



“THE CRYPT OF BLOOD”

by Paul L. Yeoh

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A Dungeon Crawl for the Holidays

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Illustrations by: Katie Fletcher and Andrea Grover

Cover by: Christine Toh

The Party

Agenar, a drunkard cleric fleeing his past

Panthagion, a half-elf paladin hunting for his father

Teal Peggotty, an apprentice with elemental powers

Tilia, a firbolg druid in search of her tribe

Travis, a warforged cleric searching for his origins

Val, a half-elf fighter with a passion for ale

Wynlynn, a high elf ranger with a wicked bow

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“What took you guys so long?” Wynlynn’s emerald eyes flashed impatiently as the party emerged into the clearing. The ranger had used her uncanny bond with the forest to expedite their journey to the Standing Stones, vanishing into the undergrowth and reappearing at intervals to indicate the easiest path. She expected them to keep up.

“Why the unseemly haste?” muttered Pantaghion. “It’s not as if anyone expects us.” His courtly style of speech always made his remarks sound more annoying than intended.

Wynlynn merely rolled her eyes in response to the haughty paladin. Val was already striding purposefully toward the massive circular stone formation radiating from the center of the clearing, her dark hair glowing auburn in the midday sun. Wynlynn, Travis, and Panthagion followed her, while Tilia and Agenar lingered to examine something—a plant?—on the ground.

Teal debated whether to head toward the Standing Stones or to inquire what had captured Tilia’s attention. The truth was he had only the vaguest notion why they were visiting this ancient stone structure at all. To get a few days off for this expedition, he’d taken longer shifts with Ferryman Styx; as a result, he’d missed crucial parts

of his friends' decision-making process. He knew they'd promised to help Travis investigate the ruined elven temple deep in the Verdigrarian Forest, but was not sure how the Standing Stones featured in the plan. Tilia had mentioned a local trapper sustaining strange injuries in this area. Someone—or something—had drained the poor man of a large amount of blood, but was this any reason for the party to visit the area?

Teal had doubts, but he hadn't voiced them. For one thing, he felt indebted to Travis for saving his life during their last adventure and was keen on helping the wooden man unravel his mysterious origins. Besides, Teal—as usual—just wanted to fit in.

As they walked toward the center of the stone formation, Tilia said casually, “Those tracks look less than three days old. I wonder if they were the ones made by the poor man I spoke to at the physician's.”

It was only then that Teal noticed the rusty trails emanating from the stone slab at the heart of the Standing Stones. He was suddenly aware of the strange hush surrounding the area. Though the still-green grass was burnished by autumnal sunshine and the skies a piercing shade of blue, not a sound was to be heard—not even the cawing of a rook.

As they drew closer to their companions, the sight awaiting them filled Teal with horror. The stone slab was entirely covered in coagulating gore.

“Is it...?” Before Tilia could finish her question, Val had traced a large “V” on the slab with her index finger and sampled the slab’s reddish brown coating. She spat on the ground contemptuously. “Yup. It’s blood. Likely human,” she affirmed.

“Eewwww!!” Various expressions of disgust shattered the silence of the clearing. Wynlynn rolled her eyes with long-suffering resignation. “Because you know there’re no pathogens in that stuff, right?” she said to her friend.

Brushing off the chorus of revulsion with a loud “har-rumph,” Val swung into action. Leaning her entire frame against the stone slab, she gave it a firm shove. With surprising ease, the slab yielded, revealing a crudely cut, narrow series of steps.

“What are we waiting for?” Val was already halfway down the stairs as Travis flung a handful of glowing pebbles ahead of her, eliciting a curse from Val and cries of protest from Wynlynn and Panthagion. Teal was puzzled. He had experimented with the night vision spell the other day, and it’d made his vision several degrees clearer regardless of the lighting. Perhaps it worked differently for

people with the natural ability to see in the dark.

The stairs were so narrow that they would have to go down in single file. Teal was about to get in after Travis, when he heard Tilia cry, “Agenar!” He looked up to see Agenar in the distance, already close to the edge of the forest.

