

# The Language of Bones

by July Pilowsky



# Table of Contents

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Summary                                  | 2  |
| Practical Overview                       | 2  |
| Equipment                                | 2  |
| Game Structure                           | 3  |
| Tools and Mechanics for Play             | 3  |
| Credits                                  | 5  |
| Ludography                               | 6  |
| The Language of Bones Facilitator Script | 7  |
| Characters                               | 17 |
| Appendix                                 | 27 |

# Summary

Ilruvenen was once a dark and nameless wilderness ruled by monsters. Then the noble heroes of the West came in their chariots, slew the monsters, and raised from the wilderness a great nation.

This is the story told in Ilruvenen. The monster-kin, descended from the children of heroes of the West and the monsters, are an inconvenient reminder of what that story fails to explain.

The scholars of Ilruvenen sought to learn the secrets of the monsters buried beneath their bright and shining towers. The monster-kin tried to tell them, until finally they learned: the language of bones is dance.

*The Language of Bones* is a game played in pairs. One person plays a monster-kin raising a monster from their grave with the power of dance, and the other plays their long-dead ancestor. Throughout gameplay, the monster-kin are able to speak, but the monsters cannot, because the language of bones is dance. This is a game about genocide, legacy, erasure, reclamation, and the complex fractures between ancestors and descendants.

Play this game if you:

- Want to express a story and character with few or no words
- Have an interest in stories about colonialism, legacy, intergenerational trauma, and identity

## Practical Overview

**Participants:** 2-20 players, one facilitator

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Tags:** physical play, dance, horror, drama, dark fantasy, anti-colonial

**Content:** Colonialism and its enduring legacy of violence, death and undeath, abusive educational systems, possession/mind control

**Space:** Enough open space for the players to dance in, dimmable lights, lighting system with programmable colors (recommended but not necessary), sound system

**Prep:** Burial goods for the monster characters to choose from, this document printed

## Equipment

- |                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This document printed out single-sided                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers that can fill the space with sound                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burial goods (may include: masks, shields/weapons, compass, canteen, flint, art, crowns, dried flowers/herbs, bandages/splints) | <input type="checkbox"/> A device with access to the larp soundtrack that connects to the speakers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A timekeeping device                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting system with programmable colors (recommended but not necessary)  |

# Game Structure

The characters of *The Language of Bones* come in pairs: a long-dead monster and their part-monster descendant. Each pair of characters has a conflict in their perspective about monsters and the colonial legacy of the city-state of Iluvenen in the land once populated with monsters. In the larp, the monster-kin resurrect their ancestors to discover something about their past. The power begins in the hands of the monster-kin in act 1, power is shared between monster and monster-kin in act 2, and the power is in the hands of the monster in act 3.

In between acts, there are interludes that are flashbacks delving into the personal histories of the characters. The first interlude is a flashback to the monster-kin characters' childhoods, which the monsters haunt as ghosts. During this interlude, the facilitator plays a schoolteacher NPC. The second interlude is a flashback to the monsters' lives during the colonial conquest era of Iluvenen, in which the monster-kin play NPC monsters for the monster characters to confide in.

The larp ends with a concluding scene in which the monster-kin decide whether to put their monster ancestors back in their graves, or sacrifice their own lives so the monsters can live again.

## Tools and Mechanics for Play

### Soundtrack

*The Language of Bones* is a dance-based larp, so the soundtrack is essential. It not only provides rhythm for the dance, it also sets the mood of monster culture and Iluvenen culture. The soundtrack is structured as follows:

**Warm-up:** Music for the workshops as people figure out the dance mechanics and how to move in character. This is all "monster music".

**Act 1:** Monster music with building energy as the monsters rise from their graves.

**Interlude 1:** Iluvenen music, to show that this scene takes place in an Iluvenen cultural context.

**Act 2:** Fully energized monster music; the monster-kin have now acclimated somewhat.

**Interlude 2:** Quieter, sadder monster music that shows the monsters' fears and vulnerabilities.

**Act 3 and Conclusion:** Monster music with snarls, growls, fear, and horror.

You can find the entire tracklist and a link to a premade YouTube Music playlist in the Appendix.

# Lighting

A programmable lighting system is optional for this larp—all you really need is dimmed lights for atmosphere—but recommended. Lighting changes are included in the facilitator script. You may find a summary of the lighting sequence for the larp here:

**Act 1:** Yellow light with green accent.

**Interlude 1:** Red and white (brighter than Act 1, but not harsh/overwhelming)

**Act 2:** Green with yellow and blue accents

**Interlude 2:** All dark blue, as if underwater

**Act 3:** Blue (brighter shade than the interlude) with green accent

**Conclusion:** Half the space lit blue, half the space lit yellow

## Setting up the Space

The key is to create as much open space without obstacles as possible. You want space for people to move around without tripping on anything. Set up a table with the character sheets and burial goods somewhere on the side and out of the way. Set up your GM area with control of the music and lights in an unobtrusive corner where you will not impede the players' movement. If you have a programmable lighting system, distribute the lights around the edges of the dance space if they're not pre-installed in the ceiling.

## Ars Rego

Ars Rego is the dance mechanic used in Acts 1 and 3 and the Conclusion of the larp. Ars Rego means “the art of ruling.” It is a dance of power and control, with one person clearly in charge. The language of bones is dance, and Ars Rego is a command. The leader in Ars Rego leads and commands the follower through an imaginary column of force connecting the palm of the leader's raised hand to the follower's raised hand.

