

THE BOOK, THE BABY, & THE BBEG

A

ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR 3-5 PLAYERS OF 5TH-6th level. Approximately 4 hours of play. Playtested at GaryCon 2024

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THE BOOK, THE BABY, & THE BBEG



HIS ONE-SHOT WAS DEVELOPED FOR A PARTY OF 3-5 magic users of 5th-6th level. But it can be used for any group regardless of classes.

The scenario was meant to run for 4 hours, and the Orc encampment encounter is optional and used to fill time if needed or skip it if your group is running long. There

are approximate time notes for each section to give you an idea if you are running long or going too fast.

Originally run at GaryCon 2024 to playtest several new wizard classes including Tide Caller, Wind Walker, Dirt Mage, Smoker, Time Lord and Alchemist. During those playtests, every single group ran through the whole adventure and usually had a few minutes left over. But convention players play fast. Your results may differ.

NOTE: Before starting, have each player give you 5 d20 rolls in order. Write them down to be used later, when determining which player(s) had their spell book pickpocketed by the drow during the commotion with the baby.

PREMISE/INTRODUCTION:

(20 min)

- (Optional: give each player a copy of this as a handout.)

The characters have each travelled from far away to get here for a wizard's convention. It's a yearly event where casters from near and far show off new spells and abilities, trying to cement their reputations as leaders in their field. The players each arrange for lodging at an Inn called The Prancing Pony. The barkeep explains that "the rooms are around back", gives you a key, and then adds "A meal and your first ale is included in the price of the room". The bar has plenty of locals in it, but there is a small contingent of wizards already in attendance. The barmaid seats each of them at the wizard's table. If they have not met before, this is a good time to get to know each other. The barmaid returns in a few minutes with a plate of Pork roast and potatoes, along with a flagon of spiced ale for each of them. While relaxing at the bar, they hear several rumors being discussed by the locals.

RUMORS:

- Farmer Bowen lost a cow last week. Something killed it, and then dragged it into the woods. He and his boys started guarding the cows at night and one of them shot something that wasn't human before it could attack another farm animal.

- Eldin's youngest son Kodi was taken by someone (or something) two nights ago. Oona (Eldin's wife) said she saw a dark figure step out of the woods to grab Kodi. He was helping the Bowen boys guard their field when the figure dragged him into the woods in front of the tall mountain face. **(See DM Note A: Samuel's Plan)**

You don't need to play out the bar scene (it is a bit cliché), just explain what happens and give them the rumor sheet.

- 1: If the players look into Farmer Bowen's cow, they will find out that the body was a Drow, and that he had some of the same coins on him as the female drow who tries to steal the baby. (next paragraph)
- 2: Kodi was hanging out with the Bowen boys when he was taken by the Drow to be used as a human sacrifice for the new conjuration spell Samuel found buried deep in the underdark. The spell conjures a BBEG for the final battle. Note that both Bowen's house, and Eldin's house are by the tall mountain face. One of the Bowen boys shot one of the "things" that was attacking Kodi, but the other drow spirited him away.

THE BOOK, THE BABY

(0:20 - 1:05)

- (See city map - at end of one-shot)

At some point you decide to call it a night. You walk out into the street, the air is crisp, and there is still a bustle to the streets even at this late hour. As you turn the corner to head around back to your rooms, you hear a woman scream "My Baby!!!" You turn to look and see a baby floating thru the air at a decent clip, bouncing up and down as it goes in a crazy looking rhythm.

The baby is being kidnapped by an invisible female drow, with orders to bring it back to Samuel, the devil in human disguise that resides in a cave in the mountainside. If the drow gets more than one turn, it will try it's best to get out of there. But if the players take the drow down first, they will find that she is carrying a mix of gold, silver and copper coins that are a mix of drow and orc coins. Don't be afraid to point out that they are a clue. **(See DM Note D: Baby Kidnapping & Alternate Outcomes)**

If they save the baby, Lilith, the baby's mother will come running up first, "My baby!" clutching the baby close to her. She checks it over, making sure everything is ok. Then she turns to look at you with gratitude "Thank you so much!" Kingston, Lilith's husband, runs up. "Oh thank Odin! He's ok." He thanks you as well.

Lilith will note that she's seen this coin (she'll pick one of the web ones out) somewhere before, but she doesn't know where.