“I’ll go get him,” she yelled. She was already halfway through Standing Stones, her long strides easily enabling her to catch up with the wickedly handsome cleric.

Employing his flame cantrip, Teal climbed carefully down the earthen stairs. He was nearly at the bottom when he heard Tilia and Agenar coming down. At least, then, they would be able to face whatever was responsible for this veritable blood bath together. They found Val, Wynlynn, Panthagion, and Travis looking around what appeared to be some kind of laboratory. There was a strong, unpleasant smell of formaldehyde and they could see bottles and containers of all shapes and sizes on the shelves, filled with strange colored liquids. Also on the shelf was a large glass bowl that was nearly overflowing with dark crystals.

“Black onyx!” exclaimed Panthagion. “A favorite—and indeed essential—accessory of the necromancer.” Just then, they all heard Wynlynn gasp. She motioned to a cor-

ner of the counter, where even in the dim light cast by Teal’s flame, a neatly preserved human digit was visible. Without another word, the group abandoned the grotesque scene, wandering through a series of fantastic underground chambers connected by a network of tunnels.

Then “Fffoomph”—the sound of a large fire being kindled, and almost simultaneously, a loud exclamation of disbelief from Agenar, who had, as was his wont, wandered off from the rest of the party. “Tymora’s ...” he broke off—remembering what had happened the last time he had used the goddess’s name in vain—adding quickly “...tufted titmouse!”

The party immediately rushed in the direction of Agenar’s cry. At ease in the near-darkness, Val, Wynlynn, and Panthagion sprinted ahead, with Travis, Tilia, and Teal close behind.

In the chamber, a strange fire blazed in a large copper cauldron at the center of the room, emitting a sinister green light without any warmth. Surrounding the cauldron—and Agenar—at various corners of the room, stood five skeletons. Their eye sockets glowed with green flame as they creaked into motion. They were armed.

“Skeleton warriors!” hissed Wynlynn. In a few swift

moves, she was across the room, positioning herself in just the right spot to unleash an arrow at their gaunt foes. By this time, though, two skeletons had already closed in on Agenar; he succeeded in fending one off but the other slashed him in the side with its sword. Hearing his agonized cursing, Val attempted to sidle past the skeletons closest to the passageway, but tripped and bumped against Tilia, knocking off a piece of her shoulder armor. Undeterred, Val brushed herself off and managed, in a couple of deft lunges, to get to Agenar just in time to parry the blow of an attacking skeleton. “Can’t... afford...to lose my best drinking buddy!” she muttered as she fought off his assailant.

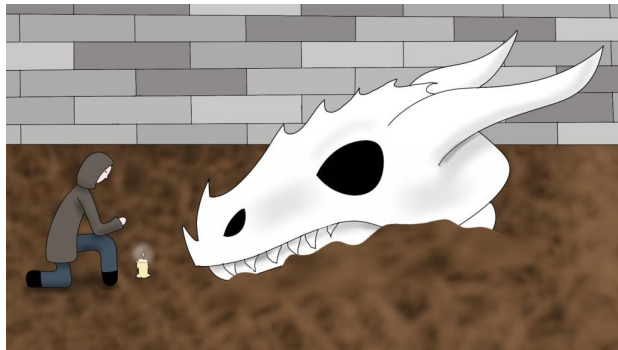
The party was no longer, however, the same group of adventurers who had been drawn together by chance a little over two years ago. Familiarity with each other’s capabilities had taught them how to fight as a unit instead of a random collection of individuals. Tilia cast a protective spell on Panthagion as he rushed into the fray, wielding his broad sword with deadly intent. Having temporarily rebuffed his antagonist, Panthagion whispered an ancient incantation to bless those who were directly engaged with skeletons. Almost immediately, Val, Tilia, and Agenar were surrounded by a soft pink aura that both shielded

them and augmented the force of their blows. “Thanks!” shouted Val as she decapitated her skeletal adversary with a swipe of a scimitar.

