

TEMPLE OF HERA

A mob of lascivious satyrs has seduced the sacred virgins charged with tending Hera's temple, and now the satyrs and (former) virgins wile away the days with drinking, dancing and debauchery in the middle of the goddess's once sacred shrine.

A Spears & Glory adventure for use with the AGON role-playing game.

HOW TO RUN IT

The contests and challenges included are just recommendations. If your heroes do something completely different, change the contests to match. Each contest includes a recommended number of dice, but you can set this to whatever you want if you have enough Strife. Want marching through the swamp to be a lot harder? Spend more Strife.

Contests also include a few notes about what creative abilities the heroes are likely to use, but that doesn't mean those are the only options. If an explanation of a creative ability sounds good, it's good.

Quotes and flavor text are included in italicized blocks. You can read them to your players if you prefer or just use them as springboards for your own descriptions. GM Craft tips, notes about running the game in a Classical Greek style and other pointers appear in the sidebar.

THE QUEST: THE GOD SPEAKS

Resting a time from deeds and wanderings, our heroes are welcomed to a humble village with open arms. Great feasts and celebrations are held in their honor, as befits such noble guests.

In the midst of the celebration a cry of alarm and dismay runs through the joyous crowd as in the heart of the roaring bonfire a face appears, the stern visage of sable-eyed Hera, wife of the Thunderer atop high Olympus. A bitter gaze she sweeps across the shocked revelers, and from the depths of the fire she issues a grim proclamation:

"Wretched people! That you should dance and revel when my temple stands defiled, while drunkenness and lechery stains my holy sanctum! You make a mockery of this insult against me!"

Her burning gaze singles out the heroes from the crowd:

"Heroes, my anger is hot within me! Heed my will! Slay those who defile my shrine! Cleanse my temple! Let not one escape the wrath of Hera!"

The bonfire flares up into the sky, the face of the goddess seeming to stretch to the heavens, and then in a flash it is gone. For a moment the village is silent and then a tumult of voices cry out in dismay, villagers fearful of the anger of the wife of Zeus!

Temple of Hera is part of the Spears & Glory series of adventures from Lame Mage Productions for use with AGON.

by Ben Robbins

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AGON was created by John Harper.
Purchase the PDF or print copy at
www.agon-rpg.com

QUEST OBJECTIVES

Four objectives, 20 Strife per hero. Major contests within each objective are listed below.

1) learn about defilers

- *find temple*
- *resist madness*

2) learn to defeat madness

- *feed the blind hermit*

3) get horn

- *trudge through swamp*
- *serpents*
- *sorceress*
- *(optional) escape swamp*

4) slay defilers*

- *(optional) barricade temple*
- *blow the horn*
- *fight*

* primary objective

1) FIND THE TEMPLE, LEARN WHAT HAS DESPOILED IT

Most of the villagers have no idea what temple the goddess is referring to (“there is no Temple to Hera here!”), but soon calmer minds may recall a temple that is not too far off. It sits nestled in the valley of the mountains, a lonely place well-removed from any hearth or home of man, as befits a sacred place of the goddess.

learn location of temple—simple contest Lore or Orate 2d6 (0 Strife) depending on approach heroes take

After long hikes through highland forests and past craggy peaks, the heroes can spy the temple from afar, it's white marble pillars standing proud amid the lofty meadows.

Even from a distance music and the sounds of celebration can be heard, a frenzy of merry-making and wild bacchanal that rises as you draw closer. Fires burn inside the temple casting the long shadows of dancers on the hills beyond. Women's laughter and cries of passion blend with the twirling flute music, and among them can also be heard the braying voices of men.

Whether by braying voice or by twisted shadow capering through the dance or the keen piping of flute music, the heroes can recognize that the “men” who cavort in the temple are none other than satyrs, debauched beast-men, slaking their passions on mortal women.