At this point, determine which wizard(s) had their spell book stolen. Lowest roll(s) on the first D20 roll. They will notice that the comforting weight of their spell book is suddenly missing! If you get several low rolls, you can say two of their spell books were stolen. The second d20 is a perception check to see if the player notices anything as their spellbook is being stolen (DC-14 perception check.) If they succeed, They'll feel a tug where their spellbook is. If they try to stop it, play it out. An invisible Drow is trying to steal their spellbook. Start with a DC-15 Dexterity check to catch the thief by the hand. There are 4 invisible Drow in all, but each of them will only fight if caught.

As the wizard starts to freak out about losing their spell book, Lilith will offer to help.

"Whatever I can do, I will. You saved my baby's life. So, whatever it takes, I'll help you until you get your book back. I am healer by trade, so I'm sure you will find me useful." (See DM Note A for Lilith's connection to Samuel)

LILITH

4th Level Life Domain Cleric, neutral good

- **Armor Class** 13 (chain shirt under traveling clothes)
- **Hit Points** 31 (4d8 + 8)
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

- **Saving Throws** Wis +5, Cha +4
- **Skills** Medicine +5, Insight +5, Persuasion +4
- **Senses** Passive Perception 13
- **Languages** Common
- **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Disciple of Life. When Lilith casts a healing spell of 1st level or higher, the creature regains additional HP equal to 2 + the spell's level.

Preserve Life (Channel Divinity, 1/rest). As an action, Lilith presents her holy symbol and evokes healing energy that restores up to 20 HP, divided among any creatures within 30 ft. (max half their HP). She will use this on Samuel and his allies if bonded.

Spellcasting. Spell save DC 13, +5 to hit. *Cantrips:* Sacred Flame, Spare the Dying, Guidance *1st Level (4 slots):* Cure Wounds, Healing Word, Shield of Faith, Bless *2nd Level (3 slots):* Aid, Spiritual Weapon, Lesser Restoration

Domain Spells (always prepared). Bless, Cure Wounds (1st); Lesser Restoration, Spiritual Weapon (2nd)

Equipment. Chain shirt (hidden under cloak), healer's kit, 2 potions of healing (2d4+2), wooden holy symbol

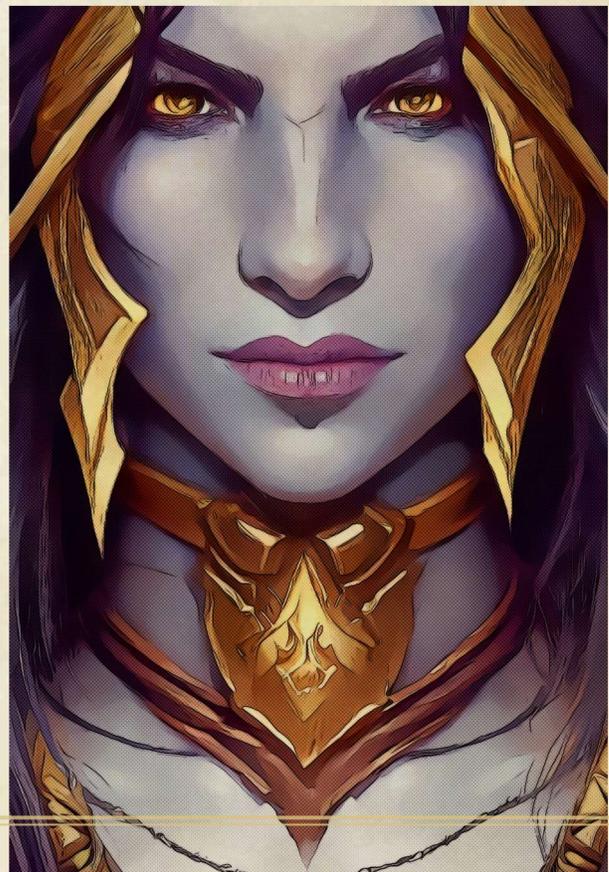
HERE ARE THE CLUES THAT POINT THE PCs IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

- 1: Kodi was kidnapped by a dark figure and dragged into the woods in front of the tall mountain face (Nearly anyone in town can tell them where this is.)
- 2: Farmer Bowen had a cow killed and then killed something that wasn't human. If investigated, it turns out the something was a Drow. (Farmer Bowen's farm is in the shadow of the tall mountain face, on the edge of a very foreboding looking forest.)
- 3: The coins the female drow have look like drow coins, and some other coin from the underdark. Lilith seemed to recognize them but not know why.
- 4: Lilith can show them where Bowen's farm is, and knows where the tall mountain face is.

