

A VITAL VINTAGE

AN ADVENTURE FOR 5TH LEVEL PLAYERS



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ON THE COVER



Cover Photo Alt Text

In the right foreground, dappled sunlight illuminates a purple bunch of grapes nestled in bright green leaves. Behind them, out of focus, stretch two rows of green grapevines on either side of a pale dirt path.

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A VITAL VINTAGE

"Our little town has quite the lust for life, I'm just feeding that craving in my own unique way."

—Alaric Mountebank, vintner and proprietor of Mountebank Winery

INTRODUCTION

A mysterious benefactor, known only as the Squire, has invited you to meet them in Versan, a local tourist spot known for its exquisite winery. They wish to hire you for an important task, but they will only give the details in person, simply saying it is a risky undertaking with rich rewards. Upon arriving in Versan, you find that the Squire has been delayed, but they've given you the full run of the town while you wait, no expense spared. It sounds like a dream vacation for weary adventurers, but the longer you spend in Versan, the more questions you have about the winery and its magnetic proprietor. Something dark is brewing below the idyllic surface, and it isn't the wine...or is it?

BACKGROUND

Versan seems the quintessential tourist town. The winery, Versan's top attraction, dominates the landscape, surrounding the humble homesteads with twisting, fragrant vineyards, the manor looming over the square in gothic splendor. The townspeople support the winery with pride. Since the crops began to fail, it's the only source of income for most of Versan. Little do they know the two are intimately related. Alaric Mountebank, founder of the winery, has made a pact with an Archfey Lord (or so he thinks). His patron helped him trap a Treant below his manor to funnel the vitality of the land into his grapes, stealing the life force from his neighbours and selling it back to them in beautifully labelled casks and bottles. A few of the citizens have gotten suspicious, but they'll need help to break the hold Mountebank has on Versan. Luckily, an adventuring party has just taken up residence in the local inn. Perhaps a few well-placed clues will awaken their thirst for intrigue, and Versan will be restored to its former glory.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The quaint town of Versan has a lot going on beneath the surface. Literally. The crops are failing, the famous wine is definitely not normal, and the winemaker is clearly hiding something. Our party stumbles into this quagmire at the behest of an anonymous quest giver, the Squire. As they explore the town and discover more clues, they must choose a side. Will they choose the side of the struggling farmers? The suspicious apothecary who promises great rewards? Or the dapper vintner who knows exactly how to bribe a mercenary group?



Whatever their choices, they're sure to find that things are not as simple as they appear. The wine may be the reason the crops are failing, but the winemaker's patron is no Fey Lord. A Night Hag has taken up residence in the town, moonlighting as the local apothecary as she waits for her unwitting victim to fall into her trap. Will the adventurers get tangled in her plot? Or will they break the curse and free Versan once and for all?

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The mysterious Squire has hinted that there are a myriad of amusements available in Versan for those with a taste for adventure, encouraging them to explore all that the town has to offer...especially the wine. The innkeeper can direct them to all the places the wine is sold. As soon as they taste it, it's obvious that it is more than just wine, but no one in town can explain what makes it so unique.

TAVERN HOOK

Their first taste of wine is sold to them by a friendly, but tired looking half-elf woman. She's happy to talk wine with the party, but mentions that ever since the winery opened, her wife has had to work harder and harder to grow any of their crops, and something about that just doesn't quite sit well with her. She can't offer much, but if the adventurers find something that can help revitalize the crops, the whole town would be in their debt.

WINERY HOOK

The winery has an open tasting room for tourists that does a bustling trade. When the party comes in, they meet Alaric Mountebank, the owner. He plies them with wine, but suspiciously brushes off any mention of the wine's magical properties, insisting that it's simply normal wine. He's concerned that the local apothecary is snooping around and trying to put him out of business. He offers his finest bottle to the party if they can get her off his back.

APOTHECARY HOOK

The local apothecary sells the Versan wine by the bottle to eager travelers. She's the only one in town who acknowledges that the wine has special properties, and she's eager to know Mountebank's secret. She'll reward anyone who can obtain it for her.



LOCATIONS AND NOTABLE CHARACTERS

1. THE AMPLE ARBOR INN

The comfortable inn where the party is meant to meet the Squire. A respectable place, popular with tourists in town for the winery. Clean linens and crackling fires welcome each new visitor, as does Marley Mason, the innkeeper.

2. THE CORK AND CASK

The tavern just across the square from the Ample Arbor. Very much a tourist trap, it's built to look like a barrel. Despite its tacky veneer, the Arbor has a delicious drink menu.

3. MOUNTEBANK WINERY

A stylishly imposing manor that dominates the square, with a public tasting room that is the toast of Versan. An ancient-looking tree (actually the crown of a trapped Treant) shades the front windows and a winding path out back leads further into the sprawling vineyards that surround the town. Staffed by disguised dryads and guarded by patrolling Yeth Hounds, it's a secret within a secret.

4. NESTOR'S NECTARS AND NICETIES

The polar opposite of Mountebank's polished establishment. The shop looks cobbled together from natural wood and ivy, a plume of multicoloured smoke always drifting from the stone chimney. You can buy nearly anything from peculiar Abigail Nestor, even Mountebank Wine, but she recommends her own elixirs instead. Sample at your own risk.

5. A SIMPLE FARMHOUSE

A home, built lovingly by Jenny Clay and her wife Clementine, just on the edge of town. It's surrounded by a struggling plot of farmland.

MARLEY MASON

The chatty innkeeper of The Ample Arbor. Marley is the picture-perfect hostess, generous to a fault. Her warm demeanor is matched only by her delicious baked goods, which she's happy to share with anyone who stops in, often with an extra helping of the day's spiciest gossip.

JENNY CLAY

All food and drink at The Cork and Cask is served by Jenny Clay, a friendly half-elf with a dry sense of humour. She used to help her wife on the farm, but as the crops began to fail, they needed to make some extra coin, so she started working at the Tavern. She's not blind to the fact that her hardships began just as the Winery opened, giving her some reservations about Mountebank.

