**Session 22 - The Alorian Backroad - Family DnD - The Villainy of Zezzek**

Background: Tracker device plan implemented (sabotaged the other gift). You'll see updates on the enchanted map soon, if the plan worked. **Sky**, **Grim**, and **Nethra** are all grateful. Make sure everyone levels up to 14. Also, review the updated Satumaa map.

**Encounter 0: Parting Edona:**

* **Sky** gifts: 8 shiny silvery hats that provide some protection from mind control. Each hat is infused with fae magic and an extremely rare chromium-tin-electrum ore.
* **Nethra** gifts: from Grim and Nethra: they provide 8 horses and a wagon to speed your travels.
* Sky recommends finding weapons that deal psychic damage. These are rare but powerful. She doesn't know where.
* Grim presents: Scroll of non-detection (for wizard).
* [bread convo?] **Grim**: Here's a recipe for Starfall Sourdough Bread. For [500 gold | other trade] he'll give you a copy of his cookbook.
* [**Viviana** convo?] Viviana received a letter from family stating that **Elara** and **Thalgar** (Valathor's parents) are traveling from Ardentia back to Thalgar's Keep, and should be passing through Edona.

**Encounter 1:** Roll from the campfire/inn table for the first couple of nights.

**Encounter 2: Night of the blood moon:** As night falls, you see the moon start to turn blood red. Moon Druids powers are super strong and it's a time where Moon druids are meant to gather for sacred rituals. Zawn can leave for a druid gathering. If she does, she is able to consume a special mushroom, go into the forest, and magically teleport to the gathering spot and return by morning. If Zawn goes, she'll return with wisdom from the druids related to Zezzek. [tbd]

\* werewolf attack - subdue but don't kill?

2.5: **The blood moon ritual**: Druids all commune/meditate together with mushrooms to gain wisdom. Goes on all night. At the closing, Zawn can talk to other druids. If so, they share: Many silvershroom groves have been decimated. The elden trees are all highly distressed. Seems to be related to Zezzek's weapon. The gathering happened near the town of Loistava. Zawn can also ask about the tower. A fellow druid mentioned that there is a very old tower on top of the mountain just north of

Encounter 3: Meet Elara and Thalgar. Parents have heard of a group of powerful adventurers with 3 dragonborn and they suspected one was Valathor. They are extremely proud. They mention that they passed through a popular silvershroom grove near Ardentia and all the shrooms were stolen/missing. Other groves are around and their state is unknown. They give the heroes 5K[?] gold to help with whatever they need. They have urgent business back in Thalgar's keep and must continue on their journey. They invite all the heroes to visit Thalgar's keep if they ever get the chance.

Encounter 3.5: Remind the players to check the map to see if the tracker is working. The map indicates Zezzek is moving towards Southwick (west side). Zezzek doesn't stay for long and then travels back to Edona.

Encounter X: roll for random encounters along the path north. [time permitting]. Also, more decimated silvershroom groves are observed. Other encounters are listed on a separate page.

**Encounter 4**: A grove appears in the distance and you see a shroom falling to the ground. On closer inspection, you see a band of 10+ Aarakocra (flying eagle-like humanoids) with protective Giant Smoke Crows lending assistance. **Optional (depending on time)**: Suddenly, the heroes realize they are individually surrounded by another 10+ of the Aarakocra. Roll for initiative. After a handful are killed, the rest flee in fear. **Keep it short.**  As they retreat, you hear one say that these must be the enemies that Z warned them about.

**Encounter 5**: continue along road north. Stop in small villages for rest and to regain supplies, rest horses. Heroes stay at a special tavern, **The Crimson Crow**. **Whispers in the Walls Scenario**: Innkeeper's name is **Stixs**. She has a fine collection of wines and cheeses. If perceptive, heroes learn that guests have complained of hearing whispers coming from the walls at night. After drinking some wine, some of the heroes perhaps hear some whispers too. Heroes see a mouse scurry across the floor (or outside or whatever). Problem: the mice are here for safety. Their leader was tortured and this is the only place he feels safe. Resolution: Mice need to be coaxed out with food (Nym's rat can help too). Players need to discover that the inn has an infestation of telepathic mice and must negotiate with their leader, Pinky, to relocate the colony. Pinky has big pink ears. Pinky wants to stay here because he has been tortured in a lab in the past. He is afraid to leave. He can be convinced to leave if offered safe passage to a forest home **AND** given lots of bread and cheese AND the inn keeper, Stixs, will agree to bring them a cheese wheel once a month. Styxs will agree to do this if she is prepaid for the cheese: **300 GP** will suffice.