BOWEN'S FARM

(1:05-1:20)

If the players decide to leave town. They end up near the woods in front of the tall mountain face. Give them this description: "This looks like the place where Eldin's son Kodi was kidnapped, at least according to the description...it fits. There is a farm (Bowen's farm) behind you, and the tree line in front of you. The smell of cow manure is in the air. But what really captures your attention is the forest. The trees are scraggly, dark and misshapen. Even on this bright sunny day, no light seems to hit the ground underneath those trees. You have a bad feeling about this... As you enter the edge of the forest, fighting through the brambles and thorns, you find a path a short distance in that seems well traveled."



THE ORC ENCAMPMENT

(Optional: time permitting – 1:20-1:40) (See DM Note C: Charmed Defenders for negotiation options)

The players can follow that path and it leads them to the Orc encampment. There is one Orc in each watch tower, equipped with a bow. The encampment has a 40' clearing around it. Players can easily get to within about 60' without fear of being seen. 40'-60' the orcs have a chance of seeing them. Anything closer than 40' and the Orcs in the watchtowers will sound the alarm and begin firing at the intruders.

Aggression - Don't forget that the Orcs in the encampment can charge forward up to twice their movement on the first round and still get an attack.

- (See Orc map at end of one-shot)

ORC WAR CHIEF

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (chain mail, shield)
- **Hit Points** 93 (11d8 + 44)
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

- **Saving Throws** Str +6, Con +6, Wis +2
- **Skills** Intimidation +5
- **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10
- **Languages** Common, Orc

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Gruumsh's Fury. The war chief deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when it hits with a weapon attack (included in attacks).

ACTIONS

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d12 + 4 + 1d8) slashing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d6 + 4 + 1d8) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Crown of Gold Leaves. A delicate circlet that grants the wearer advantage on Wisdom saving throws. Seems oddly refined for an orc war chief to be wearing.

9 ORC FIGHTERS

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 13 (hide armor)
- **Hit Points** 15 (2d8 + 6)
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

- **Skills** Intimidation +2
- **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10
- **Languages** Common, Orc

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

ACTIONS

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Players who search bodies will find more of the Orc coins mixed in with a few of the Drow coins. (12cp, 15sp, 22gp).

Once the Orc encounter is handled, the players will find the cave opening. Go to the Drow encounter.



THE CAVERNS

(See DM Note F: Drow Tactics and DM Note E: Encounter Scaling)

- (Approx. 1:20 – 3:50)
- (See The Caverns Map)

When they get to the Drow encounter, they will have to vanquish the lower Drow first, then they get to the Demon Samuel. See the map and legend for Drow numbers and locations.

LEGEND:

1 Two Drow are “camped” in this small cavern. If they hear intruders coming, they will each go down one of the tunnels to warn the rest of the Drow. If they are attacked, they will defend themselves.

DROW

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)
- **Hit Points** 13
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

- **Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4
- **Senses** Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 12

Fey Ancestry. The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting (Charisma). Spell save DC 11. At will: Dancing Lights 1/day each: Darkness, Faerie Fire

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the drow has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

2 Samuel's snake lives here. It will attack anything that enters.

SAMUEL'S SNAKE

Medium beast, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 14
- **Hit Points** 11
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

- **Skills** Perception +2
- **Senses** Blindsight 10 ft., Passive Perception 12

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 10 poison damage.

3 There is a small encampment of 6 Drow here. They will attack anyone that approaches too close and send a scout or two if they hear noises. ** (See DM Note F for tactical guidance)** If they hear more noises, they will sneak off into the darkness going through both exits and trying to find a way to flank or separate the invaders they hear.



THE BIG BAD EVIL GUY

4 This is a fairly large cavern, roughly 6 feet higher than Cavern 3. It also connects to Cavern 2 where Samuel's snake guards the passage. At the back of this cavern is Kodi, lying unconscious and tied to a stone altar. Strange symbols are carved into the altar's surface — a DC 13 Arcana check reveals they are part of an incomplete conjuration ritual.

When the party enters, read or paraphrase the following:

"A devil steps out from behind the altar, but as he does, his form shimmers and shifts into that of a tall, handsome human man with long dark hair. He holds his hands open at his sides — not in surrender, but with the calm confidence of someone who believes he has already won. He looks past you, directly at Lilith, and smiles warmly. "Lilith," he says softly. "You found me.""

