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Welcome to Legendary Adventures!

This adventure is a part of our line of support materials for the Next edition of the world's most famous roleplaying game! This adventure doesn't feature any dungeons, nor any dragons for that matter, but it provides an excellent opportunity to introduce your characters into a campaign with more than a touch of the mysterious and the macabre. It is an adventure that can easily stand on its own, set in a small village where things go bump in the night, and it bows to some of the tropes of the horror genre as well as traditional adventure. The PCs have a chance to earn the trust and admiration of the townsfolk for their heroic deeds, and perhaps gain the favor of a lovely lass should they break her curse, building their sense of community with a town that may become their home base as they move on to their further adventures.

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The Fiddler's Lament is a short adventure designed to be set in any small town where low (1st-2nd) level PCs may find themselves, though it works best set in a village with a ruined fortress, cathedral, or prison nearby, a place of tragedy and sorrow with a fell reputation. The adventure may not provide enough experience for the PCs to gain in level, but it does provide several challenges and rewards.

Adventure Background

Alhindri's parents used to say she had her head more in other worlds than in this one as she sang and danced her way through life, sprightly even for an elf. When her parents died in a tragic boating accident, she was subdued for their funeral, but even that fugue was short-lived as she soon went back to her ways of prancing across meadows to stir the butterflies and singing nonsensical songs to the birds. Many of the elves thought her stricken or possessed, and ultimately none were anything but secretly relieved when upon reaching the beginnings of adulthood she upped and left her hedged community to explore the greater world outside.

Alhindri wandered for weeks before finally falling in with a band of Wanderers headed north. In this people of dusken skin and dervish dances, Alhindri had finally found a kindred spirit. They knew the ways of the night song and the dance of the moonlight upon the water; they too could hear the music in the crackle of the campfire and freedom of nature as it flowed through their veins in an expression of purest joy, devoid of thought or artifice. In turn, the Wanderers accepted her as one of their own and allowed her to dance to the sound of their fiddle and tambourine as they traveled the rugged countryside of the North.

For more than a decade, Alhindri danced among the Wanderers, and even they had to recognize something different about her—something special that transcended the mundane and touched on some other plane of existence where the troubles of life were a trifling thing next to the trill of the music and the thrill of the dance. More than one of the dusky men offered to take her in marriage and make her a respected matron of their tribe, but she gently rebuffed them all content in their company alone, seeking neither companionship nor station—known to all the towns they visited as the dancing elf maid of the Wandering Folk.

Unfortunately though the years of an elf are long, her state of bliss came to an end all too soon. One evening as their caravan camped in the wilderness, a Dark Stranger came into their midst. Swathed all in cloak, scarf, and wide-brimmed hat, though it was a warm spring night, he requested the hospitality of their fire. This was begrudgingly given but the elder matron of the tribe immediately made the ward against the Evil Eye at the stranger, and all fell silent in his presence. Perturbed at the end of the festivities the stranger demanded that the fiddler strike up a tune and that the elf maid dance for him. Alhindri thought that he seemed handsome enough from what she could see, but before she could acquiesce to his request—nay demand—the strangest thing happened. Lothiaro, the head of the caravan, took his fiddle and smashed it upon a rock claiming that none of the Wandering Folk would play for the Dark Stranger and that none under his protection would dance before him—as it has always

been among the Wandering Folk, and as it would always be.

Alhindri did not quite understand what was going on and watched in a strangely calm daze as the Dark Stranger proclaimed, "So be it," and proceeded to gruesomely slaughter the Wanderers—her kin of the last several years—with his bare hands before her very eyes. Some of them sought to fight; others tried to flee. It mattered not, for the stranger moved with a speed and savagery unmatched by mortal limbs. In moments, the gory massacre was done, and the blood-slicked stranger stood before Alhindri. She found that she could not look up into his mesmerizing eyes and only stared dumbly at the ground where she noticed the curious detail that he had cloven hooves instead of feet.

"Your adopted kin have purchased your freedom at a dear price this night," he intoned to her, "but the demand of the Stranger cannot be denied forever. We will meet again, you and I."

Then he was gone in the darkness, and Alhindri found that she couldn't bring herself to move for some time and simply sat and stared at the dew-stained grass where he had stood and the imprint of two cloven hooves that remained faintly visible.

