

THE FLUTE OF FAREWELL

An Adventure for Expert Characters

The Children of the Second Gathering is a small cult deemed made up of faerie folk, their kin, and mortals. Foolish by mortal and immortal standards, they believe the elves did not abandon Urth forever and will one day return to gather the ones left behind and ferry them to the hidden kingdoms. A collector of rare antiques named Sammandria Jann stumbled across a relic the cult members would kill to get their hands on—one that could kill them right back.

The Flute of Farewell is an adventure for expert characters in which the characters are hired to deliver the flute to the cult and bring payment back to their employer.

Things become difficult when not all of the cult members want to pay and, worse, when the flute's original owner comes looking for it. The characters complete the adventure after confronting the devil summoned when someone sounds the relic.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SECOND GATHERING

Centuries before the founding of the Empire, the elves quit the world of Urth. They despaired at the bloodshed caused by the human conquerors and had grown weary from the losses sustained in the fighting against the trolls and other peoples opposed to their dominion. In leaving, the elves abandoned the exiled goblins, fauns, changelings, and the others who refused to go, and such peoples were forced to find their way in a world ruled by peoples who had forgotten the old customs and who had little place for their kind. The alienation and confusion by the elves' absence led some of the faeries to the Children of the Second Gathering.

As with most cults, the history of the Children's founding is one greatly embellished and exaggerated to serve the needs of their leaders. It's believed by the faithful that Astrid, the prophet whose teachings revealed the New God to the world, discovered something else in her visions and that her epiphany was not from the gods but was sent by the absent elves. While it's true that mortals are tossed constantly through death and rebirth, faeries and their ilk are doomed to a single life, one that will ultimately end in violence. Astrid, according to the Children, learned that the faeries could escape oblivion and mortals could slip from the wheel of life and death by retreating to the hidden kingdoms and live for eternity in the light and bliss they promised.



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Since such a story undermined what Astrid taught her disciples, she kept this inconvenient “truth” to herself. The elves, enraged by her omissions, visited on her a terrible death, one that culminated with her body being torn apart by wild dogs. Luckily, a miracle occurred: the rotting carcass of one of those dogs was found by a goblin called Flem (later Flem the First). He ate the carcass and from the spoiled meat discovered the truth Astrid had hidden. Armed with the knowledge, he set out to reveal it to the world.

Of course, all of this is bunk. The faeries living in the hidden kingdoms left behind goblins, fauns, and others without sparing a thought for their wellbeing. Goblins earned their exile. Fauns are ugly things, spawned from the sullied loins of mortals. And the rest who opted not to retreat from the world chose their fates. None of these things deterred Flem’s followers from fabricating a story and clinging to it as if a deity on a high mountain handed it down to them.

The Children of the Second Gathering has survived the centuries, despite being considered a heretical group by the fathers and mothers of the New God’s cult. Virtually unknown outside of the Northern Reach, it has a few enclaves in the west where the touch of the fey folk is most felt. What few temples exist are mostly found in small towns: big enough to attract a community of fey-blooded but not large enough for such types to be ignored in the crowd. Cult rites typically include eating rotting carcasses in honor of Flem the First, so in some places the local farmers find them quite useful. This habit and their preference to keep to themselves have helped them survive and, to some extent, grow their numbers.

As with all cults, however, there are those who are too impatient to simply wait for promises to be fulfilled. Sometimes this expresses itself as murderous rage as the Children blame humans for the elf exile and rise up to deliver punishment. Other times, such as now, they risk everything for an arcane possibility.

The traditions of magic associated with this cult are Illusion, Life, and Nature.

GETTING STARTED

It’s up to you to figure out the best way to hook your characters into this adventure. If they are itinerant adventurers looking for jobs, Sammandria finds them by reputation. Any magicians or rogues would likely know of her business operations. Inquiries about her confirm she deals fairly but cannily: She can get you what you need but always comes out ahead on the deal. If not a business deal, she could be a friend or relative of the characters, reaching out for a favor.

SELLING SALVATION

Sammandria Jann (as **apprentice wizard**) deals in antiques. She funds treasure hunters to explore the ruins and caves in the Northern Reach and the Desolation beyond and then uses agents to find buyers for the

recovered valuables. She is a large, stately woman who dresses to modestly show her wealth and stature, as well as to ensure that her customers believe her promises and know she will make good on her threats.