But even as the heroes recognize this, the madness of the satyrs' song sweeps over them, calling them to yield to their own wild nature and join the dance and debauchery!

resist the madness—obstacle contest Spirit d10 d12 (5 Strife). Winner is the hero best able to resist the madness, perhaps even drawing others away from the siren call. Obstacle, so heroes escape even if they fail.

likely creative abilities—Insight (plug up your ears), Music (sing a song that distracts from the satyr's music)

Fortunately the heroes are still far off when they are first afflicted by the satyrs' spell, so they are able to fight the madness and pull themselves away to flee into the wilds (with more or less impairment depending on how well they resisted). Heroes flee into the wilds away from the music and come back to their senses some time later.

Note that even though the heroes now know satyrs have defiled the temple, they might not have any idea at this point that the women in the temple were Hera's sacred virgins.

ONE QUEST OR THREE

If you want to use this adventure as one of three quests and let the heroes choose which to do (the standard Agon style) you can just omit the introduction and have Hera command the heroes to “Slay the defilers of my temple.”

Making it a single adventure allows for a more personalized introduction, involving the heroes in what is going on.

UNIMPORTANT HEROES

Wait a second, my heroes are just starting out, just humble wandering adventurers. Why would any village throw them a feast?

Remember that even the humblest Greek hero isn't very humble at all—they are nobles and heroes worthy of respect. Anywhere they go, whether it's a goatherd's hovel or a king's court, they can and should demand treatment as noble guests.

MONSTER IMMUNITY (RULES NOTE)

The madness that surrounds the satyrs makes it impossible to attack them until a solution is found—even winning the contest just means the hero escapes without impairment. In effect this is the “immunity to mortal weapons” they get for being monsters.

It's also an Obstacle contest, so even heroes that fail will just take impairment before they break away—having a hero actually lose himself in the satyr's wild party would slow down the game.

2) LEARN HOW TO RESIST THE MADNESS

The satyrs' revelry is quieter sometimes and louder others, but it goes on in some degree all day, all night. No matter when or how the heroes approach the temple, the madness of the music overwhelms them if they get too close—no mortal man can resist the call of the bacchanal. They must learn how to resist the madness if they are to overcome the satyrs.

BLIND HERMIT

Diomenis was a mighty hero in his day, tall and fell in anger. Many years ago he gazed upon the temple virgins while they bathed in lonely mountain pools. This so angered Hera that she struck him blind for his hubris. Now he is a gaunt shadow of a man, a wizened hermit garbed in rags and fumbling for nuts and berries to give him sustenance.

Diomenis is old and bitter, and he shares his tale with any that ask. He has little sympathy for the defiled virgins considering it was their sanctity that led him to his present fate.

"It would seem the virgins of Hera are sacred no longer. Debauching themselves with the satyrs... how easily they've forgotten their holy oaths. Ha! Bitter must that sit with the wrathful wife of Zeus!"

"There may be a way to complete your quest... but first if you are truly heroes, lay food on my table, for it has been long since I feasted as the satyrs do."

The heroes have to provide a fine feast for the hermit if they want his advice:

a feast for the hermit—simple contest Hunt d6 d8 (1 Strife). Winner is the hero who bags the most game for the feast. Failure means the hermit is not persuaded to help.

likely creative abilities—Aim (bring down a stag with well-placed arrow), Athletics (chase after fleeing game), Music (entertain the hermit while he eats and soften his heart towards the heroes)

After he has been won over with food or other means, he reveals what he knows of the satyrs having learned much of the wilds in his years as a hermit:

"Satyrs are born to revelry, and no mortal man can resist their call or dismay them. There is only one thing that puts fear into their hearts: the maiden huntress, chaste Artemis, daughter of Zeus and Leto."

"To no god or man would the virgin goddess yield herself, as is well known, but there was one whom she greatly favored. Telepones he was called, first among hunters, and such was her love that she gave him a horn that sounded her own hunting call."

"Where is the horn of brave Telepones now? Into the swamp he went, ensnared by the Sorceress Menae. Never did he return."

The hermit can give the heroes directions to the swamp, a few days travel away. He knows little more about Menae except that she is a witch, sorceress, and someone doubtless best avoided if you had a choice.

