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Made With



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### Happy 2026

We are getting right into it! Kicking off 2026 with a new campaign set in Greyhawk. We have a new group and DM joining on this adventure! I hope you all enjoy all this campaign has to offer.

Along with that, we bring in the last installment of the Tyranny of Dragons campaign. Let's make sure we take the time to be supportive of this group, and they try to save the world

Looking to the rest of the year, we will be looking to add an all-new campaign in July. So if any of our DMs are looking to get a spot, let Mandy know!

**Our Charity Table** Our Charity night will be returning January 21<sup>st</sup> at 8pm CST if you would like to join this of future charity table feel free to sign up! These are our only paid for tables and all profits/donations go to a great charity

**One shots!** Returning January 2<sup>nd</sup> on Friday night in the server we will have One Shots. DM Cloud has signed up for another year of fun with us so big thank you him! If you would like to join in, Send Mandy a message. Sessions will also be added to YouTube so you can watch sessions you aren't in.

Also, big thanks to our "lil s" squad for being all they do!



#### Ingredients

- Ice
- 3 oz. Prosecco
- 2 oz. Aperol
- 1 splash soda water (about 1 oz.)
- Orange slice, for serving

#### Directions

**Step 1** Fill a wine glass with ice and refrigerate until glass is chilled, about 30 seconds.

**Step 2** Add Prosecco, Aperol, and soda water and gently stir to combine. Garnish with orange slice.



### Want to learn D&D?

**Join our One Shots!**

**If you are trying to find a table  
that meets your needs and  
works for you?**

**Reach out, We might know a  
table that is looking for  
someone just like you!**

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## From The Channel

With Partnership on Twitch as our big goal in 2026, we can do this easily!

How do we get there? Simple, actually, Twitch asks for:

**6 streams on 6 unique days with an average of 75 viewers for 2 months in a row**

This is something we can get done for a 2026 goal and I can't wait!

Plus, we can have so much fun building this together! Once we hit 75 viewers in the stream, we will be having rewards: card pack give aways, Merch give aways and so much more!

**Card Packs:** We will have a new pack of cards joining the fun for our tables! January will bring the LEVNY pack and with it a lot of card to help players in game! Oh also, 2 new Legendary cards will be in the mix.

**Emotes:** With the new card pack release we are so excited to have Button being showcased in our emote swap out for the month! Here is our new "why do" emote.



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# Xaretul: The Forgotten Flame

## Chapter 6: The Path Forward

By EndYourStreamTV

The firelight danced in the clearing as the children huddled together, the warmth of the flames pushing back the chill of the night. The air was crisp, and the stars hung overhead like jewels, distant and untouchable. Yet, here, in this moment, there was warmth. There was hope.

Kira sat beside Arian, her new band of power glimmering in the firelight. It never left her arm, never shrinking, never growing too large. It was perfect, just as I had promised. Arian, his new ring proudly displayed on his finger, leaned forward, his eyes wide with wonder. Both of them were filled with a renewed sense of purpose, a strength they had never known before.

Nicholas, Caele, Garuth, Auriel, and Sandra sat quietly, observing the bond forming between their new god and the others. They hadn't spoken much since they had arrived, their hearts still heavy with fear and uncertainty. But I knew. I could feel the questions burning in their minds.

Kira and Arian had found faith. They had found me. But what about them?

I stood just beyond the circle, the shadows and flames that made up my form dancing with the firelight. My power was still new, still fragile, but it was no longer fleeting. It had solidified. And it was their faith that had made it so.

"Children," I called softly, my voice a low hum that carried through the air. "You have been given a great gift. But there is much yet to do. Much yet to understand."

They looked up at me, their eyes filled with curiosity and hesitation. Nicholas, the strong boy, was the first to speak, his voice hesitant yet filled with a quiet resolve.

"Mr. Xar... or Xaretul... what are we supposed to do now? We've never had anyone to follow before. Are we supposed to be like Kira and Arian? Are we... are we all part of your faith now?"

I could hear the uncertainty in his voice, the confusion that came with stepping into something so large, so uncertain. And yet, I could also feel the spark of hope, the desire to belong to something greater than themselves.

"You are already part of it," I replied, stepping closer. "The faith is not in titles or powers. It is in believing. It is in knowing that you are not alone, that you are cared for. You already know how to do this. You just need to believe."

Caele, his eyes wide and observant, nodded. "What about the others? The people we came from? Are they... gone? Will we ever see them again?"

The question hung in the air, heavy with the weight of loss. The truth of their past, their suffering, their abandonment, was still too fresh in their hearts. They hadn't even had time to grieve, to process the full weight of what had been taken from them.

"No," I said, my voice gentle. "You will not see them again. But know this: they are with you in spirit. They live on in your hearts, in your memories. And they will guide you, as you move forward."

The silence that followed was heavy, filled with the weight of their grief. But I could feel it, the lightest glimmer of understanding starting to form in their hearts. The truth would settle in time.





MINI  
CLOUD  
DISNEY  
VIBES



JAZZY  
WITH A  
WIN!



DINO  
BROS



SHOW  
TANK!



COZY  
VIBES  
DINKUM



MYRDDIN  
GETTING  
SOME  
SOLOS!



POST YOUR PICTURES IN OUR  
DISCORD SHARING CHANNEL TO MAKE  
THE NEXT ISSUE OF REALMS

FROM OUR SERVERS

WE HAVE 2 ONLINE SERVERS OFFERING BOTH ARK AND MINECRAFT!!





# Xaretul: The Forgotten Flame (cont)

By EndYouStreamTV

I turned to Kira and Arian, who were sitting close, their hands intertwined. Their bond was stronger than ever, their faith unwavering. They had always been the ones who believed, even when no one else had. They had never given up on me. Now, it was time to show them what they were capable of.

"Kira," I called to her softly. "Arian, come here."

The two of them stood, walking toward me. Kira held her head high, the weight of her new role as High Priestess settling on her shoulders. Arian walked with his usual confidence, though his eyes betrayed a sense of wonder, still adjusting to the enormity of what was unfolding.

"Kira, Arian," I began, my voice firm yet filled with warmth. "Your faith has built something new. You will be the first to help others see. You will share what you have learned with these children. Teach them what it means to follow. Teach them what it means to believe."

Kira's eyes shone with determination. "I will, Mr. Xar. I promise."

Arian, always with his broad smile, grinned up at me. "We'll help, won't we, Kira?"

"Of course," she said, her voice steady. "We'll teach them everything."

I placed my hand gently on her shoulder, then on Arian's. "You will do well. And remember this: You are not alone. You have each other, and you have me. Always."



The children looked to each other, and then to me, a spark of resolve lighting in their eyes. There was something new in them, a strength born from belief and unity.

I felt the power grow again, slow, steady, but undeniably real. This wasn't the power of a god of destruction or wrath. It wasn't the power of shadows or flame. This was something different. This was a power built on love, on faith, on hope. And it was growing, solidifying, becoming something lasting.

"You all have a journey ahead of you," I said, my voice quiet but firm. "You are the first steps in something new. Something that will grow beyond what any of us can imagine. And when the world is ready, it will turn to you. To us."

They all nodded, some with uncertainty, others with eagerness. But the seed had been planted, and in time, it would grow.

The night stretched on, the fire crackling and dancing before us, and for the first time in a long time, I felt at peace. I felt whole. I was no longer a god forgotten by time. I was their god, Kira, Arian, Nicholas, Caele, Garuth, Auriel, Sandra, and all those who would join us in the future.

This was only the beginning.



Chill Vibes  
for  
Campaign Prep

@TheCafeDM  
on  
YouTube



Monday  
8pm CST  
on  
Twitch





# Belrum's Anguish

## Chapter 1

### The Funeral of Fire and Ash

By OldManGeras



The pyres still burned when Belrum Orcfoe stepped onto the obsidian dais before the shattered Hall of the Remnant. The air was heavy with smoke and sorrow, the scent of charred oak and scorched flesh lingering like the memory of a nightmare. Ash drifted through the twilight, soft and gray, settling across the crowd like funeral snow. Even the wind had gone still, as if the gods themselves dared not breathe in the presence of what remained.

