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## What the Sea Wants

*Survival horror at sea! As captain of the pirate ship North Wind, you've just made a lucky score-but the treasure came contaminated with a deadly fungus. Rally your crew, stop the infection, and stay alive long enough to reach harbor.*

### Script Excerpt: The First Battle Wound

*In this scene, a young deck hand has been wounded. You can either have a serious conversation about the dangers of a life of piracy or a silly conversation where you teach him to swear like a sailor. This is a sample flow demonstrating two possible pathways; adaptive text has been omitted for clarity. Consult my [online portfolio](#) for a flowchart of the full scene.*

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*In the sickbay, your surgeon, Ibrahim, is examining the saber slash across the new guy's shoulder. The lascar brothers, who should be busy loading cargo but are instead in here where they have no business being, slap him on the back.*

**BLUE:** It's your first battle wound, Pavão!

*Pavão blushes and looks down.*

**PAVÃO:** It's hardly anything. Just a scratch.

**NAVIN:** You're a real pirate now. It's a rite of passage, your first wound. Mine was a shard of wood that got blown off the deck, and his was...

**BLUE:** ...Mine was when you hammered a nail into my foot.

**PAVÃO:** Wait, how did...?

**NAVIN:** It's a long story. We'll tell you sometime.

*Ibrahim takes out his suture kit.*

**IBRAHIM:** A couple of stitches and you'll be right as rain. Now answer me this, Pavão: Two men play three games of chess. They each win the same number of games, and there are no draws. How is this possible?

*You've heard this one before. You could jump in with an answer.*

**PLAYER:** They died during the third game.

*Ibrahim gives you a look of annoyance.*

**IBRAHIM:** Stop interrupting my riddles! Pavão hasn't heard them yet.

**PAVÃO:** I don't know.

**IBRAHIM:** They weren't playing each other.

**PAVÃO:** What does that have to do with—ow!

*Ibrahim finishes the stitch.*

**First branch: A serious conversation**

**PLAYER:** Ibrahim is the master of distraction.  
He could have your arm off before you noticed.

*Pavão's eyes get big.*

**PAVÃO:** Has...that happened?

*Belatedly you remember how young this kid is and how little he knows about his new occupation.*

**PLAYER:** Look, kid, this is a rough life. I'm not going to lie to you.  
I've lost good men and women. So many...

*Your voice catches in your throat at the flood of faces that enter your mind.*

**Second branch: A silly conversation**

**PLAYER:** "Ow?" Is that the best you can do?

**BLUE:** Yeah, you're a sailor now! Sound like it!

**PAVÃO:** My family is very religious, I don't really know any...

**PLAYER:** How about "Devil take you, you whoreson?"

*Pavão's eyes widen.*

**PAVÃO:** I can't say that to my doctor!

**IBRAHIM:** Son, as long as you don't move, you can call me anything you like. I promise there's nothing you can say about my mother that I haven't already heard.

**BLUE:** Give it a shot, Pavão! "May donkeys piss on you, you half-drowned sea rat!"

**PLAYER:** "Go shit in the sea, you thrice-damned landlubber!"

**NAVIN:** "May ants crawl up your ass, you fleabitten dog!"

*Blue puts an affectionate arm around Navin's shoulders.*

**BLUE:** I'm so proud of you, baby brother. They grow up so fast.

*By this point Pavão is doubled over weeping with laughter.*

**IBRAHIM:** Hey, stop making him laugh! He needs to hold still!

**PLAYER:** Sorry.

*Ibrahim bites off the thread and gives Pavão a pat on the shoulder.*

**IBRAHIM:** There you go. Good as new. And now I have a riddle for you, Captain: Who has blue eyes and won't climb the rigging for at least two days?

**PLAYER:** I get it, I'll keep Pavão on light duty for a few days.

**IBRAHIM:** Good. We don't want him busting those stitches.

*You head back out onto the deck.*

## Script Excerpt: The Urchins

*In this scene, one of the kids has stolen something, but who it is and what they stole depends on your previous choices. This is a sample flow demonstrating one possible pathway; adaptive text has been omitted for clarity. Consult my [online portfolio](#) for a flowchart of the full scene and adaptive text.*

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*The cabin urchins come tumbling out from under one of the spare boats, bruises on their knees, inexplicable dirt on their faces. The big one is Nat. The small one is Toby. You assume they're siblings, but really, it's anyone's guess. They look put out.*

