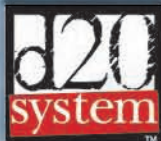


Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook

ATHENAEUM ARCANAE GHOSTLY RUMORS



BY ANDREW HIND

INTRODUCTION

I love a good ghost story. There's a certain spine-chilling atmosphere, a sense of timeless tragedy, and an aura of mystery about them that I find seductive. I frequently try to work ghost stories into my gaming sessions, and the results are usually memorable.

Athnaeum Arcane: Ghostly Rumors has been designed to help DMs introduce ghost stories into their games. As springboards to adventure or merely as background rumors that help make the campaign world feel more alive, these rumors can be a valuable aid to hard pressed DMs.

About the Author

Andrew Hind has been working as a professional in the roleplaying industry since 2000. In that time, he's written for Wizards of the Coast, Pinnacle Entertainment, Mystic Eye Games, Bastion Press, and many other gaming companies.

In addition to his roleplaying credits, he's written extensively in mainstream media, specializing in history and folklore. His work for *Fate* magazine and *Mysteries* magazine, for example, help lend an air of authenticity to the ghostly rumors in this PDF. In fact, observant readers may recognize the real-world hauntings that some of the entries are based upon.

USING THE RUMORS

This PDF is intended solely for the DM. Players who suspect that their DM may have a copy of this PDF would do best to close this file now and find something else to peruse.

The rumors in this PDF may be sprinkled liberally in a campaign either as written or modified by the DM. DMs should always be prepared for the situations, characters, and locations discussed in any rumor to leap to the forefront of the game session; you never know what bit of information the players will grab and run with.

When in any tavern, inn, coffeehouse, or similar establishment where men and women gather, select a rumor (or two or three) from this PDF and have each player make a *Gather Information* check and then check the roll against the chosen rumor(s).

These rumors work especially well if, after the *Gather Information* check is rolled, you give the PCs first the failed result (if they made their roll) and then, shortly after, give them the successful result. This adds some roleplaying opportunities and encourages the PCs to talk over the false rumor before discovering the truth.

Each rumor follows the format:

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Rumor Heading (Gather Information DC)

Failed Gather Information Check: If the check is failed this is what the PCs hear. A section of this entry is to be read aloud to the players though many DMs will choose to paraphrase the information (especially if any of it needs to be tweaked to better fit the campaign). This entry also discloses the source of the rumor.

Successful Gather Information Check: If the check succeeds this is what the PCs hear. Again, this entry is intended to be read aloud and gives the source of the rumor.

Follow Up: If the PCs choose to investigate the rumor this information will help the DM to prepare for what could happen.

THE RUM⊕RS

THE RIVER WITCH (DC 10)

Failed Gather Information Check: “A hag with skin as black as pitch stalks the hills near Brungerly. She feeds on all manner of creatures, but every year on the anniversary of the day in which the Abyss spat her out and deposited her in our world she always takes a human life.”

Source: Graystock (**Dwarf Male Exp 2, 5 hp**), an old scruffy dwarf with thick graying beard. A herbalist by trade, he spends most of his time alone in the woods and doesn't have much time for “town folk.” He's often drunker than a skunk from indulging too heavily in his own moonshine.

Successful Gather Information Check: “You been listening to Old Man Graystock, I take it. That old coot's been drinking too much of that swill he concocts in the shed out back of his property. Take a load off while I straighten things out for you. Folks in Brungerly claim

they're hamlet is haunted by the ghost of a water hag who lives under the bridge. Every year on the 12th day of the 12th month she takes the life of a farm beast, either a cow or pony. Every 12th year, she claims a human life on her anniversary. The rest of the time, they say she sleeps or otherwise makes herself scarce.”

Source: Arthur Ingeld (**Human Male, Wiz 1, 2 hp**). Arthur is a mage and teaches in the village's one-room school house. A short, thin and authoritative man, he deals in facts and has no use for superstition and folklore. Illiterates such as Graystock are treated with contempt, as are those who blindly belief unsubstantiated rumor.

