

# JOURNEY TO VESTIGE LAKE

A TABLETOP FOR TWO  
DUET CAMPAIGN SKETCH

CAMPAIGN INTRO



# Journey to Vestige Lake

A Tabletop for Two Introductory Campaign Sketch

## Greetings, traveler, and welcome to this PDF!

In what follows, you will find an experiment from your friends here at Grove Guardian Press—a system-agnostic adventure outline set in our world of the Storyverse, what we’re referring to, at the moment, as a campaign sketch. The campaign, Journey to Vestige Lake, is still in progress *but*, **what** we’d like to accomplish by sharing this preview is finding out from you, our fellow duet-ing friends, what you like and don’t like about this new possible format for gaming.

## The adventure begins...

Our adventure begins in the village of Oakvale where, in our home duet game, a young beekeeper named Owyn has been waiting for the great adventure he knows he was destined for to begin. Of course you should personalize the PC’s origin story as much as possible, but we hope you find Oakvale to be the perfect starting place for a burgeoning adventurer.

## Map of Azuria



## Meanwhile in Azuria...

The Journey to Vestige Lake campaign arc takes place concurrently with *Slipping into Shadow: Land of Vampires Part One*, the *Return of the Soul Shepherds* campaign (availability is still a couple years down the line for us), and the beginnings of the *Age of Azuria* series by Beth Ball. But while this adventure begins near Torg's Peak, the PC remains unaware of the larger events unspooling around them as they seek their own destiny and travel toward Vestige Lake.

### Larger Events in Caldara (some spoilers for *Age of Azuria*)

Yvayne Shadowbright has found one whom she believes can restore the fallen Champions, those who served the Elemental Titans long ago, before the fall of Eldura. One so destined has just begun an adventure of their own and found the hiding place of one of the Champions who has been locked away for 5000 years inside Torg's Peak. If they can succeed in awakening the Champions, a new age will begin.

In the Frostmaw Mountains, not too far from the PC's home (or current place of residence in Oakvale), the foul lich Lucien amasses an army of werewolves to himself and sends their ravaging pack across the lands of Azuria. His seat of power, in Azuria, is centralized in Andel-ce Hevra, across the Infinite Ocean from Caldara.

To the west, clouds gather about the Nocturne Estate on the borders of the kingdom of Linolynn. (*This is where Land of Vampires intersects.*) It is one symptom of the war that is brewing between the seaside kingdom and their northern neighbor, Hadvar.

## PC Motivations

Depending on the PC's backstory, there are a few different possibilities for why they might desire to venture to Vestige Lake. This doesn't have to be a constantly conscious wish either, but in the session, or before, you might prompt the PC with the understanding that Vestige Lake is said to be home to all manner of magical beings and inexplicable events.

Vestige Lake is a storied locale, one where many an adventurer has gone to seek their fortune. And each story that makes its way out of the protective mountain ring that surrounds the ancient waters differs from those that came before, constantly adding to the mountains' mystique and appeal.

### Rumors about Vestige Lake

- ◇ A long-lost community of magical merpeople dwell beneath the water's surface. Those brave or clever enough to venture into the lake's depths *and* win the mermaids' favor emerge with a blessing of the lead siren's choosing or, in even rarer circumstances, the traveler's request.
- ◇ On the easternmost edge of the lake, on the far side of the continent lies a mystical portal open only to the *saudad* for traveling the threads of fate. Since this portal is easier to access than many others, there's a greater likelihood of encountering a *saudad* muster here. As travelers themselves, the *saudad* have access to a great deal of lore and, of possible interest to a young adventurer, have encountered many other wanderers in their own journeys across Azuria, the Shadowlands, and Brightlands.

- ◇ The light of a full moon releases the stores of magic from the ancient city of Vestige. Water gathered beneath Selene's full light carries magical properties. (In the common tongue, the name for the greater of Azuria's two moons is Selene; the name for the minor moon is Luna.)

## The Village of Oakvale

Oakvale is a small mountain village located on the eastern edge of the central Frostmaw Mountains in Caldara. These ancient peaks have weathered centuries of storms and erosion, leaving their tops rounded. (The innermost mountains in the Frostmaws retain the sharp peaks of their creation.)

