOOTHLESS TOOK, ADVENTURER



A FOUL WIND

The Idol is a revered statue

BACKSTORY

Stolen from a PC's monastery/temple/faction HQ, the Idol has fallen into the hands of the Cult of the Howling Hatred, who plan to sacrifice it into the realm of elemental air high atop a forbidden mountain that was once the home of a Djinn.

SECRETS

Twist: A greater power lies within.

The cultists have thrown the idol into one of several vortices in the cave that will "return it to nothingness", but it has not yet disintegrated. The secret to recovering it from the vortex lies with a powerful gemstone, but interacting with it can be perilous.



INTEREST

Hook: the PC's order needs the artefact back. **Rewards:** renown among the order, powers of Djinn cave. **Perils:** cultists, giant vultures, traps.

SETTING

DJINN CAVE

A large open cavern that howls with the sound of the wind. Air currents in the cave move in a random direction, halving movement speed in one direction and doubling it in another.

Map: cave

START

Few have seen the Sword Coast from the air--the blue open sea to the left, the ice-capped Sword Mountains to the right, and beneath you a vast expanse of grassland dotted with copses and criss-crossed by roads. As you soar toward Djinn Peak in search of the lost idol, you recal how you got here....

ACT I (30m)

Flashback: the party has been given a mission to find the idol, and can choose one of three options to fly there. A party with a gnome or dwarf might know the steampunk captain of an air ship (see "Of Ships and the Sea" Unearthed Arcana for stats. if desired) . A party with a noble or mercenary might supply **griffon** cavalry rejects (half HP) equal to half party size (ride two per mount; one must control the mount while the other is free to act). Members of the Emerald Enclave or Harpers might know a Druid willing to cast *wind walk* on the party.

ACT II (45m)

A number of **cultists** equal to party size and one **cult fanatic** riding on **giant vultures** are likely to detect the party's approach and fly out from the cave mouth to attack them in the air. Cultists mounts act independently of their masters, so both can attack. Determine altitude and flying (marching) order before the encounter. If the PCs are using *wind walk*, they will proceed undetected to the mouth of the cave, which the cultists are guarding. For combat occurring within the cave, roll a random d4 direction (N/S/E/W) for wind to affect combat as above.

ACT III (1h 15m)

Inside a large cavern there are five vortices, each sealed, wherein the idol is rattling around being damaged. A gemstone in the centre of the room controls the openings. A successful DC 21 Int. (Arc.) check (or nat. 20) reveals the mechanism; working together can grant advantage at the DM's discretion. Failures result in one of the 1d6 random effects from the table. After 5 failures the idol will be destroyed. Each other vortex contains a valuable object (1 treasure roll each). Going into an unsealed vortex to retrieve an item requires a DC 15 dex. save to avoid 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

- 1 Summons one hostile air elemental
- 2 Deals 2d6 psychic damage to entire party
- 3 Causes one random party member to levitate uncontrollably for 1 minute
- 4 Summon 1d4 hostile smoke mephits
- 5 Summon 1d4 hostile dust mephits
- 6 Reverse gravity for 6 seconds, (4d6 bludgeoning on impact)

Keywords: cultists, four elements, flying

Tie-In: Princes of the Apocalypse



MOGGA'S RUN

Madman's Run is a network of caves

BACKSTORY

Madman's Run was created by Skoraesus Stonebones to deter small folk seeking the Heartstone of Mt. Klonos, which can cure petrification. A beloved tressym of a PC's family accidentally wandered into a medusa lair, and now only the Heartstone can restore this beloved pet.

SECRETS

Twist: The ettin who knows the way has gone mad.

Rashy-Smashy (**ettin**) has been in the cave too long, subsisting on its farm of semi-poisonous mushrooms. Rashy is good-aligned, but a compulsive liar; Smashy is evil, but compelled to tell the truth. They hate each other, and distrust strangers, but both do know the way through the caves to the Heartstone.



INTEREST

Hook: un-petrify the tressym Mogga. **Rewards:** the Heartstone gems. **Perils:** madness, galeb dur, ettin, cave collapses.