Belrum's armor, once burnished and proud beneath the banners of Cudgel's Ironclad Regiment, now bore the same wounds as the mountain behind him - dented, scorched, and streaked with soot. The crimson mantle over his shoulders was torn in three places and the sigil of his kin, the Stonehammer Clan, was nearly unrecognizable beneath layers of grime. Behind him, the banners of the Ironclad hung in tatters from cracked poles, their golden threads blackened, their runic embroidery still faintly glowing as the last enchantments faded into nothing.

He gripped the edge of the dais with calloused fingers and looked out over the gathered crowd - hundreds of dwarves, elves, and humans, their faces cast in orange light. The pyres burned tall and steady behind them, each one crowned with the remnants of another fallen brother. At the center of the courtyard, two pyres burned, the highest of all. On one lay Thrain Firehand, the man Belrum had followed for fifteen long years, who taught him that strength meant more than fury. His armor had been polished for the last time, his hammer placed upon his chest, his eyes sealed by Belrum's own hand. On the other hand, Ridomir Cudgel, the human woman who found him wandering half-mad through the borderlands, torn between wild magic and

untamed rage. She had steadied his spirit where no spell could, teaching him the calm between hammer strikes, the silence between breaths. She had been his rescuer, his comrade, his lover, his wife. When she fell in that final siege, a part of Belrum had died with her. The flames that consumed their bodies now were his last tether to what was pure. When the first ember from their pyres drifted upward into the night, Belrum began to speak.

"I said my farewell to me friend not four hours past," he said, his voice a rasp of stone upon steel. "He was our chosen leader, our Warden of the Shardlands, and a better dwarf than any of us deserved. For fifteen years he guided us - not with fear or gold, but with the strength of his hand and the honor of his word." He paused, his throat tightening. "And ye cut him down like a beast in the dark, hopin' to see our unity crumble into dust."

His words echoed through the silent square. Then, through enchantment and spellglass, they carried far beyond the mountains - projected into every scrying mirror, every message crystal, every pool of reflection that would hear him. All across Faerûn, nobles, soldiers, and common folk alike turned their eyes to the image of the soot-streaked dwarf standing before his burning dead. From the Silver Marches to the dunes of Calimshan, the name Belrum Orcfoe would not soon be forgotten.

He drew a deep breath, and the light of the fires flickered across his face. "We mended yer bridges when the trolls broke 'em," he said, voice rough but rising. "We sent our masons to rebuild yer keeps when giants razed 'em to the ground."





# Elyndra Silverstring

## Character Writing

By SexySlothh

Race: Half Elf

Class: Bard



In a world where the borders between realms blur and magic dances in the air, Elyndra Silverstring was born beneath the shimmering lights of a rare celestial event, an alignment of the moons that occur only once in a millennium. Her mother, a spirited elven minstrel with ethereal beauty, and her father, a rugged human circus performer, met during a grand festival in a vibrant town known for its art and culture. It was a night filled with laughter, music, and a touch of magic, and their love blossomed like the most exquisite flower in a forbidden garden.

Raised in that colorful chaos, Elyndra embraced the arts from an early age. Her mother taught her the delicate notes of elven songs while her father introduced her to the thrilling tales of wonder that filled the circus tent. Through the years, she learned the fine art of performance, mastering the lute, flute, and the graceful dance that accompanied her melodies. But as a half-elf, she always felt a strange duality within her; her elven grace mixed with human passion forged a unique artistic style that entranced audiences far and wide.

When Elyndra turned sixteen, a tragedy struck. A powerful storm ravaged the town, destroying her mother's beloved home and leaving devastation in its wake. In the chaos, her mother disappeared, swept away by the angry winds. Heartbroken but determined, Elyndra rallied the remaining members of the circus to rebuild, channeling her grief into her music. She poured her soul into her performances, composing stirring ballads that captured both her loss and her undying spirit.

With the circus now a nomadic family, Elyndra took to the road, traveling from one bustling town to another, bringing hope and joy wherever they went. Dressed in a vibrant patchwork of colors reflecting her mixed heritage, she quickly became the heart and soul of the troupe, enchanting audiences with her haunting songs and exhilarating dances. As she performed under the stars, she gained fame not only as a performer but as a storyteller, weaving tales of adventure, love, and sorrow.

As the years passed, Elyndra became a legend in her own right, a beacon of light in the dark. With the circus always on the move, her journey was as unpredictable as her music, filled with laughter, adventure, and the bittersweet melody of a half-elf bard forever chasing the echoes of her past.







## Belrum's Anguish (cont.)

by OldManGaras

We forged the blades ye swung against yer enemies when yer own smithies were silent. And when yer granaries were empty, we filled 'em from our own stores, because we believed in kinship. We believed in the promise of the Realms." His gaze hardened. "And what did ye give us for it?"

He slammed his fist upon the podium. The sound cracked through the courtyard like a hammerstrike in the forges of Moradin himself. "A dagger in the ribs o' friendship. Betrayal for loyalty. Fire for mercy."

He gestured sharply, and a tremor of magic rippled through the air. The scrying mirrors behind him shimmered to life, revealing visions conjured from memory, terrible and vivid. Dwarven halls engulfed in sorcerous flame. Villages turned to molten slag beneath streaks of falling stars. The proud fortress of Barak-Dun, once the heart of Stonehammer Might, crumbled beneath a storm of arcane meteors, the sky itself screaming as if in pain.

"You called us Deathbound," he thundered. "Ye said our magic was too old, too deep, too dangerous. Ye feared what ye couldnae control. So ye turned the Weave itself against us!"

The images shifted again: dwarven soldiers struggling to lift wounded kin from a field of broken rune cannons; clerics crushed beneath the ruins of their own temples; a woman shielding her child as a column of green fire swept through the mining caverns of the Eastreach. The crowd before him wept openly now, some clutching weapons, others amulets of faith. Even the flames seemed to burn quieter.

Belrum's voice lowered, trembling. "Ye burned our strongholds to cinder. Ye shattered the sky above our hearths. Ye poisoned the wells of the mountains with your cursed mists." He looked upward, his face streaked with ash and tears. "Ye made orphans of those who once prayed for yer safety. Ye slew the healers who would've tended yer wounded."

The dwarf leaned forward, his knuckles whitening on the blackened wood of the dais. "And now," he hissed, "ye call it necessary." The word twisted from his mouth like venom. "Necessity is the word o' cowards who fear the price o' their own cruelty."

A cold silence followed. The pyres crackled, the banners rustled, and somewhere in the distance, a mountain groaned as if remembering some ancient grief. Belrum bowed his head for a long moment, his breath steadying, before he spoke again - quieter, but far more dangerous.

"Ye think this grief will fade," he said softly. "That time will dull the pain and turn vengeance to memory." His gaze swept across the crowd, the firelight reflected in his dark eyes like molten iron. "But ye forget who we are."

He straightened, his shadow stretching long and dark across the courtyard. "We are dwarves. Sons and daughters of the deep stone. The mountains remember our steps, the forges remember our sweat, and the halls of our ancestors echo still with our oaths. We do not forgive, and we never forget."

Behind him, the remnants of the Ironclad banner stirred in the faint wind as if something unseen had breathed upon it. The runes of the old Stonehammer mark, hammer above flame, flickered faintly, a pulse like a dying heartbeat. Belrum turned toward it, his face softened for a moment and then hardened again into something cold and unyielding.

"Tonight, we mourn," he said, his voice now calm and deep as the roots of the earth. "But mourning is the seed of reckoning."