The dealer in antiquities has come into possession of the *Flute of Farewell*, a relic retrieved from Spider Wood. Research reveals the relic opens a door to Alfheim when played. (It opens a door, but to Hell, though Jann doesn’t know this.) Her agents put her in touch with a zealous member of the Second Gathering whom, she was informed, would pay almost anything for it. Vett Asherdon, a ranking cultist, is a **faun** who never belonged anywhere and came to believe his life would only have meaning after finding the way to Alfheim. When he learned of the *Flute*, he saw in it the salvation his cult had been promising. To meet Jann’s asking price of 100 gold crowns, the faun sold the temple and the surrounding lands, as well as bled his congregation of their entire savings. Although delighted to have found a buyer for the relic, Sammandria isn’t stupid enough to complete the transaction in person. On more than one occasion, her customers have tried to double-cross her. Rather than put herself at risk, she needs some toughs to deliver the relic and bring back the coin on her behalf.

THE FLUTE OF FAREWELL

The relic recovered from the Spider Wood was fashioned by faeries, but not by those living in the Bright Realms; it was carved by those faeries lurking in the depths of the world, the insane, corrupted devils sworn to sully mortal souls and feast on their pain. The *Flute* belongs to a cruel and rapacious fury who uses it to lure fools and treasure seekers into Hell, where they can be made permanent residents. Examining the instrument reveals it is made from bone, about as long as a child’s forearm, whittled and carved with elfish runes. Sounding the flute creates an eerie sound of weeping of women.

Ticket to Paradise If you use an action to play the flute and continue playing it, you and each creature within short range who can hear the music see a magnificent golden stag appear in an open space of the GM’s choosing within long range of you. The stag turns and runs off, disappearing behind cover. Each creature that could see the stag must get a success on a Will challenge roll or become compelled for 1 minute. A compelled creature must use an action each round to rush after the stag. The first creature to reach the spot where the stag disappeared spies a hole torn in reality and through it can be seen a city of white spires. (To determine who reaches the hole in reality, have each affected creature roll a d6. The creature with the highest result gets there first.) The creature must then get a success on a Will challenge roll with 1 bane or dive through the hole, which causes it to disappear behind the creature. The vanished creature tumbles into Hell, unlikely to be seen again, while each other affected creature that saw the city gains 1d3 Insanity.

Pass It On The flute is designed to spread madness through its many owners. Anyone possessing it for more than seven days attracts the attention of a **fury**. The fury appears somewhere within 1d6 miles of the owner, then unerringly tracks the bearer down and attempts to kill him. She then takes the flute back to her masters in Hell, who likely return it to the mortal realm to make mischief again.

MEETING SAMMANDRIA

Sammandria invites the characters to her lodgings to explain the job. If you set the adventure in a large city, this location should be her house (and in this case the temple stands a short distance outside the city walls). If it is in a smaller town or rural location, it should take place in high-quality lodgings where she stays until she concludes her business.

A polite host, her halfling servant Jessamine plies the characters with drinks as Sammandria explains the situation: she never makes exchanges herself for personal safety and needs competent people to ensure the item gets to the buyer and the money back to her. If asked if she has reason to expect trouble, she smiles and says she always expects trouble, which is why she always takes precautions.

She offers the group 5 gc for their services. She intimates her power and influence across the Reach would make taking the 100 gc and running a very unprofitable idea. She has visited the temple herself briefly and tells the characters how to reach it. She also tells them they should deal only with Vett himself. Assuming they agree to her terms, she presents them with a rectangular wooden box with a single iron lock that holds the *Flute*. She asks them to count the money when they receive it, put it into the box after handing over the relic, and return the box to her. She gives them a brass key to unlock it.

Sammandria does not tell them much about the relic, insisting they don't need to know. If they press hard or express worry about dark magic, she tell them it is an elf relic, and they are taking it to a group who worship the fey folk as gods. She also stresses it is fragile so they should not take it out of the box.

TEMPLE TROUBLES

The characters might know nothing of the Children of the Second Gathering nor have time to investigate them, but much can be learned from observing the temple and its cultists.

The temple consists of an old stone building with a cracked and gap-ridden roof supported by a dozen fluted columns. Arranged around the temple are twenty or more tents, lean-tos, and huts, all huddled around cook fires. A stream bubbles out from a crack in the ground and takes a winding course to the south.

CULTISTS

The Children are exuberant because Father Vett has been promising them their journey to Alfheim is at hand. This has boosted their natural evangelism, and any goblins or fauns among the characters will be greeted on sight with exaltations about the Good News and invitations to join them. Non-faerie characters will be given a side-eye as mortals are uncommon members of the cult.

From the greeters, the group can learn the cult's beliefs and what Father Vett has promised. Looking around, the group gets a sense of the cost of those promises: The cultists are all dressed in rags and the temple is run down. There are clear signs where ornaments and decoration have been pried off the walls and doors. Inside, everyone huddles around the fireplace for very thin meals. Not everyone is as excited as the greeters either; many are downcast and preoccupied. Many doubt selling everything that they own will deliver them to Alfheim.

