

A 5E ADVENTURE

KISS OF AUTUMN



YELLOW PETALS FALL WHERE
THE DEAD WERE MEANT TO SLEEP...

KELFECIL'S
TALES

KISS OF AUTUMN
AN ADVENTURE COLLABORATION
ORGANIZED AND DESIGNED BY



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GOLD AMONG THE LEAVES

Autumn has settled over the old road in warm colors. Orange leaves gather in wagon ruts. Yellow light slips through the branches. Green moss climbs over stones that have not felt careful hands in years. Travelers speak kindly of this stretch during the day, when the air smells of rain, bark, and woodsmoke from distant cottages.

At night, the same road feels different. Lanterns are kept low. Doors are barred before sunset. Those who live near the old grove no longer speak freely around strangers, and the names of missing traders are passed from mouth to mouth in careful whispers. A few locals say the woods have always been dangerous. Others know the danger changed when yellow flowers began blooming where no flower should grow.

The first flowers were treated as a warning. Then someone learned how to survive near them. A small family living beside the grove gathered herbs, studied the sickness, and made a bitter counteragent that could slow the Kiss before it took the mind. For a time, the secret protected the people nearby. Raiders kept away. Beasts avoided the grove. Those who knew the old rules survived.

Now that secret has been stolen. Strangers with knives and cloth masks have taken the counteragent for themselves. They cut flowers from the cursed roots, drain resin from infected bodies, and keep frightened captives alive long enough to become useful. By the time the adventurers arrive, the autumn woods are bright with color, and some of that color is beginning to breathe.



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INTRODUCTION

Kelfecil's Tales is all about strong and engaging narratives. I create stories and adventures inspired by art. I believe that well-designed narratives in TTRPGs play a vital role in creating memorable and meaningful experiences. For that reason, I put a great deal of care into my designs, so you and your players can leave the table with moments that stay with you.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Kiss of Autumn is a rural infection-horror adventure set near an old autumn grove in Southern Latakar, close to roads that lead toward the Witchwoods. The party arrives at Merra Veylan's cottage after missing travelers, strange yellow flowers, or stolen counteragent draw them into the area. What first appears to be a local outbreak becomes a criminal operation built around the Kiss of the Yellow Queen, stolen medicine, and captives used as proof that the infection can be controlled.

Act 1 begins at Merra's cottage, where the party meets the healer, learns about the counteragent, investigates the garden, and faces the first Yellow-Kissed victims near the tree line. Act 2 moves deeper into the grove, where the party discovers the old offering roots, the active Yellow Rot cluster, and evidence that the Bloom Cutters have turned a dangerous local secret into a harvest site.

Act 3 takes place in a ruined village where Tovan Hask and the Bloom Cutters hold captives, process resin, and prepare a wagon bound for Old Pilgrim Road. The finale rewards players who gathered clues, protected captives, managed Bloom Exposure, and learned how the Bloom Cutters operate. The adventure ends with the local operation broken, while the next shipment and its buyers lead directly into **Pilgrim's Bloom**.

QUICK ADVENTURE INFO

Some quick information about the adventure:

- **Recommended Average Party Level (APL):** 4 to 5
- **Themes:** Yellow Queen infection, autumn horror, moral choices, criminal harvesting
- **Setting:** Starlight Chronicles, Southern Latakar near Old Pilgrim Road
- **Expected Sessions/Playtime:** 1 session, 4 to 6 hours





BACKGROUND

The autumn grove sits along a lesser-used road in Southern Latakar, close enough to old Witchwoods routes for strange growths, wandering beasts, and half-believed warnings to feel normal. The nearby families live from herb gathering, charcoal burning, small gardens, and trade with passing wagons. They keep their houses apart from one another, mark safe footpaths with tied cloth, and teach children which yellow flowers must never be touched.

Years ago, the first signs of the Kiss appeared beneath the roots of an ancient tree in the hollow beyond the cottage. The locals feared the infection at first, then learned that certain bitter herbs growing in the autumn garden could slow its hold. A healer named Merra Veylan refined those herbs into a counteragent. It could save someone during the earliest stages of infection, ease symptoms in later stages, and let healthy folk move near Yellow Rot for a short time with less risk.

Merra and her family made a hard choice. They left the deepest bloom-field intact and treated it as a living wall against raiders, beasts, and desperate criminals traveling from the old forest roads. The people who knew the truth followed strict rules. No one entered the Rooted Hollow alone. No one harvested Yellow Rot without cause. Those who died to the Kiss were burned, unless they had sworn themselves to the grove as a final warning to anyone who came too close.

That fragile arrangement ended when a group of Bloom Cutters found the cottage. They were outlaws, smugglers, and failed apothecary hands who understood enough herbal craft to recognize value. They forced Merra's family to produce counteragent, took several locals captive, and began cutting Yellow Rot flowers from the hollow. They discovered that resin drawn from infected bodies could be sold as a dangerous narcotic, while the counteragent itself could be sold as proof of control.

The Bloom Cutters now work from Venomfang Tower, where they process resin, hold captives, and prepare shipments for buyers along the Old Pilgrim Road. Their plan is simple. Sell the bloom as pleasure, sell the cure as safety, and leave before the grove turns against everyone nearby. The adventurers arrive while the first shipment is being prepared, giving them a chance to stop the trade before it spreads beyond the autumn woods.

NEED MORE SETTING LORE?

The Starlight Chronicles is a living world of ancient ruins, starfaring ships, and vast legacies shaped by Fate. Each adventure offers a glimpse into its history, whether through the ruins of Latakar or the endless Sea of Stars. To learn more, you can access the free [Adapting to the Setting](#) guide, which introduces the core lore and explains how to bring these stories into any campaign. For deeper exploration, the [Starlight Chronicles Lorebook](#) provides the full and ever-expanding collection of regions, ancestries, factions, and timelines that define the setting.

This adventure takes place in Southern Latakar, near the old roads that lead toward the Witchwoods. It uses the Yellow Queen's infection as a local threat tied to rural survival, outlaw trade, herbal counteragents, and the dangers of treating a curse as a resource.

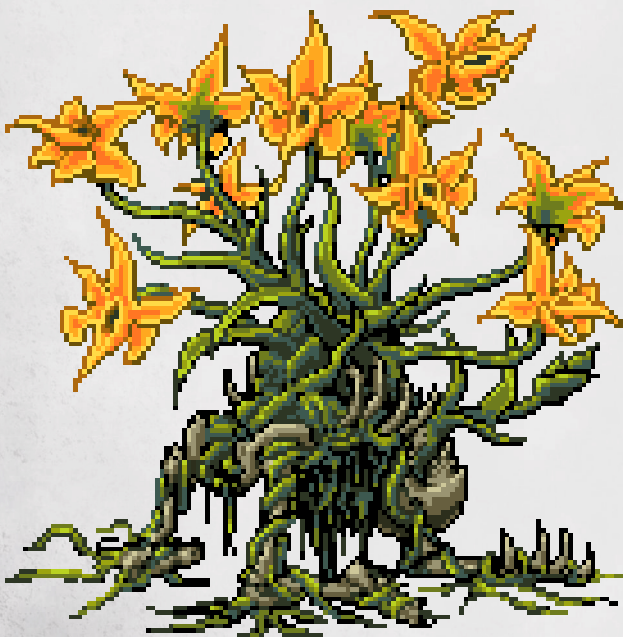
SOUTHERN LATAKAR AND THE WITCHWOODS EDGE

Southern Latakar is known for its green valleys, farms, scattered forests, and trade routes that connect larger settlements to smaller rural communities. Most villages survive through practical habits. They share tools, follow weather signs, honor old warnings, and trust healers who know the difference between useful herbs and dangerous growths.

The Witchwoods border adds older fears to that way of life. Strange plants, awakened roots, fey paths, and lingering curses can all reach beyond the deep forest when conditions are right. Many locals treat such dangers as part of daily reality. They do not need scholars to explain every strange flower or moving branch. They need rules that keep families alive.

The Yellow Queen's influence gives that old caution a sharper edge. Yellow Rot spreads through beautiful flowers, infected bodies, and spores carried through damp air. Communities that suspect infection often burn the growth quickly. Others hide the signs out of fear, shame, or desperation. In this adventure, that secrecy allowed the grove to protect a few people for years, then gave the Bloom Cutters exactly the opening they needed.

The adventure works best when the locals are treated as frightened people who made a dangerous compromise. Merra's family did not create the Kiss, and they did not invite the Bloom Cutters. They survived by learning the land around them. The party's decisions should decide whether that knowledge becomes a cure, a crime, or a fire no one can control.



RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Kiss of Autumn works best when the party feels the difference between fighting monsters and dealing with people who are still close enough to save. The infected are dangerous, and encounters should be hard, yet the adventure should not feel like a simple purge. Merra, Iven, Rell, Haren, and the other captives give the party reasons to ask questions, conserve counteragent, and decide who they can still help.

Tone and Presentation. Keep the tone grounded, tense, and autumnal. Describe wet leaves, bitter herbs, yellow petals, cloth masks, ruined homes, and the smell of counteragent. The horror should come from the Kiss spreading through ordinary places: a garden, a family cottage, a hollow used for protection, and a village turned into a workshop. Most locals are frightened, not malicious. The Bloom Cutters are criminals who understand just enough to exploit the danger.

Using the Core Mechanics. Bloom Exposure should remind the party that careless contact with the Kiss has consequences. Increase it when characters touch Yellow Rot, linger in infected spaces, or mishandle contaminated tools. Counteragent doses should remain limited and valuable. Use them to create decisions, not bookkeeping. Bloom Cutter Morale should support negotiation, surrender, betrayal, and pressure during Act 3.

Guiding the Investigation. The adventure has a clear route, though the party's discoveries should matter. Act 1 should point toward the hollow. Act 2 should reveal the captives, the harvest site, and the larger trade. Act 3 should pay off earlier clues by giving the party better positioning, social leverage, or faster access to the wagon. If the party misses a clue, you can move a related piece of information to a captive, a Bloom Cutter, or the tower ledger.

NPC Interaction. Give each important NPC a clear reason to speak and a clear reason to hold back. Merra wants help, yet fears losing her family and her work. Iven and Rell show that some victims can still speak for themselves. Tovan wants profit, control, and time. The Bloom Cutters may obey him, fear him, or turn on him if the party gives them a reason. Let conversations change how fights begin.

Combat Style. Fights should be dangerous and purposeful. Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming overwhelm and unsettle the party. Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed apply stronger pressure and show advanced infection. Yellow Rot and the Entangler control space and punish careless movement. Bloom Cutters use cover, masks, hostages, and infected creatures as barriers. Enemies should not always fight to the death, especially the Bloom Cutters.

Adjusting Difficulty. This adventure is intended to be hard for APL 4 to 5. If the party is struggling, remove one advanced infected creature, delay a Ruined Village Alert encounter, or let a rescued captive provide a safer route. If the party is moving comfortably, raise Bloom Exposure faster, add a general village encounter, or let the proof wagon start closer to the southern exit.

NPC BACKGROUNDS

MERRA VEYLAN

Merra Veylan is the healer who first learned how to slow the Kiss of the Yellow Queen in the autumn grove. She did not begin as a scholar or apothecary. She was a rural herbalist who learned by testing roots, leaves, smoke, boiled sap, and bitter flowers on animals, then on herself when the first infected villagers began coughing yellow dust into their hands. Her counteragent became the reason the nearby families survived.

Merra carries deep guilt over the Rooted Hollow. She knows the old bloom-field should have been burned years ago, yet she also knows it kept raiders away and gave the community time to endure. When the Bloom Cutters arrived, they used her fear against her. They took her notes, forced her to prepare doses, and threatened to infect her surviving kin if she refused.

