



# ALTARQUEST

## *Out of Luxen Story Guide*



# Introduction

Since the fall of the evil conqueror, Kretch, the untamed lands of Aridika have turned from a realm of horrors to one of heroes. The vampire lords—known as the Thralls—have retreated to their castles, weary of their war against the invading Austrans, while the other warmongering creatures have slunk back into the ruins and crypts that now litter the cursed countryside. The newly elected warrior queen of Five Holds, Valory Wexton, has called for aspiring heroes to venture into the wounded lands in an effort to bring peace and prosperity to a realm despoiled by violence and horror.

Aridika had suddenly become a beacon of hope that the allied people of Eastony so desperately needed after the brief, yet terrible reign of Kretch.

But there was something more. The queen spoke in depth with you about the fabled altars that had emerged in Aridika since Kretch's arrival. "My scholars tell me they are tied to the slumbering lich queen, Szera," Valory informed you. "They delve deep into the histories to make connections or find answers to these phenomena. But it is up to heroes like you to investigate them firsthand as we strive to understand their purpose."

The day before your departure for Aridika, you received an urgent message from the queen with instructions that its seal only be broken when you depart Middenvale.

Choose a player to be the party leader. That player finds **2** **Valory's Message** in the story deck, reads it aloud, and then adds it to the journal.

The province of Luxen rests on the eastern border, serving as the gateway between the peaceful lands of Five Holds and a world of danger and adventure. Since Queen Valory's historic coronation, heroes have poured into Aridika to win glory for the newly forged crown—though many of those heroes had forgotten the queen's own decree:

"All able-bodied aspirants, heed this call," the royal criers announced in every Five Holds village, carrying Valory's words. "The Queen of the Five Holds and all of Eastony has requested errants to carry out her will in the troubled lands of Aridika! She has vanquished Kretch and liberated all Aridikans from tyranny, but her quest is far from over!"

You were but one of many would-be heroes that answered that call. Thus began your journey to the town of Hawthorn in Luxen. The journey was astonishingly pleasant; the late spring makes for fair travel weather, and the queen ensured you were well provisioned. It wasn't until you had crossed through the mountain pass into Luxen that you encountered the first frox.

The frog-like creatures have crept far enough into Five Holds that you are no stranger to them, but this one moves awkwardly—not even hiding from your presence. It limps toward the main road, collapsing into the tall grass before reaching you.

You sense some sort of trap...

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Approach the collapsed frox to investigate: **026**
- ▶ Continue on quickly to Hawthorn before more frox show up: **008**

**Note:** When players are presented options in a story, they mutually decide on one of those options (unless otherwise specified) and read the corresponding entry in the story appendix at the end of the story guide. After reading any specified entries in the story appendix, players continue reading the story where they left off.

# Chapter 1

A cloudy morning breaks over Hawthorn as you wake in the quaint Inn at the Orchard. Your rustic accommodations are just outside of Hawthorn's town walls—if that is what you call the meager stone barrier that protects the rural town against the otherwise tame landscape that surrounds it. You prepare for your scheduled meeting at dawn with Mayor Bolton, taking only a few moments to banter with the inn's burry-folk proprietor and happily accepting her complimentary breakfast.

Perform the first 2 steps of normal game setup, then each hero gains 1 focus.

The mayor's estate is nestled in the center of Hawthorn, on the corner of the town's main thoroughfare and next door to a smithy's shop called "Westric's Wares." Several crudely armored town guards nod at your passing, certainly keeping a close eye on you but also clearly not surprised to see more travelers in these parts.

The queen's instructions were very clear: meet with her close ally Mayor Bolton and gain his support. Her more discreet instructions were a little less clear, however. You are unsure how pressing it is to find this Huey character she spoke of, but certainly he isn't worth keeping the mayor waiting for...

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Search for Huey: **018**
- ▶ Head to the mayor's estate immediately: **001**

"Thank you, Suzy," Morse says as his burryfolk servant sets down a tray of tea and quickly exits the study, shutting the double doors behind her. The vampire turns his attention to you. "Forgive the meager offerings, but things in Luxen haven't exactly been prosperous of late. Knowing the queen, she has probably left it for me to inform you of the situation at hand. Since Valory's coronation, restlessness has taken hold in Aridika—a vacuum of power, so to speak. There are many heroes like yourselves roaming the provinces, and while many of them are of similar noble intent, others have stirred up trouble and increased tension in each of the provinces. Here in Luxen, we are suffering the effects as these heroes press farther west into Aridika."

Morse rises from his chair and takes a rolled piece of parchment from his shelf and unrolls it on the table between you. He uses a pale finger tipped in a long, sharp nail to point to Luxen on the map of Aridika. "Our province is nearest to Five Holds, which works in our favor in many ways, but it also means we are the most removed from the happenings in Aridika. I can't say for sure what has caused it, but Raglanders have been driven out of the western provinces—maybe by valiant heroes, maybe something else—and have claimed our province as their new home. If that weren't bad enough, our existing frox problem has already gotten out of hand—farms are raided regularly, travelers robbed and killed on the roads. Now the frox and Raglanders quarrel over their meager holds in Luxen, and my people are caught in the middle."

The mayor soberly continues his report, detailing how one of his personal caravans was recently ambushed while bringing his family's heirlooms to Hawthorn from his old keep, the Harrows. "My first task for you is to recover something of mine that was stolen by these Raglander wretches," Morse instructs, moving over to a satchel on the floor behind his luxurious chair. He places the satchel on the table, on top of the map. It is clearly filled with travel supplies.

Each hero gains 1 supply.

The mayor sits down again. "Among the many things stolen was an urn—very decorative, filigreed in crimson metals. I need it returned to me; leave the old tapestries and take whatever else of my treasures you recover as payment, just bring me the urn. It is... precious to me."

- ▶ You may ask why Morse or his personal guards can't recover the urn themselves: **027**
- ▶ If **4** **Mysterious Stone** is in the journal, you may show it to Morse: **016**
- ▶ If **5** **Huey** is in the journal, you must listen to him banter with Morse: **006**



“My scouts know exactly where the Raglanders are holed up,” Morse says, motioning to a collection of hills on the map right outside of Hawthorn. “It’s close—much too close to my liking. Knowing that Valory sent you to me, I trust you fully in this matter and have faith you’ll bring back that urn. It is not safe out there...”

## Quest Setup

Finding the Raglanders’ lair with the mayor’s map poses no real trouble. However, as you approach the entryway into what must be an underground ruin, a cruel stench overpowers you...

Each hero must **TEST** **2**; each hero that fails suffers 2 damage.

- **Quest Deck:** The Search
- **Threat Deck:** Raglanders
- **Villain Deck:** Gert

**Note:** The decks listed under “Quest Setup” specify which decks players should use when setting up that quest. If an entry lists “Any” deck, then players may choose which deck to use for that quest.

## Campaign Upkeep

Each hero heals all their damage and discards all their focus. For every 3 supply the party has, they may gain 1 random *Equipment* card and add it to the journal. Then, discard all supply.

### If the heroes won the quest:

As you emerge from the pungent depths that the Raglanders have claimed as their new foothold, you unwrap the heavy object you managed to find.

Add **6** **Decorative Urn** to the journal.

Each hero adds 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to their hero to the journal.

- ▶ If **5** **Huey** is not in the journal: **020**

### If the heroes lost the quest:

Unable to withstand the horrid stench that permeates from the Raglanders, you hurry out of their underground lair into the welcoming sunlight—empty-handed.

Add 1 random enemy upgrade card to the journal.

- ▶ If **5** **Huey** is in the journal: **002**
- ▶ If **5** **Huey** is not in the journal: **005**



# Chapter 2

*The journey back to Hawthorn is uncomfortable—Huey spends most of the trip warning you about the mayor and his lies. “They say he’s a Thrall,” Huey says, not for the first time. “They whisper in the inns and shops—not just in Hawthorn, but in Luxford and Bridgewater... all the way to Nethermoor. I’m not saying he is, mind you. But rumors have seeds of truth. Vampires are drawn to their brethren—they never truly turn their back on Chalys and its old ways.”*

If you are a vampire hero, your mouth tightens and you nod in reluctant agreement.

