

A FAMILY REUNION

by Jessica Marcrum

CREATURE: *Melusine* | **LEVEL:** 7

SYNOPSIS

Monster hunting is a noble profession for only the bravest adventurers. But when a monster queen hires the party to reunite her family and restore her honor, the traditional methods of death and dismemberment are no longer on the table. Melusine is missing her children and the party must recover them all alive. This is an adventure for Tier 2 characters and optimized for a party of 4-5 level 7 characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

They may be mercenaries, monster hunters, or knights errant, hired for their efficiency and their reputation of never leaving a job undone. The adventure begins when they are hired for a “retrieval job.”

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Melusine was once married to a powerful king with whom she had several children, all brilliant but physically monstrous. Her agreement to marriage entailed that she would be granted Saturdays entirely to herself. After multiple monstrous children, her husband spied on her one Saturday and saw her bathing. Shockingly, the lower half of her body had been replaced with either the body of a fish, a snake, or two fish-tails, depending on who was telling the legend. Later at court, he embarrassed her by alluding to her true form. Enraged, she flew into the air and was never seen again. Following her disappearance, her children were each hunted down for sport or died under mysterious circumstances. In this telling, Melusine has foreseen these tragedies and wishes to protect her brood.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **MELUSINE:** *Yuan-ti malison type 3*, former queen, and ruler of the Serpent Palace
- **GUILLAUME:** *Cambion*, a skillful politician, and the next in line to rule
- **GENERAL JEHAN:** *Minotaur*, his country’s most talented general
- **COLLETTE:** *Lamia*, a very promising scholar
- **ROBERT:** *Jackalwere*, a deadly assassin
- **YSABEL:** *Harpy*, a singer of great renown

CHAPTER 1 – AN UNUSUAL ASSIGNMENT

The party arrives at a jungle temple decorated with snake motifs. A servant (likely a **yuan-ti pureblood**, but could also be any creature transfigured to appear human) asks them to leave all weapons, magical items, and components in a locked room near the entrance, out of respect for the queen. Melusine sits on a cobra-shaped throne before them. She informs them that since leaving her kingdom, she has had a vision foretelling the death of her children. Fearful for their safety, she charges the party with bringing her five adult children to her and offers great reward in return. She warns that if any of her children are killed, they will face her and her yuan-ti guards. She directs the party to begin with her eldest son, Guillaume, who should still be serving in his father's court, and gives them official documentation as royal ambassadors.

If asked, Melusine knows the careers of her children, but not their locations.

POLITICAL INTRIGUE

Melusine's palace is several days' journey from her ex-husband's court. (Sidequests may ensue at DM's discretion.)

Upon arrival at court, the party see Guillaume, a well-dressed cambion, giving a speech before an enraptured crowd. Adventurers must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw to avoid being charmed, and a DC 18 Charisma check to interrupt him. If they interrupt, Guillaume is angry and less likely to listen. If they wait until his speech is over (and it will be long), he hears them out.

Guillaume is eager to see his mother again, but does not want to leave when he is so close to achieving his political goals. With a successful DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion OR Intimidation) check, he can be made to follow the party back to Melusine. Otherwise, he insists that they immediately present themselves as ambassadors and speak before the court on his behalf, asking that they claim that, where the party is from, princes are given supreme power without being susceptible to the whims of a parliament.

Whether the party speak before court or not, Guillaume suggests that he see his sister Ysabel at the opera house while they wait for tomorrow's vote.

For a more open world campaign, Guillaume can give them directions to Jehan as well. In this case,

Robert ambushes them after they connect with Jehan and takes them to Ysabel if he defeats them.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Ysabel can be found in her dressing room at the opera house. Adventurers must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma check to bypass security or bribe the guard with at least 20 sp. Ysabel states that she yearns to see her mother, but cannot leave before tonight's performance. She also feels neglected since her sister Collette has never heard her sing, and asks the party to convince Collette to attend tonight's performance. With a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion OR Intimidation) check, she can be convinced to abandon the performance in favor of her understudy. Otherwise, the party is off to the college.

THE LEARNED LAMIA

Collette has no interest in seeing her mother, nor in attending her sister's concert. She is deeply focused on her studies and feels hurt at being abandoned by her mother. She also blames her mother for her and her siblings' "deformities." She is researching a method of transitioning to human shape permanently while maintaining their unique abilities. Collette asks the party to be her research assistants. If they refuse, she casts *suggestion* and/or *geas* on them. If they accept, or if they are bewitched, Collette proceeds to practice casting *polymorph* on them, interspersed with *remove curse*.

- If the party chose to be research assistants voluntarily, Collette thanks them for being good sports and comes to the opera with them.
- If the party had to be magically convinced to assist Collette, she refuses to attend the opera, but agrees to head to Melusine's palace when it is convenient for her.

Collette mentions that she has concerns about her brother Jehan and hopes he is safe.

DEVELOPMENT

The party returns to the opera house for the evening's show, but can't shake the feeling that they are being watched. A thin jackal slinks just out of sight and into dark corners.