Random Inn encounters:

1. **Rowdy Drunk**: A loud, heavily intoxicated patron challenges the strongest-looking party member to a drinking contest. Losing could lead to embarrassment or an impromptu brawl.
2. **Mysterious Stranger**: A hooded figure beckons the party over to their corner table and offers them a job—details and rewards are vague, but it's dangerous work.
3. **Pickpocket**: One of the party members feels a slight tug on their coin pouch and spots a nimble-fingered child or halfling attempting to make off with their gold.
4. **Bard’s Performance**: A skilled bard begins performing a hauntingly beautiful song that mesmerizes the crowd. However, their music seems to have a strange magical effect, perhaps charming or pacifying those who listen for too long.
5. **Food Poisoning**: A couple of patrons suddenly become violently ill after eating a meal. The innkeeper is concerned and asks the party to investigate what caused it.
6. **Bar Fight**: A brawl erupts between two rival adventuring groups over a perceived insult or disputed claim. The party can either try to de-escalate or jump in for some chaotic fun.
7. **Ghostly Visitor**: A ghost appears in the tavern, unseen by most but clearly focused on the party. It may be seeking help with unfinished business or delivering a warning.
8. **Thieves' Guild Recruitment**: A charismatic rogue approaches the party’s stealthiest member, offering them an invitation to join the local Thieves' Guild.

Random non-fight campfire encounters:

1. **Nature's orchestra**: A sudden chorus of nocturnal creatures creates an eerie yet beautiful symphony in the woods.
2. **Ghostly campfire**: The group encounters a phantom campfire with spectral travelers sharing tales of their journeys.
3. **Fey mischief**: Playful fey creatures lead the party on a harmless but confusing detour through the woods.
4. **Talking animal**: A wise old animal (like an owl or fox) approaches the party, offering guidance or requesting a small favor.
5. **Weather phenomenon**: An unusual weather event occurs, such as glowing rain, floating snowflakes, or a warm breeze carrying whispers.
6. **Lost merchant**: A distressed merchant has become separated from their caravan and seeks help to reunite with their group.
7. **A giant grick -** https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/16912-grick slithers by but doesn't disturb the heroes. It shakes a few trees, carries on. Looks like a mind flayer with extra body/legs.
8. **A giant Remorhaz** slithers up, falls asleep by the fire, and leaves in the morning. Looks like a caterpillar.
9. **A giant minotaur** wanders by. Asks to warm up by the fire, shares some wine, moves on.
10. **A giant owlbear lands** in a nearby tree; it looks on alert but is not interested in the heroes. It's been tracking a giant boa constrictor. Just as the python is about to attack, it swoops down, and snatches it and flies away.
11. **A giant vulture** lands on a nearby hill and begins to devour a giant spider. It leaves behind some poison sacs.
12. **A baby bahir** is seen in the shadows lurking near camp. It is a baby and has lost it's family/nest. It just wants help finding it's family again.

Secret Goals:

**Moothalamoo**: You've noticed that Grim and Nethra have a large baking oven in their kitchen. You've seen Grim baking with the staff cooks. Talk to him about bread before leaving.

**Eclipse**: Dungeon and Dragon werewolves are similar to Harry Potter werewolves: some are evil but many are likely infected with lycanthropy and are otherwise good folk. Kind of like Professor Lupin. As a Mercy Bringer paladin, you feel strongly that you should try to help any werewolves and not assume that they are evil. Share this knowledge with the heroes at the appropriate time.

