

# THE SHAMAN OF SHAMBLERS

written by Remley Farr



WWW.ENCOUNTERROLEPLAY.COM

## Adventure Synopsis

“The Shaman of Shamblers” is a Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> edition mini-event that introduces the adventurers to Madeen, a well-meaning demilich with a throng of undead family servants. She invites the players to dine with her, eventually asking them to find her phylactery and destroy it. The event is mostly humorous and can provide a solid quest line. It’s suitable for players around levels 1 and 2.

## Adventure Backstory

Madeen is a demilich hiding in the grove of her formal tribe, the Howler Clan. Once a wood elf of potent magical prowess, she is now a slave to unlife; however, she did not become a demilich by choice.

As a child, Madeen was snatched from her tribe by an evil sorcerer who believed her to be a worthy sacrifice in his quest to become a lich. The sorcerer placed Madeen on an altar and summoned an ultroloth, bargaining the girl’s soul for the transcending power of a lich.

The creature had other plans.

Not knowing the magic within the girl, the ultroloth denied the sorcerer’s request, then turned his game against him: the ultroloth instead transformed Madeen into a lich, then chose the

sorcerer to be Madeen’s living phylactery!

His plans ruined, the sorcerer fled from his tower and abandoned Madeen in her undead state. Since then, Madeen has been hiding in her family grove, praying that someone would vanquish the sorcerer so that her undead life would end.

## Adventure Hooks

This adventure is an easy “on-the-road” story. Players can be travelling to another town and happen upon the encounter, or they can be assigned a quest to track down a sudden appearance of zombies near “the old Howler Clan Grove.” The zombies are the reanimated members of Madeen’s Howler clan, who died during an attack by another wood elf tribe.

## Zombies Amuck

Madeen’s **zombies** are gathering supplies, mostly lumber, rocks, and flowers. They are clumsy, swinging axes and shovels with a zombie’s grace. Madeen likes to keep her grove joyful and neat. If the party comes across the zombies, have them find one **zombie** for each party member:

In the clearing ahead, you hear wood axes chopping against trees. There is

also stone scraping against sand—a shovel perhaps—but amid it all is the low moaning sound of a creature that sounds like it has been dying for weeks.

The zombies are clearing land in a forest and are not aggressive towards the party, but if the zombies see the party, they’ll drop what they’re doing and stare at the party. If the zombies are attacked, then they will fight back.

Whether a fight with the zombies occurs or not, Madeen will eventually confront the party. As a **demilich**, she is nothing more than a skull. Her initial appearance should strike fear into the party.

A hulking zombie, elfish in looks, shambles into view. In its hand, the creature clasps a wooden staff topped with a skull bedecked in emerald gemstones. The zombie holds the staff forward, and the skull’s mouth speaks.

Madeen will tell the party to drop their weapons if they are fighting the zombies, or she will welcome them if they are peaceful. Any PC who passes an Arcane (Intelligence) check DC 15 knows that the skull on the staff is a demilich, which has the power to obliterate the party. Madeen will do no such thing—she’s a lich, but not by choice. Her mind is still

pure even though her body and soul are corrupted.

## Dine with the Dead

If the party shows no more aggression (though she can disable them in a heartbeat), Madeen will invite the party to dinner. She hasn't had guests in decades, and since she doesn't need to eat food, she hasn't had a reason to cook. She'll insist that they dine and talk with her.

The dinner itself is held at her grove, which has been decorated to perfection by Madeen's zombie servants:

A stained-wood table sits among a grove of old, windy-branched trees. The moonlight shines through the canopy, and a series of candles on the tabletop give off an ambient glow. At the head of the table is a literal head—Madeen's. Her skull is still mounted on the wooden staff, which is now planted in the ground. "Ahem," Madeen groans, and a zombie appears, dressed head to toe in a tattered suit with tails.

Madeen introduces the zombie as Lonwick Howler. He was Madeen's brother before his death. She then has the shambling zombie take everyone's order, stating that her zombie chefs can cook up almost anything—especially with the help of Madeen's demilich power.

Play the scene comically. Rotten zombie footmen serve the food; even platters of champagne glasses wobble under the zombies' rickety hands. If a zombie spills food on one of the PC's, have Madeen shout a curse and cause the zombie to burst into flames (Madeen would certainly apologize for such an outburst). During this time, Madeen questions the party about their life, causing them to open up. Occasionally she'll ask for a "closer look" at a PC, and Lonwick Howler will pick up her staff and shove her skull towards the party member in question.

Eventually, the party will ask about Madeen's story, possibly wondering why she's not evil. Madeen will indulge them, telling of how she was a sacrificial

pawn to the sorcerer and how the ultraloth turned the request against the sorcerer. The reason she's a demilich is from her inability to feed souls into her phylactery (the sorcerer), which is fine by her. She doesn't know where the sorcerer is at the moment, though he's definitely still alive.

## Madeen's Request

Ultimately, Madeen has one task that she would ask of the party: find the sorcerer who caused the chaos in Madeen's life and slay him. Since he is Madeen's phylactery, slaying him will let Madeen drift into the afterlife with her family's souls. She will give the party the sorcerer's name, though if a party member knows of a powerful, evil spellcaster in his or her backstory, feel free to incorporate that character into this tale so that Madeen's story and a PC's story can overlap.

Madeen cannot venture with the party. As a demilich, she is shunned from society. Also, since she has no access to souls for her phylactery, her powers aren't strong enough to allow her travel. Instead, she will offer the party a different form of help:

Madeen looks towards her zombie brother. "Lonwick isn't much, but he's a better pack mule than most mules. I can't go with you, but I can lend you my brother. He's dependable and keeps to himself, but the stench can permeate most walls, so keep him bathed daily. Throw a cowl over his head if you're afraid someone will see him. Trust me: he didn't look much better when he was alive." With that said, one of the zombies offers you a rope leash—the other end fastened to a collar around Lonwick's neck.

Lonwick will accompany the party as their personal **zombie**, doing as he's bid. Should something horrible happen to him (stepping on a trap, being dismembered by an angry mob, etc.) a PC can make an Arcane (Intelligence) or Medicine (Wisdom) check DC 20 and spend 1 day's worth of time assembling him again. Failure means a "repair" can't be made on him for 24 hours.

## Afterwards

Now that the party has a side quest, they might seek out the sorcerer. Feel free to create your own story about the sorcerer's whereabouts. Is he holed up in a tower and going mad from his encounter with the ultraloth? Is he imprisoned in a demon's chamber from another deal gone sour? Or maybe he still hasn't given up on the quest to become a lich, seeking one of the legendary *Books of Keeping* so that he may resummon the ultraloth and control the fiend for good.

Either way, Lonwick is sure to give plenty of hi-jinks along the way. Just don't forget to feed him!