*As the sun begins to fall behind the trees and Hawthorn’s quaint rooftops come into view, Huey motions to stop. “It’s probably better if I return to the library—and you to the inn. We should convene with the mayor tomorrow to have him tell us the tale of his precious keepsake.”*

*A warm hearth and fresh meal at the inn is hard to argue with, so you concede to Huey’s advice. You arrive at Luck’s Inn just as the evening stew is served and take a brief moment to chat with Luck, the gnarled old Elvhan’ai that ladles your dinner into a carved out hunk of roughbread. “What would a strapping adventurer want to know from a sour old elf like me?” Luck asks you with a wink, her face aged with wisdom but not with wrinkles.*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Ask Luck about Huey: **028**
- ▶ Ask Luck about Mayor Bolton: **012**
- ▶ Try to trick Luck into telling you secrets of her own: **014**

After resting for the night, you awake to another clear morning and make your way down to the common room. Luck’s burryfolk cook, Oluff, provides you with a quick breakfast consisting of hard cheese, sausage, and fresh-baked burrybread—which was enough to stuff you even without the cheese and meat. As you finish your breakfast, a young lady dwarf bursts into the common room and bellows a boisterous, “Mornin’ folks!” She slams down a harp case on the table next to you just as you’re preparing to take your leave.

Each hero must choose one of the following:

- ▶ Stay and speak with the dwarf bard about your exploits in Luxen: **007**
- ▶ Take your leave so you have time to resupply in town: **015**

*Meeting up in the late afternoon at the wrought iron gates of Mayor Bolton’s manor, a well-dressed servant bearing the mayor’s own heraldry greets you, taking time to catch the eye of each person present. “The mayor is currently indisposed, but has asked that I give you his best and see you to the atrium in his absence.” He makes a wide gesture with his foal-leather gloved hand for you to enter, the gates creaking open eerily and beckoning you into the dark house beyond...*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Excuse yourself and come back after sundown when Mayor Bolton should be available: **019**
- ▶ Accept the invitation and continue...

*After enjoying the amenities for what seemed like forever in the shadow of your impatience, Mayor Bolton enters the room with a freshly bathed and dressed adolescent burryfolk. “Master Tallowleaf has informed me that his family homestead has been beset upon by Raglander raiders, their blood up and hunger bottomless. No doubt due to the presence of a thrice-damned altar poisoning the world near their wallow. He has agreed, as a favor to me, to show you the way to his home so you may track down the beasts and put them to the blade. I have yet to have definitive proof, but the awakening of the stones is tied to the newfound brazenness of our local malfasant species.” Producing a small sack from behind him, he tosses it onto the table perfectly between the wine carafe and cheese serving ware without so much as a clink of crystal or silver.*



If **5** Huey is in the journal: **032**

*“For your patience with my particular... proclivities... take this,” he nods to the bag, as if it were not apparent, “I hope it will help you find justice for the Tallowleafs, and bring us that much closer to understanding what these damned altars are doing to us all.” The mayor pulls back a tied leather curtain and looks at the violet of recent dusk on the horizon, his reflection smeared and nearly translucent in the leaded glass. “Go now, and you might make it before the Witch’s Bells.”*

A hero may search the search deck for a copy of “Potion of Healing,” “Potion of Might,” or “Quickroot” and gain control of it.

► Go to **030**

## Quest Setup

*As you approach the frox lair, you spot deep cloven prints from a massive raglander heading into the subterranean ruins as well. Hopefully whatever has made the frogmen go all rabid won’t take hold on it as well, but you should be ready either way—if you can be.*

If no hero controls **3** **Mysterious Stone**: each hero must **TEST**  **2**; each hero that fails suffers 1 damage.

- **Quest Deck:** The Cleansing
- **Threat Deck:** Frox
- **Villain Deck:** Gert

## Campaign Upkeep

Each hero heals all their damage and discards all their focus. For every 3 supply the party has they may gain 1 random *Equipment* card and add it to the journal. Then, discard all supply.

### If the heroes won the quest:

*You are satisfied the altars here are reset back to their original states, even if you were forced to spill too much frox blood to make it happen. You can return to the surface and get back to the Mayor with good news.*

Each hero adds 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to their hero to the journal.

- If **3** **Mysterious Stone** is not in the journal: **033**
- If **5** **Huey** is in the journal: **025**
- If **5** **Huey** is not in the journal: **036**

### If the heroes lost the quest:

*Those altars, those damnable things, have really whipped the local beasts into a frenzy. They were just too much to deal with right now, and they forced you out of the ruins again. Perhaps the Mayor was right and these altars are truly to blame, but tonight you won’t get any more information in this dank hole. Time to leave, regroup, lick your wounds, and come back strong—if you can.*

Add 1 random enemy upgrade card to the journal.

- If **5** **Huey** is in the journal: **029**
- If **5** **Huey** is not in the journal: **036**

# Chapter 3

After being passed around the mob of thralls like herded sheep, you are brought to the mouth of an old shattered wellhouse. As your captors shove you closer, a chittering, flapping column of leathery winged vermin blast up out of the darkness into the night sky. Just as the last of the bats wing away into the night, one of your vampire ushers rolls out a web of worn, moldy ropes pitoned to the collapsed stonework, disappearing into the maw of the well right after.

Perform the first 2 steps of normal game setup, then each hero must either discard 1 card or

**RESIST** (4).

Staring down the abyss of the well, you let the rest of your senses sharpen in on what might lie beyond. You can hear the scratch of claws on stone, the hissing of beasts in the dark, and smell the stench of death and decay wafting up from the depths.

“Down you go,” a pudgy thrall with fire in her eyes shoves you by the shoulders, “the countess awaits.”

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Lower yourselves down willingly: **011**
- ▶ Resist the Thralls and try to escape: **017**

## Quest Setup

There is the stench of death all around you mixed with the old stink of frog slime and mold. Everything is moist and dank. Even the flame of your torch acts as though it doesn't want to glow at full light. If it weren't for the soft glow of scattered moonmoss patches on the ceiling, you'd be stumbling blindly in the darkness, looking for a way out!

- **Quest Deck:** The Escape
- **Threat Deck:** The Thralls
- **Villain Deck:** Wynora Morn

## Campaign Upkeep

Each hero heals all their damage and discards all their focus. For every 3 supply the party has, they may gain 1 random *Equipment* card and add it to the journal. Then, discard all supply.

### If the heroes won the quest:

With one final, wood-splintering kick, you shatter the shuttered portal in the wall. You breathe a heavy sigh of relief as the morning sun streams in from the opening, taking in the fresh air of the outside again.

Each hero adds 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to their hero to the journal.

- ▶ If the heroes defeated Wynora Morn: **034**
- ▶ If the heroes did not defeat Wynora Morn: **023**

### If the heroes lost the quest:

Claws at your back, you squeeze between a pair of wedged stones just big enough for you and your packs, only barely pulling yourselves through before the thralls can snatch you back inside. You feel the tearing of their talons at your legs as the light of morning blinds you.

Add 1 random enemy upgrade card to the journal.

- ▶ If the heroes defeated Wynora Morn: **035**
- ▶ If the heroes did not defeat Wynora Morn: **023**



# Chapter 4

Wasting no time when you get back to Hawthorn, you head straight to the mayor's house. Having come and gone from here as often as you have, the only pause the gate guard gives is due to the caked-on filth covering you from days of trudging in those disgusting lairs. Once he sees past the grime, his eyes go wide, "Oh! My apologies! Come in, come in! I will send for the master immediately!" He pauses, subtly putting a gloved finger under his nose, "Let's show you to the baths while you wait."

After what feels like forever and after burning through two bars of lye getting cleaned up, you are shown back to the mayor's study and the amenities within. Draped in an exquisite long coat of kid leather, the mayor waits for you, lounging in his high-backed chair, goblet in hand. He turns to you, the questions already on his ruby lips.

"Where have you been? I thought we lost you..."

► If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is in the journal:  
**038**

After detailing the last several days' events in as much detail as you can muster, Bolton's unblinking eyes remain fixed on you. The minutes pass by as you explain, the servants of the house refilling your cups and bringing food whenever you need. He nods lightly as the facts unfold. Finally he sighs, "Wynora Morn..." he shakes his head slowly, "How far she has fallen! I feel like I just saw her... Could it be the altars are poisoning her thoughts as well?" He becomes lost in his thoughts for a moment, snapping back to attention with a sudden wrinkle in his brow.