Samuel's Goal: Samuel does not immediately attack. He wants to reach Lilith. He will move toward her at his normal speed (30 ft. per round), speaking calmly as he does. He will only fight if attacked first or if the players physically block his path.

Lilith's Reaction: Lilith freezes. She looks confused and conflicted. She lowers her weapon (if she has one drawn) and whispers, "Samuel...?" She does not act on the first round. On her second turn, if no player has intervened, she begins walking toward Samuel.

DM Note — Samuel's Infernal Bond: Samuel and Lilith's story is loosely inspired by the mythological figures of Lilith and Samael. Long ago, Samuel spent time with Lilith, earning her trust by treating her as an equal. After she had been in his presence for a full day, he placed an Infernal Bond on her — a deep, insidious charm that can be renewed at any time with a simple touch. Unlike normal charm magic, Lilith accepted this bond willingly during a time she trusted Samuel. Because of this, it cannot be resisted with a saving throw when renewed. Play Samuel as calm, sincere, and even gentle — not as a cackling villain. He genuinely believes Lilith belongs with him. This makes the encounter more tragic than villainous. (See **DM Note G: The Names for mythological context**)

KEEPING LILITH ON THE PARTY'S SIDE

If a player intervenes before Samuel touches Lilith, they can attempt one of the following:

- **Persuasion (DC 14):** Remind Lilith about her baby, her husband Kingston, or the danger Kodi is in. A player who specifically references Kingston or the baby by name has advantage on this check.

- **Physical Barrier:** A player can position themselves between Lilith and Samuel, use a grapple to hold her back, or cast a spell that blocks movement (e.g., Web, Hold Person). Hold Person requires Lilith to fail a DC 13 Wisdom save, which she has a +5 to — she is strong-willed.
- **Insight (DC 12):** A player who succeeds realizes Samuel is using some form of supernatural influence on Lilith and can warn the party.

If the party keeps Lilith away from Samuel, she remains confused but does not fight. She takes no actions in combat, clutching her head and repeating things like "I don't understand" and "He was so kind to me." She does not help either side while in this state.

IF SAMUEL TOUCHES LILITH

If Samuel reaches Lilith and makes physical contact (a touch on the arm, a hand on her cheek — something gentle, not violent), the Infernal Bond renews instantly. Read the following:

"Samuel reaches out and gently touches Lilith's face. Her eyes flutter closed for a moment, and when they open again, something has changed. The confusion is gone, replaced by calm certainty. She turns to face you, and her expression hardens. "He's right," she says quietly. "This is our family. You need to leave.""

Lilith now acts on Samuel's side. She will prioritize the following actions each round:

- **Bonus Action:** Healing Word on Samuel (1d4+5 with Disciple of Life at 1st level, 2d4+6 cast at 2nd level)
- **Action:** Cast Spiritual Weapon (1d8+3 force damage) targeting the nearest player, OR cast Bless on Samuel and up to two Drow allies if any remain, OR use Preserve Life if Samuel drops below half HP
- **Concentration:** Shield of Faith on Samuel (+2 AC, bringing him to 15) if she has a free turn

This makes Lilith a serious threat. She can heal Samuel for roughly 8-12 HP per round while dealing damage with Spiritual Weapon. If the party doesn't deal with her, the Samuel fight becomes significantly harder.

BREAKING THE BOND DURING COMBAT

KILL SAMUEL

The Infernal Bond breaks immediately upon his death. Lilith collapses to her knees, weeping. She is horrified and confused about what just happened.

KNOCK LILITH UNCONSCIOUS:

At 31 HP with AC 13, this is achievable but costs the party actions while Samuel is still fighting. *Dispel Magic* (3rd level or higher): Automatically breaks the bond. However, this one-shot is designed for 5th-6th level characters who may not have 3rd-level slots to spare. *Greater Restoration*: Also works but is a 5th-level spell and unlikely to be available.

Note: Simply grappling or restraining Lilith after the bond is renewed does NOT break it. She will continue casting spells (verbal and somatic components) while restrained unless also silenced or knocked out.

SAMUEL

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 13
- **Hit Points** 93
- **Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

- **Skills** Deception +3, Insight +4, Stealth +3
- **Damage Immunities** Fire
- **Condition Immunities** Charmed
- **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12
- **Languages** Common, Infernal, Abyssal

Shapechanger. Samuel can use his action to shift between his human form and his devil form. In human form he can only use his sword. In devil form he gains claw and tail attacks.

