

The Witch of Millstone

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GM Introduction

In the farthest outskirts of the kingdom, where the vast farmlands melt into dense forests of enchanted woods, the law of the land is dismissed and supplanted by the law of the people. Though often peaceful, the villagers around these parts are superstitious and quick to chalk up their crop failures and dead livestock to the actions of dark forces that live just beyond their reach.

In this fashion, small mobs may form that conduct their own branch of vigilante justice/kangaroo court, and while this may indeed give the villagers peace of mind, innocents are often caught in their crosshairs. Many have died due to superstitions and perceived “otherness” and one day as two adventurers wander through the wilderness, they have the chance to intervene and save an innocent life.

This quest is intended for 2-3 players and should be conducted over a single session. Players will not have to be initially familiar with all the mechanics of Dungeons and Dragons 5e in order to play.

Any text in these boxes is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased to the players.

Brief Overview

The PCs are on their way across the countryside, seeking adventure and a challenge when they stumble across a witch trial in the middle of the city. Seeing the unjust and cruel ways the “witch” is being punished, they decide to intervene and help prove the witch innocent. Due to the short plot of the game, the quest itself is fairly

straightforward and though there are definitely multiple ways to see justice done (or not), this outline will attempt to cover the broadest, most general approaches to solving the mystery of the witch and freeing her while also bringing the true culprit to justice. This entire process should hopefully be structured like a dark mystery and likewise should rely more on investigation and the reveal of information than it does on combat (though there is certainly some of that).

Monsters

The monsters in this game will be indicated in **bold** and have stats that come primarily from the 5e Monster Manual. Below are stats for enemies and commoners you may encounter.

Villagers. HP 4 AC 10

STR 10 (+0) DEX 10 (+0) CON 10 (+0)

WIS 10 (+0) INT 10 (+0) CHA 10 (+0)

Club. +2 to hit, 1d4 damage

Town Guard. HP 11 AC 12

STR 11 (+0) DEX 12 (+1) CON 12 (+1)

WIS 10 (+0) INT 10 (+0) CHA 10 (+0)

Light Crossbow. +3 to hit, range 80 ft, 1d8+1 damage

Dagger. +1 to hit, 1d4+1 damage

Eldritch. HP 21 AC 14

STR 12 (+1) DEX 16 (+3) CON 12 (+1)

WIS 12 (+1) INT 12 (+1) CHA 13 (+2)

Longbow. +3 to hit, range 120 ft, disadvantage <10 ft. 1d8+ 2 damage

Dagger. +2 to hit, 1d4+1 damage.

Amos. HP 9 AC 11

STR 10 (+0) DEX 12 (+1) CON 13 (+1)

INT 12 (+1) WIS 15 (+2) CHA 11 (+0)

Quarterstaff. +2 to hit, 1d8 damage

Wildshape to Bear. Druid utilizes magic to transform into a Bear for 1 min or until Bear’s HP is depleted, whereupon Amos dies. In Bear form, Amos gains all bear stats

and attacks.

Bear. HP 27 AC 11

STR 19 (+4) DEX 10 (+0) CON 16 (+3)

INT 2 (-4) WIS 13 (+2) CHA 7 (-2)

Bite. +5 to hit 1d8+4 damage

Claws. +5 to hit 2d6+4 damage

Player Characters

For this adventure, you can allow players to come up with their own level 1 adventurers. The only restriction is that such characters cannot be chaotic neutral or chaotic evil, as this will prevent the majority of off-track quests and senseless killings that could derail the entire mystery. Similarly, there can't be more than one support class character in a group as any combat will be extremely difficult if not impossible.

Adventure Start

Read or paraphrase the following text below to the players.

You are two adventurers, journeying across the Realm, in pursuit of adventure and the chance to help the unfortunate. You currently are travelling in the farthest outskirts of the kingdom, where the dense forests of enchanted woods melt into vast farmlands and small villages. It's been awhile since you've had a bed to rest in and a decent home-cooked meal, so you decide to stop in the tiny village of Millstone for the night.