CLEMENTINE CLAY

Warm, empathetic Clementine does her best to cultivate their small plot of crops, vegetables, and flowers, but, since the winery came to town, the yields have gotten leaner and leaner. Still, she loves to entertain and often invites new friends over for a home-cooked meal. She dotes on her wife, and worries constantly now that Jenny's new job makes her keep late hours.

ALARIC MOUNTEBANK

The charming proprietor of Mountebank Winery. He came into Versan like a whirlwind and put it on the map with his unique wines. He claims that he owes his success to a secret family technique, but really, he made a pact with a mysterious Archfey Lord. The Lord never identified themselves, but offered to make him rich in exchange for his most valuable treasure. They haven't yet come to collect.

ABIGAIL NESTOR

The eccentric owner of Nestor's Nectars and Niceties. Actually a disguised Night Hag, she pretended to be an Archfey Lord to forge a pact with Mountebank. She is the source of his power and the Winery's success. Lately, that private joke has been wearing thin, and she's looking for new sources of entertainment.

A PAUSE FOR REFRESHMENT

READ-ALoud: THE ROAD TO VERSAN

The easy road into Versan is a balm for weary travelers, scented lightly with blooming grapevines. The Squire should be waiting for you in the inn a few minutes down the road.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Upon arriving at the Ample Arbor Inn, the players will learn of the Squire's delay. Marley, the innkeeper, will send them over to the Cork and Cask Tavern for a drink while their rooms are being prepared, giving them the opportunity to taste Mountebank's Wine. After enjoying themselves, they find that their vacation is short lived, the bartender has gone missing, taken by some kind of creature, and must be rescued.

THE INN

READ-ALoud: THE AMPLE ARBOR

The Ample Arbor lives up to its name. A trellis frames the doorway, groaning under the weight of ripening grapes and blooming honeysuckle. As the party walks through the door, they are immediately greeted by a wildly effusive Marley Mason. She seems more like the painting of an innkeeper than a real person, complete with a tray of warm cookies to offer arriving guests.

When asked about the Squire, she shoves the tray into the hands of the nearest adventurer, and pulls a note from the pocket of her apron with a flourish, dusting the whole group with flour.

READ-ALoud: THE NOTE FROM THE SQUIRE

Adventurers,

My deepest apologies, but I must attend to business here for a few more days. I will catch up to you soon. I have taken the liberty of reserving rooms for you, at my expense. Please rest, eat, drink, and be merry. Restore yourselves for the tasks ahead.

The Squire

If the players ask, Marley will confirm that they essentially have the full run of Versan. The Squire's coin is good at any of the local businesses, within reason, and she'll encourage them to take advantage of everything the town has to offer.

READ-ALoud: MARLEY'S ADVICE

"If you're looking for good food and drink, that's right across the square at the Cork and Cask. Always a good first stop in town, if you're asking me. Most things are closed for the day now, but the tasting room at the Winery will be open tomorrow if you wanted to see what all the fuss is about, you might even get a look at our Mr. Mountebank. And if trinkets are your passion, Nestor's is open at dawn. Abigail is a little...unusual, but she has a knack for finding the kind of curiosities that adventurers seem to like so much."

The Squire has left enough coin with Marley for room and board at the Inn and Tavern for two days. The players can also attempt to use their name at the Winery and Shop for more perks, but they'll need to be a little more convincing.

THE CORK AND CASK TAVERN

READ-ALoud: THE CORK AND CASK

It's early in the day for the tavern to be too crowded, but there are still plenty of tourists taking their ease in the large, barrel-shaped structure. The interior is as cool and dark as a wine cellar, and leans heavily into that theme. Gleaming glass bottles line the walls, all proudly bearing the Mountebank label. The scent of food drifting from the kitchens feels a little out of place here, but still welcome after a long trek.

The half-elven bartender waves them over to the bar as the party walks in. She introduces herself as Jenny and offers to bring them food.

"New in town? First time in Versan? Have you tried the wine yet?"

Upon hearing that the party has not tried Mountebank Wine yet, Jenny immediately pulls out a bottle and begins to pour. She passes out the goblets and stares at the party expectantly

READ-ALoud: THE FIRST TASTE

At the first sip, you can all tell that this is not normal wine. It is so much more. A rush of energy flows through your veins, your vision sharpens, all aches and pains from the long journey melt away.

Any character who drinks the wine gains **10 temporary hit points** until their next rest. When the food arrives, however, it is strangely tasteless and unsatisfying. Jenny notices the party's reaction to the meal:

READ-ALoud: JENNY'S APOLOGY

"Doesn't quite measure up does it? If you're looking for food pairings, you'll have to go to the Winery itself. I don't know how he does it. We've been having trouble here with the crops, have you heard? Nothing too terrible, they're just not like they used to be."

If questioned further, Jenny reveals that the crops have been declining since the Winery was established. Her wife has done her best on their little plot of land, but no matter how hard she tries, hardly anything grows. The only thing that seems to flourish now are the grapes in the vineyard, and something about that is starting to feel...wrong. After that confession, she shakes off the gloom and changes the subject, offering more wine and food, encouraging the party to take advantage of The Squire's hospitality. When they've had enough, she'll send them back to the Inn to sleep off the drink.

If the players choose to sneak around town after dark, they'll find the winery patrolled by two uniformed Elven guards (disguised Dryads). If they snoop too long, they may also discover two Yeth Hounds guarding the property. Any attempt to break in will result in melted Thieves' Tools and a very loud alarm bell, summoning the Dryads and the Hounds (allow the players to escape them here without alerting Mountebank, just yet).

If they want to inspect Nestor's, it will also be locked up tight. Any attempt to break in will summon Abigail. She can then give them the quest to obtain Mountebank's secret that is detailed in the Nestor's Nectars and Niceties section of Chapter 2.

A RUDE AWAKENING

Not long before dawn, Marley shakes the party awake, a concerned look on her face. Jenny hasn't made it home yet, and they were the last people to see her. She takes them down to meet **Clementine**, Jenny's wife, who begs them to help find her.