"Huey knows more about these altars and what it is doing to the denizens of our world," Bolton gestured to his servant. "Send for the old man." He returns his gaze and attention to you...

► If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is in the journal:  
**009**

"So much around us has changed greatly in the last few days," he refills his cup from a dark bottle in a side cabinet, "I cannot wave it away as merely coincidence. It hasn't just been the frox going after the Raglanders, either. Nests of poxoid have blistered up from down below all over the countryside. I've heard of increased bray attacks in the west. We've all heard the Moon Children in the hills. Now there are Thralls packing up under Wynora's twisted banner? It has to be connected." He starts toward the door. "We can talk more tomorrow, after we find Huey. He knows more than he has been letting on, for sure. There are guest rooms upstairs for each of you. Please, stay and get some rest. You'll need it."

It takes you awhile to calm your mind, but the strong drink and noble trappings help you find slumber nonetheless. For a few short hours you are surrounded by strange dreams, unwanted memories, and, for some, unsettling images.

Perform the first 2 steps of normal game setup.

- If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is not in the journal, add **4** **Well Rested** to the journal.
- If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is in the journal:  
**040**

You are awakened suddenly by the mayor himself bursting into your rooms, a simple meal and a spiced "table wine" ready for you to start the new day. "Get up, get dressed, and meet us downstairs." He pauses before sweeping out the door again, "Huey has been captured."

Meeting in the study, Morse greets you with a rough drawn map that looks like it goes to a swampy ruin nearly half a day's walk from Hawthorn's walls. "We were right! I knew it! The appearance of all those altars and the madness they are bringing with their awakening is a threat to us all, and Huey knows more about those damned things than anyone else this side of the Silverehn's banks." He spins on his heels and thrusts a strip of torn yellow linen sleeve into the air, "Huey's robe! This was found in the hollow just outside of town. Strange tracks all around it, and my... men... tell me they lead to the lair on this map." The timbre of his voice transforms into a veritable growl.



“Go and find Huey,” the mayor orders flatly. “If monsters like Morn want him, he must know something truly important. We need him back. We need what he knows about the altars, the monsters, and Wynora’s thrice-damned child.” He nods to his manservant, who brings in a pile of heavy leather satchels while you can’t help but ponder on how much more Morse might know than he’s telling you...

“You’re already packed,” Bolton looks worried, but still maintains an air of confidence, “no time to waste, my friends.”

The heroes search the search deck for the “Discarded Pack” card and resolve it.

## Quest Setup

You follow the tracks—and a suspiciously convenient number of torn strips of yellow linen from Huey’s robe are tucked conspicuously into bushes and hedgerows along the way—to a looming black rend in the side of a loamy mound. The stones inside are rough and uneven, creating a natural staircase leading down into what you hope will be where you will liberate the old coot and bring him back to Bolton. Easy, right?

- **Quest Deck:** The Rescue
- **Threat Deck:** Any
- **Villain Deck:** Any
- **Special Setup:** Replace “The Prisoner” ally card with **5 Huey**. Any effect that references “The Prisoner” in this quest applies to **5 Huey**.

## Campaign Upkeep

Each hero heals all their damage and discards all their focus. For every 3 supply the party has, they may gain 1 random *Equipment* card and add it to the journal. Then, discard all supply.

### If the heroes won the quest:

The monsters’ lair was a trial, but you manage to make your way through all its twists and turns, following the old man’s little cloth clues to where they are holding him—fighting until the way was cleared. When you and Huey are safe from the threats, it is just a short climb back out onto the grass again.

Each hero adds 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to their hero to the journal.

- ▶ If **8 Vampiric Infection** is in the journal and the heroes defeated Wynora Morn during Chapter 4: **037**

Add **5 Huey** in the journal, then go to **021**.

### If the heroes lost the quest:

Everything hurts. You have cuts, bites, scrapes, bruises, and more on nearly every part of you... but you manage to battle the fiends back to their own corners long enough to grab the old git. Finding some broken old stairs in a room you are able to barricade, you pry your way out into the night air and freedom from the beasts... for now.

Add 1 random enemy upgrade card to the journal.

Add **10 Hunted** to the journal.

- ▶ If **8 Vampiric Infection** is in the journal and the heroes defeated Wynora Morn during Chapter 4: **037**

Add **9 Weakened Huey** in the journal, then go to **031**.



# Chapter 5

Huey's "shortcut" had already turned into a side path. His side path then turned into a retracing of steps, and now that retracing of steps truly feels as though he has gotten you all terribly lost. If you would have just followed the road back, you'd be in Hawthorn by now. But no, you're on some twisting mountain road where the wind is nearly as biting as the flies. The sun is getting low and the howls of awakening Lunarin echo out across the wilderness. When their bone-chilling voices die down, you prepare to launch into a verbal assault on your wandering "guide."

"Wait," Huey interrupts, "you hear that?"

Perform the first 2 steps of normal game setup, then each hero gains 1 focus.

*Hooves. The clip-clopping of hooves on a cobblestone road nearby. Roads mean towns!*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Head straight to the sound: **043**
- ▶ Tread carefully in the underbrush to investigate: **039**

"You mustn't go back to Hawthorn," the Dame Protector says plainly, "not until you see what was found in the Library of Luxford. There are scrolls from the Age of Louric that speak of ill tidings and of the hellish offspring of Countess Morn herself. If you knew what we do, you'd stay far away from that Morse Bolton and come with us." Her two escorts canter behind your group, turning you into a road caravan of sorts.

Refuse to go to Luxford: **051**

The road to Luxford was not nearly as long as Huey's shortcuts were taking you, causing you to let out a happy sigh when the staggered stone walls appear on the hill like the toothy lower jaw of a hungry bray. The Dame Protector hops off her horse and leads you toward the second largest building in the small town, letting her escorts walk off with her steed.

Each hero must **TEST** (plus icon) (minus icon). If at least half of the heroes pass (rounding up), go to **042**.

After the winding walk, you reach the esteemed Library of Luxford. In front of the three-story, stoic, whitewashed library building sits a large, regal carriage adorned with the seal of the queen. Two royal guardsmen, after seeing the Dame Protector at your front, pull open the heavy oaken doors and bid you enter.

Inside the Luxford library are hundreds, perhaps thousands of books, scrolls, tomes, and the like. You are shown to a side room where, standing behind a pile of open books and unfurled scrolls, is Queen Valory herself.

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Bow to the queen: **049**
- ▶ Wait to be addressed: **053**

"What your... oddly familiar... friend here is saying is true," Valory narrows her eyes, "Morse Bolton was a general in Louric's thrall armies, but there is more. He came to my aid when I stood against Kretch's manifestation at the time, and it was he that spirited away Louric's unholy ashes so he could not reform anew." She scoops up another book and starts flipping pages, stopping and holding the book open to show everyone. Under her manicured fingertips is a sketch of a haggard, battle-weary Bolton holding six unique containers—one of which perfectly matches the urn from a few days ago.

"This shows that he took the six fragments of Louric's remains away from where he was slain. Took them away, and now no one can find them."



“Of course he stole them. He probably hid them too!” Huey blurts out angrily, “He knows they can be used to resurrect their dark lord if Morn’s children consumes them, and he is using you—us, actually—to gather them up and deliver them like a Solstice gift!”

“Calm down, sir,” Valory scolds him, levelling a finger at his face, “I have not lived as long as I have or as well as I have by doing things hastily.” She pauses, allowing Huey to return to his seat before turning back to you. “Before we go on,” Valory leans in, “do you trust Bolton?”

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Answer yes: **047**
- ▶ Answer no: **052**

“No!” Huey barks, leaping up at the queen fast enough that many of you flinch, “You are playing right into their hands, dammit!” He begins to pace around the room, his gait alternating from a scholarly man to a half-crazed beast. “If you go digging around and getting these ashes for him, you might as well be signing on to be a Thrall yourself!” He thrust his finger at the queen angrily, his eyes changing hue ever so slightly to a lavender indigo, “You are playing into their plans, you... highness. I won’t be a part of it.” He crosses the room in three strides and slams the door loudly as he leaves the room, not waiting to be dismissed.

