

Where the River Watches - 532SaWhRiWa

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As Riverfall prepares for its beloved Harvest Moon Festival, a silver lantern streaks across the sky and crashes into the river, sparking panic and whispers of ancient prophecy. The party is hired to recover its remains and decipher the runes said to awaken the Moonlit Serpent, a guardian long thought dormant. With the full moon fast approaching, the village teeters between celebration and catastrophe.

But Riverfall holds more than secrets in its waters. A missing boy, a silent witness, and a druid with fading trust in tradition point towards something dark on the horizon. A key doesn't unlock or release some treasure but binds something deeper and seals it. Yet has someone already broken the seal?

DM: *(Part of the Harvest Moon festival ritual sees sacred treasures floated on woven reed lanterns that are tied to poles in the village. One of them is struck in the air and crashes, the thread cut. The sacred treasure is a silver key that is meant to bind the river spirit and prevent its wrath.)*



The soft hum of brush against bark filled the warm autumn air as villagers gathered along the riverbank, painting lanterns with symbols of luck and harvest. Each year, the sky bloomed with light as hundreds of glowing orbs drifted upward like stars born of celebration. But this time, as the party stood beside Mayor

Talia Reed and Elder Rinn, honoured guests for past deeds, a gasp rippled through the crowd. A silver lantern, sacred and central to the ceremony, was struck mid-air by a blazing orb that tore across the sky like a falling star. It collided with a flash, then plummeted into the river's rapids, its light vanishing downstream.

The festival ended in uneasy silence. A search party followed the river's edge through the night, but by morning, the lantern was lost to the current. Mayor Reed, anxious and pragmatic, summoned the adventurers once more but this time with a promise of gold. Elder Rinn, his gaze heavy with old knowledge and prejudice, warned that the lantern was no mere decoration. It carried a key, bound to the river spirit itself. If it wasn't recovered soon, the balance between tradition and nature might unravel.

DM: *(Elder Rinn doesn't trust that an outsider would help the village and is suspicious of their intention. Mayor Talia Reed knows of the party and trusts that they can help the village in their time of need. Refer to 532MoHaMo)*

Elder Rinn stood over a recovered silver lantern, its frame still bound to the totem strings that had guided it home. His hands trembled as he traced its surface, revealing a silver feather that shimmered with moonlight. This relic, he explained, was not merely symbolic but a tangible piece of the village's history. Unlike the lantern lost to the river, which held a key tied to the river spirit, this one held a feather. Rinn's voice was heavy with meaning as he spoke of the pact between the village and the spirit, a bond outsiders could not understand. The party, unaware of the ritual's deeper significance, listened as Mayor Talia Reed defended their intentions. Though they had come to help, Rinn remained skeptical, warning that the river does not forget and that the fallen lantern was a sign of imbalance. As the conversation unfolded, two children, Amal and Jessa, were seen eavesdropping before fleeing into the village. Mayor Reed revealed their tragic connection to the river, having lost their parents to its depths. She believed they still remembered, even if they could not fully grasp the truth. Rinn's tone softened as he urged the party to recover the key before it fell into the wrong hands. The river spirit, he warned, could restore what was lost but at a terrible cost, twisting wishes into shadows. If the party truly sought to help, they must act to preserve the balance, not for reward but for the village's survival. Mayor Reed offered support and suggested beginning with the children, who might already be entwined in the spirit's unfolding story. Outside, the moon cast its silver light over Riverfall, quiet and watchful.

DM: *(Jessa and Amal have gone to get the relic believing that it holds the key to bringing back their parents. Amal is a confident swimmer but Jessa is not. Elder Rinn could be prompted to tell of the tales of the River spirit*

how it makes demands of unreasonable price for its favour. Refer to 532TuEIRi)



At dawn, the party set out to investigate the lantern's disappearance, beginning with Mayor Talia's suggestion to find the orphans Amal and Jessa. Their search through Riverfall yielded nothing, and only after leaving the village did they encounter Jessa, battered and breathless, pointing silently toward the lake. She led them through treacherous terrain along the river, where villagers placed offerings into the water in solemn ritual. At the lake's edge, Jessa collapsed

from exhaustion but indicated a raft that had been dragged ashore. She gestured that something had gone wrong while she and Amal were on the lake. The party searched the area and found only one of Amal's shoes, but just as they prepared to deliver the grim news, Amal emerged from the water, soaked and silent, holding a silver key wrapped in a reed. His voice was not his own, but something ancient and echoing, repeating a chilling phrase about tribute and debt.

As Amal walked toward the village, nature itself seemed to recoil. Birds fell silent, a bear fled in fear, and the river's current reversed to follow him. The party remembered Elder Rinn's warning that the key was meant to seal a lock, not release it. When Amal entered Riverfall, the villagers froze and Rinn collapsed, confirming the truth that none dared speak. The river spirit had broken free and now walked among them. Word spread quickly as Amal wandered the outskirts of the village, the key clutched to his chest and moonlight glinting off his soaked clothes. The townsfolk began to fracture, some whispering of sacrifices, others planning to flee. And through the eyes of a lost boy, the river watched everything unfold.

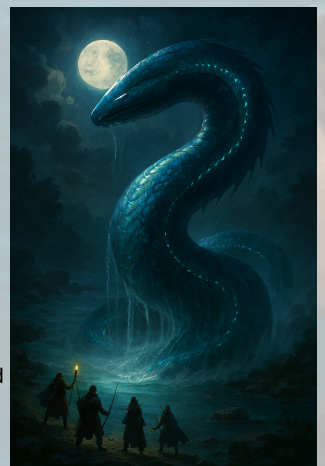
DM: *(Amal has been chosen as a vessel for the River Spirit. He is cold and wet to touch and the key can not be taken from him. If struck his body is like water and the weapon, spell or object passes through him. Refer to, 532WeVoWa)*

Amal stood at the river's edge, watching the turbulent surface before turning to the party and his sister. He spoke only once, 'The river awakes', and the water fell silent. Moonlight shimmered across the surface like silver thread, and then the river bulged outward as if something immense stirred beneath. A low hum vibrated through the stones, resonating in the bones of those nearby like a primal warning.

From the depths, a serpentine creature emerged, its snout rising ten feet above the surface, its body flowing like a living current. Scales shimmered in blues and silvers, casting shifting light across the riverbank. Its head was smooth and eyeless, reflecting the moonlight in swirling patterns, while glowing runes pulsed along its spine in rhythm with the night sky.

Water streamed from its form as it rose, towering above the party, cloaked in a sheen like sacred vestments. Mist curled from its breath, thick with the scent of stone and ancient offerings. The river followed its movements, drawn like a tide to the moon. In its presence, the world seemed to shrink, hushed beneath its gaze. It spoke not with words but with echoes and rumblings that filled the minds of nearby villagers, who began to repeat strange phrases. Amal echoed his earlier warning, but the message darkened. He spoke of tribute, of a debt to be paid in flesh and spirit, of the river's hunger and freedom. It was not a threat but a promise, a force awakened by broken tradition. And as it loomed behind Amal, it watched the party, waiting.

DM: *(Refer to the Map on the next page as well as 532ThRiCr. The creature is a River Spirit and a challenging to very challenging encounter for a moderately leveled party. Refer to 532FrRiSp for more information.)*



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