Following Up: All of the lives taken, man or beast, are the result of rituals conducted by the villagers of Brungerley designed to appease the hag. While they generally sacrifice their own stock, every twelve years they abduct a traveler or denizen of a nearby community. If pressed, no of the villagers can remember

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the last time the hag actually appeared, and in truth there is no spirit (unless, of course, you as the GM deem otherwise). The whole story is mere superstition, though one with a bloody bent to it.

GHΘST TΘWN ΘF S+WΘRDS (DC IΘ)

Failed Gather Information Check: “Hey mister, I wouldn’t go up that road if I was you. It leads to the ghost town of Swords. You know why they calls it that, mister? It’s ‘cause everyone in the village was put to the sword. That means they was all killed. The whole town is haunted now, and no one dares go there. ‘Cept me, cause I ain’t scared. Only, don’t tell my Mom. She’d be mad that I went up there by myself.”

Source: Fish (**halfling male Com 1, 1 hp**), a small child with a distinctive guppy-like look about him, hence his nickname, which he loathes but can’t shake. Fish is surely a bard in the making; an entertaining storyteller with enough conviction to be believable. Characters who make a Sense Motive roll (opposed by Fish’s Bluff +2 skill roll) will determine that he’s lying about having been there, but truthfully believes the town to be haunted.

Successful Gather Information Check: “Har, har, har! You believed that load of swill Fish fed you. Thing is, that boy is a born storyteller with an overactive imagination. I don’t think he even knows if the things he says are real anymore. I reckon talking to him is like threshing corn. If you sift out all the chaff, a kernel of truth remains. There is an abandoned village up yonder road a ways, but it was named after

its founder, a old-time gent by the name of Johan Swords. The soil just wasn’t worth a damn, so after a while the settlers just up and left. That’s the long and short of it all.”

Source: Valenso Bellaghy (**Human Male Ftr 2/Ari 1, 19 hp**), the rotund and jovial landholder who owns most of the farms in the area. A former roadwarden and adventurer, he’s more at home throwing them back in a bawdy tavern than among the courtiers of even a rural manor such as his own. As a result, he takes every opportunity to engage in conversation with travelers. He’s never had the inclination to explore Swords and urges PCs not to as well—“that town represents peoples’ broken dreams, and it ain’t right to add insult to injury by plundering it.” Suspicious players may think he’s hiding something. He’s not; Bellaghy has a strong moral core, that’s all.

Follow Up: The village of Swords is covered in a ghostly shroud, its farms and businesses silent and encroached upon by the regenerating forest, but there are no ghosts to be found. Though the shells of numerous buildings remain, collapsing under the combined assault of elements and time, five buildings remain in surprisingly good shape: the former general store, a church, and three small cabins. Exploring these buildings can be the source of adventure, as they might now be inhabited by monstrous vermin and other forms of low-level threats. But it’s possible that their intrusion will disturb the dead and that when they complete their exploration the PCs will leave behind a *real* ghost town. A return visit to set things right might be required.

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BLUE LADY'S GRIP ØF THE DEEP (DC 12)

Failed Gather Information Check: "On nights of the full moon, a beautiful woman wearing a blue dress walks across the water down in the bay. And you know what? She don't even get the hems wet. You know she died years ago, drowned right there, off that point. After she's seen, no ship or boat can take to the water. Oars or sails, it don't matter....all matter of watercraft stop dead in the water."

Source: Caleb RigWalker (male Human Com 2, 5 hp), an embittered former sailor who was once known for being the fastest rigger anyone had ever seen hereabouts. He now seeks solace for the loss of his leg in the bottle and spends most of his time drunk or hung-over.

Successful Gather Information Check: "Old Caleb has spent too much time in that damned tavern to even think straight anymore. Aye, it's true enough that the waters of the bay are dead calm after the full moon, but there is no woman in blue. That's just an old legend. Pay it no mind."

