

HEY, MISTER CAN YOU HELP ME?

Short Encounters for
Characters of Any Level

BY ALAN TUCKER



HEY, MISTER CAN YOU HELP ME?

A series of short encounters and story hooks
that may cause your party
to never trust a child again...

Designed for characters of all levels

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THE INNOCENCE OF YOUTH

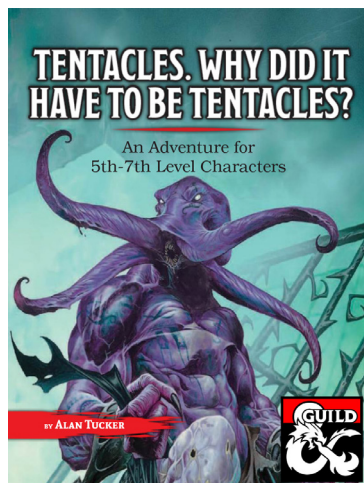
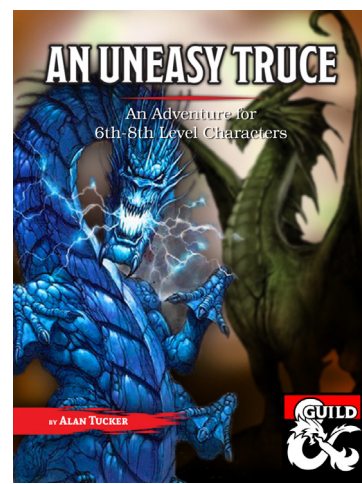
Included herein are seven short encounters—side quests, if you will—to intrigue, distract, or introduce a new adventure hook to your party within whatever campaign setting you might be running. All of them are presented to spark the DM's imagination and springboard into something new and different for your play session.

Terrains vary from urban to wilderness and each is presented with a suggested average party level at the beginning, but they can all be adjusted in difficulty by substituting various elements as detailed within each description.



If you enjoy this collection of encounters, please take a moment to rate it and leave a comment or review! And be sure to check out my other adventures!

Alan Tucker also writes fantasy and science fiction novels and you can find links to all of his books (*several are FREE!*) at www.AlanTucker.net



DOUBLE TAP

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 1-2

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: 3-5

ENVIRONMENT: URBAN OR WILDERNESS

A small child approaches you as you begin your meal. "Excuse me, sir. My ma and pa are sick. Can you help me?" She looks at you with tear-filled eyes, wearing a dirty dress and her feet are bare.

The child's name is Irma and she's confused as to what's happening to her mother and father.

She will lead the party to her home— either a shabby room in a creaky tenement building or a run-down farmhouse, depending on what location serves your campaign best— and show them where her parents have been resting. Unfortunately, they have both passed on and been raised as zombies by an unknown force.

ZOMBIE

Medium undead, neutral evil (MM page 316)

Armor Class: 8

Hit Points: 22 (3d8 +9)

Speed: 20 ft.

Saves: Wis +0

Immunities: poison; poisoned, prone

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Undead Fortitude: If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Con save vs. DC 5 +the amount of damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Attacks: **Slam** +3 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 4 (1d6 +1) bludgeoning damage

Irma will scream and either run, or try to attack the party who is hurting her parents as she doesn't understand what has happened.

The DM can expand the problem by having more of the residents in the building become zombies, or animals on the farm rise as undead versions to terrorize the countryside. Is there a crazed necromancer running amok, or has something gotten into the food supply to cause this terrible plague?

Ultimately, Irma will need someone to care for her, which can give the party some role playing opportunities with the neighbors or nearby relatives. Maybe Irma will bear a life-long grudge against the party for murdering her parents and do everything she can to become powerful enough to take her revenge someday!

ALTERNATIVES:

To increase the difficulty of the encounter, the DM can substitute other types of undead, such as ghouls or specters, or even wights, to replace the zombies. Giving the zombies more hit points, or higher damage attacks can also bump up the challenge for a more powerful party.