- **Unique Phrase:** "A cure can become a knife in the wrong hand."
- **Desire:** To save her family and keep the counteragent from becoming a traded poison.
- **Fear:** That the adventurers will burn every trace of her work and leave future victims without hope.
- **Misbelief:** Believes her secrecy caused all of this, so every death is partly hers.
- **Current Development:** Hides what she knows until the party proves they want to save people, not only destroy the grove.

TOVAN HASK

Tovan Hask leads the Bloom Cutters operating out of the ruined village around Venomfang Tower. He was once a failed apothecary's assistant who learned enough to recognize value in dangerous reagents, then used that knowledge to survive among smugglers. He does not worship the Yellow Queen. He sees the Kiss as a resource that frightened people were too weak to exploit.

Tovan keeps his cutters loyal through coin, fear, and practical promises. He tells them they are harvesting a product, not murdering people, since the infected are already doomed in his eyes. His plan is to sell both yellow resin and the counteragent, creating buyers who need him twice. He will bargain if cornered, lie if useful, and sacrifice his own people if escape remains possible.

- **Unique Phrase:** "Fear sells. Relief sells better."
- **Desire:** To turn the Kiss, the resin, and the counteragent into a profitable route.
- **Fear:** Losing control of the infection before he can sell his proof.
- **Misbelief:** Believes anything can be safely handled if the price is high enough.
- **Current Development:** Holds captives across the ruined village around Venomfang Tower and prepares the next shipment for Old Pilgrim Road.

THE BLOOM CUTTERS

The Bloom Cutters are smugglers, deserters, poachers, and failed herbal hands drawn together by Tovan's promise of fast coin. Most wear cloth masks soaked in counteragent residue, carry hooked blades for cutting growths, and know just enough about the Kiss to be reckless. They are criminals, not cultists, which makes them easier to understand and harder to dismiss as madmen.

Some Bloom Cutters are cruel opportunists. Others are frightened workers who have already gone too far and see no safe way out. A few have handled infected captives long enough to feel doubt. During the adventure, the GM can let individual cutters talk, beg, threaten, or reveal information if the party separates them from Tovan's control.

- **Unique Phrase:** "Cut clean, breathe shallow, do not look at the face."
- **Desire:** Coin, survival, and a way out before the infection spreads.
- **Fear:** Becoming another body in the bloom-field.
- **Misbelief:** Believe the counteragent makes them safe enough to continue.
- **Current Development:** Guard hostages, process resin, and try to move the final shipment before the adventurers ruin the operation.

OTHER IMPORTANT NPCs

The captives are locals, travelers, and failed workers held around the ruined village near Venomfang Tower. Some were taken for ransom at first, then kept as future hosts once Tovan understood how valuable infected bodies could become. A few are in the early stage of the Kiss and can still be saved with counteragent. Others have begun to slip toward the Blossoming stage.

The captives are important to the adventure's choices. They can warn the party, plead for help, identify the Bloom Cutters, or force the adventurers to decide who receives limited counteragent doses. Saving them takes time and may allow enemies to regroup. Ignoring them makes the final fight easier, at a clear moral cost.

- **Unique Phrase:** "Please, I can still hear myself!"
- **Desire:** Escape, treatment, and a chance to return home.
- **Fear:** Being left behind because saving them is dangerous.
- **Misbelief:** Some believe infection always means death, even when help is still possible.
- **Current Development:** Held in separate buildings near Venomfang Tower so the Bloom Cutters can use them as leverage.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Adventurers may become involved in the events of Kiss of Autumn through rural warnings, missing travelers, healer requests, criminal rumors, or direct contact with the first symptoms of the Yellow Queen's infection. Each hook should lead the party toward Merra Veylan's cottage at the edge of the autumn grove, where the locals know more than they first admit.

Missing on the Old Road. A wagon master hires the party after one of his drivers disappears along the lesser-used autumn road. The missing driver was carrying dried herbs, lamp oil, and sealed letters for rural families near the Witchwoods border. The wagon was later found abandoned, its cargo disturbed, and yellow petals scattered across the seat. The wagon master believes bandits are responsible, yet one of his stablehands swears the horse came back coughing yellow dust. This hook gives the adventurers a clear rescue mission and a practical reason to question Merra's family first.

The Healer's Message. Merra Veylan sends a short, frightened message to a trusted contact, asking for help from capable outsiders. The message says only that her work has been taken, her garden is no longer safe, and people will die if the wrong hands finish the next batch. She does not mention the Yellow Queen by name, fearing the message could be intercepted. By the time the adventurers arrive, Merra regrets sending for help and tries to send them away before the Bloom Cutters notice them. This hook places Merra at the center of the first act.

Yellow Flowers for Sale. A small apothecary, black-market contact, or worried temple worker learns that dried yellow flowers are being sold as a dangerous narcotic in nearby settlements. The buyers call it autumn resin, claiming it brings warmth, visions, and relief from pain. One user later became violent, coughing spores and scratching yellow veins into their own skin. The trail leads back to a rural grove where the flowers are being harvested. This hook frames the adventure as an investigation into a spreading trade before it becomes a wider outbreak.

Purifier Concern. A small group of local purifiers asks the adventurers to confirm rumors of Yellow Rot near the old grove. They cannot burn the area without proof, since several families still live nearby and one healer insists the grove can be managed. The purifiers offer payment for clear evidence, rescued survivors, or a safe way to destroy the bloom without killing those already infected. This hook makes the central conflict clear from the start, since the party must decide whether the grove is a threat to erase or a danger that can still be handled.

A Familiar Name. Someone connected to the party recognizes the name of a captive taken by the Bloom Cutters. This person may be a relative, former patron, caravan guard, herbal apprentice, or traveler who vanished after passing through the autumn road. The only clue is a bloodstained scrap of cloth found near yellow petals and wagon tracks leading toward Merra's cottage. This hook gives the party a personal reason to reach the area quickly and makes the captives in the final act matter from the beginning.

CORE MECHANICS

These systems support infection pressure, counteragent choices, and the criminal operation behind Kiss of Autumn. Use them during all three acts to make the Yellow Queen's influence feel dangerous without slowing the adventure down.

BLOOM EXPOSURE

Bloom Exposure tracks how much contact the party has with Yellow Rot, infected bodies, spore-heavy air, and contaminated resin.

Starting Point: Bloom Exposure starts at 0.

Maximum Value: Bloom Exposure reaches its final stage at 6.

When to Increase Bloom Exposure: Increase Bloom Exposure by 1 when one of the following happens:

- A character touches Yellow Rot without protection.
- A character is hit by an infected creature's spore-based ability.
- The party disturbs a bloom cluster without burning or sealing it.
- The party spends 10 minutes in an infected area without counteragent protection.
- A character fails a Constitution saving throw against Yellow Rot.
- The party carries infected resin, flowers, or bodies without proper containment.

Exposure Effects:

- **0 to 1:** The party notices yellow pollen, faint coughing, and mild irritation.
- **2 to 3:** Spore patches become more active. Characters exposed to Yellow Rot make saving throws with disadvantage unless protected by counteragent.
- **4 to 5:** Infected creatures become more aggressive. Add one **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** to the next infected encounter.
- **6:** A bloom surge occurs. One infected creature in the current or next encounter begins combat already transformed into a **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**, or the GM adds one additional infected creature to the encounter.

GM Notes: Use Bloom Exposure to create pressure around careless investigation, not to punish players for interacting with the adventure. Smart choices, protective gear, counteragent use, fire, sealed containers, and careful checks should prevent or reduce exposure.

COUNTERAGENT DOSES

Counteragent doses are limited. They protect the party, save early-stage victims, and create hard choices around infected captives.

Starting Supply: The party can gain 2 counteragent doses from Merra Veylan in Act 1 if they earn her trust.

Additional Doses: The party can recover more doses from the Bloom Cutters in Act 3.

Using a Dose: A creature can use an action to administer one counteragent dose to itself or another creature within 5 feet.

Counteragent Effects:

- A healthy creature gains advantage on saving throws against Yellow Rot and Bloom Exposure for 1 hour.
- A creature in the earliest stage of infection can repeat its saving throw against the Kiss of the Yellow Queen.
- A **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** that has not entered combat yet can be stabilized with a successful check.

◉ **Stabilize the Infected.** **Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, the target collapses and no longer acts as a hostile creature. On a failure, the dose is wasted and the target becomes hostile. If the check fails by 5 or more, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

GM Notes: Stabilization should work only on early-stage victims. Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed, Yellow-Kissed Hulks, and older infected creatures are too far gone for a single dose to save.

BLOOM CUTTER MORALE

The Bloom Cutters are criminals, not fanatics. They can be threatened, bribed, convinced, or turned against Tovan if the party handles them carefully.

Starting Point: Bloom Cutter Morale starts at 3.

Maximum Value: Bloom Cutter Morale reaches its lowest value at 0.

Reduce Bloom Cutter Morale by 1 when:

- The party captures a Bloom Cutter alive.
- The party proves Tovan plans to abandon his workers.
- The party destroys a resin cache.
- The party saves a captive in front of the Bloom Cutters.
- Tovan is wounded or publicly humiliated.

Morale Effects:

- **3:** Bloom Cutters follow Tovan's orders.
- **2:** Bloom Cutters hesitate, argue, or retreat if badly hurt.
- **1:** One Bloom Cutter may surrender or reveal useful information.
- **0:** Tovan loses control. Some Bloom Cutters flee, surrender, or turn on him if he threatens captives.

◉ **Break Their Nerve.** **Charisma (Intimidation), Charisma (Persuasion), or Wisdom (Insight), DC 14.** On a success, reduce Bloom Cutter Morale by 1. On a failure, the Bloom Cutters stay loyal for now. If the party offers proof that Tovan will abandon them, the check is made with advantage.

GM Notes: Bloom Cutter Morale should support roleplay during combat and negotiation. Let players talk their way through parts of the operation if they gather leverage.

INFECTION STAGES AND YELLOW QUEEN CREATURES

Some creatures used in Kiss of Autumn and Pilgrim's Bloom reference infection stages from the Kiss of the Yellow Queen codex. For these adventures, the GM does not need to run the full disease system unless they want a deeper infection-focused game.

Use the following quick guide:

- **Early Infection:** The victim is still conscious, frightened, and partially themselves. They can sometimes be helped with counteragent.
- **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming:** The victim is in the first visible stage of transformation. They may still speak, hesitate, or respond to familiar voices, though they are dangerous once violence begins.
- **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed:** The infection has advanced. The victim is no longer meaningfully reachable through ordinary conversation or a single counteragent dose.
- **Advanced Growths:** Creatures such as the **Yellow-Kissed Hulk**, **Yellow-Kissed Entangler**, **Vine Horror**, and **Vine Sorrow** are fully overtaken by the bloom's influence. Counteragent cannot restore them during these adventures.
- **Yellow Rot:** **Yellow Rot** flowers, dust, and resin are the environmental face of the infection. Treat them as hazards, clues, and sources of Bloom Exposure.

These adventures use a simplified counteragent system to keep play fast. If the GM wants to expand the disease, its stages, symptoms, long-term consequences, and deeper Yellow Queen lore, they can use the full Kiss of the Yellow Queen codex.

HOW BLOOM CUTTERS SURVIVE THE KISS

The Bloom Cutters are not immune to the Kiss of the Yellow Queen. They survive through short exposure windows, crude protection, and Merra Veylan's stolen counteragent recipe. Their methods are risky, expensive, and unreliable, which is why they keep forcing Merra to make more doses.

