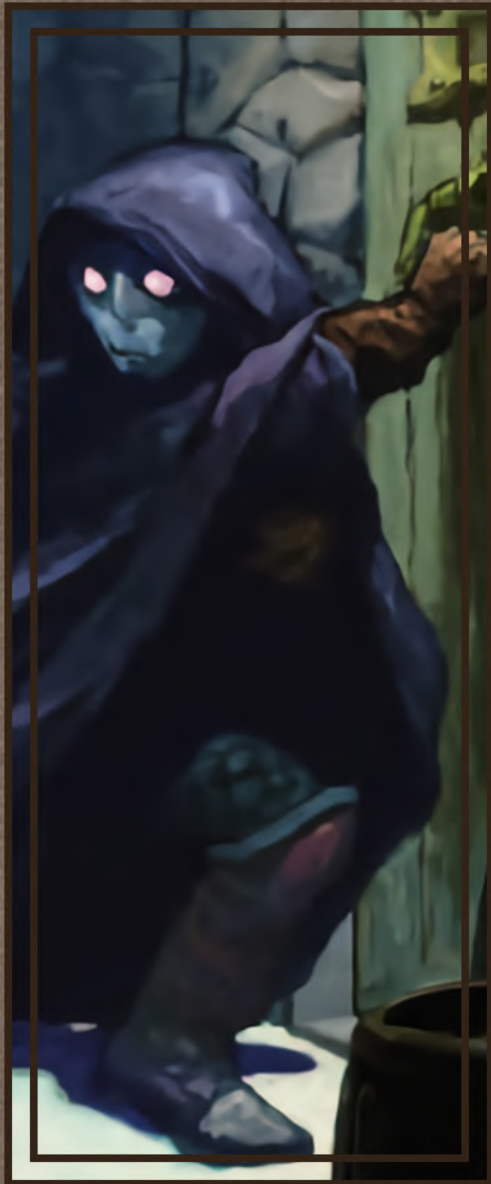


"I HAD TO GO BECAUSE"



BY **ASHLEY MAY**



Over 180 options for sporadic players.

I HAD TO GO BECAUSE...

OPTIONS FOR SPORADIC PLAYERS

1.01

EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR PLAYERS WHO CAN'T MAKE IT THIS WEEK.

BY ASHLEY MAY



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INTRODUCTION

It sometimes feels like it takes a Wish spell to get a group together to play at the same time, especially among older players; various work and life obligations can leave you longing for the days when you could roll dice all weekend, as long as you got your homework done. It's often necessary to make certain concessions in order to be able to include everyone who has the passion to play, but doesn't have the time or resources.

The goal of this document is to provide in-character explanations to cover when a player says "Sorry, I can't make it to the next session!" Many of these reasons can be stretched out over weeks or months at a time if necessary, or even come up "at a moment's notice" should a player need to duck out mid-session. These excuses are organized by the character's background, rather than class or race, as many of them involve "ghosts of the past" coming back to haunt someone, or an aspect of their personality being exploited.

Most of these distractions are crafted to be pressing matters, but not inherently dangerous. This is an intentional design choice, to reduce the urge for other party members to try to join in and help, instead of letting the absent party go about their business on their own. If a party still feels as though they should stick together, you may want to rely on additional excuses like...

- "A single rider can travel faster than a group."
- "A large crowd would only complicate the issue."
- "It's more of a personal matter."

"WE CAN HELP!"

There's sometimes little that you can do to keep a party from wanting to tag along and help out. After all, many players treat "splitting the party" as a cardinal sin. Short of hand-waving the situation, the We Can Help! infoboxes are designed to give advice for handling certain events that may sound dangerous.

With a few exceptions, most of these reasons do require that the party is reachable by some kind of outside contact. A courier of some form, be it humanoid, a trained animal, a familiar, or a magical delivery, must be capable of making contact with the subject in order to deliver the news that will draw them away. Choosing the method of delivery will be up to you as the Dungeon Master, and will vary greatly depending on the design of your world, and where a party is entrenched at any given time.

FALLING BEHIND

If a player is unable to attend several sessions in a row, they might wind up significantly lagging behind the rest of the party. However, just because a party member is separate of the party, doesn't mean that they can't gain experience, money, levels, or equipment. Not only do many of these "I Had To Go Because..." excuses involve experiences that may contribute to leveling up or earning money, but the journey to rejoin with the party could be waylaid by a solo adventure of their own.

Though you can hand-wave their solo adventures as just "a thing that happened", these could be excellent excuses to run "one on one" mini sessions with the player. This allows you to roll dice with a friend whenever they're available, rather than requiring the entire party to be present. One-on-one sessions can also be used to impart the absent adventurer with additional information or magic items that can assist the party when they're able to join up again, and allows the player to feel as if they have something unique and beneficial to bring to the table, rather than constantly having to be caught back up.

Whether you use milestone leveling or experience point tracking, you can still get your absent characters caught up. Be mindful not to slack on treasure too; being a level behind could be less detrimental to the party's balance than having a single adventurer who's poorly equipped compared to the rest. Various methods of granting a player a magic item include...

- I camped out in a cave during a storm and found the hidden coffers of a group of bandits who either fled or were killed. I figured they didn't need the goods anymore...
- After helping a merchant fix a broken wagon wheel, they gifted me this item. They know it would be difficult to sell, and it does more good in my hands.
- I took an ill-advised shortcut and fell down a hole into some old ruins. While finding a way out, I came across some ancient treasures.

On the other hand, if you're concerned that a player's time away will be *too* beneficial, just remember that options that involve obtaining money or property don't have to be successful. Just because a character leaves the party to claim an inheritance or collect a bounty, doesn't mean they get to return with all of the gold they sought. Not only can they fail in their endeavours, but they might also have sudden expenses arise on the way back to the party.

ACOLYTE

An acolyte has some connection to a religious order, past or present. Even if this religious order has mostly dissolved (thus spurring the acolyte to adventure, as per the general rule that *"happy and content people don't become adventurers"*), some remnants of it may still remain to call the acolyte back to their divine duties.

d8 Acolyte "I Had To Go Because"

1 My former mentor was facing trial for crimes against the order, and I was compelled to stand as witness to his good character before the judicial forum.

2 The graveyard of the religious institution where I trained has suddenly fallen victim to grave-robbing. Whether thieves were seeking jewels, a necromancer was seeking parts, or the dead were getting up and leaving of their own accord, the gravekeeper asked for all the help he could get.

3 I need to return for the funeral of the highest ranking member of my order. There is some debate as to who will be their successor and it is my duty to weigh in.

d8 Acolyte "I Had To Go Because" Cont.

4 Some religious texts that I once studied at length were destroyed in a fire, and it is my duty to return and offer my input to see that they are accurately reproduced.

5 A new tome of religious texts has been unearthed that may have significant impact on our order. This is a tumultuous time and I would not forgive myself if I did not see them with my own eyes before they were determined to be canon or apocryphal.

6 One of the acolytes I grew up and trained with is has been nominated by some to be an avatar of our deity or other divine figure. I know certain truths about them that I believe should be brought into the open before they're elevated to such an honor.

7 Tales of my adventures have made their way back to my order, and I am being venerated as a holy warrior of our faith. I must return to accept this most prestigious honor, or humbly set the record straight.

8 I have reached (or passed) a point in my life in which I am expected to make a religious pilgrimage. If I do not answer the call to depart on my pilgrimage, I will have to answer to my order for neglecting my spiritual growth.



CHARLATAN

No doubt, charlatans leave many broken deals (and possibly broken hearts) in their wake, and such things are bound to catch up with them sooner or later. Though they may not necessarily have broken any laws, they may still have to deal with the fallout of their actions. They also tend to run in the same circles as many shady types who could bring trouble down on their heads.

