

The Swamplands Witch



A Duet Adventure for PCs of levels 5-7

Introduction

The setting of this adventure is a **swampland surrounding a geyser** near the village of Festerwelt in the Gaspig Swamps, located in the center of Caldara and is scaled for PCs of levels 5-7. If you prefer to run the adventure outside the world of Azuria, we suggest setting it in or near swampy terrain.

How to Use this Adventure

This adventure assumes that you have access to the 5e SRD. Items or creatures that are not part of the SRD can be found in the appendix.

Text box example: Text that appears in a box like this may be read aloud, paraphrased, or omitted as you prefer. It is intended to help describe scenarios and environments.

Sidebar example

Text that appears in sidebars is also optional and/or intended to provide extra background information or lore that may be helpful as you flesh out the adventure.

Creatures with stat blocks appear in bold, magic items appear in italics.

Adjusting Combat

Regardless of whether you are running this adventure 1-on-1 or for a group, one of the most important roles of the GM is balancing and tweaking encounters to suit the PC. The combat should feel weighty, but fun. Some strategies include reducing

or raising hit points or changing the number of combatants before the session begins or making adjustments during combat.

For more information and resources about playing this one-on-one style, please see dndduet.com.

Adventure Premise

A boy is missing in the swampy village of Festerwelt, and the villagers are in an uproar. Accusations are flying, especially toward the boy's stepmother who implores the adventurers to clear her name.

Upon investigating the boy's home, the party comes across a seeing eye and track it back to Callista Skinner, a witch who lives in the wood in center of the swamp. She saw the abduction.

Following her lead takes the party to an ancient temple situated around an erupting geyser dedicated to Gaia, the Titan of Earth. If the party manages to navigate the treacherous temple, they may arrive just in time to save the boy.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure occurs in the world of Azuria in the Gaspig Swamps around Festerwelt. You might introduce the adventure in a few ways:

- The party is approached by a tall, thin man who introduces himself as Dale Fairsmith. He represents a woman falsely accused of wrongdoing and wants to hire the party's help.
- As they travel, the party encounters a pair of excited peddlers. Apparently, there is to be an execution soon, some murdering stepmother. Executions mean crowds, and crowds mean money! The party really should come see!
- The party runs across a bulletin board with the following posted: *Missing Boy—Donovan Robins of Festerwelt, 7 yrs, red hair, freckles, answers to Donny. Large Reward for Info or Return.*



Adventure Background

Seven years ago, a prosperous farmer named Derrik Robins and his wife, Belle, looked over their land and possessions and realized they lacked for only one thing, a child. They had not had luck in that arena, so they sought out the Swamplands Witch to change their fortune.

A few months later, their child Donovan was born to the joy of the couple. Their bliss was short-lived as Belle never recovered and eventually passed. Distraught, but wanting the child to have a mother, Derrik married Everly, a young woman from Penschaw. They made a life together, and the years rolled by.

Two months past, Derrik failed to return from delivering grain to Penschaw and was eventually found in the Gaspig Swamps, drowned. Mourning turned to scandal when it was discovered that Everly had been written out of the will and that Donovan—and Donovan alone—would inherit Robins' Nest, the most profitable farm in the region.

Two days ago, Donovan mysteriously disappeared from his home. Left without an alibi but with a clear motive, the town guards seized Everly, and townsfolk are ready to exact justice.



Part One: A Cry for Justice...

The small frontier town of Festerwelt is only slightly more attractive than its name. Many of the buildings perch atop stilts, and wooden ramps and bridges of dubious construction spiderweb their way in between abodes. Outside one of the few multi-story buildings, an angry crowd has gathered. “Give us her head!” some shout, and others, “Justice for the boy!”

The party witnesses a severe, gray-headed man in magisterial robes emerge onto the balcony. He addresses the people, saying that he, Magister Jorand, wants swift justice as well, but his hands are bound by law. The people will have to wait three days before the execution. It’s tradition! As the crowd begrudgingly disperses, Dale Fairsmith, a tall, angular man with bushy eyebrows approaches the party.