**Grimwald**: None of the encounters in this session require fighting (except one which will likely start with combat but quickly end). Help the heroes steer towards non-violent options but also let them do as much of the decision making as possible. I want to try doing this more too and will try to give the other heroes the chance to decide things on their own too based on how I narrate the encounters.

**Nym**: Time permitting, the heroes will encounter some curious mice. Don't assume that they are just vermin that need eliminated. Your ability to communicate telepathically with your rat can help you out with this encounter. Help the heroes (and mice) find a good resolution to the situation.

**Valathor**: Talk to your cousin, Viviana, before leaving Edona. She may have a message for you. Also, review your backstory. I have a copy in case you need it. Remember who your parents are. Think about what you would say to them if you haven't seen them for many years.

**Zawn**: When the signs of the blood moon appear, let the other heroes know you need to disappear for the night but will return by morning. Bring some extra mushrooms with you to share with other druids. Also, talk to the other druids afterwards and ask about things like the Elden Trees, Loistava Tower (from the foretelling received 2 sessions ago), etc.

Cookbook recipes:

**Moonshade Loaf:** A dark, dense bread infused with night-blooming herbs and a touch of luminescent moonflower essence. It glows faintly in darkness.

**Dragonfruit Scones:** Flaky scones studded with pieces of rare dragonfruit. The fruit's scales add a crunchy texture and subtle spiciness.

**Elven Honeycomb Rolls:** Light, airy rolls with a honeycomb structure. Made with elvish whisper-flour and nectar from sacred forest flowers.

**Shadowmist Muffins:** Rich, chocolate muffins with a swirl of shadow essence. They're said to temporarily enhance night vision when consumed.

**Frostfire Biscuits:** Crisp biscuits that are cool to the touch but leave a warm, tingling sensation in the mouth. Baked with ice crystals from mountain peaks and embers from a phoenix's nest.

**Whispering Willow Flatbread:** Thin, crispy flatbread seasoned with crushed willow bark and enchanted herbs. It's said to impart wisdom to those who eat it.

**Starfall Sourdough:** A crusty sourdough made with a starter cultivated from wild yeast found in fallen meteorites. Tiny, glittering specks are visible in the bread.

**Emberberry Tarts:** Flaky pastries filled with rare emberberries that grow in volcanic soil. The berries provide a burst of warmth and spice when bitten.

**Sylvan Spice Cake:** A moist cake flavored with a blend of forest spices and decorated with edible flowers. It's rumored to grant temporary communion with nature spirits.

**Crystalbloom Crumpets:** Delicate crumpets infused with powdered crystalbloom petals. They have a slight iridescent sheen and are said to enhance magical abilities when consumed.

Valathor's background:

In the ancient land of Drakonia, where dragonkind once reigned supreme, Valathor emerged as a unique figure—a dragonborn cameforth of the union between Thalgar, a revered dragon warrior of the Flamescale Clan, and Elara, a daring human princess from the kingdom of Ardentia.

The backstory of Valathor begins with his parents. It was said that Thalgar, on a quest to patrol the borders of Drakonia, stumbled upon Elara amidst the rugged terrain of the Dragonspine Mountains. Elara, an intrepid princess adventurer from the distant Kingdom of Ardentia, had ventured into Drakonia in search of ancient relics rumored to be hidden within the dragon-infested lands.

Their encounter was unexpected yet fateful, as Thalgar found himself captivated by Elara's bravery and determination in the face of danger. Despite the initial tension between their two races, A love bloomed amidst the chaos of adventure, defying the conventions of both dragonborn and human societies.

Their son, Valathor was raised amidst the traditions of the dragonborn, Valathor was trained in combat by his father, instilling in him the values of honor and strength. Yet, he also inherited his mother's adventurous spirit, yearning to explore the world beyond Drakonia's borders. Drawn to tales of heroism, Valathor embarked on a journey with a band of adventurers, honing his skills as a fighter and forming deep bonds of connection along the way. Now, wielding his mother's sword, indicating his noble birthright of Ardentia and with the blood of generations dragons coursing through his veins, Valathor stands as a testament to the fusion of two worlds—a hero destined for greatness in the books of history.