Charlatans have colorful pasts to lead them to such wild lives. Depending on the charlatan's favorite schemes, they may also find some options on the Entertainer or Criminal "I Had To Go Because" tables, and their childhoods may also lead them to draw from backgrounds ranging from Noble to Urchin. Your mileage may vary.



d8 Charlatan "I Had To Go Because"

1 I realized my "lucky" loaded dice got left behind in a tavern I recently visited. I need to get them back before people discover that my most recent gambling winnings were ill-gotten, and I wind up on "wanted" posters far and wide.

2 A while back, I did a forgery job for a thieves' guild. Unfortunately, the example document they gave me featured an unusual flaw, which I studiously duplicated into every forgery. If I don't return to them and correct it, they'll sell me out to the town guard in exchange for reduced sentences for themselves.

3 An old friend, rival, or accomplice of mine has sent me an invitation to their wedding. I know them better than to believe they've found true love and abandoned the life of a charlatan. I want to attend the wedding to either warn their "beloved", support their scheme, or just sit back and see how badly things might go sideways.

4 A piece of "useless junk" I sold to someone as a priceless antique turns out to have been an actual priceless antique, which means I severely under-priced it. I'd kick myself forever if I didn't try to get every coin I could out of it.

5 I shaved some coins to stretch my money a little further, but as it turns out, the authorities have caught on. I need to get my coins melted and re-minted by an old friend if I expect to be able to spend any of them without consequences.

6 I was the paramour of a noble for a few months, in an effort to gain their trust and access to financial records that I sold to their business rival. Once the job was done, I left, but they've still been burning a candle for me. As it turns out, the private investigators they hired to find me and "bring me home" are closing in, and I need to give them the slip.

7 My mentor taught me everything I know, and I wouldn't be the person I am today if not for their teachings. Chiefly, they taught me to never be afraid to push someone out of your way. I thought they'd be rotting in jail for the rest of their life, but I just found out they've been freed, and I need to make myself scarce for a while.

8 I told the wrong joke to the wrong wealthy aristocrat and caused them a great deal of embarrassment. I thought I'd evaded them long enough, but my "obnoxious laugh" was recognized by one of their lackeys in a tavern recently, and the chase is on again. I'll be gone a few days while I figure out how to fake my death or something.

CITY WATCH

Though the “City Watch” background in Sword Coast Adventure Guide may share tables with the Soldier background from the Player’s Handbook, the daily challenges and experiences of a local guardian can vary greatly from those of a soldier who’s seen war up close.

d8 City Watch “I Had To Go Because”

1 One of my last acts as a city guardsman was to break up a bar room brawl. I didn’t know why I was discharged after that night, but it turns out one of the heads I cracked was a drunken noble, and my commander was trying to protect me. That noble now wants my head on a silver platter, and I need to testify in person to straighten things out.

2 A thief slipped right by me one night and robbed a building I was guarding. It’s been a point of shame for me for years. The opportunity to catch the thief and bring them in has presented itself all this time later, and I might never forgive myself if I let it pass me by.

3 I cut the “town drunk” some slack one too many times, and on a night when I should’ve thrown them in jail until they sobered up, they wound up going to another tavern, getting into a fight, and beating a man to death before going on the run. I recognized them in a tavern recently, and I feel I owe it to their victim to bring them back to stand trial.

4 They’re building a new hall onto the guard barracks back home, and they want to name it after me, since I’ve gone on to enjoy a somewhat remarkable career as an adventurer after serving my tenure on the city watch. I need to return for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

5 Several years ago, I protected a young lady in the market when a robbery went sideways, and the thief tried to take her hostage. She was incredibly grateful at the time, but I thought little else of it. She just wrote me a letter to tell me she’s getting married soon, and she has asked if I would do the honor of giving away the bride.

6 A marauder attack on the wall where I served has decimated the city watch and left the city without proper protection. They’re in a scramble to train new guards. As a city watch veteran, they’ve asked me to return post haste, to help train the new recruits and get them ready to serve.

d8 City Watch “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

7 The sewers and abandoned cisterns under my city used to be part of my patrol route, until the city sealed the entrances. The local authorities recently discovered that a gang of burglars has broken in and is using the sewer as their highway to access all parts of the city. They’ve asked me to spearhead the operation to clean out the sewers.

8 My old commander is retiring and the guards who served under them are throwing one last big bash in the commander’s honor. It will be a grand opportunity to reunite with old friends, catch up on the news I’ve missed, and get blackout-drunk to have an excuse to tell off my commander for years of frustrations and stupid orders.



“WE CAN HELP!”

Option #7 is a rare break in the book’s “nothing too dangerous” theme, and therefore, an adventuring party might feel especially enthusiastic about coming along to help. However, this is an operation being handled by the city watch, and as an internal matter, they won’t be thrilled with the idea of miscellaneous adventurers tagging along. Furthermore, if the party has a history of illegal activities of their own, the former-city-watch adventurer may want to keep the two sides of their lives as distantly separated as possible.

CRIMINAL

Though they may not know for certain that they have any, no criminal should be terribly surprised that they have warrants out for their arrest. However, many more ghosts of the past can surface to haunt a career criminal.

If they were a criminal of the “smooth” variety, they may also have some overlap with the Charlatan “I Had To Go Because” table.

d8 Criminal “I Had To Go Because”

1 I noticed a warrant for my arrest on a public posting, but the illustration wasn't my face, but instead the face of an old friend I used to run with. If I don't go and straighten this mess out, my old friend may be charged with my crimes.

2 Once upon a time, I did a stint as an enforcer for a gang I was involved with. At the time, I had to work over a low-ranked lackey that screwed up a job. Well, some unusual political shifts have occurred in the gang and now that lackey is the new leader of the gang. I need to go make a showing of humble loyalty to the new leader before they make an example of me.

3 I used to work in a pawn shop owned by a retired thief, where we fenced stolen goods for the local gangs. The owner has since passed away and their daughter has asked me to come back and teach her the ropes of running the store. However, she was oblivious to the criminal side, and has no idea that the shop was only successful because of its illegal ties.

d8 Criminal “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

4 An old friend of mine reached out to me to tell me that they stole something they shouldn't have, and now they think they might be cursed. Security has increased on the building they broke into, and they want me to break in... So I can *put it back*.

5 I ran into an old town guard that I outsmarted more times than I could count. Now they're a washed up loser who quit the guard and feels like they're a failure. I feel somewhat responsible for the sorry state they're in, and I think I should do something to help restore their confidence and maybe get them to enlist in the guard again.

6 I read a cheap “copper dreadful” pulp fiction story, and the plot sounded familiar. In fact, a lot of this writer's work sounds like my life story, or those of old friends. I think the author might be someone from my old gang! I want to track them down to get a cut of the royalties, and to make sure they don't give away my best secrets.