Meanwhile, Teal, joined by Travis, observed the fighting from the doorway. Uncertain how best to help his friends, Teal guessed at a connection between the cauldron’s flame and the magic animating the skeletons. Uncorking his water flask, he sent a large sphere of water gliding across the room into the heart of the cauldron, causing it to splutter and fizzle . A low flame still burned, but two of the skeletons froze in mid-action, their glowing green eyes extinguished.

By this time, Agenar had managed to edge his way out of the combat zone and Travis devoted his attention to healing him. The tide was turning in their favor. Wynlynn succeeded in shattering one of the skeleton warriors with a volley of well-aimed arrows, and Teal put out the green flame completely by sealing the cauldron with ice. Returned to their state of suspended animation, the remaining skeletons were quickly dismantled by Val and Panthagion.

Flushed by victory, the party were triumphant as they proceeded into the next chamber. They found a marvelously intact dragon skeleton, and lost no time in har-



vesting a few teeth, which they knew would fetch a good price back at the Glade.

Leaving Agenar in the chamber with the dragon skeleton, the others wandered into the adjacent chamber. In the dim light, they could see rows of sarcophagi arrayed along the walls.

Then everyone heard a loud “THUMP.” It was from the sarcophagus nearest Val.

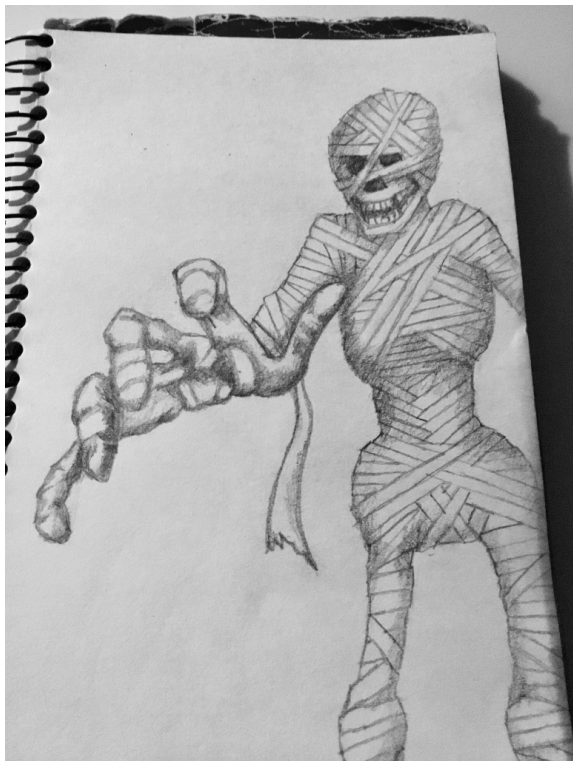
“There’s someone trapped in there!” Val’s golden eyes shone with excitement as she began to explore the locking mechanism with her scimitar.

“Are you sure it’s a good idea to open that?” Tilia sounded worried. There was a strange miasma pervading the entire chamber that already had the firbolg on edge. The odor of death—mixed with something fouler than the natural stench of decaying matter.

“Don’t do it!” Teal begged, but Val had already lifted the heavy metal bar that was keeping the cover of the sarcophagus in place.

The thumping sound had grown steadily louder and found its echo in a rhythmic pounding from the other sarcophagi. The party’s rapt attention was, however, on the one that Val had unlocked, for the cover had been violently flung open. The stench had intensified, and they saw a figure wrapped entirely in ancient, yellowing fabric.

Where its face should have been, two hellish orbs burned. With a low, raspy groan, a mummy emerged.



For a moment, everyone seemed mesmerized by the fearsome spectacle. Stepping out of its sarcophagus, the mummy jerked its head toward Val, who was standing just a few inches away from the displaced cover. It snarled: Val’s face scrunched up with revulsion, but she didn’t flinch. But before she could move, an arrow pierced the mummy’s left side. It let out an indignant roar, but Wynlynn’s attack didn’t seem to have injured it as much as it should have.