## Ars Vinculi

Ars Vinculi means “the art of bonding” or “the art of relating.” It is a mutual dance of reciprocity, with no one leading or following. It also includes constant physical contact between the dancers, representing the connection between the life force of the living and the bones of the dead. The dancers must always be touching each other, but it can be with as little as one fingertip.

# Facilitator Approach

This game is purposefully vague about what monsters look like. Monsters may simply be humans who have been labeled monsters, or the founders of Iluvenen might be monstrous themselves (note that the imperialists who founded Iluvenen are never referred to as humans, except in the character sheets of characters who *believe* that the imperialists are human and the monsters are not.) Keep this in mind as GM and maintain the ambiguity about who is human, who is not, and what the characters look like. However, if you want to use the term “human” when in character as the teacher in Interlude 1, that might be appropriate.

## Time Management

Two hours is a conservative estimate for this scenario, in that it usually wraps in less than that, so don’t stress too much about time. The debrief is optional. Here is a rough timetable:

|             | Time since start | Duration |
|-------------|------------------|----------|
| Workshop    | 0:00 - 0:40      | 40 min   |
| Act 1       | 0:40 - 0:47      | 7 min    |
| Interlude 1 | 0:47 - 0:56      | 9 min    |
| Act 2       | 0:56 - 1:07      | 11 min   |
| Interlude 2 | 1:07 - 1:14      | 7 min    |
| Act 3       | 1:14 - 1:23      | 9 min    |
| Conclusion  | 1:23 - 1:27      | 4 min    |
| Debrief     | 1:27 - 1:37      | 10 min   |

## Credits

### The Language of Bones

by July Pilowsky

### Images

Courtesy of [Make a Scene MN](#)

### Fonts

Westsac by Chank Diesel

Transat by Greg Shuttters

### Feedback and Ideas

Jon Cole

Margo Gray

Kassandra Tomaras

# Ludography

[\*Bjergtaget\*](#) by Maria & Jeppe Bergmann-Hamming

[\*Glamorous Night\*](#) by Jon Cole

[\*Velveteen Heart\*](#) by Jon Cole

[\*The Deep Forest\*](#) by Mark Diaz Truman and Avery Alder

[\*The Abortionists\*](#) by Jon Cole and Kelley Vanda

# The Language of Bones Facilitator Script

## Guide to Formatting

*Instructions to the facilitator are italicized.*

Things to read aloud or paraphrase in your own words are unformatted.

Reminders and pieces of advice for the facilitator are in breakout boxes.

## Equipment

- ☐ Characters printed out, single sided
- ☐ Burial goods for the monsters, ideally equal or more than the number of players
- ☐ Speakers that can fill the game space with sound
- ☐ Device with the playlist that can connect to the speakers
- ☐ Lighting system with programmable colors (recommended but not necessary)

## ApproXimate Timetable

|             | Time since start | Duration |
|-------------|------------------|----------|
| Workshop    | 0:00 - 0:40      | 40 min   |
| Act 1       | 0:40 - 0:47      | 7 min    |
| Interlude 1 | 0:47 - 0:56      | 9 min    |
| Act 2       | 0:56 - 1:07      | 11 min   |
| Interlude 2 | 1:07 - 1:14      | 7 min    |
| Act 3       | 1:14 - 1:23      | 9 min    |
| Conclusion  | 1:23 - 1:27      | 4 min    |
| Debrief     | 1:27 - 1:37      | 10 min   |

## Set Up

1. *Set up the space for play. Position the speakers to fill the room with sound, connect your device, and test the setup. If you have a lighting system, set up the lights and test the setup. Have a table or similar for the character sheets and burial goods. Create as much open space for movement as possible. Recruit players as needed to help you.*

# Overview

2. Welcome to *The Language of Bones*. In this game, you will play either a long-dead monster rising from their grave, or a monster-kin, a descendant of monsters living in the city-state of Iluvenen that was once the monsters' domain.
3. The characters come in pairs of one monster and one monster-kin. There is a fundamental conflict about the legacy of Iluvenen and the nature of monsters and their descendants written into each pair of characters. In the first act, the monster-kin will raise their monster ancestor from the dead. Over the course of the larp, this conflict between monster and monster-kin will surface, escalate, evolve, and reach a crisis point in the conclusion, when the monster-kin must choose whether to put the monster back in the grave or sacrifice their life so the monster can live again.
4. The way we play out the themes of the game is primarily through movement. In the present, monster-kin can speak, but monsters cannot. There will be one clearly marked flashback in which the monsters can speak. However, even though there is some verbal communication in this larp, the main way we express the story is nonverbal.

## Safety

5. Because this game is primarily nonverbal, we will use the double-tap check-in method. If you want to check in with someone, double tap them on the shoulder. Please double-tap from the front so as not to startle. You double-tap back on the shoulder to indicate that all is well. If the person does NOT double-tap back, assume that something is up and invite them to the side, out of the way of the dancing, to find out what.
6. You can also use the double-tap check-in to express a need that you have. Double-tap someone to get their attention, wait for the double-tap back acknowledgment, and indicate your need. There will be music playing throughout the larp so it might be hard to hear each other talk. Either indicate your needs with gestures, like a sweep of the arm to show you need personal space, or gesture them to the side so you can hear each other talk.
7. Remember, unless something has gone wrong and you need to communicate that, double-tap back when someone double-taps you.
8. Another safety tool: if, during the workshop, you have questions about movement and nonverbal communication, raise your hand to indicate that you would like the GM to come over and help. Indicate whether you are okay with being touched in order to show you the movements. The GM will assume by default that you do not want to be touched.