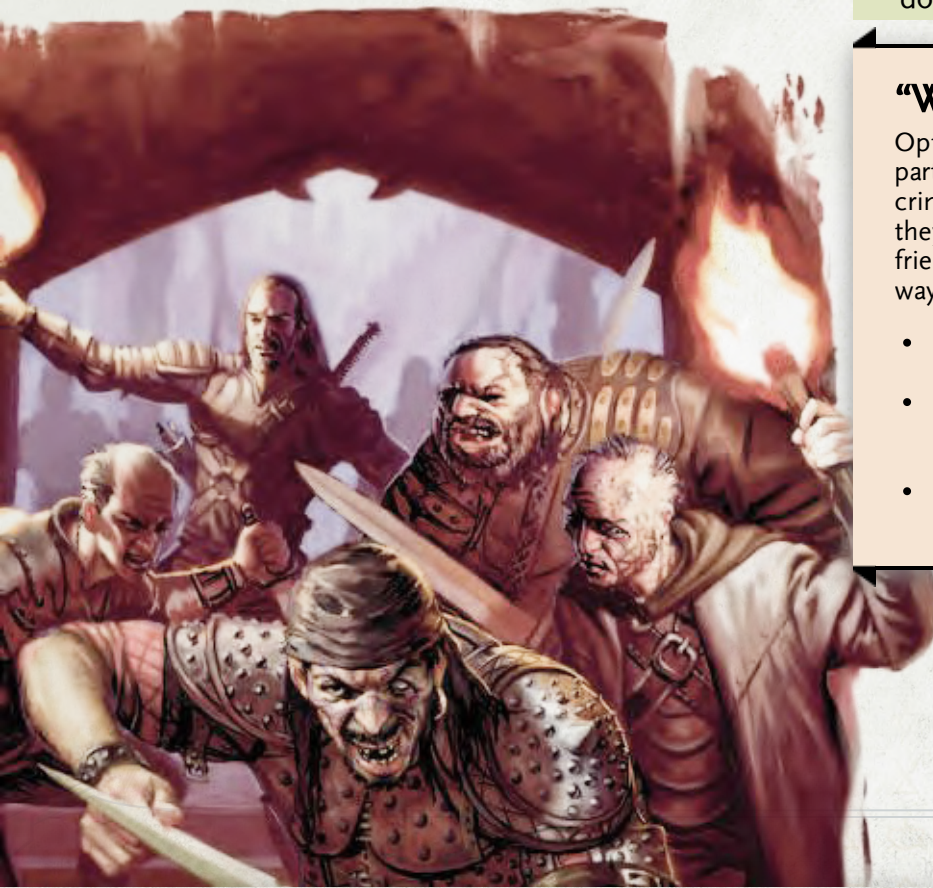
7 In a moment of remarkable charity (*I'm honestly impressed with myself*), I gifted some of my ill-gotten-gains to a poor blind beggar I met. I've since seen the “poor blind beggar” working another rouse as a fully-seeing street entertainer, and realized I'd been had by a charlatan! I need to teach them a lesson in being mindful of who they cheat.

8 The last time I broke out of jail, I freed some other prisoners, mostly to increase my chances of getting away. As it turns out, one of them was a more vile criminal than I could have guessed. I'm responsible for their freedom, and I'll feel responsible for any atrocities they commit until I can track them down and put them back in shackles.

“WE CAN HELP!”

Option #4 might seem like the kind of thing the party may want to tag along for. Of course, the criminal doesn't *have* to tell them up front why they're leaving; they could just go to “help a friend” and not explain until they return. Other ways to keep the party from tagging along...

- The vault has a magic seal on it that only allows one person in at a time.
- It's a personal matter and the criminal's friend would be embarrassed and refuse the help if so many people knew about it.
- The rest of the party isn't stealthy enough to pull off the job.



ENTERTAINER

A popular public figure must cultivate the interests of their fans. It's reasonable that entertainers would occasionally need to step away from their adventuring lives to tend to their arts and their following.



d8 Entertainer "I Had To Go Because"

1 I was approached by an author who wants to write my autobiography. I'll need to submit myself to be extensively interviewed, and remain with them as they write the first draft, in order to ensure that all of the details are correct.

2 By popular demand, some of my most popular poems or compositions are being assembled into a collection. It's important that I oversee the authoring of the collection.

3 A prestigious theatre has asked me to showcase my talents. It will be the largest crowd I've ever performed for. I can't possibly pass up this opportunity.

4 I've received word that my former mentor is in poor health and may not be long for this world. This is my last opportunity to learn whatever I can from them, and I'd never forgive myself if I didn't spend these last days with them, learning all that I could.

5 A wealthy merchant of questionable legality has personally requested that I perform at his daughter's wedding. It's an offer I *really* can't refuse.

6 I lost an instrument of my art (a pen, a brush, a musical instrument, etc) that was incredibly important to me some time ago. I've been notified that it's resurfaced, and I must go to verify its authenticity and reclaim it.

7 I'm accustomed to devoted admirers in my line of work, but I've recently drawn the affections of a noble with more money than reason. It's best that I make myself scarce until they lose interest in me.

8 My fame has grown, and one of the first venues to ever showcase my work (a theatre, museum, amphitheatre, library, etc) wants to commission a portrait of me to hang in their halls, to commemorate my history with them. I'll need to pose for the painter until they've produced a suitably grand portrait.

"WE WANT TO COME TOO!"

What happens when the party is *super supportive* of their artistic friend? Well, it's possible that the entertainer is dealing with the upper crust of society that won't accept a band of ragtag adventurers. For events like theater performances or museum showings, tickets may already be sold out for the event.

FAR TRAVELER

A “stranger in a strange land”. The far traveler could be from any number of distant, exotic locations, and have traversed great distances for any number of reasons. This makes it difficult for personal matters in the far traveler’s past to tug at them the same as adventurers of other backgrounds. Difficult, but not impossible.

d8 Far Traveler “I Had To Go Because”

1 Though physically far from home, I am not entirely out of contact with my family or acquaintances. I have methods of communicating over great distances, though word travels slowly. I’ve just received distressing news from home and I must travel to find a more expedient method of communication in order to find out what’s going on.

2 A cultural misunderstanding has resulted in me deeply insulting a native noble, and I did not realize it until recently. Unless I want them to make my time in this land completely miserable, I would do well to make a formal, humble apology in person.

3 I’ve realized that a precious token of my homeland, which I usually keep in a pocket or in my bag, has fallen out. I must retrace my steps, or go to the last inn where we stayed, in search of it.

4 Though cultural exchange is interesting, it can also be exhausting. I feel a need to be among my people again, and in lieu of making the distant journey home, I would like to visit a community of expatriates that I’ve heard of in the area. I just need a few days to reconnect with my roots.

d8 Far Traveler “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

5 I was fascinated to discover a local author has written a book about my people and their culture, but I’m horrified by the inaccuracies. It’s downright insulting! I must find the author and demand a correction, lest they cause an incident with their terrible “advice”.

6 Being a fish-out-of-water is no longer new and fascinating, and is causing more problems than it’s worth. I would like to spend a few days at a local library or educational institution to learn more about the land in which I now live, so that I can feel more at ease.

7 Shortly after arriving in this land, I was approached by a merchant who explained that foreigners are not granted the same legal rights as residents. They sold me a miniscule share of land for a moderate fee, in order to grant me papers as a formal land-owner. I later realized I’d been had, and owning a few inches of dirt makes me no better-off than I was before. However, someone has recently committed a crime on my meager inches of dirt and I’m required to appear before the justices.

8 A criminal from my homeland is the focus of a local manhunt, and people are now on the lookout for “one of our kind”. It’s going to go and present myself to the local authorities to clear myself before a posse shows up trying to apprehend me because the locals don’t know the difference.



FOLK HERO

Even if you're not a world-renowned adventurer, there's still one town out there that thinks the sun rises and sets on you. Unfortunately, even after you've left, they may still feel like they just can't get along without you.

The folk hero's town plays heavily into most of these options, so these assume the town still exists. If the folk hero's town is gone (thus spurring them to adventure), you may want to look into other backgrounds that they share similarities with.

d8 Folk Hero "I Had To Go Because"

1 My hometown has commissioned a statue in my honor and they'd like me to return home in order to model for it.

2 A cheap publication of adventure stories has made its way into my hands, and it turns out someone has decided to chronicle my (fictionalized) adventures! But some of the details are so horrendously misrepresented that I feel I need to stop them... Or at least race home to tell the people I know that they can't take the stories at face value.

3 Before I was an adventurer, I was a farmer, and I tilled the land before I traded my plow for the sword. I always figured I'd retire to the farm one day, but an aristocrat is trying to claim my acres under "eminent domain" because they haven't been maintained while I was away. I need to return to stake my claim.