When they search the Tavern, they'll find evidence that she closed up as normal and began a walk home. A **Survival check** of 10 or higher will allow the party to track her

towards the edge of town, where her trail ends. Another **Survival check** of 10 or higher reveals the sign of a struggle, and a body being dragged north towards the woods, the lack of blood indicates that Jenny may still be alive. A **Survival** or **Nature** check of 15 or higher reveals the tracks of some kind of large wolf or hound.

The players will need to follow the trail to what looks to be the creature's den. Upon encountering it, they'll see a **Yeth Hound**. As soon as it senses the party, it will attack. If the players choose to stealth their way in, they'll see it about to attack an unconscious Jenny, prompting combat that way.

NOTE:

if a single **Yeth Hound** looks too easy for your players, you can add in two **Wolves**, clearly emaciated and desperate enough to seek humanoid prey. For larger parties, you can add a second **Yeth Hound** instead, use your best judgment. The additional **Wolves** can also help engage non-magic users in combat and give their players more to do in the encounter.



CHAPTER 1 MONSTER STATS:

WOLF

Medium Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 40 ft.
Initiative +2

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Senses Passive Perception 13
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 +4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

YETH HOUND

Large fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)
Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)
Initiative +3

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Damage Immunities Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered
Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan understands but can't speak
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The yeth hound has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Sunlight Banishment. If the yeth hound starts its turn in sunlight, it is transported to the Ethereal Plane. While sunlight shines on the spot from which it vanished, the hound must remain in the Deep Ethereal. After sunset, it returns to the Border Ethereal at the same spot, whereupon it typically sets out to find its pack or its master. The hound is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, but it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane. Once it is adjacent to its master or a pack mate that is on the Material Plane, a yeth hound in the Border Ethereal can return to the Material Plane as an action.

Telepathic Bond. While the yeth hound is on the same plane of existence as its master, it can magically convey what it senses to its master, and the two can communicate telepathically with each other

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 +4) piercing damage, plus 14 (4d6) psychic damage if the target is frightened.

Baleful Baying.: The yeth hound bays magically. Every enemy within 300 feet of the hound that can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the hound's next turn or until the hound is incapacitated. A frightened target that starts its turn within 30 feet of the hound must use all its movement on that turn to get as far from the hound as possible, must finish the move before taking an action, and must take the most direct route, even if hazards lie that way. A target that successfully saves is immune to the baying of all yeth hounds for the next 24 hours

When the **Yeth Hound** is on its last few hit points, pause combat and allow the sun to rise. When the sunlight reaches the hound, it will let out a baleful howl and vanish into the Ethereal Plane, leaving the party safe to revive Jenny.

With the Yeth Hound gone, the party can escort Jenny home, to the obvious relief of Clementine. She insists that they join them for breakfast at their home as a sign of gratitude, not taking no for an answer.

NOTE:

If the players do say “no,” have Clementine deliver them a basket of home-baked muffins and deliver her exposition then.

BREAKFAST AT THE FARM

READ-ALoud: THE CLAY FAMILY HOME

Jenny and Clementine’s home is a simple farmhouse on the edge of town, easily walkable from the Tavern. The small plot of crops is lovingly tended, but still looks a little dull and worse for wear, even the flowers are drooping.

Breakfast is a hearty affair, beautifully prepared, but, just like in the Tavern, strangely unsatisfying. Clementine apologizes for the quality of the food. She reveals that Versan used to be known for its rich and bountiful crops. So much so that they would often share the bounty with neighbouring villages.

However, since Mountebank established his winery, the yields have diminished. Even Clementine’s Druidic abilities haven’t been able to bolster their harvest. Only the vineyards are thriving. She’s asked Mountebank to let her examine them, to see if they can tell her what’s been happening to the land, but he refused. She’s unsure of how to restore the farmland, and she worries that soon, the only things left growing will be grapes. A town can’t live on wine alone.

She asks the adventurers, if they don’t mind, to keep an eye and an ear out for anything that can help. If it’s not too much to ask. They don’t have much, but if there is anything that the group can do to help with the crops, the whole town would be in their debt.

DEVELOPMENT

With the new information about the failing crops, and that mysterious taste of the Mountebank’s wine, the players are now aware that there is something strange happening in Versan. They’ll need to explore the town a little more to get to the bottom of it.



A BITTER NOTE

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A new day gives the party a chance to explore the town, including the famed winery. The conversation with Jenny and Clementine at breakfast should have sparked their curiosity about the wine and its maker. If it didn't, have Marley run into them and ask about their plans for the day. She can then recommend a wine tasting or a visit to Nestor's to get the players in the exploring mood. If they ask questions about the creature they faced, Marley can definitely recommend Nestor's as a place to find information about strange beasts or magical workings.

This section is all about information gathering and poking at secrets. Players will have to decide whether to side with Jenny, Clementine, and Abigail, or support Mountebank instead. Either way, they'll need to get access to Mountebank's manor to get to the bottom of the mystery. They need an invitation to his Full Moon gathering tonight.

GETTING ON THE LIST

The players can easily convince Mountebank to invite them to the gathering, either by using the Squire's influence or by agreeing to help him with Abigail's meddling. However, if they make him angry by asking too many prying questions, he'll rescind the invite. They may be able to mollify him by offering something about Abigail or her elixirs that will give him an edge over her.

If they choose to go to Nestor's first, they can ask for her help in getting an invite. She may offer a sample of an elixir to keep him happy with the party, or suggest they try to convince one of his loyal customers to bring them along.

Players can scout the winery for likely stooges and persuade them to bring them as plus ones to the gathering. They can also wait until the evening and attempt to break into the manor. For further details on the obstacles they'll face, go to Chapter 3.



MOUNTEBANK WINERY

READ-ALoud: MOUNTEBANK WINERY TASTING ROOM

The centerpiece of the town square, the Mountebank Winery is impossible to miss, a luxurious manor house with a tasting room that's open to the public. Even now, early in the day, tourists flock to it for a chance to sample Versan's finest bottles, served by Mountebank himself. As you join them, you are ushered into a sizeable room.