# How Monsters and Monster-kin Move

## Dealing with Dance Anxiety

Some people have anxiety about dancing in front of other people. If you think that this may be an issue with your players, you can mitigate this anxiety by a) calling it “movement” or “physical play” or “nonverbal communication” instead of dancing, b) respecting people’s boundaries by asking before you intervene with advice in people’s dances during the workshop, and especially before you touch anyone.

9. Now we’re going to start moving.
10. *Put on the music for the workshops, the songs by Danheim on the playlist.*
11. Have you heard the expression “dance like nobody’s watching”? I want you to dance like everybody’s watching. Dance like you’re not sure you’re allowed to be dancing, like there’s a correct way to do it and nobody told you what it is.
12. *Once everyone has danced awkwardly and stiffly for a couple of minutes, pause the music or crank the volume down and say: When you dance like this to monster music, you are dancing like a monster-kin.*
13. Now I want you to think of the music your body always responds to, whether that’s your heart beating faster, tears pricking your eyes, or a rhythm tapping your toes. When this song comes on, it’s a familiar call that your body answers. Hold that music in your mind.
14. I am about to put the music back on. I want you to try to respond to this music the way you respond to your music. The one your body knows so well. Dance and feel those sensations in your body.
15. *Turn the volume back up or resume the Danheim music.*
16. *Wait until a good stopping point, like the end of a song, and say: When you dance you like this to monster music, you are dancing like a monster.*
17. None of this means that monster-kin characters must always move the first way or that monsters must always move the second way. Rather, you can use this as a guide to express your character’s comfort, ease, and familiarity with monster culture at any given moment.

## Ars Vinculi

18. Ars Vinculi means “the art of bonding” or “the art of relating.” It is a mutual dance of reciprocity, with no one leading or following. It also includes constant physical contact between the dancers, representing the connection between the life force of the living and the bones of the dead. We will use Ars Vinculi in Act 2.
19. As a heads up, this dance involves physical touch, but it is pre-negotiated and you don’t have to touch with more than a fingertip if you don’t want to.

20. Find a dance partner. Hold both your hands up with palms facing out.
21. *Put on one of the Danheim songs for the workshop.*
22. Dance to the music while mirroring each other's movements. Keep your hands up and palms out.
23. Slowly bring your hands closer without touching.
24. When you're ready, touch one fingertip to your partner's.
25. You are free to keep mirror dancing however you like, with your hands in whatever position you like, as long as you keep your fingertips connected.
26. *Pause the music and say:* Switch partners. With your new partner, discuss your touch boundaries.
27. With these touch boundaries in mind, mirror-dance with your partner. The rule is that you have to have at least one point of touch contact with your partner at all times, be it a fingertip or something else.
28. You can change your point of contact by touching in two places at once and switching from one to the other. For example, if you want to switch from fingertips as your point of contact to elbows as point of contact, bring your forearms together from fingertips to elbows, then separate your fingertips and connect at the elbow instead.
29. Switch partners, discuss touch boundaries again, and try it again.

## Ars Rego

30. Ars Rego means "the art of ruling." It is a dance of power and control, with one person clearly in charge. The language of bones is dance, and Ars Rego is a command. We will use Ars Rego in Act 1, Act 3, and the conclusion.
31. Pair up with someone you haven't worked with yet.
32. Now you will learn the basic movement of Ars Rego, which is based on leading and following roles. Choose one of you to be the leader and one to be the follower, at least for now.
33. Leaders, raise a hand, palm out and vertical. Followers, press your hand against it, palms touching. Lean into each other a little and feel the tension and connection. Arms should have tension but not be locked at the elbow.
34. Leaders, move the pair of you in some direction or other by moving. Followers, you should be able to feel the movement through the leader's arm.
35. The leader is always responsible for the follower's safety, especially when they are moving backwards. That's a lot of trust and a real source of risk. Be a guardian of the trust the person following places in you, and be aware of their surroundings.
36. Leaders, move back and forth. The follower should follow without breaking contact. You can move around the room and change direction. *Give players 30 seconds tops, as this is very simple.*

37. Switch leader and follower. *Another 30 seconds of practice.*
38. *Demonstrate leading with an invisible column of air between you.* Now try leading and following without your palms actually touching. You should feel that connection between you, as if you're leaning into each other. Whatever distance between your palms you start with, maintain that same distance.
39. *Demonstrate that leaders can make a follower come closer by turning their hand and doing a beckoning motion towards themselves.* Leaders cannot push followers away, only bring them closer. Establish a connection with each other from far away and practice coming closer while maintaining the connection between your palms.
40. Leaders can dismiss a follower by dropping the hand, breaking the control, then reconnect from farther away. *Demonstrate this motion.* Switch leader and follower and practice this with your partner.
41. Leaders, don't forget to watch your follower's back.
42. Everyone, switch to a new partner. Practice leading, following, come closer, and breaking and reforming connections.
43. Switch roles and practice again.
44. *Pause the music.* You now know all of the mechanics you need to play. When you return from a break, we will choose characters, build their world together, practice non-verbal communication, then go directly into play. Before we take our five minute break, what questions do you have about the mechanics of play?
45. During break is a great time to approach me privately with questions or accessibility needs. We will start picking characters when the break ends.
46. *Take a five minute break. Don't worry if you don't have much break time yourself; during one of the longer acts of the game you can sneak out to pee pretty easily.*