Page 217 of *Volo's Guide to Monsters* has a typical 12th level necromancer statted out to act as possibly a recurring villain, or an end boss for this encounter if the party is of higher level (6th and above). You can also scale down the necromancer's stats for a lower level party to take on if desired.



SOUL OF THE FOREST

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 2-4

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: 3 AND UP

ENVIRONMENT: WILDERNESS

Traveling along the fairly well-worn path, up ahead you see a small form, huddled by itself next to a tree.

As the players approach...

Closer inspection reveals the object in question to be a little girl, probably about five or six years old. She looks up at you, with a mixture of joy and relief in her eyes, and says, "I'm so hungry. Can you help me?"

If the party offers her some food, she will gladly reveal, between bites, her name is Bea— short for Beatrice— and she's been sitting here for a very long time. Her friend is in trouble back in the woods and she would very much like the adventurers to come help.

If pressed for more information, she will describe her friend as the "tree girl" and insist that she needs help from the "bogey man" that has her trapped.

Bea can direct the party to the dryad's tree, which is just a few minutes travel off the path.

DRYAD

Medium fey, neutral (MM page 121)

Armor Class: 11 (16 with *Barkskin*)

Hit Points: 22 (5d8)

Speed: 30 ft.

Skills: Perception +4, stealth +5

Resistances: advantage on saving throws vs. magic

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages: elvish, sylvan

Speak with Beasts and Plants: The dryad can communicate with both beasts and plants at will.

Fey Charm: The dryad currently has Bea charmed and cannot charm another humanoid unless she releases the child.

The dryad's tree is covered in strange, oily vines. If the party finds means to communicate with her— either through knowing one of her languages, or some kind of magic— she will warn them of danger just before the redcap attacks.

REDCAP

Small fey, Chaotic Evil (Volo's page 188)

Armor Class: 13

Hit Points: 45 (6d6 +24)

Speed: 25 ft.

Skills: Athletics +6, Perception +3

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages: common, sylvan

Iron Boots: While moving, the redcap has disadvantage on Stealth checks

Outsize Strength: While grappling, the redcap is considered to be Medium sized. Also, wielding a heavy weapon doesn't impose disadvantage on its attack rolls.

Attacks: **Wicked Sickle (3 att.)** +6 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 9 (2d4 +4) slashing damage

Ironbound Pursuit The redcap moves up to its speed to a creature it can see and kicks with its iron boots. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Dex saving throw or take 20 (3d10 +4) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

The redcap found a scroll with a spell to bind the dryad from escaping and ordered her to lure creatures here for it to murder, or it would kill her and Bea's family, who live in a farmhouse nearby, instead. This seemed like a clever way to make sure its cap was always fresh with blood without having to do all the work of finding things to kill.

Reluctantly, the dryad charmed Bea in hope of finding a band of hardy adventurers to come slay the redcap. She didn't like using the little girl this way, but didn't see any alternative since she couldn't fight the evil fey herself.

The redcap's death releases the magic and the dryad, along with Bea and her family, will be extremely grateful to the party, though they won't have much to offer in the way of reward.

ALTERNATIVES:

An additional redcap can be added if the party is particularly strong, or a more sinister creature of the DM's choice can be substituted.

Story hooks can come in the form of something the dryad knows about the surrounding area, or the party could find something in the redcap's stash of trinkets in a cave close by, where it has resided.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 2-4

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

ENVIRONMENT: URBAN

It's late afternoon and the marketplace you've been shopping in is about to close for the day. You've just completed your final purchase when you hear a mournful sob from the corner of a building a few feet from you.

Noticing your attention, a little girl looks up with tears in her eyes. She wipes her nose and asks, "Can you help me?"

The girl's name is Ellie, but her friends know her as Shank. She's an aspiring member of the local thieves' guild and looking for her first mark of the evening.

Ellie will spin a yarn of terror and woe, saying that she and her younger sister were captured by two men last night who did unspeakable things to them. Ellie managed to escape earlier today, but her sister is still in their clutches.

