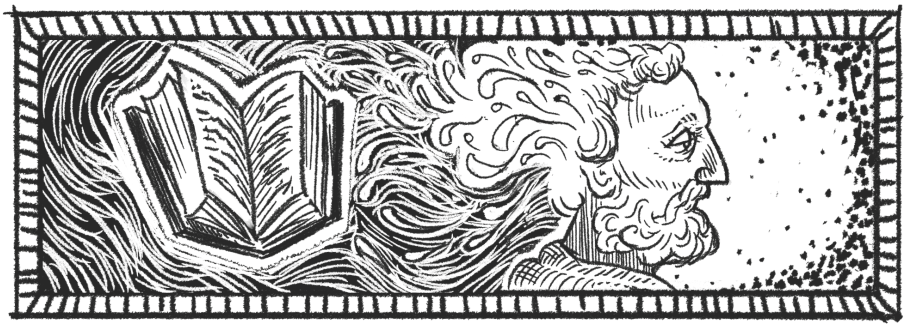


You step up to the clerk at the local Expedition Board office...

"No choice on contracts today. Personal dispatch for you, I'm afraid, Paid the extra fees and all." The halfling clerk says as you pass over your Expedition Board Badge. They open a drawer in their desk and hand you a wax-sealed job offer...

To those I trust to follow strange roads,

It has been some time since we last spoke. I do hope you are well. I would not call upon you in his manner if it were something simple.

I have set up shop in a coastal town called Briarhook. A few miles outside of the town are ruins called Gauntlight. The town buried their history with that place ages ago, after brave heroes slew the dangers there and paid a price in turn.

There is a light in the Gauntlight again.

The town no longer truly remembers what that place cost them. Just a nursery rhyme from parents to their children, warning them to be good. But still, they will not go back. I cannot blame them.

But I am asking you to.

Come to Briarhook. Find me at my shop when you arrive. I will share with you what I have seen.

Your friend,
Wrin Sivinxi

"Some other folks got the same message. Tidy sum of fifty gold each for the job." The clerk says from behind the desk with a smile. "Shall I look into booking you for travel with the rest or would you like to refuse the dispatch?"

Now that I've sold you on this clerk persona and the call to adventure, let's get down to the brass tacks of reality, shall we? I'm Scott (he/him) and I've been running D&D games since people thought the Spellplague was a pretty neat idea. I'm what people sometimes call a Professional DM, as I run primarily paid games. And I'm here, hat in hand, telling you that I'm running a 5.5E game of the Adventure **Abomination Vaults** set in a homebrew world called Erund.

I've completed a number of games in Erund, and a handful of my players have stuck around to keep playing in it! The lore and setting is constantly evolving and I don't just rely on having a really stupid joke to start writing lore anymore.

So if you're looking for a new campaign and might be in the market for a forever home server or group to tell a story with...

Might I continue to hold my hat in my hands and suggest you give this a try?

The Abomination Vaults is a Pathfinder adventure path that was ported into 5e's ruleset for, likely, capitalism reasons. But I'm glad it has been! I'm still on the fence about learning Pathfinder.

This is set in Briarhook, a logging town in the Nation of Kelvastra just a few weeks south of the capital city of Illvastre. You've been called to action by a friend, along with some other adventurers who also know her, as a personal favor. Dive into a dungeon that takes you deeper and deeper not only below ground but into the history of Briarhook, as you'll have to leave to find answers to questions before proceeding further and further.

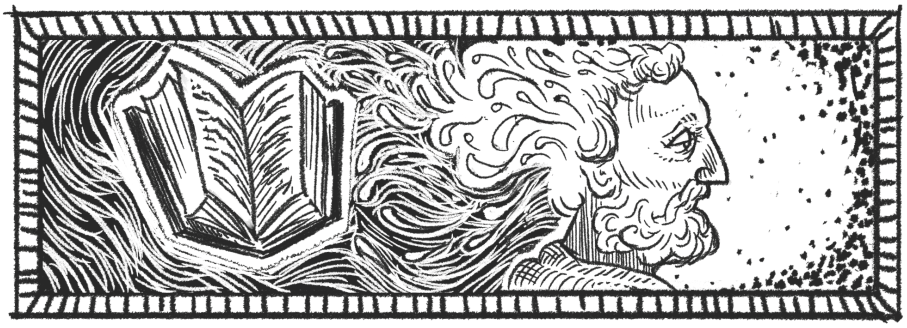


Table Rules and Guidelines

As your GM, it's my responsibility to ensure everyone has fun and feels comfortable. Let's establish the guidelines to make sure our virtual table runs smoothly.