Source: Any dock hand, fisherman, or sailor in town.

Follow Up: The blue lady is just a local legend, though the phenomenon attributed to her is in fact real. No ship, whether sail-powered or rowed, can move within the bay on days after a full moon. Vessels entering the bay are ground to a sudden stop, unable to move. It's an obvious inconvenience, and hinders trade and fishing. As a result, the town will offer a

1,000gp reward for anyone who can lift the curse.

Interestingly, a woman did in fact drown in the bay years before, and her body never recovered. Perhaps there is some connection after all?

MØMNSHINE TØWER (DC 12)

Failed Gather Information Check: "Moonlight seems to reflect off the rocks of that old tower, casting it in a pale blue glow. It's so pretty and tranquil, a place truly at peace. The gods have made it sanctuary from the evils that lurk in the dark of night, and so we have nothing to fear from it."

Source: Colin Crofter (**Human Male Clr 2, 10 hp**), a farmer and local agrarian priest. He's well meaning, but is not as worldly as he lets on and has little understanding of matters beyond farming. He has no idea that his ignorance may get people dead, and would be aghast if that should come about.

Successful Gather Information Check: "Some people consider Moonshine Tower beautiful. I think otherwise. There's something oddly unsettling about it, almost as if it has hidden itself away from civilization and resents our intrusion. The last lord went off to war about 100 years ago and never returned. Or did he? Some believe his spirit has returned to the only home he ever knew and haunts the tower to this day. All I know is that it's bricked up for good reason, and we should leave well enough alone."

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Source: Helda Raven-eye (**Female half-elf, Sor 3, 7 hp**), an elderly woman who somewhat shunned by her fellow villagers, both due to her command of “witchcraft” and her unsettling raven-like eyes. She’s a wise woman, however, who sees much more with those eyes than most could ever conceive.

Follow Up: The tower has always held its ethereal blue pall under the light of the moon, a feature deemed pleasing by the Varg family, werewolves all, when they built it centuries before. The last lord did indeed perish in war, but in some cultures—the Varg’s included—slain werewolves occasionally rise as vampires. That’s exactly what happened to the last Lord of Moonshine Tower, who has in fact returned home as Helda suggests.

GH⊕STLY MILLINERS (DC 15)

Failed Gather Information Check: “What kind o’ nonsense is this? Ye’ll nae spread rumors about those poor lasses who died in the flames, nor do we need fairy tales o’ ghosts to keep ‘em alive. T’was a tragedy, sure ‘nough, but the lasses are dead and buried and at peace, and that’ll be the end of it.”

Source: Peter Herron [**male human Com 4, 10 hp**], a farmer and proprietor of Herron’s Inn, a business recently burned to the ground. Three boarders, women working in the village woolen factory, perished in the fire.

Successful Gather Information Check: “Mr. Herron is in a state of

denial, poor dear. You see, the girls were like daughters to him. I’m afraid he’s taken their deaths hard. You see, he was able to get his own family out, but the mill girls were trapped in a second floor room and didn’t make it. Mr. Herron blames himself, both for their deaths and for their restlessness after death. Oh, dear me, the stories are very true. Those poor girls have returned from the grave.

Source: Rosa [**female human Com 1, 1 hp**], a portly and middle-aged woman who lives across the way from where the old hotel stood. Rosa spends most of her days making corn-husk dolls on her porch which she sells to peddlers passing through, and so she sees and hears an awful lot of what goes on in town. A successful Sense Motive check [DC 12] shows that she’s holding back something. If prodded, and if she’s convinced the PCs are not allied to the local sheepherders, she’ll offer more.

“The fire was awful suspicious, how it went up so fast and all. And you know something, I could have sworn I saw figures lurking in the shadows around the building moments before hand. This is just hearsay, but I think some of the sheepherders were behind it. They don’t like farmers, like Mr. Herron, buying up and fencing in grazing land.”