If the party asks, she asserts that she can remember the way back to the hideout and would be ever-so-thankful if the players can assist in recovering her sister. She will protest if the adventurers wish to involve the local law enforcement, saying that she and her sister are orphans and the locals don't take kindly to street urchins, possibly even selling them as slaves!

If the party agrees to help, Ellie will lead them on a meandering route, ending in a dead end alley and a door where she says she and her sister were taken. Hiding amongst the garbage in the shadowed alley, however, are a number of thugs, looking for trouble.

THUG

Medium humanoid, any non-good alignment (MM page 350)

Armor Class: 11 (leather armor)

Hit Points: 32 (5d8 +10)

Speed: 30 ft.

Senses: passive Perception 10

Pack Tactics: Thugs have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the thugs' allies are active and within 5 ft.

Attacks: **Mace (2 att.)** +4 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 5 (1d6 +2) bludgeoning damage.

Heavy Crossbow +2 to hit; range 100/400 ft.; 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

ELLIE (SHANK)

Small humanoid, chaotic neutral, level 1 rogue (PHB page 94)

Armor Class: 14

Hit Points: 8 (1d8)

Speed: 30 ft.

Skills: Deception +4, Perception +2, Performance +4

Senses: passive Perception 12

Sneak Attack: Ellie can do an extra 1d6 damage once per turn if she hits with an attack she has advantage on or if an ally is within 5 ft. of her target.

Attacks: **Dagger (2 att.)** +4 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Ellie will cower and attempt to hide once combat starts, looking for an opportunity to surprise the party, or escape if things are going poorly.

As a general rule, use one thug per party member at 2nd level and add one for each level above that (i.e. for a party of four 4th level players, six thugs should be used).

If the players manage to defeat the thugs and Ellie is captured, she will do her best to convince the party that she only did this because her sister truly is in danger and she had to find people for the men to rob or they'd kill her. She will try to escape at the first opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES:

The thugs' stats, as well as Ellie's, are obviously very scalable for stronger parties. Plus, an outnumbered party is always at somewhat of a disadvantage, even against weaker foes.

Fun twists could be a very high level Ellie, whose natural talents have moved her up quickly in the thieves' guild ranks. Perhaps she is in charge of this group of thugs, rather than the other way around.

Other hooks include particular members of the party have been either designated as person(s) of interest by nefarious influences in the city, or even marked for death, and Ellie can provide information regarding such circumstances. Perhaps it's time to infiltrate the thieves' guild and find out what's going on.

HANSEL, IS THAT YOU?

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 3-5

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: 5-8

ENVIRONMENT: WILDERNESS (FOREST/SWAMP)

Moving through a particularly dense area of foliage, you are surprised to come across a young girl. She is sitting calmly in the dark wood, playing with what looks like a doll made of sticks and vines.

She looks up at you, apparently unafraid, and says, "Hi. What's your name?"

The girl appears to be nine or ten years old and is well-fed and, though her clothing is crude, it seems to be in good repair. Her name is Marie.

Marie will happily chat with the players. She lives nearby with her Auntie Tilda and her doll's name is Bertram.

At some point in the conversation, she will pause briefly, then ask if the party would like to meet her Auntie Tilda. If the players accept, Marie will lead them to her home— a decrepit stone building that might have once been a small guard tower or outpost, but has completely overgrown with sickly, dark vines and loose stones litter the ground. Auntie Tilda is a green hag and this is her lair.

GREEN HAG

Medium fey, neutral evil (MM page 177)

Armor Class: 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 82 (11d8 +33)

Speed: 30 ft.

Skills: Perception +4, Deception +4, Stealth +3, Arcana +3

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Illusory Appearance: The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of similar size and humanoid shape.

Invisible Passage: The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell. While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage.