A few times a year, rangers and travelers pass through the village to participate in trade and share news. The village is friendly to the *saudad* musters they know and to the elven witches from Ferhva. Oakvale is large enough to provide for a blacksmith and a baker and is home to a once-renowned herbalist now in her later years, Temera.

### Temera (guide and mentor to the PC)

One of the PC's closest confidantes in Oakvale is the herbalist Temera, an elderly human woman who, unlike most of Oakvale's residents, has seen the wider world and still chose to return to the village. Temera has taken an interest in the PC and has been teaching them the skills and knowledge necessary to survive in the wilds. Should her prophesy about the PC's potential come true, they will be glad of her wisdom and training.

### Temera's prophecy

In our game, Temera has been caring for Owyn, Jonathan's PC, since his mother died giving birth to him. She has taught Owyn the herbalist arts, and he has taken on more responsibilities as he has grown older. (At the start of our campaign, Owyn has just turned 18.)

Before Owyn was born, Temera's Sight showed her that he was destined for something special, something great that would change the course of the world. His mother struggled with an illness Temera could not heal during her pregnancy, and Owyn's father was killed by giants trying to bring back the healing waters of Vestige Lake for her.

As the years passed and Owyn's special destiny or abilities still did not manifest, the villagers' confidence in Temera's abilities diminished. She remains busy creating tinctures and potions, but few of the town's residents continue to place credence in her foresight.

This doubt is limited to the residents of Oakvale. Temera remains a respected, even revered, foreteller among those who travel to the village, especially the witches of Ferhva.

The "chosen one" archetype works really well as the foundation to a fantasy campaign, and we think a story along these lines would set up your PC for adventure, whatever their backstory. We all need to be ready to answer adventure's call!



## Vestige Lake

Vestige Lake is a large body of water protected by an ancient ring of mountains on the eastern borders of the continent of Caldara. The legends tell of mystical sirens who dwell beneath the lake's depths and creatures long lost to memory who walk the woods beyond the lake's edges.

Travelers with a mind for cartography would understand that part of the reason the legends about the lake differ so much is the lake's size. Depending on where an adventurer arrived at the lake and which part of the lake they explored, they're liable to have a completely different experience from someone visiting another shore.

But the true magic of Vestige Lake is the residue left over from the ancient world of Eldura. The careful adventurer might find artifacts from a time of warfare and strife, be they legendary weapons or magical items imbued with elemental magics. Closer to the lake as well, the people remember, at least in part, the world that came before.

For a brief overview of the history of Vestige and the larger kingdom it was a part of, [see the \*Legend of Neverune on Fantasy Afield\*](https://fantasyafield.com/the-divided-kingdom). (fantasyafield.com/the-divided-kingdom)

## The Adventure Begins

We like to start a Session 0 with the PC going about their daily tasks. At their heart, **stories are about change**, so this introduction helps emphasize that moment of change when the PC embarks on their adventure and will never be the same again. **We've also found that this beginning allows the player to get comfortable at the table and feel out their character and their character's voice, and it lets you as the GM get to know the PC as well.**

In our game, I knew before we started that Owyn was a beekeeper with some experience as a ranger and that he was young, relatively naïve, and bored with life as it was. In the days before his birth, the village herbalist had prophesied that he would be a bringer of change. Owyn grew up with this expectation, but he has yet to actualize that spark of something special. Instead, he stands out because he's always surrounded by bees.

During the first few minutes of our role-playing [RP], Jonathan acted out one of Owyn's conebees landing on his face. Owyn swats it away in frustration. If only these bees would leave him alone, he might be normal enough to achieve something worthwhile. Jonathan didn't know, before this moment, that Owyn's bees were a source of irritation for him. We love when these discoveries happen at the table instead of us deciding on them beforehand, and it's these sorts of moments that this approach should help enable. (Of course you'll want to find the story setup and playstyle that works best for you and your duet partner! But we're hoping these examples help!)

Owyn went about his day tending the hives and visiting the young ladies of Oakvale. His best friend, Julia, is an apprentice blacksmith, and the lady who has recently caught Owyn's eye, Brenea, works at the bakery.

**GM Tip:** During these initial scenes, have a few NPCs prepared for the PC to interact with, especially a mentor or quest-giver character. But give the player some space to add in NPCs of their own, people they've known. This part of the first session asks the player to drive the narrative without putting too much pressure on them in the moment as you both find your way into the story: "What would you like to do now?" "On a normal market day, where would you head first?"