## Characters

47. Choose someone you danced with during the workshops to be your partner for the game. Decide which one of you will be the monster and which will be the monster-kin. I will note that if you are an inexperienced dancer, you may find it easier to play a monster-kin, because they can use verbal as well as nonverbal communication. Once you have decided, pick out a pair of characters to play from the ones provided.
48. If you're playing a monster, choose one of the burial goods I've provided. This is an object that you were buried with. You may use this object during the game however you like.
49. *If there are 8 or fewer players, direct all monsters to group up and all monster-kin to group up. If there are more than 8 players, then tell everyone to look below the name of their character. They will see a group name. Tell them to find their subgroup within the monsters or monster-kin.*

50. *Once everyone is in their group:* Decide on 3 aspects of your culture and how you carry this in your body and your movement. If you can't think of a way for this cultural aspect to be made manifest in your physicality, then discard it and come up with something else.
51. *Put the Danheim music for the workshop back on.* Let's try moving in character to the music, now that you have one. How does your character move differently from you? How do they respond to monster music?

### **The Body Language Workshop**

There is a tendency for players to overthink the body language section. You can break the deadlock by suggesting that it can be as simple as "direct eye contact is aggression" or "a slow blink is trust". Make sure players know that body language can go beyond gestures like waves and curtsies. They can come up with more general norms if they like, such as avoiding eye contact as a sign of respect, or smiling with teeth to indicate aggression.

## **Non-Verbal Communication**

52. We are going to take a moment to practice non-verbal communication. Find your dance partner for the larp. Discuss your boundaries around touch so you can dance and communicate nonverbally in a respectful way you'll both be comfortable with.
53. Monster-kin, start talking about your plans next week (if you don't want to share your real plans, make up some fake ones.) Monsters, you know by the power of prophecy that your partner's plans will lead them to certain doom. You have to express this to your partner nonverbally, within the touch boundaries you discussed.

## **Structure of the Game**

54. Before we play, we're going to review the structure of the game so you know what to expect.
55. In act 1, the monster-kin use Ars Rego to resurrect the monsters.
56. In interlude 1, we flash back to a time from the monster-kin's childhood, which the monsters will haunt as ghosts.
57. In act 2, the monster-kin and monsters deepen their connection with Ars Vinculi.
58. In interlude 2, we flashback to a time from before the monsters died. Monster-kin will play NPC monsters for the PC monsters to talk to. Monsters can talk here.
59. In act 3, the monsters take control of the monster-kin with Ars Rego.
60. In the conclusion, the monster-kin either allow the monsters to drain their life force and live again, or they take control of Ars Rego and put the monsters back in the ground.

# Act One

61. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the lights to yellow with a green accent. If not, simply dim the lights.*
62. The monsters start out lying on the floor, where they are buried. The monster-kin kneel at the monsters' feet, and beseech the grave: "Bones of my ancestors, speak!" They then use the Ars Rego mechanic to slowly raise the monster from the grave. This act will last 7 minutes. Monster-kin may speak; monsters may not.
63. I will [clap/ring a bell/flash the lights] when there is one minute left in this act.
64. *Play "Anoana" then "Hakkerskaldyr" by Heilung. Let the players experience the game uninterrupted unless there is some threat to everyone's safety that you have to stop the game for.*

# Interlude One

65. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the lights to red and white. The lights should be brighter than in Act One. If not, simply brighten the lights a little.*
66. In this interlude, we are not dancing. We are having a flashback. The monster-kin play their characters as elementary school kids. I, the GM, am your Iluvenen teacher. Monsters, you are ghosts haunting the classroom. The rest of us can't sense you except perhaps as a strange shiver in the room, but feel free to react to what's going on. Today we are talking about the founding of Iluvenen. Monster-kin, play your younger selves and raise your hands to ask the teacher questions.
67. *Play "Oakmoss", "Miss Blennerhassett," and "The Milky Way Over Ratlinghope" by Bibio and get into character as the Iluvenen teacher.*

## Playing the Teacher

You are playing a Iluvenen teacher who genuinely believes that these monster-kin children are very fortunate to live in Iluvenen and are much better off than the monsters were before. Your goal is to instill a sense of belonging and pride in the children. Feel free to improvise about the history of Iluvenen; it's true to the setting if the teacher gets lots of things wrong about monsters, so don't worry about accuracy. If the children bring up the violence of the founding, tell them that it's very bad that the monsters and the charioteers from the West fought and so many people died, but Iluvenen is peaceful now and a beautiful place to live. When it's time to wrap up the interlude, tell them that their history lesson is over and it's time to gather their things and go home.

If you want some more detailed talking points for when you're playing the teacher, here are some you can use:

- The heroes of the West fled the tyrannical rule of a mad king and found shelter in this land.

- The monsters lived in a dense, inhospitable wilderness, but then the heroes from the West tamed it, and now we all get to live together in this beautiful city.
- It's really sad that the monsters and the heroes from the West couldn't just put aside their differences and get along. But now we can all do better by sharing and being kind to each other.
- Everyone belongs in Iluvenen. You all belong here too. Don't let anyone let you feel anything less than proud to live here.
- I think it's such a beautiful thing that the descendants of monsters and the descendants of heroes can all learn and play together.
- Are there humans who call you names because you're a monster-kin? That's very mean. If anyone in this school acts like that, let me know and I'll tell them that in this school we treat everyone fairly.
- Yes, there was a war back in those days. It was terrible, and lots of people died. But there's peace in Iluvenen now. You don't have to worry.
- Aren't you so glad you get to live here in Iluvenen? Tomorrow we're going to learn about some of the wonderful music the heroes brought with them from the West.
- Oh, me? My ancestors weren't warriors or charioteers, they were just lowly servants. But now my family has a much better life here than they had back in the West.
- *If someone tries to delve into something specific like a refugee camp you can say "You'll learn about that when you're older. You don't have to live in an awful place like that now."*