Remove **5** Huey from the journal.

“Albeit rude,” she continues after a moment, “your friend isn’t exactly wrong. We will have to be very careful not to let Morn’s agents—or Bolton’s, if they are not one in the same—figure out what we are doing. If he is going to be a problem, it is best he is gone.”

She unrolls a map, holding it so you can read its many markings. “See? This is where I think we can begin to search.”

BANG!—the wooden shudder to the building’s skylight slams closed, causing everyone in the room, no matter how brave, to jump in their seats. Looking up, you see a dark shape vanish out of sight across the rooftop.

“Hells!” the queen exclaims, “A spy! We have to go after it and make sure it doesn’t report to Bolton, Morn, or anything else that might help set up this unholy armageddon!”

## Quest Setup

You wait as long as you can for Huey at the stables, but a light rain threatening to erase the spy or their tracks from the fresh ground has forced you to get moving early. With how angry he was getting about this, and how much about him has changed over the last few months, you think that might actually be a good thing.

The tracks lead you to an old keep whose bottom floors were swallowed up by the peat bog decades ago. The creatures in this glorified hole might not have anything to do with the Morns or even the altars, but it is upon you to hunt them down and make sure.

- **Quest Deck:** The Hunt
- **Threat Deck:** Any
- **Villain Deck:** Any (except Wynora Morn)

## Campaign Upkeep

Each hero heals all their damage and discards all their focus. For every 3 supply the party has, they may gain 1 random *Equipment* card and add it to the journal. Then, discard all supply.



### If the heroes won the quest:

*As you draw back from the last foe falling from your attacks, you cannot help but to be filled with pride. Your satchels are filled with dozens of notes, scraps of messages, and other clues that should lead you to the next piece of this puzzle surrounding Louric and the Morns. If Huey were here instead of off having a temper tantrum, he could surely decipher all these pieces and tell you where next to go... but he isn't. You can stare at all these clues all day and not make any sense of them, or you can bag them all back up and take them to someone who has decades of wisdom on you. But to whom?*

Each hero adds 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to their hero to the journal.

- ▶ *Go to Luxford and see Queen Valory: 044*
- ▶ *Go to Hawthorn and see Mayor Bolton: 056*

### If the heroes lost the quest:

*Heaving yourselves out of the rotten pine hatch and running as hard as you can for as long as your legs will carry you, you put as much distance between you and the howling nightmares in that den before collapsing onto the ground. It was a whirlwind of activity in that glorified hole in the loam, but you made it out. Now you have to head back to civilization and try to figure out where to strike at Wynora Morn next—but you can't do it alone. You're going to need to get some help from those in power, now to decide who that will be.*

Add 1 random enemy upgrade card to the journal.

- ▶ *Go to Luxford and ask Queen Valory for aid: 045*
- ▶ *Go to Hawthorn and ask Mayor Bolton for aid: 057*





# Chapter 6

*“It’s right this way,” Bolton says as you cross a small bridge into a dilapidated old village. All of the buildings have been razed to the ground except for a few broken walls and the single towering castle-mansion where Louric once lived still stands like a dark reminder of more bloodthirsty times. The moon is shining on the rickety iron gate that marks the front of the ruined old mansion, leaving the rest of the building in all-consuming darkness and night fog...*

Perform the first 2 steps of normal game setup, then choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Approach carefully from the darkest angle:* **055**
- ▶ *No time to waste! Ride for the gate!:* **058**

*“Whoa!” Bolton pats his steed and swings himself out of the saddle. “The bookcase on the first floor, the one edged with ivory vinework, that is your way into the catacombs. I can’t go any farther. My connection to her is still too strong; I can feel what it would do to me in there, and it will endanger you and your mission. I’m sorry.”*

If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is in the journal: **054**

*Right before you push into the mansion, stepping through a rent section of wall and boarding, there is an echoing, monstrous call that erupts from deep within the dark structure.*

*“Come...” the crooning voice cackles, “...be the first offerings to our new lord!”*

*The building itself is empty, most of the furniture destroyed and layered in dust and cobwebs, and it only takes you a few minutes to locate the ivory-edged bookcase Bolton described. When you’re ready, all it will take is one shove and there will be no going back...*

## Quest Setup

*You slip into the passageway behind the bookcase, and it is just a few uneven steps before things widen back out into the larger catacombs. The stench of death strikes you like a mallet, but it is soon drowned out by the sour salt of spilled blood and the pungent tang of ritual incense. Wynora Morn is down here, and she has already begun her dark ceremony it seems.*

- **Quest Deck:** The Showdown
- **Threat Deck:** The Thralls
- **Villain Deck:** Wynora Morn





## Campaign Upkeep

### If the heroes won the quest:

*The last Thrall slinks away from your heroic advance, the monsters retreating from your every movement. When Wynora fell, the rest of the beasts began to act erratically, little Frederick crawling away from his mother like a foul beetle scurrying away from the revealing light. Upon Wynora's all-too-still remains—her body frozen in a deathlike torpid state—you find a bloodstained leather tome as ancient as the altars themselves strapped to her like a personal treasure.*

*The runic letters are unlike anything you've seen or known before, but somehow they are swirling and combining into sentences and paragraphs in your mind as much as in your eyes. You might not know why or how, but a piece of your spirit remembers.*

*It reads... "The altars are awakening. The Arkenspire calls. The Trickster is Laughing, and the Guardian falls. Heavy is the pull of Their door. The Heavens are empty no more."*

*Whatever is happening to Aridika, it is just beginning.*

If **8** **Vampiric Infection** is in the journal and the heroes defeated Wynora Morn: **037**

The heroes have won the campaign!

### If the heroes lost the quest:

*The room spins around you, lights going dark, and the floor rushing up to meet you. Your mind is racing, your heart beating faster than it ever has before, and you believe that death is surely only a few breaths away. The Thralls, slavering from their open maws and scarlet desire flashing in their bulging eyes, circle you and begin to descend for the final feast...*

The Morns have escaped! Go to **059**.

The heroes have lost the campaign.





# Story Appendix

**001.** *As you arrive at the mayor's manor, your punctuality is noted and his assistant guides you to the study. "Mayor Bolton shall join you shortly," the young burry woman instructs, showing you to an assortment of refreshments. After a short time, a tall, solid man with long black hair enters the study. He gives you a lurid smile that reveals his sharp vampiric fangs. "Sorry to keep you waiting," he says with cool courtesy. "The queen has informed me of your arrival, and I would like to thank you for traveling so hastily to Hawthorn's aid."*

Each hero may draw 1 card.

**002.** *As you breathe in the fresh air, you notice Huey is nowhere to be seen. After a few moments of panicked searching, he casually emerges from the Raglander lair. "Well," he says, hefting a bundle under his arm, "we better get this back to the mayor..."*

Continue to Chapter 2.

**003.** *"Rags came and just started killin' our flock," he explains on the road to his homestead. "It was like they were all rabid or somethin'. Ma and Pa grabbed their bows and Uncle Geoffy took up his spear, but I don't know if it was enough. I wanted to stay and help fight the pigs back, but Pa told me to come to town and get the mayor to send help." He looks away, hiding his tears, and stays silent for most of the rest of the journey.*

Go to **030**.

**004.** *You approach one of Hawthorn's guards pacing casually down the main thoroughfare. Upon hearing the name "Huey," you notice the dwarf woman's eyes widen ever so slightly. "That old bum is usually around the library, but why'd you want to associate with that dolt?" You give her your thanks and continue to the town's meager library, grateful that it is so near the mayor's estate.*

Add **7 Known Associates** to the journal.  
Go to **022**.

**005.** *As you continue coughing the last of the putrid Raglander aroma out of your throat, you hear a rustling from behind. You look around for the source and see a peculiar old man walking toward Hawthorn with a wrapped bundle under his arm. He passes you by as if you aren't even there, whistling a careless tune. Without question, you know this is Huey, the wanderer that the queen instructed you to meet with. You follow him, knowing exactly what the bundle under his arm is.*

Continue to Chapter 2.