Attacks: **Claws** +6 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 13 (2d8 +4) slashing damage

Spells: Auntie Tilda can cast each of these at will: *Dancing Lights*, *Minor Illusion*, *Vicious Mockery*

Lair Actions: On an initiative count of 20 (losing ties) Auntie Tilda can pass through walls, doors, ceilings and floors as if they weren't there until the next turn. Or she can target any number of doors and windows that she can see, causing them to open or close as she wishes. Closed doors can be magically locked, requiring a DC 20 Str check to open.

As a third option, she can create an illusory copy of herself, which appears in its own space. As long as Auntie Tilda can see her duplicate, she can move it a distance equal to her normal speed and even speak with it on her turn. The duplicate can take no actions, but can interact with its environment and even pick up and hold real objects. The illusion disappears if any damage is done to it, dropping any real objects it may have been carrying.

Auntie Tilda is training Marie to take a place in her coven in a few years, but has grown bored of late since no one has come seeking her aid with their petty mortal problems in quite some time. The appearance of the adventurers has piqued her interest and she telepathically instructs Marie to bring them to the lair via a small token Marie carries with her.

Auntie Tilda is not seeking combat with the party, but will defend herself if necessary. If the battle isn't going in her favor, she will use any means available to escape, including putting Marie into harm's way if she has no other options. Auntie Tilda may be interested in something the party has in its possession, or she may have a task for them to undertake in exchange for a boon of some sort if the players are willing to negotiate with her. The DM can decide what story hooks to dangle in front of the party at this point.

ALTERNATIVES:

To increase the difficulty of the encounter, a second hag of the coven could be present, enabling coven actions and shared spellcasting to aid in a combat situation. Consult the MM page 176 for a list of spells or *Volo's Guide*, page 58 for more options.

If the DM wants to have the encounter in a more hilly or mountainous area, one or more annis hags could be used instead (*Volo's* page 159), also increasing the difficulty in a combat-oriented encounter.

THE SOUL OF REVENGE

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 3-5

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

ENVIRONMENT: URBAN

You stop to admire some finely crafted items in a store window when you feel a tug at your jerkin.

“Hey, Mister. Can you help me?” A young waif says, looking up at you with expressive brown eyes. She’s dressed in rags and her face is smudged with dirt.

The girl’s name is Rosie and she’s been sent to lure the party— one specific member, preferably— to her mother or father, who is holed up in an abandoned shack, an unused livery, or possibly a room in an unsavory inn.

Use some aspect of one of your party’s backstory, or an incident in their adventuring exploits, to explain the revenant that seeks revenge in order for its soul to be laid to rest.

The child, Rosie, has stayed with their undead parent and is desperate to help them exact the revenge they desire. She doesn’t understand that once this happens, she’ll lose her parent forever. She thinks that she’s working to cure the strange disease or curse that has affected her mother or father.

REVENANT

Medium undead, neutral (MM page 259)

Armor Class: 13 (leather armor— or adjust to make appropriate)

Hit Points: 136 (16d8 +64)

Speed: 30 ft.

Immunities: poison; charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned; turn undead

Resistances: necrotic and psychic damage

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Regeneration: The revenant gains 10 hit points at the start of its turn, unless it suffered fire or radiant damage the previous turn. Its body is destroyed only if it is reduced to 0 hit points and doesn’t regenerate.

Attacks: **Fist (2 att.)** +7 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 11 (2d6 +4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is one who the revenant has sworn vengeance upon, they take an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage.

Vengeful Glare the revenant chooses one target it can see within 30 ft. that it has sworn vengeance upon. The target must make a DC 15 Wis saving throw or be paralyzed until the revenant deals damage to it, or the end of the revenant’s next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of the revenant for 1 minute.

Even if the revenant is defeated in this encounter, it will **Rejuvenate** (see entry in the MM) after 24 hours and continue its quest for vengeance until a year has passed since the incident which incited its creation.

Rosie, now parentless, is another loose end for the players to attempt to tie up— either figuratively or literally!

ALTERNATIVES:

Instead of the revenant seeking revenge upon members of the party, Rosie has been sent to find aid for her parent in dealing vengeance to someone else within the town who wronged them in the past, but the revenant has, thus far, been unsuccessful in its quest.