4 I just received word that my hometown has been decimated by a flood. Though the people can recover, their spirits are broken. Having their "hero" come home, even just to help till fields and rebuild barns, would mean the world to them. I can't save them from disaster this time, but I want to help them save themselves.

5 My old town is holding their biggest annual festival, and they want me present as a judge for their local combat tournament, and to present the first place award. I know many of the young warriors in this contest idolize me as their local hero, and it would inspire them to get to compete in front of me.

6 One of my oldest friends is getting married and I've been invited to the wedding. As the "local hero", they've asked me to do all kinds of things, like carry the rings, give a speech at the reception, etc. I can't possibly let them down.

7 I stole from a corrupt merchant to feed the poor and downtrodden. At the time, they didn't press charges because it would draw attention to their own vile behaviors, and saving face was more valuable than what I took. Well, they've since changed their mind, and I need to formally claim "statute of limitations" before the bounty hunters show up.

8 I lead an act of protest against a noble's decree, and through my hard work and suffering, I forced them to rescind it. Now that I've been gone, they've decided to reinstate their decree. I need to return home to remind them that I'm never too far away to fight their injustices.



GLADIATOR

The life of a gladiator is another form of entertainer, but a gladiator's form of entertainment tends to involve more showboating and head-smashing. Though it involves every bit as much performance and playing to the crowd, it can come with its own unique challenges, such as helping to maintain the "cover story" of the gladiatorial circuit.

d8 Gladiator "I Had To Go Because"

1 A new gladiator has been smack-talking me at my old fighting pit, claiming that I ran away because I couldn't keep up with the pace anymore. I need to go back and beat my retort into them.

2 I left a champion, but because I haven't been present to defend my championship, they're planning to strip me of my title and hold a tournament for it. I need to make it back to the pit in time to stop them, and barring that, I need to enter the tournament to get it back.

3 My old mentor is being inducted into the arena's Hall Of Fame, and they're putting up a statue in their honor. As their greatest pupil, I must be there to give a speech, or I'll be forever shamed for letting them down.

4 Another gladiator has entered the combat circuit, disguised as me and carrying on under my persona. I need to go and unmask this copycat before they ruin my reputation.

5 I was famous for a spectacular "finishing move" I used to end my arena matches. I just received a letter from a young gladiator, asking permission to utilize my finishing move, with a twist. I've decided to let them use it, but I need to train them in how to do it properly before they risk attributing sloppy work to my legacy.

6 The biggest show of the year is coming to the coliseum, and they've asked me to participate in a "legends" match with another semi-retired gladiator. There's a substantial payday waiting on me if I can put on a show on the grandest stage of them all.

A LOOK AT THE ARENA

The view of the gladiatorial arena presented here is somewhat inspired by the pageantry and the behind-the-scenes atmosphere of professional wrestling.

If this idea piques your interest and you'd like a deeper look at the life of a gladiator in this sort of setting, you may be interested in another supplement called [Battles, Brawls and Belts](#), available exclusively on the DM's Guild.

d8 Gladiator "I Had To Go Because" Cont.

7 I had a run as a "scoundrel" type of character, and one of my crowning moments was to put a "paragon" into retirement by "killing off" his character. Unfortunately, he drank a little too heavily at his retirement party, and when they found him floating in the river the next day, the local guard decided to charge me with his actual murder. I need to get ahold of the promoter and talk to the guard to straighten this mess out.

8 A writer who was a big fan during my arena days wants to chronicle the fictitious adventures of my gladiator persona. They've asked me to meet with them and give them an inside look at the gladiator business, the mindset behind my persona, how I came to design my signature moves, and so on.



GUILD ARTISAN

Membership to a guild comes with a lot of perks, but also a lot of obligations. An adventurer with a guild affiliation may be able to utilize the benefits in their line of work, but eventually, the guild will come asking for their back to be scratched in return.

d8 Guild Artisan “I Had To Go Because”

1 Counterfeit goods have been flooding the market, baring the symbol of our guild of artisans. As one of their most prestigious artisans, they need my help verifying the authenticity of goods that I specialize in, so that the counterfeits can be removed from circulation as quickly as possible.

2 I pay my guild dues without fail every month, but while I've been away adventuring, the courier that I count on to send my dues has been pocketing them. I now have a substantial debt and mounting penalties from the guild, and I need to appear in person to put the matter to rest.

3 My aging mentor stands accused of putting their maker's mark on goods being produced by their apprentices. I need to appear as a character witness before the guild tribunal, but I have reason to fear that my mentor may be guilty.

4 A warehouse fire has decimated the guild's inventory of goods, and if they can't provide supply to meet demands, they may lose power and influence over the market. This is an “all hands on deck” situation and they need every able-bodied craftsman in their employ to help them recover.

5 My hometown is holding a craftsman's festival, and I'm expected to take home the blue ribbon as I have in previous years. I was willing to sit this one out until I heard my rival had been bad-mouthing me, and now, I won't settle for anything less than first place.

d8 Guild Artisan “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

6 In order to ensure that the quality of goods being produced under the guild seal is maintained, the guild requires that their artisans present examples of their work in order to renew their licenses. I've procrastinated for as long as I can, and it's time for me to go and show the board of the guild what I can do.

7 In a world that consistently asks “But what have you done *lately?*”, being an adventurer takes away a lot of valuable craftsmanship time. If I don't take some time away to hone my craft and keep my name relevant, I might as well forfeit my guild membership.

8 I'm rather surprised to learn I have a fan! A wealthy aristocrat has written to me to tell me that their child adores my work, and they'd like to learn the craft from me. Though I hadn't expected to take on an apprentice at this point in my life, it would mean a significant payday, and a feather in my cap to be an aristocrat's private tutor for a while.



GUILD MERCHANT

Though formally a variation on the "Guild Artisan" background, the Guild Merchant faces an entirely different set of challenges.

d8 Guild Merchant "I Had To Go Because"

1 The guild is claiming that I've been paying my monthly dues with counterfeit coins. I know this to be a false accusation, and my in-person testimony is required in order for them to investigate an internal money laundering scheme.

2 A former partner of mine has been fencing stolen goods for a gang of thieves. I felt sorry for them and looked the other way, until I found out they'd been forging my signature on the receipts.

3 A good friend of mine has recently come into a surplus of valuable, but perishable goods, and needs help moving the product before it spoils. It would mean a big payday and a huge favor to a friend if I helped them move the merchandise as fast as possible.

4 The largest annual market in the region is coming up and it will be a who's-who of the most influential merchants and traders. I need to put in an appearance if I have any expectation of maintaining contacts and keeping up my reputation.

5 My mentor, who taught me everything I know about the market, has died. I was contacted by their next of kin and informed that they had fallen on hard times, and the funeral is planned to be a rather humble affair. I'm going to contact some of their old friends and partners, and see if we can't bankroll the grand send-off that they deserve.

6 I've been asked by a young writer to contribute my expertise to a book on economics and the mercantile arts. Given that they consider me a professional at my craft, I couldn't possibly turn down their request. I'll be gone for a while, teaching them the ins and outs of the trade.

7 The guild is holding an assembly of merchants, to discuss economic laws, make new business contacts, and improve our trade. I've been asked to appear as a guest speaker, and they would like me to deliver an address on the complexities of being a merchant-adventurer.

8 My reputation as a merchant and an adventurer has grown, and an adept of our guild wants to open an inn and tavern using my name recognition. I'm happy to accept the royalties of such an arrangement, but I need to be present to help design the menu, decorate the rooms, etc, for any establishment that will bare my name.



"HEY WHILE YOU'RE GONE..."

Merchants are perfectly cut out for certain downtime activities that the party may not want to take the time for. Chiefly, "Selling A Magic Item" requires at least one workweek per item, as described in Xanathar's Guide To Everything (pg. 133). Your player's absence could become a boon for the party if they return with a pile of gold from cashing in on items the adventurers no longer need. Load their bags with stuff!