Bloom Cutters commonly use the following protections:

- **Counteragent-soaked masks:** Cloth masks are soaked in diluted counteragent and worn over the mouth and nose.
- **Bitter herb paste:** A thick paste is rubbed under the nose, on wrists, and across glove seams.
- **Hooked tools:** Cutters use hooks, sickles, tongs, and wrapped knives to avoid touching Yellow Rot directly.
- **Short work shifts:** Cutters rotate in and out of infected areas before symptoms can begin showing.
- **Disposable infected barriers:** Yellow-Kissed creatures are used to scare intruders, slow pursuers, or guard harvest sites.

Mechanically, a Bloom Cutter's protection is handled through the **Spore Mask** trait in its stat block. This gives the Bloom Cutter advantage on saving throws against poison, disease, and the effects of Yellow Rot.

The protection can fail. A Bloom Cutter loses the benefit of **Spore Mask** if one of the following happens:

- Their mask is removed or destroyed.
- They spend more than 1 hour in a heavily infected area without fresh counteragent.
- They are fully submerged, burned, or otherwise soaked through.
- They are restrained by Yellow Rot or a Yellow-Kissed creature for 1 full round.
- The GM decides their protection has been damaged by a major failed check or combat complication.

If a Bloom Cutter loses this protection, they must make exposure saves normally. This gives the GM a useful way to show that the Bloom Cutters are exploiting the Kiss, not controlling it safely.

PROLOGUE

YOU FOLLOW THE OLD AUTUMN ROAD BENEATH BRANCHES HEAVY WITH ORANGE AND YELLOW LEAVES. THE AIR SMELLS OF WET BARK, WOODSMOKE, AND BITTER HERBS. AHEAD, A SMALL COTTAGE SITS AT THE EDGE OF A GROVE WHERE THE TREES GROW CLOSE TOGETHER, THEIR ROOTS LIFTING THE EARTH IN UNEVEN RIDGES.

The adventurers arrive near Merra Veylan's cottage through whichever hook was chosen. This section is not on a battlemat yet. Use it to connect the party to their chosen lead, introduce the first signs of the Kiss, and give them a chance to prepare before Act 1 begins.

Depending on the hook, the party may know some or all of the following before arriving:

- A traveler, captive, or contact disappeared near the old autumn road.
- Yellow flowers have appeared in places where they should not grow.
- Merra Veylan sent for help, then stopped answering messages.
- Masked harvesters have been seen near the grove.
- The infection can be slowed with a local counteragent.
- Someone is moving yellow resin through rural trade routes.

The road leading to the cottage is narrow and poorly maintained. Wagon tracks cut through fallen leaves, then split near the grove. One set turns toward the cottage. Another set continues deeper into the trees, where broken stems and dragged marks show recent movement.

☉ **Follow the Tracks. Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation), DC 13.** On a success, the party learns that at least four armed people passed this way within the last day, dragging something heavy toward the grove. On a success of 18 or higher, they also find a strip of cloth stained with yellow dust, suggesting one captive was already infected or exposed. On a failure, the party still finds the cottage, though they miss the deeper tracks and begin Act 1 without knowing the Bloom Cutters are nearby.

THE GARDEN BESIDE THE COTTAGE HAS BEEN PLANTED WITH CARE. BUNDLES OF HERBS HANG FROM A WOODEN FRAME, THEIR LEAVES DARK AND CURLED FROM DRYING. AMONG THEM, YOU SEE EMPTY TWINE LOOPS WHERE PLANTS WERE CUT AWAY IN HASTE. A FEW YELLOW PETALS CLING TO THE SOIL NEAR THE PATH, BRIGHT ENOUGH TO DRAW THE EYE EVEN BENEATH THE AUTUMN LEAVES.

If the party inspects the garden from a safe distance, they can identify signs of forced harvesting. The counteragent herbs were cut quickly, leaving broken stems and crushed leaves. Yellow Rot has contaminated the soil near one corner of the garden, likely from a handled flower or resin vessel.

◉ **Inspect the Garden. Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Medicine), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, the party learns that the garden contains herbs used to resist or slow an infection, and that someone harvested them recently in a hurry. On a success of 19 or higher, they also identify the yellow petals as an active infection risk and avoid increasing Bloom Exposure if they keep their distance. On a failure, the party notices only that the garden was disturbed. If a character touches the yellow petals during the search, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

The cottage looks occupied, though no one opens the door at once. Smoke rises from the chimney. A curtain shifts as the adventurers approach. Merra Veylan watches them from inside, frightened enough to hide, desperate enough to listen.

If the party calls out peacefully, Merra answers from behind the door. She asks who sent them, what they know about the flowers, and whether anyone followed them. Her first instinct is to protect her family and avoid provoking the Bloom Cutters.

Merra can say:

- *"If you came for flowers, leave."*
- *"If you came for medicine, tell me who taught you that word."*
- *"There are people in these woods who listen before they strike."*
- *"Do not touch anything yellow. Not a petal. Not dust. Not a stain."*

◉ **Earn Merra's Trust. Charisma (Persuasion), Wisdom (Insight), or Intelligence (Nature), DC 14.** On a success, Merra opens the door and admits the party is standing near an infected grove. She does not explain everything yet, though she confirms the counteragent exists. On a success of 19 or higher, she also warns them that Bloom Cutters have been forcing her to prepare doses. On a failure, she speaks through the door and gives only one warning: the garden is unsafe and the grove should be avoided.

SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE COTTAGE, A BRANCH CRACKS. THE SOUND IS SMALL, YET THE REACTION IS IMMEDIATE. THE CURTAIN DROPS. THE DOOR BOLT SLIDES INTO PLACE. FROM THE GARDEN, A FAINT YELLOW PUFF RISES WHERE ONE FALLEN PETAL BREAKS UNDER THE WIND.

A Bloom Cutter lookout is watching the cottage from the tree line. The lookout does not attack during the Prologue. Their goal is to learn whether the party is dangerous and then warn the others.

◉ **Spot the Watcher. Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Insight), DC 14.** On a success, the party notices a masked figure withdrawing into the trees. They can follow the direction of the movement in Act 1. On a success of 19 or higher, the party also sees the watcher signal with two quick hand motions toward the grove, giving them proof that Merra is under observation. On a failure, the watcher escapes unnoticed and the Bloom Cutters are alerted before Act 1 begins.

At this point, begin tracking Bloom Exposure if the party touches Yellow Rot, searches contaminated soil without care, or lingers in the garden without protection. If the party failed Spot the Watcher, the Bloom Cutters begin Act 1 aware that outsiders have arrived.

The Prologue ends when the party enters the cottage grounds, speaks directly with Merra, or chooses to investigate the garden. Act 1 begins on the cottage battlemap.



ACT I: THE COTTAGE

THE COTTAGE GROUNDS OPEN BENEATH AUTUMN BRANCHES, WHERE FALLEN LEAVES GATHER AROUND LOW STONES, GARDEN ROWS, AND A NARROW PATH LEADING TO THE FRONT DOOR. SMOKE RISES FROM THE CHIMNEY IN A THIN GRAY LINE. THE GROVE BEYOND THE YARD IS STILL, YET THE STILLNESS FEELS WATCHED.

Act 1 begins when the party enters the cottage battlemap. This act focuses on Merra Veylan, the counteragent, the first signs of the Kiss of the Yellow Queen, and the pressure placed on the cottage by the Bloom Cutters. The party should leave this act knowing that Merra's counteragent is real, that Bloom Cutters have forced her to make it, and that the Rooted Hollow holds the source of the Yellow Rot.

The map has three marked locations:

- **1. on the map** is the cottage interior.
- **2. on the map** is the autumn garden.
- **3. on the map** is the tree line where infected victims have been left as leverage and warning.

Act 1 should give the party room to talk before the fight begins. Merra is frightened and guarded, yet she can be convinced to help. The infected near the tree line are dangerous, although the party may attempt to save one before combat fully begins.

I. ON THE MAP, COTTAGE INTERIOR

THE INSIDE OF THE COTTAGE IS WARM, CRAMPED, AND HEAVY WITH THE SMELL OF STEEPED HERBS. BUNDLES OF DRIED PLANTS HANG FROM RAFTERS ABOVE A SMALL TABLE COVERED IN STAINED CLOTH, CLAY BOWLS, FOLDED NOTES, AND SEALED JARS. A WOMAN STANDS NEAR THE HEARTH WITH ONE HAND CLOSE TO A KITCHEN KNIFE, WATCHING YOU AS IF EVERY WORD MIGHT DECIDE WHO LIVES PAST SUNSET.

Merra Veylan lives here with two relatives. One of them, Iven, is in the Growth stage of the Kiss. He is conscious, feverish, and terrified, with faint vine patterns visible beneath his skin. He is not yet a Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming, and Merra has used small counteragent doses to delay his progression. The other relative, Sella, keeps near the hearth and watches the party with open distrust.

Merra begins guarded. She does not deny that the flowers are dangerous, though she avoids explaining the Rooted Hollow until the party proves they are not working with the Bloom Cutters. Tovan Hask's people threatened her family, took her notes, and forced her to prepare counteragent doses for their harvesters.

Merra can say:

- "I know what grows out there. I know what it does."
- "The people taking the flowers are not healers."
- "The counteragent delays the Kiss. It does not make anyone safe forever."
- "If you go into the hollow without preparation, you will carry the yellow home in your lungs."
- "I kept the grove quiet for years. Then men with masks found it."

Sella can interrupt if the party presses too hard:

- "She already gave enough. You want more from her too?"
- "They took Haren because she said no."
- "If you can save people, prove it before asking questions."

The missing captive, Haren, was taken from the cottage after Merra refused to prepare another batch of counteragent. This creates the act's main roleplay decision. The party can use a dose to help Iven, save the doses for later, or promise to rescue Haren first. Merra understands any practical choice, though she responds differently depending on how the party explains it.

ACT 1 MAP



◉ **Read Merra's Fear. Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Persuasion), DC 14.** On a success, the party understands that Merra is hiding information because someone has threatened her family, not because she wants to protect the Bloom Cutters. She admits that masked cutters took her notes and forced her to prepare counteragent doses. On a success of 19 or higher, she also reveals that their leader is named Tovan Hask and that he moved captives toward an old tower in a ruined village beyond the hollow. On a failure, Merra gives only cautious warnings and refuses to name anyone yet.

◉ **Examine Iven's Symptoms. Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, the party identifies Iven as infected, though not yet converted into a Yellow-Kissed creature. They learn that the counteragent can delay the Kiss or help him resist progression for now. On a success of 19 or higher, they also learn that his symptoms are worsening because Merra's counteragent supply has been taken. On a failure, they know he is dangerously ill, yet cannot tell how close he is to conversion.

◉ **Study the Counteragent. Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Medicine), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, the party learns how to recognize the bitter smell and dark-green color of the counteragent. If they are not threatening Merra, she gives them 2 counteragent doses. On a success of 19 or higher, she explains that a **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** can sometimes be stabilized before violence begins. On a failure, the party understands that the medicine matters, though they do not learn how narrow the treatment window is.

If the party uses one dose on Iven, he steadies enough to speak clearly for a few minutes. He tells them he saw Haren dragged toward the grove by Bloom Cutters wearing counteragent-soaked masks. This reduces Bloom Cutter Morale by 1 if the party later repeats Iven's words in front of the cutters.

Iven can say:

- *"They smelled like bitter leaves."*
- *"One of them said Tovan would sell the cure twice."*
- *"Haren was alive when they took him."*
- *"They were laughing about the tower."*

If the party threatens Merra, searches the house by force, or treats Iven as a monster, Merra shuts down. The party can still get information from the garden or tree line, though they lose her immediate help.

GM Notes: This scene should be a real conversation. Merra has information, the party has capability, and Iven gives the situation a face. The question is not only whether the party can fight, it is whether they spend limited help now or save it for later.