Follow Up: The three milliners do indeed prowl the night, seeking out those responsible for their deaths. Unfortunately, their presence is accompanied by spontaneous outbursts of fire that endangers innocents. Already, a haystack has been burned down and the shingles of a barn set aflame. It’s just a matter of time before tragedy replays itself.

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Rosa is right. The local sheep-herders were responsible, if indirectly, for the deaths of the mill girls. They hired the Donnelly Brothers, sheep-herders, rustlers, and thugs from a neighboring town, to do their dirty work for them. As a result, even if the local ringleaders are brought to justice, the ghosts will not find rest. The Donnelly's must be brought in as well.

THE ETERNAL PØKER GAME (DC 15)

Failed Gather Information Check: "The corner table is haunted, sure enough. Only the dregs and the curious risk their luck playing cards at that table, for it's said you're gold is the least you'll lose. Some cardsharks have gone raving mad after playing a hand there; they claim to feel desperate chills even with a blazing hearth just feet away, to hear the boisterous peal of spectral laughter coming from empty seats, and to smell a whiff of cigar smoke in the air even when none at the table smoke. It's as if invisible gamblers are playing right alongside you, or so they say."

Source: Barnabas Brandywine (**Male Halfling Sor 3, hp 9**), they graying and ever-jovial bar-tender. Well liked for his courteous ways and the efficient manner in which he de-escalates the festering resentments that tend to boil over when alcohol is involved, most would be surprised to hear of his shady past. He was once a very successful con-artist, his

favorite trick being to masquerade as a fortune-teller and use his natural magical abilities to fleece the vulnerable and naïve.

Successful Gather Information Check: "Haunted? Hardly, watch Brandywine carefully. It's almost imperceptible—a flick of the wrist here, a whispered word there. Before you know it, another card player folds his hand and flees, cursing the haunted table for his misfortune. There's no doubt in my mind Brandywine is creating the ghostly phenomenon with his magic."

Source: Priya Alyten (**Female Elf, Ftr 4, Hp 34**), watch sergeant. Despite being beautiful and blessed with the gentle grace of a cat, Priya is a skilled warrior and a street-smart watchman. She's as steady and certain as sunrise, and while she rarely speaks, when she does her words carry real weight.

Following Up: Brandywine is creating ghostly phenomenon, using the table's notoriety as a means of attracting customers to his tavern. It's become almost a tourist attraction; many people come just to sit at the table and perhaps play a hand. He's also formed an arrangement with several local gamblers; for a take of the winnings he creates his spooky illusions to unnerve those playing at the table, causing them to lose their concentration or even fold entirely.

What Brandywine doesn't know is that not all of the supernatural activity can be attributed to his spellcraft. The table really is haunted, and many people who pull up a chair are....

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GHØSTLY LØVERS
ØF FIR LARRIG
(DC 15)

Failed Gather Information Check: “Gather round and listen to a tale of eternal love, a tale so powerful it will move you to tears, even the most steadfast dwarf, I’d wager. It’s a tale of tragic ghosts unable to find peace, and pinpoints the gateway to the mythical Elven other-realm where immense wealth awaits the intrepid adventurer. Step right up, and have your ten gold ready.”

The PCs Pay 10 Gold: “Ten leagues west from here is a natural stone pillar called Fir Larrig, which means “Where the Rock Stands Out” in Elvish. It was here that a Seelie emerged from his Faerie-realm domain to trade among the elves of our world. What he found was more valuable than any trade good: he found the love of a beautiful elven princess. Her father refused to sanction the relationship, however, so the lovers continued their romance in secret, stealing kisses under the cover of darkness. Eventually, the princess’ brothers found out. They killed the Seelie and threw his body off a cliff. When the princess discovered what they had done, she fell into a deep morose and flung herself off the cliff to be with her lover in death as they couldn’t be in life. Their spirits cursed the area, causing the elves to abandon their village and vow never to return. A grand tale, no? And absolutely true! Best of all, for an additional ten gold I’ll provide a map with the directions to Fir Larrig”

The PCs Don’t Pay: “Sorry friends. Everyone pays, no exceptions and no bartering.”