SETTING

MADMAN'S RUN

Madman's Run is a dark, endlessly-branching network of caves. The flicker of torch light makes it seem like the stones themselves could be moving, and the whole place echoes with a faint creaking sound. On entering each section after the first, PCs must make a DC 10 wisdom save or suffer a madness effect rolled from the DMG table for 10 minutes.

Maps: caves, cavern

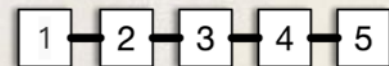
START

You arrive at the face of Mt. Klonos with the stone statue of a winged cat bundled carefully under your arm. Flies circle the skeletons of horses and mules who were clearly tied up here, awaiting fellow explorers who went into the caves known as Madman's Run and never returned.

ROOM 1 (15m)

Careful examination of the position of the pack animal bones and/or a successful DC 15 Int./Inv. check reveals that a narrow crack is actually an optical illusion, passable by creatures of size medium and below.

SUGGESTED LAYOUT



ROOM 2 (30m)

Have the party each explain how they intend to help navigate the caves. The party must succeed on three DC 15 skill checks to proceed to the next area. If they reach three failures before three successes, the passage they choose collapses behind them requiring a DC 15 Dex. save to avoid 2d6 bludgeoning damage, and the count of successes and failures resets. Narrate the results of success and failure as you see fit.

ROOM 3 (30m)

The final successfully-navigated passage leads to a large open cavern glowing with blue fungus wherein Rashy-Smashy resides. Successful social interaction and/or skill checks will cause it to assist them through the next section. Enjoy role-playing this eccentric.

ROOM 4 (30m)

The passages branch as in area 2. Attempting to navigate this area without Rashy-Smashy will lead the party back in a circle to its lair after three failures. With five successes (progressive DC 5/10/15/20/25) the party can navigate to the Heartstone by themselves.

ROOM 5 (45m)

The Heartstone is set in the middle of a sunken floor amidst 2d20 500gp sapphires. Approaching causes **galeb dur** equal to the party size to roll into action and attack. The Heartstone will un-petrify Mogga, but is not removable.

Keywords: petrification, giants, madness, pets

Tie-Ins: Storm King's Thunder, Against the Giants



SHADOWS IN THE CELLAR

Lady Amblecrown is a noblewoman with a secret

BACKSTORY

Since the death of her manservant Marlo, Lady Amblecrown is convinced her estate is being haunted by a banshee who howls in the night. Those around her think she is being paranoid. Amblecrown suspects her clandestine dabbling in spells from her great-grandfather's book may have caused the eerie howling in the ruins beneath the stable house, but is ashamed to admit her deeds.

SECRETS

Twist: Amblecrown is hiding what she did, and the situation is worse than she realises.

The book details powerful evil conjuration magic. A portal into The Shadowfell has opened and a **Young Red Shadow Dragon** named Skakleus now wails insanely within the ruins beneath the stable house.



INTEREST

Hook: Amblecrown hires the PCs as ghost busters.

Rewards: The Amblecrown family favour, reward money, solving the mystery. **Perils:** Shadows and a howling dragon.

SETTING

AMBLECROWN MANOR

A crumbling once-proud estate in the Castle Ward of Waterdeep, barely keeping up appearances in spite of the eccentricities of its inhabitants. Furnishings are dusty, patched, and askew. Servants are jaded and loopy.

Map: ruins

START

Lady Amblecrown fidgets nervously before you, thanking you for coming at such short notice to investigate the banshee in the garden house cellar. Her hair rests lopsided above her narrow face, half-powdered with one black pearl dangling from her ear. Her butler Mephistus looks up at you with sullen, dead eyes.

OPENING ACT (15m)

The party has a chance to speak with and question Amblecrown before being led to the farmhouse by the dreary Mephistus. Marlo went missing two nights ago, and since then the howling began. She will avoid revealing her visits to the cellar at all costs. Mephistus will remain monosyllabic wherever possible. The reward is hefty, and should be enticing to the party. The wine she serves is terrible.

ROOM 1 (15m)

Mephistus will lead them to the garden house, then quickly depart. The seemingly-ordinary wine cellar beneath a garden house contains a few rats and barrels of spoiled wine. A DC 15 investigation check will reveal a secret door behind one of the barrels leading into grandfather's study. Opening the door causes a single black feather to blow into the room. If not found for some time, the door will creak open.

