

**Session/Game:** Krondar, D&D5e 8      **Date:** March 11, 2018

**Episode 8:** “Red Hermit, Yellow Temple”

**Campaign Date:** Eighth-Month, Days 1-14, 1173 of 12<sup>th</sup> Age

**Characters:**

Yul Gibbons, wood elf, druid - 3, neutral (Jason Liebert)

Preacher Lightning, human, ranger - 2, chaotic neutral (Marlon Kirton)

Drag, half-ogre, barbarian - 1, chaotic neutral (Miles Trout)

Walter, Destroyer of Evil, human, sorcerer - 2, chaotic good (Dave Nelson)

**DM:** Andrew Smith

**PROLOG:**

Two months ago, some guy named Rolfe with blonde hair and gold eyes insulted Preacher Lightning’s heritage as he did business in Newport. Angered, Lightning planned revenge on this strange foreigner away from the eyes of the city guard, but Rolfe disappeared before Lightning could get even. Preacher Lightning learned from the city guard that Rolfe was spotted in the province of “The Orchards.”

Drag recently learned that some of his ogre half-siblings have also recently arrived in Krondor. Most of them, were terrible to him. Wort, Spang, Gruff, and Mund were all just plain mean. However, Drag’s ogre sister Erm was always kind and kept him from being slain and eaten by the others. In his mind if he could reunite with her, or his ogre mother Mum, it would complete him and make him happy.

Yul Gibbons also ran into Rolfe. This strange young man with golden yellow beard and gold eyes passed through Newport on his way into the interior of the island. He couldn’t stop talking about this “King in Yellow” deity. The elf found him simply annoying. He was meeting his superior at his temple. It was unbelievable just how rude and obnoxious he was.

**LOG:**

*Eighth-Month, Day 1, Newport:*

Walter is approached by a nobleman’s herald named Grint. Walter is asked to help out with a matter “of utmost delicacy, which requires an amount of expertise and discretion” that requires the heroes who had survived as castaways on goblin island and their allies to help. Walter immediately asks “Does this matter require us to defeat evil in any and all forms?” to which Grint

answers simply “So much evil.” Walter, Destroyer of Evil, Hermit of the Red Mountain is immediately interested.



Walter collects a motley group of castaways, and they all decide to hear what Grint's employer has to offer. They are ushered to a fancy carriage. Grint takes them to the biggest town in the province of “The Orchards” known as Bayhead.



The Castaways arrive at Bayhead in the province of “The Orchards” and meet with Lord DuPort, a gentleman merchant who acts as a middle man between ginster farmers to the North and the Royal Krondor Company. He is perhaps the most wealthy man in this small industrial town. He is heavysset, 50s, in royal maroon robes.



The meeting takes place in his private offices by the docks. A few grizzled guards eye the heroes unfavorably as they pass and enter. "Well now, today seems to be your lucky day." DuPort asks the castaways to identify themselves. After those quick introductions, DuPort begins to explain his plight.

"My daughter has been kidnapped from the room right next door to mine. I never heard a thing. They left this note. They call themselves the "Dancing Demons". They've asked for a ransom delivered in Rowdy. Here is their lousy ransom note<sup>1</sup>. I want the people who did this dead! I also want my daughter back. "

"My daughter has...challenges. She's beyond my control. My wife and I adopted her in a happier time, and I'm afraid she's grown up mostly on her own after she learned to talk back to us. I wish her all the best...but she exhausts me. If she's moved on to a better place, perhaps it is for the best."

"I cannot raise the money in the time given without raising the Krondor Company's suspicion. If my accounts are audited, I'm afraid that they might believe mistakenly that I have been less than honest in my dealings."

DuPort offers banknotes for 200 gold sultans each redeemable at the Newport station of the Royal Krondor Company. DuPort promises another 100 gold if the heroes return with news about his daughter, along with evidence of killing the evildoers. Duport offers a bag of flawed stones that might fool someone into thinking they are worth 10K in gold. The Castaways accept DuPort's offer.