GIVE THEM A CLUE

Once the heroes have escaped the madness you can just tell the players it is not something a mortal can overcome no matter how much they try—only their valor even let them escape. They need to find a way to beat it.

FINDING THE HERMIT

The heroes can find the blind hermit as the result of a Lore contest to learn more of the temple of Hera ("there's said to be an old hermit who lives in the hills near the temple"), to learn more about the satyrs ("there's an old hermit who has lived in the hills near the satyrs for years"), or they could stumble upon him in the wilds near the temple after they escape the madness.

PRONOUNCIATION GUIDE

Diomenis: die-OHM-en-eez

Telepones: tel-EP-on-eez

Menae: menn-AYE

3) GET THE HORN OF TELEPONES

REACH THE SORCERESS

The Sorceress Menae dwells deep within a dismal, trackless swamp. Just getting to her abode is a test of strength and endurance.

forging through the swamp—obstacle contest Might 2d8 (2 Strife). Obstacle, so heroes get through even if they fail. Winner is the hero who leads the way.

likely creative abilities—Hunt (finding the way through the wilderness), Insight (wisely choose a safer path), Athletics (hike and leap and climb)

making it harder—add one Strife to make it a Harmful contest. Failure could leave a hero scratched and bruised, stung by insects, bit by snakes, or even half-drowned in a bog.

Menae's lair is a crumbling temple of grey stone, surrounded by a cracked plaza littered with fallen pillars draped with creeping vines. Huge serpents dwell among the rocks and attack any trespassers. The snakes are servants of the sorceress, and it pleases her to let them test the mettle of any who would disturb her.

SERPENT

Name d10 (minion of Menae) / Beast / Strife 6

Arete d6 / Craft d4 / Sport d6 / Battle d8

weapons: fangs d6/d6 (sword), coiled strike d8/d6 (spear), scales d8 (shield)

powers: Poison (wounds also inflict impairment), Natural Weapons

<i>left hand</i>	<i>right hand</i>
d8 d6	d10 d8-or-d6 d8 per minion +1 per minion
(shield, sword or spear)	(name, sword or spear, battle)

costs 6 Strife (1 base, 2 abilities, 3 powers) +1 for each serpent after the first

Serpents initiate a contest of Cunning to determine the starting distance of the battle, slithering up on the heroes before they are spotted. Distance is 2 if they succeed, otherwise defaults to 5 (rugged dim exterior). Two serpents per hero is probably plenty—they are intended to be a warm-up not a serious threat to the heroes.

GET THE HORN FROM THE SORCERESS

If the heroes approach openly (and survive the snakes), Menae appears on the threshold to greet them and ask their mission.

Lustrous black curls spill down her shoulders to her crimson gown. A broad golden mask conceals her features, revealing only her full lips and a hint of her striking dark eyes.

She is unconcerned about the slain serpents and in fact may be impressed by manly deeds in the battle.

"Long has it been since heroes of such fine figure graced my threshold, and I grow lonely in this desolate place with none to appreciate my beauty..."

SO MUCH STRIFE

The first two objectives probably used very little strife, so you'll have plenty available for this objective and the next one.

DUDE, SHE IS A MEDUSA!

Five talents and a bronze tripod says your players assume that because Menae is wearing a mask she's either a medusa or just terribly ugly underneath. She isn't. It's just a bit of detail to add tension to anyone thinking to seduce her. It forces the players to wonder what they are really getting into, because GM's should have fun too.

Menae is a perilous and fickle creature, but she's also very lonely. Rarely do visitors come to her solitary abode. Beneath her cold surface fiery passions boil. Imperious yet needy and longing for the embrace of a man.