## The Moment of Change

After a normal day in town, the PC returns to their home (or the tavern/inn where they are residing/staying) to rest for the night. Little do they know that everything is about to change. (Unless they're a character gifted with foresight in which case, it might be more fun for them to have an inkling in advance.)

### A new friend

As part of the changes the PC is about to experience, it's time to begin introducing the Storyteller's PC (SPC). In the case of our game, because Jonathan really enjoys supernatural forces and the balance of good and evil as themes, I created an elven SPC who was divided from part of herself and her ancestral powers because of a curse. Seraphina, a young elven witch, would be Owyn's companion during the campaign but Arda, her hidden half, would visit in dreams.

While you may not wish to have an SPC with multiple selves, having someone who can intercede on your (the Storyteller's) behalf and urge the PC in particular directions is extremely helpful.

### Strange dreams (an example introduction of the SPC)

That night, the PC has strange dreams in which a lilac-skinned elf with glowing eyes the color of moonstones appears before them. The elf is curious about the PC and knows a few more details about them than she perhaps should. Let the PC drive the conversation with the elf as much as possible. She reveals that her name is Arda, and other than learning more about the PC, her motivations remain relatively mysterious.

Arda is one half of Seraphina, locked away shortly after her birth as part of a curse. Arda is a succubus, though she's not trying to condemn the PC's soul. Instead, she's seeking the help of someone who can free her and allow her to be whole once more. Feel free to adapt this NPC/SPC setup as you see fit, but supernatural forces should begin to gather around the PC. (I'll cover this in more detail in the second part of this series.)

### Strange Visitors

A knock sounds against the wooden door in the middle of the night. Outside, the PC hears a "gekking" cry followed by a short series of barks. A range of magical cervidae (fox-elk) and their elven riders wait in the darkness. A tall elf with lavender hair thumps his fist against the door again. (This scene setup works best when the elves have someone they're trying to see. We used Temera, but you may have another healer in mind or even the PC themselves.)

The elf is Druza, leader of this group of Selenites (worshippers of the greater moon). His daughter is in grave danger from a curse, and she needs the aid of a healer.



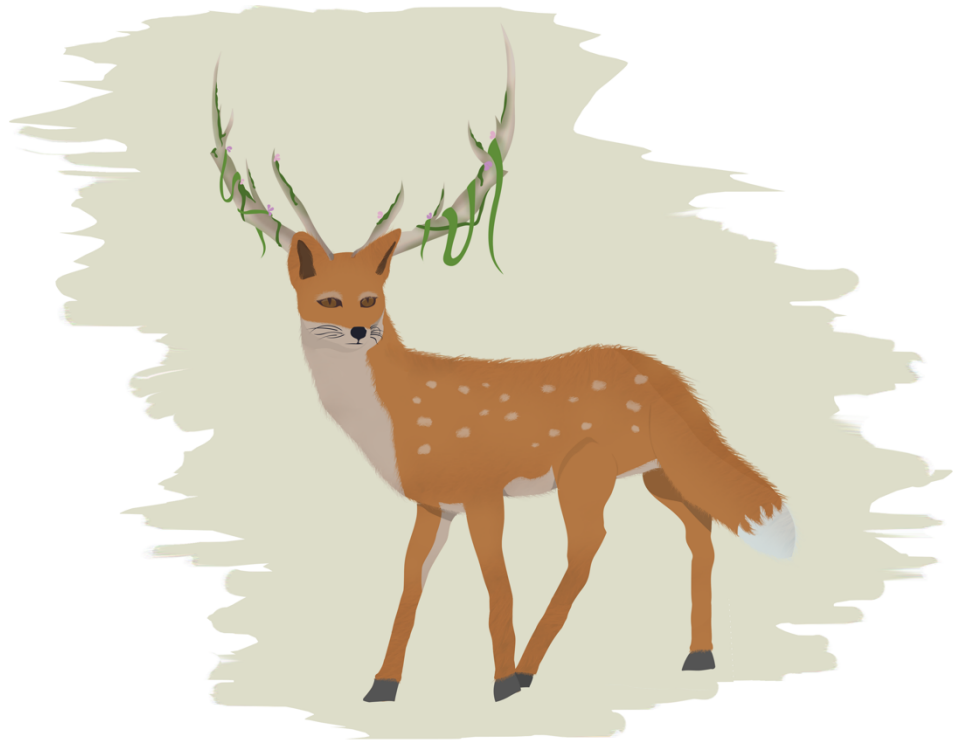
## What happened to Druza's daughter:

Enter the SPC, Seraphina :)

Seraphina's character setup could work really well as a PC backstory or you can adapt her story for your SPC.