Source: Tunnit the Talemonger (Human Male Brd 5th, 22 hp), a traveling charlatan and entertainer. He’s a born salesman, able to sell dirt to a dwarf, and he’s not above peddling fake or dangerous defective items.

Successful Gather Information Check: “That Tunnit is a huckster profiting from the tragedy of my people. I’m afraid his map is wrong quiet inaccurate, and his story entirely misleading....no doubt due to ignorance on his part. Fir Larrig is fifty leagues west, and does not mark a gateway to the mythical Faerie-realm. Instead, it’s an entrance to the Underdark. I’m afraid all one would find there is death, not the treasure Tunnit alludes to. The basis of his story is accurate, more or less, though of course the other-worldly trader was a dark elf not a member of the Seelie.

Source: Ophirea Shem (Female Elf Sor 6th, 14 hp), a virile young mage, reputed to be the daughter of elven nobility. Extremely willful, she refused to marry her chosen mate and fled to the human lands. She’s actually the younger sister of the princess alluded to in the tale.

Following Up: Ophirea may be persuaded to guide the way to Fir Larrig, especially if the PCs intend to lay her sister to rest. The ghostly lovers do indeed haunt the area around Fir Larrig, but are not together as they wished. An examination of the bones beneath the cliff reveal only one set, that of an elven female; the dark elves retrieved her lovers body and interred him in a vault in the Underdark.

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Their spirits are restless and lonely. She searches desperately for her lover, frightening off those who might aid her, while he throws mortals from the cliff in vengeance for the perceived murder of his beloved. If their spirits could somehow be reunited, all would be well.

Save for the little matter of the unguarded entrance to the Underdark....

CORNFIELD CORPSE (DC 18)

Failed Gather Information Check: “If yer talkin’ about that dandy with the red lion plastered all over his cloak, then I reckon I did see yer Baron Fairfield. Came through here a week or so back, if I recall rightly. Didn’t give us common folk the time of day, ‘cept when he was tossin’ about orders. Missing, you say? Can’t say as we’d miss ‘im much, one less too-right-for-his own-good-snob I say. My guess is the bandits done ‘im in.”

Source: Yukos Falkenberg (**Male Half-Orc, Ftr 1/Exp 3, 21 hp**), proprietor of the local inn and militia captain. A large man, with broad shoulders, arms that hang down almost to the knees, and a simian brow, Yukos displays much of his orc heritage. Still, he’s a respected member of the community, and like his neighbors, has nothing but disdain for the nobility.

Successful Gather Information Check: “Truth is, there are no bandits hereabouts. Not any worthy of the name, at any rate. The folks around here hate people of noble birth, and always have. The village was a hotbed of rebel activity during the peasant risings, and a rebel

army was crushed in one of the cornfields just outside of town. You may scoff, but I believe Baron Fairfield was killed by the specter known as the Cornfield Corpse. Legend has it that the ghost is that of a peasant soldier who, with his dying breath, pledged to continue the battle until the hated nobility were killed.”

Source: Vlad Totten (**Male Human, Rgr 6, 34 hp**), a grizzled old roadwarden with silvered hair, drooping handle-bar moustache, and a perpetual five-o’clock shadow. With more than four decades riding these roads, he’s seen it all and isn’t easily swayed by tall-tales. And yet he believes firmly in the existence of the Cornfield Corpse.

Following Up: As it turns out, Totten has good reason for believing in the existence of the Cornfield Corpse. The soldier (**Wight, 30 hp**) does indeed crawl forth from the soil every harvest season to plague the village. And while the cornfield corpse does go out of its way to slay nobles, in truth no one is safe from its depravations, especially those foolish enough to enter the swaying sea of grain that surrounds the community.