Dale Fairsmith, Esq. needs an outsider’s help for a delicate yet pressing situation. He believes the person whose blood the crowd is calling for, his client Everly Robins, is innocent of the disappearance of her stepson Donovan Robins. She is the widow of the wealthiest farmer in Festerwelt. When her husband left his son the farm instead of her, the town was scandalized. But then the son disappeared, and the town quickly condemned her as the culprit.

Fairsmith asks that the party do whatever they can to find out what really happened to the boy. They might check Robins’ Nest for clues that were overlooked, and he can allow the party to interview his client.

Treasure

Fairsmith guarantees the party 1000gp if they are able to clear his client’s name and an additional 1000gp if they are able to return Donovan Robins to safety.

To the Nest

Finding Robins’ Nest is rather straightforward. Everyone in Festerwelt knows where it is and can point the party down the right road. However, villagers that know the party is trying to help Everly are reticent to provide assistance. The town has

already decided that Everly is to blame, and most of them are not interested in being dissuaded.

After following signs for Robins' Nest along the twisting road for a couple hours, the party breaks through the thick, swampy forest and sees a large farm on a hill. The plots are on some of the only elevation in the area, making for rich farmland that isn't drowning.

A large barn stands near the two-story farmhouse. The front door of the farmhouse hangs open, creaking gently in the wind. The door has obviously been forced open. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a large, booted foot is responsible. The house is a mess. Evidently the place has been tossed, some furniture has been damaged, and valuables are gone.

In the largest bedroom, the thieves missed a small jewelry box underneath the bed that a PC discovers upon succeeding a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check. Inside lie 3 brilliant emeralds each worth 250gp.

In Donovan Robins's room, a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a flashing reflection of light from underneath a toppled wardrobe. A *seeing eye* eerily rolls around in its socket, staring at the party. Unbeknownst to the adventurers, this *seeing eye* belongs to Callista Skinner. Fairsmith or Magister Jorand could point the party to the Swamplands Witch if someone in the party shows them the item. A check of Donovan's room that succeeds by 3 or more locates strange scratches on the windowsill. Success by 5 or more suggests that these came from claws... but claws from different kinds of animals.

As the party begins to leave the house, **2x skeletal abominations** burst from the mud and suddenly set upon them. Investigating the bones afterward the encounter reveals that they are from a wide variety of different animals, and all of the bones have a strange, shiny mineral deposit coating and hardening them.



(For the GM) What Happened Here?

The night Donovan Robins disappeared, Everly was meeting her lover in the barn. A skeletal abomination sent by necromancer Oberon Druud slipped into the boy's bedroom and carried him off into the swamp to Oberon's hideout in Gaia's Victory.

Everly was taken into custody. The magister was supposed to set a guard on Robins' Nest, but intentionally selected a pair of ne'er-do-wells who robbed the place themselves and took off.