ROOM 2 (30m)

Grandfather's study is lined with bookshelves and a stone table in the middle, with a spell book, *The Mysticatum Majorum*, held open by a black pearl earring as a bookmark. The far wall is shroud in darkness (as per the spell), behind which is a portal into The Shadowfell. The book contains conjuration magic. A number of **shadows** equal to the party size lurk in the darkness waiting to attack.

ROOM 3 (1h)

Behind the portal is Skakleus, who will emerge after 3 rounds of combat or if the shadows are vanquished. He can use his action to howl, causing a DC 15 wisdom save for all within 60' to avoid the madness effect. Saves can be repeated when the character takes damage. The shadows are immune. Being killed by the dragon causes PCs to enter The Shadowfell. Destroying the book closes the portal. Lady Amblecrown will ultimately confess if confronted with evidence of her misdeeds, and try to pay them double the reward money to keep quiet.

Keywords: madness, mystery, The Shadowfell, undead, magic

Tie-In: Waterdeep: Dragon Heist



ECHOES OF NETHERIL

Eileanar is a floating city held aloft by a magic crystal

BACKSTORY

Eileanar, like all Netherese cities, was destroyed when Mystra paused The Weave long enough for the floating city to crash to the earth. However, Eileanar rose again in fragments and was re-settled by moon elves. Now the blue dragon Avegus has stolen the crystal whose power holds the city aloft and has set up a lair in the ruins below.

SECRETS

Twist: Lord Karsus, thought dead for centuries, lives on within the ruins of the city.

Karsus has enslaved the dragon and plans to destroy the crystal of Eileanar and bring down the floating city over Waterdeep (or another major city the PCs know), exacting revenge on the modern world that they may "know the pain of such destruction."



INTEREST

Hook: Recruited by Gaemon for their courage. **Rewards:** dragon's horde, pledge of friendship from moon elves.

Perils: Avegus (**adult blue dragon**), Lord Karsus (**demilich**), **stone golem**, **gargoyles**, traps.

SETTING

EILEANAR

Eileanar (floating) is a beautiful elven city built among the Netherese ruins, with elegant bridges spanning chunks of floating island. The ruins below are an overgrown wasteland jutting with the rubble of former buildings, including a sideways castle where Avegus makes his lair.

Maps: city ruins, dungeon

START

You find yourselves in the banqueting hall of the moon elves in a secret floating city high above the ruins of Eileanar. The place seems to glow with a pale light as the sparrow mead is poured and the lyre strikes up a haunting tune. Gaemon, your host, is making sure this meal will be a memorable one, for it may well be your last.

ROOM 1 (15m)

Finding the sideways castle where Avegus makes his lair should not be difficult, as some of Gaemon's troops have seen the blue dragon in the area. Descending through the twisted portcullis may prove difficult for those who do not fly or climb well, as it is a 400' drop (DC 15 Dex. skill challenge to climb down; 1 success required per 100'; 2 failures makes a fall).

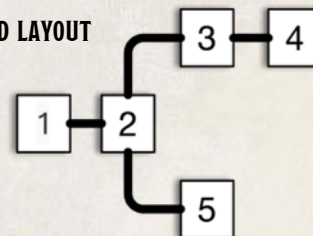
ROOM 2 (30m)

The vast courtyard is rigged with six sections of collapsing stones that can be magically triggered by anyone but Karsus. [DC 20 Wis. Per. detect / DC 20 Int. Inv. disarm / DC 20 Dex. save evade or take 6d6(21) bludgeoning]. Once one is detected the others can be detected with rolls at advantage.

ROOM 4 (45m)

Karsus awaits here, having ensnared Avegus in a magic collar (hold monster spell). He has the crystal, and threatens to bring Eileanar down upon them all if reduced to half hp or less.

SUGGESTED LAYOUT



ROOM 3 (45m)

A stone golem guards the entrance to this chamber, formerly a tower along the castle wall. It asks, "Who is the greatest sorcerer in Netheril?" (Answer: "Lord Karsus") and attacks if not given the correct answer straight away.