THE HAUNTED MOORS (DC 18)

Failed Gather Information Check: “Don’t you be going up in those hills, especially at night when the fog rolls in. There’s evil in this there land, I’ve seen it with my own two eyes. A ghostly creature, as big as a horse with glowing red eyes, spewing smoke and fire from it’s mouth. On nights like these when the fog is thick and low, it comes looking for

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fresh meat. Heed my words or you'll be next. Stay away! STAY AWAY I TELL YE!"

Source: Arrun Greenspeck (**Human Male Druid 5, 25 hp**), a dark haired wild eyed individual who mostly keeps to himself when found in town, which is very infrequent. Usually Arrun can be found wandering the surrounding area, particularly the main road into town. He makes it a habit to warn travellers about the unnatural moors north of the town.

Successful Gather Information Check: "Ain't no truth b'hind ol Arrun's words. The Moors ain't haunted, nothing but a pack of wolves out for a hunt. They be looking to pick off stray sheep and stragglers from the herds.

Source: Clef Broadbeard (**Dwarf Male Ftr 1/Com 2, 20 hp**), is the owner of the Notched Axe Inn and Tavern. In his earlier years Clef wanted to strike it rich by adventuring but a pair of Ogres ambushed his group during one of their first excursions. The Ogres were eventually brought down, but not before the adventuring party had all been slain except Clef. The first town Clef came to after that encounter was where he parked his arse and now calls home.

Following Up: At night, when the fog rolls in, creatures do indeed haunt the moors. But the ghostly creatures are none other than Arrun and his befriended wolf Silvermane. Arrun has been using his spells to make his companion appear sinister and evil in hopes of scaring away farmers and ranchers from the moors. The area is sacred to Arrun and doesn't want to see the lands used for feeding and then toiled as farmland. His ghostly sto-

ries and "frightening" companion have so far kept the townsfolk and interlopers at bay. It's only a matter of time before he is discovered and has to take more drastic steps to preserve the hills.

THE LADY ΘF THE MILL RUN (DC 20)

Failed Gather Information Check: "Stay away from the river, you hear? The water runs fast and hard this time of year, and if you fall in you're in a world of trouble. We've lost too many folks to the river's temper already, and I'm tired of pulling bodies out of drink. Do you have any idea what a body smells like after it's been in the water for a few days?"

Source: Asa Hrothgar (**Male Dwarf, Rgr 2, Hp 17**), a lumberman who swills booze and brawls with equal zeal. During the winter he fells trees up river, then shoots them down the swollen banks in spring, and finally cuts the logs into lumber through the remainder of the year at his mill at the base of the rapids. Asa is therefore extremely knowledgeable about the river and its dangers, but he's never seen the ghost and therefore refuses to entertain notions of its existence. In fact, he grows agitated when it is mentioned.

Successful Gather Information Check: "At one time, Asa Hrothgar's mill was a going concern. It had five or six hands, and was prosperous. Now everyone refuses to work up there. It's haunted, you see. People began seeing the smoky image of a lovely lady walking along the river or sitting patiently on a

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rock alongside the rapids. In either case, her gaze is always firmly rooted upriver, and it never wavers. It's as if her heart, her entire being, is focused on something beyond our vision. Soon after she appeared, people began to drown mysteriously in the river, even seasoned river-runners. It's a shame too, 'cause a lot of folks made a good living off them mills."

Source: Elda Willow (**Human Female, Com 2, Hp 4**), a burly sod-busters wife whose course disposition suits the rough frontier existence just fine. She inhabits the farmstead nearest the river, and has seen more than her share of strangeness hereabouts. Nevertheless, Elda'd love nothing more than for the hauntings to end so that her husband might once again seek work at the mill.

Following-Up: The ghost is that of a pretty young woman, though her beauty is marred by a sadness that seems to weigh upon her. She is awaiting the return of the love of her earthly life, a logger who met an untimely demise by drowning during the spring drive. She's bound to haunt the river until they are reunited. She is often accompanied by an unnatural mist that seems to coil from the water like ghostly tendrils. These misty coils grapple men and drag them into the rivers' depths. Another phenomenon is a disembodied gurgling sound, that of the ghost's lover as he drowned. Hearing this sound causes characters to begin drowning themselves, their lungs filling with water.