Whipping out her scimitars, Val slashed through the mummy’s bandaged figure. Foul dust filled the air where her blades made contact, but once again, a blow that would have meant death to another foe appeared to be far less effective on this one. *How do you kill something that’s already dead?* Teal wondered. The creature was now staring intently at Panthagion, who was advancing with his broad sword. As Val had done, the holy knight, too, stood his ground against the mummy’s glare. Then he attacked with uncharacteristic ferocity, supercharging the blade with divine energy as he aimed his weapon at the mummy’s torso. Moving with surprising dexterity, the mummy managed to avoid the full force of the sword, but the searing blade pierced it, causing the creature to howl in pain.

Could methods other than physical force be more effective against the undead? Tilia seemed to have picked up on this idea, as with a gesture of her furry arm, she conjured a crackling bonfire around the mummy. The creature bellowed, tottering backwards as the flames consumed its bandages, revealing the decomposing flesh beneath. Perhaps the natural elements might offer some remedy against this abomination. Hoping to capitalize on Tilia's success, Teal raised his arms and sent a strong gust of wind in the direction of the mummy. For a moment, the bonfire's flames soared to the ceiling, and the mummy's horrible cries were silenced by the howling of a powerful gale; but just as it seemed as if the creature might be buffeted back into its sarcophagus, it appeared to tap some latent reserve of strength and lunged through the flames at its attackers.

The mummy turned on Tilia, perhaps sensing her role in starting the fire. With terrifying force, it swung its desiccated arm at the firbolg, who instinctively raised her left arm in defense—and just in time, for the impact of the mummy's blow sent her sprawling. Where the mummy's claw had made contact, her arm was branded by an ugly, dark bruise.

Hissing and growling like some kind of supernatural

beast, the mummy might have inflicted further damage on its victim—had an arrow not penetrated its neck at that very moment. And then another—and another—which severed its half-bandaged head clear off. Wynlynn had finally put to rest the soul that had lingered in its strangely preserved vessel for so long.

“Tilia?” Teal rushed over to see how he could aid the firbolg—she was unconscious. By this time, however, Travis, had joined them in the chamber of sarcophagi and was able to stabilize their companion. Panthagion examined her wounded arm and whispered an incantation. Although Tilia was able to sit up and speak to them, her arm showed no signs of improvement from the paladin’s healing magic.



Suddenly they heard distant voices coming from a chamber close to the entrance of the underground tunnels; abruptly, and without any discussion, they began heading swiftly toward the source of the sound. If they had stopped to examine their reasons, they would have been hard pressed to explain; perhaps it was some vague notion that the speakers might know a cure for Tilia’s arm—or maybe it was the heat of the battle, compelling them to find someone to blame for her injuries.



And then they were walking, running, and then walking again through the unevenly lit tunnels—the hunters or the hunted? Navigating the dim passageway easily with their night vision, Val, Wynlynn, Pantaghion, and Agenar led the way, while Teal, Travis, and Tilia proceeded more cautiously.

Teal glanced worriedly at Tilia. Seven feet six inches tall and powerfully built, the firbolg sometimes moved a little awkwardly, but now she seemed conspicuously off balance. Her breathing was labored, and she clutched her left arm tightly as she walked. Although Teal was no healer, he could tell that hers was no ordinary wound. Even in the dim light and through Tilia’s soft fur, the dark lesions spreading across her arm were apparent. And the

smell. It reminded him of the year when thousands of sea creatures had washed up and putrefied on Talpin's lavender beaches.



Seeing Tilia in distress was particularly upsetting, for she was the party's voice of wisdom. A big-hearted soul whose knowledge of the natural world they'd come to rely on.

As they passed the narrow staircase leading out to the surface, Tilia stopped. "I'm going up. I won't be any use in a fight, and it'll be a struggle for y'all to haul me out of these tunnels if I pass out again."

Only Travis and Teal heard her, for the others were far ahead. Teal felt torn. Should he follow Tilia to make sure she was all right? Who knew what was waiting for her above?

Tilia saw his hesitation. "Go with them. I'll be okay. They'll need you if a fight breaks out."