HERMIT

Just because hermits live lives of seclusion, doesn't mean they have no one to call upon them. If anything, it just means that their attachments are all the more distant and strained, leading them to depart even more awkwardly, or for longer stretches of time.

d8 Hermit "I Had To Go Because"

- 1 I haven't seen my family member in many years, but I've received word that they're on their deathbed and this is my last chance to settle our past. As to whether or not they're truly dying, or this is a last ditch effort to bring me home, remains to be seen.
- 2 For years I lived in exile for a crime that I've now been exonerated of. The court has asked for me to return in order to formally put the matter to rest.
- 3 I've been asked to come and claim goods, wealth, or property that are rightfully mine after the passing of a relative with whom I have no familiarity. As their last of kin, it is only right that I carry out the directives of their last will and testament.
- 4 An ancient ruin or relic that I served as guardian (either under orders, or by my own volition) has been destroyed or stolen. I must return to the site to see what can be done to recover it, or avenge it.
- 5 While in solitude, I created works of art (writings, paintings, sculptures, etc) that I left behind when I began adventuring. They have now been discovered and are on display in an art house, and I need to claim my work, and whatever earnings I'm owed for their display.
- 6 My solitary pilgrimage was interrupted by the call to adventure, and an opportunity has presented itself to complete my pilgrimage. If I do not take this rare chance, I don't know when or if I'll ever be able to finish.
- 7 The place in which I communed with nature is now set to be demolished in order to make way for new construction or settlement, and I must return to bar their progress, lest a sacred place be destroyed.
- 8 A monastery that I withdrew to has suffered some form of catastrophe (fire, flood, illness, etc) and I feel that I must return to lend aid.

INHERITOR

As an heir to something of great value beyond mere coin, you've likely grown accustomed to having your life be influenced by outside forces. Be sure to read the options carefully, because an inheritance could be an object like a trinket or book, something ingrained in the inheritor like a tattoo, or something intangible like a story or a secret, and not every excuse may apply.

d8 Inheritor "I Had To Go Because"

- 1 My inheritance is in need of some care (repair, polish, mending, refreshing ink of tattoo marred by a scar, etc), and I must tend to it.
- 2 Local authorities found my inheritance, or perhaps my reverence of it, to be "suspicious behavior", and have decided to detain me for questioning. The legal system moves at a snail's pace, so it will take some time to sort this out.
- 3 Some "unwanted attention" has begun to follow me, most likely focused on my inheritance. Instead of bringing trouble down on the rest of the party, I'm going to head off on my own for a while to give them the slip.
- 4 My inheritance has been with me for a long time, but I've realized I know very little about it. Considering it's such an important part of my life, I believe I would be well served to take the time to learn more about it.
- 5 A researcher has taken an interest in my inheritance, and wants to learn more. They'll be questioning me and examining my inheritance for a while, and possibly calling in colleagues to help examine it.
- 6 My inheritance was stolen by a mundane pickpocket who likely has no concept of its true value. I need to go and get it back before they sell it off for a pittance.
- 7 Albeit vague, my inheritance has always lead me toward *something*. Recently I've been putting together the clues and I believe I've gained some headway. I need to investigate a detail on my own, and see if this is truly what my inheritance has guided me to.
- 8 The last person besides myself who knew anything about my inheritance (a mentor, a parent, a leader, etc) has died, and I need to attend their funeral. I believe it's possible that they did not give me the entirety of my inheritance, and that the final pieces will be awaiting me as the sole heir.

Thanks to Nathanaël Roux for suggesting #1-#4!

INVESTIGATOR

Though the Investigator is a variant on the City Watch, which itself is a variant on the Soldier, this background presents some highly unique options. While guards are common, not every town has the benefit of an Investigator to look into crimes after the dust has already settled, but their influence can make all the difference in the crime rate of an area.

d8 Investigator “I Had To Go Because”

- 1 New evidence has been discovered on a “cold case” I worked long ago. I need to race back to my old stomping grounds to do whatever I can to solve the mystery and put the criminal behind bars.

- 2 My greatest rival was a professional thief who slipped through my fingers more times than I’m comfortable admitting. I’ve received word that they died, and named me as the recipient of a package in their will. I don’t know if I can trust anything about them, even their mortality, but my curiosity is killing me and I have to see what they left in my name.



d8 Investigator “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

- 3 A criminal I put away for years has been exonerated of their crime, after new evidence surfaced to prove their innocence. I feel terrible for the time I took away from them, and I feel I owe them an apology in person.

- 4 There was a murder that I was never able to solve, and I felt the murderer must’ve escaped long ago. However, I’ve heard now that the *victim themselves* has been spotted in public. I need to find them and interview them to get to the bottom of what may have been a faked death all along.

- 5 I turned in my credentials when I left the guard and quit as an investigator, when I realized the force was corrupt and cases against the wealthy were being intentionally dropped. I’m told there’s been a change of command and they’re working to clean out the filth, and the new commander wants my input on changes.

- 6 I don’t like to brag, but I was one of the best. A string of murders in my old hometown has lead the force to ask me to return to help investigate. They want to keep things quiet, so bringing in an entire team of adventurers would draw too much attention. I need to do this on my own.

- 7 Investigators are a rare breed, and since I became an adventurer, my absence has been palpable back home. Though they know I won’t be coming back on a permanent basis, my old guard unit has asked me to come back and train some of the city watch to become investigators in my stead.

- 8 Now that I’ve gained some renown as an adventurer, a cheap pulp mystery author has decided to write an unauthorized series of my fictitious exploits as an investigator. I know they need to sensationalize it, but, the details are all embarrassingly wrong. I need to find this hack and tell them to straighten things out, or take my name off of it.

I FOUND A CLUE!

Want to keep your absent investigator involved with the plot, and feeling relevant? Before their return, give them some information or a clue that the rest of the party may have overlooked or not yet discovered. Now when the investigator returns to the party, they already have a method of helping to move the plot forward. Instead of having to be filled in on what they missed, the investigator gets to be one step ahead.

KNIGHT

Though technically a form of noble, a knight lives a unique life revolving around military service and upholding a chivalrous code.

Because the Knight is a variation on the Noble background, there may be some overlap between them. Consider rolling on the Noble "I Had To Go Because" table for additional options. You may also consider options from the Soldier "I Had To Go Because" table, depending on a knight's particular military background.

When all else fails, a knight can simply be called away by their lord or their ruler, though these excuses may be more difficult to hand-wave as being simple, non-threatening excursions that won't require the party's help or lead to any missed storylines. If a knight has particular difficulty separating from their party, it can be helpful to remind the party that they *are not knights*, therefore, the knight's calling is not actually any of their business.



d8 Knight "I Had To Go Because"

One of my squires entered a jousting competition under my name, with hopes of winning glory. They've been badly injured by a broken lance, and if I don't show up in the lists to take their place, they'll be discovered as an imposter and hung for their juvenile mistake.

In my absence, a knight has been committing crimes and behaving dishonorably with my coat of arms on their shield, and I must go challenge them to cleanse my tarnished reputation.

Though any true devotee of courtly love knows that it is more important to *adore from afar* than it is to *obtain* the object of one's affections, I am told that my distant admirer is making plans to actively pursue me, and I must go to them and talk them out of it before they put themselves in danger.

I have been sent a token of courtly love, tarnished with blood, and a letter from my rival claiming they have kidnapped my beloved. Though I don't actually have a beloved, I feel I must go and straighten this matter out before an innocent noble is harmed.

My beloved mare, who has been stabled at my family grounds while I adventure in dangerous lands, has recently given birth to two foals. Healthy twins are vanishingly rare with horses, and I must rush home to ensure that my dear horse is not stressed by the onslaught of attention from farmers, breeders, and people calling it an omen.