There's a polished oak bar set against a wall of windows overlooking the vineyard. Behind the bar, several uniformed workers are attending to guests: pouring tastes, washing glasses, and serving small plates of cheese and chocolates bearded human in fine clothes, **Alaric Mountebank**. He produces a bottle of wine out of thin air and flashes a wide smile to a rapt audience of tiefling merchants, then hands it off to a member of the staff to serve. The group of you catch his eye, and he waves you over with a flourish.

"Ah, I've been hearing that we have some adventurous strangers in town, please, come in. Any guest of the Squire's is an honoured friend here. Tell me, have you had the chance to try any of my wares yet?"

Whatever answer the party gives, he'll smile knowingly and pull a small round bottle from his jacket pocket.

READ ALoud: MOUNTEBANK'S OFFER

"Then try this aged port, I think you'll find it...uniquely restorative."

If any player attempts to investigate the beverage before drinking and Mountebank notices, he will raise a brow, pour his own glass and drink it down with a wink. Any player who also drinks the wine gains the benefits of a **Heroes' Feast** spell for the next hour. Any questions about these effects will get brushed off by Mountebank as just an aspect of his unique varietals. He'll categorically deny that his wines have any magical properties. If the players want to purchase any wine, it's 10gp for a standard bottle. He won't allow them to purchase the port or any of his special reserves, as he's saving them for his Full Moon Gathering this evening.

If any player has the ability to detect the presence of fey creatures or fey magic, the wine will immediately give off an indistinct fey energy. The player will also become aware of the disguised Dryads working around them. Any player who investigates the staff closely will notice that they're oddly silent, an investigation check of 15 or higher will reveal their true nature. If Mountebank is questioned about them, he'll pretend not to know what the players mean. If they continue to press about the staff or the wine, he'll get

angry and ask them if **Abigail Nestor** has sent them, as she's been spreading nasty rumours about him.

He'll turn on dime then, all charm, and ask for their help to get her to leave him alone, promising an extra special bottle if they succeed. If the players agree, he'll send them to Abigail's shop (Nestor's Nectars and Niceties), warning them against trying any of her "elixirs" if they value their tastebuds.

As they leave, he'll invite them to return that evening for his exclusive Full Moon gathering. Normally, it's just for his most loyal clients, but if they have news of their progress, they'll get the chance to sample his private collection.

If the players refuse or continue to ask questions about his operation, he'll summon security (3 disguised **Dryads** with **barkskin armour**) to escort them out of the building.

If the players have already been to Nestor's and accepted Abigail's request, any mention or implication of Mountebank's "Most Valuable Possession" will cause him to freeze, face white, and order them out of the Winery. If they resist, he will summon security.

NESTOR'S NECTARS AND NICETIES

READ-ALoud: NESTOR'S NECTARS AND NICETIES

Just off the main square, Nestor's seems to belong to a fairy tale rather than a tourist town. Its vine covered facade extends up to a chimney that is wafting a lavender coloured smoke today. Tomorrow it may be blue or acid green, depending on Abigail's mood.

As you push through the heavy wooden door, a silvery bell tinkles through the cramped space. Feathers rustle as a raven eyes you from its perch on a tall shelf. The interior looks like a mix of an apothecary and a general store, with a decidedly witchy flair. The shelves are overstuffed with supplies, books, and decorative knick-knacks. If there's an organizational system, it's not obvious to anyone but Abigail.

At the sound of the bell, she pops up from behind the counter suddenly and says:

"Sorry, did I startle you? I didn't realize adventurers were so jumpy nowadays. Well, come in, close the door, don't let the bird out, he gets into far too much trouble in town. Looking for anything...special? How about a refreshment while you browse?"

She beckons the party back to the counter, towards the part of the store that looks much more like an apothecary's workshop. Dried herbs and other components hang from the rafters (bumping the heads of taller party members), and a large cauldron bubbles over the fireplace in the corner. She dips a ladle in the cauldron and fills a

mismatched porcelain teacup for each party member, then sets them on the counter before them.

Any player who'd like to inspect the drinks will find that they're not poisoned (Abigail will huff at their suspicion). They will look distinctly magical, but no defined school of magic can be detected. Any player who drinks the beverage will need to roll on the **Wild Magic Surge Table**. If there is an objectionable effect, Abigail will apologize for the bad batch and offer a discount on an item from the store. If there is a positive effect, she'll gleefully note the recipe for the latest elixir down in a worn book, with a pointed "I told you so" at the raven, who ignores her. Regardless of outcome, she'll slyly thank the party for helping her test the latest round of elixirs, praising them for helping loosen

READ-ALoud: ABIGAIL'S SUSPICIONS

"Have you tried his wine yet? It's got a little something extra that he doesn't want anyone to know about, doesn't it? And if he's hiding it, it can't be good..."

I've been waiting for some likely strangers to come into town and do something about him...You know you're the first to take me up on trying one of my elixirs? You've got some backbone if you'll take a drink from an old with like me. What do you say? I'll make it worth your while..."

Mountebank's hold on Versan.

If the party says yes, she'll tell them that she's working on a spell to reveal whatever secret he's hiding. There's just one problem. She needs one more, vital component: His most valuable possession. She's convinced it's either in his office or his private wine cellar, perhaps even his wine collection. She just needs them to borrow it for a while, bring it to her, and she'll finally have the upper hand. If they succeed, she'll brew them any two potions that they'd like, free of charge.

If they need more convincing, she can start by offering the potions, or an item from her shop. Whatever you think will be attractive to your players. She can also appeal to their compassion, reminding them that the crops are still dwindling and that Mountebank must be behind it.

If they have already been to the winery, they can choose to reveal that Mountebank has tried to hire them to get her to leave him alone. If they do, she'll do her best to convince them to help her instead, making the same offer of free potions and magical items.