When villagers from the nearby town of Raven came upon the scene of the massacre three days later, they found Alhindri sat there still, staring at the ground, silent and unresponsive, her cheeks hollow from hunger and thirst, and her brow burned from days in the unrelenting sun. The villagers buried the Wanderers in the consecrated ground of their town cemetery to prevent them from arising again to trouble the living and took the elven waif in out of the kindness of their hearts, thinking her one of the forlorn members of her race presumably in shock over what she must have witnessed. They nursed Alhindri back to health but soon learned that her injuries were more to her spirit than to her body. She never spoke nor emerged from her silent stupor. Finally, realizing that they could do no more for the young elf, one of the local councilmen paid out of his generosity to have her transported to a hospital in a distant city where she could be cared for in hopes that she would eventually emerge from her fugue and be able to tell what had occurred to the Wanderers she had been with.

There Alhindri waited, known only as the Raven Patient, passed from hospital to prison to asylum, silent and alone for 85 years...until today. In the darkest hour of the early morning, Alhindri opened her eyes to discover the Dark Stranger standing in her cell with her. He called her by name and told her it was time for her to return to her lost kin and dance for them once more. She was fascinated, as he spoke, by the pair of cloven hooves that peeked out from beneath his cloak but became even more astonished when he handed her a meticulously cared for viol that in her mind's eye she recognized at once as being that which had belonged to Lothiaro, made whole once more.

Immediately the color returned to Alhindri's face and her life as she took the beloved instrument in her hands. She didn't even notice when the Dark Stranger wrapped his cowl around her and she found herself no longer in her lonely cell but standing upon a hill covered in tombs, surrounded by ancient unmarked graves. In the pre-light of dawn she gave no thought to her surroundings but touched bow to fiddle and began to play. Though the fiddle had never been her instrument, as she played upon Lothiaro's beloved viol she found that it practically played itself. She soon lost herself to the music and began to dance as of old...and she did not dance alone as her long-lost Wanderer kin rose from the ground to join her.

MINI-ADVENTURE

The Fiddler's Lament takes place in the town of Raven near a haunted prison. The enigmatic Dark Stranger, for reasons of his own, has brought Alhindri back to the region where he slaughtered her adopted kin and has provided her not with the beloved fiddle of her former protector but an infernal instrument called the *Rebec Malevolenti*, crafted in the pits of Hell with the sole purpose to bring ruin upon mortals. With this instrument, Alhindri heedlessly summons forth the dead from their rest and causes them to descend like a plague upon the unsuspecting town of Raven nearby. Only with the destruction of the fiddle can the plague of zombies and worse be stopped.

The adventure begins as the PCs, who have already come to the town of Raven for their own reasons, make their way to the general store to gather supplies.

A FIDDLE AT DAWN

The early morning sun has barely peeked over the eastern horizon as you make your way through long shadows across the town square. The village is awakening around you as goodwives push their sleepy-eyed children out the door to begin the day's chores. The usual sounds of cock crows and dog barks are joined this morning by something unexpected. Floating lightly upon the morning breeze is the sound of a hauntingly beautiful melody, as if the world's saddest fiddler were out this dawn plying his bow to catgut in a dirge for the day to come. Who the mysterious player might be is unguessed and the music, though mournful, is not unpleasant.

Though it is morning, the PCs are assumed to be wearing their normal gear and equipment as befits an adventuring party. Their reasons for visiting the general store are unimportant and should just be to pick up some mundane supplies or equipment. Unfortunately, while there they learn that there is more to the fiddler's music than they know and that its effects have come to visit upon the town.

VISIT FROM GRAMMY

The storekeep and a local gaffer chat idly near the front counter talking about the strange music, which has apparently been heard across parts of town since before dawn, speculating as to who could be the source. The storekeep's wife stocks shelves while their giggle of young girls run around playing chase. You once again eye the suit of fine plate armor that stands near the back of the store, wondering what kind of coin it would take to get the storekeep to part with it—you've heard him mention that it belonged to his wife's long-deceased grandfather from back when he fought for his country.

As one of the young girls opens the cellar door to fetch a bag of herbs for her mother, you hear her small child's voice suddenly exclaim with delight, "Grammy?!" to which the storekeep's wife patiently explains, "No, dear. You know Grammy and Grampy passed on from the fever last winter. She's not waiting in the cellar for you."

Out of the corner of your eye you notice that the arm of the suit of armor seems to shift and slightly raise, as if it had been dislodged and the whole thing was about to fall over forward, but you are distracted from further investigation by the sound of the heavy, slow tread of bare feet climbing the cellar stair and the look of delight still on the young girl's face as she shouts, "It is Grammy!" at something behind the cellar door that you can't see yet. As the suit of armor clatters to the floor at your feet and you see standing in the alcove behind it the worm-eaten corpse of what was once a gray-bearded old man, you can only think to yourself, "And this must be Grampy."