The target could be a powerful noble, an influential cleric or wizard, or any other entity the DM wishes to put in front of the party. Time may be running out in the revenant’s year before its soul is lost forever. It will insist on joining the adventurers, its hunger for revenge unrelenting until the deed is finished.



MY MIND TO YOUR MIND

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 4-6

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: 7 & UP

ENVIRONMENT: URBAN

Walking past an alley next to a crowded street, you hear a small voice sobbing. A closer look reveals a young girl crouched down with her head in her hands.

She looks up with tears in her eyes as you approach. "My brother got lost in the sewers. Can you help me?"

The girl's name is Tess and she's unfortunately become the victim of an intellect devourer.

The devourer was traveling with its master, a mind flayer, to scout out areas for a potential lair. They ran afoul of some stout members of the local thieves' guild in the city's underground tunnels and the mind flayer was badly injured before managing to flee and hide, while its assailants retreated to tend to their own wounded. The illithid's *Plane Shift* ability won't be available again until tomorrow and it's in desperate need of a brain to help it heal. The intellect devourer went in search of aid and first found the unlucky Tess, playing near a drainage grate. It is now using her to lure some juicy, unsuspecting brains down to its master.

INTELLECT DEVOURER

Tiny aberration, lawful evil (MM page 191)

Armor Class: 12

Hit Points: 21 (6d4 +6)

Speed: 40 ft.

Skills: Stealth +4, Perception +2

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Senses: blindsight 60 ft., blind beyond, passive Perception 12

Attacks: **Claws** +4 to hit; damage 7 (2d4 +2)

Devour Intellect DC 12 Intelligence save or take 11 (2d10) psychic damage and the DM rolls 3d6 against character's intelligence score. If the roll is equal to or greater to the adventurer's intelligence, their score is reduced to 0 and the character is stunned until they regain at least 1 point of intelligence.

Body Thief The intellect devourer can initiate an intelligence contest with an incapacitated humanoid within 5 ft. that isn't protected by a *Protection from Evil and Good* spell. Success means the devourer magically consumes the target's brain and teleports into its skull, taking control of the body.

If the party suspects Tess is up to no good before the intellect devourer is able to lead them to its master, it will attempt to **Devour Intellect** of the party member it thinks will be the most susceptible to the ability and try to use that character to overpower the rest of the party.

If it can get the party close enough to its master, the intellect devourer will shy away from any conflict, seeking to keep its child host safe since the ruse worked so well. The mind flayer will first use its **Mind Blast** ability, then attempt to grapple and consume the brains of any incapacitated adventurers.

INJURED MIND FLAYER

Medium aberration, lawful evil (MM page 222)

Armor Class: 15

Hit Points: 26 (13d8 +13) (*injured*)

Speed: 30 ft.

Skills: Arcana +7, Deception +6, Insight +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +4

Senses: darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16, telepathy 120 ft.

Magic Resistance: Advantage on saving throws vs. spells and magic

Innate Spells: (DC 15) At will: *Detect Thoughts*, *Levitate*

1/day each: *Dominate Monster*, *Plane Shift* (self only) (*already used today*)

Attacks: **Tentacles** +7 to hit; damage 15 (2d10 +4) psychic, grappled (DC 15) and save or be stunned until grapple ends (DC 15 Int)

Extract Brain +7 to hit; damage 55 (10d10) vs. grappled target, if damage reduces target to zero, target is killed and mind flayer extracts and devours its brain

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6): 60 ft. cone attack; damage 22 (4d8 +4) and stun for one minute, save (DC 15) Int for half and no stun.

DMs use caution with this encounter as it can go badly for the players very quickly with an unlucky roll or two if they are not prepared.

ALTERNATIVES:

If your party is of higher level, you can reduce the severity of the mind flayer's injury, or even give it some companions, like quaggoths (MM page 256) or troglodytes (MM page 290).