Seraphina was on her way to Vestige Lake for her initiation ceremony with the coven of Ferhva when the coven matrons struck her with a curse. Once the PC allows the elves entry into wherever they're staying, the elves bring Seraphina in on a stretcher.

For the moment, she's unconscious with a high fever. Her eyes dart back and forth behind closed lids. The PC can either work to bring Seraphina back or assist the healer's efforts.



During this time, if the PC asks Druza what happened, he describes a spectral raven materializing from the shadows of the moon and striking Seraphina in the chest. She immediately fell limp against the neck of her cervidae, Alianore.

His daughter has been planning her trip to Vestige Lake for months, but, with the matrons' rejection, he cannot ask the others of the renga to continue accompanying her toward Vestige Lake. *Phrase this prompt however you think it will best strike the PC as the moment for them to volunteer to accompany Seraphina in her father and the renga's stead.*

Seraphina has pale blue eyes, freckles, and blue hair streaked through with a soft pink. Across her forehead she has glowing silver-white tattoos of the phases of the moon. She wears purple paint from temple to temple and across her eyelids and has silver markings beneath each of her eyes and across the center of her lower lip. Like the elves she travels with, she wears lots of jewelry and has many piercings, including a ring through the center of her nose.

## The Coven of Ferhva

Not all the witches of the coven of Ferhva are Selenites (worshippers of the moon), but the coven pays a great deal of heed to dreams and the signs of the earth. In some ways similar to Owyn's destiny, the matrons have gathered that Seraphina poses a threat to them and their leadership. They have taken the action of banishing her from the coven and placing a curse upon her.

After Seraphina revives, she confides in the PC that she feels part of herself is missing. When her father is out of earshot, she also explains that he has told her that the coven matrons have reacted to her in this way because they fear the power that she might grow into, but Seraphina herself doesn't place much credence in this.

### Additional backstory for the PC

In prepping for your first session, take the PC's backstory and personality into account as much as possible. As an example, Owyn's father was killed by a wandering group of giants, the Cloudstriders, on what came to be known as "the day the sky fell." Rangers brought Owyn's father's broken sword back to Oakvale, and Owyn arms himself with his father's sword before heading out toward Vestige Lake with Seraphina.

You might use a similar painful memory or, conversely, tap into one of the PC's passions or a calling from their deity to help spur them on the journey.

## The True Adventure Begins

Druza thanks Temera (or your guide character of choice) for her work in healing Seraphina and thanks the PC for their aid as well. With Seraphina on the mend, if he has not already secured the PC's aid in accompanying his daughter to Vestige Lake, Druza formally asks the PC to travel alongside her or, if it better suits the characters' dynamic, Seraphina might ask for their help herself.

Seraphina assures the PC that no harm will come to Temera because of the renege's visit or her healing aid. One of the witches will alter the memories of everyone in the traveling party, and a second witch will change the first's memory to ensure word does not make it back to the coven matrons.

The young elf looks behind her, a sheen to her pale gaze as she stares after the retreating renege. She tells the PC that her father won't remember what happened after the curse struck her and, depending on how the witches choose to change his memory, he may believe she died.

### Initial Encounter

As they travel over the mountains near Oakvale, an ogre wanders across the PC and Seraphina's path the morning of their second day. Ogres are not necessarily the most observant of creatures, so it's possible the party escapes this close encounter without any further danger.

*You may choose to use a creature besides an ogre who better fits the party's dynamic and/or backstory. And feel free to keep this a combat-free encounter. The goal is to create the feeling of being out in the wilderness, away from what the PC has known.*

**I hope this has helped give you an idea of what these narrative campaign sketches would look like! Jonathan and I are so curious to hear your thoughts and if future supplements like this would be of interest to you. We welcome your feedback, ideas, and suggestions. What more information would you need to make this work at your table, or do you like the narrative setup as-is?**

**Thanks!**

**- Beth**