2. ON THE MAP, AUTUMN GARDEN

THE GARDEN HAS BEEN CUT IN UNEVEN PATCHES. SOME ROWS ARE NEAT AND CAREFUL, WHILE OTHERS LOOK STRIPPED BY HURRIED HANDS. DARK LEAVES DRY ON WOODEN RACKS. CLAY POTS SIT HALF-FILLED WITH BITTER-SMELLING PASTE. NEAR THE FAR EDGE OF THE SOIL, YELLOW PETALS GLIMMER UNDER THE AUTUMN DEBRIS.

The garden contains the herbs used for Merra's counteragent. It also shows that the Bloom Cutters have been forcing repeated harvests. Broken stems, crushed leaves, and torn strips of cloth show where workers took more than Merra wanted to give.

The yellow petals near the garden edge came from a contaminated harvest basket. They are not a full Yellow Rot, though they can still increase Bloom Exposure if handled carelessly.

◉ **Identify the Harvest. Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Survival), or Wisdom (Medicine), DC 13.** On a success, the party learns that two different plants are involved: the local counteragent herbs and Yellow Rot flowers brought from deeper in the grove. On a success of 18 or higher, they can tell the counteragent herbs were harvested repeatedly over several days, likely by people who knew they needed protection. On a failure, the party only learns that the garden has been disturbed. If anyone touches the yellow petals without protection, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

◉ **Find the Cutters' Trail. Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation), DC 14.** On a success, the party finds boot marks leading from the garden toward the tree line and then deeper toward the Rooted Hollow. They also notice that one set of tracks dragged a struggling person away from the cottage. On a success of 19 or higher, they find a dropped cloth mask stained with counteragent, granting advantage on one later check made to identify, deceive, or confront Bloom Cutters. On a failure, the tracks are too broken to follow clearly, though the party still knows the grove is the next likely destination.

If Merra trusts the party, she explains that the Bloom Cutters come at irregular hours to take herbs. Their usual pattern is to approach from the tree line, cut what they need, and return toward the hollow.

Merra can say:

- *"They cut too much. They do not care if the roots recover."*
- *"Those petals did not grow here. Someone brought them back from the hollow."*
- *"If you found drag marks, then they took Haren after I barred the door."*
- *"The masks help, though not forever. Do not trust anyone who says they are safe."*

GM Notes: The garden should provide actionable information. It points the party toward the Rooted Hollow, proves the Bloom Cutters are active, and introduces Yellow Rot as a direct hazard.

2. ON THE MAP, AUTUMN GARDEN

THE TREES BEYOND THE COTTAGE STAND CLOSE ENOUGH TO BREAK THE LIGHT INTO STRIPS. LEAVES SHIFT WITHOUT WIND. BETWEEN THE TRUNKS, SOMETHING PALE-YELLOW MOVES, THEN STOPS. A WET COUGH ANSWERS FROM THE UNDERGROWTH, FOLLOWED BY THE SCRAPE OF BARE FEET OVER ROOTS.

The tree line marks the edge of the infected grove. The Bloom Cutters have left infected victims nearby to frighten Merra and punish anyone who comes to help. These victims are already Yellow-Kissed creatures. They are dangerous once combat begins, though one of the **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** is still close enough to the person they were that counteragent might stabilize them before violence starts.

If the party has been careful, they hear the infected before combat begins and may try to stabilize one. If the party was loud, threatened Merra, failed to spot the watcher in the Prologue, or disturbed the yellow petals carelessly, the infected emerge aggressively and combat begins at once.

➤ **Encounter!** At 3. on the map are x4 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**.

If Bloom Exposure is 2 or higher, add x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** to the encounter.

If the party failed **Spot the Watcher** in the Prologue, x1 **Bloom Cutter** joins the encounter at the end of round 2, attacking from the tree line with ranged attacks and then trying to flee if wounded.

The **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** shamble toward sound, movement, and bright light. One of them repeats a simple phrase, such as "help me," "water," or "I came from the road." The **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed** pushes ahead with more purpose, using its spore burst once it can catch multiple creatures.

Before initiative begins, the party can attempt to stabilize one **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** if they have a counteragent dose and the infected has not attacked yet.

⦿ **Stabilize the Infected. Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, one Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming collapses and is removed from combat. On a success of 19 or higher, the stabilized victim whispers that Haren was taken "past the roots," giving the party advantage on their first tracking check in Act 2. On a failure, the dose is wasted and the target becomes hostile. If the check fails by 5 or more, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

During combat, the infected try to overwhelm the closest creature. The **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed** should pressure the party's front line while the **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** swarm isolated characters. If a **Bloom Cutter** joins, they fight cautiously and do not die for Tovan unless cornered.

A captured Bloom Cutter can reveal the following:

- Tovan Hask controls the operation.
- The Rooted Hollow is where the Yellow Rot is cut.
- Haren and other captives were moved beyond the hollow.
- A shipment is being prepared for Old Pilgrim Road.
- Tovan plans to sell the resin and the counteragent separately.

⦿ **Catch the Lookout. Dexterity (Acrobatics), Strength (Athletics), or Wisdom (Survival), DC 14.** On a success, the party catches or corners the lookout before they flee. On a success of 19 or higher, the lookout surrenders without a fight and reduces Bloom Cutter Morale by 1. On a failure, the lookout escapes toward the Rooted Hollow and warns the other Bloom Cutters that armed outsiders are coming.

GM Notes: This encounter should be dangerous enough to matter for an APL 4 to 5 party, especially if the party spends resources on stabilization or enters with Bloom Exposure. Keep the infected tragic, yet do not soften their combat role. They are victims, and they can still kill.

ENDING ACT I

Act 1 ends when the party has spoken with Merra, investigated the garden, and dealt with the infected near the tree line. By the end of the act, they should know that the Yellow Rot source lies deeper in the grove, at the Rooted Hollow.

Before the party leaves, Merra gives one final warning if she trusts them:

If the party helped Merra, she gives them directions to the

"THE HOLLOW IS WHERE THIS BEGAN. SOME OF THE DEAD THERE CHOSE IT. MOST DID NOT. IF YOU SEE YELLOW FLOWERS GROWING FROM A BODY, DO NOT KNEEL BESIDE IT UNLESS YOU ARE READY TO DECIDE WHETHER THAT PERSON CAN STILL BE SAVED."

Rooted Hollow and any remaining safe handling advice. If they alienated her, they can still follow tracks from the garden or the fleeing lookout.

Move to **Act 2: Rooted Hollow** once the party follows the trail into the grove.

ACT 2: THE HOLLOW

THE TRAIL DROPS INTO A ROOT-CHOKED HOLLOW BENEATH AN ENORMOUS OLD TREE. THE AIR GROWS DAMP AND WARM DESPITE THE AUTUMN CHILL. YELLOW FLOWERS SHINE BETWEEN ROOTS, BONES, AND STONES PLACED WITH CAREFUL HANDS LONG BEFORE THE NEWEST BLOOD WAS SPILLED HERE.

Act 2 begins when the party follows the trail from Merra Veylan's cottage into the grove. This act reveals the truth behind the old bloom-field and shows how the Bloom Cutters turned a dangerous local secret into a harvest site.

The map has two marked locations:

- **1. on the map** is the old offering roots, where the party can discover the community's original relationship with the hollow.
- **2. on the map** is the active Yellow Rot cluster, where the Bloom Cutters have been cutting flowers, collecting resin, and preparing victims for transport.

The party should enter this act with questions from Act 1. Where did the flowers come from? Why did Merra hide the grove? Where was Haren taken? Why are the Bloom Cutters moving captives deeper into the woods? By the end of this act, the party should know that Tovan Hask's operation continues at the ruined village beyond the hollow.

I. ON THE MAP, OLD OFFERING ROOTS

THE OLDEST ROOTS CURL AROUND FLAT STONES, RUSTED TOOLS, CRACKED CHARMS, AND STRIPS OF CLOTH TIED SO LONG AGO THAT MOST HAVE FADED TO GRAY. A FEW BONES REST IN THE ROOT GAPS, ARRANGED WITH CARE INSTEAD OF THROWN ASIDE. YELLOW FLOWERS BLOOM NEARBY, BRIGHT AND UNTOUCHED.

The old offering roots show that the hollow was once treated as a boundary. Years ago, the nearby families learned that the deepest bloom-field could scare away raiders, beasts, and reckless travelers. A few dying locals were placed here after infection or mortal injury, either by choice or through family agreement, so the hollow would remain dangerous enough to protect the road.

The older remains were arranged with care. They have cloth markers, carved names, weathered charms, and small tools left as tokens. The newer remains are different. They are bound, dragged, cut, and stripped of useful growths.

• **Read the Old Signs. Intelligence (Religion), Wisdom (Medicine), or Intelligence (History), DC 14.** On a success, the party learns that some of the dead were placed here intentionally and with respect. These were not random killings. On a success of 19 or higher, they also find carved names and understand that the hollow was used as a local defense pact known to Merra's family. On a failure, the party only understands that bodies have been left among the roots for years.

• **Separate the Old from the New. Wisdom (Survival), Wisdom (Medicine), or Intelligence (Investigation), DC 14.** On a success, the party identifies recent drag marks, fresh blood, cut rope, and broken branches that do not match the older offerings. The Bloom Cutters added new victims within the last few days. On a success of 19 or higher, they find Haren's torn sleeve and a boot print leading past the hollow toward the ruined village. On a failure, the party sees signs of violence, though they cannot tell how recent they are.

If the party talks about destroying the hollow, you should let the discussion breathe. The hollow protected people for years, yet it now feeds a criminal operation. Merra's secrecy helped the locals survive, and that same secrecy gave Tovan room to exploit the site.

A living captive named Rell can be found near the old offering roots, half-covered by leaves and root growth. Rell is in the **Growth** stage of the Kiss and has been left behind because the Bloom Cutters believed he would not survive being moved. He is weak, feverish, and frightened, yet still lucid enough to answer a few questions.

Rell can tell the party:

- Haren was alive when the Bloom Cutters moved him onward.
- Tovan Hask wants captives who can still breathe and speak.
- The Bloom Cutters are preparing a demonstration for buyers.
- One wagon already left toward Old Pilgrim Road with a sealed crate.
- Several hostages are being held in the ruined village ahead.

• **Keep Rell Lucid. Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Charisma (Persuasion), DC 14.** On a success, Rell stays conscious long enough to answer questions and describe the route to the ruined village. On a success of 19 or higher, he also remembers that the Bloom Cutters argued about whether "proof" meant a living captive or a cured one. On a failure, Rell panics, coughs yellow phlegm, and cannot explain more than Haren's name. If the check fails by 5 or more, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

• **Cleanse the Offering Roots. Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Survival), or Dexterity check with alchemist's supplies, DC 15.** On a success, the party burns, cuts, salts, or seals part of the infected root growth without spreading spores. Reduce Bloom Exposure by 1, to a minimum of 0. On a success of 20 or higher, they also preserve enough evidence to show later that the older offerings and the newer victims were treated differently. On a failure, the roots split and release yellow dust. Increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

GM Notes: You should use this location to complicate the party's view of the grove. Do not present the locals as villains. Show that they made a grim practical choice before the Bloom Cutters turned that choice into a crime.

2. ON THE MAP, YELLOW ROT CLUSTER

THE ROOTS TIGHTEN AROUND A PATCH OF BRILLIANT YELLOW FLOWERS. SOME GROW FROM THE SOIL. OTHERS RISE FROM BODIES HALF-BURIED BENEATH MOSS AND LEAVES. CUT STEMS LEAK DARK SAP INTO SHALLOW BOWLS LEFT BEHIND BY HURRIED HANDS. THE AIR TASTES BITTER, AND EVERY BREATH FEELS WARMER THAN IT SHOULD.