Teal tried to smile bravely and rushed to catch up with the others—with a wave of his hand, he made the smooth rocky floor of the cavern slick with a layer of water and skated toward his other friends. The trick work well—perhaps a little too well, for the next moment Teal found himself at the head of the party with Val as they burst into the chamber from which the voices were coming.

There, staring at them in surprise, were two humanoid creatures busy at work on a skull of gargantuan proportions. The pair were momentarily at a loss for words. Then

the elven-looking woman smirked unpleasantly at them. "Well, the mistress will be really pleased to see you," she declared, giving her partner a meaningful glance. Though he had dark rings under his gray eyes, her human companion had an expressive, sympathetic face. Perhaps he might be receptive to a language other than force?

Despite the woman's ominous remark, Teal could not bring himself to strike the first blow. "Umm ... ca-can you help us?" he stammered. "We got lost in these tunnels and our friend was injured by a mummy."

Val sighed, though not unkindly. "So peaceful," she muttered. Scimitars drawn, she brushed Teal aside and charged at the elven woman. The woman drew her sword and met Val with equal ferocity. Only then did Teal notice a corpse next to the giant skull.

Seeing Val engaged in battle, Wynlynn leapt into the fray. She whipped out her short swords and approached the woman's companion with a menacing glint in her green eyes. The young man looked alarmed. For an instant, he glanced questioningly at Teal, as if to ask "Why?" but then he seemed to make up his mind, unsheathing his rapier and pointing it threateningly at Wynlynn. The ranger needed no further invitation; in a single move that should have been as deadly as it was graceful, she

struck. But somehow, the edge of her sword caught her adversary's tunic, ripping it and hitting the stone floor. The blade broke as if it were a cheap toy. The young man swung wildly at Wynlynn, but in his nervousness he stumbled and jabbed the floor, ruining his weapon as well.

Teal could see how scared the man was, but he knew the time for words was over: there was no chance of reasoning with their opponents now. Still, he felt a pang of remorse as—with a wave of his arm—he sent a gleaming shard of ice sailing through the air at the young man. The icy knife was true to its mark. The young man gasped as it pierced his exposed side—and then shattered into a million crystalline fragments, enveloping him in a pink cloud of blood and ice. For an instant, Teal experienced a mixture of desire and callousness—akin to the exhilaration of a shark sinking its teeth into its prey. Then he felt sick to his stomach.

The young man tottered, struggling not to fall. Yet he had enough fight left in him to pull out a dagger. Teal couldn't imagine that the man was capable of hurting anyone in his condition but Wynlynn, soldier-like in her discipline, was not taking any chances. With a well-aimed kick, she sent the man's dagger flying across the room. A clinical twist of her short sword put him out of his misery.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the chamber, Val had the fight so well under control that Agenar and Panthagion were just standing by, enjoying the spectacle of combat. Val had dealt a couple of serious blows to her antagonist, but the woman stubbornly kept attacking in spite of her injuries. Brandishing her sword, she lashed out wildly, but Val was too agile for her. The clumsy blows missed by a wide margin, prompting Val to cackle with wicked mirth—before inflicting further damage on her opponent. Defiant to the last breath, the elven woman forcefully stuck something she’d been clasp into the neck of the corpse near the massive skull. Then she, too, was dead.

Wary of the effect the woman’s dying act might have on the corpse, Val proceeded to decapitate it. Once again, she demonstrated her nerves of steel by plunging her hand into the desecrated body and rooting around, searching intently for the object that the elven woman had inserted. When her first efforts proved fruitless, she employed her scimitar to butterfly the area where the object might be, completely unperturbed by the blood splattering all over her.

“What. Are. You. Doing,” deadpanned Panthagion, while Agenar merely looked amused. Wynlynn, who was now standing next to her friend, calmly wiped a few drops

of blood off her own boots and placed her hand on Val’s shoulder. Val stopped hacking, and Wynlynn motioned to a gore-covered sphere that had rolled onto the ground nearby. Val seized it triumphantly and wiped it on her breeches—it was an impressively large onyx crystal.