Basic Requirements

- You must be 18+ to participate.
- You must have the following working accounts
  - Discord
  - Roll20
  - D&D Beyond
- You must have the following equipment
  - A stable internet connection
  - A working, decent microphone
  - A working set of headphones
  - A webcam (Mostly Optional, but **Heavily Preferred**.)
- Install the Beyond20 browser extension for smooth integration with Roll20 and D&D Beyond
- Be available for our listed session time

Core Rule: Respect Each Other

This game is inclusive and LGBTQIA+ friendly. The key rule is simple: **Be kind and respectful.** We're here to create an enjoyable experience for everyone.

- Disagreements happen, but keep them respectful. No shouting, name calling, or hogging the spotlight.
- No telling players how to play their characters or being upset at non-optimization.
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or other bigoted behaviors will lead to immediate removal.
- It is understandable if people interrupt accidentally. However frequent disruptions will be addressed.

The Session Schedule

- **Time:** Saturday Evenings, Weekly. 6:00 - 9:00 PST/PDT
- Sessions start promptly. If late, you'll have a 10-minute grace period before the game starts without you.
- Sessions run 2.5 - 3 hours with a 10 - 15 minute break midway.
- If I cancel a session, I'll notify you ASAP. There is not a guarantee, with my 9-5 job, that I will be able to run every single scheduled date.

Voice Chat & Equipment

- We use Discord voice and video chat only. Your mic doesn't have to be studio perfect, but it must be clear. If there's too much background noise, you'll need to use push-to-talk.
- No text-only participation or playing through the chat, as it disrupts the flow.
- Webcams are highly preferred for reactions and roleplaying, but are not deal breakers.

Absence & Player Communication

- Life happens, and you might miss a session. Let me know in advance if possible.
- Missing 2 sessions without notice or a valid excuse will result in removal.
- If a player misses a session, their character will remain inactive and out of combat. For important arcs, we may reschedule if someone is missing.

Payment

- **Cost:** $20 USD per session; payable via StartPlaying.Games
- If you notify me 24+ hours in advance you can't attend a session, you won't be charged. Cancelling within 24 of the session, or simply not showing up, will still incur the charge.

Safety Tools

This game is built on mutual trust and inclusivity. We'll be using the following safety tools:

- **Session 0:** To set expectations, define safety boundaries, and ensure everyone is comfortable.
- **Monte Cook Consent Checklist:** Sets boundaries and content preferences before the game.
- **Aftercare:** Post-session debrief to check in emotionally and encourage self-care.
- **X, N, O Cards:** Tools for flagging discomfort (X), warning of potential discomfort (N), and confirming comfort with ongoing content (O).
- **Open Door Policy:** If you need a break from the session for any reason, feel free to step away without judgment.

Character Creation

- This is set in Erund, so characters should reflect that. Avoid joke or evil-aligned characters for the sake of being evil. (Character creation will have more in-depth descriptions following this.)
- Bring at least 3 character concepts to avoid overlap.
- In-party conflict and drama is welcome, but should be interesting. Not disruptive. Characters should work together as a team. No PvP without consent.

Content Warnings

This campaign will more than likely feature the following themes. If any of these themes make you uncomfortable, this campaign may not be for you:

- Ableism
- Alcohol Use
- Animal Death
- Blood
- Body Horror
- Cannibalism
- Character Death
- Cults
- Death
- Deep or Large Bodies of Water
- Devils/Demons/Fields
- Drowning
- Insects
- Murder
- Paralyzation
- Scars
- Small Spaces (Claustrophobia)
- Suicide
- Violence

Roleplaying & Metagaming

- You don't need to use funny voices or have an elaborate backstory (keep it concise), but engaging with the story is encouraged.
- Metagaming is discouraged—focus on the story, not outsmarting the GM with rules lawyering or optimization.

Party Unity & PVP

- D&D and TTRPGs are cooperative, so build a character who works well with others.
- PVP is not generally allowed unless agreed upon by both players, and it should not result in character death or major disruption to the story.
- Avoid evil-aligned characters. Avoid creating conflict for conflict's sake.