**NAT:** We wanted to help board the *Endeavour*.

**TOBY:** Yeah, you never let us fight!

**PLAYER:** You're too little. You'd get hurt.

**NAT:** I am not. I'm almost five feet!

**TOBY:** I'm little but I'm tough.

*Toby wipes his runny nose.*

*They're trying to distract you from a very important fact: Usually there's three of them.*

**PLAYER:** One. Two. One...Two.

*You count the urchins very pointedly. They look up at you innocently as though they have no idea what you're talking about.*

**PLAYER:** All right, where's Kit?

*Nat and Toby look at each other and shrug.*

**PLAYER:** Is Kit on the *Endeavour*?

**NAT:** No.

*Just then Kit comes scurrying down the ropes and joins the other urchins as if she'd been there all along.*

**PLAYER:** Kit, were you just on the *Endeavour*?

*She doesn't even bother lying to you. She just pins you with a knife-eyed glare.*

*You hold her upside down and give her a good shake. A gold watch comes tumbling out of her pocket.*

**PLAYER:** You never do as you're told, you eat enough for an entire crew, and now you're stealing straight from under my nose? I should flog you down to your bones! I should keel-haul you! I should put you off on the first cay we pass!

*Their eyes glaze over. Eventually you run out of steam.*

*You pocket the watch.*

**PLAYER:** Well, run along then. I'm sure someone has something that needs doing.

*You're a big softie when it comes to the urchins. You know you should be tougher on them. But you can never bring yourself to punish them, no matter how feral they act.*

*The urchins scamper off, their bare feet sliding on the wooden deck.*

## Character Profiles and Barks

*Everyone in What the Sea Wants has a secret. How do they present themselves to others? And who are they really?*

### Rodrigo

**Role:** First Mate

**Age:** 28

**Gender:** Male

**Home Port:** San Juan

**Skills:** Sailing, fighting, overwhelming arrogance

**Description:** Your right-hand man since the beginning. He would absolutely take a bullet for you, and has. Twice. Too bad his judgment hasn't caught up with his loyalty.

**Backstory:** When he was ten, his sailor father sailed off and never came back, leaving Rodrigo his lucky silver coin. He's never forgiven him. At eighteen, he went to sea in the hopes of crossing paths with him. When he eventually came to accept that it would never happen, became determined to prove that he never needed him.

**Barks:**

"Fortune favors the bold!"

"I still say we could have taken that man-o'-war."

"Redheads are bad luck. You let them on board and the next thing you know you're having to wash your socks, pick up your things, wear pants..."

## Siobhan

**Role:** Second Mate

**Age:** 23

**Gender:** Female

**Home Port:** Bridgetown

**Skills:** Sailing, common sense

**Description:** She's the only reason anything gets done around here, and she may be *slightly* salty about it. Inherited Irish sarcasm without ever clapping eyes on the Emerald Isle. She keeps her wedding band and a locket with a bit of her kid's hair on a cord around her neck.

**Backstory:** Of course there's no husband. She only wears the ring to keep people from asking questions. Her older sister agreed to take in her baby on the condition that she never attempted to see him.

**Barks:**

"Yes, you're God's gift to women. Get back to work."

"You break it, you buy it. That does include the entire ship."

"I'm going to practice saying 'I told you so' in front of a mirror."



## Constanza

**Role:** Master-At-Arms

**Age:** 38

**Gender:** Female

**Home Port:** Cádiz

**Skills:** Fighting, impeccable manners

**Description:** A baron's daughter in search of adventure, she brings a certain panache to the crew's swordplay. The only member of your crew who has technically been dead.

**Backstory:** An indulged youngest daughter, she realized with despair that she knew exactly how the rest of her life was going to go. When she was thirty, she was on an ocean voyage when her boat was caught in a storm and she nearly drowned. When Ibrahim revived her, she realized with delight that she'd had no idea whether she was going to live or die. She's been at sea chasing that high ever since.

**Barks:**

"Fourth position! ...No, that's sixth position, you Philistine."

"Oh dear, that's never coming out."

"A storm on the horizon? Excellent."

## Ibrahim

**Role:** Surgeon

**Age:** 48

**Gender:** Male

**Home Port:** Cádiz, or at any rate that's where you picked him up

**Skills:** Medicine, riddles

**Description:** Mild-mannered and kindhearted, maybe too kindhearted for his line of work. Doesn't mind blood but detests the smell of gunpowder.