## Act Two

68. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the colors to green with blue and yellow accents. The lights should be about as bright as they were in Act One. If not, simply dim the lights to the level they were in Act One.*
69. The monster and the monster-kin deepen their connection with Ars Vinculi. This act ends when the monster feels that they understand their situation: they are dead, the world they knew is gone, and one of their descendants has come to confront their past. At the end of Act 2 the monster raises their hand, turning the Ars Rego mechanic around on their descendant. This act will last 11 minutes. Monster-kin may speak; monsters may not.
70. I will [clap/ring a bell/flash the lights] when there is one minute left in this act.
71. Play "Futhorck" by Heilung.

# Interlude Two

72. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the colors to all dark blue, as if underwater. If not, leave the lights unchanged.*
73. There is a tradition among the monsters. When they are in mortal peril, and may be about to die, they confess their deepest secrets to total strangers. It unburdens them so they can go to their deaths light and free. Monsters, this is a flashback to a confession you made before your death. You may speak. Monster-kin, you play a monster who doesn't know anyone here.
74. Monsters, feel the secrets in your body. Where are they? Touch the places where they live. When you're ready, find a stranger played by a monster-kin to confess to. As you confess, pull the secret out of your body, shape it with your hands, and offer it to the stranger. Monster-kin, accept the secret from a stranger. You can respond verbally if you want to, but you can also accept it in silence. When you are done, walk away.
75. Monsters, if you feel you have more than one secret, you can confess again if you like.
76. *Play "ENN" by Eivør.*

# Act Three

77. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the colors to blue (a lighter shade than in Interlude 2) with a green accent. If not, leave the lights unchanged.*
78. We return to Ars Rego, this time with the monster in control of their descendant. This is the monster's chance to use their descendant's very flesh to communicate whatever message they want to pass on. This act will last 8 minutes. Monster-kin may speak; monsters may not.
79. I will [clap/ring a bell/flash the lights] when there is one minute left in this act.
80. *Play "Upp Úr Øskuni" by Eivør and "Svanrand" by Heilung.*

# Conclusion

81. *If you have a programmable lighting system, set the colors to half blue, half yellow. If not, leave the lights unchanged.*
82. The monster-kin either sacrifices their life force to resurrect their ancestor, or puts their ancestor back in the grave. If the monster-kin puts the monster back in the grave, they signal this by raising their free hand that's not being controlled by the monster with Ars Rego. The monster must then clap their hands, then raise their other hand to be controlled. The monster-kin then uses Ars Rego to put the monster back in the ground. If the monster-kin does not take control this way, then the monster uses Ars Rego to act out draining the monster-kin's life force, in whatever way makes sense to the monster. The ending lasts 4 minutes. Monster-kin may speak; monsters may not.

84. I will [clap/ring a bell/flash the lights] when there is one minute left in this act.
85. *Play "Norupo" by Heilung.*
86. *When the song is over:* Thank you for playing, everyone. Let's take a five minute break before the optional debrief. If you don't want to debrief, this break is a perfect time to leave.

## Debrief

87. Let's go around and introduce ourselves by our real names and pronouns if you like. Also say how you're feeling right now. If you haven't already returned your burial goods, do so when you introduce yourself. You can pass on the feelings if you want. I'll start and we'll go to the left.
88. If you played a monster character, what do you wish they could have said? If you played a monster-kin, what do you wish someone had said to them?
89. Bleed is a phenomenon in larp where feelings or experiences can seep from your real life into the game or from the game into real life. Because this game grapples with feelings of legacy, intergenerational trauma, and feeling othered by your society, it's totally normal to experience some bleed after playing this game. For many people, talking with your co-players after the game is a way to remind yourself who you and your co-players are in your regular lives.
90. That's it for our debrief. Now we can all hang out and talk while we clean up the space together.

# Characters

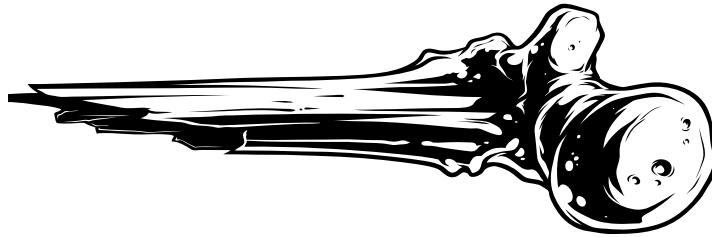
## Peldir (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Züshvöwo

**Group:** C

**About You:** As a monster-kin, you have always been told that as a monster, you have no honor and no morals of your own; they can only come from the grand philosophical and ethical tradition of Iluvenen. You feel humiliated and abject at the idea of needing to receive your moral code from the very people who despise you. You have come to raise your ancestor with the hope of learning the ways that monsters have been honorable, so you can adopt an ethic you can believe in.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** You went looking in scholarly texts for the knowledge, and resented that you had to learn to raise your ancestor from scholars of Iluvenen, who have no right to do it.



## Züshvöwo (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Peldir

**Clan:** Ngaysh

**About You:** Your people, the Ngaysh, believe that their ties to the land give them great power, and so they must be very cautious in how they use it. There is a profound code of honor about the use of violence and coercion towards others. You were an outsider among the Ngaysh because you rejected this code completely. The charioteers were coming from the West, with blade and flame. What use was honor when people and land are under such threat? You abandoned Ngaysh ethics, abandoned your friends, to fight. And, apparently, die.

