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# Episode 3: Awearry of This Moon

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From set *Lorwyn Eclipsed*

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If Dina was unsettled by having the large lion-man give her commands, she was too relieved at being able to hand the responsibility for the missing students off to a responsible member of the faculty to care. She nodded at Ajani's declaration and, after waiting for Liliana to clean up her broken teacup, led the two out of the building where Liliana's office was located and across the fields toward the Harrier's Wood.

The rest of the students had already returned to their housing, leaving the question of where their missing classmates had gone to the TA who was supposed to have been supervising them all during their time in the field. Dina felt terrible about that. She was never going to be allowed to supervise undergraduates again. Not that she particularly *wanted* to supervise undergraduates—they were interesting in their way, and frustrating, and filled with so much potential, but they weren't her life's work or anything, and she was never going to be a teacher—but she didn't like to be limited, either. And "Dina can't be trusted not to lose students" was a limitation.

Not to mention the students themselves. She liked Abigale—the owlin had been clearly bound for Silverquill since orientation, and Killian was going to be furious when he found out Dina had misplaced her. She didn't know the other three as well, although she had just enough overlap with Tam in her theory classes to worry about her, too. There were doubtless people on campus who would worry themselves sick about Sanar and Kirol. This was terribly bad, no matter how she wanted to look at it.

Then they reached the wood, and she stepped aside to allow Liliana and Ajani to search, and some of her worries lifted. They would figure this out. They would find the missing students, and while Dina might be in trouble, there would be no lasting harm done.

She tried to hold tight to that thought as Liliana stepped into the wood and raised her hands, calling a black fog from the ground. She cocked her head, seeming to listen as it eddied and swirled around her, then lowered her hands and turned to the lion-man. "Like Jace, they aren't dead," she said. "Lots of little things died here today—bugs, rodents, pests—but nothing as large and complicated as a student."

"Thank you for that incredibly compassionate update," said Ajani.

Liliana lifted an eyebrow. "My, you've learned sarcasm in our time apart, kitty-cat. It suits you."

Ajani ignored her, beginning to prowl deeper into the wood. He didn't call up any magic or visibly cast any spells, but he did stop and pick something up from the forest floor, studying it carefully and sniffing it thoroughly before he turned and walked back to Liliana. He held his hand out to her, showing her the slim blue flower petal resting in his palm. The edges were bruised, but there were stitches at the end where it had been attached to something larger.

Liliana looked at it and scowled. “A flower petal?”

“I’ve smelled this type of flower before. There’s a plane where they grow plentiful and wild. A plane where some of the denizens use flowers in their tailoring.”

Dina frowned, looking between the two of them. “Don’t play guessing games. Just say it.”

Liliana sighed, sounding oddly put-on. “You’re hinting at Lorwyn,” she said. “You think one of their faeries led my students astray? It’s as good a place to start as any, but I don’t see any sign of an Omenpath.”

“They don’t always stick around,” said Ajani.

“They’re like Planeswalkers that way,” said Liliana.

Ajani closed his hand on the petal. “Which do you want right now: your students, or your pride?”

“My students,” said Liliana without hesitation.

“Then I’m sorry, Liliana, but I can’t take you with me. There’s a stable Omenpath between Lorwyn and Shandalar, as far as I know, and if I can get them to Shandalar, I can bring them back here.”

“Tam is from Shandalar,” said Liliana. “Shandalar will be fine.”

“Good.” He turned to Dina then. “It was a pleasure to meet you, Miss.” He gave a small bow before turning to walk away.

On the first step, he started to glow.

On the second step, he was gone.

Liliana sighed. “Are we all that inclined to showing off?” she asked and turned to Dina. “It was a hypothetical question, dear: don’t answer. Let’s get back to campus. Ajani will find them.”

“Yes, Professor,” said Dina, confused but hopeful.

Together, they turned back toward the school.

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“You’re lucky to have run across me,” said Brigid as they walked through the sun-dappled forest. She seemed utterly relaxed now that they were away from the spreading dark, although it was clear that she heard everything around her; her head was constantly moving as she swiveled toward one noise or another, and her hand was always on her bow.

“Why’s that?” asked Kirol.

“Well, most anyone with a lick of sense could have gotten you clear of Isilu, and anyone of Lorwyn who saw you would have felt moved to help. We try not to let people get swallowed down by night when they don’t want to be. But not just anyone could get you to Goldmeadow, and that’s probably the best spot for you to rest up while you figure out what sort of pretty lies you’re going to use to tell me why you went into Isilu’s den in the middle of the day.”