Innate Spellcasting (Charisma). Spell save DC 13. At will: *Disguise Self* 3/day each; *Charm Person*, *Mirror Image*, *Scrying*, *Suggestion* 1/day; *Geas*

ACTIONS

Sword (Human Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 slashing damage.

Claws (Devil Form, 2 attacks). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 slashing damage.

Tail (Devil Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 3 rounds.

TACTICS

- Round 1: Samuel moves toward Lilith, speaking calmly. He does not attack unless attacked. If a player attacks him, he shifts to devil form and fights back.
- Round 2: If he hasn't reached Lilith, he continues moving toward her. If blocked, he uses *Suggestion* on the blocker: "Step aside — this is a family matter." (DC 13 Wis save.) If he has reached Lilith, he touches her (see above) and then shifts to devil form.

- Round 3+: Full combat. Samuel fights aggressively, using *Mirror Image* early to protect himself. He prioritizes any player trying to reach Lilith or Kodi.
- If reduced to half HP (46 or below): Samuel drops his calm demeanor and becomes vicious. He commands any remaining Drow to protect Lilith while he focuses on the strongest melee character.
- If Lilith is knocked unconscious or the bond is broken: Samuel becomes enraged and reckless, attacking with fury but making tactical mistakes. He gains advantage on attack rolls but attacks against him also have advantage (essentially the *Reckless Attack* trait).

AFTER THE BATTLE

Once Samuel is defeated, read or paraphrase the following:

"As Samuel falls, his devil form shudders and dissolves into black smoke that seeps into the cavern floor. The cavern is suddenly very quiet."

- If Lilith was bonded: She collapses, gasping as though waking from a nightmare. She looks at her hands, then at the party, then at the baby if it's present. "What... what did I do? What was I going to do?" She will be deeply shaken and guilt-ridden. She remembers everything.
- If Lilith was never bonded: She stares at the spot where Samuel fell and says quietly, "Part of me wanted to go to him. I don't know why." She holds her baby tighter.

Kodi can be untied from the altar. He is unconscious but stable (1 HP after being stabilized or healed). He is frightened but unharmed.

TREASURE:

- 2-3 spellbooks (1-2 that were stolen from the party, and one additional spellbook with spells from another wizard class). (**See DM Note B: The Spellbook Thefts**)
- A gold ring with the inscription "May we always be together" etched on the inside — worth about 50gp.
- A small pile of coins that look like the ones picked up off the Drow (314sp, 973gp, 112pp).

Sounds carry in The Caverns. Sounds of fighting from the Orc Encampment, especially if the Chief uses his battle cry, the Drow will be ready. And if that doesn't alert them, any battle or loud noises in The Caverns certainly will. The Drow know the caverns well and will try to flank, or separate the attacking party.

THANK YOU FOR PLAYING!

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

The Book, The Baby, and The BBEG was originally run at GaryCon 2024 and has been one of my favorite one-shots to DM. Sometimes the best encounters come from life's chaos—a crying baby, an ancient tome, and a villain who thinks they've won.

I hope your table enjoyed it as much as mine did!

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APPENDIX: DM NOTES



HIS APPENDIX PROVIDES ADDITIONAL CONTEXT and guidance for running **The Book, The Baby, and The BBEG**. These notes answer common questions, clarify NPC motivations, and offer tactical advice for making encounters challenging and memorable.

DM NOTE A: SAMUEL'S PLAN

Who Samuel Is:

Samuel is a devil who has been operating in this region for months, building toward a greater summoning ritual that would bring a powerful demon/devil to rule this area.

The Charm Strategy:

Samuel's primary weapon is his shapeshifting and charm ability. His charm requires spending 24 hours with each target to gain their complete trust before the spell takes hold. He appeared in different forms to accomplish this:

- **Lilith:** Appeared as a handsome human man who courted her and treated her as an equal over the course of a full day. The baby is his offspring.
- **Drow Leader & Warriors:** Appeared as drow, spent 24 hours with their leader in the Underdark, charmed them, then brought them to the surface as guards
- **Orc War Chief:** Appeared as an orc, spent a full day gaining the chief's trust, charmed him to set up obvious sentries near the cave

Once charmed, each is free to act normally until an attack comes, then they must defend Samuel. This is a major operation - Samuel has been methodically assembling these pieces for months.