CHAPTER 2 — UNEXPECTED COMPLICATIONS

The party attends Ysabel's opera. They must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw to keep from being utterly convinced that abandoning monster hunting and devoting their life to Ysabel is the only way to live. The crowd begins to rush the stage, cheering, as Ysabel flies and sings above them. If Collette is with the party, she finds this hilarious.

After the show, Ysabel agrees to visit Melusine the following morning. If Collette is with the party, they travel together. They suggest the adventurers seek out Jehan as soon as possible.

AMBUSH

As the party is leaving, they are approached by an incredibly thin beggar. Regardless of how they respond, he reveals himself to be Robert, a **jackalwere**. He will accuse the party of stalking his family and attempt to fight them. The party must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation OR Persuasion) check to convince him. Otherwise, Robert attacks.

TACTICS: Robert will primarily use sleep gaze in an attempt to kidnap the party and bring them to Jehan.

- If the party reduces Robert to 4 hp or fewer, he can be subdued. If they have the equipment, the party can bind Robert (**note:** he is a shapeshifter and must be tied carefully) and bring him with them, or they can convince him that they have been hired by Melusine. This time, he will listen and take directions to Melusine's palace.
- If the party kills Robert, they can continue on their journey, but get *Conclusion A* no matter how the rest of the adventure plays out.
- If Robert defeats the party, continue to "The Training Grounds."

RETURN TO COURT

The following morning, if the party was not defeated by Robert, they may return to court. Guillaume's resolution passes overwhelmingly, and he is happy to take a brief visit to see his mother.

Upon leaving, party members with passive Perception 15+ will overhear confusion, as the nobility is released from Guillaume's spell. Some may make threats against the "devil prince," but do not take action unless threatened by the party.

TACTICS: If threatened by the party, court contains 20 **nobles**, about 10 of which fight the group. Guillaume fights on the party's side.

DEVELOPMENT

With all but General Jehan accounted for, it is time to take the few days' journey to the battlegrounds.

CHAPTER 3 — UNGENTLEMANLY OFFICERS

After a few days' journey, the party arrives at a training field with several tents, one notably larger than the others.

COMBATANTS

- Nobles – NE human **nobles**
- Personal Guards – TN **guards**
- Soldiers – TN human **veterans**

THE TRAINING GROUNDS

Party members with passive Perception 12+ overhears grumbling about "the big ox." Those with passive Perception 15+ hear two nobles plotting the death of "the monster prince."

- If the party is being transported by Robert, this still applies. Robert also hears the plotting.
- Inside the largest tent is General Jehan, a minotaur in full uniform who is studying battle plans.
- If Robert defeated them earlier, the party awakens as they are unceremoniously dumped out of a sack in front of Jehan. Adventurers must succeed on a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check, show the court invitation, or role play very well to convince Jehan that they have been hired by Melusine. Jehan convinces Robert to back off.
- Jehan expresses joy that his mother hasn't vanished for good, but states that he cannot leave now. War with a rival kingdom is brewing and he is concerned that some of his soldiers do not appear to trust him as they once did. He regrets that his appearance seems to matter much more than it used to.
- Paladins and others with the knight or soldier background can help Jehan make battle plans and put his mind regarding the coming war at peace.
- Adventurers who overheard the plot against Jehan may wish to inform him about the threat to his

- life. If Robert is there, he informs him and begin assassination plans.

MUTINY AVERTED

If the party has warned Jehan about the mutiny, he makes preparations and has two personal **guards** and one trusted **veteran** join him that night. If he has not been warned by the adventurers or Robert, Jehan and the adventurers are ambushed by his racist troops looking for new leadership.

The revolt consists of three nobles, each with two personal guards, and three soldiers.

SCALING: For higher level parties, add one additional **veteran** per **noble**. For lower level parties, reduce the hp of the soldiers to 44.

TACTICS: Nobles attack last, aiming to mitigate damage to themselves. They see the veterans as the most expendable. Enemy guards aim to protect the nobles first and engage Jehan second. They only attack adventurers or Robert if engaged first. Enemy soldiers concentrate on Jehan unless physically stopped by adventurers.

- Jehan's veteran acts as a bodyguard, while his two guards defend his tent. Jehan fights like a typical **minotaur**. Robert, if there, fights as a **jackalwere**, utilizing *sleep gaze*. He turns into a jackal and slink away before dying if he takes too much damage.
- If Jehan dies, the nobles offer the party 250 gp to look the other way. If they accept (and Robert is alive), he attacks them as they leave. This time, it is a fight to the death. Go to *Conclusion A*.
- If Jehan and the nobles all die, the fighting stops and the guards ask the adventurers to be merciful, one mercenary to another.
- If the party defeats the nobles and stops the mutiny, Jehan is thankful to the party for fighting on his side (and possibly warning him of the attack). If his veteran survives, he asks them to take charge while he accompanies the party on their journey to Melusine. If Jehan's veteran died, he calls in a major to take over command temporarily. Go to *Conclusion B*.

Note: If Jehan is met earlier in the game, he may go straight to Melusine or offer to accompany the party throughout the journey to “protect” them, especially if they are lacking a barbarian, fighter, or paladin. At this point, he also convinces Robert to go to Melusine, if he is there.