**Location of Your Grave:** A historic battlefield where many of the Iluvenen who died have marked graves. Your grave has no marker.

# Amatheden (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Wuzash

**Group:** C

**About You:** You have risen through the ranks of the Iluvenen military, famed among your peers for your martial prowess. Your parents told you that you come from a lineage of fearsome warrior monsters, which explains your accomplishments. But you've noticed that your Iluvenen peers have risen faster in the military than you even when they're less skilled, which means you have to get even better to be recognized. You raise your ancestor in the hope that they will teach you the warrior traditions of the monsters that begat you.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** Your parents told you a legend passed down in your family about how to do it, and you decided to give it a try.



# Wuzash (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Amatheden

**Clan:** Ngaysh

**About You:** Your people, the Ngaysh, believe that their ties to the land give them great power, and so they must be very cautious in how they use it. You once violated your people's code of honor, lashing out against a friend in anger, and to atone for it, you retreated into life as a sacred hermit, holding yourself to the highest standards of honor. You repaid your debt to society by planting and cultivating trees for future generations, bringing flourishing into the world instead of violence and pain.

**Location of Your Grave:** At the foot of a great old tree.

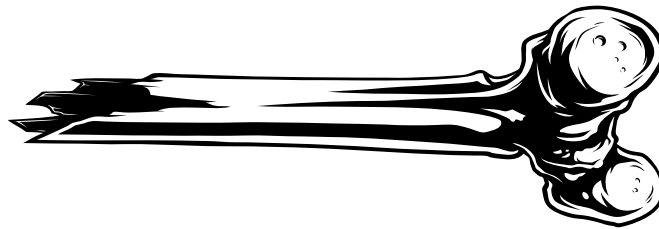
# Nemiril (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Ayealí

**Group:** B

**About You:** You know you're monster-kin, of course, but you don't believe that says anything meaningful about you. Whatever some might say, you are no different from any of the other scholars at the Learned Temple of Iluvenen. You are a well-established historian of Iluvenen and pride yourself on your scholarly objectivity. You have come to use a novel magical technique to uncover new truths of the era of Iluvenen's rise from the wilderness, and you will report your findings faithfully.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** You are a scholar on the subject.



# Ayealí (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Nemiril

**Clan:** Gírasagáku

**About You:** Your people, the Gírasagáku, believed they could negotiate a peace with the charioteers from the West. Your parents were among the diplomats. The invaders killed them and sent home their heads, and you swore they would never know peace. Even if you died fighting off the invaders, your children and grandchildren would take up the mantle and make them pay in blood. You waged ruthless guerrilla warfare, poisoning wells and torching settlements. You regret nothing.

**Location of Your Grave:** A site known to be a mass grave of monsters.

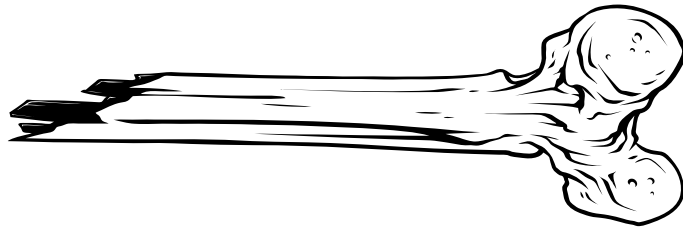
# Gitsa (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Mâtsauta

**Group:** A

**About You:** You live in a poor village on the outskirts of Iluvenen where monster-kin hold onto the old ways of their clans as best they can. You know that you are not just monster-kin, but Gîrasagáku, one of the clans that held territory here before Iluvenen stole it away. But you know that there are Gîrasagáku traditions you have lost, despite your ancestors' best efforts. You have come to raise your ancestor in the hopes that you can remember what was forgotten.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** You have pieced together how to do it from different oral traditions you heard from your elders.



# Mâtsauta (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Gitsa

**Clan:** Gîrasagáku

**About You:** The invaders slaughtered your village when you were a child, and you went from there to a refugee camp that was a mix of many clans. You never got to learn the ways of your clan from your elders, go through the coming of age ceremony, or even really learn your language; you speak the refugee camp pidgin. You died as a teenager when a chariot-riding wizard spell-bombed the refugee camp. You suppose your baby must have survived, since your descendant found you here.

**Location of Your Grave:** A fallow field that was not known to be a mass grave of monsters until it was assessed for building aqueduct tunnels.

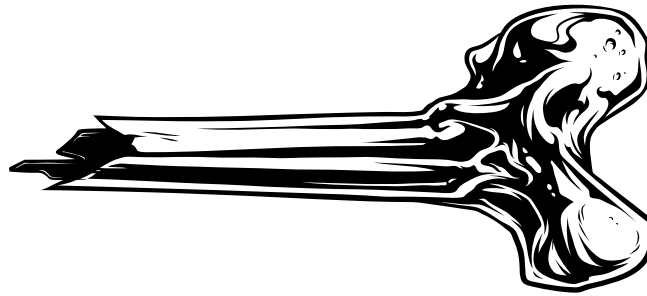
# Thurinith (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Jugarujaukj

**Group:** B

**About You:** You strive to be an ideal citizen of Iluvenen, the city you love. You're glad you are fortunate enough to live in this beautiful, learned place. Even though some people believe you don't belong, much less working in the government, you know in your heart that you do. You wouldn't want to talk to some barbaric ancestor of yours, except that your Iluvenen lover is very curious about monsters and begged you to find out about your ancestor and tell them everything.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** Your lover, a wealthy dilettante, gifted you a book on the subject.



