

Campaign/Game: Saturday Showups - D&D 5e

Date: January 7th, 2023

Session 1: Wherein the Showups save a young peasant woman's simple brother, her love life, and her village from the threat of an ancient warlord awakened to conquer with his army of undead.

Characters

Bastian Woodson, elven hexblade warlock (Tyler)

"Friend", elven ranger (Matt)

Heskan, dragonborn paladin (Adam)

K'last DeLake, human champion fighter (Travis)

Tilly Tealeaf, halfling moon druid (Madison)

Zeshire, tiefling hexblade warlock (Auggie)

Zinmar Everthell, genasi armorer artificer (Collin)

DM: Andrew

Log:

In an arcane age, adventurers have arrived in the "new world" from wherever they originally came from in search of adventure, riches, destiny - something that drives them. Collectively, they are known as the "Showups." This is their story.

These adventurers explore this rediscovered continent of **Apreea** from **Ineas**, a modest city based on a large island just off the coast. Ineas was once a major naval base for the crumbling elven empire that once ruled from the waves.

Portburg is the largest village on the mainland of Apreea. It is famously built on a rocky outcropping surrounded by shabby docks of all sizes and shapes. Portburg trades in timber and grain harvested from the peninsula that runs West toward the mainland of the continent.

Following a crippling drought ten years ago, many livestock herders in the Portburg area migrated inland west along this peninsula, creating a tiny twenty-family hamlet in the sandy plains a day's walk away. These bucolic, brave souls named their settlement **Droughtsburg**.

A newly-formed group of adventurers, the Showups, were traveling west from Portburg toward Droughtsburg in search of adventure and treasure in the earliest days of spring. Soft, wet snow mixed with thick mud along the path they traveled as night began to fall. Ahead, they heard a frightened scream. They broke through the underbrush to see a number of the restless dead closing in on a young village woman named **Susam** and her brother.

The Showups make quick work of the zombies. **Bastian**, an elf with a birthmark of three strokes on his left cheek, draws his whispering blade which fills his head with a cacophony of voices

from the past. **Heskan** an argent dragonborn paladin, uses his breath weapon to clear swaths of the enemy. **K'last**, champion of his people, throws himself into battle slashing at his enemies with his twin blades. **Tilly**, a rustic halfling priestess with sparkling clear blue eyes, and a secret belied by her burned and scarred hand, transforms into a great murderous dire wolf twice her size. **Zeshire**, accompanied by his curious crow Alexa, draws his own slim hexblade sword carefully sizing up the enemy. **Zinmar**, a mortal descended from a bloodline born from the elemental plane of fire shimmers from the heat thrown off by his armor and the brilliant collar around his neck. Finally, an unassuming half elf ranger has joined the band full of angst and mystery.

They perform a quick examination of these walking corpses. The zombies have strange spiral runes carved into them. Heskan identifies those symbols as that of **Tharizdun**, deity of darkness, isolation, and imprisonment. Susam thanks the Showups for saving her and her brother. She recognizes the efforts of the unnamed ranger and gives him the name "Friend" for his selflessness.

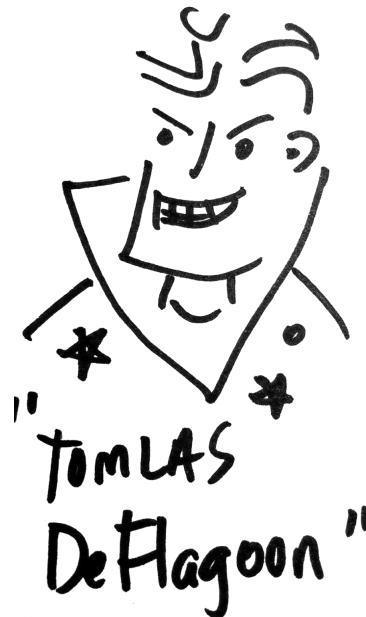
Next the showups escort Susam back to her village. Droughtsburg is a herding town, and many of the barns are in flames. The zombies had taken up in a nearby field milling about in front of a strange, alien obelisk of some sort. The Showups helped to control the fire. They did their best to keep the livestock safe. The village has quite a large amount of llamas. One villager named **Stevem** was very concerned about his precious llamas.

The heroes are introduced to the mayor. Unfortunately, they find him mute and catatonic. He had seen something that he could not handle, from what the other villagers say. However, the catatonic mayor clearly recognized "Friend" the ranger, but could not communicate much about what he recognized about him. As the party made plans to counter attack the threatening zombies. Susan produced a note from a man she said was from her betrothed. She passed it to Zinmar asking if he could read it to her, as she and her whole poor village of Droughtsburg are illiterate. The genasi armorer took care to spare her feelings by reading the note incorrectly. The actual text of the note, and the self-portrait of the rake who wrote it are included below.