CHILD OF THE SECOND GATHERING

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 or 1 faerie

Perception 12 (+2); shadowsight

Defense 14 (soft leather); **Health** 8

Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 9 (-1)
Speed 10

Immune damage from disease; charmed, diseased

Iron Vulnerability A child is impaired while in contact with objects made from iron.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Club (melee) +0 (1d6)

Bow (long range) +0 (1d6)

FATHER MALTHIAS

The least sure of all is Father Malthias. An aged changeling who stands below Vett in the cult hierarchy, he has been a member longer than the leader and has seen enough false leads and dashed hopes that he's skeptical about the *Flute*. He's almost certain Vett bet the farm on a pig in a poke and that he'll be left holding the baby when the truth comes out. He lacks the power to stop Vett's actions, but he still tries to stop the deal, which is why as soon as there's word about strangers bringing a delivery he meets the characters before they can meet Vett.

Malthias rushes up to them and demands the characters hand over their package to him. Since the characters were told only to deal with Vett, it will take some diplomacy, distraction, or even force to get around Malthias. If and when they do, Malthias switches to Plan B, which involves finding out everything he can about the deal—what's in the box, what it does, and, most importantly, who the characters are and whom they are working for. He makes sure to accompany them when they meet Vett.

Somewhere between Malthias getting his questions answered and the characters leaving, he wanders off to put the rest of his plan into motion: assembling a gang of likeminded cultists to ambush the characters on their way home and steal back the money.

FATHER MALTHIAS

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1 faerie

Perception 14 (+4); shadowsight
Defense 12 (hard leather); **Health** 31
Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 13 (+3), **Will** 9 (-1)
Speed 10
Immune damage from disease; charmed, diseased
Iron Vulnerability Malthias is impaired while in contact with objects made from iron.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Staff (melee) +1 (1d6 + 1)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Shared Recovery Malthias can use an action to heal 7 damage and allow one creature within short range to heal damage equal to its healing rate. Once Malthias uses Shared Recovery, he cannot do so again until he completes a rest.

Steal Identity Malthias can use an action to alter his appearance to match that of a living creature he can see within short range. The target must be Size 1/2 or 1 and have a humanoid shape of flesh and blood. His body changes so that he looks like the target, though his clothing and possession remain unchanged. The effect lasts until he uses Steal Identity again. If he becomes incapacitated or touches an object made from iron, he immediately reverts to his normal appearance.

Prayer When a creature within short range of Malthias makes an attack roll or challenge roll, he can use a triggered action to grant 1 boon to the triggering roll. If Malthias uses Prayer to grant a creature 1 boon on an attack roll, the creature's attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

MAGIC

Power 3
Illusion *clamor* (4), *thimberig* (2), *invisibility* (1)
Life *minor healing* (4), *major healing* (1)
Nature *oak hide* (4), *overgrowth* (2), *fiery pinecones* (1)

FATHER VETT

The cult leader, Vett is happy to hand over the money and answer all questions about the *Flute* and what he hopes it will do, which is take the entire cult to Alfheim. Vett dismisses any suggestion that it might not do this or could be dangerous in any way. He has risked far too much for his mind to allow any possibility of failure to filter through.

Vett is good to his word and fetches them a hundred crowns, most of it in silver and copper. Vett thanks them for their service and sends them off. The exuberant faithful give them blessings of the fey as they go and ask any fey characters to return for the great event.

FATHER VETT

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1 human (faun)

Perception 13 (+3); shadowsight
Defense 13 (soft leather); **Health** 30
Strength 9 (-1), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 12 (+2)
Speed 12
Quick Step When Father Vett uses an action, he can move 1 yard before or after the action, provided his Speed is at least 1.
Favor When Vett makes an attack roll or a challenge roll, he can make the roll with 1 boon. If the roll results in a failure, he gains 1 Insanity and loses this trait until he completes a rest.
Skittish Father Vett makes Will challenge rolls with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Staff (melee) +2 (1d6 + 1)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Shared Recovery Vett can use an action to heal 7 damage and allow one creature within short range to heal damage equal to its healing rate. Once Vett uses Shared Recovery, he cannot do so again until he completes a rest.