She sped up then, heading for the edge of the wood a little faster. The four students exchanged a look, then sped up after her, not willing to risk her getting out of their sight.

Brigid led them out of the woods and into a vast, sunlit meadow filled with standing stones and massive patches of blooming wildflowers. Fat striped bees buzzed from flower to flower, ignoring the group. Brigid continued on, and the students matched her, the forest falling away behind them and the wall of a settlement appearing ahead of them. A high wall cupped what looked like a large and somewhat

irregular assortment of buildings, with a tall central watchtower nestled in the middle of the settlement itself.

“Goldmeadow?” guessed Sanar.

“Goldmeadow,” Brigid confirmed warmly. She beckoned them to stay close as she approached the gate where two more of the stout humanoids waved to them as they cranked it open. Neither of them blinked at the fact that Brigid had gone out alone and come back with a motley assortment of strangers. In fact, if anything, they looked pleased that she’d found someone to walk with.

“What is this place?” asked Kirol, looking thoughtfully around at the nearby buildings. Everything was built on Brigid’s scale, implying a population that was, on the whole, shorter than vampires, gorgons, and owlin tended to be. Sanar fit right in.

Literally. He looked like he could go through any door and be perfectly in scale with the room on the other side. Kirol blinked, considering for the first time how disconcerting it must have been for the diminutive goblin to be constantly surrounded by taller people.

Brigid reached a round building with broad double doors and gestured for them all to go inside. “Come on, then; this is the meeting hall, and we’ll be fine here for a bit.”

“Not your home?” asked Kirol curiously.

“Oh, I don’t live here,” said Brigid. “I make the locals a bit nervous, what with my connection to the thoughtweft all mangled up and half-severed. They don’t like it when I stay for too long.”

Kirol blinked. This was the second time she’d mentioned this “thoughtweft,” and the urge to ask what she meant was almost irresistible. Common sense and the visible discomfort on Tam’s face told them to resist anyway, and so they swallowed the impulse and simply followed Brigid inside.

The meeting hall was comfortable but barren, with low, plush seats scattered around the floor and rough-hewn shelves lining the walls. Scattered books and objects had been shoved onto the shelves in no particular order. Brigid set her bow down in an empty space as she passed and turned to face the group.

“All right, you lot. You’re not from around here. Where *are* you from?”

“There was a little buzzing thing in the woods where we come from and it was flying around and so we chased it and then there was this big hole and we fell down the big hole and landed in the middle of this big meadow and there were spirals everywhere, which was really, really cool only when the landscape starts making symbols everywhere sometimes that means evil robots will come out of rifts in the sky and kill your friends,” said Sanar without pausing to take a breath.

Brigid looked at him blankly.

“What our friend means to say is that we were on a field trip at the university we all attend, and he spotted an unfamiliar creature in the trees, which he felt compelled to get a closer look at,” said Tam. “He pursued it, and the rest of us pursued him. The creature led us to a hole in the ground, and we fell. From there, it’s as Sanar has said—we landed in the meadow, outside the dolmen gate, and you found us shortly after that.”

“What did this creature look like?” asked Brigid.

“It was small and humanoid, with hard-looking blueish-gray skin and a tunic made of flower petals,” said Kirol.

*It had wings like a beetle*, signed Abigale.

Brigid frowned but didn't comment again on the telepathic contact. "That sounds like a faerie," she said. Then she brightened. "Fortunately for the lot of you, I'm sort of a close friend of their queen."

"Excuse me. What?" asked Kirol.

"Her name is Maralen, and she's queen of the faeries of both Lorwyn and Shadowmoor, not only on one side or the other. If I send her a message, she can tell us why one of her faeries was at your school. And then maybe we can find out why it led you to the hole, and how we can get you back where you belong."

"That would be wonderful," said Tam.

"Can faeries talk?" asked Sanar.

"Yes, of course," said Brigid.

"Why don't we ask the faerie, then?"

"What?" asked Brigid.

"What?" asked the others in unison.

They turned. Sanar was looking at the little blue faerie from before, which had flown in through a window and was now hovering in front of him. As they looked at it, the faerie started to laugh. It was a bright, merry sound that grew louder and louder as it went on, filling the space entirely.