Area 1: Millstone Town Square

Have players roll a perception check DC 5.

You see that the townspeople are not in their homes, and the shops are all closed down, despite the sun not setting for the next few hours. You are however, able to see a dirty vagrant crouching in an alley.

The players can approach the vagrant, **Poe**, and speak with him. For the price of a few coins, Poe will tell the players that the townspeople are gathered near the center of town having a hall, but for the most part, he should be characterized as crazy and not quite there.

Other bits of intelligence he can give is that Millstone is a farming town, and Poe survives off the scraps the farmers toss out. Recently, there hasn't been too many scraps for Poe to eat, so he has subsisted on the town's rats.

The players can go to the center of town, where they will see:

You see a mob of people gathered at the foot of a large wooden stage. Atop the stage, an older man tries to calm the crowd down while a younger man restrains a lady with a burlap sack over her head.

Dialogue here can be improved, but the gist of it is that the older man, Mayor **Amos**, is trying to calm the crowd down so that they can proceed with the trial of the restrained woman, **Griselda**. Amos's son, **Anthony**, restrains Griselda, who thrashes violently in his arms. Amos appears more sympathetic to Griselda and does not want the bloodlust of the crowd to convict her, while Anthony definitely wants to see her punished.

Naturally, the players will try to help, but in order to cut through the commotion, they will need to either elbow their way to the stage or somehow get the crowds attention.

After they secure the attention, Amos gladly tells the players that maybe an impartial judge may help with the trial. He commands Anthony to take the hood and gag off of Griselda, who may then speak with the players.

Again, improve is fine for dialogue, but the gist is that Griselda has been accused for being a witch because of her outsider nature. She is the one responsible for the recent slaughter of lots of livestock as “nothing human or beast” could have inflicted such terrible wounds on creatures.

No one has seen her do this, although several village children have claimed to see her go into the forbidden parts of the woods. When asked why she was there, Griselda may say that she is simply an herbalist who needs to pick rare herbs and roots.

Amos says that the testimony of a child is not enough to convict a woman and urges that the matter be resolved, however, Anthony says that one of the farmers that has been affected by the killings, **Farmer Bill**, has seen other potentially damning things. He tells the players to look there and see for themselves.

Area 2: Bill's Farm

Should the players decide to look into the case, they go to Bill's farm whereupon they will see:

Amidst the green pastures you see several corpses of cows. Upon closer inspection, you see that their stomachs have been ripped open and their innards are spilled across the ground.

Players can choose to examine the remains and see if this looks natural Nature DC12 (it looks to be the work of a huge beast rather than a person or a wolf).

As they are examining, Bill will approach behind them and tell them his views.

Apparently, the killings aren't just a recent

thing. They've happened in years past to other farmers who don't like to associate much with the village folk.

He has seen peculiar things involving Griselda however. One day, he was out in the forest and saw her in the thickest part of the woods, not wearing any clothing and in the throes of passion with a dark shape.

He points out the spot in the woods and tells players if they want answers, they should go in there and confront the damn thing.

Area 3: The Forest

Night is approaching fast and players will need to make perception or survival checks DC14 in order to try and figure out clues as to where this dark thing could be.

Eventually, players may find a clearing with a deep well, and should they go down it, they will enter into the next area.

If they do not, they may choose to camp upon which the encounter/character described in the next area will come to them in this area.

Area 4: The Well

Players will have to make an acrobatics or athletics check DC 12 in order to make it down the well without 1d4 injury.

Once down:

You look around and see a tunnel leading off down a long, stone corridor. At the end of the corridor is an enormous circular door, similar to the hatch of a pipe.

The players will enter and if they enter with stealth, they may gain a surprise attack on a dark elf, **Eldritch**, who is working at a writing desk. If they are unsuccessful,

Eldritch will try and take them on with his bow and arrow.