A Stepmother in Mourning

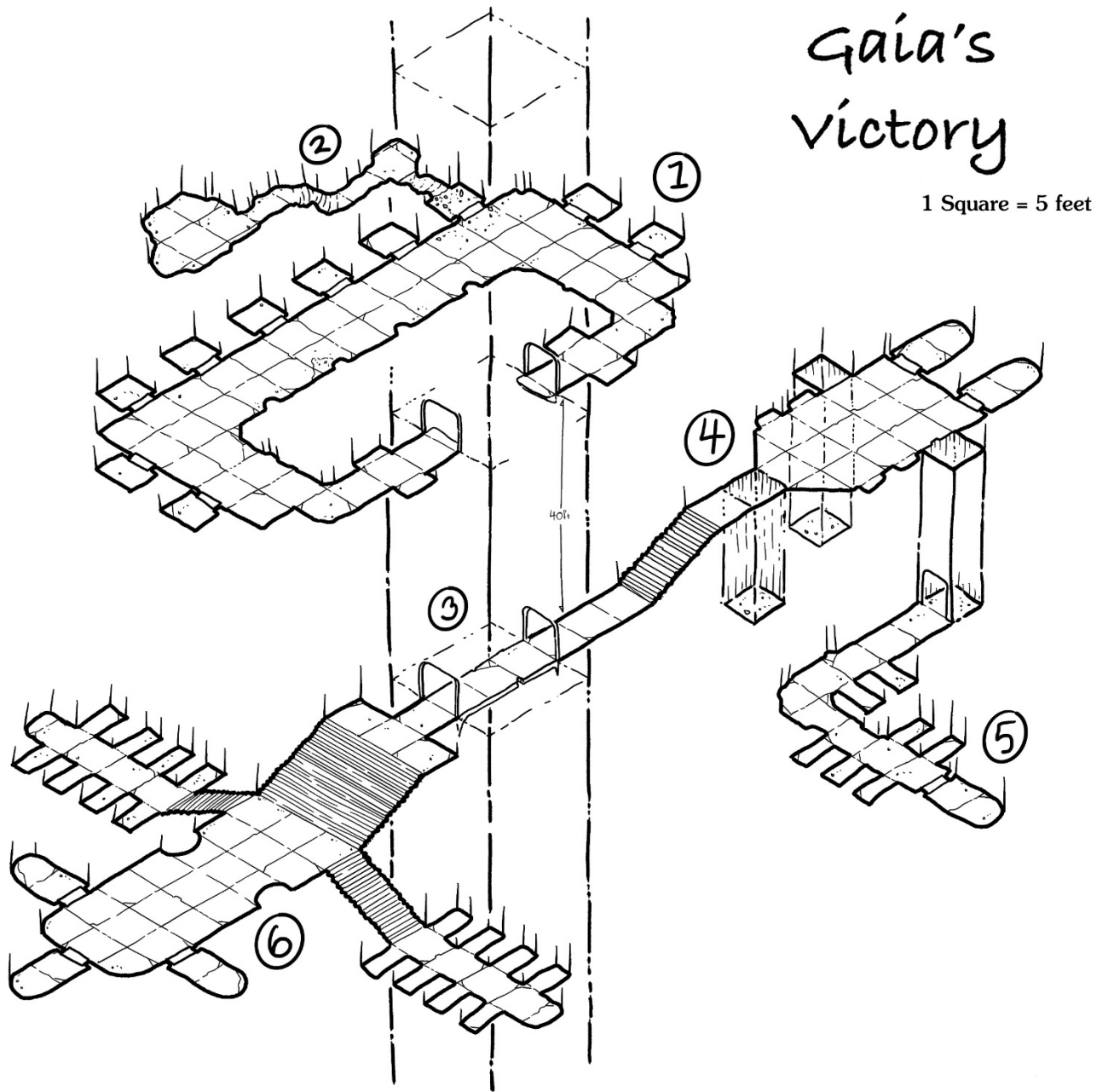
Fairsmith escorts the party into the small Court of Justice. Inside, Magister Jorand reclines with his feet kicked up. Jorand believes Everly killed Donovan because she has motive and doesn't have a good alibi. He is antagonistic toward Fairsmith and anyone helping him clear Everly's name, but he does not prevent the party from seeing the prisoner. In a corner of the building, crouched in a small cell, the party finds Everly Robins. She has a streak of silver in her otherwise jet-black hair and holds herself with dignity and poise even given her dire straits.

Everly Robins is a proud, private woman, but Fairsmith is right, she is not responsible for Donny's disappearance. Interviewing Everly is somewhat contentious, but she can be encouraged to divulge the following information to the party. (Everly uses a **commoner** stat block.) The GM should call for Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) checks and contest them as appropriate. The info from least to most important:

- The night of Donny's disappearance, she was checking on a noise from the barn (Lie: she was meeting her lover, the magister's daughter.)
- She loved Derrik Robins (True).
- Of course it hurt to be cut out of the will, but she would never fight over it. (Lie: She initially enlisted Dale Fairsmith to review and challenge Derrik's will.)
- She loves Donny and would never hurt him (True).
- Donny is a special boy, more than he or anyone else knows (True).

If pressed, or if the party has made a favorable impression on her, she may reveal: Things weren't always great with Derrik. He never got over losing Belle. Everly eventually found out that he and Belle had some kind of business with the Swamplands Witch, a figure that the people of Festerwelt fear.

Map of Gaia's Victory



Art Credits

Base map by Dyson Logos.
Cover image from Canva Pro.
All other images from Design Cuts resources.