If the party agrees to help Abigail, she'll tell them that the best way to find what she needs to is to gain access to the Manor. Luckily, tonight is his exclusive Full Moon Gathering, where he invites his most loyal clientele into his home to sample his private collection. She's not invited, of course, but she'd bet some crafty adventurers could wrangle an invite.

If they say no, despite Abigail's best efforts, she'll back off. But not before warning them that they may regret taking Mountebank's side.

If the party has decided to side with Mountebank, the information that Abigail is looking for his most valuable possession will be enough to get them into the Full Moon Gathering.

ABIGAIL'S INVENTORY

If the party is looking to shop, here are a few suggested items for sale. It will take high investigation checks to find any magic items unless they specifically ask for them. Feel free to supplement with more common items from the Players' Handbook or the DMG.

ITEMS

Healing Potion... (50gp suggested)

Vial of Acid... (25gp suggested)

Potion of Climbing... (150gp suggested)

Vial of Poison... (100gp suggested)

A tattered book about Fey Creatures ... (10gp suggested)

A book about winemaking... (5gp suggested)

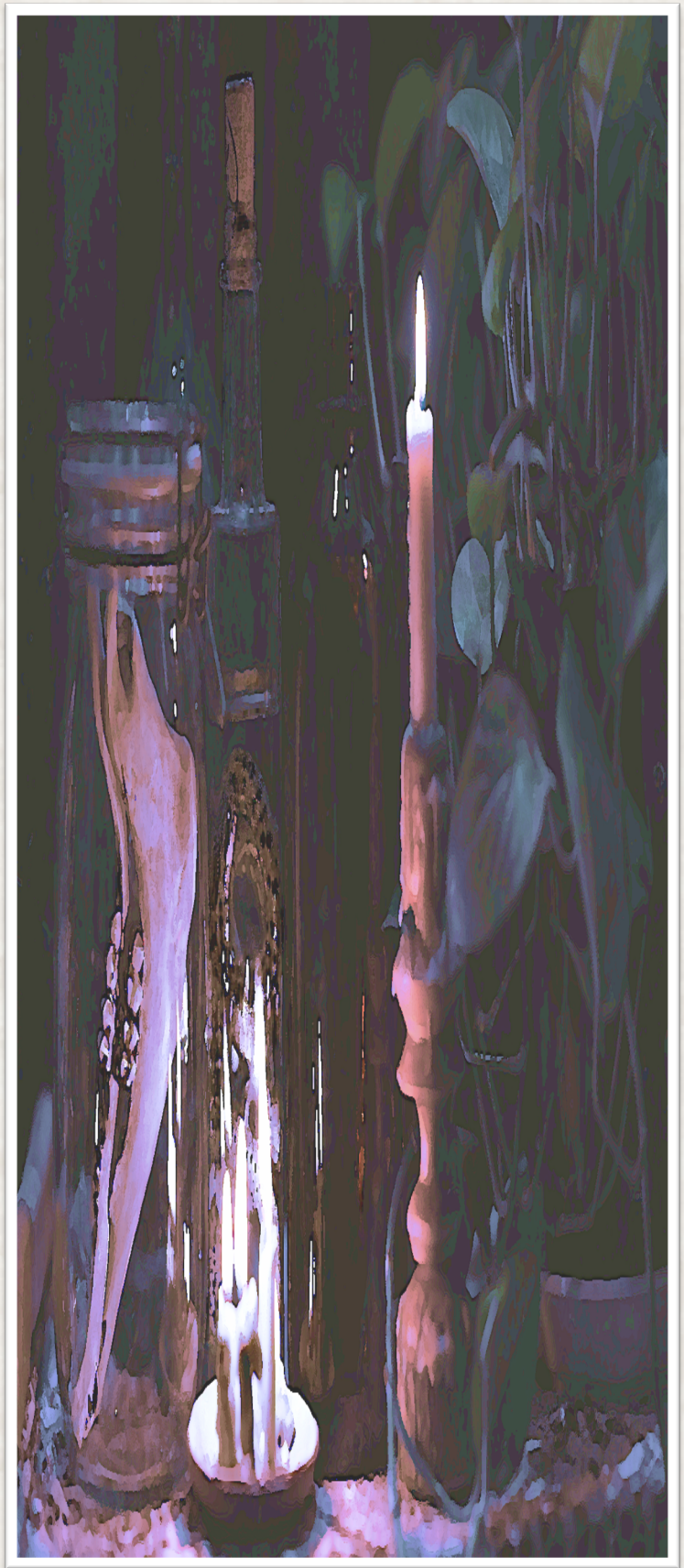
Assorted bottled elixirs without labels... (30gp suggested each)

A small figurine of a raven ... (5gp suggested)

An antique ring ... (20gp suggested)

DEVELOPMENT

After forming a strategy to access the manor, and choosing a side, the party needs to prepare for the evening's gathering.



SOMETHING ROTTEN

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

All of the adventurers' efforts thus far have been leading up to tonight, Mountebank's Full Moon Gathering. Whatever way the party chooses to enter the manor, whether by invitation or stealth, they'll quickly notice that something is strange about the whole affair. Magically charmed guests, "enhanced" wine, fey servants, and a hidden door all suggest that there is more to Mountebank's operation than meets the eye. Further investigation through that hidden door reveals the secret to his ill-gotten success: a pact with a mysterious Archfey Lord.

In return for Mountebank's service, the Lord trapped a Treant deep beneath the manor. Mountebank uses its unique ties to the land to funnel all the vitality of Versan into the vineyard, killing the crops to make the wine. When his secret is discovered, he'll do his best to convince the party to keep it to themselves. He'll try to bribe them with some of his rarest and most powerful bottles, if that doesn't work, he'll attack. The players will need to decide whether to accept his offer or try to free the Treant by force.

If it looks as though the players are avoiding combat with Mountebank, Abigail reveals herself as his Pact Master and attempts to claim her prize: his most valuable possession. Which, of course, for such a self-centered individual, is his life. Something that Mountebank is very keen to hold on to.

