

# Invitation to the Dance

*Long ago, back in the last age of the world, there was a kingdom of men called Dayvos. Now, these weren't men as we know them today — these were the High Men, seven feet tall and stern. Some people say they're just legends and myths, but I saw them with my own eyes that night. They looked like they could tame dragons.*

*The last king of Dayvos was named Mileas (MILL-ee-uhs), and he was unusually smart for a king. He learned what any sergeant can tell you, that most wars aren't worth fighting, and he made peace with the orcs of his time. That couldn't have been easy, because the orcs then were fiercer than today's orcs, just like the High Men were bigger than us. But Mileas sat down with a chieftain named Otusk, and they agreed that orcs and humans could live together. Mileas even worked it out so that his daughter, the Crown Princess Kylea, would marry Otusk's son.*

*That didn't sit too well with Kylea's brother, Prince Aster. He never liked his older sister in the first place — her destiny as the next ruler of Dayvos had a lot to do with that — and he didn't have any use for an orc that wasn't impaled on the end of his war-spear. So he and a few of his cronies decided to do something about both his problems.*

*The peace treaty was signed at an old hill-fort on Midsummer's Eve, and a ball was held that night to celebrate Kylea and Gragtor's engagement. That's when Aster made his move. He planned to murder his sister and frame the orcs for it. He'd be the new heir and win his father's favor by leading a war of revenge against the orcs.*

*The plan didn't work so well. Thanks to some bad luck, magic, and a couple of horrible mistakes, King Mileas and just about everybody else at the ball got killed. The kingdom collapsed and there were a couple of centuries of war and suffering before things settled down again. Somebody must think that play is funny, because people sure do keep acting it out.*

*But like I said, all that was an age ago. You wouldn't think it would have anything to do with a rattled*

*old soldier like me, but it did. And if you've got the time for another drink — thank you kindly — I'll tell you how ...*

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## Adventure Overview

*The Last Dance* is a fantasy adventure for four to six characters. In this module, the PCs stumble into a magical reenactment of the downfall of a long-forgotten kingdom. Thousands of years ago, an ambitious prince plotted to murder his sister Kylea by magical means and blame a delegation of orcs who had just signed a peace treaty with his father, King Mileas. The plan went wrong, causing the death of the king, the orcs, and most of the land's nobility. The chaos that followed tore the kingdom apart. Now their corpses reappear from the mists of time to act out the tragedy, and the PCs are called upon to free them from their torment.

The adventure features some difficult opponents, and 5th- or 6th-level characters will find plenty to challenge them. A party of 4th-level characters will have to be at the top of its game to survive and triumph.

The most important problems must be solved by clever players, not beaten into submission by brawny characters. However, any party that goes into this adventure without a cleric or plenty of healing potions (preferably both) will get mangled. One or two magical weapons are also very useful.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

Prince Aster's plan was not simple, which is one reason it failed. He formed a conspiracy with several like-minded nobles, including a sorceress named Lady Dezaria. Using a rare magical gem as an amplifier for her magic, Dezaria would cast a spell





## THE LAST DANCE

to distract the guests at the ball; the spell would force the entire crowd to dance while Aster completed his part of the plot.

At the same time, Aster would slip poison into Kylea's drink and his men would prepare to ambush the orcs. Aster would then propose a toast. Kylea would drink the poison, and Aster would blame the orcs. Dezaria could then incite the Davosians to frenzy, again using the gem to boost a second spell, and Aster's men would pounce on the orcs, ensuring a quick slaughter. A war would begin and Aster would become crown prince.

Dezaria overestimated her own skills. The enhanced dancing spell she was casting was at the edge of her ability and she lost control of it — although no one realized what was happening until too late. Meanwhile, Aster was careless. After putting the poison in a glass of wine and proposing a toast, he allowed the king to hand out the glasses.

The king drank from the poisoned glass and died, confusing and demoralizing his nobles. Aster's men couldn't get in position for the ambush, and the orcs put up a bloody fight. Because of Dezaria's uncontrolled spell, the few Davosians who survived the battle were unable to stop dancing and died of sheer exhaustion. After being deprived of its entire leadership in a single night, the kingdom collapsed into anarchy.

The magic that precipitated the disaster had another effect; it set off a series of mystical echoes, causing the assassination to be magically reenacted. For thousands of years, the revelers at King Mileas'

Midsummer's Eve Ball have replayed the events that led to their deaths. It is a dance of corpses, each one only somewhat aware of what has happened, each one forced to repeat its last hours over and over again.

Only one member of Mileas' court — a hapless jester named Frog — has a chance to break the spell. Frog stumbled on Prince Aster's plot a few hours before it happened, but was killed before he could warn anybody. His early death and his guilt over failing his king have given him a measure of freedom. He can't change what happened, but he can go look for somebody who can.

### ENTER THE PCS

The adventure begins when the characters meet the jester Frog on the road, dressed as a beggar. After testing their goodwill and dancing ability, he uses pantomime to persuade them to follow him into the woods. He leads them to the fort where the Davosians and the orcs are still celebrating their new peace treaty.

Once the characters are at the ball, the dead can react to what they do. This gives the PCs a chance to change history and free the king's court from their suffering, but to do this they must figure out Prince Aster's plot and stop it. That won't be easy, especially after thousands of years of cultural drift have left an almost insurmountable communications barrier. If the characters can't save the king, though, they too will be trapped with the dead forever.

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