

# Session 002 - Thorn

Standing outside the door, they can hear an intense argument going on inside. Brassdagger, a catfolk man, opens the door and gestures for them to head further inside. They go into the far room and listen quietly as the argument a tiefling woman and old man continues. They learn that Opalneria is requesting soldiers from Governor Karim to aid her in a ritual to track down the cultists that she believes are responsible for the dwindling population of Riverton. The governor continues to refuse her request with the logic that the few soldiers remaining must stay to protect what is left of the town.

The adventurers soon offer to help Opalneria with her cultist hunt for a price before asking the governor for more information about the quest to aid Riverton. Governor Karim reveals that villagers have been disappearing for months now and he'd like for them to find them and return them safely to town. Looking through the contract he has quickly drafted, they soon notice that part of their reward, priority choice on future quests from the `Pathfinder's Society`, is limited to one month. Quick negotiations follow and they agree to the final deal of 100 gold for finding villagers and priority on quests for a full year. The governor receives missives from a courier and begins skimming through them as he shoos the group out. Athe catches the old governor give an odd look to Kat as they leave and wonders as to what he might know about her.

The group makes plans to meet with Opalneria in the morning and part ways to find lodgings. Deals had to be made with a merchant that had rented a double bed for himself so they could all have beds to sleep in. Save for the Austere who revealed he does not need to sleep like his fleshy companions, and instead works on prototyping a cane embossed with Griffon imagery. While he is working with wood in the dead of night, he hears a young child call to him to play but cannot find them.

He soon returns to his craft before conversing for some time with the Innkeeper about himself. He soon retires to a seat near the hearth and idles for the rest of the night.

Opalneria meets them at the inn while they eat a wonderful meal prepared by `Inn Keeper`, who hails from a long line of exquisite innkeepers. The five depart to Zogla's smithy to retrieve The Austere's weapon before heading northward out of town. They encounter a rowdy group of orcs along the path that have surrounded an old woman and are attempting to teach her the proper cadence for the music they are playing. When the woman spies the adventurers approaching, she points to them and yells, "Doom" before she collapses on the spot. Following the crone's finger, the orcs approach the group and requests them to join in the songs and dance.

Athe is quick to oblige and shows exquisite moves as she dances to the song the orcs are playing. They are less enthused with Kat's attempts to mimic the dance and ask her to stop. They sing and dance some more before the orcs bid them farewell and continue on their way. The group

approaches where the woman lie dead with no obvious wounds. The Austere reckons that she was a `Doomsayer`, a crone known for predicting tragedy upon others. With that new information, the group follows the path east.

They encounter a crossroads with a signpost indicating Riverton to the west, `Sanctuary` to the north, an unknown village to the east, and no markings for the southern path. Searching the area provides them with an explosive devices filled with needles that had been tucked away within a hollow tree trunk. Nearby they find a small collections of wild pups that seem to beckon for them to follow. With little hesitation they accept the invitation and follow the pups north along the path marked for Sanctuary.

As the canopy grows thicker overhead, the group finds themselves in darkness, conjuring a light before continuing on. The overgrown path they find themselves on is lined by multiple groups of wild pups that simply sit and watch them as the continue. The trees grows sparse and a large circular clearing of exposed stone enters their view. As they descend the path into the heart of the clearing and nearing a large stone jutting from its center, they notice that even more dogs are surrounding the edge of the rock and watching them. Thaniel climbs atop the center stone but is quickly batted off as `Thorn`, a large wolf grasping a sword in its teeth, leaps from the tree line onto the stone.

She refuses to let them leave unless the group can defeat her in combat so she can judge their worth. A difficult and bloody fight follows in which the group emerges victorious with more wounds and less blood than they started with. They bandage their wounds and swear to keep the dog sanctuary secret and even direct other dogs they find here. They spend the night there, cuddling with the pups as they talk about themselves and their past before settling for the night.

In the morning, they break camp and bid adieu to Thorn and the pups before heading to the crossroads to destroy the sign pointing to Sanctuary. As the sign burns, Thaniel and Kat attempt to roll a log to block the path but are unable to make any meaningful progress before Charles moves it over at the Austere's beckoning. Rain begins to fall as the group depart to the unknown village to the east. The rain has already evolved into a full storm by the time they arrive in the abandoned village. They quickly take shelter in the nearest building before discussing their path moving forward.

The agree to clear the area of any dangers before they begin the day-long ritual and begin entering each house one after another thanks to the Athe's skill with a lockpick and the Austere's ability to repair any picks that break in the process. Most houses are empty, likely from past looters, but they do find a couple of precious gems and a medicine staff. While watching their surroundings, Kat notices a few small figures creeping in the darkness of a house they have yet to visit. Aware that they are not alone, the group continues their steady progress to the northern houses where the figures were seen. They find that most of the doors here are unlocked and the interiors empty. When Thaniel enters one of the houses, he is ambushed by some large rats and alerts his companions outside.