ROOM 5 (45m)

Six gargoyles guard a treasure horde (level-appropriate, generous, minimum 3 magic items). It is that of a mage rather than a dragon, as evidenced by spell-caster tomes, spell components, and other artefacts.

Keywords: Netheril, dragon, bbeg

Tie-In: Arcane Age



SETTLEMENTS

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"WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS: HOW DO THEY DO IT?
HUMANS, I MEAN. THEY CAN BARELY STOP KILLING EACH
OTHER LONG ENOUGH TO REBUILD THEIR CITIES. AND YET,
WHEN THEY DO..."

-BRAWN BRAWNMUS, DWARVEN NOBLE



JUSTICE COMES TO AMPHAIL

Ravenna is an assassin with a grudge

BACKSTORY

The party's patron, Sir Godfrey (LN **noble**), has received a death threat specifying that wherever he is, he will be murdered on the night of the new moon. He has fled Waterdeep to Amphail to lie low, and hired the party to protect him. Little does he know the assassin is in Amphail among them, and her motives are personal.

SECRETS

Twist: The good guy is a bad guy and vice versa.

Ravenna (CN **assassin** with 36 hp while possessed; **commoner** with 8 hp when exorcised) is the sister of Gilda, whom Godfrey caroused with and then left destitute with child this time last year. He has a reputation in Amphail for such behaviour, though the party may not know this at first. Ravenna is under the influence of The Spirit of Amphail (**ghost**), who seeks justice and retribution. Ravenna, whom Godfrey has never met, is posing as a jolly barmaid in The Gilded Stallion, Godfrey's favourite tavern, where he plans to lodge for the fateful night.

START

The floor of the dimly-lit tavern is covered in straw, and through the lamplight the craggy faces of local farmers stare at you from their regular booths. More than anything, they grimace at the foppishly-dressed nobleman beside you, delicately sipping the froth from his ale and visibly sweating.

ACT I (30m)

Investigations in The Gilded Stallion and around town. Social interactions should be high DC, but may reveal more about the legend of The Spirit of Amphail, Godfrey's reputation, that Ravenna's jolly demeanour is just an act, or that Godfrey "knows" her sister. Godfrey encourages PCs to take watch outside the tavern, at the main entrance, and outside his room. Ravenna plans to hide in his room just after closing time and stick him with a poisonous dart.

ACT II (45m)

Ravenna attempts to kill Godfrey, then flee out the window. PCs may discover her, leading to a chase scene, or discover the deed and some clues the next morning or when they check on Godfrey. The poison will have paralysed but not killed him, such that he can be revived in Waterdeep (for a price, which his father will pay).

ACT III (1h 15m)

The hunt for Ravenna is on, leading to a chase scene, investigation, and/or combat. If reduced to half hp, captured or on initiative count 10, Ravenna will revert to being a **commoner** with 8hp (regardless of hp when reverting), but in doing so The Spirit of Amphail will appear and may attack the party. It will choose to flee rather than kill them once they have been sufficiently punished for interfering with the course of justice. The PCs may wish to remonstrate with Godfrey or visit Gilda upon hearing Ravenna's side of the story.



INTEREST

Hook: Hired by Sir Godfrey. **Rewards:** Expense-paid trip, reward money, Sir Godfrey's thanks, solving the mystery.

Perils: Ravenna the assassin, The Spirit of Amphail (ghost), angry villagers.

SETTING

AMPHAIL

The Gilded Stallion and surroundings are inhabited by terse farmers suspicious of outsiders. They all believe in the Spirit of Amphail. Godfrey is sweaty and nervous. The nights are eerily quiet. People have clearly fallen on hard times.

Maps: town, tavern

Keywords: revenge, undead, mystery, assassin, rural, horror, nobility

Tie-In: Waterdeep: Dragon Heist



NIGHTMARE ON HELM STREET

S'nara Jos is an evil wizard from a far off land

BACKSTORY

S'nara Jos is harvesting souls for the lich king of Thay, S'aaz Tam. PCs have crossed her, and also proved brave. Striking fear into the brave feeds one of S'aaz's phylacteries. She wants them alive for this purpose.

SECRETS

Twist: The meeting was a setup.