Regardless of whether or not the players defeat Eldritch, they'll be able to talk to him as a) they can interrogate him for information after he wakes up or b) he can interrogate them after they wake up from unconsciousness.

As to attempt to avoid the possibility of killing Eldritch, it is recommended to have him surrender when he has less than 6 HP remaining.

He will tell players that he and Griselda were in a serious relationship and that he is a poet who lives here in the woods. Griselda isn't a witch, she's just a girl who thinks that he is the one.

When asked about the killings, Eldritch will say that he knows it isn't him and it isn't Griselda, but he thinks it might be Anthony, after all, Anthony has had it in for Griselda after she rejected his romantic advances. Perhaps he has framed her.

Area 5a: Millstone Town Hall

If the players choose to kill Eldritch or take him back to the town as a sort of scapegoat for the monster, they will be rewarded with praise with a large feast in their honor.

Anthony and Amos will lead the festivities, but Amos will appear deeply unsettled. During the feast, word will come in that Griselda committed suicide, whereupon, Amos will retire to his chambers as Anthony will declare victory.

If players pursue Amos to his chambers, they will see him frantically packing his things. He wants to get away from the guilt and pain that this situation has brought the town, he claims, a situation that he truly started.

Upon intimidation DC 14 or persuasion DC17, Amos will reveal that he is a druid and has the power/curse to wildshape into any creature he chooses, but in his old age, as he does so, he loses a lot of his human reasoning and starts to act like the animals, which is why he was killing the livestock.

He didn't want anyone to get hurt and that's why he was trying to defend Griselda. But he also recognizes that if he lets the players live, there's a risk that the villagers will rise up against him and kill him, which is fine, but they probably will also kill his son as some sort of dark magic spawn. So he must act.

At this point, Amos rises to his feet and begins to transform. His skin ripples as muscles grow and hair sprouts. His body elongates and his face soon becomes the visage of an enormous Black Bear. He roars at you and immediately begins to barrel towards you, fangs bared and claws outstretched.

This will launch the players into combat, whereupon they can try to directly engage the bear or use objects in the room to try and trick the bear or trap it.

As they kill the bear, Anthony will come inside and see the massive creature go down. If one explains the situation to him, he will recognize the implications if this gets out. He pleads with you not to tell anyone.

Area 5b: Millstone Town Hall

The players will go back to the town hall after either they are satisfied with Eldritch's story or after he releases them.

In the town hall, they confront Amos and Anthony and tell Amos that Anthony is the

killer. Anthony will try and resist at all costs, but before things come to blows, Amos will intervene and say that it is not Anthony who did the murders. It was Amos.

He is a druid and has the power/curse to wildshape into any creature he chooses, but in his old age, as he does so, he loses a lot of his human reasoning and starts to act like the animals, which is why he was killing the livestock.

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Anthony will be stunned for the majority of the battle, but if the players can talk sense into him with persuasion DC 17, he may help restrain his father.

Conclusion

Below is perhaps the most optimistic way this adventure can end, but by no means limit your conclusion to this if circumstances have changed and your ending does not call for such straightforward

ends.

The bear rears up, blood streaming from its wounds. It lets out one last roar before it topples to the ground at its son's feet, dead. Anthony looks down at it, tears streaming from his eyes. He looks to you, begging. Please don't tell anyone. I swear I'll be better. Don't tell anyone this was my father.

Players have the option to either tell the town about Anthony upon which he will be ripped apart by a mob of angry villagers or they can choose to keep the secret, release Griselda, and act like the bear was the culprit the whole time.

Endings can range from, the players walking away from the bloodthirsty town, unsure of what to do next or perhaps on a lighter note, they will see Griselda go off into the woods to reunite with Eldritch. In this case, the town will remain in peace and the players will simply have to keep the little secret for the greater good.

Again, use common sense if such endings do not work for your group, but do not dumb down enemies or take away from the town's desperate cry for a scapegoat.

Map of the Quest