GETTING INSIDE

If the players accepted Mountebank's invitation to the Gathering, they can spend rest of the day preparing however they'd like (outfit shopping montage *cough* cough*), and enter the Manor as valued guests.

If the players decide to break in instead, they'll find the manor heavily patrolled by armed guards (more disguised Dryads), and the two Yeth Hounds. It will take some ingenuity, but by avoiding the guards and the crowd in the wine cellar, they should be able to make their way inside. It will then be up to them to find the hidden door in Mountebank's office.

READ-ALoud: THE FULL MOON GATHERING

As the sun sets, a group of well-dressed revelers gather beneath the tree in front of the manor. A few are tourists, like you, but most of them are locals, the high society of Versan. It's a privilege to be invited to the Full Moon Gathering. Only Mountebank's most loyal customers are invited to this monthly ritual to sample his private wine collection. There's an official looking elf at the door, checking names against a list and then waving people inside.

MOUNTEBANK MANOR

If the players received Mountebank's invite, they can check in with the elf at the door. The elf will look at the party silently until they give their names, then check them against their list.

Any party member who noticed the Dryads at the Winery will recognize this individual as another disguised Dryad. After confirming that everyone in the group is on the list, they will let the party through.

NOTE:

Speaking Sylvan to one of the disguised Dryad's may startle them enough to get them to reply, have the player roll a Charisma or Persuasion check. If they roll a 15 or higher, the Dryad will visibly recognize the words, but look too frightened to reply. A Charisma check of 18 or higher, however, will encourage the Dryad to speak fairly openly with the group. They can be convinced to reveal the secret door in Mountebank's office.

Once inside, another elf will guide the party through the front tasting room downstairs to Mountebank's private wine cellar. If the players promised to help Mountebank with Abigail's meddling, he'll meet them at the foot of the stairs.

READ-ALoud: AN EAGER MOUNTEBANK

As you reach the lower level, Alaric Mountebank emerges from the crowd to greet you, resplendent in a high collared coat dripping with metallic embroidery.

"Good News, I trust?"

If the party answers in the affirmative, he'll smile slyly and gesture to the closed door in the northwest corner.

READ-ALoud: ALARIC ELATED

"I have to make my rounds, but I'll meet you in my office shortly. Please, help yourselves to some of my private stores, it's the least I can offer you"

If they say no, he'll look disappointed for a moment, but then launch right back into host mode.

READ-ALoud: ALARIC DISAPPOINTED

"Not to worry, there's plenty of time for that. Please, come in, help yourselves to anything you'd like, just do me the courtesy of avoiding my office in the corner there, I've just gotten it organized the way I like it." He gestures with a slight head tilt to the door in the northwest corner of the cellar.

If the players have decided to break into the Manor, when they make it close enough to the entrance of the private cellar, allow them to overhear Mountebank's request to avoid his office. This should point them in the right direction.

THE WINE CELLAR

READ-ALoud: THE WINE CELLAR

The wine cellar is surprisingly cozy, with several tall tables scattered throughout. Barrels and casks are stacked high against the stone walls, the warm wood dampening the sound of chatter. The room is bustling with the who's who of Versan, all eagerly sipping tastes from the trays being passed around by silent staff. The more they drink, the louder and livelier they get. There's an intoxication in the air that doesn't feel like inebriation.

Any player that's curious about the atmosphere in the room can roll a **Perception** or an **Insight** check, a 12 or higher will reveal that people seem charmed rather than drunk. Any characters with a **Passive Perception** of 13 or higher will notice that the more people drink, the more complimentary they are of the Mountebank. After a few minutes of tasting, the conversations are tantamount to hero worship.

If any of the players choose to taste the wine, they'll need to make a **Wisdom save** (DC 10). Anyone who fails is considered **charmed** by Mountebank for the next hour. A spell like Lesser Restoration can end the effect.

After making their own round of the cellar, the party should be able to head into Mountebank's office. If Mountebank is expecting them, the door is unlocked. If he asked them to avoid it, or they broke in, it will require **Thieves' Tools** (DC 13).

MOUNTEBANK'S OFFICE

READ-ALoud: MOUNTEBANK'S OFFICE

The office is really more of an extension of the cellar with an intricately carved desk. The walls are covered floor to ceiling with shelves full of wine bottles. The stone floor is cushioned by a thick crimson rug. The ideal environment for a wealthy, powerful man to do business.

If the players have found their way into the office without Mountebank's permission, allow them to investigate the space. If he is expecting them, he will join them very quickly, giving them very little time to search.

A search of the desk (**Investigation** DC 8) will reveal several *order slips* for food and supplies from Waterdeep at great expense, suggesting that he obtains his provisions from outside Versan.

Anyone who searches the walls will find one section out of place, the four bottles on the center shelf are empty. If a player attempts to take any of them, they'll see they're attached to it. A secondary **Investigation** check (DC 13) will reveal tiny hinges at the base of all the bottles. They look like levers. The bottles, from left to right, are labelled *Red*, *Sparkling*, *Port*, *White*. The party will need to pull the levers

in the correct order to unlock the secret door. **The correct sequence** is the traditional order wines are served in tastings: *Sparkling*, *White*, *Red*, *Port*. As soon as they pull the final lever, the wall swings open, exposing a dark, narrow wooden staircase leading downwards.

If Mountebank enters the office before they can search it, and he's expecting them, he'll ask for their intel on Abigail Nestor. The players will need to offer him something of value about her, something he can use against her. Whatever they decide, they'll need to roll a **Persuasion** or a **Deception** check to convince him (DC 15). If they have physical evidence, like an elixir sample, they can make the check at advantage. They can also choose to reveal that they know what she's looking for.

On a success, Mountebank will take a moment, considering the group.

READ-ALoud: A REWARD FROM MOUNTEBANK

"You've all done very well, I thank you. You have no notion how much trouble that witch was causing. And one good turn deserves another. You've earned a truly special reward, a vintage I don't normally share with strangers, but I can trust you, can't I?"