He laid a hand upon the stone dais, and the ground beneath him answered - a deep, resonant hum, low and powerful. Dust trickled from the cracks in the flagstones. The pyres guttered, then flared brighter, flames twisting into shapes that looked almost alive. Somewhere deep beneath the mountain, something vast and ancient stirred in response to his call.

"The stones themselves hear our sorrow," Belrum whispered.

The last words carried not as sound, but as tremor - a low rumble that shivered through the floor and out into the bones of the world. Deep below, somewhere in the heart of the mountains, something ancient stirred in answer.





# New Year, New Me, New Game?



By W. Adam Clarke

Good Afterwhenever, everyone. Your friendly neighborhood Game Dev, AP Runner, Streamer, and Author you've never read W. Adam Clarke again. This week, as we look with hope (read: sheer terror that last year may continue and only get worse) into a new year, I wanted to give you some suggestions we can all take to heart, Player and GM alike.

Going into the new year, I'd like to offer some ideas for trying to stretch your gaming experience. Even if you are completely happy and comfortable with your current games, learning is never bad, and you may find ways to incorporate new ideas into your existing play. Having tried all of these suggestions myself, I can promise you that they'll make you a more well rounded gamer.

**- OFFER TO GM.** Okay hear me out: you don't need to run a whole campaign. But, if you've never GM'ed before, take some time, one session in the next year, and try to run a game. Not only do you run the risk of finding out you like it, even if you never do it again, it'll give you

perspective into what your normal GM faces week to week, and they'll appreciate your increased appreciation.

**- TRY A NEW GAME.** I know, you like your 5E/5.5/PF2/BitD/Daggerheart/etc, and don't think you'll enjoy anything else. I get that. But... try. Pick up something old to see how your system developed, or something new to try a different take. The reason? Every game engine has the same problems they need to solve, but many use different mechanics to do it. Even if you never pick up the game again, it'll show you new methods of dealing with familiar problems, and that's where the best house rules are born.

**- PLAY THAT RACE/CLASS YOU HATE.** Probably better to do in a one-shot than a new long campaign, but stretch your wings. Can't understand why people like a class? Try it. Hate the mechanics of a certain race or ancestry? Play it. From personal experience, there's no better way to understand a thing than doing it, and you might find a surprise new favorite that way- or at least appreciate your existing favorite in a new light.

I am Myrddin  
on  
Twitch

Always a  
great  
time



Single Step Gaming  
The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE All times Eastern

MON 7PM TYRANNY OF  
DRAGONS  
SE Campaign  
GM: Jarroa

TUE 8PM SPINESPOR  
Daggerheart  
GM: Adam

WED 7PM CHILDREN OF  
ELYSIUM  
Blades in the Dark  
GM: Jarroa

THU 8PM SALVAGE INC.  
Salvage Union  
GM: Myrddin

FRI 8PM SMALL PACKAGES  
Simulacrum / SE  
GM: Adam

SAT 7PM Cyberpunk 2020  
Cyberpunk 2020  
GM: Adam

SUN 7PM REMANETS  
Daggerheart  
GM: Murgoth

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youtube.com/SingleStepGaming





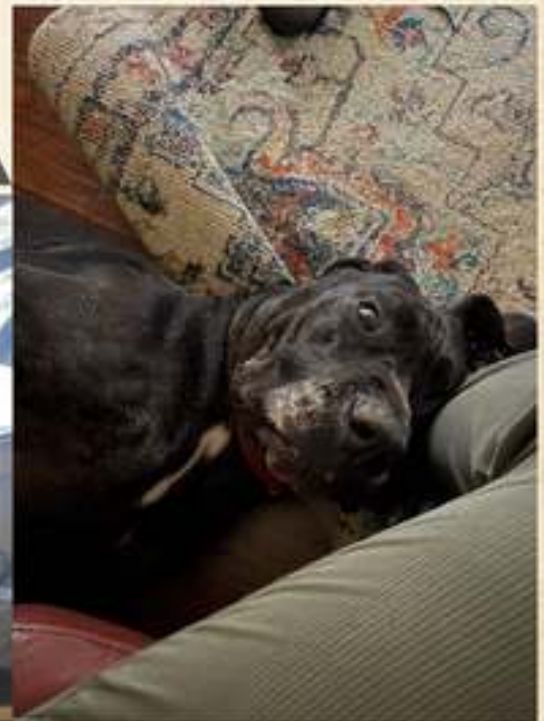
## *Join the Quest*

The beacon has been lit! On February 1<sup>st</sup> I will be doing a drawing for a shot of Quest's End Warlock

It will come with the booklet and stickers seen in the image

All you need to do is take a clip to be entered in our giveaway!

Best of Luck!



**Send in yours by January 19th**  
in the SideBar server!





## New Year, New Me, New Game? (cont.)

by W. Adam Clarke

- **FIND A NEW TABLE.** Try a new group, or new method of play. Only play on an in-person table? Try some play-by-post or virtual table gaming. Only play online? Find an FLGS nearby (maybe the one you bought that shiny new book from?) And see if any tables have vacancies. Check to see if your local library runs a game night (or offer to GM one, like the first suggestion). Check MeetUp or other apps for gaming groups in your area. I'm not saying stop playing with the group you're comfortable with... but odds are, if you've been with the same group campaign after campaign, everyone always fills the same roles, running similar characters, and even playing a campaign or module you've done before with a completely different group will make it a uniquely new experience.

- **TWEAK YOUR NORMS.** If nothing else, try to swap up what you do with a fun new quirk. Play off-gender. Pick a different dump stat. use a different build. Play a coward instead of the Hero. Play Evil instead of Good, or vice versa.

Well, that's it from me for this month, folks. Here's hoping your holidays were spent with the ones you love, and you have a bright year ahead of you. Hopefully you'll stop by my streams. If not, see you all next month.



W. Adam Clarke  
Can be found on  
SingleStepGaming



# SIDE BAR

[rpgsidebar.com](http://rpgsidebar.com)





# Oneshots vs. Campaigns



By Skyline

I'm now at the point in my D&D life that I have plenty of experience in different games with different players, people and versions.

And I've now learned the different ways to be involved in D&D, more specifically in the aspects of being a dungeon master versus a player.

But that's a whole other conversation!

In this newsletter, I wanted to discuss and write down my thoughts on being in a one-shot compared to playing in a campaign. Both have their merits and their ways of letting the players experiment, learn, and grow, but both are different. So let's talk about it!

## Oneshots:

Now, for starters, there are quite a few factors involved. From a DM's perspective, are you doing something completely homebrewed? Are you doing something from an existing campaign? Or are you using the one-shot books from D&D? In any case, I think oneshots are essential for any D&D player to take part in, especially for beginners. There is technically less at stake, and you have a way to experiment with the different classes, races, and abilities! As someone who prefers playing the magic classes, participating in oneshots has helped me get more comfortable with playing the melee classes. Not only with classes, but I find it extremely helpful to play different kinds of players with different personalities, alignments, and voices. Now, from the perspective of a DM, it's generally much easier to run a one-shot because there are many options and room for changes in case anyone cancels last minute. Additionally, this is also a way for the DM, especially newer ones like myself, to test combat and see how to level your battles. Now I am someone who prefers the role-playing aspect of D&D, but running oneshots has helped me immensely in terms of running battles and how to balance them depending on levels.

## Campaigns:

Moving onto campaigns, I love campaigns for a multitude of reasons. A continuous story with high stakes and a chance to grow with others as players and as people. Not only can you see characters arcs and their development, but also their strength and powers and their highs and lows. You also get a chance to test out and experience roleplaying depending on what type of character you play and the environment you're in. I also adore the idea as a player to start from scratch and see how your party forms and functions together, the bonds of every person whether it's familial or something else!