The Ritual:

- **Kodi** is the human sacrifice needed for the summoning
- **The spellbooks** contain rare elemental spell components Samuel needs to complete the ritual - he's been stealing them from wizards at the convention
- **The baby** is Samuel's own offspring - he wants it back (Lilith is optional but welcome)

DM NOTE B: THE SPELLBOOK THEFTS

Why Samuel is Stealing Spellbooks:

Samuel needs rare elemental spell components to complete his greater summoning ritual. These aren't the common elemental spells found in most spellbooks - they're obscure "basic" elemental magic that normal spellcasters don't typically study or possess.

The Wizard Convention:

A yearly gathering of casters showing off new spells and abilities is happening in town. Samuel (or his drow agents) have been systematically stealing spellbooks from visiting wizards, searching for the specific components he needs.

Why the Party's Spellbook:

The party wizard's book was targeted during the chaos of the baby kidnapping - an opportunistic theft by the invisible drow while everyone was distracted.

What Happened to the Other Spellbooks:

Samuel has been destroying spellbooks that don't contain what he needs - burning them or discarding them once inspected. The treasure pile contains only:

- The party's stolen spellbooks (not yet examined)
- One additional spellbook that either hasn't been inspected yet OR does contain something useful for the ritual

DM NOTE C: CHARMED DEFENDERS (ORCS & DROW)

How the Charm Works:

After spending 24 hours gaining their trust, Samuel's charm allows his pawns to act freely in their normal behavior - until Samuel or his operation is threatened. The charm compels them to defend when:

- The party clearly intends to enter the caves
- Combat breaks out near Samuel's location
- Someone attacks the cave entrance or defenders

Can Players Negotiate with the Orcs?

Yes! The orcs are not automatically hostile. They're camped as sentries but will talk, trade stories, or even let the party pass IF:

- The party doesn't appear threatening
- They don't ask about the caves or what's inside
- They don't try to sneak past or scout the entrance

The moment it becomes obvious the party intends to enter the caves or investigate what the orcs are guarding, the charm kicks in and they attack.

The Drow's Awareness:

The drow know they're serving Samuel but don't realize they're charmed. They believe they're willingly helping him with an important ritual. They're more alert than the orcs and will use stealth, darkness, and flanking tactics if they hear combat.

Tactics:

Both groups fight to defend, not to pursue. If the party retreats, the defenders won't chase - they'll return to their posts.

DM NOTE D: BABY KIDNAPPING & ALTERNATE OUTCOMES

If the Baby is Successfully Kidnapped:

Sometimes players prioritize chasing the visible threat over protecting the baby. If the drow escapes with the baby, she takes it directly back to Samuel in the cave.

Does This Change the Adventure?

Not significantly! The other clues still lead to Samuel's cave:

- Kodi's kidnapping
- Bowen's farm and the dead drow
- The coins
- Lilith's determination to help

How the Final Scene Changes:

When the party arrives at Samuel's cave, he already has the baby with him. The confrontation plays out almost identically:

- Lilith still says "Samuel, why did you kidnap my baby?"
- Samuel still tries to touch her and renew the bond
- The stakes are the same: stop Samuel and save both the baby and Kodi

No Additional Clues Needed:

If players didn't care enough to save the baby during the kidnapping, they probably won't care about tracking clues about the baby. The adventure's other hooks are strong enough to lead them to the finale.

DM Guidance:

Don't punish players for making tactical choices during the chaos. The baby being taken creates tension but doesn't break the adventure.

DM NOTE E: ENCOUNTER SCALING & PARTY COMPOSITION

This Adventure Was Playtested With Magic-Heavy Parties:

The original GaryCon 2024 sessions used all spellcasters (the "Glass Cannons" format). The cave encounters become significantly more deadly when:

- The party has no tank to hold chokepoints
- Everyone has low AC (squishy casters)
- The drow use darkness + flanking to separate and overwhelm

For Balanced Parties (Tank/Healer/DPS/Support):

The encounters as written are appropriately challenging. A fighter can hold the line while casters control from range.

For Caster-Heavy Parties (3+ spellcasters):

The caves are BRUTAL. The drow's flanking and separation tactics target low AC characters. Consider this difficulty intentional - tactical play and smart spell usage are required.

