

LATHANDER'S CHOSEN

ONE LIFETIME JUST ISN'T LONG ENOUGH

A 2-HOUR ONE-SHOT FOR 4 PLAYERS OF LEVELS 1 & 2

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N A SMALL TOWN, THE CITIZENS HAVE BEEN GOING missing for the past four months. They always return after a few days, but never know what happened while they were gone. The citizens are always uninjured, but appearing to be slightly older than they were when they went missing.

YOU NEED TO BE GREEDY OR IGNORANT TO TRULY WANT TO LIVE forever.

—Mokokoma Mokhonoana

BACKGROUND

Wakefield is a small, busy town, perfectly normal by all accounts—except for the recent rash of disappearances. Over the past four months, the citizens of Wakefield have been disappearing with alarming regularity. While everyone always returns within a week, people are becoming a little concerned. When an abductee returns they look slightly older than before, but are otherwise uninjured. For example, an adolescent boy returns with a moustache and beard when he only had peach fuzz before his disappearance.

The town is situated nearby a major road on a relatively active trade route. It's small, but has all the amenities one would expect (blacksmith, market, tailor, etc.) including three inns for travellers to choose from: Shaggy Sharks Inn and Tavern, The Bad Hatchet, and Middlebranch.

ADVENTURE HOOK

While enjoying a pint in the tavern, a commotion breaks out with the arrival of a human male. The adventurers overhear other taverngoers asking him where he's been. Sordon Madz, the new arrival, explains that he's been home and at work, just like every day. It's clear that something strange has happened to Sordon as his friends insist he's been missing for five days.

GATHERING INTEL

The town isn't so large that the party will encounter someone who doesn't know about the disappearances. Every towns person knows someone who has disappeared.

The more people the adventurers speak to, it will become evident that the vast majority of people in Wakefield have been abducted. However, like Sordon Madz, no one has any recollection of the time they were missing.

THINGS TO LEARN

The party may learn the following gossip from the townsfolk:

- It's a Hag taking people.
- It's a Vampire taking people.
- Someone always disappears on a full moon.
- Every person who disappears comes back after 1d4 + 2 days.
- When they return, they seem to look slightly older than they had been before.
- There's a large house that appeared to the southeast of the town about six months ago, but no one ever seems to be home.
- The disappearances started about four months ago.

INVESTIGATING THE HOUSE

The house looks like a perfectly respectable, two-storey stone and wood house about one and a half hours' travel (on foot) southeast of Wakefield. A long driveway leads up to the house. The surrounding grounds are immaculately kept. There is no wagon or carriage out front and no one answers the door if the adventurers knock—no matter how many times they do so. There's no movement from within the house. The lock on the large wooden front door is easily picked.

The inside matches the outside. It's not particularly remarkable, but is well decorated. There is the typical assortment of rooms for an estate home like this: bedrooms, library, sitting room, kitchen, dining hall, and servants' quarters.

The adventurers may find the following: (*XGtE pp. 135-145*)

- **Charlatan's Dice**
- **Potion of Healing** (x2)
- **Unbreakable Arrow**
- 15 GP, 85 SP, 700 CP

Throughout the whole building, the adventurers do not encounter a single soul and the entire place is immaculately clean. It's as if no one lives in it at all.

A DC 12 passive Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal a vibration running throughout the building, but is most noticeable on the main floor. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal a slight hum accompanying the vibration. A thorough investigation will reveal a hidden door leading to a basement.

THE WORKROOM (A)

Initially, the basement looks like a typical storeroom. There are large sacks and crates piled around the room. However, the vibration and hum is stronger down here and a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal a hidden door, behind which lies a workroom.

The workroom (55x40 ft.) is filled with shelves and worktables, and is lit by a single low-burning lantern. The shelves are jammed with books, bottles, papers, scrolls, and other ephemera. Above a long worktable, one entire wall is covered with a schematic drawing of a massive, T-shaped machine.

To the right of the door into the workroom is a large, open archway. It's evident that the vibrations and the hum are originating in the room beyond the arch.