**006.** *Huey jolts suddenly in his chair, as if he had fallen asleep and just been startled awake. "Quite the tale, my pale friend! I hope you don't mind if I accompany our new allies on this most dangerous of adventures. I should very much like to see this urn for myself," he gives the mayor a playful wink. Morse fixes the old man with an icy cold stare, deigning to reply. "Oh, don't you worry," Huey continues, standing up. "With me along, your treasure is as good as found! Let's just hope the Thralls don't get to it first, eh?" Huey's laughter is nothing less than sinister...*



007. *“Such a tale should grace only the lips of storytellers and firesiders like m’self,” she laughs, strumming her harp with thick, calloused fingers. “Perhaps you need a chronicler to venture with you? No? Okay. Either way, I’ll make sure your stories be told into legend the way our old mothers and tired fathers intended!”*

Add 1 random hero upgrade card belonging to your hero to the journal.

008. *You choose to proceed to your destination quickly and cautiously, without being drawn into open battle with whatever frox may be lying in wait. As you approach Hawthorn, the last rays of the sun yield to the tall trees of the surrounding forests, and you are thankful for your decision to press on—you have plenty of time for a warm meal and a comfortable bed at the inn before meeting with the mayor on the morrow.*

Add **4 Well Rested** to the journal. Continue to Chapter 1.

009. *“You really must stay here until we locate Huey and talk with him tomorrow,” the mayor places his hand upon your shoulders, “Your first slumber while the Blood is in you can be... difficult. I know it can be too much for many folk, so you should know how it works.” He swirls his goblet of crimson, staring down into the liquid with decades of past memories glazing his eyes. “You can live with it, feed it carefully, and not take life to quench its thirst. It will stave off the worst of it. Avoid direct light in your eyes, try to keep your temper, and mind yourself in other,” he bites his lower lip and chuckles, “passionate moments. It can be an effective asset, even if you never fully give in to it.” He clears his throat and begins to pace the room. “You will never reach the full*

*potential of someone born to it like myself, but it will be a whole new world to be sure.” He pauses, lowers his gaze, and turns back, “But if you want to be rid of it before it becomes permanent—you will need to drink a mouthful of Wynora Morn’s blood and chase it with a spoonful of hemlock sap. It is awful, but it works.”*

010. *When you enter the mayor’s manor, a tall, solid vampire descends the stairs, his long black hair cascading behind him. His dark eyes immediately find Huey and the casual courtesy seems to fade from his pale face. “Hello, Morse!” Huey calls out almost patronizingly. “I hear you have called together a council.” The mayor gives Huey a polite nod, then turns to you. “Thank you for venturing here so urgently.” Mayor Bolton’s voice is quiet and sharp as a razor. “The queen sent word of your arrival, and it comes at Hawthorn’s most desperate hour. Please join me in my study...”*

011. *Somewhat surprised by your acquiescence, the Thralls surround the mouth of the well and watch you descend the web of ropes into the catacombs below. Your eyes adjust to the gloom faster than your nostrils can abide the stink of it, and in a few minutes, you set your feet into an inch of muck covering the stone floor. Looking around, you can see this was once a populated frox den, but now it seems only populated by frogman corpses. The ropes you came in on are drawn back up, leaving you with only one way out. There is a current of stale air pushing against you from beyond the creaking door in the wall, and on it you think—just for a moment—that you can hear the cries of a baby...*

Continue to Chapter 3 Quest Setup.

**012.** *"I'm old enough to remember when the vampires first came over here from Chalyss; their bloody kingdom on Greel. There were many wars, and the Boltions fought in all of them, for various sides, mind you! During Louric's reign, our good mayor was a stout supporter and his house kept the peace—but when the madness took the count, Morse did not join up with those Thralls. He fought them tooth and stake, just like most of us elves, oh and burries, dwarves, and humans, don't doubt! Aye, I think it's safe to say that our good mayor is one of the good ones. I don't buy into that malarkey about him secretly being Thrall. I've never known him to keep a secret. Even when that Thrall woman came snooping around town, good Morse didn't try to hide it. Come to think of it, though, I don't quite remember how he explained that one away..."*

**013.** *You casually join the throng of villagers going about their morning business in the thoroughfare. Remembering Queen Valory's words, you keep your search for Huey discreet, playing the part of an everyday traveler while keeping your eyes and ears focused.*

Each hero gains 1 focus.

*As you pass through the small market in the square, a young Sathien acolyte from the Temple of Aluna approaches you and smiles. "Please," the girl says gently, "take this and let the light guide you."*

A hero gains the "Potion of Healing" search card.

*You gladly accept her offer and asks if she knows someone who's called 'the wanderer.' She giggles. "That's Huey," she informs you. She points with a small thumb to the library near the mayor's estate. "He is usually reading books or laughing at nothing. My older sister says he's lost it... but I'm not sure what he lost. I'd like to help him find it." You nod to the girl, give*

*her one of the silver currents that Queen Valory provided you with, and head toward the library.*

Go to **022**.

**014.** *"You spin yourselves in circles," she laughs, levelling her eyes and spoon at you, "but I feel you have real worries lurking. You have nothing to fear from me, young ones. You need not try fireside games or wordplay. I am no spirit of the trick or a woe in false face. You can speak plainly, and I will tell you all that I know."*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Ask Luck about Huey: **028**
- ▶ Ask Luck about Mayor Bolton: **012**

**015.** *The city market is fruitful, even with the limited time that you have to shop for the essentials. "Essentials" is not even the proper term, as you aren't fully sure what you will need on the mayor's little excursion, but the fine folk working at Westric's Wares help you gather up what you believe you might want to have in your packs when you head back out into the wilderness.*

Gain 1 supply and add 1 random *Equipment* card to the journal.

**016.** *As you present the mayor with the stone you happened across, the vampire seems to lose himself in the depths of it. After several long moments, he slowly hands it back. "I know this stone. It comes from the Arkenspire in Nethermoor... it's a piece of the first altar. I can't imagine any frox daring to stir the spirits that slumber there. Which means there has been meddling there by something more cunning or wise... I like neither prospect. Regardless, keep this to yourself for now. I shall look into this matter while you are away."*



Each hero suffers 1 damage as the weight of what they carry poisons their morale.

**017.** “No!” you shout, shoving back against the Thrall and digging in your heels. The vampiric servants hiss their bestial displeasure at your resistance. Moving like a pack of wolves, they circle you, their fangs lengthening and their eyes shining scarlet with fury. In a pale-skinned blur, they surge forward at once, overwhelming you with their supernatural speed and strength. Their stone-hard hands push you down into the well, and as your feet lose the ground beneath them, you reach out and get a fist full of an attacker’s loose shirt—if you’re going down that hole, so are they!

Each hero must **RESIST** ①. Search the lurker deck for “Feral Mother” and place it facedown on top of the lurker deck. Then, read the following:

*Thick rivers of scarlet bubble out onto the slimy stones, mingling with old, dead blood from a half dozen scattered frox corpses littering the chamber. You catch your breath, realizing that the way into this lair will not be the way out. There is a current of stale air pushing against you from beyond the creaking door in the wall, and on it you think—just for a moment—that you can hear the cries of a baby...*

Continue to Chapter 3 Quest Setup.

**018.** *Time is of the essence, but you remember the queen’s instructions about keeping your search for Huey discreet...*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Ask a guard about a person named Huey: **004**
- ▶ Spend some time searching for Huey yourself: **013**

**019.** *While you are enjoying the meager pleasantries of Hawthorn, what few there are on a late afternoon, a filth-smearing burryfolk jogs up to you and nearly collapses into your arms. He smells of sweat, livestock, and a touch of old blood. Snatching a waterskin from one of your hands like a man lost in a desert, he takes three hard pulls, gasps for air, then takes one more before handing it back. “I’m so glad I found you,” catching his breath, he starts to speak more slowly, “You can help us. Those pig bastards are back! The mayor promised to send help!” He pulls at your tunic for you to come with him, but the direction is away from your appointment with Bolton...*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ Calm him down, and bring him with you to see the mayor: **024**
- ▶ Let the burryfolk lead you: **003**

**020.** “You don’t know what that is, do you?” The voice startles you, and you turn to see a seemingly harmless old man dressed as a beggar. He leans against a nearby rock, eyeing your recent discovery. “I’m sure the queen informed you about me—but she may not have informed you about that thing you’re carrying.” He straightens and walks toward you. “Perhaps I had best accompany you. The mayor surely owes you an explanation...”