The Yellow Rot cluster is the active harvest site. This is where the Bloom Cutters cut flowers, scrape resin, test counteragent masks, and prepare infected bodies before moving them onward. Several tools remain nearby: hooked knives, stained bowls, sealed jars, soaked cloth masks, and a cracked board covered in tally marks.

The party should be able to connect this location directly to Act 1. The same counteragent smell clings to the masks. The cut stems match the petals found in Merra's garden. The drag marks from 1. on the map lead here, then continue beyond the hollow.

◉ **Inspect the Harvest Site. Intelligence (Investigation), Intelligence (Nature), or Wisdom (Medicine), DC 14.** On a success, the party learns that the Bloom Cutters are harvesting both flowers and resin from infected bodies. This confirms that the operation is organized, not random scavenging. On a success of 19 or higher, they also find tally marks showing that one shipment has already left for Old Pilgrim Road. On a failure, they identify the area as dangerous, though they miss the evidence of the shipment.

◉ **Search the Cutter Tools. Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception), DC 13.** On a success, the party finds a sealed resin jar, a counteragent-stained mask, and a strip of waxed cloth marked with Tovan Hask's symbol. On a success of 18 or higher, they also find a note reading, "Tower first. Road after. Proof must breathe." On a failure, the tools are too contaminated to search safely. If a character searches by hand without protection, increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

If the party approaches carefully, they can inspect the edge of the cluster before combat. If they disturb the bodies, cut into the flowers, spend too long searching without care, or arrive after a warning reached the hollow, the infected react immediately.

► **Encounter!** At 2. on the map are x1 Yellow Rot, x1 Yellow-Kissed, Entangler, and x2 Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed.

The Yellow Rot should remain near the deepest flowers and pressure the party with spores and tendrils. The Yellow-Kissed, Entangler should restrain isolated characters or drag them toward the infected growth. The Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed should protect the cluster and punish anyone trying to search or burn it during the fight.

Treat the area within 10 feet of the Yellow Rot cluster as difficult terrain. If a creature ends its turn prone or restrained in this area, yellow roots curl around them. The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn.

Characters can weaken the cluster during combat or immediately after it by attacking the roots, burning the flowers, sealing the growth, salting the soil, using alchemical fire, or applying another reasonable method.

ACT 2 MAP



⦿ **Sever the Bloom-Roots.** **Strength (Athletics), Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Survival), or Dexterity check with alchemist's supplies, DC 15.** On a success, the party destroys or seals enough infected growth to stop the cluster from feeding the encounter. The Yellow Rot cannot use its next recharge ability, and Bloom Exposure does not increase from this location for the rest of the act. On a success of 20 or higher, the party also creates one 10-foot safe patch that is no longer difficult terrain. On a failure, the roots split open and release yellow dust. Increase Bloom Exposure by 1.

After the encounter, the party can search the cluster safely if they take basic precautions. They find clear evidence that the captives are no longer here. Haren and several others were moved toward the ruined village beyond the hollow. They also find early evidence of the next adventure's threat, although it should still feel like a thread rather than a full reveal.

Useful discoveries after the encounter:

- Haren was alive when moved from the hollow.
- The captives were taken to the ruined village ahead.
- Tovan Hask is preparing resin, counteragent, and at least one living "proof" for buyers.
- One shipment has already been marked for Old Pilgrim Road.
- The Bloom Cutters are selling the danger and the cure as separate goods.
- The Yellow Rot cluster remains dangerous unless burned, sealed, or contained.

GM Notes: You should make this encounter difficult. The party is facing a harvest site that defends itself through infected hosts and plant growth. Let scouting, counteragent, fire, and careful movement matter. Once combat starts, the infected should fight with purpose through Bloom Link.

ENDING ACT 2

Act 2 ends when the party survives the Yellow Rot cluster and discovers that the captives were moved onward. The party should now understand the full shape of the local crime. The Bloom Cutters are not only cutting flowers. They are using bodies, medicine, fear, and proof of survival to build a trade.

Before the party leaves, read or paraphrase the following:

PAST THE HOLLOW, THE TRAIL CONTINUES THROUGH BROKEN LEAVES AND TORN ROOTS. A STRIP OF CLOTH HANGS FROM A THORN BUSH AHEAD, STAINED WITH YELLOW DUST AND HUMAN BLOOD. BEYOND IT, THE TREES THIN ENOUGH FOR DISTANT RUINED WALLS TO SHOW THROUGH THE BRANCHES.

If the party reduced Bloom Exposure through careful containment, they reach Act 3 with a brief advantage. The first infected creature they face in Act 3 does not benefit from Bloom Link during the first round of combat.

If the Bloom Cutter lookout escaped in Act 1 or if the party made excessive noise here, Tovan begins Act 3 prepared for them. You should place Bloom Cutters in defensive positions and have one captive already being moved when the party arrives.

Move to **Act 3** once the party follows the trail toward the ruined village.



ACT 3: THE RUINED VILLAGE

THE TREES THIN AROUND A RUINED VILLAGE HALF-SWALLOWED BY AUTUMN GROWTH. BROKEN WALLS STAND BETWEEN LEANING HOUSES, YELLOW VINES CLIMB THROUGH OPEN WINDOWS, AND AN OLD TOWER RISES NEAR THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE SETTLEMENT. SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE RUINS, A CAPTIVE COUGHS HARD ENOUGH TO ECHO.

Act 3 begins when the party follows the trail from the hollow to the ruined village where Tovan Hask and the Bloom Cutters have gathered captives, resin, counteragent, and travel supplies. This act should reward what the party learned earlier. If they questioned Merrra, helped Iven, found Rell, searched the harvest site, or captured a lookout, they should arrive with useful leverage. If they rushed forward without learning much, the Bloom Cutters are harder to predict and the hostages are in greater danger.

The map has four marked locations.

- **1. on the map** is the village approach, where the party enters the ruined settlement.
- **2. on the map** is a ruined house where captives are being held.
- **3. on the map** is the old tower where Tovan oversees the resin and counteragent stores.
- **4. on the map** is the southern road where a wagon is being prepared to leave for Old Pilgrim Road.

Before the party enters the map, check what they discovered earlier:

- If they know **Tovan Hask's name**, they have advantage on the first social check made against him or his cutters.
- If they found **Haren's torn sleeve** or spoke with Rell, they know captives are alive and can search for them immediately.
- If they found the note reading "**Tower first. Road after. Proof must breathe,**" they know the wagon is important before Tovan explains it.
- If they recovered a **counteragent-stained mask**, they have advantage on one check made to deceive or approach Bloom Cutters.
- If **Bloom Cutter Morale** is 1 or lower, one Bloom Cutter in this act is already looking for a reason to surrender.
- If the party missed most of these clues, Tovan begins confident and the Bloom Cutters start in stronger defensive positions.

RUINED VILLAGE ALERT

Use Ruined Village Alert to track how quietly or loudly the party moves through the settlement. This gives you a flexible way to add danger without forcing every group into the same number of fights.

Starting Point: Ruined Village Alert starts at 0.

Maximum Value: Ruined Village Alert reaches its highest useful value at 4.

Increase Ruined Village Alert by 1 when:

- The party fails a stealth, scouting, or deception check while moving through the village.
- A Bloom Cutter escapes and warns others.
- The party starts a loud fight.
- The party breaks into a building carelessly.
- The party spends too long searching a wrong building.
- The party allows an infected creature to make noise for more than 1 round.

Alert Effects:

- **0 to 1:** The party can scout, choose routes, and approach one marked location with some control.
- **2:** A village encounter appears when the party moves between marked locations.
- **3:** Bloom Cutters begin moving captives toward the wagon at 4. on the map.
- **4:** Tovan is fully warned. The wagon starts 30 feet closer to the southern exit during the final encounter.

Use one of the following encounters when Ruined Village Alert reaches 2 or 3, or when the party crosses the village loudly.

➤ **Encounter! Village Patrol.** x2 **Bloom Cutters** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** move between ruined houses. The Bloom Cutters try to whistle for help on their first turn unless stopped.

➤ **Encounter! Captive Transfer.** x2 **Bloom Cutters** drag one infected captive toward the wagon. If the party approaches quietly or speaks first, this can become a negotiation or rescue scene before combat begins.

➤ **Encounter! Broken House Ambush.** x4 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** burst from a ruined building when the party passes too close. One of them still wears rope around its wrists, showing it was once a captive.

➤ **Encounter! Masked Argument.** x2 **Bloom Cutters** argue behind a ruined wall about Tovan abandoning them if the operation fails. The party can overhear, confront, intimidate, or turn them. Ⓞ **Turn the Argument.** **Charisma (Persuasion), Charisma (Intimidation), or Wisdom (Insight), DC 14.** On a success, reduce Bloom Cutter Morale by 1. On a success of 19 or higher, one cutter gives the party a safe route toward either **2. on the map** or **3. on the map**.

GM Notes: You should use Ruined Village Alert to make the village feel active. Do not add every encounter. Choose the one that best fits the party's actions, the current pace, and how many resources they have left.

I. ON THE MAP, VILLAGE APPROACH

THE FIRST RUINED WALLS GIVE YOU COVER, THOUGH NOT COMFORT. OLD HOMES SAG BENEATH OVERGROWTH. DOORS HANG LOOSE FROM SWOLLEN FRAMES. YELLOW PETALS ARE SCATTERED ALONG THE PATH IN SMALL, DELIBERATE PILES, LIKE WARNINGS LEFT BY SOMEONE WHO WANTED TRESPASSERS TO LOOK DOWN BEFORE LOOKING AHEAD.

The party enters the ruined village from the road or forest path. Bloom Cutters are present, though not all are visible at first. Some are moving crates. Others are watching windows, carrying hooked blades, or checking counteragent-soaked masks. They are tense because the operation is close to moving.

The party can scout, sneak, call out, or rush in. Careful players should be rewarded. The village has ruined walls, open buildings, overgrowth, and broken sight lines that make stealth and positioning useful.

⦿ **Read the Ruins.** **Wisdom (Perception), Wisdom (Survival), or Intelligence (Investigation), DC 14.** On a success, the party spots two active work areas: captives being held in a ruined house and crates being moved near the old tower. On a success of 19 or higher, they also see a wagon prepared near the southern road before the Bloom Cutters realize they have been noticed. On a failure, the party sees movement too late. Increase Ruined Village Alert by 1.

⦿ **Enter Unseen.** **Dexterity (Stealth), Wisdom (Survival), or Charisma (Deception), DC 14.** On a success, the party reaches either **2. on the map** or **3. on the map** before the village fully reacts. On a success of 19 or higher, they also overhear one Bloom Cutter saying, "Tovan only needs one breathing proof for the road." On a failure, a lookout spots them and warns the village. Increase Ruined Village Alert by 1, and Tovan begins moving supplies toward **4. on the map** sooner.