Now, from the perspective of a DM, for me, there's more pressure in a campaign compared to a one-shot. You are the one who knows all about the characters and where they come from, and you want to do their arcs justice. Of course, the players are in charge of the choices they make and how they develop them, but you, as a DM, are taking them on that journey. The lore of the whole campaign, the characters and environment building are a bunch of factors that make being a DM a challenging role for me personally. However, I've had so much fun messing with the players, watching them play, and having no pressure on whether my character will live or die.

So overall, oneshots and campaigns are different in their own ways but are equal in a few ways. Allowing all players and DM's to grow and experiment, whilst also of course having fun. There are different areas of pressure and responsibility, of course, but as long as everyone has a good time in the end, that's all that matters.

What is your preference for D&D? Do you like one-shots or campaigns more, or do you not care either way?

Until next time...







## Member Showcase!

### GrimGrixis

We asked a few questions to get to know Grim just a little better!

#### ***Favorite color?***

Orange, specifically the deeper colored oranges of fall.

#### ***Tell us about your hobbies?***

My hobbies include, but are not limited to, gaming, DND (creating monsters and maps), cartography (drawing maps by hand), and, like any other southern man, I love a good day of yard work.

#### ***Do you have any Pets?***

Mao. Mao is a snowball of sacred fuzz; he is my son, and I will hear no complaints against him. We look the same, we both hate people, we both love naps. I sacrificed my hair so his may remain, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. Mao is the sacred fur child, he is the one that darkness cannot touch, for he is light. And if ANYONE talks bad about a Mao.... hands. Mao is better than your cat, that I promise AND guarantee.

#### ***What is your favorite style of game, and what got you into it?***

Personally, I enjoy turn-based strategy games. I like games that challenge my brain with difficult fights and odds that seem stacked against you, but with good tactics and good thought, you can change the tide. I love RPG and FPS games as well, Call of Duty being one of my all time favorite games.

#### ***If you were to recommend a game to someone in that style, what would you recommend?***

Well, in the field of turn-based strategy, I recommend War Tales, ANY of the Sid Meir's Civilization games, and turn-based roguelikes in the vein of Slay the Spire. For FPS games, well... Call of Duty, if you don't like it... get good.

#### ***What's something interesting that people wouldn't guess about you?***

Now, see, for this one, it's a little fun, BUT I like hands-on crafts and art project style work. I love fuse beads, I know how to knit (poorly), and I have been taught multiple times by Mandy how to crochet. But I love putting together smaller art projects and building something fun out of a blank slate.



### Anything Else?

Nothing to big here, if you need monsters for a DND session I got your back. Need a sweat to carry you in COD and maybe some Overwatch 2, I'm there. Beyond that I look forward to the big things that are coming in the future!







## New Content



By Mini Cloud

Hi and welcome, about 5 months ago, I did something exciting I (with permission) made a YouTube channel. I thought that I might not be the only person trying to build a YouTube channel, so I thought I might share what I have learned, what I am making, and the status of my channel.

When I started, I didn't know what kind of videos I was going to make. The first videos I made were what is called "long form" content, which are videos that last more than 3 mins. They did ok (as far as I knew) I had around 5 views and was able to gain 3 subscribers. So I would say that is a big win.

As time went on, I looked into a different type of content. This is called "short form" content. These are videos that are mainly targeted for viewers on their phones. Videos like this are shorter and made in a vertical format for better viewing. I had to make big changes in how I did edits for my videos. The topics I have used range from dinosaur time periods, types of dinosaurs, and different kinds of animal facts.

With this newfound form of content, I think I have done well with last week I actually had a video get over one thousand views! Also, I have 14 subscribers now, so I think I am on the right track. I will keep working to learn how to make fun content.



I might not give updates every month, but, I will make sure the numbers I share on the growth of the channel are correct.



long form views



Short form views

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## A note from the editor

For those who are new, Mini-Cloud is the 10-year-old daughter of our DM Cloud and she has been wonderful to work with. Every month I get so excited to see what she will come up with next!



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By GrimGrixis

## So you want to fight a monster?

This month, let's talk about a beast of mythology, one everyone should be well versed in and well acquainted with, the chimera! Originating from Greek Mythology, the chimera is an amalgamate monstrosity. A creature composed of three or four heads, depending on the Chimera, the heads are of a dragon, goat, lion, and sometimes a serpent/snake. Now the three main heads of the creature are those of the goat, dragon, and lion. However, the serpent comprises the tail of the creature, which creates a very sturdy and interesting creature.

In DND 5e, the only thing missing from this creature is the tail that is a serpent, which in reflection, could make this creature even more terrifying if it were there. Now, to fight one of these beasties, you have to be quite cautious in how you handle them. The dragon's head can breathe fire, the lion's head has a bite attack, and the goat's head can ram you with its horns. Now, if that is not bad enough, this creature not only has the claws of a lion on its front paws, but the rear feet are hooves. But, with all of that being said, this creature even has a fly speed! Now, take into mind this creature has no debilitating effects like pushing a creature prone, paralyzed, or poisoned; however, this creature would be knocked up a notch by one simple effect, adding in the serpent's tail from mythology. This would take the creature up a notch in both form and fear, causing a very complex fight and one that could be potentially deadly to the party. But all in all, there are no real special features of a chimera, so in light of that, this month's cover monster makes one, well, terrifying.

A chimera is a challenging yet simple enough creature to fight, so let's make that a little more complex and make something more so to challenge and terrify the party! If you fight a chimera, use your wits, tactics, and **DON'T CLUMP TOGETHER**, or do and get roasted alive by that breath weapon!

From one DM to the players,  
GrimGrixis







Here is the backstory of how Athas was forged, as told by its creators

*By Chase Street*

### The "War World" Origins

In 1990, TSR wanted a setting to showcase their BATTLE\_SYSTEM mass-combat rules. The project was originally codenamed "War World." The mandate given to the design team, primarily Timothy Brown and Troy Denning, was to create a world where constant conflict was the norm. The team decided that to make war meaningful, resources had to be the primary motivator. This led to the concept of environmental collapse. They stripped the world of water and metal, making a single iron longsword worth more than a kingdom.

### The Influence of Brom

Perhaps no setting in D&D history is as tied to its artist as Dark Sun is to Gerald Brom. The collaboration between Brom and the design team is legendary because it was a "feedback loop" that rarely happens in corporate publishing. Brom wasn't just a contractor; he was essentially a co-creator who sat in a room with Tim Brown and Troy Denning, throwing paintings on the table like they were world-building grenades.

### Art First, Writing Second:

Unlike most settings where artists illustrate what is written, Brom often painted concepts first. Brown and Denning would see a sketch of a bug-man or a hairless dwarf and then write the lore to explain why they looked that way.

**The "Neeva" Story:** Troy Denning famously recalled seeing a painting in Brom's workspace of a muscular, blonde gladiator with a strange polearm. That painting became the character Neeva, and the "vibe" of that single image eventually dictated the aesthetic for the entire world. Here are a few more in-depth anecdotes about how Brom's brushstrokes became the "Bible" for Athas.

### The "A-ha!" Moment of the Half-Giant

Before Brom got involved, the design team had the idea of "big strong guys," but they were thinking in traditional D&D terms—basically just larger humans or "Ogres as PCs."

Brom walked in with a painting of a massive, (cont on page 00)



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brooding warrior with a tiny head relative to his muscular frame, draped in strange, organic-looking leather and bone plates. Denning and Brown realized that these weren't just "big guys"—they looked wrong in a way that fit the world. Brom's depiction of their vacant yet intense stares led directly to the lore that Half-Giants had "mercurial personalities" and were prone to mimicking the people around them because they were "psychically hollow."

#### The Mul (The Baldness Factor)

One of the most iconic "vibers" of Dark Sun is that almost everyone is hairless. This wasn't a lore decision initially; it was a Brom decision. Brom hated painting "shampoo-commercial hair" on warriors in a desert. He felt it looked ridiculous and unhygienic for a survival setting. When he turned in the sketches for the Mul, they were completely bald, sweat-slicked, and covered in tattoos. The writers saw this and immediately pivoted: "Okay, Dwarves and Muls have no hair. It's a biological trait." This led to the culture of

Here is the backstory of how Athas was forged, as told by its creators (cont)  
*By Chase Street*

"Slave Tattoos" becoming a major plot point in the Prism Pentad novels. If Brom hadn't preferred the "clean" look of a bald head, the Muls might have just looked like generic Viking-dwarves.