Prayer When a creature within short range of Vett makes an attack roll or challenge roll, he can use a triggered action to grant 1 boon to the triggering roll. If Vett uses Prayer to grant a creature 1 boon on an attack roll, the creature's attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

MAGIC

Power 3
Illusion *disguise* (4)
Life *minor healing* (4), *cure* (2), *vitality burst* (1)
Nature *magic acorns* (4), *healing berries* (2), *shillelagh* (2), *forest walk* (1)

AMBUSH

Malthias hopes to overwhelm the player characters with numbers. He gathers twice as many **goblins** as there are characters in the group, plus two **gremlins**, and himself (see below). He's not willing to fight to the death but he has no problem murdering the characters. After all, he believes they are con artists bent on stealing his cult's lifeblood for their personal gain.

Malthias would follow the group back to their employer, but shadowing a group with their numbers would make doing so difficult if not impossible. If the characters do anything at all to look for a tail or guard against an ambush, they spot Malthias and his gang; if they succeed on a Perception challenge roll as well, they notice them early enough to set a counter-ambush of their own. Military professions grant 1 boon to this roll. If Malthias' gang ambushes the characters, they use bows from a distance before closing in to fight in hand-to-hand combat. If they are ambushed, they go straight into melee.

MURDER

After dealing with the ambush, the characters have no further trouble reaching Sammandria. However, she has had trouble herself. There's no answer at her door and pushing in reveals a grisly sight: Sammandria's body lying headless on the floor. The flaming sword that performed the execution also set fire to her severed head, which sits on the desk. It is little more than a blackened skull with the hair singed to dust, the flesh peeled back to reveal half-melted eyes, and a roasted tongue. Anyone seeing this must get a success on a Will challenge roll or gain 1 Insanity.

The place has also been ransacked. Searching characters find Jessamine weeping in the corner. When she comes out of her shock and realizes the characters aren't going to kill her, she provides a traumatized version of the events. She describes a beautiful woman in a blood-stained dress and holding a sword made of fire. The woman kicked in the door screaming with rage about retrieving that which belonged to her. She didn't give Sammandria a chance to answer; she just knocked her to her knees and then cut off her head. The severed head screamed and screamed as it burned, Jessamine recalls with a shiver.

If they ask, Jessamine pays them the 5 gc they are owed.

THE FURY

The killer is a **fury**, a devil loosed from Hell to murder oathbreakers and traitors. Bound to the relic, the fury must seek it out and carry it off to new victims, as an ancient geas compels her. Not finding it with the woman, the fury heads off to the temple to murder everyone there in a similar fashion. As she is not certain of the relic's location yet, the characters can beat her there by a few minutes and warn the cult, should they be inclined to do so.

If the characters do nothing or just run, they are safe from the devil. About an hour later, plumes of smoke rise from the temple, and the watch brings back bodies the next day, dismembered and burnt until their flesh cracked. You might remind the players that their characters saw many women and children at the temple. The number of dead depends on where you set the adventure; in a large town, the cult could have over fifty members. The characters don't suffer any Corruption for running, however.

TAKING THE MONEY

The characters might never return to Sammandria, keeping the coins for themselves. They may come to a similar decision after finding her dead. This will have consequences. Sammandria and Jessamine know their faces and names and alert any security in the town to the theft. Jessamine fights like a tiger for this last bit of respect due her employer, and exaggerates their crimes happily. She employs lawyers and bounty hunters if need be. She has access to her mistress' substantial wealth and network of contacts. So, even if the characters do elude pursuit for now, they may find themselves in later adventures unable to sell enchanted objects or relics they find or get treasure hunting jobs because every buyer in the Reach will believe the characters double-crossed and murdered Sammandria. However, a hundred crowns might still be worth it...

INTO THE FIRE

Whether they come to warn or aid the cultists, the fury arrives at the Temple mere minutes after the characters. Most of the cultists are non-combatants, **6 children of the Second Gathering** join the fight with clubs as well as any survivors from the earlier fight. Father Vett also offers to fight, but when he realizes the fury wants the flute, he instead moves to protect it, perhaps even running away with it.

A better option than fighting the fury is to just give her the *Flute*. If anyone does this, she immediately stops fighting and flies away. Getting it from Father Vett is the challenge. He'll do everything he can, including the use of violence, to keep the flute, and if he thinks he will lose it, he blows it to summon the stag. Seeing the creature distracts him long enough for someone to snatch it away and end the bloodshed.

Surviving cult members are grateful to the group for their aid, and henceforth always feed and clothe the characters whenever they pass through, albeit from their new venue in the poorest end of town. If they give the cult their money back, or enough to save their temple from being sold, they will be praised forever and maybe even immortalized in holy writ.

The cult is a good source for further adventures, as Vett spent many years studying elvish lore. His students and library can point the characters to other treasures and mysteries.

Jessamine, merchant colleagues of Sammandria, and her adventuring clients looking for help in their own quests might create additional opportunities for the characters.