The heroes do some research. They ask to check Emma DuPort's room. It is a holy wreck of gold and purple. Drag puts on some of her clothes and lays in her bed, nearly causing it to break. He is politely but firmly asked to leave. There are no signs of a break in

Walter changes his appearance to masquerade as Grint and questions Lord DuPort. He questions DuPort, leading him to think that Grint is in on a plot. DuPort gives no indication that he is not as he appears.

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<sup>1</sup> *Etienne, we have taken your beautiful Emma but her life will be spared if you follow our directions and dance our steps. Bring 10,000 worth in gems to "The Auric Mug" in the hamlet of Rowdy. Ask for Artie, and someone will tell you where to stash the gemstones. Once you've done that, just walk away. Heed our choreography and your daughter will be returned by the morning. Otherwise, your precious child will be a partner in our nightmare dance forever! -The Dancing Demons*

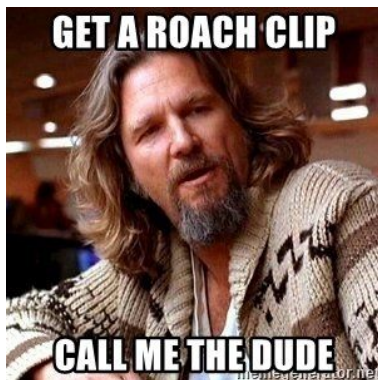
Preacher Lightning asks around with the guards, and learns that Emma spent weekends at a bar known as the “Auric Mug” on the square in the hamlet of Rowdy where she cavorted with the commoners.

It suddenly dawns on the Hermit of the Red Mountain. He realizes that the motivations, the stories, and the descriptions all fit together. Emma DuPort kidnapped herself!



The Castaways travel to the hamlet of Rowdy. Drag enters the Auric Mug and makes contact with the bartender Bart. Bart asks if Drag is in town for “the ritual” or not. He quickly changes the subject once Drag returns a confused reaction. Drag asks about Abel, and Bart tells Drag that he will “be right back.” Bart leaves Drag at the Auric Mug to meet Abel, and he is tracked along the way by a hidden preacher lightning. Bart returns, telling Drag that the gems should be left in the bed of an abandoned cart “to the Northwest, in a small copse of trees.”

Meanwhile, Walter and Yul Gibbons stand on a huge pile of dried pig dung to hawk healing services. None of the ginster-addled pig farmers of Rowdy take them up on their offers. Dejected, the hermit of the Red Mountain steps down from his perch of hardened crap chips.



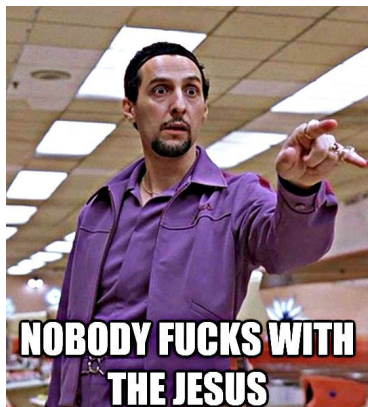
Preacher Lightning stays with the gold and purple robed figure of Abel. Following a quick conference via the message spell from Walter, Preacher Lightning tracks Abel to the North, leaving a trail of arrows like breadcrumbs showing the others where to follow.

The Castaways come upon the copse of trees, and see the cart. Abel crosses the copse and hides behind a huge boulder. Walter transforms himself to look exactly like Bart the bartender,

and leads Drag into the copse. The Preacher sneaks forward, and alerts everyone that there is a cadre of hooded cultists behind the boulder. The trap is sprung, and a cadre of robed cultists led by a shirtless thug attack Drag.

Walter sprints toward the cultists, pretending to be bartender Bart. He lines up a gout of flame and fries several of the cultists. Yul Gibbons uses his powers to bind many of the cultists using the nearby foliage. Drag and Lightning are engaged by those cultists who break free.

“What the hell, Bart!” The cultist thug yells. He breaks free of the gripping branches and vines and attacks Walter. They two trade blows and Walter, the destroyer of evil was severely wounded by the cultist thug.



Lightning finally breaks free and he and Drag shoot the thug dead. Abel throughout the battle was not able to escape the bonds of the plants. They question him, and learn the location of the upcoming “ritual” that Emma DuPort is a key part in. What that part in the ritual exactly consists of is unclear since all the Castaways can get from Abel is that she will “usher in the messiah who will deliver the King in Yellow to The World.”