#### The "Cactus" and the Thri-kreen

Brom's art for the Thri-kreen changed them from being just "bug monsters" (which they were in the standard *Monstrous Manual*) to being The Mantis Warriors. Brom painted them with multiple limbs held in very specific, "praying" martial poses, using weapons made of a strange yellow crystalline substance (Dasl). He also gave them those huge, multi-faceted black eyes that reflected the desert sun. The writers looked at the art and realized these creatures shouldn't speak like humans. Brom's art looked so "alien" that it forced the writers to create the Thri-kreen language (clicks and whirs) and their philosophy of the "Clutch," where the group is more important than the individual.

#### The World of Bone and Obsidian

Perhaps Brom's biggest contribution was the lack of metal. In the early concepts, characters were still carrying steel swords. Brom started painting "The Obsidian Axe" and "The Bone Dagger." He felt that metal was too shiny and "clean" for his color palette of oranges, browns, and deep blacks. (cont on page 00)

# Imperial Magpies

## Tuesdays

## 8pm CST

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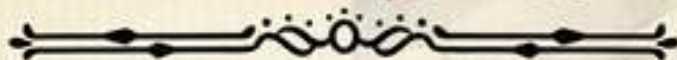
# SIDE BAR





# Haltorix

By GrimGruus



Oi, pull up a stool and buy the next round of drinks. If you want to hear this one properly and true—keep it quiet, though.

Out on the wide golden plains, where the grass waves like an endless sea and the wind carries the scent of wild herds and prairie bounty for miles, there's been talk of a beast, one like no other, a chimera with four heads, Haltorix, that be what the folk are calling him.

A herder from the eastern grasslands came through here last moon, pale as the clouds in the sky himself, he swore to the heavens above he saw it, a cold-hearted, patient killer, stalking through the grass towards a stray aurochs. He said the thing looked like a massive white lion at first, nearly invisible against a patch of sun-bleached grass, slinking low with eyes like cold steel. Then he sent the dogs after it... and what happened next, he still shudders when you ask him. His dogs gave chase, they tracked the beast, but it was toying with them. Once they got it cornered and started barking up a storm, the thing shifted, right before his eyes. The lion head pulled back, and to the side, a bleating goat's skull shoved forward on a thick neck, horns curved and wicked, and a long dragon neck uncoiled from its mane, spouting flames that scorched the prairie, but the worst of it is the tail became a writhing serpent, poison dripping from its bared fangs.

The herder bolted. He tells it that fear gripped his heart as the dogs yipped and yelped in panic, and I can't say I blame him. As the cries of the dogs faded, then began the noises of the beast descending upon the herd, it wasn't a quick hunting call of a predator taking down prey, no, this beast tortured the herd, letting the cries peel over the prairie, but the herder put the beast to his back, hoping he'd have something remaining when he returned. Now, this isn't the first sighting of the beast, Haltorix. Some say it doesn't always show all four heads. Sometimes it's a ghostly pale goat grazing peacefully with the antelope herds, then suddenly shifting form and with earth-shaking force, brutalizing the very herd it just grazed with. But when it's cornered or hungry enough? All four snarling heads together let loose a roaring cry that makes horses halt dead in their tracks and men freeze up like statues.

The worst of it is, no one knows if it's hunting meat, territory, or just playing with folk, but the local caravans now travel heavily armed through the open plains. Let this be your warning, if you hear four mismatched roars on the wind at dusk... best make camp early and pray Haltorix ain't in the mood for company



## Tyranny of Dragons

Thursday 8pm CST

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## NIGHTFELL







## HALTORIX THE PALE CHIMERA

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 16 (Natural Armor)

**Hit Points** 232 (22d10 + 110)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Str +10, Con +9

**Skills** Perception +6

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Condition Immunities** blinded, frightened, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Understands Draconic but cannot speak

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Draconic Fury.** Haltorix's dragon head enrages at half health, and will begin to attack with its dragon's bite attack.

**Heart of the Monstrosity.** Haltorix has advantage on Constitution saving throws.

**Serpent's Poison.** All bite attacks by Haltorix are poisonous and require a DC 16 Constitution saving throw to succeed against.

**Shifting Form.** Haltorix can take the form of a goat or lion, its wings and other heads meld into its form.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Haltorix makes three attacks, two bite attacks and one claw attack, he may one of these attacks with a horn attack.

**Dragon's Bite (Under Half Health).** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage, the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one hour.

**Lion's Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 20 (4d6 + 6) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage, the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one hour.

**Serpent's Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) poison damage, the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one hour.

**Goat's Horns.** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d12 + 6) bludgeoning damage, the target must make a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Claws.** Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 20 (4d6 + 6) slashing damage.

**Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6).** Haltorix breathes out a 30ft cone of fire, all creatures within the cone must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 45 (10d8) fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful saving throw.

### REACTIONS

**Smoke Plume.** Haltorix breathes out a cloud of smoke, all creatures within 10 ft. Must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 round as the smoke irritates their eyes.







Here is the backstory of how Athas was forged, as told by its creators (cont)

*By Chase Street*

He painted a character holding a club made from a Megapede mandible.

The designers saw this and it clicked: "The world has no iron." This one artistic choice by Brom created the most famous mechanical quirk of Dark Sun: The Weapon Breakage Rule. If your bone sword hit a heavy shield, there was a chance it would snap. That entire layer of gameplay—the fear of your weapon shattering—started because Brom thought bone looked cooler than steel.

### The Dragon of Tyr's Nightmare

When the time came to design The Dragon, most D&D dragons looked like "Western Dragons" (four legs, wings, green/red). Brom turned in a painting of a creature that was gaunt, upright, and looked like a desiccated, mummified corpse of a god. It was terrifyingly thin, with elongated fingers and an expression of eternal, psychic agony.

This art is the reason the "Dragon" isn't a monster you fight for gold.

The writers saw the pain in Brom's dragon and decided: "This isn't a natural creature. This is a man who destroyed his soul to become a monster." Brom's art literally created the tragic, horrific backstory of the Sorcerer-Kings.

### The Brom Legacy

Troy Denning often says that he didn't write The Prism Pentad (the novels); he just "wrote down what he saw in Brom's paintings." It was the first time in D&D history that the Art Director was essentially the Lead World Builder.

It's why the world feels so cohesive. Every armor piece, every creature, and every jagged rock looks like it belongs to the same nightmare.



## Charity Night

*3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month*

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## The Mandurterians

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*Dreamstory pt.3*  
*By Tora @*  
*CoffeeAndDragonsRPG*

Alisha started to tear up at his words. "I wish he could stay with us as well Poppy. When you are older, I will explain to you what he is doing for us and what the others are not willing to do what Nathaniel and I would do," she said softly. "I want you to be my papa, I do not want you to leave, it will hurt if you are gone" Poppy cried. Nathaniel smiled and started to tear up, so innocent, yet her words weighed so heavily on his heart. "I will stay with you both a bit longer, I will not leave right away" he said. "Ok," she said with a quivering lip trying to hold back more tears. The three of them spend the rest of the day holding each other, taking turns to sleep. Nathaniel would listen to some of the others speak. Saying it did not matter who they chose, but they would make their captures pay by making them look like fools. Sometime later, the light appeared once again and there was another table of food and drinks. No one went running right away and finally, some were trying to convince their children or pick something up and try it. Arguments started to break out as even families turned on each other.

Smiling, Nathaniel stood up and walked over to table looking over the food. He picked up some bread, meat, and some fruit, enough for the three of them and a pitcher of water and walked back over to Poppy and Alisha.