I pride myself on my integrity as a knight, but I'm shamed by the fact my ancestor elevated our family to this rank by making their fortune in a "free company" (read "*band of mercenaries*") before buying their knighthood through bribery. Another noble and chivalrous family has threatened to reveal this shameful past, and I must go and show them that I am not my ancestor, impressing upon them the strength of my own character.

I've been procrastinating on it for some time, but my family wants to commission a portrait of me to hang in the halls of our estate. After a heartbreaking, guilt-inducing letter from home about how they fear I'll die in a deep dungeon with nothing to remember me by but a childhood portrait, I'm ready to give in and return home to be painted.

As a knight, my patent of nobility is vitally important to me, detailing my noble ancestry and claim to knighthood. Unfortunately, my "letters patent" were recently lost or destroyed, and I must return to my home in order to see that new papers are properly drawn up.

NOBLE

Living a life in the lap of luxury has its drawbacks. Along with wealth, influence, and prestigious titles, you must also answer to certain responsibilities. The lofty world of nobles is distantly out of touch with the life of an adventurer, but when the two collide, it often requires an adventurer's full attention to set things back on their proper course.

d8 Noble "I Had To Go Because"

- 1 My parents have decided that this "adventuring stuff" has run its course and it's time for me to come home and settle down. Thus, I've been informed that my wedding is in a fortnight. If I don't go and straighten this mess out, I risk being disowned.

- 2 A family scandal has come to light and I must return home immediately to help assist with "damage control". The household must present a unified front, and this means wrangling a lot of very upset extended family.



d8 Noble "I Had To Go Because" Cont.

- 3 An ornery, eccentric family member of mine has died. Having last seen me as a toddler, they "hated me the least", and this apparently means they were fond enough of me to leave their entire estate in my name. I must return to sort out their final affairs, including the sale of their decrepit manor.

- 4 A young person has appeared at my household, claiming to be an illegitimate child of a member of our family. The entire extended family, including myself, are being called home to try to verify their parentage and decide how to handle the situation.

- 5 My "rival" has sworn they will ruin my name, destroy my family's businesses, burn our properties and salt our fields. I've never heard of this person before but I seem to have insulted them at some point, so I had best handle it before things escalate further.

- 6 Though I truly love my life as an adventurer, I can't abandon my social status. In order to maintain my contacts and influence, I need to put in an appearance at an upcoming formal event. It's a fancy gala that none of you would be interested in (or welcome at, really), but I'll catch up when I'm done waltzing and rubbing elbows with nobility.

- 7 I'm an eloquent flatterer, and I know how to please the people I talk to. Unfortunately, I apparently laid it on a little too thick and gained myself an admirer. They've now reached out to me through a matchmaker to express an interest in possible marriage. It would be disgraceful of me to decline by letter, so I must meet in person to let them down gently.

- 8 My family has authorized an autobiography of our household, without my consent. If I don't show up to be interviewed and provide details of my life, I'll have no influence over how my family chooses to portray me. I need to go and make sure the right person winds up immortalized in their narrative.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF NOBILITY

Not every noble looks or acts like one, but they can be troubled by the same issues. A wood elf princess who utilizes the Outlander background because it better suits her lifestyle is still a princess. Look beyond an adventurer's "Background", and consider what their history and personality could mean when it comes to determining good excuses for their absence.

OUTLANDER

The outlander background abandons the stability and order of cities in favor of the freedoms and chaos of the wilds. Though this may mean there are fewer structures in place that require their attention, there may still be matters in their past that call out to them.

One of the origins suggested for an Outlander in the Player's Handbook is the "Bounty Hunter" option. For bounty-hunting outlanders, you may also find some useful options in the Urban Bounty Hunter "I Had To Go Because" table.



d8 Outlander "I Had To Go Because"

The acreage which I built my homestead on is being claimed as a "no man's land" by a

- 1 noble who wishes to settle. I must return to either combat their claim, or to formally sign over my claim to the territory.

A long-forgotten hunting trap of mine, one I assumed had been lost in a mudslide, has

- 2 since been found... On the leg of a merchant who was traveling through the region. I have been identified by my mark on the trap and must appear in court and pay reparations, lest I wind up on a wanted poster.

As an outlander, I often took bounty hunting jobs to make my way. One mark got away

- 3 from me and I never forgave myself for letting the criminal slip through the cracks. New rumors about the outlaw have surfaced and I feel compelled to pursue them to the end.

A nomadic group that I travelled with is being pressured by a provincial lord to settle a town, claiming that their "wandering

- 4 livestock" have been damaging farmers' land. I know that this is really about trying to make the nomads pay taxes, and I feel I must represent them in court to fight for their freedom and way of life.

A gang of marauders I ran with in my youth have been captured. One of my old cohorts

- 5 has named me as an accomplice in order to reduce his prison sentence. I need to appear in court baring proof that I've had no involvement with them in years.

Some years ago, when I was walking home one evening, I accidentally stepped into a circle of flowers. I felt disoriented, but

- 6 continued home. When I made it back, my belongings were covered in dust and my food stores had rotted. There's not much I can do about what I presume was an extended stay in the Feywild, but now I've heard that another outlander took up homestead in my old cabin, and recently went missing. I feel I owe it to their family to show the search teams where the circle was... If it's still there.

When I lived alone with nature, I held intimate knowledge of the energy and health

- 7 of the land. I've now received word that the land is "sick", suffering from dying trees, stagnant water, and even the animals are leaving. I believe if I return, I could get to the root of the problem and help to save the land.

The same wanderlust that lead me to become an outlander in the first place has been

- 8 gnawing at me again. I don't want to leave my life as an adventurer, but if I don't get away for a while, I feel like I might go crazy. I just need a little time alone to reconnect.

PIRATE

It can be difficult for a sailor to say goodbye to the seas. Even more difficult for a pirate, whose history may be marred with crimes and sworn allegiances. Like holding a shell to one's ear and hearing the roar of the ocean, a pirate's past will always call out to them.

Though they lead very different lives, the Pirate may also have some overlap with the Sailor "I Had To Go Because" table, if you're looking for less "legally-gray" callings.

d8 Pirate "I Had To Go Because"

1 My old sea captain has died, and his crew, past and present, are gathering to throw a send-off befitting of the salty old dog. There's bound to be tears, drinking, and more than a few things set on fire. I can't miss this for the world.

2 Once upon a time, I made a pact with four friends to bury a treasure we couldn't divide, and the last of us surviving would inherit the whole thing. Well, one of us decided to jump the gun and steal it, so the rest of us need to go beat them up and re-bury it somewhere better.

3 Back when I was in the "deck mopping" era of my life of a pirate, I served on a ship for a few months, just long enough to be added to the roster... Which has since resurfaced. A few years after I left, they turned to awful, inhumane crimes, and now I need to go and inform the authorities that I had nothing to do with their more recent atrocities.

4 One of my relics of my past is a small, barely noticeable tattoo that I got while I was out drinking. The tattoo parlor where I got my ink has since been shut down under suspicion of curses and hexes, and they're asking everyone to have their ink examined to be certain that they're not afflicted with the old tattoo artist's vile magic.

5 As a small child with a head full of dreams, I told my first crush that I'd become a mighty pirate with my own fleet someday, and that I'd marry them and rule the seas with them at my side. I'd forgotten about my promise, before I received a letter from my first crush, asking if I was ready to come back and wed them. I need to go let them down gently.

6 I once served under "The Immortal Pirate King", a terror on the seas who's outsmarted every navy to ever try to capture them. Or at least, I served under the eighth. Well, my old captain has fallen ill and they've asked me to take up the mantle until they recover, lest the legend become tarnished.

d8 Pirate "I Had To Go Because" Cont.