With that, he'll reach over to the center shelf and pull the hidden levers in sequence, opening the secret door and beckoning the group downstairs.

If Mountebank catches them searching his office without permission, his eyes will flick noticeably to the hidden levers in the center shelf. He'll do his best to keep his composure and escort them out, handing them glasses of wine and insisting that they drink. If they refuse to leave, or to drink the wine, or get confrontational in any way, he'll pause for a moment, then shove them back into his office, closing the door behind them.

READ-ALoud: MOUNTEBANK CORNERED

"Who sent you? Abigail? That hag won't leave well enough alone! What's she offering you? I'll double, triple it...no, wait...I have something better..."

And then he'll open the secret door and head down the stairs.

READ-ALoud: THE SECRET BENEATH THE MANOR

The stairs open out into a large, cavernous space, deep beneath the manor. Directly in the center of the room looks to be a giant tree, its roots dug deep into the rocky floor. As the group moves further in, two eyes open sleepily in the trunk, staring down at the party, dazed. It's a Treant, sunk into the foundations of the winery. The walls are covered with the gnarled root systems of the vines above, extending into the center of the room to wrap around the Treant. They pulse with a dull crimson glow.

If Mountebank isn't with the party already, he appears now, flanked by 3 Dryads. Either way, he still says the following text:

READ-ALoud: MOUNTEBANK'S SECRET

"Here it is, you've found it. The heart of Versan, the heart of my Winery. This is what makes our bottles so special..."

If Mountebank willingly led the party down here, he'll offer the following item as a reward for their dedication to him. If he caught them down here, he'll offer it as a bribe to keep his secret.

READ-ALoud: A GIFT FROM MOUNTEBANK

Mountebank reaches into his coat and pulls out a wine bottle made of dark red glass.

"This bottle puts all the rest of our stock to shame. Its regenerative effects are truly remarkable, there's nothing like them. A sip from this will bring you back from the brink of death, and if it runs dry, don't worry. Simply leave it overnight in the nearest body of water and it will refill itself. Normally, I wouldn't think of parting with such treasure, but now may be the time to make an exception...what do you think?"

He holds the bottle out to the party for inspection, if they so desire. If they roll **Insight** (DC 15) on Mountebank, it will be clear that he's hiding something about the bottle. A **Persuasion** or **Intimidation** Check of 20 or higher will find that he's telling the truth about the bottle's powers, however, they come at a terrible price. Anywhere they recharge the bottle will be rendered barren and desolate in a 1d10 mile radius. Any player who casts **Identify** on the bottle will also be able to know those consequences, and that it has as many uses per charge as there are party members.

The players must decide whether to accept the bribe, attempt to leave, or attempt to free the Treant.

If they try to leave or approach the Treant, Mountebank and his Dryads will attack to preserve his fortune.

If they agree to accept the bribe, they're cut short by a crash as Abigail Nestor bursts in from the stairwell, looking very different than she did when last they saw her. Her skin is now a shadowy blue, her eyes are white, and long thin horns are peeking through her hair. She's been a **Night Hag**, hiding in plain sight.

READ-ALoud: ABIGAIL'S DEMAND

"Alaric, my dear, I think it's time to stop hiding behind adventurers...don't you? It's time to hold up your end of our deal. You've had your fame, your prosperity, now I want what's mine. Your greatest treasure, dear. You did promise."

She cackles as Mountebank looks to the Treant in panic.

"Fool! I gave you that creature. What use do I have for a tapped Tree? No, selfish boy. The thing you value most is yourself. And that is what I shall have!"

She raises a hand and three **Magic Missile** bolts pelt toward Mountebank, who cries to you for help.

The party can choose to ignore him, but when they try to leave, the Night Hag will summon her own **Yeth Hound** to attack them, bringing them into the combat.

NOTE:

If you need to increase the difficulty for either of these encounters, feel free to add **Dryads** or a second **Yeth Hound** to balance things out.

When the main enemy is defeated, either Mountebank or Abigail, any remaining Yeth Hound(s) disappear, the Dryads immediately end all aggression and stand back, waiting.

READ-ALoud: A CURSE BROKEN

There's a sudden sound of creaking wood and cracking rock. The Treant's eyes open wide as it finally awakens, roots bunching as it presses itself up, bursting through the earth, tearing through the web of wines imprisoning it. It reaches up to its full height, crashing through the neatly manicured grounds of the manor, taking its rightful place in the open air once again.

DEVELOPMENT

Alone in the wreckage of the manor, in the shadow of the newly liberated Treant, the party needs to regroup and find out what's to become of Versan, its inhabitants, and its winery.

FINAL BATTLE MONSTER STATS

DRYAD

Medium fey, neutral

Armor Class 11 (16 with Barkskin)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

Initiative +1

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The dryad's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The dryad can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: Druidcraft

3/day each: Entangle, Goodberry

1/day each: Barkskin, Pass without a Trace, Shillelagh

Magic Resistance. The Dryad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Speak with Beasts and Plants. The dryad can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language

Tree Stride. Once on her turn, the dryad can use 10 feet of her movement to step magically into one living tree within her reach and emerge from a second living tree with 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger.

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh.

Fey Charm. The dryad targets one humanoid or beast that she can see withing 30 feet of her. If the target can see the dryad, it must succeed on a DC 14 **Wisdom** saving throw or be magically **charmed**. The **charmed** creature regards the dryad as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the dryad's control, it takes the dryad's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can.

Each time the dryad or its allies do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the dryad dies, is on a different plane of existence from the target, or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the dryad's Fey Charm for the next 24 hours.

The dryad can have no more than one humanoid and up to three beasts **charmed** at a time.

ALARIC MOUNTEBANK, WARLOCK OF THE ARCHFEY

Medium human, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (14 with Mage Armor)

Hit Points 49 (11d8)

Speed 30 ft.