He sat down next to them and closed his eyes and prayed to the Dawn Mother to ask for this food to be safe from poison and disease and then he took a bite of bread and one of the pieces of fruit and drank some water. "I think it is safe to eat" he said, and he heard a mad rush of everyone to the food.

"Are you sure it is, ok?" Alisha asked.

"Yes, I asked the Dawn Mother to bless the food to protect us." He said softly.

Surprised, she asked softly,

"Are you a religious man?"

"Yes and no, I was a warrior for the church during the war, I took an oath to protect the kingdom. When the war was over, I wanted to go back to the quieter life, but my oath still stands," he said.

Alisha then moved to sit next to him, and Poppy sat between them as they ate in silence. Not much later, there were sounds of retching as the poison started to take effect, and Nathaniel looked upwards and said softly,

"Thank you, mother."

It was a hard day for the three of them. People were now starting to blame them for poisoning the food and drinks. There were waves of voices saying they would offer one of them to be sacrificed so they all may leave this hell.

(cont on page 26)



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## *It's Just a Game*

By DMGeezerJim

(This article starts with a recap of an encounter from a recent game). The party, composed of 6 level 9 PC's (2 clerics, a fighter, bard, druid, and a ranger) had closed in on the final encounter for this dungeon. I tailored this encounter for the party and their known tactics; I included a Cinder Hulk, a Fire Elemental Myrmidon, two Babau (for their Dispel Magic ability), and an Efreeti. The party enters about halfway into the room along the left, and proceeds to enter combat (the image shows the start of the fight).

The party, predictably, attempted to cast Banish on the Efreeti, who saved successfully and avoided the effect. They then secured the Cinder Hulk with a Banish (2 clerics can be a handful). The Babau immediately used a dispel magic, succeeding on its attempt - this keyed the party to that mechanic. The Fighter, Bard, and Ranger immediately shifted their attention to the two Babau, as the party was committed to the "perma-banish" strategy. The two clerics continued to support the party with cantrips (toll the dead, sacred flame), and the Bard managed to lock down the Myrmidon and another Babau with a well-placed Hypnotic Pattern.

The players were growing uneasy, as their tried-and-true strategy was being threatened. They realized that using all of their resources to control the elementals or fiends would leave them with nothing for healing or recovery. However,

the PC's took a risk as the dwarven cleric cast Banish, using their sole 5th level spell.

"Let me try this...if not we might be in trouble guys..." he mutters as he announces his play. I roll for the saves on both the Cinder Hulk and the Myrmidon - both fail their saves (one by a single point). The table goes wild as the players relax, certain that their "perma-banish" strategy is going to work. The PC moves their cleric back out of the room to break line of sight from the Efreeti and last remaining Babau.

The spell Banish targets a creature and removes it from combat temporarily, sending it either to a harmless demiplane, or to its home plane of existence for one minute (10 rounds) - as long as the caster can keep concentration. Should the caster maintain the spell for a full minute, the creature that has been banished will remain on its home plane once the spell expires. Ultimately, the party is hoping to keep concentration for 1 minute, and two of the threats (the Cinder Hulk and Fire Elemental Myrmidon).

I am 100% aware of this and begin arranging my remaining forces (now down to a Babau and the Efreeti) to deal with the situation. Still, I have to be aware that even though I (the DM) am aware of the players' plan, the creatures likely wouldn't, and I have to "PLAY" the game from that aspect.

(Cont on pg 27)

### Houses of Hardby

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That night with Alisha laying her head on Nathaniel lap, and Poppy curled up next to her. In the stillness he could hear Poppy whispering a prayer to protect us that she had found a family, and she did not want to lose us. Nathaniel started to cry silently, he knew that he would break her heart. He had already decided to give up his life so no one would be forced to die for others to live. Piercing the darkness the bright light that filled the room, and the booming voice spoke again, "It is time for one of you to die, who shall it be?" A short, fat man with many jewels and nice clothing stood up on legs that could barely support his weight. "The girl who goes by the name of Poppy will die so the rest of us may live" Nathaniel stood up in an instant and shouted "No one will be chosen to die, I volunteer! Take my life so the others may live!" Alisha stood up, "No, take me. I cannot ask for someone else to die for me. I am just a poor girl with no future in this world. I am just a peasant; no one will miss me." Poppy just cried out, "No, no, no, I want both of you, please let there be a way for me to have both of them, please." The voice came out and said, "A decision has been made and accepted," the booming voice said, and a doorway appeared. One of the street urchins got up and ran towards the door. When he got there was a loud crack, and something flung them across the room.



The booming voice that seemed to shake the room said "This door is not for you!" Nathaniel looked at Alisha and Poppy, Alisha stood up and took his hand and pulled him down to her and she gave him a long soft kiss "You are someone I could have lived with my entire life without fear or regret" She said Nathaniel smiled and nodded "I would have been honored to try" and he reached into his pocket and took out a coin purse and handed it to Alisha "Here, take care of Poppy, I will not need that where I am going" She started to cry and pulled him in closer and kissed him again, in a way that a lover does when they know they are saying goodbye for the last time. "I promise to take care of her and keep her safe" she said softly while nodding her head. Nathaniel then knelt next to Poppy and said, "Goodbye, little one, Alisha will take good care of you." She wrapped her arms around him and gave him the biggest hug a little girl could ever give. "I do not want you to go, I want you to stay!" she wailed "I know, I wish I could stay too, but for you to have a long life, I must do this," he said with his eyes starting to tear up again.

(cont on page 29)

## SIDE BAR

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## Tyranny of Dragons

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## It's Just a Game (cont)

By DMGeezerJim

The Babau continue to engage the bard and fighter, and the elven cleric and druid trade shots with the Efreeti. The last of the Babau falls, and the Efreeti finds himself alone, with the concentrating cleric fleeing down the hall. The remaining 5 party members stand in defense, closing the door and blocking the doorway in defiance, ready to sacrifice a PC or two, but the dwarven cleric can maintain concentration for 6 more rounds. Four players remain in the room, standing side by side across the large doorway, ready to fight the Efreeti while the cleric hides.

I now have a difficult choice to make as a DM, from a "gameplay" point of view. I can easily pummel the remaining party members and probably incapacitate one or two with the Efreeti. I also know that the party has invested heavily in their "banish" strategy, and at this point, we would simply be rolling to the inevitable conclusion. Rather than just kill 2 players and grind through the remaining fight, I wanted to find a way to keep the pressure on, while "honoring" their plan.

The Efreeti flies to the ceiling and positions behind a pillar, close to the door, and dodges. The party prepares, some holding actions, others dodging, preparing for the Efreeti's attack. The Turtle Druid even helps, placing his bulky frame on the opposite side of the door as a last-ditch doorstep. I decided to make the "smart" play here - yes, I could have probably incapacitated 2, maybe even 3, of the PC's while the other cleric stayed out of danger, finishing the permanent ban on my other two elementals. I felt that an Efreeti would KNOW that the banishments were in effect, and would chase the cleric - and the party knew that I knew that they knew that I...well, you get it.

The next turn, the Efreeti moves out of cover, triggering a couple of held actions. 10 feet above the party, I declare "I'm casting Enlarge/Reduce, and I'm targeting the door. As this is an object that is neither worn nor carried, it is a legal target. So, I will now use my 50 feet of flying speed to squeeze through the doorway. Three of you have already used your reactions, so two of you get attacks of opportunity as I pass."

Faces sink, and bodies begin slumping in their chairs as their valiant defense is undone by a simple Enlarge/Reduce spell. To add insult to injury, one PC does succeed on their opportunity attack as I pass (the druid), and breaks the Efreeti's concentration, causing Reduce to end and the door to immediately return to full size, trapping 4 party members on the far side of the door.