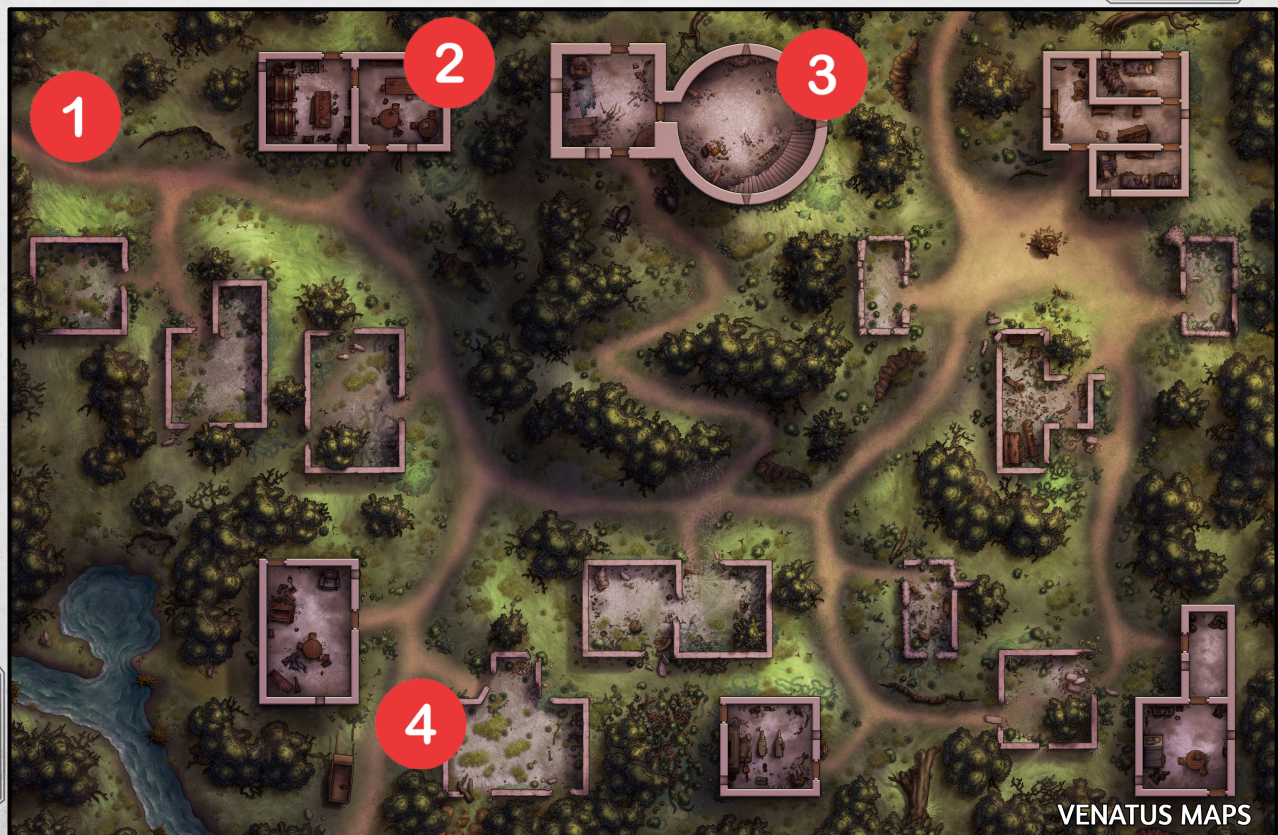
If the party announces themselves, Tovan does not appear immediately. A Bloom Cutter calls from cover and tries to learn what the party knows.

The cutter can say:

- "You are far from the cottage."
- "Turn around. The sick here are already sold."
- "You want the healer's kin? Name them."
- "No one burns the yellow without Tovan's say."

GM Notes: You should let this opening respond to the party's earlier work. If they gathered clues, they should feel prepared. If they did not, make the village harder to read and let the Bloom Cutters control the first move.

ACT 3 MAP



2. ON THE MAP, CAPTIVE HOUSE

INSIDE THE RUINED HOUSE, CAPTIVES SIT WITH WRISTS BOUND IN STAINED CLOTH. SOME KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN. ONE MAN LOOKS UP AS YOU ENTER, EYES RED, SKIN THREADED WITH FAINT GREEN LINES BENEATH THE SURFACE. A BOWL OF DARK COUNTERAGENT SITS JUST OUT OF REACH.

Several captives are held here, including Haren if he survived the earlier events. The Bloom Cutters use this house as leverage and as a supply of possible "proof" for buyers. A captive who can speak, cough, worsen, and then be stabilized is more valuable to Tovan than a corpse.

There are three captives here. One is healthy, one is in **Incubation**, and one is in **Growth**. The Growth-stage captive can still be helped with counteragent, though panic, rough handling, or delay can worsen their condition.

If the party learned about Haren earlier, they recognize him by the torn sleeve, description, or Merra's details. If they did not, they must identify who matters through questions and checks.

⦿ **Free the Captives Quietly.** **Dexterity check with thieves' tools, Strength (Athletics), or Wisdom (Medicine), DC 14.** On a success, the party frees the captives without worsening their condition. On a success of 19 or higher, the captives are steady enough to move on their own and can hide outside the fight. On a failure, the bindings tear skin and one captive begins coughing yellow phlegm. Increase Bloom Exposure by 1 unless a counteragent dose is used.

⦿ **Choose Who Gets Treated.** **Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Wisdom (Insight), DC 14.** On a success, the party identifies the Growth-stage captive as the one most likely to benefit from immediate counteragent. On a success of 19 or higher, they can preserve half a dose through careful use, allowing that half dose to grant advantage on one later saving throw against the Kiss. On a failure, the party cannot clearly tell who is closest to worsening, and any counteragent use here is a hard guess.

If the party uses a counteragent dose on the Growth-stage captive, the captive steadies and gives useful information.

The captive can say:

- "Tovan is in the tower."
- "He said the road buyers need to see someone saved."
- "There is a wagon. South road."
- "One crate already has yellow flowers packed in wet cloth."
- "If he cannot sell the cure, he will sell the fear."

Saving captives in view of any Bloom Cutter reduces Bloom Cutter Morale by 1. Killing infected captives or abandoning them does not raise Morale, though it makes later negotiation harder.

If Ruined Village Alert is 3 or higher when the party reaches this location, x2 **Bloom Cutters** arrive after 2 rounds to move the captives toward the wagon. If the party acts quickly, they can hide the captives or prepare an ambush.

GM Notes: You should make this a real decision. The party can spend time freeing captives, spend counteragent to save one, or move quickly to stop Tovan. Every option has a cost.

3. ON THE MAP, OLD TOWER

THE OLD TOWER SMELLS OF RESIN, BITTER HERBS, AND DAMP STONE. THE LOWER ROOM HOLDS BOWLS, BLADES, SEALED JARS, FOLDED CLOTH MASKS, AND BUNDLES OF YELLOW FLOWERS WRAPPED IN WET LINEN. A ROUND CHAMBER BEYOND IT RISES INTO SHADOW, WHERE VOICES ECHO AGAINST THE STONE.

The old tower is the center of Tovan's operation. The lower room is used for processing resin and preparing counteragent. The round tower chamber holds the most valuable stores, Merra's stolen notes, and enough resin to prove the Bloom Cutters were preparing a larger trade.

If the party reaches this location quietly, they can overhear the cutters arguing before combat begins. If the village was alerted, the Bloom Cutters are already positioned behind tables, crates, and ruined stone.

The Bloom Cutters here know the operation is close to collapse. They are not eager to die for Tovan. The party can try to turn them before or during the fight if Bloom Cutter Morale is already low.

➤ **Encounter!** At **3. on the map** are x3 **Bloom Cutters** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming**.

The Bloom Cutters use the tables, crates, and tower doorway as cover. They try to keep the party away from Merra's notes and the resin stores. The Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming are chained or trapped behind a ruined partition at the start of the encounter. A Bloom Cutter can release them as an action, or they break free at the start of round 2 if combat is loud.

If Bloom Cutter Morale is 1 or lower, one Bloom Cutter hesitates before releasing the infected. The party can use this moment.

⦿ **Stop the Release.** **Charisma (Intimidation), Charisma (Persuasion), or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), DC 14.** On a success, one Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming remains restrained and does not join the encounter. On a success of 19 or higher, the hesitant Bloom Cutter refuses to release either infected creature and drops their weapon. On a failure, the Bloom Cutter releases the infected as planned.

⦿ **Expose the Operation.** **Intelligence (Investigation), Intelligence (Nature), or Wisdom (Medicine), DC 14.** On a success after or during the encounter, the party finds enough ledgers, resin jars, and counteragent notes to prove the Bloom Cutters were selling both the danger and the cure. On a success of 19 or higher, they also find the route marker for Old Pilgrim Road Inn, including the phrase "second proof arrives by dusk." On a failure, they find scattered supplies, though not enough to understand the next destination before the wagon leaves.

If the party spends too long in the tower, increase Ruined Village Alert by 1 as the noise and delay give Tovan more time to prepare the wagon. If the party wins quickly, they can reach **4. on the map** before the wagon moves.

Useful discoveries in the tower:

- Merra's stolen notes are here.
- Tovan has copied only part of the counteragent recipe.
- A ledger records resin weight, captive condition, and dose count.
- One entry reads, "First proof sent. Second proof goes south."
- The buyers expect to see the counteragent work on a living infected captive.

GM Notes: You should use this encounter to make the tower feel like the actual center of the operation. The party can recover evidence, weaken Tovan, save resources for the final fight, or lose time and let the wagon get closer to escape.

4. ON THE MAP, SOUTHERN ROAD

NEAR THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE VILLAGE, A WAGON WAITS BESIDE THE ROAD. A RIVER BENDS THROUGH THE FAR CORNER BEYOND IT, DARK BENEATH THE TREES. THE WAGON'S REAR GATE IS HALF-OPEN. INSIDE ARE WET CLOTH BUNDLES, SEALED JARS, AND A BOUND CAPTIVE BREATHING THROUGH A STAINED MASK. A YELLOW FLOWER PRESSES AGAINST THE INSIDE OF ONE CRATE, BENDING TOWARD THE LIGHT.

This is the final confrontation and the clearest bridge into **Pilgrim's Bloom**. The wagon is meant for Old Pilgrim Road Inn, where buyers expect a demonstration: a living infected captive, a counteragent dose, and enough Yellow Rot to prove the trade can continue.

If the party learned about the wagon earlier, they can reach this location before it starts moving. If they missed the clues, failed multiple checks, or allowed Tovan too much time, the wagon is already being prepared to leave and the final fight begins under worse conditions.

Use the following setup:

- If the party reached this location quickly or found the Old Pilgrim Road clue, they choose their approach.
- If Tovan was warned in Act 1 or Act 2, two Bloom Cutters begin in cover.
- If Ruined Village Alert is 4, the wagon starts 30 feet closer to the southern exit.
- If the party did not identify the wagon's importance, it starts 30 feet closer to the southern exit.
- If Bloom Cutter Morale is 1 or lower, one Bloom Cutter may surrender after the first round if offered safety.
- If Bloom Exposure is 4 or higher, the bound captive begins the encounter coughing spores. At initiative count 20 on round 2, the captive becomes a **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** unless stabilized.

Tovan Hask uses the **Bloom Cutter** stat block with these changes:

- Increase his hit points to 45.
- Increase his attack bonus by 1.
- He can use Cunning Step as normal.
- He gains the following bonus action.

Drive the Cutters. Tovan chooses one Bloom Cutter he can see within 30 feet. That cutter can move up to half its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Tovan does not begin with a fight if he thinks he can bargain. He wants to know what the party has seen, whether Merra is alive, and whether they understand the Old Pilgrim Road shipment.

Tovan can say:

- "You think this is evil because you are late to the business."
- "People fear the Kiss. People pay to forget fear."
- "The healer made a miracle and hid it in a cottage."
- "I am doing what she was too frightened to do."
- "You can save a few here, or you can stop the wagon. You will not do both unless you move fast."

☉ **Turn Tovan's People. Charisma (Persuasion), Charisma (Intimidation), or Wisdom (Insight), DC 15.** On a success, reduce Bloom Cutter Morale by 1 as one cutter hesitates or argues with Tovan. On a success of 20 or higher, one Bloom Cutter refuses to follow Tovan's next order involving a captive. On a failure, Tovan keeps control. If the party knows he plans to abandon the cutters or can prove he already sent one wagon ahead, they make this check with advantage.