Its dominion only lasted a few seconds before the alarm bells began ringing outside. It was a raucous, clanging sound, metallic and overwhelming. It washed over the faerie's laughter, wiping it away. Brigid swore and rushed to the window, gripping the ledge as she leaned out to see what was going on. The faerie flew out past her head, whisking away into the sky. Brigid didn't even seem to notice.

In the meadow outside the city walls, Isilu was walking. The great beast took long, intentional steps, legs moving with an elegant grace which would have been easier to appreciate if not for the darkness that poured off of it in never-ending waves. Where the darkness fell, the night descended. The students rushed to the window to join her and watched as the sudden night began to overtake the city.



Art by: Ralph Horsley

Everywhere the darkness touched, the city was transformed. The wall grew higher, topped with long spikes pointing both inward and outward. The ladders vanished, making the territory impassable. The buildings nearest the wall remained the same shape but sprouted spikes and bars along their windows, the spirals worked into their architecture growing more tangled and defensive. Even the doors grew narrower, making it easier to shut them against the world.

“What in the?” Tam started to ask.

“Shadowmoor,” said Brigid, tone cold. “The night side of the plane. It’s not supposed to be here. The sun sets, the moon rises, the dark reveals what day disguises. But not *here*. Goldmeadow has been on the Lorwyn side of the border for years. A shift like this is unheard of. There are nomads inside the city walls.”

“Why does that matter?” asked Tam.

“Who you are at night and who you are in the day are two different people,” said Brigid almost desperately. “I have to help the city. The locals welcome the nomads in the day, but Shadowmoor locals aren’t nearly so friendly. You’ll need to locate Maralen on your own.”

“What,” said Tam. It wasn’t actually a question. She pronounced the word like a small, hard stone, throwing it into the well that had suddenly opened between them.

“The night’s spreading when it’s not supposed to be,” said Brigid, grabbing her bow. “Lorwyn and Shadowmoor both exist, side by side, always, but they don’t overtake each other without warning. The borders respect the lives people have chosen, and they have since we broke the aurora. I wish I could stay with you. I promised I’d stay with you. But you have to go.”

“Why—” began Sanar. He was interrupted as a rock flew through the central meeting room window, which had been closed, unlike the window the faerie had come and gone through. The students flinched, all save Abigale, who hadn’t heard the glass breaking. She turned to Brigid, signing rapidly.

*Where can we find this “Maralen”? We’re strangers in this land. We don’t know where we’re going.*

Brigid started for the door, tightening the string on her bow as she walked. Someone outside the meeting room screamed. “Maralen lives in Glen Elendra. It’s meant to be impossible for outsiders to find. When you leave here, go dead east until you reach the Wanderwine River. Cross the river and walk until you see a great wood, with boughs like woven branches. That is the Gilt-Leaf Wood. Cut through the edges until you find a tributary that flows to the Wanderwine, then follow it back to the waterfall. Beyond and behind the waterfall, you’ll find another stream. Follow this one to its source, and you’ll come to Glen Elendra. Maralen is there, in the twilight palace.”

The students stared at her as Brigid turned toward the door and said, “When I step through this door, you run, you understand me? Run for where the darkness ends, and do not look back, no matter what you hear. The person who begs you to turn around—that person isn’t me.”

She opened the door and rushed outside, bow raised.

The students followed her, moving as quickly as they could. Abigale caught Sanar by the forearms and, upon his nod, threw them both into the sky, while Kirol and Tam ran along the street, which was half sunlight and half shadow, impossible, impassable. Everywhere they looked, stout humanoids fought. Those who stood their ground in sunlight and those who stood their ground in shadow were virtually indistinguishable. As Tam looked, she saw that those who attacked from the dark were hunched forward, not out of physical need, but from apparent suspicion for everything around them. Some of those humanoids spotted the students and barked commands to attack, throwing rocks and releasing arrows. None of them stepped into the sun. Their eyes glowed yellow like those of a hunting cat, no pupils, no whites.

The humanoids who fought from sunlight were like Brigid, and that appeared to be costing them the battle. They stood with open, trusting postures and were easily grabbed from behind as the shadows flowed forward and swallowed more of the street. No one fought the shadows. There was no way to stop them, and bit by bit, the archers were falling, transforming into moon-eyed fighters from the other side.

The students ran, and as they forced their way out the gate to the fields beyond, Abigale looked back, still clutching Sanar close. Together, they bore witness as Brigid fired into the dark, aiming to wound, not kill, trying to stop figures who were being far less considerate with their own attacks. A tendril of misplaced night slithered along the wall to her back, unseen, and bright-eyed figures followed it, pressed to the stone to avoid the narrow strip of sunlight where Brigid stood.