THE SWAMP THINGS (DC 20)

Failed Gather Information Check: "You can find your own way to the ruins. I can take you no farther, for it is unwise to go venture into the lizardmen ruins and risk angering the ancient city's guardians. These spirits, the remains of former chieftains, are neither dead nor alive and are not to be trifled with. Thy'll drain your blood and leave you a lifeless husk."

Source: Yarra (**Half-Lizardman Female, Rgr 5/Adpt 3, 41 hp**), an experienced guide and who remains attractive despite being weathered by years of exposure to the elements. Her unusual ancestry is evident only in slight webbing between her fingers, angled eyes with thin iris', and a ridge of coarse skin down her spine. Yarra attempts to conceal her ancestry, and her knowledge of lizardfolk ritual magic.

Successful Gather Information Check: "Several explorers and treasure-seekers have gone missing near the old ruins of late, there's no doubt of it. We've even found wreckage of large skiffs, their crews no where to be found. But what's odd is that people have been exploring the area for years without much mishap. I myself have been to the city several times in my youth without any incidence. Why would the guardian spirits become active now? And I wonder if it has anything to do with those strange boatmen we've has comin' in here. Shady characters, them. I'd peg them for smugglers or pirates."

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Source: Reinhold Rahbas (**Human Male Rogue 4, 18 hp**), proprietor of the Stilted Keg, a tavern in the swamp's edge community. Rahbas is a wiry and still spry old man who proudly displays his many adventuring scars as badges of honour. Like most barkeepers he knows much of what goes on, legitimate and otherwise.

Following Up: While many have come to believe the ruins are protected by vampiric lizard men, in fact there are no guardian spirits standing watch over it. The entire ruse was concocted by Yarra herself, and is carried out with the assistance of a band of lizard men cutthroats. It seems that she discovered a rare and highly magical breed of orchid that only grows within a specific temple complex inside the city. Yarra is smuggling some of these orchids out of the swamp and using the proceeds from their sale to fund a lizard man army, while the remainder she hordes for use in as-yet unrealised rituals designed to restore the swamp to its rightful heirs—the lizard men.

THE BARROW LEGION WILL RISE (DC 22)

Failed Gather Information Check: “Our esteemed mayor is at it again, is he? There must be an election on the horizon, and shame on him for using such deceitful tactics. A ghostly army rising from the hills on the millennial anniversary of their deaths, indeed! I admit, it has a catchy ring to it, but does he think we'll swallow that old myth? Shameful, truly shameful.”

Source: Alanna Moray (**Human Female, Exp 3, 9 hp**), a lumpy middle-aged woman who runs the village mercantile. Opinionated and blunt, she'd love nothing better than to discredit the mayor who has more often than not been her sparing partner in the council meetings.

Successful Gather Information Check: “The baron sent a bum lot of soldiers and not the kind of men that is required at a time such as this. It's only a few short months before the dead arise from their barrows and seek vengeance upon the living. Woe betide us if we are unprepared to meet them.”

Source: Mayor Jalin Elzear Bonna (**Male Gnome, Sor 5, 20 hp**), a little bull of a man who has served as mayor on three different occasions. Bonna is headstrong and has a habit of fear-mongering as a means of getting himself re-elected, realizing that his temperament and experience as an adventurer make him an ideal leader in time of crisis.

Following Up: Mayor Bonna does on occasion resort to histrionics, but in this case he's not exaggerating in the slightest. The curse is very real, but unfortunately Bonna's history of playing-up threats makes preparing for the eventuality difficult. Many simply don't believe him and are therefore indifferent to the threat they face. Others are panicked and begin to act irrationally—fleeing the village, boarding up businesses, and hoarding supplies. It may fall to the PCs to unite the community and organize a defense. It might also be cause to enter the barrows to forestall the curse.

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