

"WE'RE LIBRARIANS, NOT HEROES"

My players wanted to play an all-wizard adventure. Wizards don't stand up to combat on their own very much, and have a lot of interesting tools that could be used in creative ways, so I wanted to create a campaign that reflects that.

There is the option for more combat, though, if the players want, though I feel it's more interesting if they go with non-combat options. NPC motivations are sketched out broadly because it's the adventure will go off the rails. It should scale to any number of players you can handle and characters can be silly and non-optimal. In fact, characters optimized solely for combat might get bored.

I ran this twice, and it went completely differently each time. I ran it in D&D 5E but I see no reason why it couldn't work in any vaguely medieval fantasy game. For that reason, I haven't set the exact monsters to be used - this also would allow it to work at various levels.

THE PREMISE

There is a giant library, the main library for the kingdom. The party works for the library and enforces its rules. The rules are as follows:

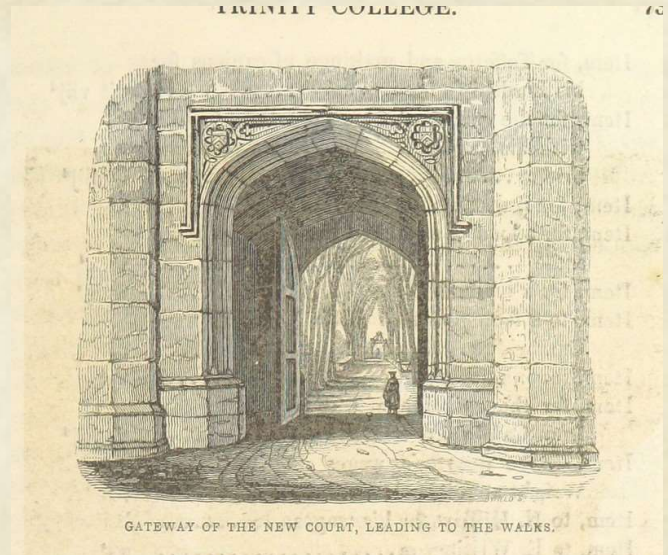
- The library is to provide learning and knowledge to all, powerful or weak, rich or poor.
- There is to be no excessive noise in the library.
- Library books must be returned by their due date. If they are not returned, they will be retrieved and a fine extracted.

The king is in a precarious position, politically. Recent military defeats have made him look weak, and many other members of the royal family, in particular his sister, are looking for an excuse to depose him. Once a year there's a ceremony involving a special book. At this point it's just a formality, but technically, if this ceremony does not occur, the king's rule is nullified.

The book is kept in the library, but obviously is not supposed to be checked out. However, a junior librarian has mistakenly checked the book out to a mysterious individual named **Kirigaranan**. The ceremony is in three days, and the kingdom is at risk. *But more importantly, the book is now overdue!*

WHAT CHARACTERS WORK WELL?

For wizards, divination and enchantment works well. Evocation worked out best of the combat-focused ones. I recommend making characters specific for the campaign. I tried playing with an existing party and it didn't work out quite so well. I suspect it might be fun with other impractical parties of all one class, especially ones with all sorts of utility abilities, like bards.



HOW IT BEGINS

The first thing the PCs will likely do is find out if there's a record of the book being checked out. Consistent with library policy, there is a name and address written down, but the address is in "Kenku Town", and nobody knows where that is. Only a scholar of the Kenku would be likely to know about it. Unfortunately, the local scholars have all disappeared, and all scholarly journals have been removed from the library... (see **Beryntanthropal** below.)

The players, if they ask around, learn that the scholars used to hang out in a particular **tea shop**. They also know that **Lady Jair** is a likely suspect in any schemes against the current king.

Over the course of the game, the players should start in the **Library**, then probably visit some subset of Lady Jair, the tea shop, and then afterwards maybe the dragon. Then they'll get enough information to make their way to the swamp and get the kenku to return the now overdue library book.