S'Nara is a Red Wizard of Thay sent here to scout for a possible invasion. She is also collecting the fear of the brave to feed S'aaz Tam's phylacteries. She has an accomplice, a Thayan **assassin**, and has hired some Zhentarim mercenaries (**thug**) to help with her kidnapping efforts. Her mansion in a formerly prestigious, now dilapidated part of town is guarded by **gargoyles**.



INTEREST

Hook: Invited by each other. **Rewards:** Escaping alive, learning more about their evil plot, S'Nara's treasure and equipment. **Perils:** The assassin, thugs, and S'Nara.

SETTING

WATERDEEP

It is festival time, with people wearing masks and carousing. They can be heard outside S'Nara's cellars, which are dark and adorned with strange symbols. Her mansion feels almost uninhabited, and is cold, dark, and adorned with objects of exotic/unfamiliar design.

Maps: city street, mansion with cellar

START

You find yourself outside The Shining Talons tavern on Helm Street at midnight, each waiting for the others to arrive. Yet the tavern is closed so the proprietor can participate in the festival, with a sign on the door saying as much. Confusion ensues as you realise that each of you received an "invitation" from one another to meet here, yet none of you actually sent invitations.

ACT I (45m)

A shot is fired at the toughest-looking PC from above by an **assassin** on the roof. In lieu of poison damage, these crossbow bolts require a DC 15 Wisdom save, or induce hallucinations of the PC's greatest fears, causing them to do nothing on their turn until they succeed on a subsequent saving throw at the end of their turn. **thugs** numbering twice the party's size appear on each end of the street (4x party size in total), wearing masks, wielding weapons and carrying nets. They demand surrender. Roll for initiative. The adversaries will knock PCs out rather than deal a death blow, attempting to capture them all alive.

ACT II (30m)

If captured or even killed, the party wakes up as captives with 1hp in S'nara's mansion cellar, gagged and bound. She will have revived any dead party members if necessary. S'nara (**archmage**) will attempt to induce fear using the same poison as in the previous act on one of the characters. If she succeeds, the character falls unconscious again and S'nara leaves. This is their chance to escape. Their equipment is stored nearby. They can escape through a nearby window or explore her mansion.

ACT III (1h)

The PCs confront S'nara in her mansion. They may have been captured, or may have escaped and been investigating their kidnapping attempt. The Zhentarim hire-swords might squeal. The assassin is a mysterious woman dressed in Thayan garb who would rather kill herself than talk. She has been spying on the party, and sent the invitations. S'nara keeps half the party size (rounded down) in **gargoyles**. If S'nara is reduced to half hit points, she will use a medallion around her neck to cast Dimension Door and escape with the phylactery, leaving behind a trove of exotic treasure and another mystery to be solved. If she is captured, she would rather destroy the phylactery and kill herself than talk.

Keywords: Red Wizards of Thay, poison, overwhelming odds, escape from danger

Tie-Ins: Dead in Thay, Waterdeep: Dragon Heist



YOU SHALL GO TO THE BALL

Lord Rosznar's Ball is a nobleman's party with sinister intentions

BACKSTORY

Lord Rosznar (**vampire spawn**) is celebrating the restoration of his family title after exile for slave trading, and has thrown a party for the elite of Waterdeep.

SECRETS

Twist: The bad guy is worse than we thought.

Lord Rosznar (**vampire spawn**) is in league with the lich king of Thay, S'aaz Tam. His plan is to lure some of the elite partygoers into his "private chambers" to induce nightmares that feed S'azz's phylactery, then "cure" them and hold them to ransom for future "cures" his minions will subsequently inflict.

START

The Roznar family apartments are a lavish old dwelling in the Sea Ward. Each of you have come here for different reasons, but all of you want to know more about the mysterious Lord Roznar, recently restored to his title and returned to Waterdeep. Everyone who is anyone in Waterdeep is in attendance as well, presumably for similar reasons.

ACT I (30m)

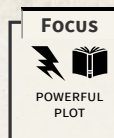
The PCs assemble and mingle. Use skill checks for socialising, dancing, drinking, and investigating as appropriate. Point out the **helmed horror** guarding the door. At some point they may spot an assassin they knew from elsewhere or other minor enemy or minion in the crowd. The serving girl is very specific about who gets what drinks, and at some PCs should notice "ill" nobles being escorted into Roznar's private sitting room. They may hear screams or ranting at the door. There are subtle Thayan-influenced decor elements, and the suggestion the Roznurs worship Azmodeus.