➤ **Encounter!** At 4. on the map are **Tovan Hask**, x3 **Bloom Cutters**, and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**.

The **Bloom Cutters** use cover, spread out, and try to keep the party away from the wagon. The **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed** begin near the wagon or are released from a nearby ruined building once fighting starts. The Bloom Cutters use them as disposable pressure while their masks and counteragent protection last.

During the fight, the wagon is the main objective. At initiative count 20 each round after the first, if at least one Bloom Cutter is adjacent to the wagon and no party member is adjacent to it, the wagon moves 20 feet toward the southern exit. Once it leaves the map, the party can still win the fight, though the strongest hook into Pilgrim's Bloom escapes.

☉ **Stop the Proof Wagon. Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Acrobatics), Wisdom (Animal Handling), or Dexterity check with thieves' tools, DC 15.** On a success, the party jams a wheel, cuts the harness, calms or turns the draft animal, or blocks the wagon long enough to stop its movement for one round. On a success of 20 or higher, the wagon cannot move again unless a Bloom Cutter spends an action fixing it. On a failure, the wagon continues moving. If the check fails by 5 or more, one crate cracks open and increases Bloom Exposure by 1.

A character adjacent to the bound captive can use a counteragent dose to stabilize them if they have not fully transformed.

⦿ **Save the Proof.** **Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Arcana), DC 14.** On a success, the captive stabilizes and can later tell the party that another shipment already reached Old Pilgrim Road Inn. On a success of 19 or higher, the captive also remembers the phrase "Pilgrim's Bloom" and says it was the name the buyers used for the demonstration. On a failure, the dose is wasted and the captive continues worsening. If the check fails by 5 or more, the captive becomes hostile as a **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming**.

If Tovan drops below half his hit points, he tries to flee toward the wagon. If the wagon is stopped, he tries to bargain. If Bloom Cutter Morale is 0, his own people may refuse to cover his escape.

Tovan can bargain with:

- the location of other captives
- the Old Pilgrim Road route
- a crate of counteragent
- Merrra's stolen notes
- proof that a buyer network already exists

He lies unless the party has leverage. If they captured a Bloom Cutter, saved captives, found the ledgers, or know about the proof shipment, they can call out his lies and gain advantage on checks against him.

GM Notes: You should make this fight hard and active. The party should not only defeat enemies. They should stop the wagon, protect captives, manage Bloom Exposure, and decide whether Tovan is worth taking alive. If the party learned useful information earlier, reward them with better positioning, advantage, or a weaker Bloom Cutter response. If they rushed in blind, let the wagon and captives become immediate pressure.

ENDING ACT 3

Act 3 ends when Tovan is defeated, captured, or driven off, and the party has dealt with the proof wagon. The outcome should directly shape the next adventure.

If the party stops the wagon, they find that one earlier shipment already reached Old Pilgrim Road Inn. The wagon's documents describe a second meeting there, where buyers expect to see the counteragent used on an infected captive in front of them.

If the wagon escapes, the party sees it vanish down the southern road while one broken crate leaks yellow petals behind it. The Old Pilgrim Road Inn becomes the obvious next destination.

If Tovan survives, he can flee toward the Old Pilgrim Road and appear in **Pilgrim's Bloom** as a desperate returning villain, exposed supplier, or bargaining prisoner depending on how the party handled him.

Before the act closes, read or paraphrase the following:

AMONG THE WAGON PAPERS, ONE ROUTE IS MARKED TWICE IN DARK INK. OLD PILGRIM ROAD INN. BESIDE IT, A SHORT NOTE HAS BEEN WRITTEN WITH A STEADIER HAND THAN THE OTHERS: "FIRST PROOF DELIVERED. SECOND PROOF EXPECTED BY DUSK. BUYERS WILL PAY MORE IF THE CURE WORKS IN FRONT OF THEM."

The party may have saved the cottage, broken the village operation, and rescued captives. The trade has already moved. The next road carries both the Kiss and the promise of a cure.



EPILOGUE

THE RUINED VILLAGE FALLS BEHIND YOU IN BROKEN WALLS, YELLOW PETALS, AND SMOKE. THE AUTUMN ROAD WAITS BEYOND THE TREES, CARRYING THE SMELL OF WET LEAVES AND BITTER HERBS. SOMEWHERE FARTHER SOUTH, WAGON TRACKS CUT THROUGH THE MUD TOWARD OLD PILGRIM ROAD.

The adventure ends once Tovan Hask's operation at the ruined village is broken. What happens next depends on whether the party saved the captives, stopped the proof wagon, preserved Merra Veylan's notes, and learned where the Bloom Cutter trade is moving next.

IF THE CAPTIVES WERE SAVED

The rescued captives can be taken back to Merra Veylan's cottage or escorted to a safer settlement nearby. Those in **Incubation** or **Growth** still need treatment, rest, and careful watching. Merra can help if her notes and counteragent supplies were recovered.

HAREN SITS BENEATH THE COTTAGE AWNING WITH A BLANKET AROUND HIS SHOULDERS, HANDS SHAKING AROUND A CUP OF BITTER TEA. "I HEARD THEM TALKING ABOUT BUYERS," HE SAYS. "THEY WERE NOT AFRAID OF THE FLOWERS. THEY WERE AFRAID OF LOSING THE ROAD."

If only some captives survived, Merra still helps those brought back, though she asks who was left behind and why. You should let this moment reflect the party's choices without turning it into punishment. The party may have stopped the operation while still carrying the cost of who could not be saved.

IF TOVAN WAS CAPTURED OR ESCAPED

If Tovan is captured, he becomes a useful prisoner. He knows the buyers expected proof at Old Pilgrim Road Inn, and he knows that one crate was already sent ahead. He bargains before giving clear answers, especially if the party lacks ledgers, witnesses, or Merra's stolen notes.

TOVAN SPITS BLOOD INTO THE LEAVES AND SMILES WITHOUT WARMTH. "YOU THINK YOU STOPPED IT BECAUSE YOU BROKE ONE WAGON? THE FIRST PROOF ALREADY REACHED THE INN. THEY WILL PAY MORE NOW THAT THEY KNOW SOMEONE TRIED TO STOP US."

If Tovan escapes, he flees toward Old Pilgrim Road with whatever notes, doses, or resin he can carry. He abandons any Bloom Cutters who cannot keep up. He can return in Pilgrim's Bloom as a desperate supplier, exposed criminal, or bargaining prisoner depending on how the party handled him.

IF THE PROOF WAGON WAS STOPPED OR ESCAPED

If the party stops the wagon, they recover wet-wrapped Yellow Rot cuttings, sealed resin jars, counteragent doses, and documents naming Old Pilgrim Road Inn. These supplies prove the trade has already moved beyond the grove.

INSIDE THE WAGON, THE FINAL CRATE IS LINED WITH WET CLOTH. YELLOW FLOWERS PRESS AGAINST THE LID FROM WITHIN, BENDING TOWARD EVERY CRACK OF LIGHT. BENEATH THE CRATE RESTS A FOLDED ROUTE NOTE MARKED TWICE IN DARK INK: OLD PILGRIM ROAD INN.

If the wagon escapes, the party still breaks the ruined village operation, though the next outbreak becomes more urgent. The wagon leaves a trail of yellow petals, cracked resin, and wheel ruts leading south.

THE WAGON VANISHES DOWN THE SOUTHERN ROAD. FOR A FEW MOMENTS, ONLY THE SOUND OF ITS WHEELS REMAINS. THEN SOMETHING YELLOW SLIPS FROM THE REAR GATE AND LANDS IN THE MUD, A SINGLE FLOWER WRAPPED IN WET CLOTH, STILL FRESH ENOUGH TO MOVE.

MERRA'S WORK AFTERWARD

Merra's future depends on whether her notes survived. If the party recovered them, she can continue refining the counteragent and possibly help the infected from both adventures. If the notes were destroyed, she must rebuild her work from memory while the Kiss continues spreading.

MERRA LAYS THE RECOVERED PAGES FLAT BENEATH A LANTERN, SMOOTHING BLOODSTAINS AND MUD FROM THE CORNERS. "THIS WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE SOLD," SHE SAYS. "IT WAS MEANT TO BUY TIME."

Merra may become a continuing ally in Pilgrim's Bloom, especially if the party sends survivors back to her or asks her to prepare additional counteragent. She cannot solve the outbreak alone.

CONNECTING TO PILGRIM'S BLOOM

Kiss of Autumn is designed to lead directly into Pilgrim's Bloom. The party does not need to wait for a new patron or a separate hook. By the end of this adventure, they should have enough evidence to understand that the Bloom Cutter operation has already spread beyond the ruined village.

Use one or more of the following links:

- **The proof wagon escaped:** The party follows the wagon tracks south toward Old Pilgrim Road Inn.
- **The proof wagon was stopped:** Documents inside the wagon reveal that the first shipment already reached Old Pilgrim Road Inn.
- **Tovan was captured:** He reveals that buyers are waiting at the inn to see the counteragent used on a living infected captive.
- **Tovan escaped:** His tracks and discarded counteragent mask point toward Old Pilgrim Road.
- **Merra's notes were recovered:** Merra identifies a copied route mark in the ledger and warns that the buyers now have enough information to misuse the counteragent.
- **A captive was saved:** The saved captive remembers the phrase "Pilgrim's Bloom," which the buyers used for the demonstration.

The cleanest transition is simple: the party rests briefly, gathers counteragent, then follows the road before the buyers scatter. If you want immediate momentum, begin Pilgrim's Bloom the same day, with the party arriving at Old Pilgrim Road Inn near dusk.

THE ROAD CONTINUES

Whether the party won cleanly or barely escaped with answers, the final evidence points toward Old Pilgrim Road Inn. Someone there has already seen the first proof. Someone there may be preparing to sell the Kiss, the counteragent, or both.

BY THE TIME THE LAST FIRES FADE IN THE RUINED VILLAGE, THE ROAD SOUTH HAS ALREADY TAKEN THE NEXT PART OF THE STORY. MUD HOLDS THE WAGON TRACKS CLEARLY. YELLOW PETALS MARK THE WAY IN SMALL, BRIGHT PIECES. SOMEWHERE AHEAD, AN INN WAITS WITH ITS DOORS OPEN.

MONSTERS USED

ACT 1: THE COTTAGE

- At 3. on the map: x4 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**.

Optional escalations:

- Add x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** if Bloom Exposure is 2 or higher.
- Add x1 **Bloom Cutter** at the end of round 2 if the party failed **Spot the Watcher** in the Prologue.
- Remove x1 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed** if the party is badly weakened.

ACT 2: THE HOLLOW

- At 2. on the map: x1 **Yellow Rot**, x1 **Yellow-Kissed, Entangler**, and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**.

Optional adjustments:

- Remove x1 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed** if the party has low resources.
- Let the party identify the **Yellow Rot** before initiative if they scout carefully.

ACT 3: THE RUINED VILLAGE

- x2 **Bloom Cutters** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming**.
- x2 **Bloom Cutters** escorting one captive.
- x4 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming**.
- x2 **Bloom Cutters** in the masked argument scene.

Marked Locations:

- At 3. on the map: x3 **Bloom Cutters** and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming**.
- At 4. on the map: **Tovan Hask**, x3 **Bloom Cutters**, and x2 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed**.

Optional adjustments:

- If Bloom Exposure is 4 or higher, the wagon captive may become x1 **Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming** on round 2.
- If Bloom Cutter Morale is 1 or lower, one **Bloom Cutter** may surrender or refuse Tovan's order.
- Remove x1 **Bloom Cutter** from the finale if the party is badly weakened.
- Add x1 **Bloom Cutter** to the finale if the party avoided most danger.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

I include these designer's notes to give the GM a clearer look at what I wanted this adventure to do, how it connects to the next release, and which parts of the design are meant to create the strongest table moments.