THE ANTAGONISTS

LADY JAIR

She is the sister of the king, a human in her late 40's with her hair pulled back in a tight bun, wearing plain but severe clothes. She speaks rarely, but when she does everyone knows to listen. She runs the **Office of Information**, under which falls both the kingdom's intelligence service and the Library.

She hates the Library. Information should be controlled, and if seditious, burned. She's next in line for the throne, and it's not a secret that she is manoeuvring to undermine her brother. She isn't evil, though. She wouldn't murder her brother to get her way, and honestly if conveniently believes that her becoming queen would be for the good of the kingdom. She isn't behind a plot to dethrone the queen, at least not directly, and doesn't really know anything useful about the plot. Her agents, acting independently, convinced **Kirigaranan** to steal the book.

However, as head of the Office of Information, she is one of the few people who know where the kenku are. In one game the party managed to trick her into revealing that information through an elaborate scheme that made use of her love of fine wine to find her at a wine bar.

KIRIGARANAN

He's a kenku. In this adventure, kenku are reclusive, living in houses on stilts in swamps, getting by mostly by fishing. Very little is known about them, and the area where they live is protected by ancient illusion magic. Kirigaranan is viewed as eccentric by the others because he likes to travel and is especially fascinated by the city, which he first visited to sell his crafts. He was particularly fascinated with the library, and learned to read and write over the course of many visits. He wants to one day move there with his daughter, and for that reason wanted to bring a book with him back to his village to teach her to read.

His daughter wants a book about princesses. He wasn't sure how to find such a thing, and didn't want to ask a librarian because he planned to not bring it back, so wound up talking to someone in a tea shop who was surprisingly helpful (because he was an agent of Lady Jair). That man nudged him towards stealing this particular book.

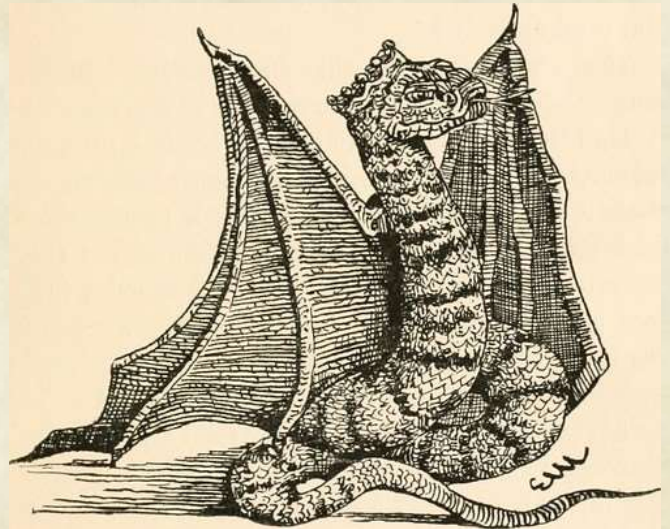
He generally means well and doesn't understand the significance of what he's done, being unfamiliar with the quirks of human politics, although he does know that he shouldn't steal from the library. He'll be evasive on that point, but otherwise friendly and welcoming if he's visited in his town.

He's an expert carver, able to carve incredibly small and intricate scenes. He's very eager to show them to you. He's considered a bit eccentric by the others, as he's always leaving the kenku swamp and bringing back stuff from the outside world.

BERYNTANTHROPAL THE DRAGON

He's a young but ambitious red dragon. Rather than hoarding gold, though, he's decided he can amass more power and renown by hoarding knowledge. He recently "acquired" a scientific publishing company and charges exorbitant yearly rates for anyone to access these journals. As a result of budget cuts (introduced by Lady Jair), the library has thus been unable to afford these fees. He's on good terms with the government, having figured out the value of bribery and corruption to make sure his activities are overlooked. He lives in an immense but slightly ruined, formerly abandoned castle nearby.

He also started kidnapping academics and forcing them to write papers for him. Among those kidnapped is Beatha, the only one in this area who studies the kenku.



