

Session 3 intro

Following the deer toward the lodge, the foliage becomes almost impossibly thick. Where before there were only sparse evergreens and shrubs, you now must wade through knee-high grasses and duck under thick vines which hang from tropical trees. Pushing through the greenery, you come to a region full of large flowering plants with purple petals growing in regularly spaced intervals, as if planted for cultivation. Finally, you approach the Lucky Deer Cabin.

Judging by its appearance, you certainly wouldn't guess that this structure was previously a hunting lodge. The wooden logs are completely covered by moss and vines of varying shades of green. Animals seem to be attracted to the area; you see plenty of prairie dog mounds, and there are a dozen or so birds perched on the roof with many more chirping and flying between nearby trees. Surrounding the cabin is a circle of stone cairns of various sizes. Perhaps the most striking feature is the presence of an enormous gum tree protruding straight out of the roof, as if it had grown directly through the roof.

Standing in one of the higher branches is Alyona, who calls out "You must forgive the mess; I am quite unused to having visitors. Come inside and I can explain what's going on."

* she pours liquorice tea for anyone who wants some* Since you've been to Zaridel already, I trust that you've already met Varinn. He talks a lot about '*perfection*,' but the part he doesn't say out loud is this: Zarunites believe that to be perfect requires being human; all other races are considered to be inferior. Where exactly this idea originated, I don't know, but the townspeople clearly believe it. You've seen how much power Varinn wields over the town's citizens.

I... I'm ashamed to admit that I myself used to buy into this belief. You see, although I look like a human, I was actually born as a half-elf. My elvish mother... I'd rather not go into the details, but let's just say that she betrayed me and my father. After that, I cursed my own elvish blood and wished to be free of anything tying me to it. I learned of a rumor that someone in Zaridel possessed the power to transform anyone into a human. Straight away, Varinn saw my insecurity and used it to mold me into the 'perfect' Zarunite. Once I had proven myself thoroughly converted to Zarunism, he performed the ritual using one of those orbs, the so-called "Right Eye of Zarus".

One minute I was in the cathedral, looking at the human woman you see before you. The next I was in this body, the whole of my consciousness seemed to have switched with hers. At first, I was happy.. finally having achieved the seemingly impossible goal of becoming human. But that soon faded when I started learning more about the inner workings of Zaridel.

At first I thought the town's people just held a cult-like devotion to Varinn, not uncommon in religious towns. But it's more than that. In the event that someone might go against his will, Varinn can somehow *force* them to do his bidding all whilst they believe they are acting of their own volition. I know it has something to do with this orb * holds up Left Eye of Zarus*.

Once I realized what Varinn was doing, I became disillusioned with Zarunism and fled the city to live in the forest for fear of being controlled like a puppet. I've lived out here for years now, and after reflecting on my choices, I've realized I want to get my original body back. But I have no idea where it is, or if it's even still alive. I thought if I stole this * holds up Left Eye of Zarus*, I would be able to force Varinn to return my mind to my body, like he uses it to force others to do what he wants. But sadly, I can't seem to figure out how it works. I

know a little about how some magical items require attunement, but this artifact seems to be too powerful for typical techniques.

There are archives containing information about magical artifacts at The Lavander Library. It's about 2 days journey from here, but the exact location is notoriously hard to find, probably due to protection wards. Also, I can't leave this area for that long since I must protect the animals who live here from Zarunites that Varinn has no doubt sent to find me.