Art by: Zoltan Boros

Once they were solidly behind her, they reached out and grabbed her shoulders, pulling her into the darkness. She struggled and wailed, then stilled, and when she opened her eyes again, they were full moon-bright, filled with a light that had nothing to do with the day.

Abigale turned away as Brigid began to fight beside her new compatriots, turning her arrows against her former allies. Shuddering and dismayed, the owlin soared after Kirol and Tam, carrying Sanar along.

They fled and left the falling Goldmeadow behind.

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“Again,” said Tam.

Obligingly, Abigale began signing. *The figures in the dark didn't seem to be evil so much as they seemed scared, like pests that think they've been cornered by some larger predator. They were attacking to protect themselves. I'm almost sure of it. Brigid was a threat, and so they stopped her.*

“And when they pulled her into their shadows, she became who she is at night,” said Tam. “Scared, like them. So she started fighting on their side.”

*Yes,* signed Abigale. *I don't think the night is bad here, just different, and the people on the night side don't always want the same things they wanted in the day.*

“I want to go home,” said Sanar. “I want to finish my term project. This place makes me want to do homework, and I hate it.”

“Brigid told us which way to go while she was in the daylight; we'll get to this Maralen she talked about, and Maralen will be able to send us back to Strixhaven,” said Tam. “I'm sure of it.”

Kirol gave her a measuring look but didn't say anything, focusing more on the meadow ahead of them. Unlike Goldmeadow, it was still drenched in daylight, so complete that it seemed impossible it should ever fall to night. Tufts of wildflowers grew on green-dusted standing stones, and spirals occurred everywhere around them, in the curves of ferns and patterns of wildflowers. They were less sinister

than the symbol of Phyrexia, but Kirol still twitched uncomfortably away from them, trying to thread a path between the curves.

Sanar craned his neck, looking toward the horizon. "Are we going the right way?" he asked.

"Due east," said Tam, tone implacable. "Don't you know how to tell the direction?"

"Never needed to," he said. "Goblins don't count on directions, as long as we know the way we're going is the *right* one."

"How very ... quaint," said Tam. The tendrils of her hair shifted and twisted around in spirals of their own, showing her discontent.

Abigale huffed, feathers puffing out until she looked like a startled cat, but didn't sign anything, only continued in silence.

Ahead of them, the sunlight glinted off the flat silver ribbon of a river, running from one end of the horizon to the other. Kirol straightened then hurried forward, leaving the others to follow them. "The Wanderwine!" they called. "We found it!"

They stopped when they reached the water's edge, staring out across the widest river they had ever seen. Fish danced at the surface, scales flashing in the sun, and the water itself was fast, clear, and obviously deep.

"How are we supposed to cross *that*?" they asked.

Abigale lifted her ear tufts in amusement, signing, *You were the one who told me to fly*. She moved to stand behind Kirol. *Do you mind?*

"No," they said after momentarily absorbing the offer. They spread their arms, and Abigale grasped them, taking to the air.

"Some really powerful vampires can fly, and my mother says maybe someday I can, too, but my dad says no one in our family has ever had that power, so I don't know which of them is right," they said, keeping their arms spread to fully enjoy the feeling of flight. "I really hope it's Mom. Flying is *awesome*."

Abigale continued silently to the other side of the river, where she landed to set them on their feet and signed, deadpan, *It certainly is*.



Art by: Mark Zug

She jumped back into the air and flew back to the others, leaving Kirol alone. They looked around thoughtfully. It was obvious that this side of the river played host to a large forest somewhere nearby: Kirol was in the Introduction to Magibotanical Environments, not due to a secret interest in Witherbloom but due to a not-at-all-secret interest in everything an environment could tell you about what was nearby. The grass on this side of the river was coarser, and the flowers had the flat, smooth leaves they associated with growing in shade. It was still a beautiful environment. It just spoke to more nearby trees than the ones that stood outside Goldmeadow.

They crouched, running their fingertips over the flowers, and were still crouching when Abigale dropped Tam off next to them and went back for Sanar. They looked up then, meeting the unhappy gorgon's eyes. "Look at these flowers," they said. "They're glowing. You can't really tell, because the sun's up, but they're bioluminescent. Maybe that's how they can get light in Shadowmoor."