Then the screaming begins.

The map shows the floor plan of the general store. The shelves hold only mundane equipment and supplies, though the waist-high shelves and front counter do provide cover to anyone behind them and require a DC 6 Strength (Athletics) check to leap over them headfirst (DC 12 without at least a 10-foot running start), or a DC 12 (DC 24 with no run) to leap atop them. They can be easily climbed over with a move action, but it provokes attacks of opportunity.

Creatures: The first of the undead brought forth by Alhindri's bone fiddle that the PCs encounter are indeed the zombies of Grammy and Grampy come back to visit their young folk. They crept into the store before light while the owners were busy elsewhere and instinctively took up hiding places as they had once done to play with their grandchildren. The sound of the young girls playing has brought them out of their hiding places but has also triggered their instinct to destroy all living creatures, so playtime is over. They lurch to attack whoever is closest. Hopefully this will be the PCs as the storekeep's wife grabs the young child and bolts for the stairs to the upper floor while the storekeep gathers up his four older girls and hustles them that way as well. The gaffer likewise scoots out the front door leaving the PCs to deal with the zombie menace. They attack and pursue until destroyed.



General Store



First Floor



Second Floor

One square = 5 feet

GRAMMY & GRAMPY, ZOMBIES (2)

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 each (3d8+9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 13 (+1)	DEX 6 (-2)	CON 16 (+3)
INT 3 (-4)	WIS 6 (-2)	CHA 5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Immunities (conditions) poisoned; (**damage**) poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception 8

Languages Common (can't speak)

Challenge Rating 1/4 (50 XP)

Hard to Kill: If reduced to 0 hit points by damage other than radiant or from a critical hit, a zombie is instead left with 1 hit point if it succeeds at a Con save (DC 5 + damage taken).

ACTIONS

Slam Attack: melee, 5 ft. reach, 1 target. +3 to hit, 1d6+1 (4) bludgeoning damage.

Development: When the PCs have finished with the zombies, they can hear the sound of screams from out in the town square with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. However, immediately afterward they automatically hear the shrill screams of the storekeep's wife and their five little girls coming from upstairs. Encourage the PCs to stick together unless they have more than four PCs as they decide if they will go outside to see what is going on or if they wish to head upstairs to face the more immediate threat.

LINGERING SHADOWS

If the PCs head upstairs in the general store, they find it still dark and shuttered from the previous night's repose. The sound of whimpering cries and shrill little screams come from the master bedroom. A single candle lights the room and just a hint of dawn light leaks through the heavily curtained window. Across the room, behind the bed, huddle the storekeep and his entire family. They point wordlessly to the open closet door that stands near the exit. From within the closet, sinister shadows can be seen to move in unnatural ways.

Creature: Another dire visitor from the town cemetery has made its way into here. It is a lesser shadow, much like its normal brethren but weaker and more stunted in its power. It lurches forth to attack as soon as the PCs enter, trying to get at the helpless family but willing to take on adventurers if they interfere. As long as the room remains in dim light, the lesser shadow has concealment against the PCs. If anyone thinks to open the curtain (the storekeep can do so if they PCs think to tell him), the bright dawn light floods into the room and removes this concealment for the creature. In addition, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw each round to stay and fight or flee back into the closet and out through the walls of the house to find some shadowy corner of the town in which to hide. If it flees, it is not encountered again in this adventure.

LESSER SHADOW

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 13 (2d8+4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR 6 (-2)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 14 (+2)
INT 8 (-1)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 11 (+0)

Immunities (conditions) charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious; (**damage**) necrotic, poison

Resistances (damage) acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge Rating 1 (200 XP)

Incorporeal Movement: A lesser shadow can move through objects and creatures but can't stop in their spaces.

Shadow Blend: The lesser shadow has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks in any light condition less than bright light.

Sunlight Sensitivity: A lesser shadow has disadvantage on sight-based Wisdom (Perception) checks and on attack rolls in bright light and sunlight.

ACTIONS

Strength Drain Attack: melee, 5 ft. reach, 1 target. +4 to hit, 1d8+1 (5) necrotic damage plus the target's Strength is reduced by 1 point (DC 11 Con save negates) and dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. This Strength reduction ends when the target finishes a short rest.

Development: If the PCs rescue the storekeep and his family, they receive a 10% discount off any items in the general store.