The Cleric now has 4 rounds of concentration remaining to finish the Banishing on the Cinder Hulk and Myrmidon, and he is 40 feet down the hall when the Efreeti passes the defenders. The PC moves and dashes, placing another 50 feet between himself and the Efreeti. (cont on Page 00)







He gave her one last hug and stood up and walked towards the door. He turned around one last time before stepping through the door.

Nathaniel stepped into a long, bright hallway taking slow steps. He softly said a prayer. "Dawn Mother goddess of creation, please protect Alisha and Poppy. Mistress of Shadows, goddess of the afterlife, prepare a place for me and grant me a quick and painless death."

As he finished his prayer to the sisters of life and death, he looked up and saw five figures in black cloaks.

"Do you give your life freely?" the first one asked in a deep baritone voice.

"I give my life freely," he responded

"Have you lived a fulfilling life?" a female voice asked

"I have lived my life well by my oath," he said

"Would you choose another to die to save your life?" another voice asked

"Never," Nathaniel responded sharply

"Any regrets?" another female voice asked

"In life and my choices, I have made, I have none. I only wish I could give more to Alisha and Poppy so they could live a life without worry," he said

"Do you want to live?" the final cloaked figure asked

"When you go to war, you know there is a chance you could die, and you accept that fact. You pray that you make it home alive. So yes, I want to live, but I have accepted death," he said. With that answer, he started to hear screams from down the hall he had just come from. He went pale, thinking of Alisha and Poppy, and screamed, "Wait! I gave up my life so others may live! I accepted my fate. There are innocent people in there!"

"There was gluttony, lust, greed, wrath, sloth, envy and pride in there. Are you saying you wish to release them into the world to do more harm?" they all asked at once.

"Poppy is young and innocent. There was time for her to grow into a good person. Alisha is a caring person, I her eyes and I did not see any malice. She understood that I was giving everyone a chance to live a better life." He said with tears running down his face, feeling like he had been lied to, and it felt like his oath was being broken.

"Are you saying that if you could, you would raise the little girl as your own to teach right from wrong, to educate her, and help her have a better life?" another female voice asked

"Yes!" he screamed

"Are you also saying that you would take the woman in as your own and give her the life that was free from worry and pain?" a male voice asked

*Tyranny  
of  
Dragons*

Thursday 8pm CST

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_maisy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_maisy)

*I am Myrddin  
on  
Twitch*

*Always a  
great  
time*





*Cheer up, Brian. You know what they say: some things in life are bad. They can really make you mad. Other things just make you swear and curse. When you're chewing on life's gristle, don't grumble; give a whistle, and this'll help things turn out for the best. And... always look on the bright side of life...*



By OldManGeras



**Title:** Against the Storm

**Publisher:** Hooded Horse

**Released:** 2023

**Amount of time played thus far:** 5 hours

**Estimated time to finish:** 45-85 hours

**tl/dr:** -=[6.8/10]=- Roguelite repeating city builder worth getting when on sale.

**From the publisher:** A dark fantasy city builder where you must rebuild civilization in the face of apocalyptic rains. As the Queen's Viceroy, lead humans, beavers, lizards, foxes, and harpies to reclaim the wilderness and secure a future for civilization's last survivors.

**Story:** Humanity survives on the brink of extinction after the world is shattered by endless, magical Blightstorms - tempests so destructive they constantly wipe civilizations from existence. In this ruined landscape, only one place still stands: the Smoldering City, ruled by the Scorched Queen. You play as her appointed Viceroy, sent into the dangerous wilderness to rebuild what was lost, gather vital resources, and reclaim the land before the next storm arrives to demolish everything you've accomplished. All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh-water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us? Brought Peace? Each expedition you lead is temporary, the Queen demands steady progress and tribute, the forest spirits lurk with their own chilling agenda, and the environment strains against your efforts. Yet with every settlement that falls, you return to the Smoldering City stronger- earning permanent upgrades and knowledge to push further into the wilds.

**Art Style:** The art style of Against the Storm blends fantasy with a moody, atmospheric realism creating a world that feels charming and threatening at the same time.

Its environments use warm colors and soft lighting to evoke a living forest while the weather effects (thick fog, cold rain, glow of the upcoming Blightstorm) add a sense of constant tension. I think it was, "Blessed are the cheesemakers"! Buildings and characters are stylized with clean silhouettes, making it easy to read the settlements.

**Gameplay:** Here's where the fun begins!! AtS is a blend of city-building, survival and roguelite - all built around short, high-stakes settlement runs! As the Viceroy, you start each expedition in a new procedurally generated biome where you must gather resources, assign workers from different species and slowly expand the settlement while maintaining morale from collapsing. Each race (you have humans, beavers, harpies, lizards and foxes) has their own unique strengths and needs, and as the population grows and demands more complex goods, you get to assign them to provide these. And the pressure, oh the beloved pressure. Manacles! Ooooh, my idea of heaven, is to be allowed to be put in manacles. Just for a few hours... they must think the sun shines out your arse, sonny. The forest pushes back with threats, mysterious events happen and the increasing impatience from the Scorched Queen. Oh my! And when the storm finally destroys your settlement, your run ends and you bring resources, upgrades and knowledge back to the Smoldering City to unlock new tools for the next run. BUT (and you know I had to throw something in here) here's the rub - you're going to do this over and over and over and.. well, you get it.. but that's the entire point of this type of game, so if you are aware of that, you're going to absolutely love it.

**Steam Deck:** The game plays great on the Steam Deck with minimal tweaks needed. First, you will want to use the Community Layout and the trackpad. I tried using the default layout and it just didn't feel 'natural' for me, but using this layout made it so much more comfortable. There is text in the game, and you may struggle to read it on the small screen, but if you have this docked and are using an external monitor/tv, then you'll be fine. Proton lists this as a Platinum-level game. (cont on pg. 00)





Dreamstory pt 3(cont)  
By Tora @  
CoffeeAndDragonsRPG



"By the Gods yes! With all that I have and more!" he yelled to the sky

From down the hall, he could hear running footsteps towards him. He turned around to see Poppy running towards him with Alisha in tow. She jumped towards him, and he caught her in midair, and she put her arms around him tightly at the same moment, Alisha hugged him tightly as well.

Tears started to cloud his vision, he could hear the breeze dance across the field, and he could smell the sweet and spicy scent of poppies on the breeze. He slowly opened his eyes. There was Alisha with her head in his lap, holding Poppy in her arms.

"Are you alright, my love?" she asked softly

"Yeah, just a bad dream," he said, trying to pass it off

She looked at him with that all-knowing look, "You were dreaming of the trials again?"

He sighed heavily and nodded, "I was, it still haunts me from time to time."

She sat up and pulled him down to her, and she kissed him.

"We may not be rich in wealth, but we are rich in love and that is all that matters," she whispered

"That we are," he said, smiling as he was playing with her hair

"So, where are we heading now my love?" Alisha asked

Nathaniel looked up and pointed to the mountains to the north and said, "Just over the mountains is the Kingdom of Mistivale. That is where I grew up, where I joined the army, and where our home lies"



ONE  
SHOTS

Frídáys

Join the  
Discord to  
sign up!



Mandurlorians

Sunday 5pm CST

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy)

SIDE BAR







## Against the Storm (cont)

By OldManGaras

**Audio:** Let's talk about the first part of the audio - the soundtrack. Here you'll lean into soft strings, warm woodwinds and subtle percussions that give you a sense of mysticism as you expand the settlement. Very low-key, almost meditative as you juggle the workers, buildings, and resources. Now the environmental sounds is where it's at! The forest creaks and groans, rain patters down softly during drizzles and roars when storms roll in. When the Blightstorm starts rolling in, it shifts into deeper, more oppressive tones with low rumbles, howling winds, and sharp unsettling cues that warn you. Your demise will stand as a landmark in the continuing struggle to liberate the parent land from the hands of the Roman Imperialist aggressors, excluding those concerned with drainage, medicine, roads, housing, education, viticulture, and any other Romans contributing to the welfare of Jews of both sexes and hermaphrodites. Signed, on behalf of the P. F. J., etc. And I'd just like to add, on a personal note, my own admiration for what you're doing for us, Brian, on what must be, after all, for you a very difficult time.

