

Campaign/Game: Marionettes: D&D 5e
One Shot: Marionettes
Campaign Date: Jubilee 13th, 932 (Winter)

Date: October 14th, 2021

Characters

Nero Leonhart, Half-Elf Wizard Bladesinger - 2 (Brandon)
Rilith, Tiefling Archfey Warlock - 2 (Keith)
Naladon, Green Elf Paladin - 2 (Luke)

DM: Andrew

Log:

The village of Sallegrange is somewhat remote, perched in the eastern foothills of the Stony Mountains of Radavan. Situated at the base of a cliff to protect it from the harsh winds, its picturesque location would normally grant a scenic view, however no living person can recall a day that would make such a sight possible. It was founded when a community of tieflings fled into the hills during the Age of Corvax to escape certain death from the continent-spanning war at the time. The village is ruled by a town council of nine elders, but it is Councilman Castor who seems to hold sway with all the people of the village. His word carries much weight in this bucolic village.

While the majority of the residents are modest, the village does claim one noble family—the Fantoche family, having made Sallegrange their home many years ago after moving there from the big city of Bizancio. Lucian Fantoche inherited his fortune, but his family nevertheless prospered through his mechanical inventions: devices, instruments, and toys operated by springs and cogs. His wife, Glovia—gifted with a talent for healing—helped the locals for many years using her knowledge of healing ways and tools crafted by her husband. They lived together in a fancy mansion in the hills overlooking the village of Sallegrange.



The Fantoches had a single daughter named Isabella who died just shy of ten years ago at the age of twelve. The couple did not take Isabella's death well and both fell into a very dark state of depression. Lucian has since made rare appearances, but hasn't been seen since last winter. Glovia disappeared for so long that it was rumored she had killed herself. Recently, however, she has emerged and has once again begun helping at the village's small hospice. She sleeps there more often than not, but occasionally returns to their home for long periods.



Into this small village, three travellers arrive as the sun sets and the winter winds pick up. Nero, Rilith, and Naladon have recently joined forces. They discuss their new years' resolutions as they travel the road toward the small village. Nero is looking for a particular book entitled Naladon wants to be a better person. Rilith just hopes to not get killed. Rilith notices a young tiefling in a horse-drawn cart loaded down with basic supplies who is momentarily shocked by Rilith's appearance. The others miss this detail, but he seemed to be anxious, and reached for a spear as they approached and seemed relieved as they passed.

The adventurers are welcomed to sit at one of the three tables of the Four Tables Inn by its proprietor, the tiefling Marc. A group of four tiefling locals sit at a second table, and a squat, soft merchant Naladon identifies as Mendel sits surrounded by his three guards at the third. Marc's wife shouts at him from the kitchen, cajoling him to get back to work and stop hobnobbing with the party.

Despite not removing his helmet, Naladon approaches the table of Mendel the Merchant along with Nero. Naladon looks threatening, but Mendel doesn't seem concerned. He points out that he doesn't want any trouble and that he will move on in the morning without incident.



Rilith makes nice with the locals, plying them with drinks. Their moods immediately improve and they learn some local gossip. First, animated shadows have been spotted near the graveyard of Sallegrange. Next, taxes are too high. Councilman Castor is much too greedy to ease the load. This burden will be felt as winter progresses. Also, Councilman Castor has brought a curse on the village of Sallegrange by accepting the gifts of the Widow Qway.

Rilith asks more about the Fantoche family. She learns another juicy detail. Isabella - Lucien and Glovia Fantoche's only child was found dead in the parlor of their manor. She had managed to hang herself with a bundle of harpsichord wire. Some believe that there was foul play and she was murdered.

Three separate times, as the sun sets to the west Marc looks anxiously out the front door. He's worried and looking for someone. The three adventures ask what he is concerned with, and he replies that his brother in law should have arrived by now. He is concerned that perhaps there has been a terrible accident or he has been attacked. The three offer to look for him, and Marc is relieved and thanks them. Their stay and meal will be free if they can bring him home safely.

As he retires for the night, Rilith asks Mendel if they could "do some business" later. Mendel mentions a "special knock" and when Rilith responds he seems dismissive. He replies that he awaits her visit. The three adventurers head back out into the night to find Marc's brother in law.

They find Marc's brother-in law Salagante beaten and unconscious. Six grey goblins stand over him. Naaldon charges the bugbears, scattering them among the falling snow. Nero engages cautiously, while Rilith fires arcane bolts from behind cover. They quickly neutralize the threat. Rilith takes one bugbear hostage, and asks him about his master. The bugbear identifies him as a fancy tiefling just like Rilith, but is unable to give much more detail. They try to heal Salagante and ply him with more questions, but all he can muster are the words, "the bloodline" before falling into a catatonic state. The three travellers collect the poor tiefling and carry him back to Sallegrange.

There, they inform Marc and go directly to the Hospice. There they meet Lady Glovia Fantoche and her human assistant Mira. There is a moment of realization as Lady Fantoche lays eyes on Rilith, but the moment passes without reflection. Glovia takes Salgante in and heals him with vein infusions and resetting bones. Nero helps Marc retrieve the Four Tables' wagon of supplies from the night's snowstorm. The travellers strike up a conversation with Mira, who tells them that Mendel is not a slaver as Naladon had heard, but rather the seller of corpses. The barrels of pickled herring he purports to transport have false bottoms in which bodies are trafficked. Mira tells them this, because she is working undercover to help her sister Lucy find an appropriate moment to murder the smug Mendel for his crimes. They identify the archetypal nobles' house on the hill where the Fantoche family lives. Glovia is not forthcoming about her child Isabella, and none ask about her husband and what he is doing.