THE TEMPLE (B)

Looking through the archway reveals a massive temple (90x140 ft., 50 ft. ceiling), much larger than should be possible beneath the house. Eight pillars, four per side, line the long walls leading to the head of the temple. Rows of pews line the room on both sides of the central carpet leading to a 5 ft. raised dais at the head of the temple. Red banners hang along the walls. A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check will reveal the temple is to Lathander, the Morninglord.

THE MACHINE (C)

Behind the altar at the head of the temple stands a large, T-shaped machine. It appears to be the same machine the schematic in the workroom depicts. It is approximately 20 ft. tall and the main structure is comprised of large wooden beams. There is a large crank situated on each side of the base of the T. These cranks turn,

providing movement and power to a jumble of cogs, wires, and other bits of metal leading up the central beam of the machine.

From each end of the top crossbar hangs a long coil of rope and wires with a helmet on the end. Below each hanging helmet is a chair. One chair contains a humanoid in red robes, the other holds an unconscious human, likely someone from the nearby town. Both are wearing the machine's helmets and are tightly bound to their chairs.

Two **Acolytes** (*MM* pp. 342) are turning the cranks at the base of the T.

In the pews of the temple, participating in the rite, are two **Acolytes** and three **Cultists** (*MM* pp. 345).

COMBAT

A figure in long red robes stands on the dais, a **Cult Fanatic** (*MM* pp. 345), leading the others in a chant, a rite is clearly taking place. They speak to the glories of eternal life (*They, the most favourite of Lathander's followers, are no longer bound to the short lifespan they've been cursed with*).

Everyone in the Temple's priority is completing the rite they're performing. **Acolytes** and **Cultists** from the pews will engage the party in twos and threes once hostile action has been taken.

Acolytes will spend their first turn casting **Bless** (*PHB* pp. 219) on the three nearest **Cultists** (or two and themselves). Subsequent turns are spent casting **Cure Wounds** (*PHB* pp. 230) whenever possible. Once out of spell slots, the **Acolytes** will engage in melee combat.

When combat breaks out, the **Cult Fanatic** will attempt to hide behind the machine, the **Cultist** bound to the chair beneath the machine, the **Acolytes** turning the crank, and the unconscious **Commoner** (*MM* pp. 345) in the other chair. He will continue to preach about being Lathander's chosen few and the glories of eternal life. He will use every action to hide, dodge, and disengage until in melee combat with the adventurers.

All combatants, **Acolytes**, **Cultists**, and the **Cult Fanatic**, will attempt to flee when they reach half health.

For a stronger party, add 1-2 **Acolytes** and 1-2 **Cultists**.
For a weaker party, remove 1 **Acolyte** and 1-2 **Cultists**.

SAVING THE CAPTIVE

The **Commoner** bound beneath the machine is incapable of freeing themselves. As long as the **Acolytes** turning the machine's crank spend their entire turns doing so the **Commoner** will lose 1d4 hit points per round. If one **Acolyte** flees or is killed, but the remaining **Acolyte** continues to turn the crank, the damage amount is halved. If the **Commoner** reaches 0 HP, they perish.

A series of three skill or tool checks can be made to free the captive. Encourage the players to choose the skill/tool and justify the choice. The same three checks may be made to free the bound **Cultist** if they were not killed during combat.

INTERROGATING A CULTIST

If the adventurers choose to interrogate any of the **Acolytes**, **Cultists**, or the **Cult Fanatic**, they can learn the following:

- This group are worshippers of Lathander, the Mornnglond.
- If life is sacred to Lathander, why wouldn't he want his followers to have life forever? If life is great, eternal life must be amazing!
- The **Cult Fanatic** received the plans for the machine directly from Lathander in a dream.
- They've been doing this all across the country for years. They set up in a location for a few months to a year, depending on the size of the nearby community, and eventually move on when they feel unable to safely and secretly take vitality from the folks in the community anymore.
- **Greater Restoration** (*PHB* pp. 246) will restore the memories of all those who have been abducted in Wakefield. However, they'll also remember and relive the pain they felt during the rite.
- The house is magical, but only the **Cult Fanatic** knows the command word.*

*The house is a version of **Daern's Instant Fortress** (*DMG* pp. 160). When the command word is spoken, the house appears, but cannot be unsummoned for 30 days.