Communicating with the GM

- **In-Game:** Please communicate through voice only during sessions. Use text only for non-essential actions. Whispering in Roll20 chat is discouraged unless necessary. Direct Message me to report abuse, triggers being ignored, or other serious concerns.
- **Out-of-Game:** Message me on Discord if you need to discuss any issues or report behavior. I'm here to help keep things smooth.

When I Mess Up

Mistakes happen! I strive to run a great game, but encounters or events might not always go as planned. Constructive feedback is welcome, but remember, no game is perfect.

Adult Content

This is a 18+ game. Expect mature themes, including swearing, violence, and gore. Sexual content will always fade to black, and any inappropriate behavior will lead to immediate removal. No jokes or references to sexual violence.



What follows isn't going to be that outlandish or complex. In fact, it's pretty standard for creating any character for Dungeons and Dragons, and should be familiar to pretty much all of you. This is just a section for easier access to the process and the homebrew I've added, as well as what I'll need from you for a character driven narrative.

We'll be using D&D Beyond for our character sheets and a mirror on Roll20 for the VTT. (Use D&D Beyond even if you have one of the homebrew options presented here; we'll talk about it when we get to classes here.)

We are using the 5.5e Ruleset for this campaign.

The One House Rule

Shotgunning Healing Potions: 2024 Ruleset under Potion of Healing states: “This potion is a magic item. As a Bonus Action, you can drink it or administer it to another creature within 5 feet of yourself. The creature that drinks the magical red fluid in this vial regains **2d4 + 2** Hit Points.”

This still stands. **However**, you can also use an **Action** to do the same, forgoing rolling the dice and instead regaining 10 Hit Points.

Source Book Allowances

We’re using the **D&D 5.5E Players Handbook**, **Forgotten Realms: Heroes of the Faerun,** and a few races presented in the **Eberron: Forge of the Artificer.** Spells, classes, subclasses, and backgrounds are to be taken from the first **two** books.

No 3rd Party Content. 2014 Content, or Unearthed Arcana will be permitted for this campaign.

Stats

We're using Point Buy for our campaign. What's point buy, you ask? Allow me to briefly explain it by copying exactly what is in the Player's Handbook:

"You have 27 points to spend on your ability scores. The cost of each score is shown on the Ability Score Point Costs table. For example, a score of 14 costs 7 of your 27 points."

Score	Cost
8	0
9	1
10	2
11	3
12	4
13	5
14	7
15	9

Classes

We are using the following classes listed in the 5.5e ruleset.

- Barbarian
- Bard
- Cleric
- Druid
- Fighter
- Monk
- Paladin
- Ranger
- Rogue
- Sorcerer
- Warlock
- Wizard

Species of Erund

We're using the species provided in the 2024 Players' Handbook and some presented in Eberron: Forge of the Artificer. (Those are denoted with a *)

Those are:

- Aasimar
- Dragonborn
- Dwarf
- Elf
    - Drow
    - Wood Elf
    - High Elf (Moon Elf)
- Gnome
- Goliath
- Halfing
- Human
- Orc
- Tiefling
    - Abyssal
    - Chthonic
    - Infernal
- Half-Elves (Khovar*)
- Warforged*
- Shifters*

Backstories

I love backstories!

Have you heard about the "Knife Theory" method for character creation? (Thank you to u/jimbaby for their post about this. Which I have basically copied here since they explain it much better than I ever have.)

> "When writing a character's backstory, it's important to include a certain number of "knives". Knives are essentially anything that the DM can use to raise the stakes of a situation for your character. Anything that can make a conflict personal, like a threatened loved one or the appearance of a sudden enemy. They're called "knives" because the players lovingly forge them and present them to the DM so that the DM can use them to stab the player over and over again.
>
> The more knives a player has, the easier it is for the DM to involve them in the story. So it's important to have them! When breaking down a backstory, it kind of goes like this:

- Every named person your character cares about, living or dead (i.e. sibling, spouse, childhood friend) +1 knife [A large family can be bundled into one big knife.]
- Every phobia or trauma your character experiences/has experienced +1 knife
- Every mystery in your character's life (i.e. unknown parents, unexplained powers) +1 knife
- Every enemy your character has +1 knife
- Every ongoing obligation or loyalty your character has +1 knife
- Additionally, every obligation your character has *failed*
- Every serious crime your character has committed (i.e. murder, arson) +1 knife
- Every crime your character has been falsely accused of +1 knife
- Every favored item/heirloom +1 knife
- Every secret your character is keeping +1 knife