The heroes arrive at the site of the temple that the cultist directed them to. There isn’t much there except for a cart, a few guards, and the husk of a small ruined hovel. The Castaways approach cloaked in the robes of their previous victims, allowing them to close the distance with another cultist thug named Burns welcoming them to the “ritual” with a hearty smile and laugh behind his full iron helmet.



The heroes easily defeat the cultists this time behind a magic arrow from Lightning, some well placed flame bolts from Walter and Drag standing firm. The fight ends, and the one cultist left asks why the guards were killed. Somehow, Walter and Yul Gibbons manages to convince the befuddled cultist that it was in fact the guards that attacked them, and that they want to join “the ritual.”

The Castaways each don fresh robes from the temple left in messy heaps within the ruined hut. Drag even finds a few huge robes. He chooses one that is a bit too big even for him. They follow the clueless cultist down a trap door into the bowels of the temple. They arrive in a vestibule with a passage leading ahead and two chambers to the right and left. Drag puts the ginster-addled cultist out of his misery, then moves off to the right-hand chamber. Walter and Yul Gibbons checks the left hand passage and Lightning guards against anything coming down the passage at them.

Drag discovers a storeroom with all sorts of foodstuffs and supplies. A door on one side is spiked shut from the outside. He pokes through the supplies then makes his way back to Lightning.

To the left, a brand new shrine is built to the King in Yellow, and several brand new stone bookshelves hold only a few books. Walter, immediately recognizing them as works of evil burns them before anyone can even have a look.

The heroes move deeper into the underground temple, and discover an ogre in the process of preparing a feast. Drag immediately recognizes this monster as his half-brother, Gruff. “Brother!” he calls out “It’s me, Drag! Tell me, have you seen mother or our sister?” The ogre looks up from the hearth, surprised. It takes a moment of surprise, but Gruff replies “Brother! It is good to see you!” as he reaches for the pig carcass roasting over the open flame. The conversation continues briefly, until Gruff grabs the pig and attempts to bash Drag with it. The attempt fails, as well as an attempt to blind Drag with spices in a belt pouch. Gruff is clearly not the ogre he was when Drag knew him. The party attacks Gruff, eventually knocking him unconscious.

Gruff falls, and is quiet just for a moment. Then his face splits open like a bloody egg, and a small brain-like monster with vicious claw-limbs pops out of the mess of the ogre’s head and attacks Walter. The claws bite deep, but the hermit fends off a magical mind attack. The group pummels the brain monster into a small patch of yellow slime.

The group returns to the spiked door. Drag removes the spikes one by one, and the group enters. Inside, they are immediately attacked by a spectral death monster of darkness wielding a scythe of death. Drag is hit, and nearly dies. However, thanks to Walter’s magic and Drag’s bravery they group stands firm and slays the undead horror. Inside, the Castaways find five rotten bodies of cultists -- the former victims of the monstrous ghost.

Next the group happens upon a dormitory where two cultists are engaging in some reckless lovemaking. Drag walks over and stares at them quizzically. Just then, Lightning accidentally

trips over a shoe left on the floor of the dormitory. The woman screams as the man's pelvis is immediately crushed by Drag's axe, leaving him a bloody mess. The woman's screams are silenced by violence, and the group continues on.

The group next approaches the stairs down to the temple itself. They can hear the chants and ecstatic screams clearly. They see a torture chamber, with a young man still captured on it. They free this young man, but he's such a mess he can't process anything or make sense of anything. Walter offers him a torch, telling him it is a "magic stick" for defense and that he should wait for them to return from the temple itself.



Just then, a disease hyena-man emerges from a side passage and attacks the party. A struggle ensues, but the dog-man is finally slain. Drag picks up a sweet battleaxe from the monster. A nearby cell door is unlocked, and inside the party finds a strange dead body laying naked in a corner. This individual may have looked like this when alive.



The Castaways carefully make their way down the stairs to the sounds of the ritual. They hear chanting and screams of ecstasy and pain. They emerge in a gallery above the floor of a yellow temple filled with cultists. At the far end, Emma DuPort is about to give birth and Rolfe is about to pull a yellow, jaundiced baby from her womb. Nearby, another spectral monster floats and watches.