Agenar had by now made his way through a doorway near the skull. The others followed and were awestruck by the majesty of the chamber awaiting them on the other side. It was a high-ceilinged space with an elaborately decorated altar at its center. The altar’s beauty, however, was marred by the presence of a dead orc lying hog-tied on it. The iconography, too, seemed at odds with the overall character of the chamber. Teal couldn’t say why, but there was a vaguely disturbing quality to the scarlet-robed figures on the walls.

Agenar and Travis looked eagerly around, fascinated by the ancient artifacts and cultural treasures surrounding them. But Val became suddenly quiet, almost pensive. “I’m going upstairs to check on Tilia,” she announced.

Wynlynn said nothing, but she immediately turned and headed out of the chamber with Teal close behind. The others soon caught up with them.

By the time they emerged from the tunnels, it was late afternoon. Tilia was sitting on a large boulder close to

the entrance. Her eyes were closed; she appeared deep in concentration as the breeze played gently with her mossy locks. Perhaps it was her posture, or perhaps it was enormous proportions of the boulder, but Teal was struck by how vulnerable the firbolg looked.

“Tilia, are you feeling okay?” Val asked. There was an uncharacteristic tenderness in her voice.

“Yes, how is your arm?” Wynlynn, just behind Val, looked shocked at how wizened Tilia’s injured limb looked.

Panthagion walked up to the boulder and offered his assistance as Tilia slowly climbed down. He looked grave. “Mummy rot is one of the deadliest curses known in the realm. Lifting such a curse is beyond the scope of my power.”

“I tried tapping the natural magic in the area to augment my own healing spells, but they don’t seem to be doing much good.” Tilia’s speech was as measured as always, but there was a hollowness in her tone that sent waves of panic through Teal.

“We’ve got to get you to a capable healer. Is there a village nearby where...?” Teal’s voice trailed off as he realized how foolish the question was. They were nowhere near any settlement—the closest village would be the Glade, and that was at least a day and a half away.

Val had moved a short distance from the group. Then she turned to them and announced, “I’m going back down. There’s still a lot that we haven’t explored in those tunnels. Maybe we can find something down there that will help Tilia.” She was already starting to move towards the underground staircase.

Agenar seemed receptive to the idea. “It’s rich in ancient magical energy—I can feel it.”

“Val, we’re in no condition to face another mummy or worse,” remonstrated Wynlynn. “Tilia’s arm looks really bad, and there’s absolutely no guarantee that anything we find down there—assuming we survive—will reverse the mummy’s curse.”

“You know I hate loose ends. I never leave the job half-done.” Val seem unmoved.

“Please, Lia ...Val ... if you go back into the tunnels, you *know* I’ll follow you, and we’ll most likely perish fighting Corellon knows what without the others to back us up. Tilia’s arm needs urgent attention.”

“I don’t need anyone to back me up.” Val was silent for a moment. Then her expression softened. “Okay, let’s get Tilia back to the Glade. Pronto.”

Although it was nearly sunset, Val and Wynlynn were adamant that the party should return to the Glade without

any delay. The plan was to march continuously through the night, turning a day-and-a-half journey into an eight-hour trek. For once, there was no dissent—by now, all were aware of the gravity of Tilia’s injuries and galvanized by a shared sense of purpose.

The long night march through the forest—though expedited by Wynlynn’s skillful pathfinding—soon took on aspects of an interminable nightmare. At one point, the party heard the roaring of a large beast in the distance and at another, they came across tracks that almost certainly belonged to a pack of zombies. And more potent than all these night terrors was the fatigue that was slowly overtaking everyone. Travis in particular was moving more woodenly than usual until he stopped completely like wound-down toy. “I can go no further,” he said sadly. “You guys go on without me. I’ll catch up when I’ve recharged.” The glowing crystal in his chest pulsed dimly.

“We’re not leaving anyone behind.” In an impressive display of strength, Val hoisted the tall Warforged across her shoulders and continued trudging on as if nothing had happened. “This is fun!” exclaimed Travis, his eyes sparkling. “We should do this more often!”