DEVELOPMENT

With Melusine's children accounted for, whether living or dead, it is time to return to the Serpent Queen for an accounting.

CONCLUSION A – MELUSINE'S WRATH

POTENTIAL COMBATANTS

- Melusine's throne: **giant constrictor snake**
- **Giant poisonous snake**
- **Swarm of poisonous snakes**
- Melusine's guards: LN **yuan-ti pureblood**
- Melusine: LN **yuan-ti malison type 3**

Melusine asks why the party has returned to her with only some of her children and questions their competence. She accuses them of being monster hunters through and through, more eager to kill than to do a proper job. She stands before the adventures and her snake throne reveals itself to be a **giant constrictor snake**. She summons 2 to 4 **giant poisonous snakes** at the party's sides, and 2 to 4 **swarms of poisonous snakes** behind them, at DM's discretion based on party level.

- **DIFFICULTY SCALING:** For stronger parties, 2 to 6 of Melusine's guards (**yuan-ti pureblood**) also fight.
- **OPTION FOR SCALING:** Melusine may summon the higher number of snakes as punishment for adventurers who lost several of her children, regardless of party size and composition. In this option, her guards always join.

If the party spoke before court on Guillaume's behalf, let Collette experiment on them, or attended Ysabel's opera, the children will speak out on behalf of the adventurers. If either Jehan or Robert are alive, they lend their voices also. If Jehan was warned about the mutiny, but still slain, Robert also speaks on the party's behalf, assuming he wasn't killed.

If more than half of her children advocate for the party, Melusine does not join in the fight herself. She agrees that the adventurers may not be all bad but must prove their worthiness to live in order to make up for their incompetence. If two or fewer children speak up for the party, Melusine joins in the fight herself.

If the adventurers defeat the snakes and Melusine did not fight, she gives them 500 gp for each child returned to her.

If Melusine fights the adventurers and is slain, they may loot the rod of rulership from her body. Her living children do not attack adventurers unless pro-

voked, but tell the party that they are no longer welcome in their home kingdom nor in Melusine's palace. If alive, Ysabel sings a mourning song as her siblings escort the party out.

CONCLUSION B – HAPPY REUNION

Melusine is overjoyed to see all of her children alive. She throws a massive feast to celebrate, with Ysabel providing music. If adventurers allowed Collette to practice on them, she demonstrates what she has learned on Jehan, to the family's amusement.

- Melusine gives the party 500 gp for each child returned to her as well as the *staff of the python*.
- If the party spoke before the court, Guillaume gives them his *eyes of charming*.
- If the party allowed Collette to practice on them, she winks and give them a *mantle of spell resistance*.
- If the party attended the opera, Ysabel gives them *pipes of haunting* and say that she hopes they can play together in the future.
- Robert gives the adventurers a *robe of useful items*, saying that an assassin can never be too prepared.
- If the party warned Jehan, he gives them a ring of the minotaur (see: *Ring of the Ram*) and ask them to think fondly of him.

Characters are informed that they are always welcome both at Melusine's palace and at the children's court, which Guillaume and Jehan are shortly going to control. (If desired for a longer campaign, they can refer adventurers to other quests or recruit them for the upcoming war).

REWARDS

POTENTIAL XP REWARDS:

Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards. (DMs may also choose to award listed XP for reuniting the children.)

CREATURES	XP
Guillaume (cambion)	1800
Ysabel (harpy)	200
Collette (lamia)	1,100
Robert (jackalwere)	100
Jehan (minotaur)	700
Melusine (yuan-ti malison type 3)	700
Guards	25 each
Nobles	25 each
Soldiers (veterans)	700 each
Swarm of poisonous snakes	450 each
Giant constrictor snake	450
Giant poisonous snake	50 each
Melusine's guards (yuan-ti pureblood)	200 each

POTENTIAL TREASURE REWARDS:

TREASURE	VALUE
Nobles' bribe	250 gp
Melusine's payment	500 gp per living child

Potential Item Rewards:

ITEM (FOUND IN DMG)

- *Rod of rulership*
- *Staff of the python*
- *Eyes of charming*
- *Mantle of spell resistance*
- *Pipes of haunting*
- *Robe of useful items*
- *Ring of the Minotaur* (*Ring of the Ram*, but change the following stats: a spectral minotaur head emerges; attack roll with +9 bonus, target takes 3d10 force damage.)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Melusine has been one of my favorite myths since childhood, partly due to my love of mermaids and partly due to her unabashed control in her relationship. I was always horrified that her children died tragically after she left, so this is my attempt of reuniting them with their powerful mom.

Thank you to Ashley for this amazing opportunity, to my lovely friends for telling me about the project and believing in me, and for my wonderful spouse without whom none of this would be possible!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Marcrum is a lifelong fan of myths, fantasy, and gaming. A former opera singer and current licensed social worker, she has had the good fortune to GM for several fantastic groups of adventurers over the last several years. Though Chicago-raised, she currently lives in Pittsburgh with her spouse and their three fat cats. She can be reached at @Miss_Jess03 on Twitter.