For Martial-Heavy Parties (3+ melee fighters):

The encounters may feel easier. Consider:

- Adding 2-3 more drow in Cave 3
- Upgrading some drow to higher CR enemies
- Having the drow retreat to reinforce Samuel's final fight

Scaling by Party Size:

- **3 players:** Use encounters as written
- **4 players:** Add 1-2 drow to Cave 3
- **5 players:** Add 2-3 drow to Cave 3, consider adding 2-3 orcs to the encampment

Scaling by Level:

- **5th level:** Encounters as written are appropriate
- **6th level:** Add reinforcements or upgrade enemies slightly
- **Mixed levels:** Aim for the average and adjust on the fly

The Near-TPK Story:

At GaryCon, one group of four wizards got separated trying to get out of the caves when Samuel jumped in between them. The party healer was isolated and dropped to 0 HP early on. The casters in a panic did their best to make it out of the caves and into the open. They survived by one player bringing Lilith back after she had been knocked unconscious, which broke the charm spell, and she began to use her heals for the party's benefit rather than for Samuel. It was still touch and go for several rounds after that, but they finally prevailed. It was the best session I ever ran.

DM NOTE F: DROW TACTICS IN THE CAVES

The Map is Designed for Separation:

The cave system has multiple entrances and exits to each chamber. When the drow hear combat, they don't rush straight at the party - they split up and use the tunnels to:

- Come at the party from two directions simultaneously
- Cut off retreat routes
- Isolate spellcasters from tanks

Darkness is Their Best Weapon:

Drow can cast Darkness 1/day. The spell has a 15-foot radius (30-foot diameter sphere).

Optimal Darkness Placement:

- **First choice:** The 4-way intersection between Caves 3 and 4 - cuts off line of sight and movement between the two chambers, creating total chaos
- **Second choice:** Inside Cave 3 or Cave 4 - both caves are just slightly smaller than 30 feet wide, meaning one Darkness spell covers the entire chamber

Flanking & Pincer Movements:

The drow know these caves intimately. They will:

1. Send 1-2 drow to engage from the front
2. Send 2-3 drow around through alternate tunnels to attack from behind
3. Use their superior darkvision (120 ft) to fight in dim light where the party struggles
4. Use the multiple exits in each chamber to constantly reposition and flank

Faerie Fire:

If the party has invisible or heavily armored characters, use Faerie Fire to outline them, giving all attacks advantage.

Stealth & Ambush:

With +4 Stealth and superior darkvision, drow can:

- Hide in shadowy alcoves and attack with surprise
- Withdraw from combat, hide, and re-engage from a different angle
- Use hit-and-run tactics rather than standing toe-to-toe

When to Retreat:

If half the drow in Cave 3 fall, the survivors retreat to Cave 4 to reinforce Samuel. They won't fight to the death - they'll fall back to protect their master.

The Map Does the Work:

You don't need special abilities like Misty Step - the cave design itself provides everything the drow need to be deadly. Multiple exits, tight corridors, and connecting passages make flanking and separation natural and devastating.

DM NOTE G: THE NAMES (LILITH & SAMUEL)

Why These Names?

The names Lilith and Samuel are intentionally evocative, loosely inspired by mythological and religious figures from Jewish folklore. Lilith appears in various traditions as Adam's first wife who left Eden, and Samael (the basis for "Samuel") is often depicted as a powerful demon or fallen angel.

The Legends Are Conflicting:

Even if a player recognizes the names, the mythology is contradictory across different sources:

- Some traditions say Lilith left Adam and then coupled with Samael
- Others say they were created together as evil counterparts to Adam and Eve
- Some depict Lilith as married to Asmodeus instead
- Some show Samael as the Angel of Death, others as Satan himself
- The relationship between them varies wildly depending on the source

This Actually Helps the Twist:

A player who knows the mythology still won't know for certain what's coming because the source material itself is inconsistent. They might suspect Samuel is demonic, but the nature of his relationship with Lilith and what he wants remain ambiguous.

This is a Feature, Not a Bug:

Players who recognize the significance of these names deserve the advantage. They get:

- An early hint about Samuel's true nature
- Insight into a possible Lilith/Samuel connection
- A feeling of "I figured it out!" before the reveal
- But NOT a complete spoiler, because the myths contradict each other

Most Players Won't Catch It:

In four GaryCon 2024 playtests, zero players recognized the names until after the adventure when it was explained. The connection requires knowledge of Jewish mythology and folklore that most D&D players don't have readily available.