# Jugarujaukj (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Thurinith

**Clan:** Hraraguv

**About You:** You were a great storyteller of the Hraraguv, known for your deep listening, deep remembering, and knowing your audience. When the invaders started rounding up monster children into their schools, you acted to make sure your stories would live on. You took as many students as you could, and told them of the Kind Thunder, the Dagger's Eye, and the Hollow in the Throat. Whether they knew it or not, future monsters would need their stories to survive.

**Location of Your Grave:** A crumbling old monster graveyard somewhere on the vast property of an Iluvenen knight.

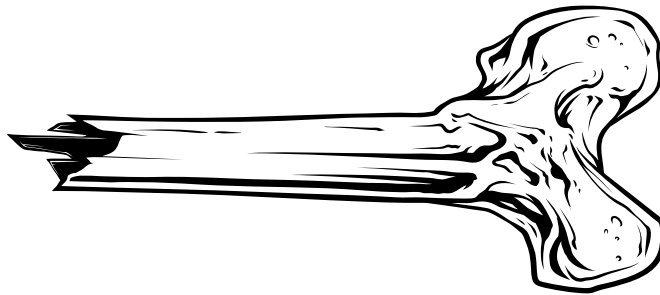
# Istor (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Mbautsu

**Group:** C

**About You:** You just reached the age of majority, and on your birthday, your parents told you that you had been adopted from a monster-kin orphanage. Apparently, the adoption fees are cheaper. You have always felt different from your cousins and your classmates, but you never knew why. Now, a million strange details of your life make sense—but nothing else does. You want to go back to living as a normal person and forget about all this. But you also want to understand what all of this means. Maybe your ancestor can help.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** A scholar who studies Iluvenen history is hiring monster-kin with the idea that it might be easier for them to resurrect monsters. You're expected to report your findings after this.



# Mbautsu (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Istor

**Clan:** Keushyse

**About You:** When you were 15, you were taken from your loving clan in the chaos of a battle and forced to work for a great house in the growing city of Iluvenen. You attracted a lot of unwelcome attention, and the attention made you realize you could pass for an Iluvenen. You learned the language and culture, then ran away from the house and reinvented yourself. You could get real work after that. You were treated like a person. Then one of the spoiled brats of the great house recognized you and revealed your identity. You were hunted down by your new “friends.” You died out in the forest of exposure as you fled.

**Location of Your Grave:** A cairn in the forest outside the city.

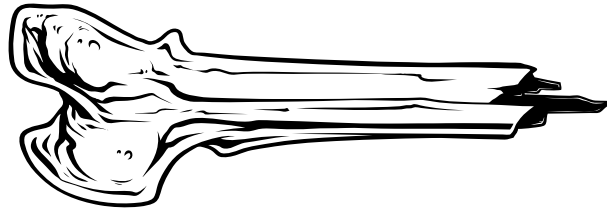
# Sîdhel (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Hrihvauk

**Group:** C

**About You:** You come from a mixed human and monster-kin family, and whenever there was any mischief in your home, you and your monster-kin cousins would be blamed. Whenever you complained, someone would bring up your father, a nasty deadbeat who walked out on you, and say they were just trying to make up for his bad influence. As an adult, you've noticed a lot of monster-kin criminals. But you also love your monster-kin cousins. Is it really true that monster-kin have destructive impulses? Or can you prove that monsters were once heroes and healers, too? You're on a quest to find out.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** You are a student, and did some research in the libraries of the scholarly towers.



# Hrihvauk (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Sîdhel

**Clan:** Gîrasagáku

**About You:** The proud blood of the Gîrasagáku flows in your veins, giving you the favor of the gods to enact their will in this realm. You did so with pride, making manifest the glory of Gereh. Even the fiercest of monsters cowered before you as you razed their homes, until one day you met your match. One of your spouses killed you, cursing you for a traitor for fighting monsters instead of the upstart charioteers from the West. But you know that if the monsters had united beneath your banner, you could have defeated the invaders from the West. Your descendant at your grave could be a great warlord, too.

**Location of Your Grave:** A traditional Gîrasagáku graveyard, crumbling and overgrown in a swamp.

# Hzense (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Sibaliyon

**Group:** A

**About You:** You are a proud descendant of the Keushyse clan. No matter what Iluvenen tries to take from you, they can't take your dignity. Your family is poor, but you hold your heads high because you know you are descended from Sibaliyon, a great hero who fought the invaders. Sibaliyon kept a longhouse as a shelter for the Keushyse, feeding and defending them. In times of trouble, you take courage from Sibaliyon and try to do as they once did. Your eldest child now has an Iluvenen partner who treats them terribly, and you're not sure what to do, so you turn to Sibaliyon for guidance.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** Your best friend knows many of the old ways of the Keushyse clan, and they showed you how you might ask Sibaliyon for aid.



# Sibaliyon (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Hzense

**Clan:** Keushyse

**About You:** In another era, perhaps you would have been a great credit to the Keushyse clan. As it was, you tried to run a household in a war zone, and you mostly failed. When Uncle was sick and needed to stay warm, you couldn't stock the fireplace fast enough to save him. The children were so hungry that little Qaiseuk ate poisonous mushrooms in desperation. In the end, you bound yourself into service to a charioteer lord so you could send money back home, helping the very people destroying the Keushyse. It was only when a Keushyse warrior band attacked your lord that you finally found the courage to join them. You face your descendant with shame.