How the heroes handle Menae is entirely up to them. Three obvious avenues are persuasion, battle, or trickery: they could appeal to her vanity and loneliness and seduce her to learn the fate of the horn, they could condemn her as a vile enchantress and demand the horn at spear point, or they could pretend to accept her hospitality only to later skulk about her home and try to steal the horn.

seducing the sorceress—simple contest Grace 2d8 (2 Strife). Grace is used as a measure of physical beauty and perfection. Winner is the hero the sorceress falls for.

likely creative abilities—Cunning (promises of eternal love), Music (serenading the lady fair), Orate (flattery and boasting will get you everywhere)

A hero winning Menae's affection will almost certainly get more than he bargained for. She is greedy for attention and dangerously jealous if there is any hint that the love between them is just a ploy. Telephones himself captured Menae's affection years before, only to run afoul of her wrath when he yearned for the freedom of the hunt once again and sought to leave her. His horn survived though he did not. She kept it as a bitter memento and for a time wept over it daily, but her love is indeed fickle and it's been long since she even thought his name. The horn lies likewise forgotten, cast among her many possessions.

MENAE THE SORCERESS

Name d10 / Man / Strife 16

<i>Arete</i>	<i>Craft</i>	<i>Sport</i>	<i>Battle</i>
d8 Insight	d6 Heal	d6 Athletics	d10 Aim
d6 Grace	d10 Lore	d10 Cunning	d6 Shield
d4 Might	d4 Music	d4 Hunt	d4 Spear
d8 Spirit	d6 Orate	d4 Wrestle	d4 Sword

weapons: sorcerous curse d6+1 armor piercing (javelin), deceptive aura d8 (shield)

powers: Armor Piercing, Fear (one use), Gaze (each exchange), Hold (each exchange), Reflect

Attack

armor: d8 (deceptive aura)

6 divine favor

<i>left hand</i>	<i>right hand</i>
d10 d8	d10 d6 +1
(name, shield)	(aim, javelin)

costs 16 Strife (1 base, 5 abilities, 8 powers, 2 armor)

Making it harder:

- spend 1 Strife for d8 Advantage "fury of a woman scorned"
- spend 1 Strife for d8 Advantage "favored of the goddess Hecate"
- spend 1 Strife for d8 Advantage "power of the inner sanctum" since she is on her home turf
- have more of her serpents appear to aid her in battle (be warned, this can easily crush the heroes)
- if any hero has a d8 Name increase her Strife to 18, raise her javelin to d8 and add a second use of Fear

ALL IS FAIR IN LOVE & WAR

Make sure that any effort becomes a contest between the heroes, not just a contest against the sorceress.

For example only one hero can win her favor—he is invited inside and given her attention while the others are left sitting on the stoop. Heroes who originally didn't intend to compete for her favor may start just because they bridle at being dismissed as servants or companions of the "true" hero. Rub their noses in it. Kick them in the pride.

PLAYTEST ANECDOTES

When I originally ran this quest, the heroes competed to win Menae's favor, the winner making it into her bed and the rest getting left outside to fume and chuck rocks into the swamp. The clever paramour wheedled the horn's location out of the sorceress during pillow talk, but when he sweetly asked for it as a souvenir to remember her by the wheels came off the cart: remember her by? He didn't think he was leaving did he? Just love her and leave her, would he?

So the heroes did fight the sorceress in the end, just with one hero sans armor (or any other clothes for that matter). After getting a bitter taste of the sorcerous fury of a woman scorned they grabbed the horn and legged it for the swamp.

You can use this descriptive text to spice up the sorceress's attacks:

(Curse) Darkness gathers around her like a cloak as she stretches her arms high and calls down sorcerous fury to smite her foes.

(Gaze) Her eyes flash and burn like twin stars falling in the night sky, her unbridled malice scything across all who dare oppose her.

(Hold 1) Your feet sink into the ground turned suddenly to mud, sucking at the your heels as you struggle to escape like some kind of nightmare.

(Hold 2) Gnarled roots erupt from the ground and twist around your knees, holding you in place.

(Reflect Attack) Even as you thrust you watch in horror as your blade transforms into a viper, twisting in your hand to strike you instead of her... and then a moment later the phantasm has passed, leaving you bleeding and haunted by the sorceress's mocking laughter.