You kind of get the point. Any part of your backstory that could be used against you is considered a knife. A skilled DM will use these knives to get at your character and get you invested in the story. A really good DM can break your knives into smaller, sharper knives with which to stab you. They can bundle different characters' knives together into one GIANT knife. Because we're all secretly masochists when it comes to D&D, the more knives you hand out often means the more rewarding the story will be.

On the other hand, you don't want to be a sad edgelord with too many knives. An buttload of knives just means that everyone in your party will inadvertently get stabbed by your knives, and eventually that gets annoying. Anything over 15 knives seems excessive. The DM will no doubt get more as time goes on, but you don't want to start out with too many. You also don't want to be the plain, boring character with only two knives. It means the DM has to work harder to give you a personal stake in the story you're telling together. Also, knives are cool!! Get more knives!!! "

Starting off, I'd like for each character to incorporate 3 knives into their backstory. (At least.) Give yourself room to pick up other knives during the story. These knives also tell me the story you want to tell with your character.

If your knives deal with subject matters that make any of the other players uncomfortable, I will ask that you change them.

Other than that, you'll need to have two things in your backstory:

One is that you are part of a fledgling adventuring party registered with Kelvastra's Expedition Board.

Two is how you know the Tiefling Merchant and part-time Seer, Wrin Sivinxi.

The Extra Bits

Since we'll be using battlemaps via Roll20, you'll need to find a visual representation for your character and create a token for me to use for them. If you have spells or abilities that have temporary or permanent presence on a battlefield (find familiar or spiritual weapon for example) please also create a token for those so I can add them to VTT.

I will link a tokenmaker on our discord.

In addition, if you are using Chrome/Firefox/Opera as your browser, you'll need to download the add-on Beyond 20. If you have it running, your character sheet on D&D Beyond up, and our VTT, it will automatically share rolls and number information between the two websites.

Who is Wrin Sivinxi?



Wrin Sivinxi grew up in the small village of Elmyraeth in the predominantly elven nation of Sylvara, but a traveler wouldn't find her hometown if they were to visit that nation today, for Mossreach was destroyed 15 years ago by demons in the service of the Deep God, Vinos. Despite the loss of her hometown, Wrin feels no sadness or despair about the event, for none perished in Elmyraeth's fall. In the days before the demon army's attack, Wrin had a vision of the disaster. She warned her parents and neighbors, and their trust in her visions gave the town the time it needed to relocate everyone in the village to safety. When the demons came, they found Elmyraeth deserted, and when they burned it in frustration, they suffered greatly from the magical traps the elves had left behind to greet them.

When she came of age a few years later, Wrin left her parents and friends, eager to find her own place in the world. As she traveled across Erund, she trusted in her visions and her faith in a Boundless Conclave House associated with space and time she refers to as The Cosmic Caravan, looking to the nightly stars to make decisions for tomorrow. Her knack for finding lost things and gathering strange treasures made establishing her own curio shop an obvious choice, and it was by mere chance that she decided to set up that shop in Briarhook—it was simply the port she'd arrived at when her capacity to carry her collection finally outweighed its portability.

She opened her shop, Wrin's Wonders, four years ago. In that time, she has become part of the community, even if many of its citizens regard her as a good-natured eccentric. Sales of the strange and bizarre aren't brisk in the small town, but that's no matter to Wrin—she's patient and has enjoyed her time in Briarhook so far. One day, she hopes to make enough money to fund a trip west, for she has heard tell of an abandoned observatory in the small town of Crookcove on Kelvastra's southwestern coast that she hopes to purchase and transform into a temple devoted to the Cosmic Caravan. But for the time being, she's content to stay in Briarhook and sleep under the stars.

Wrin's tiefling ancestry is impossible to miss, and it's something she long ago decided to embrace. Eyes devoid of pupils, large ram horns curling around her elven ears, a thin tail, and fingertips that sparkle with motes of glittering lights leave no doubt that she's touched by supernatural forces. Yet, her quick smile and welcoming attitude have always helped her to secure friendships during her travels.