7 A ship I served on was specialized for smuggling people, and had hidden compartments all over to hide criminals, exiles, or even just nobles trying to travel in secret. I've now heard that slavers have been kidnapping people along the coast, and I've seen some of my old associates looking surprisingly well-off. I fear my old crew has taken a dark path. I don't like talking to the authorities, but I believe the information I have on the ship could lead to the slavery ring being dismantled.

8 I once encountered a ghost ship on the high seas, and when we boarded, I pocketed a single coin before we realized the ship was haunted. I've begun experiencing terrifying nightmares, and I know that the ghosts won't leave me alone until I find that ship and return their stolen coin.





SAGE

Though you may be a master in your field of study, there will always be questions that remain unanswered. For someone with an academic mind, the call to seek these answers can be a powerful one.

d8 Sage “I Had To Go Because”

1 A thesis I submitted months or years ago has finally been reviewed by the committee, and I must appear in person to defend it, lest my hard work be discarded.

2 I’ve received an exorbitant bill for overdue library fees and threat of arrest if it goes unpaid. I *know* I returned those ancient and priceless tomes, so my only recourse is to debate the charges. Even if I could afford to pay it, it’s the principle of the matter!

3 An old classmate of mine has continued some research that I long since abandoned, and has made some fascinating discoveries. As a result, they want to name a star after me, and I’ve been invited to the naming ceremony.

4 My experience as an adventurer has put me in a unique position among my peers. I have been asked to lead a research expedition, helping guide scholars and analysts who’ve seldom left the academy through dangerous ruins. I don’t expect any real threats will befall us, and this feels more like a babysitting job.

5 My former mentor is getting a wing of the university named after them. The ceremony will be a who’s-who of the greatest thinkers of our time, and my mentor is excited to introduce me to their peers.

6 During our explorations of dungeons and ruins, I’ve realized that certain texts I read in my studies were woefully inaccurate. I must consult with other academics and see that these texts are corrected, lest a young adventurer make a fatal mistake based on bad research.

7 In my time as a professor, I delivered a lecture that was deeply inspirational to one of my students. It’s become the basis for all of their studies, they’ve become an expert in the field and they are currently writing a book on the subject. They’ve asked me to be their editor, and to write the foreword, which is an honor I couldn’t possibly decline.

8 In our journeys, I noticed the remains of a research expedition in some ruins. I recognize the crest on their clothing and cargo containers, and I feel that I should inform their associated institution of their deaths, so that next of kin can be notified.

SAILOR

All manner of different sailing ships travel the coast, from military, mercantile, to missions of exploration. This list generally assumes the sailor did not serve under military obligation, but instead worked on a civilian ship. If your sailor was a member of the navy, you may consider options from the Soldier “I Had To Go Because” chart as well.

d8 Sailor “I Had To Go Because”

- 1 The ship I served my longest tenure on has sank, and with her, many good sailors. I need to be present at the coastal funeral to honor the memory of my brethren.

- 2 An exploratory vessel I crewed on has discovered new land. Supposedly I’m partially responsible, due to an offhand comment I made on where they should go, back before I left the ship. They’re celebrating the new findings at a university hall and they want to honor me for my contribution.

- 3 A mercantile ship I served on is under investigation for having skimmed gold from its shipments over the course of several years. I’m listed as a crew member during part of that time, so I need to go and clear my name before they put me on wanted posters.

d8 Sailor “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

My best friend when I served was a navigator, and I’ve received word from their next of kin that they’ve passed away. The heir wants to

- 4 share with me a chart they found in their inheritance that has my name on it, and it may lead to some treasure or secret that was intended for me.

My old captain has reached out to me as one of the best they ever sailed with, and has asked me to return for an urgent job. They

- 5 have a tight timeline to sail through dangerous waters, but if I’m willing to come out of retirement to help make their delivery, there might be a big bonus waiting on me.

In our travels, we ran across the wreckage of an old ship. I recognize the name and some characteristics about it, and I feel I should go and report the wreckage so that their next of kin can be informed.

- 6

From the remote locations that our party travels through, I’ve begun to notice unusual patterns emerging in the weather and

- 7 changing of seasons. Unprecedented storms are going to shut down major shipping lanes and if I can deliver this warning to the port, it might save a lot of sailors’ lives.

A public “moral panic” has lead a group of civilians who’ve never sailed to petition against the standardization of rum as part of a

- 8 sailor’s daily rations. As a former sailor, and as a lover of rum, I owe it to myself and my peers to go and cast my vote in favor of a long standing tradition.



SOLDIER

The background of a “soldier” typically has less to do with those drafted into compulsory service, and more to do with the “career soldier” who trained since childhood for the military. That being said, there is a big difference between the life of a soldier in a formal military, and one who worked as a mercenary. Thus, this background receives two separate “I Had To Go Because” charts.

d8 Soldier, Military “I Had To Go Because”

1 The people you shed blood with are like brothers and sisters to you. I swore a vow to one of my closest friends that when they died, I'd be the one to tell their family, rather than some cold-hearted officer ticking names off a list. They decided to stay in long after I left, and I just received word that they fell in war. It's been years, but my vow remains.

2 I don't like talking about it, but I received a dishonorable discharge when I left the military. New evidence has surfaced that I was innocent all along, and if I show up before the tribunal to fight the case, I may be able to get my service record corrected.

3 My old unit commander recently passed away, and their family has gone to great lengths to contact all of the soldiers who served under them. I feel like I need to be there for the funeral, as my one last act of loyalty to them.

4 My company suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the enemy, and I lost a lot of good friends that day to foul tactics. Well, thanks to politics, our former enemy is now our ally, and the enemy company is going to be recognized as heroes. I feel like I'd be betraying their memory if I didn't fight to stop their murderers from being honored.

5 So, just because I've been galavanting around as an adventurer doesn't mean I was ever *actually* discharged. Our unit has received the call to muster, and if I don't report back, I'll be considered AWOL.

6 Myself and several other soldiers testified to the war crimes of a commanding officer, and directly contributed to his incarceration. I've now heard that he's receiving a royal pardon. For the sake of everyone who ever served under him or will ever be subject to his influence, I need to formally protest his pardon.

d8 Soldier, Military “I Had To Go Because” Cont.

7 When we were soldiers, there was a tavern that was our favorite. The barkeep was generous with the soldiers, the waitresses knew us all by name, and nobody ever minded if we stayed after hours to talk. Well, that tavern was destroyed in a fire recently, and my old unit wants to come together to help them rebuild. We owe it to them.

8 Not every war-wound can be treated by medicine or magic. I've received a letter that an old friend from my unit hasn't been doing well lately, and could use the support of those who know what they've been through. I'll be away for a while, helping an old comrade work through some difficult thoughts and memories.





d8 Soldier, Mercenary "I Had To Go Because"

1 An old ally of mine has done very well for themselves after retirement. They've invited me to their estate to "reminisce about old times"; It would be *terribly rude* of me not to accept their invitation to vacation in a luxurious villa for a few days.

2 I received a letter from a mercenary I used to run with. It sounds like they're trying to round up the old gang (or at least the members they liked). I suspect they want to start their own mercenary company and they're going to offer me a job, but I don't want to pass up the opportunity to reconnect with old friends.

3 The winners write the history books. When we did our work, it was "a glorious victory", but in retrospect they're calling it "war crimes". I need to offer testimony to our side of the story, or else I'll wind up on "Wanted, Dead Or Alive" posters from coast to coast.

4 I was paid for a lot of work I'm not proud of, and sometimes that meant hurting people who didn't deserve it. The opportunity has arisen for me to make amends to someone I hurt, and I feel I need to do it.

5 Two different mercenary companies that I worked with over the years have begun to quarrel with each other. They now expect me to take sides in the matter. It's probably best if I lay low and make myself hard to find until this blows over.