**Location of Your Grave:** The site of a historic battlefield from the founding of Iluvenen.

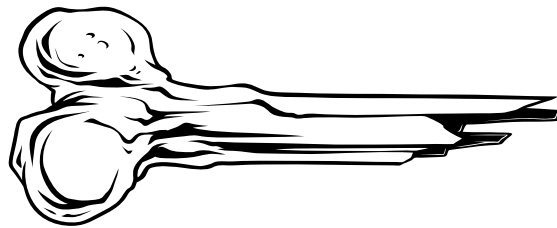
# Amrû (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Zezeoka

**Group:** B

**About You:** You grew up in an orphanage and have no idea who your family might be, though your features mark you as obviously monster-kin. The clerics who ran the orphanage all saw you as a future criminal, no matter how well you behaved. You're not a criminal; you work the river docks, mostly with other monster-kin who come from real families, so even among them you feel pathetic. All your childhood you tried to be good, but none of it will ever earn you a family or a history. You don't see how a dead monster could ever love you, but at least it could show you where you come from.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** One of your work buddies swore up and down that you look just like her friends in the Leleopol Clan. When you expressed doubt, she told you where to find the traditional Leleopol burial ground, and how to raise the dead to see for yourself.



# Zezeoka (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Amrû

**Clan:** Leleopol

**About You:** You and your spouses once had five beautiful children. Kätir died by a stray arrow when the attack came to your lodge from the west. Kemi joined a raiding party to repel the invaders and never came home. Little Boroq took ill in the refugee camp and there was no medicine for her. You, your spouses, and Liuka were forced to build encampments for the invaders, and an unsteady scaffold fell on Liuka's unprotected head. After many years in the refugee camp, Fuwät went off to the growing settlement of Iluvenen to seek eir fortune, and you never saw em again. Perhaps for the sake of the children of the refugee camp, you should have lived, but instead you died of heartbreak.

**Location of Your Grave:** A humble traditional Leleopol burial ground near the site of the refugee camp.

# Tiuq (monster-kin)

**Monster:** Omtanis

**Group:** A

**About You:** You have a large and loving family, but your baba fell in love with an invader, who claimed to love them, but hated you and your younger sisters' Leleopol faces. Your baba was too bewitched by your father's wealth and power to protect you. At age 15, you ran away to live with your grandparents in a monster-kin enclave outside Iluvenen. There, your life changed course. You're poor, but you feel so free. Your life revolves around your monster-kin neighbors and the sight of an invader fills you with dread. You wish to speak with your ancestor as you develop a new philosophy to empower your people.

**How You Learned to Raise the Dead:** Your aunties taught you, and pointed you toward an ancestral grave.



# Omtanis (monster)

**Monster-kin:** Tiuq

**Clan:** Leleopol

**About You:** You were born in a refugee camp, and when you turned 10 you were put to work mending clothes for the invaders. That was the first time you met people from the west who weren't soldiers: bed warmers and servants who had never asked to come to your land. They were not so different from the Leleopol. A seamster, Tenion, became like a father to you, even spoke Leleo with you. You fell in love with his youngest, and started a tailory in Iluvenen, and together you raised money and made clothes for the refugee camp every week. You died with some guilt in your heart, still. Was it wrong of you to live in Iluvenen? Did you do enough for your people?

**Location of Your Grave:** Beside your lover in an Iluvenen cemetery.

# Appendix

## Burial Goods

The GM brings objects to serve as burial goods, items buried with the dead. When the players choose characters, the ones playing monsters choose something that they either had on hand when they died or that was deliberately placed in the grave with them. I encourage creativity and resourcefulness from the GM on this, but here are some suggestions:

- Masks
- Shields/weapons
- Basic first aid (bandages, splints)
- Beads/jewelry
- Survival gear (compass, canteen)
- Art/pictures
- Crowns
- Dried herbs/flowers
- Figurines
- Bottles / drinking canteens

Monsters can incorporate their burial goods into dance however they like.

## Music

### **For practicing dance in workshops:**

Ivar's Revenge by Danheim

Ulfhednar by Danheim

Berserkir by Danheim

Runar by Danheim

Blodfest by Danheim

Tyrting by Danheim

### **Act 1:**

"Anoana" by Heilung

"Hakkerskaldyr" by Heilung

### **Interlude 1:**

"Oakmoss" by Bibio

"Miss Blennerhassett" by Bibio

"The Milky Way Over Ratlinghope" by Bibio

**Act 2:**

“Futhorck” by Heilung

**Interlude 2:**

“ENN” by Eivør

**Act 3:**

Upp Úr Øskuni by Eivør

Svanrand by Heilung

**Ending:**

“Norupo” by Heilung

**Playlist on YouTube Music:** [https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEcdqeElsgHRI\\_AWofBmwjg-bgwpiB4MNt&si=P3gfYo1uYN0suAZv](https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEcdqeElsgHRI_AWofBmwjg-bgwpiB4MNt&si=P3gfYo1uYN0suAZv)

# Lighting

**Act 1:** Yellow light with green accent. Open the action with fog machine.

**Interlude 1:** Red and white (brighter than Act 1, but not harsh/overwhelming)

**Act 2:** Green with yellow and blue accents

**Interlude 2:** All dark blue, as if underwater

**Act 3:** Blue (brighter shade than the interlude) with green accent

**Ending:** Half the space lit blue, half the space lit yellow