Exhaustion took its toll on the others, too. Tilia wondered aloud if the mummy’s curse was spreading to her

lower limbs; Teal saw imaginary pools of water everywhere; Agenar cursed quietly; and Panthagion was muttering misogynistic aphorisms about allowing women to lead. Only Val and Wynlynn forged on relentlessly, hardly slower than when they had first begun.

Abruptly, the familiar lights of the Glade's watchtower appeared in the distance. Too tired to speak, the party approached the village in silence, but never had they been gladder to see the little town. After dropping Travis off at his schoolhouse and Agenar and Panthagion at a tavern called "The Yeoman's Apple," Teal, Val, and Wynlynn brought Tilia to the town's chief healer, Cleric Wilhelm. The cleric made it clear the cost of treating mummy rot would be considerable, but Wynlynn assured him that money was no object. When Wilhelm looked to her companions for confirmation, Teal nodded anxiously, while Val grunted in assent.

Selûne and Io, twin moons of Álfheimr, were shining high in the night-sky by the time Teal bid Val and Wynlynn good-night. He headed along the Princess Stream to the lockhouse where he was apprenticed to Uriah Styx, the town's lockkeeper and ferryman. For a moment, he wondered if he should seek out Caedmon—after a performance, his beloved childhood friend could usually be

found carousing with fellow-musicians into the wee hours of the morning. Not tonight, he decided. He wasn't sure where Caedmon had been singing, and if he succeeded in finding Caedmon, the bard would insist on him joining the festivities—which would mean not getting any sleep at all. No, he needed all the rest he could get, for Ferryman Styx would almost certainly expect him to make up for all the time he'd missed in recent weeks.

Teal could almost hear the old man's disapproving reference to the “slackers” with whom his apprentice had become involved. It then struck him how senseless today's adventure would appear to most. To his industrious, innkeeper uncle, risking life and limb with little guarantee of recompense was a luxury that only the rich—and foolish—could afford. Amma Naya and his other mentors at his school, the Tangled Depths, would undoubtedly frown upon the violence in which the party engaged. Even Caedmon, fond as he was of Teal, would be hard pressed to celebrate the adventure in song, for the party had fought no epic battle nor discovered treasure rare. If anything, their purses, after paying the cleric's fees, were emptier than before.

And yet. Though they'd conquered no formidable foe, perhaps they'd won a greater victory—by choosing

a friend's life over gold. And while Tilia's injuries was the result of their recklessness, surely there was something praiseworthy in the party's efforts to remedy their mistakes.

As tired as he was, Teal felt strangely lighthearted. Their actions today might be heroic by conventional standards, but he nevertheless felt proud of his friends. More than ever, he felt that they were the ones meant to accompany him on his journey of self-formation.

Based on The Mysteries of Arklan, a Dungeons & Dragons campaign run by Matt Hale, this story is adapted from material originally published on UNOMAHA D&D, <https://unodnd.game.blog/>, 28 Sept. 2019.

Select Glossary

Cleric: in the Dungeons & Dragons fantasy role-playing game, a cleric is a standard playable character class, a priestly figure devoted to a particular deity. Clerics are often powerful healers and spell-casters.

Druid: spell-casters who wield nature-themed magic and have a close bond with the natural environment.

Dungeon crawl: A common sequence in Dungeons & Dragons plots. During a dungeon crawl, characters explore a labyrinthine setting in which they avoid traps, fight monsters, and hunt for treasure.

Firbolg: a reclusive race of gigantic humanoid beings between seven and eight feet tall. They are furry, powerfully built creatures with innate magical abilities.

Paladin: a holy knight who crusades in the name of good and order. Paladins are often formidable warriors with divine spell-casting abilities.

Ranger: a class of skilled hunters and warriors of the wilderness. They are usually also adept at tracking, woodcraft, and surveillance.

Selkies: marine mammals hunted by the Sea Women during the month of the Raven Queen; its pelt is used to make the diving suits worn by the Sea Women when free-diving for seafood.

Warforged: originally built as weapons, the warforged embody a sophisticated blend of magic and technology; they are living robots, made from wood, stone, or metal but capable of feeling pain and emotion.