Initiative +1

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	13(+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws WIS +3, CHA +6

Skills Arcana +2, Deception +6, Nature +2, Persuasion +6

Senses Passive Perception 11

Languages Abyssal, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1m100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Mountebank's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). he can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: Disguise Self, Mage Armor (self only), Silent Image, Speak with Animals

1/day: Conjure Fey

Spellcasting. Mountebank is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to with spell attacks). He regains his expended spell slots when he finishes a short or long rest. He knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): Dancing Lights, Eldritch Blast, Friends, Mage Hand, Minor Illusion, Prestidigitation, Vicious Mockery

1st-5th level (Three 5th-level slots): Blink, Charm Person, Dimension Door, Dominate Beast, Faerie Fire, Fear, Hold Monster, Misty Step, Phantasmal Force, Seeming, Sleep

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Misty Escape (Recharge after a Short or Long Rest). In response to taking damage, Mountebank invisible and teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. he remains invisible until the start of his next turn or until he attacks, make a damage roll, or casts a spell.



NIGHT HAG

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

Initiative +2

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances Cold, Fire; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered.

Condition Immunities Charmed

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: Detect Magic, Magic Missile

2/day each: Plane Shift (self only), Ray of Enfeeblement, Sleep.

ACTIONS

Claws. (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. The hag magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Etherealness. The hag magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

Nightmare Haunting (1/Day). While on the Ethereal Plane, the hag magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane.

A **protection from evil and good** spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a **magic circle**. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in the hag's soul bag. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the **greater restoration** spell or similar magic.

CONCLUSION

READ-ALoud: LET IT BREATHE

With the Treant free, the strange hold that Mountebank Winery ha on Versan is broken. Immediately, the breeze feels fresher, the grass looks greener, the crops stand taller, and wildflowers begin to sprout. Life and vitality return to the land and its inhabitants. Your “paid holiday” is now over, it’s time for you to meet The Squire at last.

MOUNTEBANK DEFEATED

If Mountebank was the one defeated in the battle, Abigail is the first one to reach the party as they make their way back up to the surface. She insists that she knew he was up to no good, but she never would have imagined something like this. She’ll also let the party know that the Squire has arrived at last and is waiting for them at the Ample Arbor. As the party turns to head back to the inn, they see her lay a hand on the Treant, smirking. She pulls a small bottle out of her pocket and lets it spill on the ground at the base of the trunk, her skin taking on the slightest tinge of blue.

ABIGAIL DEFEATED

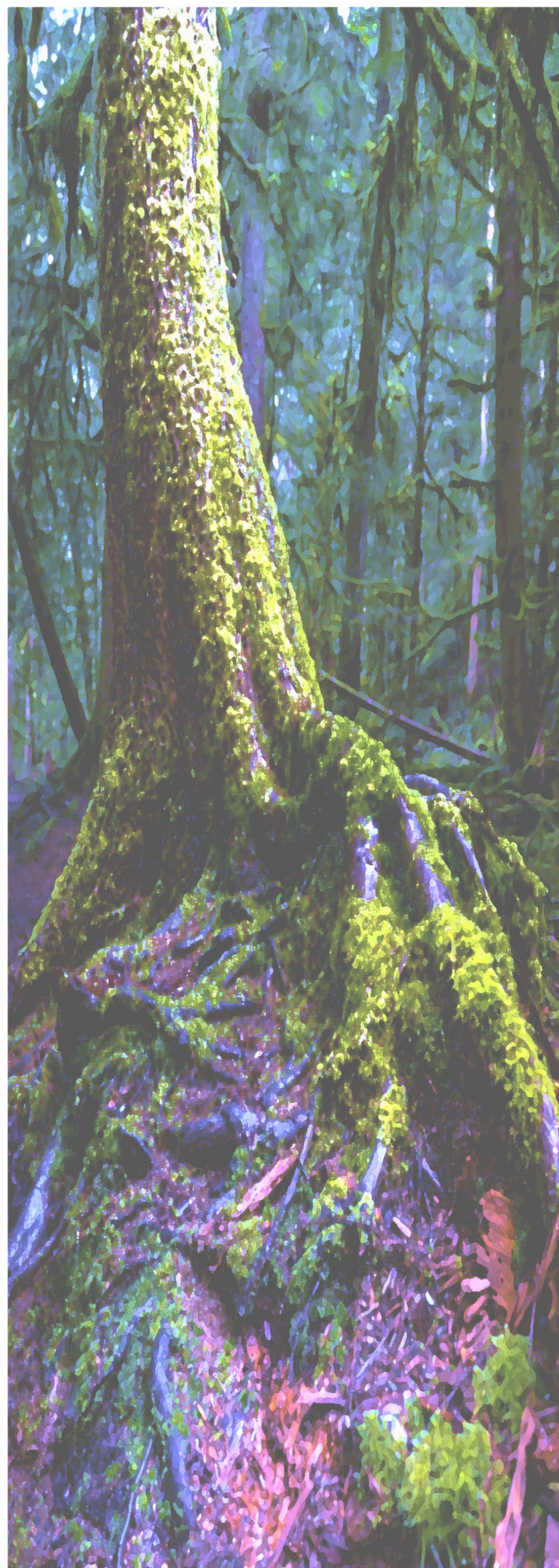
If Abigail was the one defeated, Jenny and Clementine let down a rope to get the party out of the now ruined wine cellar. They thank them for their help, informing them that the town already feels more lively. If Mountebank survived the battle, they’ll pull him up too, but his presence disturbs the Treant, it begins to move aggressively. Clementine rushes over to it and lays a comforting hand on its trunk, it begins to settle.

She calls over to the group “You all better go see the Squire, they’re waiting for you. Looks like we’ve got plenty to do here.”

The Dryads gather around her, staring expectantly, she gives them a kind smile.

REWARDS

As the party turns to leave the now ruined manor, a Dryad approaches them, slowly, cautiously. They hold out a small bag full of clinking glass bottles. Opening the bag, the party discovers several (one for each player) small bottles of Port, identical to the ones Mountebank gave them in the Tasting Room. Each one, when drunk, has the effect of a **Heroes’ Feast**.



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