This encounter could be the hook for a deeper infestation of illithids beneath the city, who have decided to investigate the world above in search of new feeding grounds, or possibly seeking to gain influence in the politics of the land-dwellers in preparation for a full-out assault of the world above.

THE JOKE'S ON YOU

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: ANY

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

ENVIRONMENT: URBAN

Walking down a crowded street, you feel a tug at your belt. After checking for missing valuables, you look down to see a young, human child.

"Hey, Mister. Can you help me?" The girl is clothed in simple linens and wools and has dirt smudged on her face. She is rather gaunt and appears to be six or seven years old.

She will introduce herself as Ava and is actually a copper dragon in disguise, looking for a bit of fun on a dull day.

Ava will tell the adventurer(s) that she and her brother were playing and exploring in the tunnels beneath the city when he fell and hurt his ankle. She came back to the surface, looking for help.

In reality, Ava just wants to watch the party slog through the disgusting sewers, slipping and falling in the muck and mire, as a distraction to her recently uneventful life.

Have the players make multiple Dexterity checks to avoid slipping in the slime and falling in pools of raw sewage and refuse. Ava, all the while, will cheerfully lead the way, apologizing profusely about forgetting to tell the following party about that "extra slippery spot" which she seems to always deftly avoid. She'll also pretend to not remember the way back to her fictional brother, whose name she says is Sean, and make the party backtrack multiple times. Be sure to describe in detail how they look and smell after several minutes of trailing the mischievous, disguised dragon through her makeshift maze.

Once they seem to be getting angry and belligerent about the excursion, Ava will lead them to her lair through a secret passage in the tunnels. She has fashioned a huge space that lies deep beneath a wishing well in the city. Occasionally, the players will hear the tinkling of a copper piece or two trickling down from the well and into an enormous pile of coins in the center of the chamber. Ava will transform into her true form, once inside, and apologize for the mess she's left the adventurers in.

If the party is good-natured about the ruse after realizing that Ava has simply played a trick on them, she may offer them a trinket or boon for being good sports. If a bard is among the party members, she will invite them to play a song or tell a story and might even offer them employment if she likes what she hears.

ADULT COPPER DRAGON

Huge dragon, chaotic good (MM page 111)

Armor Class: 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 184 (16d12 +80)

Speed: 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

Saves: Cha +8, Con +10, Dex +6, Int +4, Str +6, Wis +7

Skills: Perception +12, Deception +8, Stealth +6

Immunities: acid

Senses: blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Legendary Resistances: 3/day, If the dragon fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Attacks: The dragon can use her **Frightful Presence**, then makes 3 attacks, one with her bite and 2 claw attacks

Frightful Presence Each creature of the dragon's choice within 120 ft. and aware of her must make a Wis save against DC 16 or be frightened for 1 minute. The creature may attempt the save again at the end of each of its turns. If successful, they are immune to the effect for 24 hours.

Bite +11 to hit; reach 10 ft.; 17 (2d10 +6) piercing damage

Claw (2 att.) +11 to hit; reach 5 ft.; 13 (2d6 +6) slashing damage

Tail +11 to hit; reach 15 ft.; 15 (2d8 +6) bludgeoning damage

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6) The dragon has access to 2 breath weapons, one of which she can use as her action for that turn:

Acid Breath The dragon exhales acid in a 60 ft. line, 5 ft. wide and each creature in that line must make a Dex save vs. DC 18 or take 54 (12d8) damage (half on a successful save).

Slowing Breath The dragon exhales gas in a 60-foot cone and each creature in the area must make a Con save vs. DC 18 or suffer the effects: speed halved, one attack per turn, and no reactions may be used.

ALTERNATIVES:

Any number of plot hooks are available to the DM with this encounter and can be used for parties of any level. Ava can become a patron of sorts, feeding the party information about the city and its denizens, or she can call upon them to perform tasks she is unable to herself because of her size or nature.

If the party's alignment or behavior is questionable to Ava, she could also become a powerful adversary.