ESCAPING THE SWAMP (OPTIONAL)

Didn't get enough of the wrath of Menae yet? Did the heroes really piss her off? Have her sorcery turn the swamp against them as they flee. Roots and branches cling at the heroes, paths appear only to twist and lead them deeper into the swamp, the very ground beneath them seems to suck at their heels, and so on. It's a nightmare that only the bravest heroes can escape.

escape the enchanted swamp—harmful contest Insight 2d10 (5 Strife). Winner is the hero who pushes through and breaks the spell.

likely creative abilities—Lore (know how to escape enchantment), Might (pushing through with brute force), Spirit (resist the terror of the enchanted swamp)

making it harder—spend Strife to add Advantages (choose from the list given for the Sorceress Menae)

4) SLAY THE DEFILERS

TRAP THE SATYRS (OPTIONAL)

The temple is a classic Grecian style, pillars surrounding a central walled chamber. There is a main frontal entrance and smaller side entrances. Clever heroes might recall the words of the goddess and be concerned that once the horn is blown the terrified satyrs will scatter into the wilds, escaping the wrath of the goddess.

There are a few things the heroes could do. They could try to creep up when the revelry inside is at a low ebb and barricade the side exits with brush and brambles (after passing an easy contest versus the madness), or simply split up and have different heroes enter from different sides after blowing the horn to block escape.

Depending on their actions they could do a contest to get Advantage dice to use later to prevent the satyrs from escaping (use for positioning rolls to prevent satyrs from fleeing). If the heroes take no such precautions they may have their hands full making sure none of the defilers escape.

MAGIC IS SCARY

The Sorceress is written to be a very punishing opponent because sorcery should be more terrifying than fighting some guy with a spear.

With her Fear she should be able to put the heroes at a disadvantage and then pound all the heroes with her Gaze each exchange in addition to her normal attack against a single hero. She uses her Hold to keep anyone she particularly doesn't like from getting away. Brutal.

The heroes should be able to beat her if they really dig in, but it will cost them. And then again, why should they? If they can grab the horn running is a perfectly good choice. It's much classier to flee the wrath of the woman scorned, dodging withering curses as they flee into the swamp, than to stand around and drive a spear through her.

resist the madness (again)—obstacle contest Spirit d6 d8 (1 Strife). Same as before, but less Strife assuming heroes have waited for a quieter time.

barricade the side exits—simple contest Cunning 2d8 (2 Strife) to gain Advantage die. Winner is the hero who is the most stealthy, spots the drunken satyr near the entrance before it can spot them, finds the best spots to barricade, etc. Failure means the heroes think the exits are barricaded sufficiently but they aren't, so the heroes aren't watching those exits as closely during the battle giving the satyrs the Advantage die to escape.

likely creative abilities—Lore (figuring best way to barricade exits), Might (dragging great heaps of brush)

BLOW THE HORN

The muses will doubtless sing of the mighty hero who blew the horn of Telephones and put fear into the hearts of the satyrs. So which hero gets to do the glorious deed?

blow the horn—simple contest Orate 2d8 (2 Strife). Winner gets to blow the horn, but they need to beat the GM's roll to scare the satyrs (so a hero could beat the other heroes and get to blow the horn but fail to drive off the satyrs)

likely creative abilities—Cunning (trick the others into letting you do the work), Hunt (a skilled hunter knows how to sound a hunting horn), Might (big lungs means more wind)

It's assumed the heroes will approach just near enough to hear the satyr's revels and then blow the horn before they are drawn in by the madness, otherwise they must make another check to resist the madness.

Failure means the heroes couldn't blow the horn hard enough. Hit them with the satyr's madness again, using as much Strife as you can. This time it's not an obstacle—if they all fail they fail the quest, losing themselves in the satyr's madness and perhaps awakening weeks later as through from a dream of wild abandon. If even one hero succeeds they can all escape (with appropriate impairment) and try to blow the horn again later if they want.

Make sure the heroes know the consequences for failure—they should be able to beat the “blow the horn” contest if they are willing to call in creative abilities, oaths, divine favor, etc.

SLAY THE DEFILERS

As soon as the pure tones of the horn echo across the valley the revelry inside the temple grinds to a terrified halt. Cries of joy and passion are replaced with cries of alarm and fear.