The Castaways take stock of the situation and comes up with a plan. Drag will charge the cultist congregation backed up by Yul Gibbons while Walter and Lightning rain death from the gallery above. Just then the baby is born. Rolfe raises the sickly-looking child above his head and offers him to the congregation, "All hail the King in Yellow! The golden messiah is born!"

Preacher Lightning takes careful aim. He has a choice, and confers with Walter. "Do I shoot that asshole Rolfe, or do I shoot the DuPort girl?" Walter ponders for a moment, thinking through the machinations of evil he witnessed in his dream visions he had alone on the Red Mountain. He realizes that in the case of dark rituals involving a child messiah, there is only one way to surely end the threat. Shoot the evil baby. Lightning draws back his bow...



...and buries his arrow through the child's skull. Rolfe continues to hold the baby overhead, now realizing his triumph has been ruined. Blood and gore drip down his forearms from the ruined

yellow child. He throws the broken body down violently and whispers an oath to the King in Yellow to makes these interlopers pay.

Drag manages to take on many of the cultist guards, while other go around him to climb the stairs toward the gallery. The spectral guardian immediately floats up to Walter and Lightning and engages them in combat. Yul Gibbons does his best to screen off the cultists from climbing the stairs. Many other cultists stand aside, but draw knives to attack any party member who might fall unconscious before they can be healed.

Walter and Lightning blasts the spectral horror to wisps of shadow just as the cultist guards mount the stairs. A great melee goes on as Lightning and Yul Gibbons are engaged in combat by Rolfe and his followers. At first, it looks grim for the Castaways when Rolfe manages to get his spectral axe to attack Walter and knock him unconscious again. However, Drag manages to finish off the guards in the gallery and he takes the fight back to Rolfe, eventually delivering the killing blow.

With Rolfe's death, there is a violent shock. The brand new temple created to serve the King in Yellow was in fact conjured using scrolls from a much more powerful spellcaster. With the caster's death, it begins to crumble around the Castaways.



There is a mad dash for three chests of treasure in the gallery. It looks rough as the stairs collapse and dust starts to rise choking the Castaways and blocking their view. However, the Hermit of the Red Mountain keeps his head, lowers a rope and pulls the party and two of the three chests to safety.

Back in Bayhead, Lord DuPort is impressed with the head of Rolfe delivered by Preacher Lightning and increases everyone's banknotes to another 200. The party returns to Newport and finds the notes valid, and they split the remaining treasures up as well.

## EPILOG:

Walter took significant amounts of damage which keeps him from adventuring next fortnight.

## DOWNTIME HIGHLIGHTS FOR NON-ACTIVE CHARACTERS

- Edwan Mirths: Trapped in a timeless portal
- Wun Hung Lo: First week—spends two weeks pit fighting. The first he only wins 50gp and one match, the second he loses every match.
- Ragnar Shinbane: Trapped in a timeless portal
- Brother Thunder: First week: earns 15sp sailing, second week, earns 15gp sailing
- Altarboy Midnight: Trapped in a timeless portal
- Milosh: Spends two weeks hunting for a living, does comfortably well the first week, poor the second
- Xander: Spends two weeks recovering from a ginster-related illness, has an epiphany and emerges as a cleric
- Bocephus: Two weeks carousing among the low-life, makes a contact.
- Sir Roderick of Heston: Spends two weeks beginning to learn the Celestial Language (8 weeks to go!)
- Nak: Continues to earn a modest living as a bouncer at The Rusty Plough. The proprietor there isn't nice to Nak since he's a "foreigner," but they can't dispute the fact that Nak is a beast who just doesn't talk much. He earns a modest living the first week, and experiences a windfall the second when he sticks up for a travelling noble who was about to be gutted by a local.
- Flex Macho: Styling himself as the "spokesman for the Castaways - a group of adventuring troubleshooters looking to take on dirty and dangerous jobs in Newport" Flex Macho gets a part-time job networking adventuring types with paying patrons for Old Maggie Penthouse at the Bottomless Mug. The first week, Flex is only able to make a modest living at it, but soon his efforts pay off and the second week he makes a comfortable living plus an additional 25 gold.