The three travellers return to the Four Tables Inn for a long rest. They find that along with his guards and caravan, [Mendel has disappeared](#) during the night. A servant of Councilman Castor has been sent to collect Nero, Rilith, and Naladon by name. They accompany the servant back to Castor's modest home where they are introduced to the councilman and a strange human fortune teller who he introduces as the Widow Qway.

Most tieflings of Radavan are of the Asmodeus bloodline. They hold the traditional "Tiefling" look with red skin and horns that form part of their brow structure. The rarer Baalzebul bloodline Rilith belongs to features long curving horns that are sometimes more antler-like than what one would expect, giving them an almost Fey appearance. Unlike the other tieflings of Sallegrange, Councilman Castor shares this trait with Rilith.

After some smalltalk, Councilman Castor offers to provide a reward for submitting to Qway's visions. Castor seems to be curious about a reading of the future that was provided since it included the three travellers. The adventurers submit to the dream, and find themselves in a nightmare state locked in a wood-paneled study with a young girl playing the well-known tune "The Two Horned Knight" on the harpsichord. They quickly learn that the girl is Isabella Fantoche, a ghost of the tiefling girl who died just before her thirteenth birthday of being hanged from a wire from her instrument. Unlike her mother Glovia, Isabella also bears the rarer Baalzebul bloodline. They see an open notebook of Glovia's, and Nero reads it.



Isabella will not have died because of my failings. I must find a way to bring her back to me.

Lucian's grief is getting in the way. He drinks incessantly. He cannot see the big picture. I'm not sure what to do about him but he will not stop me.

Another failed attempt! I think there is a greater force at work here. Something is subverting my efforts to bring Isabella back. Lucian objects to my methods. I will kill him tonight.

The golem studies have yielded nothing, save a method of resolve for Lucian. There are days I miss him, but he was blind. Now at least he is useful.

Some success today, but the results are morbid. They are not suitable for my darling, though they are useful for fetching more specimens. I no longer have to rely on Mendel for more raw material.

Today I have finally found the answer, or rather, she has found me. She knows far more than I do and has promised to help me. She says she can bring Isabella back, but it will require an appropriate host. While I am suspicious of her charity, I have no choice.



As the reading ends, a nightmarish version of an enraged castor breaks into the study. He throws the ghostly girl to the keyboard and tears wires from within it. He wraps the sharp, deadly cables around her neck aggressively pulling them taught then hoists her on one of the overhead beams. Isabella croaks, and the dream ends.

The three adventurers find themselves back in Castor's chambers, but now he has summoned more of his grey goblins to help put an end to these leaks. Councilman Castor slits the Widow Qway's throat in brutal anger with his knife and draws his sleek rapier. As the bugbears are engaged, Naladon engages the tiefling lord. Rilith puts many bugbears to sleep while Nero fights to keep the devil kin at bay. Naladon unleashes a vicious smite on Councilman Castor, and the tiefling is slain in short order. With the master dead, the bugbears' fight goes out of them. Rilith manages to convince the rest that it is in their best interest to help the adventurers.

Following the battle, the heroes find secret love letters from Glovia to Castor that confirm that Isabella was in fact the councilman's child and not Lucien's. Why would the councilman kill his own child? Why did the widow's corpse disappear when the adventurers were not looking?

There is no time for consideration. Marc explains that a younger tiefling child is missing from the village, kidnapped by Glovia for some cruel experiment! After a brief rest, the adventurers climb the hill toward the haunted mansion of the Fantoches.

Thanks to the sacrifice of three of the bugbears, the heroes learn that the entryway to the manor is faulty. The floor collapses, sending the demon-spawn falling into the cellar where they hear screams and the crunching of bones. Something evil lurks down there. The three search the kitchens below the dining room, and kill the ghouls which were the source of the noise, but not without losing the remainder of the friendly bugbears.

The heroes climb the stairs to the second floor after hearing the loud, shuffling footfalls of someone or something that is not human. The group approaches the bedroom and laboratory of Glovia Fantoche where they find several tables with corpses laying on them. One looks very much like the fourth table that was once stolen from the Four Tables Inn almost eighteen months ago. Nero identifies one of the corpses as belonging to Lord Fantoche, but it has been changed. The corpse is enhanced by pieces of other things sewn to it, and his left arm is now an extendable steel claw meant to trap and pull people toward him.

Naladon moves past the corpses into the laboratory where he hears a young girl's voice from a small barred cell and Lady Fantoche preparing a nasty looking syringe with wires and tubes. He is tossed from the room by what appears to be a large magnet, and furniture moves to block off the lab. The battle is joined against the flesh golem that was once Lucien Fantoche. Rilith is hurt badly, but together they manage to push the golem around and hit it enough to make it stop functioning.

Softened up, but not defeated, the three adventurers enter the lab. They discover that the young girl was just a ruse to get Rilith to come up. Lady Fantoche traps the warlock with an animated shelf, and begins to drain the life from Rilith's veins and replace it with the ghost of her slain daughter. Only the sharp mind of Nero and the final crushing smite from Naladon manage to put an end to the mad artificer's life and end the nightmare.

Following these events, the three adventurers make peace with the ghost of Isabella, and she is put to rest. They clear out any dangerous elements of the manor and then report back to Marc on what happened before moving on.

Epilog:

In the darkness below the cursed Fantoche manor, the [Widow Qway](#) curses her bad luck. The child who was all along a hag-spawn would not be re-incarnated after all, despite finding an appropriate vessel in that warlock Rilith. Qway turns on her heel, and walks into her house. After a beat, it grows giant duck legs and wings. After it wheezes a gout of flame it lumbers toward the edge of the ridge and leaps into the sky.