If the heroes do nothing, virgins and satyrs flee the temple and scatter into the wilderness. The heroes have freed the temple but failed to punish the defilers: quest failed. If the heroes charge into the temple their arrival is met with terror:

The sacred temple is worse for the wear from days and nights of constant revelry. Spilt wine stains the floor and pillows and gauzy veils lie trampled underfoot.

Wiry satyrs, beards and chest-hair still dripping with wine, dart about looking for escape, their dark bodies a sharp contrast to the pale white skin of the half-naked (former) virgins who scream and run in all directions.

SLAUGHTERING THE VIRGINS

Hera considers the virgins just as guilty of soiling her temple as the satyrs, if not more so: they were supposed to resist temptation and remain pure in honor of the goddess they had sworn to serve, not have fun and party down with the first pack of horny goat-men that came along. Hera wants them put to death for their betrayal.

Modern sensibilities are likely to expect the quondam virgins to be victims who should be saved, but that doesn't really jibe with the Classical tone. Stalking through the blood-stained temple slaughtering defiled temple maidens who have had congress with beast-men for the sake of a vengeful goddess—that's hardcore Classical stuff. Very appropriate for a Greek hero.

If your players are not that into the Classical “blood & vengeance” style and balk at the idea of slaughtering virgins, even if handled entirely off-screen, you can consider their terror and exile all the punishment the goddess requires and let them flee screaming into the wilderness instead.

The satyrs are not particularly dangerous opponents, but there are lots of them. The challenge is not to beat them so much as it is to make sure none escape—they try to flee every exchange. If the heroes are not careful to make sure at least one of them beats each minion group on positioning that group will escape if it survives the exchange.

If one or two satyrs slip through, you can either consider the quest failed, or if a hero opts to pursue immediately (leaving the fight inside the temple to the other heroes) give them an Athletics contest to catch up and fight those satyrs separately. Feel free to add Strife to make the chase harder.

SATYR

Name d8 (minion of Bacchanal) / Monster / Strife 5

Arete d6 / Craft d8 / Sport d8 / Battle d6

weapons: nails, teeth and horns d6/d6 (sword)

<i>left hand</i>	<i>right hand</i>
d8 d6	d6 d6 per minion + 1 per minion
(name, sword)	(sword, battle)

costs 5 Strife (1 base, 4 abilities) +1 for each satyr after the first, maximum of 16 satyrs (20 Strife total) if heroes have d6 Name or 20 satyrs (24 Strife total) if any hero has a d8 Name

Making it harder:

- spend 1 Strife for d8 Advantage “mobs of virgins” (the terrified virgins can provide a distraction allowing the satyrs to escape)
- spend 1 Strife for d8 Advantage “blind terror” (fear may make them even quicker to flee)

Slaying the virgins doesn’t require rolls—it’s considered part of the battle with the satyrs. Even as the heroes are chasing the satyrs around the blood-stained temple they are cutting down terrorized temple virgins that get in their way.

If the heroes slay the satyrs before they can escape (and the virgins along with them), they have avenged Hera and completed their quest!

EPILOGUE: IF THE HEROES FAIL

If the heroes fail to drive the satyrs from her temple or let some of them escape or simply give up, Hera’s wrath boils over. She calls upon Poseidon, the Earth Shaker, to destroy the whole mountain in a terrible earthquake, burying her temple and all those who defiled it beneath merciless rock.

So great is the might of Poseidon that farmers and sheperds leagues away are caught in the god’s fury, their homes crushed and their flocks scattered. Far and wide men tremble at this sign of the gods’ displeasure. Such is the wrath of Hera.

I SMELL DIONYSIUS!

With all this bacchanal and dancing and revelry, it’s natural to think that Dionysius is behind this outrage to Hera’s temple.

Doubtless the great god of the grape is somewhere thinking this is a terribly amusing turn of events to rattle poor frigid Hera, but even he is not so foolish as to plan such a thing. At least not while sober.

The satyrs on the other hand... well they just can’t help themselves, no matter how badly it may turn out. Party yes, planning no.