Don't Change the Names:

The subtle reward for knowledgeable players is part of what makes this encounter memorable. If someone at your table says "Wait... Lilith and Samuel? Like from the myths?" - smile and let them feel clever. They earned it. But don't confirm which version of the myth you're using.

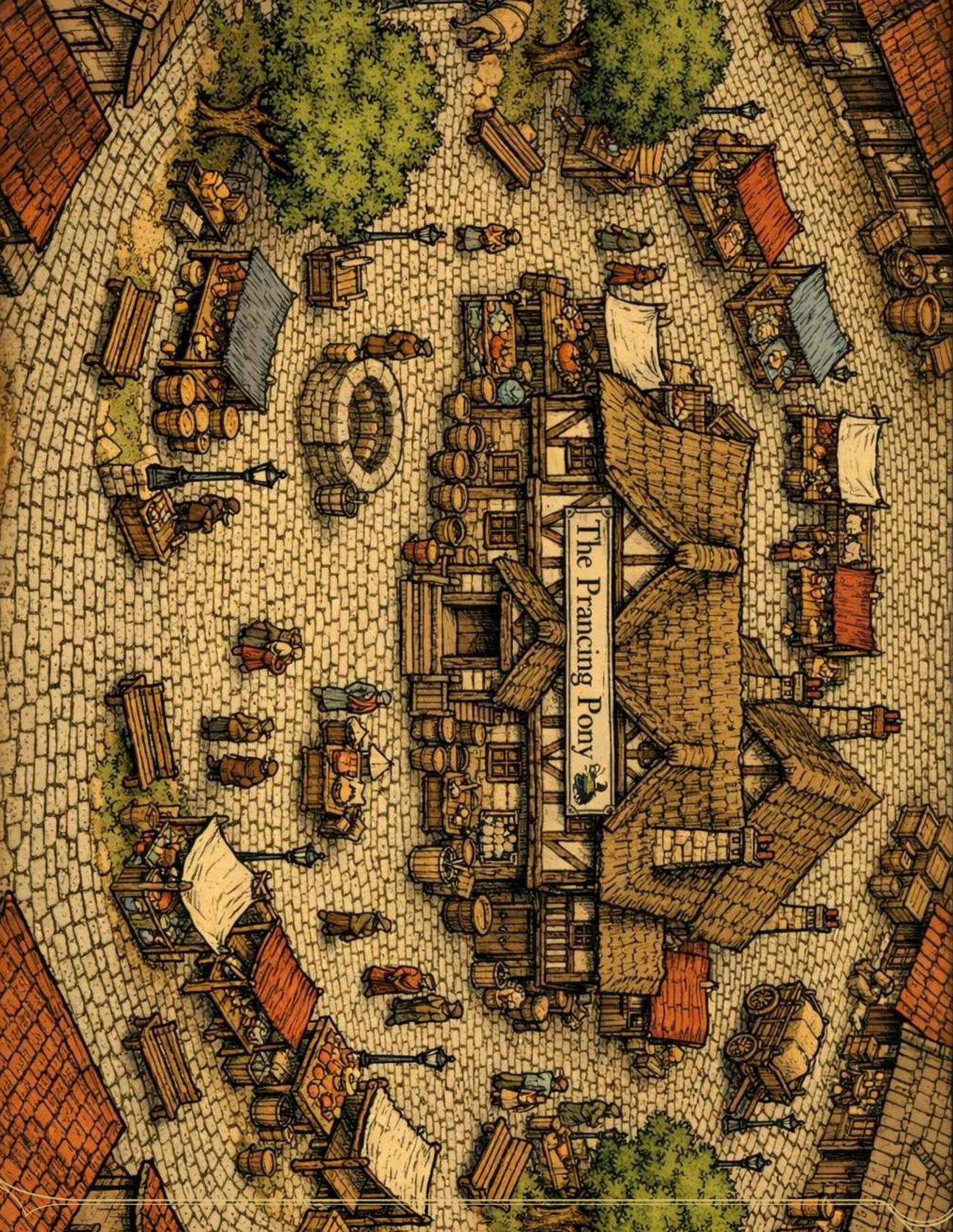
DM NOTE H: FORMATTING & PRESENTATION

Read-Aloud Text:

Descriptive text meant to be read directly to players is formatted in italicized boxes throughout the adventure.

Maps:

Battle maps are included for the Orc Encampment and the Caverns. Scale has been added to the legend (approximately 5 feet per square). DMs can use these maps as-is or as reference for their own versions.



The Prancing Pony

Orc Encampment