A Two-Part Structure. I wanted Kiss of Autumn to work as the first half of a two-part adventure, while still having its own beginning, middle, and end. The party can arrive, investigate the cottage, uncover the hollow, break Tovan's operation, and save people within this adventure alone. At the same time, the Old Pilgrim Road thread makes it clear that the problem has already moved beyond the local grove. That gives the ending a natural push into Pilgrim's Bloom without making this adventure feel unfinished.

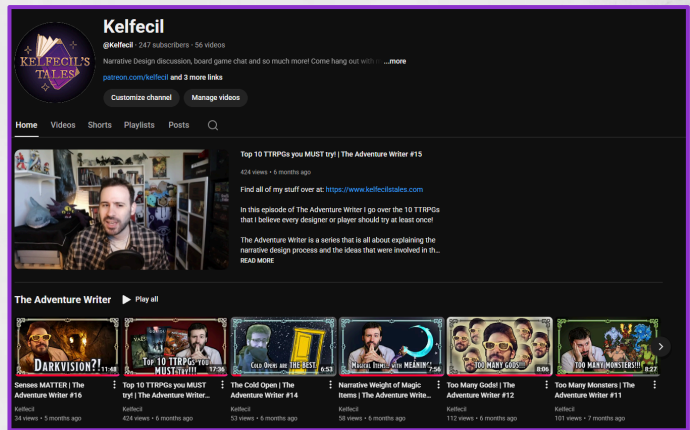
More Than Encounters. I wanted this release to include more roleplay and ethical decision-making than a simple chain of fights. The infected are dangerous, but they are also people at different points of the Kiss. Merra is not a villain. The locals made a grim choice with the hollow, and the Bloom Cutters exploited that choice for profit. Those layers give the party real motives to sort through before blades come out.

Limited Counteragent Doses. The counteragent doses are limited on purpose. They turn the question from "Can we kill these monsters?" into "Who can we still save, and what does saving them cost?" Spending a dose early can earn trust, reveal information, or save a life, but it may leave the party with fewer options later. I wanted that pressure to be present without making the mechanics too heavy.

The Kiss as a Moving Threat. The Kiss of the Yellow Queen needed to feel like a real threat moving through the area. The party is not walking through a clean dungeon with isolated rooms. They are moving through gardens, roots, ruined houses, captives, carts, and infected creatures that all connect to the same spreading danger. Bloom Exposure helps keep that pressure active, while the encounters show how quickly the Kiss can turn a place into a hazard.

Practical Villains. The Bloom Cutters were designed as criminals, not cultists. They understand just enough to be dangerous, and they rely on stolen counteragent methods to work near the infected. They are not trying to worship the bloom. They are trying to sell fear, relief, and proof of control. That makes them useful at the table because the party can threaten them, turn them, expose them, or fight them depending on how the story unfolds.

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APPENDIX: STAT BLOCKS

Here you will find all of the stat blocks for all the NPCs and monsters involved in the adventure.

DESCRIPTION

Bloom Cutters are smugglers, poachers, failed herbalists, and desperate workers who learned enough about the Kiss of the Yellow Queen to become dangerous. They wear counteragent-soaked masks, carry hooked tools, and avoid touching Yellow Rot with bare skin whenever possible. Most do not understand the full danger. They know the flowers can be cut, the resin can be sold, and the counteragent can keep them breathing long enough to finish the work.

In this adventure, Bloom Cutters should feel practical and afraid beneath their confidence. They use infected captives and Yellow-Kissed creatures as barriers, not allies. If their masks fail or Tovan abandons them, their nerve can break quickly.

DESCRIPTION

Tovan Hask is the Bloom Cutter leader operating from the ruined village. He is not a cultist and does not worship the Yellow Queen. He sees the Kiss as a market, with fear on one side and relief on the other. His danger comes from knowing just enough to exploit Merra's work while ignoring every warning that made the counteragent necessary.

At the table, Tovan should speak like someone who believes he is the only person honest enough to profit from what everyone else hides. He uses captives, ledgers, and the proof wagon as leverage. If cornered, he bargains before he bleeds.



BLOOM CUTTER

Medium humanoid (any race), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) |

Skills Nature +2, Stealth +4, Survival +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spore Mask. The bloom cutter has advantage on saving throws against poison, disease, and the effects of Yellow Rot.

Harvester's Nerve. The bloom cutter has advantage on Wisdom saving throws made to resist fear while it can see an infected creature or Yellow Rot within 30 feet of it.

ACTIONS

Sickle. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage.

Hand Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Spore Pouch (Recharge 5-6). The bloom cutter throws a pouch of cultivated spores at a point it can see within 30 feet. Each creature within 5 feet of that point must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage and become poisoned until the end of its next turn. A creature infected by the Kiss of the Yellow Queen has advantage on this saving throw.

Counteragent Dose. The bloom cutter administers a prepared counteragent dose to one creature within 5 feet of it. If the target is suffering from an early stage of the Kiss of the Yellow Queen, the target can immediately repeat its saving throw against the infection, ending one stage of the infection on a success. The bloom cutter usually carries one dose.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Step. The bloom cutter takes the Disengage or Hide action.

YELLOW-KISSED, BLOSSOMING

Medium Plant (Humanoid), unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 3 (-4) | 6 (-2) | 5 (-3) |

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands understands the Yellow Queen but the Yellow Queen

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Bloom Link. Shares vision and hearing with all other Yellow-Kissed within 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Infectious Touch. On a hit with Slam, target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or begin Stage 1 of infection.

DESCRIPTION

Yellow-Kissed, Blossoming are infected humanoids in the late visible stages of the Kiss, with pale green skin, vine-like veins, and yellow blooms pushing beneath the flesh. They are dangerous, though some still show fragments of the people they were. A word, a repeated name, or a pleading gesture can make them feel tragic before the violence starts.

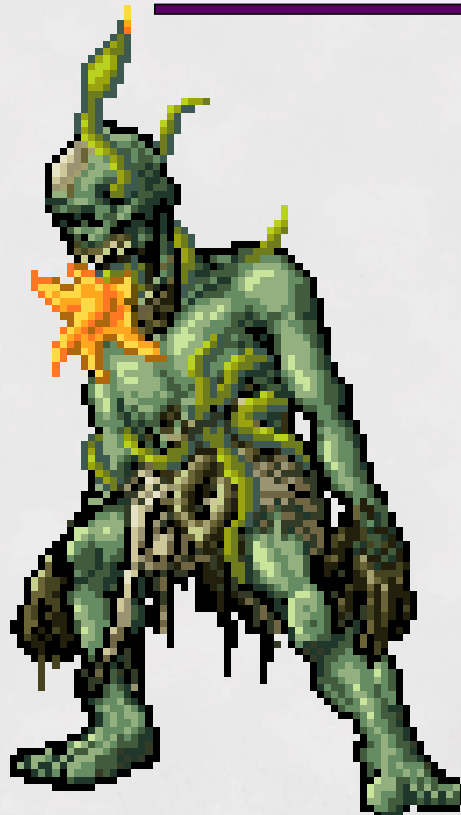
In this adventure, they are used as victims left near the cottage, captives close to conversion, and pressure inside the ruined village. They should remind the party that the counteragent matters most before the bloom fully takes hold.



DESCRIPTION

Yellow-Kissed, Blossomed are fully bloomed infected hosts. Their yellow flowers have ruptured through the body, and the Kiss has taken away any meaningful trace of the original person. They move with stronger purpose than the Blossoming, guided by the Yellow Queen's influence and the shared awareness of the bloom.

In this adventure, they appear where the infection has been allowed to grow without mercy: near the cottage, at the harvest site, and beside the proof wagon. They should feel like the point where rescue has almost certainly come too late.



YELLOW-KISSED, BLOSSOMED

Medium Plant (Humanoid), unaligned

Armor Class 10 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 4 (-3) | 7 (-2) | 5 (-3) |

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the Yellow Queen but the Yellow Queen

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Bloom Link. Shares vision and hearing with all other Yellow-Kissed within 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Bloom Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. Target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or begin Stage 1 infection.

Spore Burst (Recharge 6). Releases a 10-foot-radius burst of spores. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature is considered infected at Stage 1.

YELLOW-KISSED, ENTANGLER

Medium Plant (Humanoid), unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 9 (-1) | 4 (-3) |

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Bloom Link. Shares vision and hearing with all other Yellow-Kissed within 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Entangling Vines. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). While grappled, the target is restrained. The Entangler can grapple up to two targets at once.

Bloom Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Spore Pulse (Recharge 5–6). The Entangler emits a pulse of spores in a 10-foot radius. Creatures must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or begin Stage 1 infection.

DESCRIPTION

Yellow-Kissed, Entanglers are advanced infected hosts whose vines have grown into tools of control. They drag, bind, and isolate prey with unsettling precision, especially in terrain filled with roots, bodies, and narrow paths. Their danger comes from how quickly they can turn a safe position into a trap.

In this adventure, the Entangler protects the active Yellow Rot cluster in the hollow. It should feel like the infected site defending itself, pulling intruders toward the flowers while the rest of the bloom responds.



DESCRIPTION

Yellow Rot is the first active plant expression of the Kiss in this adventure. Its yellow flowers are beautiful enough to draw attention, while its tendrils and spores make every nearby breath dangerous. It does not need to chase the party to threaten them. Its presence changes the ground, the air, and the choices the players make.

In this adventure, Yellow Rot is the source of the Bloom Cutters' harvest. It is evidence, hazard, monster, and resource at the same time. The party can fight it, burn it, seal it, or study it, though every close interaction risks Bloom Exposure.



YELLOW ROT

Medium Plant, unaligned

Armor Class 9 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 15 (+2) | 1 (-5) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, charmed

Senses tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Rooted Awareness. As long as it remains stationary, Yellow Rot cannot be surprised and gains advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Bloom Link. Shares vision and hearing with all other Yellow-Kissed or bloom creatures within 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Tendrils Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) slashing damage, and target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Spore Bloom (Recharge 5-6). Releases a 15-foot cloud of infectious spores. All creatures in the area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or begin Stage 1 infection. Creatures already infected are pushed 10 feet away and fall prone.

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MAPS USED

You can find the maps used in this adventure without the GM notes at the following links:

- [Cottage](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/a7ytttezq49xgfwv8wj/map2_wm.jpg?rlkey=s9r10ethdo4n1366arwo9nui&st=0qv8jyrt&dl=0)
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- [Rooted Hollow](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/a7ytttezq49xgfwv8wj/map2_wm.jpg?rlkey=s9r10ethdo4n1366arwo9nui&st=yb5r67v3&dl=0)
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- [Ruined Village](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/nv6ukqd05tew65pzz7dw/map3_wm.jpg?rlkey=byx9acnqzqsa85cv3forv8&st=04aty15&dl=0)
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RESOURCES

Here's a whole bunch of links of where you can find more of the stuff I create:

- [All my Releases](#)
- [DriveThruRPG Store](#)
- [Setting Lorebook](#)
- ["How to adapt to the Starlight Chronicles setting"](#)
- [YouTube: Narrative Design Videos](#)
- [Cat Tales!](#)
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CONTENT LINES

I am always busy creating something different, so much so that I've started all sorts of different and amazing content lines, such as:

- Adventures
- Side Quests
- Monster Hunts
- Treasure Hunts
- Setting Lorebook
- Saints of Ruin
- The Broken Expanse
- The Driftveil Bazaar
- The Midnight Gazette
- Monster Codex Supplements

And more...