ACT II (1h)

The PCs may see the serving girl (**spy**) poisoning the drinks. She may attempt to poison one of them. In lieu of poison damage, these drinks once ingested require a DC 15 Wisdom save, or induce hallucinations of the PC's greatest fears, causing them to do nothing on their turn until they succeed on a subsequent saving throw at the end of their turn. They will be smuggled away quickly. Whatever the case, some PCs may end up in Roznar's private chambers (a lavish sitting room with a chaise longue where he draws blood as well as fear to feed his master's phylactery). He may call on any number of **thugs** to assist him in conflict. He will try to play things down and prevaricate if confronted directly.

ACT III (1h)

Should the PCs cause too much ruckus, **guards** will be dispatched to arrest them and throw them in the dungeons below Castle Waterdeep. Should they capture Lord Roznar he will fight to escape and call on minions for aid, revealing as little as possible (including his vampirism). The characters may report back to their quest-givers or otherwise resolve the session in relation to their stated goals. This will likely lead to additional adventure and investigation, since Roznar's "family" is extensive and powerful. If Roznar gets away he will continue his plans, and a noble held to ransom may contact the PCs in future for help.



INTEREST

Hook: Invited, hired, or curious to investigate. **Rewards:** Roznar's treasure, uncovering plot. **Perils:** Lord Roznar and his thugs.

SETTING

THE ROZNAR FAMILY MANSION

Lively party full of foppish nobility and extravagant, frivolous food, drink, and entertainment.

Map: mansion

Keywords: Red Wizards of Thay, undead, nobility, social event, mystery

Tie-Ins: Dead in Thay, Waterdeep: Dragon Heist



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-CALADRIEL OF NORTHDARK, DRUID



I'D LIKE TO THANK THE LITTLE PEOPLE

Thulro Hornblower is a pompous merchant

BACKSTORY

Thulro (halfling **commoner**) is a braggart and swindler prone to scorning the "little people". Now he has disappeared without a trace. His elderly mother is offering her life savings to anyone who can rescue him and bring his kidnappers to justice.

SECRETS

Twist: Thulro receives poetic justice.

His captors are, in fact, little people--a band of vigilante sprites intent on stopping his dealings from destroying their homes. Thulro knows that if anyone finds out he was bested by such tiny creatures he will be a laughing stock. Even his own mother might disown him.



INTEREST

Hook: One of the PCs may have a soft spot for the mother, or it could just be a case of work-for-hire. **Rewards:** The thanks of the Hornblower family, and the reward money. **Perils:** Vigilante sprites and their tricks and traps, including the treacherous Blueleaf Burrows.

SETTING

BLUELEAF BURROWS

South of Waterdeep, verdant tunnels of Blueleaf shrubbery wind through the hills and along the riverbanks. Touched with feywild magic, some say they make an endless maze.

Maps: tunnels, caves

START

Dense tunnels of thorny green shrubbery lie before you, dripping in places with bright blue sap. Snagged on a branch before you is a scrap of velvet--a clue that your quarry lies within.

OPENING ACT (15m)

Flashback: Halia Hornblower (halfling **commoner**) pleads with the party for support from her tiny thatched cottage outside the city walls. An avid lacemaker, her house is draped in lace and smells of dust. She is open about Thulro's arrogance toward "little people" and that he has made many enemies through his dealings in the past. She offers tea and cookies. His recent interest was in clearing the Blueleaf Burrows for improved trade access to the river. Allow the PCs to interact with her and define their interests in attempting to rescue him.

ROOM 1 (30m)

Exploration of the Burrows, a labyrinthine network of hedge tunnels. Allow players to describe how their characters will help navigate the terrain, and make medium-DC skill checks to follow clues (a whiff of Thulro's cologne, scraps of clothing, even the occasional copper piece). At a point where the tunnel goes from requiring stooping to crawling for medium creatures, there is a trap--thorny branches pulled back on a gossamer trigger. The thorns do 7 damage to the front 3 party members or 3 on a successful DC 15 dex. save.