*My Dear Simple Susam,
I regret to inform you that I have moved on from
our brief relationship. You should feel honored that
you were blessed with my attention for as long as
you were. I'll always remember your bucolic
Llama-filled hamlet. If you could please send along
the brooch I left with you back to me in the city of
Ineas at your own expense I would appreciate it.*

Sincerely,

Tomlas DeFlagoon



The Showups laid a trap for the undead, using some of the remaining hay from the livestock and vials of flammable military oil provided by Zinmar. Tilly baited the mindless corpses using the brains of a fallen villager, while Bastian cajoled them to surge forth. Many zombies were burned to tallow, but there was a pair of vitriolic ghouls leading from behind. K'last charged these monsters flanked by Tilly in wolf form and supported by Zinmar. The two hexblades along with Heskan cleaned up the remaining zombies. "Friend" took a more stealthy approach and attacked the ghouls from hiding when they least expected it.

After a short rest, the Showups investigated the strange alien obelisk that was the origin of the living dead. They discovered a misty green opening in the vitriol-covered misshapen spike that led down a set of circular staircases to a commemorative atrium of some sort. Here, they discover hieroglyphics carved into the walls and floors of the stone in a language that none of them knew, but all could read. This writing was that of the **Titans**, a golden civilization of peoples who lived in Apreea long before the cataclysmic ice age. It is as if the words carved into the rock change in one's mind's eye subtly providing a sort of limited conversation with the reader.

These words tell all the story of **Hardok the Barrister**, Keeper of the Mythic Underworld and henchman of **Lord Sallow**. Following the downfall of the Titans, Lord Sallow was among the warlords of Apreea who fought over the scraps of that great society amongst the cataclysmic ice age. The runes discuss how Hardok struggled against the warlord **Gargantov** in service of his master. Hardok is depicted in only the most glowing terms by these hieroglyphics, and the Showups quickly realize that is because this obelisk that has emerged from the late-winter ground is in fact the entrance to his long-uncovered lair.

A second set of stairs leads to some rooms used to prepare zombies. The Showups ambush more vitriolic ghouls, fight some skeletal guards, and burn a corpulent, alien undead monstrosity to rendered fat.

The heroes press on, discovering the throne room of Hardok the Barrister. They see what they believe to be the warlord himself in front of an altar featuring the jagged spiral of Tharizdun. He wears his dusty skull cap and flowing black robes they recognize from the runes in the first room. He rises to speak, unsure on his wobbling feet and speaks to the Showups.

“In witness whereof, the bad actors hereunto have set their hands at assaulting this officer of the court in good standing - a deed hereinbefore requiring censure...and death!”

The heroes move to destroy the skeletal guards as they rise from their sarcophagi. Hardok is flanked by two well-armored guards. Zinmar charges Hardok the Barrister and his guards trying to pin them, but the fight is behind him. The armorer quickly realizes that this Hardok is little more than a ruse while the real Hardok is elsewhere. Meanwhile, K’last catches a glimpse of a half-ton monstrous undead monster clad in armor - a long forgotten Soulless Juggernaut. It plows into its first target, smashing them and then continuing on charging about the room in a frenzy of destruction.

Hardok, previously looking on invisibly, shows himself to confront “Friend”. Hardok insists that the amnesiac ranger looks exactly like the son of Lord Sallow, **Alwem**. The ranger is shaken at first, but begins to play along. He convinces the mage to stand down, getting the juggernaut to drop its guard for a little bit. Hardok flees into a magically darkened room, but is hunted down and torn apart by Tilly in her dire wolf state. Even as a diabolical killing monster, her blue eyes twinkle as she returns with the corpse of Hardok the Barrister.

The Showups find that the treasure room is filled with 16,600 gold pieces in value of riches which is split seven ways by the party. Following the looting, the adventurers return to the surface to meet the dawn and the happy cheers of the emancipated hamlet of Droughtsburg!

What should the civilized people of Droughtsburg make of this creation? Should they stay or flee? What could be made of some of the other rumors of adventure that can be found elsewhere on Apreea? What do the Showups make of their time in the wilderness?¹ Find out next session!

¹ DM Note: Don’t forget! I’ll give your character 1000XP after any session they participate in if you offer me any content to post on the website about the adventure. It could be a drawing, an in-character paragraph, or a rough map. Anything that could link from a website would be welcome!

Epilog: Jobs, Rumors, and Leads

This section includes adventure seeds that the Showups could play in the future. Feel free to discuss amongst yourselves and ask me questions in Discord about how your characters spend their downtime between game sessions.

- The hag **Auntie Mugwallow** has been a source of gossip among the citizens of **Portburg** for decades. Some still say that the mayor's oldest daughter didn't actually travel back to Ineas but instead was kidnapped by this hellish beast. Only adventurers interested in knowing the truth might learn whether she is a misunderstood loner, or a dire threat to civilization that must be destroyed.
- **Goltwarden**, a dwarven hold from an earlier age, is buried in the hills of the continent of **Apreea** just a half-day's walk from the village of **Droughtsburg**. Some say that the long-dead dwarves still haunt the vault, cursing any who come for their hard-mined gold.
- A strange vale created when a star fell out of the sky is the site of several cave lairs of the native humanoid monsters. It lies a day's journey past **Dorughtsburg** to the west. Are these beings forming their own community to attack civilization in force, or are these factions struggling against one another in a play for dominance?