Continue to Chapter 2.

021. "Thank you!" Huey exclaims, happily throwing his arms—bare from so much of his robe being torn apart to leave the trail you followed—around you tightly. "I knew you'd find me! Save me!" He lets out an almost childlike and mildly unsettling giggle, but then steps back and looks into your face with a dour seriousness that you cannot help but question, given the old man's other behaviors. "Morse sent you for me, eh? Needed to make sure that I didn't unlock the altars' secrets before he or others of his kind could, hmm?" Planting one hand on his hip and stroking his stringy, cave-filthy beard straight with the other, he lets out an echoing, far-too-loud-for-your-closeness, laugh. "No matter! The old boy will want to hear what I have to say, and so should you! Let's not keep the..." he smirks, "...good Mayor Bolton waiting!" He sniffs at the air like some kind of hound, "This way. I know a shortcut."

022. You find the old man Huey stooped over an enormous old book and a piping hot beverage. "Oh, greetings from the queen, is it?" Huey gives you a pleasant enough smile. He's a kind looking old man with inquisitive eyes and the disheveled clothing of a beggar—but something about him gives off a curious sense of importance. You carefully explain to Huey your purpose in being in Luxen. "Oh the mayor and I are fast friends," Huey assures you. "Let us go see him together!"

Add **5** **Huey** to the journal. Go to **010**.

023. "Run! Run back to that dog! Traitor to the blood, he is, and now so are you!" the Thrall countess hisses at you from within the shadows of the lair from which you just escaped with your lives. "You tell him that Countess Morn... Wynora Morn... is coming for him and all the blunt-fanged fools! Louric's dust and ashes will be MINE!" Her words echo in your head as much as your wounds throb with some new burning. You can't shake the shrill of her cackle as you head back to Hawthorn. Even though it plays right into her words, you really must tell Mayor Bolton what

happened and find a way to make sense of this new part of your life.

The hero that has suffered the most damage gains **8** **Vampiric Infection** and adds it to the journal.

024. Passing through the iron gates to the Bolton Manor once more, you are shown to a spacious sitting room, where a servant brings mulled wine and garlic-roasted bread. After a while, a chime sounds somewhere distant in the house, and Bolton enters the room a moment later. He is wearing a fine housecoat of spun silk, but nothing else. His pale skin is almost shining like marble against the freshly lit oil flames in their sconces, and pinpricks of crimson light appearing behind his eyes at certain angles. There is a slight clicking sound as he enters the room, and you cannot tell if it is his claw-like fingernails against the teacup so delicately held in his cupped hands or the talons of his bare feet against the tile floor. "My friends," he greets you all, but allows his gaze to linger on the half-panicked burryfolk, "allow me to adjourn with Master Tallowleaf for a moment. We will not be long." The vampire raises a slender finger to his nearby manservant, "Renevol, do bring some plum brandy and the good Jhan'eva cheddar for my guests. We will return shortly."

025. "Well, that was something," Huey says, walking backwards out of the den into the night, "but I need to..." he looks quickly to one side, then the other, "...check on the horses." Before you have a chance to ask "What horses?" Huey is gone, whisked back away into the night and vanished like morning fog. You scan the night in search of your friend, but only the blinking appearance of pairs of crimson eyes can be found—Thralls! You go to draw your weapons, but the beastly things are far too quick, and in seconds you are held fast in the vice grip of their clawed hands and their fangs get closer to your throats... "No! The Countess forbids. We bring them... unharmed!"

Remove **5** **Huey** from the journal.



026. *You approach the motionless frox cautiously, preparing yourself for any ambush it may have served as a diversion for. Fortunately, the late afternoon spring wind sending the surrounding long grass into a rhythmic dance is the only moment you notice. You bend over the fallen frox to find her dead, various wounds adorning her scaly body. You pull out what appears to be a massive boar's tusk from one of the wounds. "Raglanders...", you curse under your breath, not wanting to wait around to see the pig-vermin that gave this frox its wounds. But before you depart, you take a brief moment to further inspect what's in the frox's hand—a jagged stone that gives off a faint aura of power. As you pack up the stone, you notice a chill wind and realize that it's much later in the day than you thought. You better make haste to arrive at Hawthorn in time for some rest.*

Add **3** **Mysterious Stone** to the journal.  
Continue to Chapter 1.

027. *Morse nods, as if he expected the question. "Believe me, I thirst for Raglander blood. It is no secret that swine blood is richer on the tongue than Sathien... or any of the other civilized races," he smiles somewhat wickedly—a smile that would send a chill down any mortal being's spine. "However, I dare not abandon my town; not now. In addition to these frox and Raglander troubles, I fear there may be unrest fomenting here. As a vampire, I have never been fully welcomed by the simple folk here. I can't say I blame them, with how the Thralls have responded in the wake of Louric's usurpation. Needless to say, I am needed here."*

028. *The old elf's face seems to stiffen ever so slightly at the mention of Huey's name, but her demeanor remains otherwise carefree. "That's one curious human. He showed up in these parts around the same time Valory ended Kretch's reign, when all the Nethermoor refugees sought new homes in Luxen. He's quite the eccentric, but as harmless as any*

*other wanderer—dare I say vagabond? I mean, you'd think as much as he laid about Hawthorn he might take up a trade or contribute to the town council's various needs. But seems to me all he wants to do is read at the library and lecture anyone that passes by about those damned altars."*

029. *"I have to keep moving," Huey gasps as you break out into the night air. He sniffs the air, almost like a worried animal, "I'll catch up..." he looks around, "... as soon as I can." He nods twice, then disappears into the rising fog. A twig snaps, and pairs of crimson eyes appear all around you—Thralls! You go to draw your weapons, but you are far too exhausted and aching to put up a fight. In seconds, it seems, you are held fast in the vice grip of their clawed hands and their fangs get closer to your throats... "No! The Countess forbids. We bring them... unharmed!"*

Remove **5** **Huey** from the journal.

030. *After a few miles, you come upon a grisly scene—but not the one your diminutive friend thought he'd see. Dead Raglanders litter the field amidst torn-apart and half-eaten sheep. There are dead burryfolk here and there, and your small guide runs and falls to his knees next to one you think was female and cries loudly into her bloodstained smock. Knowing you have a job to do, you begin to search the area. The tracks in the mud are mainly Raglander, but are also scattered with the fin-footed marks of the frox. A few dead frogmen show that the pigs fought back, but it definitely seems as though the frox had the upper hand. It will be no trouble to follow their tracks away from the homestead and back to their lair, where you can rid everyone of whatever is causing them to be so openly savage.*

Continue to Chapter 2 Quest Setup.

031. “Whew!” Huey huffs melodramatically, folding himself over at the waist and planting his hands on his knees. The threads from where he tore off his sleeves to lead you to him dangle to his legs, “One more minute down in that hole and I would have surely been one of those things’ lunch!” He straightens, looking suddenly far more serious. “Bolton sent you down into that hell for little old me? He thinks I’m that important, eh? Or is it...” he pauses, “...he needs to know about the altars, does he? Too busy to ask his fellow fanged friends? Typical.” Huey looks grim for just a moment, then smiles widely—almost wickedly, “Let’s go see Mister Bolton, then.” He sniffs at the air like some kind of hound, “This way. I know a shortcut.” He hobbles more than usual, clearly more injured from the ordeal than he lets on.

032. “Now, now, now,” Huey interrupts the mayor, “we can’t immediately go blaming the altars. Not until we know more. I have heard they are the very handholds which Rhune used to shape the world. Like His holiest of holy fingerprints upon our realm. We shouldn’t go trying to erase them from His creation, right? I mean, what if they represent something bigger than all of us, something that can be tapped into, something good? You ever thought of that, eh?” He folds his arms in punctuation, and his brow furrows slightly as he turns to address you more directly. “All I’m sayin’ is that we shouldn’t smash godly things that we don’t fully fathom. We could be throwing the bologna out with the cheese water, so they say.”

033. You even managed to grab proof that things are back to normal, at least for a while—a piece of the last altar you cleansed.

Add **3** **Mysterious Stone** to the journal.