ROOM 2 (45m)

The burrows open out into a circular space lined with stones covered in druidic markings. This is a wild magic zone with a 50% chance of triggering a wild magic surge. Blue sap that drips from the overhead greenery coalesces into 2x party size saplings (use **mud mephit** stat. block, substituting sap for mud) who will attack any who enter. Two of the three exits from here connect to each other; the third leads to the burrow where Thulro is being held.

ROOM 3 (30m)

Thulro is bound in this burrow by thick vines (DC 20 str. to free) and guarded by party size (**sprites**) who are invisible. He pleads his innocence with the party, but there are holes in his story, and it should be obvious he is not wholly sympathetic. If the party tries to free him, the area within 20' of Thulro will have entangle cast upon it (spell save DC 15). The sprites will then attempt to convince the party of their cause, asking Thulro for reassurances about his plans to clear the burrows. If negotiations go too far south, Eldar (**archdruid**) will appear from the exit to Room 2 and mediate.

Keywords: fey, kidnapping, ecology

Tie-Ins: Waterdeep: Dragon Heist, Return to Myth Drannor



A SINKING FEELING

Buckman Chao is a mercenary sent to kill a PC

BACKSTORY

One or more of the party has angered someone important from a past adventure or their backstory, and is being sent to their doom by a pair of cut-throats with a well-rehearsed routine. "Baron" Goldpetal (NE Elven **bandit**) sends the victims on a rescue mission to the Fallen Lands and Buckman Chao (CE Hobgoblin **assassin**) finishes them off.

SECRETS

Twist: It was all a setup to kill the PC.

There is no caravan travelling with Goldpetal's beautiful cousin to rescue. The pair were paid by the PC's nemesis to lure them to their death. The tracking gem has been placed in an old wreckage site surrounded by quicksand. Buckman is perched in a nearby tower. She hopes to finish them off while from afar whilst the sink.



INTEREST

Hook: Rescue a caravan of important cargo. **Rewards:** Payment, esteem of Lords' Alliance. **Perils:** Sand skimmers, Buckman, quicksand.

SETTING

FALLEN LANDS

A desolate landscape with howling winds and cloudless lightning, full of quicksand and strange beasts.

Map: wasteland

START

Wind whips through the vast badlands stretching before you. To your east is the desolate Anauroch desert, and to the west cloudless thunder echoes across the moors. Ahead of you, a dead, lightning-struck tree begins slowly sinking into the ground.

ACT I (1h)

Quick flashback: "Baron" Goldpetal in the Pilgrim's Rest tavern in Parnast pleads for their help and offers a reward, placing the tracking gem in the marked PC's hand. Goldpetal claims a griffon patrol spotted the caravan a few days ago, and that the cargo is of importance to the Lords' Alliance. Have the players describe why their character decided to accept this mission. **Fallen Lands:** roll for initiative as sand skimmers (use **giant crocodile**, tails do piercing instead of bludgeoning damage, swims through sand) rise up onto the flat rocks, churning quicksand (DC 15 dex. save to cross without sinking) in their wake.

ACT II (45m)

Through DC 15 nature/survival/perception checks the party navigates to the wreckage of a long-deceased dwarven mining caravan surrounded by quicksand (passive per. 18+ to detect). The gem is buried in the wreckage. Once the party encounters the quicksand, Buckman fires poisoned crossbow bolts at the marked PC from a ruined tower 80' away. Buckman hopes to fell the marked PC before they can reach her.

ACT III (15m)

Buckman will drop onto a **giant scorpion** mount if the party gets near. The mount can navigate quicksand as normal terrain. Buckman leaves behind evidence of the stakeout and an elven ring encircled in golden petals (family symbol of the "Baron"). The party may catch up to Buckman and remonstrate, or trek back to find the Baron and learn about the setup.