"How strange," said Tam, crouching beside them.

When Abigale returned with Sanar, she found the pair deep in a discussion of the properties of wildflowers. Tam didn't seem to know much about the flowers back in Arcavios, but Kirol could recite them by region. Both stopped and straightened as Sanar hurried over to join them.

"The forest should be this way," Kirol said and started walking.

The others followed, as did everything to come.

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The walk to the wood took the better part of an hour, during which time the sun overhead moved not an inch. Days were apparently longer here, when Isilu didn't walk the land. As they had left the spirit of night on the other side of the river, it wasn't threatening them here.

They walked what felt like forever, and then the tree line was ahead of them, its boughs woven like baskets as Brigid had said. Finally, they stepped into the shade of the trees, a natural, changeable darkness that wrapped around them like an old friend, carrying none of the autumn brightness of

Isilu. This was just shadow, not misplaced night. Cooled by the wood, they pressed on, looking for the tributary Brigid had mentioned.

Kirol had been the fastest of them in the beginning, and so it wasn't much of a surprise when they began to lag. Sanar walked loudly, distracting Tam, and Abigale heard nothing that wasn't speech. It probably shouldn't have been a surprise when a silent hunter rose out of the bushes behind Kirol and grabbed them, pulling them out of sight before they could make a sound.

None of the others even looked back to see that Kirol was gone.

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Kirol stiffened as a hand covered their mouth, stopping them from shouting. That wasn't nearly as much of a concern as the arm that locked around their neck, cutting off their air.

*Joke's on you*, they thought, as they struggled silently. Vampires had to breathe, but not as often as humans or elves. They could choke them for long as they wanted.

After they'd been dragged some distance, the arm around their neck withdrew, replaced by the sharp edge of a knife pressed hard against the soft spot where their jaw met their throat. A pleasant, almost friendly voice said, "Struggle or scream, and we'll see how well your blood can water the flowers here, outsider. Do you understand me?"

Kirol nodded as much as they dared.

"Speak."

"Not wanting to slit my own throat, I'm not sure how much I can," said Kirol. "What do you want from me? I haven't got any dragons on me. No snarls or pests either."

The knife withdrew, and its wielder stepped around Kirol into view. It was an elf in hunter's leathers, green and brown and sturdy. He wore no shoes and, in fact, had no feet; instead, dainty hooves pressed against the loam. More confusing were his horns, long and curved and growing from his temples. He looked at Kirol as if *they* were the strange one, not him, and perhaps here, that was so.

"I don't want your 'dragons,' whatever those are," said the elf. "I saw you fleeing Goldmeadow with the other strangers. I know you know why Isilu walks. I want to know what you know."

"Well, first, my name is Kirol, and I know my friends are going to be worried about me."

The elf blinked. "What?"

"You said you wanted to know what I know, and those are the most important things I know. Can you tell me your name?"

"Lluwen," said the elf, "and I know nothing of your friends. You were just the first to fall enough behind that I could catch you."

"I'm very flattered," said Kirol, rolling their eyes. "And why did you need to catch one of us so very badly? We're just cutting through your woods—assuming these *are* your woods—to get to Glen Elendra so we can ask Maralen to send us home."

"Where is home?"

"A world on the other side of an Omenpath, where things are different than they seem to be here." Kirol shook their head. "I don't belong here. Please, let me go back to my friends before they get too far ahead. I won't even tell them you took me."

“No,” snapped Lluwen, drawing the spear that was strapped across his back and aiming it at Kirol. “You come with me. High Perfect Morcant will want to see you. You’re my prisoner now, and that means you have to do as I say.”

“Is that what it means?” asked Kirol. “I don’t think the rules are that clear-cut.”

Lluwen circled around behind them, prodding them in the back with the tip of their spear. Kirol yelped, turning to glower.

“I’ll come. I’ll come,” they said. “But you’re making a mistake, Lluwen. I’m not a good prisoner.”

“Some people say I’m not a very good hunter, so I guess mistakes are to be expected,” said Lluwen. He prodded Kirol again. “Get moving.”

Together, they walked into the trees and, from there, moved deeper into the forest. Kirol hunched their shoulders but walked without screaming, as in the distance, their friends moved farther and farther away. Kirol knew they would notice soon that they were gone. They would notice, and they could come back to find them.

They had to.

The forest seemed to swallow Kirol and Lluwen as they walked, leaving no sign of them behind.