034. Thankful for the warmth of daylight on your face and the fresh morning air in your lungs—and more importantly, nostrils—you know you have to head back to Hawthorn as quickly as you can. Bolton is assuredly worried about you, and he must be informed about these thralls and their so-called countess.

Even though you sent her and her monstrous children slinking back into the depths, you know the threat of her fanged family has yet to be fully extinguished.

035. As you limp across the wilderness headed back to Hawthorn, the morning dew shines on your boots and the glow of sunrise burns against your eyelids. Your wounds, still throbbing from the Thralls’ claws and fangs, feel like pins and needles ever since you came out into the daylight. You need to get back to Bolton and tell him about these fiends still waiting in the darkness, and maybe get answers about these new feelings you are dealing with and what they mean for your future.

Add **8** **Vampiric Infection** to the journal.

036. You escape the ruins out into the gloom of night, huddling under a sharp overlook of stone that was adequately keeping the rain off your heads. The sharp cry of a wolf in the distance raises the hairs on the back of your neck, but the feeling you are being watched is far more unsettling. A twig snaps, and pairs of crimson eyes appear all around you—Thralls! You go to draw your weapons, but you are far too exhausted and aching to put up a fight. In seconds, it seems, you are held fast in the vice grips of their clawed hands and their fangs get closer to your throats... “No! The Countess forbids. We bring them... unharmed!”

037. Remembering what you were told about needing the vampire mother’s blood to cure your condition, you wipe as much as you can from your weapons and mix it with the hemlock powder from your pack. It sizzles slightly, and the smell stings your nostrils like you just stirred up a pretty nasty poison. All you have to do now is shove that spoon in your mouth and hope this doesn’t kill you...



Choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Eat the horrible stuff, suffer for a few minutes, but feel the fire in your veins fade away. Remove **8** **Vampiric Infection** from the journal.*
- ▶ *Toss the spoon away. Today is not the day you give up the potential for being a vampire.*

**038.** *“Rhune’s bones!” Bolton shoots up to his feet, supernaturally fast, his goblet sloshing red... wine... all over the table as he puts it down. He rushes across the room and leans in, his face inches away from yours. He carefully turns your head from one side to the other, using his thumbs to pull down on your cheeks to see the reds of your eyes. “What happened to you? I sent you to deal with Raglanders on a farmstead, and you come back shy a week later with the Blood in you? What in all the hells above and below happened?”*

**039.** *You slink through the low shrubs toward the sound, the gloom of night helping cover your approach. Pulling apart the dense branches ever so slightly, you look out to see a long, dark road over the moors, worn cobblestones glistening in the moonlight. A hooded figure astride a gorgeous blue-grey stallion approaches. As the rider gets nearer, they slow down, the shine of mystic eyes peering out from under that cloak searching... possibly for you.*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Leap out, weapons drawn, and surprise the rider: **048***
- ▶ *Walk out slowly into the road and hail the rider: **043***

**040.** *Your sleep is full of nightmares. Crimson eyes floating on a sea of darkness, rivers of blood that run from all corners of your vision, and the groaning sound of tree branches bending in the night winds crowd your mind and cause you to wake up several times throughout your rest. Each time your gums ache a little more and your stomach growls a little deeper, but you manage to fight yourself back to sleep.*

The hero with **8** **Vampiric Infection** suffers 1 damage.

**041.** *“Scrolls, you say?” Huey bursts from the undergrowth, a wide grin on his face. “Excuse the ruse,” he apologizes with a bow, “but we needed to know if YOU were in league with the devils of this land, with the Morns and their fiendish ilk.” He bows deeply, “We are whom you seek. Please, explain what is going on... and more about these, scrolls, did you say?”*

**042.** *The town of Luxford is busier than you would have first believed, and you can see that many groups of thugs or disgruntled commoners are watching you as you proceed through the streets. Huey moves from alley to alley, seemingly at home in this place, and even when the Dame wants to turn one way, he often simply goes another. Whether to avoid these onlookers or because he doesn’t want to get followed, Huey made the route from the walls to the library almost as convoluted as his shortcuts back to Hawthorn. “Here we go,” he laughs as you emerge in a small pavillion square, “right where I left it.”*

Each hero gains 1 focus and draws 1 card.

**043.** *The clapping of the horse's hooves comes to a halt as you leave the bushes and raise a hailing hand to its rider, causing it to rear slightly and pull against the reins. Two other riders—armored men with shields and spears in their arms—emerge from behind the first to come to either flank. Their weapons lower, but they do not proceed. "Whoa!" Throwing back her hood and revealing the insignia on her clasp, you see that she is one of Queen Valory's Protectors of the Path. "We are looking for servants of Lord Morse Bolton. Compatriots of his that may have an old man in tow. By order of the queen, have you seen them?"*

Choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Bring out Huey and tell the truth: 050*
- ▶ *Try to hide Huey and get more information: 046*

**044.** *The road to Luxford was surprisingly fast and light of distractions. It was as if what is happening with the altars and with Louric's remains had the beasts and bandits hidden away, which is unsettling—even if it does make for good travels. You get to the library once more to find that the queen and her entourage have moved on. Heinrich the librarian has a letter wrapped around a bottle of sweet smelling fluid she left for you however. It reads, "Heading to Hawthorn to square with Bolton. Come as soon as you can."*

Add a "Potion of Healing" search card to the journal, then go to **056**.

**045.** *You limp into Luxford a few hours before dawn, and every part of you aches from your wounds and your journey. When you reach the end of the thoroughfare and the looming library building, you are saddened not to find the queen's carriage or her Protector cavalry anywhere to be seen. You knock on all the doors and a few windows to the place, but to no answer. While you are peeking in one of the frosted leaded glass frames—seeing nothing inside the dark building—a gruff voice from the alley chimes in, "She left this morning. Headed off toward Hawthorn. She had a big bag of books and stuff with her, too. Ran off in a hurry, she did." He laughs twice and then disappears into the gloom, almost making you wonder if he was ever there to begin with. Ignoring your wounds, you set out again and hope you aren't too late. Thankfully that old man was there to tell you, even if it makes you feel guilty about Huey running off.*

Go to **057**.

**046.** *You try to misdirect the Dame Protector, explaining that you are lost in these moors and are simply looking for a way back to the nearest town. "While I cannot forfeit my duties to take you, Luxford is just a short walk down this way." She points the direction from which they came. "And stay away from that path," one of her escorts points his lance a different direction, "as that way leads to Hawthorn, a city run by a monster in league with the queen's enemies!"*

*"Hush your gossip, Garth," the Dame Protector scolds her compatriot, but worry still wrinkles her brow. "It is still a matter under investigation, to be fair," she clicks her tongue, "which is why we have been tasked to find what we believe are pawns in his most recent schemes—some adventuring types and an old historian named Huey." She sighs, "The queen says he would know what to do with the scrolls."*

Go to **041**.



**047.** *"Your friend is right about the prophecy and Louric's ashes," she continues. "If Wynora Morn gets her claws on all six parts of the dread lord, she can give them to Frederick, use the powers of the altars, and her spawn becomes the newest and possibly most powerful threat Aridika has ever known since the time of Kretch and the Bloodwars." She nods slowly, "I know you want to give Morse the benefit of the wisdom his age has bought him, but I cannot be completely sure unless we put it to the test. I know where we can find the next piece to the puzzle."*

**048.** *You burst from the undergrowth, weapons lifted high to do battle against a horseman, but are immediately thrown back as two more riders—these in full armor and bearing shields and spear-like riding lances—gallop up and bat your weapons aside with veteran expertise. "By order of Queen Valory!" a woman's sharp, commanding voice blasts out from under the first rider's hood. "Aid in our search or stand aside." Throwing back her hood and revealing the insignia on her clasp, you see that it is one of Queen Valory's Protectors of the Path. "We are looking for servants of Lord Morse Bolton. Compatriots of his that may have an old man in tow. Have you seen them?"*

Each hero must **RESIST** (2); then, choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Bring out Huey and tell the truth:* **050**
- ▶ *Try to hide Huey and get more information:* **046**

**049.** *"Please, please," she waves her hands at you to stand, "this is not Court, nor is this a throne room. I think we are beyond such formalities. There are far bigger things at stake, it seems, than etiquette." She gestures to several of the scrolls in specific. "I admire your spirit and your loyalty, but some of these old records have a lot to say to you in particular."*

Each hero gains 1 focus and go to **053**.