PLACES

THE LIBRARY

In the library, there is a complex hierarchy of librarians. The players are part of the enforcement arm of the library, and while that's a moderately senior position, they do have to answer to the head of the enforcement division if things get out of hand.

Every book that leaves the library is recorded with the name of the book, the name of the person who checked it out, and the address. The area immediately around the checkout desk is under the influence of a powerful truth spell. However, addresses are not necessarily helpful if nobody has heard of them.

There is an old gnome, **Enky**, who decides how long books should be checked out, through rolling dice. He's blind, and can't see the books, but doesn't need to. The fates will determine the due dates. If necessary, he can be convinced to change a due date, though it would be difficult.

With some persuading, the party can borrow a bag of holding and level-appropriate cash from the library.

THE SCHOLARS' TEA SHOPS

Here, the local scholars gather after work (or work in the tea shop). Tea is generally popular in the city, but this tea shop has rarer varieties, because the scholars are often well-traveled, and there's a tradition of bringing tea to sell to the tea shop after going somewhere far away. The tea shop sells a particularly rare tea, drunk only by the kenku, where the tea leaves are fermented in the swamp. They can tell you that these were brought by **Beatha**, the foremost expert on kenku, who has mysteriously disappeared.

The people here can tell you all about **Beryntanthropal** the dragon and are happy to complain at great length about the difficulties of research and in particular of dealing with publishing companies. They will mention that last they heard Beatha had been talking to this dragon.

The scholars are often supported by powerful nobles, so it's not unusual for agents of the nobles to be here. As librarians, it's likely the party is at least somewhat familiar with the place.

THE DRAGON'S CASTLE

It's built into the side of the mountain, and has a secret underground entrance. Inside, the building is maze-like, and the walls are lined with books - clever PCs might realize that it's unlikely that the dragon would use his fire breath in a way that these books might catch fire (and also it might be a good idea to be cautious with fire magic). The halls are broad enough that a young dragon can manoeuvre through them. At the entrance is an office where the party can submit a paper for publication, at which point the guards will attempt to kidnap them.

Acolytes in robes work here - the dragon has amassed a sizeable dragon cult for his age. Most of them are unarmed and nonviolent, but there are a small number of guards and enforcers. To reach the imprisoned scholars, the guards have to somehow be dealt with. It might also be difficult to find them. The dragon isn't always present, but if you take too long or draw too much attention to yourselves he might come back, and if the party wants to, it wouldn't be hard to get the dragon to come back and fight him.

Deep in the castle is a dungeon where scholars have been imprisoned, and are forced to churn out research papers. It doesn't matter what they're on - just that Beryntanthropol has more "knowledge" than anyone else. They are all meaningless nonsense.

There is a room that has a map of all libraries in the area, with carefully written notes about hours of operation and who works there.

There is also a room with level-appropriate treasure. One of the items is the Cloak of Billowing, a cloak whose magical property is that it billows dramatically.

There's no map, because I would just improvise based on what the PCs came up with.

THE KENKU'S SWAMP - THE CONCLUSION

The swamp is surrounded by powerful, ancient illusion magic, including the illusion of a very tall wall. Nearby is an old man who, if you figure out the wall is an illusion, will tell you that everyone who has passed that point has died. He is, in fact, a kenku, and wears a special hat that gives the illusion of him being an old man, and he's just trying to keep people away from the village. If the party acquires the hat, that's the only disguise it'll give them.

The swamp itself consists of a number of buildings on stilts. You have to travel between them by boat, but boats are conveniently lying around. The kenku are friendly but bemused that you are there and assume you are also scholars like Beatha, the only human most of them have seen. There's a central building which has only a roof and railings, where there are many tables at which the party can drink tea and talk with the kenku. The kenku are unfamiliar with alcohol. They all know Kirigaranan and all have really long and hard to remember names.

Aside from the illusion magic, the kenku are unarmed and if the PCs just slaughter them they're terrible people. They could either steal it back or convince the kenku it's really important to give it back. As librarians, they're also supposed to collect a fine for the overdue book. In one game, the "fine" was to testify against Lady Jair in court.

CREDITS

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