6 Some of my old buddies and I found treasure that we knew we couldn't keep, or else we'd likely be charged with war crimes. It primarily consisted of ancient coins, the likes of which we'd never seen before. We buried it to wait until we could retrieve it someday without facing charges. Well, I've recently noticed several of these ancient coins in circulation, and I need to go figure out who took our treasure early.

7 A historian wants to write a book about a famous battle I took part in. They've guaranteed me anonymity in exchange for my telling of the events, but I need to make sure they change the details enough that no one from my old company will recognize me.

8 Mercenary companies don't usually have field medics, but we had one healer who was responsible for saving my life and many more over the years. They've decided to open a proper clinic, and I want to go help with the construction and donate whatever I can to get their practice off the ground.

SPY

Though a variation on the criminal background, the spy has different reasons to hide in the shadows and keep their “side-job” a secret. Rather than lifting valuables, the spy is a thief of information that could help their employer, be it an influential noble, a wealthy merchant, or even royalty. When a spy’s boss calls on them, they generally don’t have the option to say, “Can you wait a little while? I’m in the middle of an adventure.”

d8 Spy “I Had To Go Because”

- 1 In our travels, I’ve come across some information that could be vitally important to my benefactor. The information is time-sensitive, and I must depart immediately to hand-deliver the details.

- 2 The network of spies I work within has recently suspected a turncoat in our midst. Now that we’ve figured out which spy is in the enemy’s pocket, I’ve been asked to “take them out for a friendly drink”...

- 3 My employer is a jumpy one, and they’ve decided that the cipher we’ve been using may have been compromised by our couriers. I need to return to them in person to receive the new cipher.

- 4 A spy in my network has been found floating face-down in a river. I need to help figure out what they were looking into, and what they got too close to, when they fell upon their “bad luck”.

- 5 Spies don’t always skulk in the shadows. Often times, we’re hidden in plain sight. I have to attend a high-society function and in order to blend in with the crowd, I need to spend some time brushing up on my table manners, my dance steps, and learning the names of a lot of foreign dignitaries before the event.

- 6 Every now and then, my spying network makes sure we’re still at the top of our game by putting out a hit on one of us, just to keep us on our toes. I need to slip into obscurity for a little while until they’ve decided I’ve still got what it takes.

- 7 I just received word that an extraordinarily high power (a king, an archbishop, a guild leader, etc) needs me for an important job. I don’t know what it is yet, or how long I’ll be gone, but you don’t turn down this kind of request.

- 8 My last few “check in” notices didn’t make their way back to my spy network somehow, so now think I’ve been killed and replaced by an enemy spy. I need to go present myself in person to prove that I am who I say I am.

SNEAKY SNEAKS

Keep in mind, a spy doesn’t necessarily have to be truthful with the party about why they’re leaving. Their “cover story” could also be drawn from other background tables.



URBAN BOUNTY HUNTER

Hunting for bounties in a town or city is generally a very different line of work from hunting them in the wild. Out in the open, a bounty hunter can freely give chase and use any number of methods to catch their quarry. Within the limitations of society, however, an urban bounty hunter has to stick to certain rules.

d8 Urban Bounty Hunter “I Had To Go Because”

1 I have to attend the funeral of my quarry. Just because they're dead, doesn't mean the bounty has expired... I happen to know that my quarry has an elder sibling who is an accomplished necromancer. I can still claim this bounty as long as I'm patient.

2 It's difficult to be an “urban bounty hunter” out in the wild. I need to spend some time in the city, or at least some form of civilization, to feel “at home” again.

3 In my attempt to catch my quarry, I was mistaken by the local authorities as being a criminal associate of theirs. I have every confidence that I'll be released, but it will still take time for the authorities to process the situation, so I'll need to catch up later.

4 There's one mark that's been eluding me for years, and I would consider them to be my rival at this point. I've heard that another bounty hunter is getting close on their tail and may even get the drop on them. I need to make sure I get there in time, but I'm not sure if I'll be helping another bounty hunter catch them, or helping my rival slip away so I can be the one to catch them one day...

5 There is reason to suspect a famous, well-to-do bounty hunter who views their profession as a way to hunt people like sport. Supposedly, they've been killing people who *don't* have bounties on their heads, and then taking out the bounty retroactively in order to clear themselves of any crime. If I can catch them in the act, I'll be the one drawing a massive bounty on them.

Thanks to Xavier Bates for the inspiration for #1!

d8 Urban Bounty Hunter “I Had To Go Because”

6 A clerical error has resulted in the most recent bounty postings listing me as a bounty, rather than listing me as a hunter. I need to lay low for a few days while I wait on them to print a correction.

7 A small town that seldom has to deal with vile criminals has put up a job posting for an executioner; they've never needed one before, and none of the locals are up to the task. I figure it's a good way to make some extra money, seeing as I'm used to killing bad people without it weighing on my conscience.

8 I brought in a bounty recently, and another hunter brought in the *same* bounty a day or two later. Both of us need to return to the offices until we figure out which one of us bagged the bounty, and which one of us bagged their completely innocent twin sibling.

URCHIN

The poor and lowly urchin has had to overcome much in their life in order to walk the path of an adventurer, and their humble beginnings may be filled with shadows and skeletons that will come back to haunt them.

d8 Urchin "I Had To Go Because"

1 There's an orphanage in my hometown, run by one of the kids I grew up with. I try to send money whenever I can. Their building was recently decimated by a fire, and my old friend has asked me to come and try to help with recovery, and to lift the spirits of the orphans; it turns out my old friend has told them I'm an adventurer, and I'm their "hero".

2 I owe my survival to another urchin who taught me the ways of the street. While I made a life for myself as an adventurer, they got tangled up in some nasty business with a gang, and now they're on trial. I feel I owe it to them to appear before the court as a character witness.

3 I bought my first adventurer gear with the purse I stole off a noble. I didn't think they'd miss it. All this time later, I discover I'm wanted for stealing a priceless family heirloom that happened to be in that purse. I feel I need to return and apologize, return the item if I still have it, and show them what I've made of myself.

d8 Urchin "I Had To Go Because" Cont.

My hometown has heard about my success as an adventurer and they want to celebrate my achievements with a statue. I have mixed feelings about them suddenly putting me on a pedestal after how they treated me as a child. I haven't decided yet if I'll go bask in their adoration, or use my new found platform to tell them all how horrible they are.

5 I only survived one winter in my childhood because a kindly farmer took pity on me, and let me live in their barn until spring. I can never truly repay them for what they did for me, but now that I'm an adventurer, I want to go back and show them what I've done with the opportunity they gave me.

6 I'm amazed at how valuable a single gold piece meant to me when I was an urchin, and how common they are now. I'm feeling charitable and I want to go back to my old stomping grounds to spread the wealth.

7 Some of the street urchins I ran with have decided to pursue their own fame and fortune by becoming mercenaries. They don't see it as being any different from becoming adventurers, but I feel like I should talk to them about their choices and try to convince them to walk a more noble path.

8 One thing I always wanted to have was a home to call my own. The opportunity has arisen for me to purchase a small plot of land. It's not much, but I can't possibly turn down the chance to own property that's mine. I'll need to hurry to secure the purchase but I'll be back once the papers are signed.



REAL LIFE GETS IN THE WAY

Player can't find a babysitter? They've got a paper due and they haven't even started? A schedule change at work? There are lots of reasons a player might have to miss a week, or even step away from the table for months at a time while the battle the fierce dragon known as Real Life Obligations.

There's no need to kill off their character or relegate them to NPC status. "I Had To Go Because..." can provide a DM with over 180 narrative options for excusing a player, and later bringing back their adventurer with stories to be told.



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Thank you to *you*, reader, for taking an interest in my work! If you enjoyed this book, you may also be interested in...

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