**Achievements:** 80 achievements await you in this one, and these are going to challenge you! From easy ones that just tell you to win a game in a certain biome, to ones focused on winning with certain races and counts of creatures, if you are going for completionism, you'll be replaying this many times. I have a vewy gweat fwiend in Wome called Biggus Dickus. Silence! What is all this insolence? You will find yourself in gladiator school vewy quickly with wotten behaviour like that. There are also DLC-specific achievements included in that count of 80, and looking at the stats on some of these, there are 15 cheevies with under 1% completion rate.

**Value:** Suggested Retail on this game is \$30/USD on Steam with SteamDB showing a record low of \$15/USD (hitting that sale prices every month since Sept. 2024). So the value - for the full price, if you like roguelite style games, you will love this. Personally, I think it's about \$5 too high and would recommend waiting for it to go on sale for 50% off (which, again looking at it historically, it does monthly). For that price, this is a steal! The game also has 2 separate DLC's available, with the regular price of \$15/USD each. Considering that you can get this game on sale for the price of 1 of the DLC's, I say the same as the main game (wait for the sale). You'll only get between 20-35% off the price, but hey, a dollar saved and all that.

( cont on page 31)



# Houses of Hardby

Monday  
8pm CST  
on  
Twitch



# Tyranny of Dragons

Thursday 8pm CST

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles-maisy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles-maisy)





## Mexican Ground Beef And Rice Casserole

By Brad Harris



This Mexican ground beef and rice casserole is a testament to how simple, affordable ingredients can come together to make a fabulous-tasting dish that will feed the family without breaking your wallet.

### Why You'll Love This

In just a few words: easy, fast, delicious, affordable. With food prices continuing to creep up, sometimes it's important to find dishes that still deliver big flavor without breaking the bank. This is one of them. You get spice-infused beef and rice, cheesy, melty goodness, wonderful pops of sweetness from the corn, the creaminess from the black beans, and a slight hint of heat. This dish hits all the right notes with all the flavors and all the textures.

### Key Ingredients

Nothing of the ordinary here. Now, we do use our own spices to make this dish. As a timesaver/option, you could use a packet of Taco seasoning mix. We do suggest, though, to use the spices. It's better! 😊



### How To Make Mexican Ground Beef And Rice Casserole

- Heat the oil in a large skillet or pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and red bell pepper and cook for approximately two minutes. Add the ground beef and cook, breaking it up into smaller pieces.



(cont on pg 32)



# SIDE BAR

[rpgsidebar.com](http://rpgsidebar.com)





# AGAINST the STORM

## Review CONT.



Let's break it down:

-=[6.8/10]=-

-=[ **Gameplay** ]=-

□ My name.. is Neo

☒ Good

□ Decent

□ Get an etch-a-sketch

-=[ **Story** ]=-

□ There is no life other than this game

□ Great

☒ Decent

□ Tetris has more story

-=[ **Graphics** ]=-

□ You are in heaven

☒ Good

□ Decent

□ A 2-year-old made them 30 years ago

-=[ **Audio** ]=-

□ Is it live or Memorex

☒ Good

□ Decent

□ What? I can't hear you

-=[ **PC Requirements** ]=-

□ Potato Potatoe

☒ Decent

□ Expensive

□ Frontier or Fugaku are needed

-=[ **Audience** ]=-

□ Everyone

□ Adults

☒ Teens and above

□ Nappy time!

-=[ **Difficulty** ]=-

□ 3X + 1

□ Challenging

☒ Moderate

□ Can you color within the lines?

-=[ **Replayability** ]=-

□ And nothing else matters

☒ Every 6'ish months, I play it again

□ I played, I conquered, I uninstalled

□ There can be only 1

-=[ **Game Time** ]=-

□ Time has no meaning, only this game exists

□ 40+ hours

☒ 20-40 hours

□ Press start and you're almost finished

-=[ **Price** ]=-

□ Worth the price

☒ If it's on sale

□ If you have extra money

□ Just throw your money in the trash

-=[ **Bugs** ]=-

☒ Smooth as silk

□ It's annoying but playable

□ Early Access game-level bugs

□ Starship Trooper has less bugs





## Mexican Ground Beef And Rice Casserole (cont)

By Brad Harris

Continue to cook the ground beef until it's almost done. Add the garlic and continue to cook until pink no longer remains. When the ground beef is done, add all the spices and tomato paste and continue to cook for one minute, combining well with a spatula.



Add the broth and mix. Then add the rice, black beans, corn, fire-roasted tomatoes, and chiles. Bring to a simmer and cook for approximately 25 minutes until the rice is cooked and tender. Mix the two cheeses together in a bowl. Remove the lid and add half the mixed cheese. Mix to combine. Smooth the top and add the remaining cheese. Cover for about a minute to melt the cheese.



Remove from the heat and serve immediately (or let it rest for 5-10 minutes to allow it to thicken up even more). Optionally, garnish with your favorites!

This dish delivers great textures and flavors while saving you a bit of coin feeding the family. It also is a great dish to 'make ahead' so you can have one sitting in the fridge or freezer, ready to pull out at a moment's notice. This Mexican Ground Beef And Rice Casserole recipe is a keeper!



### Tips

- Perfectly cooked rice within a casserole can be tricky, as it might not be quite done or mushy. Ensure you bring the mixture to a simmer before lowering the heat and covering it. This will allow the rice to cook evenly in the broth, absorbing all the spices and juices from the ground beef.
- Use fresh garnishes on this casserole. Cilantro, jalapeno, green onions, radish, and sour cream make this dish sing!
- You can serve this dish immediately, but allowing it to rest for 5-10 minutes allows the flavors to meld together. This will also thicken the dish a bit more, making for a more texturally pleasing bite.



For the Full Recipe  
card click the Icon

**Imperial  
Magpies**  
Tuesdays  
8pm CST  
Live  
On  
Twitch  
[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy)



Chill Vibes  
for  
Campaign Prep

@TheCafeDM  
on  
YouTube





# Random Rants w/Mandur

## Lets Talk Plot!

Oh, hey friends, I invite you into the mind of a Mandy just for a bit! I know, it is weird, but let us take a look at an issue players can have in sessions

So, you're at a party, and you're like the bad ass barbarian!  
(omg so cool) You guys finish this crazy fight and you win!  
(fan fair "YAY")

You pick up a strange, glowing dagger that the bad guy had in their hands! Your DM gets the evilest smile you have ever seen, your party finds out YEP, you're cursed, and you can no longer rage!

Well, this is outrageous, and the DM is just nerfing your PC! It must be because you're not the favorite at the table. I actually think he is trying to get revenge for the fact that his mother never got him a cat when he was 6! That has to be the reason.

Or maybe it is part of the plot. I have seen this a lot, DMs get a chance to challenge a player and maybe show the range players how much work someone is doing for the party. These are great chances to switch up how are team works and normally it is in prep for future fights or just something down the road. There is so much to learn from these, it is always sad to me watching players get mad at their DMs because they challenge them. My point is, maybe it isn't that bad.

If you're that worried, talk to the DM after but if they tell don't worry, it is for the story, trust them. You had to sit back and think of whatever crazy PC you wanted and the DM worked with it. Now it is your turn, sit back, try to have fun with whatever change it is. Imagine being a fire wizard, and now everything you fight is immune to fire? Ouch, that would be stressful. Or a rogue who can't sneak around? All of the classes have ways for the DM to "mess" with them

Remember, you are playing to have a good time. DM's normally have a plan when they do things. If you think people are out to get you, maybe you need a snack? or nap! it is going to be ok!

w/love

*Mandy*