**050.** *After he refuses to come out willingly, you pull Huey out of the underbrush into the road, explaining to the Dame Protector that you were headed back to Hawthorn but got terribly lost. "It is my fault, to be sure," Huey adds, fidgeting as nervously as the horses have been for the last few minutes, "I got turned around after being a captive underground for so long." He bows, "Can you show us the way?"*

**051.** *"Now. now," Huey says quietly, "we really should follow them to this library and these scrolls." His voice drops to a whisper. "If Bolton is in league with the Morns, and I've had my suspicions with how much he is willing to risk to get at those altars, it is the wise choice." He straightens to his full height, thrusting a finger into the air as punctuation, "Please, ma'am, be so kind as to lead on."*

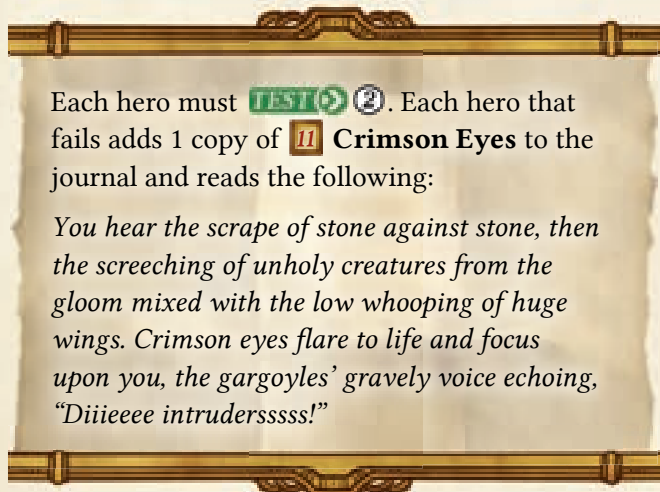
**052.** *"If that is so, your worries are not totally unfounded. Our scholars have discovered that Frederick Morn, child of Wynora Morn, could be given the six partial remains of Louric to become the new dark lord of Aridika. Morse has always been outspoken and well known for his... predilections... but if his ties to the Morns go deep enough to enact such a troubling scheme," she pauses and holds up a nightmarish picture of dark shadows and beasts rampaging the countryside, "then we must stop him." Setting the book down, she takes a deep breath, "I know where we can find the next piece to the puzzle."*

**053.** *"Please sit," Valory gestures to a ring of chairs around the table, "We have been pouring over these tomes and texts, and we have found a troubling fact." She turns one of the scrolls around to better face you, her finger tapping on a gorgeous illustration of Louric's army assembling for battle. At the sight of it, Huey leaps from his chair and stabs a thick digit into the page. "It's Bolton! Morse Bolton led one of Louric's armies! I knew he was in league with that witch Morn!" He pounds his fists against the table. "No wonder he wants the altars destroyed! He knows what they mean to the resurrection!"*

**054.** *As you draw near to the old ruined Morn estate, there is a throbbing in your veins and all your teeth begin to ache. Just being around the Countess has your blood thick and burning. Even though every part of you wants to tear off into the night to find something to slake this thirst, all of your senses have never been sharper—but you are sure you can keep your head about you, right?*



**055.** *As you approach the building under the cover of darkness, you realize that although it hides your approach perfectly—it also allows others to hide and wait in ambush.*



**056.** *You push through the night to reach Hawthorn just a few hours before dawn and head straight through to Bolton Manor to catch Morse before he lays down for the day. The manservants lead you directly back to Morse's private study, where you are somewhat surprised to find the mayor standing at a desk, looming over a few opened tomes and unrolled scrolls. Tallow candles all but burnt down to the base flicker dimly upon his face as he lifts his gaze to you, exaggerating all the aspects of his angular face to make him seem even more bestial than normal. "What is this?" he asks as you begin emptying the notes and clues you gathered from the monsters' den.*

*"They have some of the puzzle, Morse," Queen Valory's voice enters the room as she does, her arms filled with more books, "I have a little more, but I think you are the key to understanding this. If you're willing to stand against her, that is."*

*"Wynora..." Bolton ponders for a moment, memories long past clouding his atmosphere, "Yes, I do believe it is time to discuss Countess Morn and her insidious plans."*

*Piecing everything together for several hours, you conclude that Wynora has begun to gather the lost pieces of Louric in the catacombs beneath the old Morn mansion, hoping to use them to ascend her son Frederick into being the new Louric on this realm. "I used a hidden entrance, decades ago, to go down into those tunnels under the old house," the mayor admitted, "and I remember at least one of those awful altars down there. Dammit, Huey! I knew those things were trouble!"*

*"If she is down there," the queen continues, "that must mean she is getting close to finding where you hid the other urns... and when she gets them..." she trails off, her eyes staring out into a dark possible future.*



**057.** *After a grueling cross country trip that had you dodging howls and growls at every bend in the road, you finally reach Hawthorne deep into mid-morning. The burry servant at Morse's door ushers you inside so quickly, you barely notice a familiar carriage sitting in the courtyard as you pass through. You burst into the study to find Queen Valory and Mayor Bolton standing on opposite sides of his desk, both stooped over a pile of books, loose pages, and scroll fragments. They both look up when you enter, shock and worry plain on their faces. "We thought you weren't coming. We thought maybe the monsters..."*



*“Nevermind that bleakness,” the queen continues, “When you didn’t return, I gathered up what we knew and came here to confront Morse. It seems that there is more behind the conspiracies and ravings of your friend Huey, but not as he believed.” She points to the urn in the glass cabinet. “Morse was not hiding Louric’s parts FOR Wynora’s sick ritual... he was hiding them FROM her!”*

*“Valory told me your fears,” Morse hisses slightly, his fangs peeking out from parched lips, “and I’m ashamed to say that Wynora and I were very close, once, a long time ago. This was before her mad ideas of bringing Louric reborn into this world. Thralls in close quarters work each other into our basest natures, so I used to sneak past her household guards to meet with her... using a secret passage.”*

*“Enough. We don’t need your stroll down memory lane right now,” Valory taps her fingers on the desktop. “What we need is to stop Morn from plunging us back into Louric’s darkness.” Her eyes glaze over, seeing a future she only beheld before in nightmares.*

Go to **060**.

**058.** *Throwing danger to the wind, you crack the reins on your horses and push up the main path to the gate. The moon lights the whole way, and you know many pairs of eyes from the dark windows of that mansion are watching your approach. They will be ready for you when you arrive, that is for sure, but maybe a straight-up fight against evil would be better than sneaking around. Maybe it is time the countess knew she was not scheming in secret anymore.*

Add 1 random enemy upgrade to the journal.

**059.** *“No, my children,” Wynora purrs, “they are not to be harmed any further. Their toll will be paid not in blood, but in pride.” She claps, and the Thralls pull back into the recesses once more. “You have done nothing here, hero,” Wynora hisses, crouching next to you. She runs her taloned fingers across your scalp playfully. Her prophesied child cooing happily in her arms despite all of the violence and bloodshed that was only just recently surrounding it, she continues, “except force my hand. Frederick will have his father’s gifts, and Louric will rule once more. Mark my words and hear your future within them,” her voice fades as she and her minions slink away, “Do yourselves a favor. Slide back to that blunt-fanged traitor Morse and tell him that I felt him come so near. I miss him dearly. When you all are back on your feet, try and find me. We’ll do all this again sometime... Goodbye for now, my lovelies!”*

*It will be a long time before you get the sound of her laughter out of your head...*

**060.** *“Then, it is settled,” Bolton slams his fist into his other palm. “You will go into the old Morn catacombs through the same secret path I used a long time ago, find Wynora Morn, and stop her from being able to seed Frederick with the last parts of Louric.” He pauses, rubbing his finger across an old picture of the trickster, Kretch. “I am troubled that Huey has chosen to step away from such an important event, but,” he taps the picture with a claw-like fingernail, “I’m sure he has his reasons.”*

*“You must hurry,” Queen Valory adds. “If we are to stop her before it is too late, we must go... now!”*

Add **12** Queen Valory to the journal.