Keywords: Lords' Alliance

Tie-In: Princes of the Apocalypse



THE GIFT HORSE

The mission is to escort a PC's faction ambassador

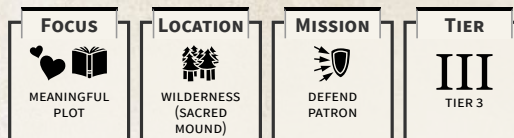
BACKSTORY

Clotius the Wise (NG **Druid**) seeks to make peace with the fey of Iselore's Mound deep in the forests of Cormyr. He has taken The Brotherly Band, a headband which conveys true sight, as an offering, and enlisted the party to escort him through these mysterious, dangerous woods.

SECRETS

Twist: The Brotherly Band has been cursed by a green hag coven.

Anyone who puts on the band will take 6d6 psychic damage and be cursed with blindness. The hags will have cursed the object the night before the adventure begins.



INTEREST

Hook: securing a lasting peace with the fey is of great importance to the faction. **Rewards:** renown within faction, green hags' treasure. **Perils:** green hags, blink dogs, centaurs, dryads, awakened trees.

SETTING

ISELORE'S MOUND

The forests of Cormyr are mystical and fey-touched. The mound of Iselore is sacred to druids and The Emerald Enclave, named for a prominent member who is said to have melded with the earth here.

Maps: sacred mound, forest

START

Deep within the forests of Cormyr the veil between the material plane and feywild is thin. Leaves seem to wink and brooks sing like children. You seek the Mound of Iselore and its centaurs, and as fate would have it hoof prints now cross your path.

ACT I (30m)

Ask the party what skills they will bring to finding the centaurs and make skill checks as appropriate. Hunters' traps have been laid in the area (DC 10 Wis. Per. to detect; 2d4 piercing damage). A **Goblin** spy with the eye of the green hag coven is spying on the party. He will flee if detected, using his invisibility potion to try to escape.

ACT II (45m)

The Mound of Iselore is a wild magic zone; all spells of first level and above have a 50% chance of triggering an effect from the PHB wild magic table. The Mound is home to four sacred trees, each inhabited by a **Dryad**, 3 **Awakened Trees**, and 12 **Centaurs** including a captain with 72 HP. Upon donning the band, the captain will order all to attack. The fey will subdue and capture the party rather than kill them. Successful negotiations will exonerate them, and investigation will reveal that hags have cursed the Band. The centaurs will expect the party to deal with the hags themselves.

ACT III (1h 15m)

Successful investigation and tracking will reveal the **Hag** coven hideout, a sea dragon shell with wooden legs (move 10'/turn). Three hags reside within, guarded by a **Blink Dog** named Flash. Any one of the hags can remove the curse if coerced; all will barter for their lives at half HP. Their lair contains a generous amount of treasure, magic items, and some rather disgusting oddities.

Keywords: factions, fey, wild magic zone, curses

Tie-In: Return to Myth Drannor



APPENDIX

ADVENTURE ELEMENTS



Chase scenes



Combat



Exploration



Investigation



Magic Items



Monsters



Puzzles



Social interaction



Traps

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

2d6x10 – e.g. the result of rolling two
six-sided dice times ten

DC – Difficulty class

DM – Dungeon Master

HP – Hit points

NPC – Non-player character

PC – Player character

OTHER RESOURCES

The Spontaneous Dungeon Master's Companion:

<https://bit.ly/sdmc4dms>

The One-Page One-Shot Toolkit:

<https://bit.ly/1p1stk>

YouTube Channel: <http://j.mp/spontaneousDM>

TIE-INS

Princes of the Apocalypse_____8, 19

Storm King's Thunder_____9

Waterdeep: Dragon Heist_____10, 13, 14, 15, 17

Arcane Age_____11

Dead in Thay _____14, 15

Return to Myth Drannor_____17, 19

DIFFICULTY CLASSES

Type	DC	Example
Very easy	5	Do something anyone can do
Easy	10	Do something many can do
Medium	15	Do something hard for most
Hard	20	Do something only experts can do
Very Hard	25	Do something hard for experts
Nearly Impossible	30	Do something legendary/unlikely

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[Sly Flourish](#) is the DM who first got me really thinking about efficient, game-focused preparation, and I highly recommend his *Lazy Dungeon Master* series. [John Fourr's](#) work on five-room dungeons helped me find the right scope for my delves.

Finally, special thanks to Valerie Peake for proofreading and overall support with getting these adventures out into the world.

Game on!

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