**Backstory:** He was an army doctor who served in one of the Ottoman Empire's many wars against Russia. Overcome with the futility of trying to heal people in the midst of war, he fled to Cádiz, planning to stop practicing medicine--only to happen to be there at the right moment to save Constanza's life. That moment made him realize he still wanted to be a doctor after all.

**Barks:**

"Please come back in one piece this time."

"These boys have no idea what they're getting themselves into."

"Feeling all right, Captain? You look a little pale."

## Keep It Together

*As the administrator of a space station a few decades past its prime, you must deal with grumpy crewmembers, breaking equipment, and an unimpressed boss in a desperate attempt to make it to retirement. As the team lead, I did most of the programming and about 25% of the writing, including the excerpt below.*

### Script Excerpt: Breaking the Telescope

*This is a simple scene with minimal branching. This is a sample flow demonstrating one possible pathway. Consult my [online portfolio](#) for a flowchart of the full scene.*

**DR. GREEN:** We are about to make astronomical history, and you are here to witness it.

**INTERN BOWEN:** I want a commemorative mug. Or one of those rolled-out pennies.

*The four of you are clustered around the viewscreen of a rusty, dented telescope held together with duct tape, Popsicle sticks, and a combination of prayer and black magic.*

**PLAYER:** Are we sure the old telescope is up to it?

**ENGINEER FARAWAY:** It should work. Just don't rotate it too fast. Or move it more than 48 degrees to starboard. Or breathe on it.

*Dr. Green is practically vibrating with excitement.*

**DR. GREEN:** It took me weeks to work out the calculations, but I'm finally going to get a sighting of that uncharted meteor! Is it too soon to decide what to name it? I'm gonna name it after my dog.

**PLAYER:** Well, let's get started!

*Agonizingly slowly, the telescope swings around with a groan of stressed metal.*

**DR. GREEN:** See anything yet?

**INTERN BOWEN:** Just stars.

**DR. GREEN:** How about now?

**INTERN BOWEN:** Still stars.

**DR. GREEN:** Now?

**INTERN BOWEN:** Wait, hang on, there's something. Is your meteor red?

**DR. GREEN:** I don't...think so?

*The telescope screen comes into focus. A red sports car is floating in the middle of open space.*

**INTERN BOWEN:** Aaaaaand it's Elon Musk's space Tesla.

**ENGINEER FARAWAY:** Predictable, really.

**DR. GREEN:** I don't understand. I did the calculations three times! What else can I try?

**PLAYER:** Try adjusting the plane of focus.

**DR. GREEN:** Oh—of course! The comet is millions of miles behind the Tesla. It's just blocking the view!

*She adjusts the focus. With a painful creak of metal on metal, the car on the viewscreen goes out of focus and another shape begins to appear.*

**DR. GREEN:** I think I see something! No, wait. No, yes! There's something there! It's a—

*CLUNK. The telescope console goes to static.*

**ENGINEER FARAWAY:** What did you do??

**DR GREEN:** I didn't do anything!

**PLAYER:** *Kick it!*

*Satisfying, but ineffective. Still static. Faraway looks out the window.*

**ENGINEER FARAWAY:** Oh, wow. Yeah, it is definitely not supposed to bend like that. That is one broke telescope.

**PLAYER:** Nice one, Green.

**DR. GREEN:** I didn't do anything! I wasn't even near it!

**ENGINEER FARAWAY:** Hardly matters. I'm gonna have to send away for parts from Earth. Again. And spend a million hours fixing it. Again. And that's assuming it isn't worse than it looks. And it's always worse than it looks.

**INTERN BOWEN:** If anyone asks, I was in the bio lab the whole time.

**PLAYER:** I know that everyone here is sincerely committed to this station's mission and we will all diligently work to find a solution to this problem.

*The scientists look at each other. Then Faraway bursts out laughing. At least they're amused?*

*You head back to your office.*

## The Olympiad

*An infamous Waterdeep pub crawl takes players through one drunken misadventure after another. Face raticorns in the cellar, evil desserts, the world's most diminutive tavern brawl, and more in this wild and whimsical Level 8 adventure for D&D 5e.*

### Encounter: The Malignant Blancmange

*A classic monster fight featuring a custom-designed ooze.*

**Stop Number:** 10

**Pub Name:** The Silver Sylph

**Proprietor:** Valenna Liastradel, halfling bard 1

**Signature Beer:** Extra crisp lager. A light, effervescent beer with a clean aftertaste. Very refreshing. Intoxication save: DC 10.

It's a bad sign when you approach the Silver Sylph and run into a group of fleeing patrons. One of them throws away his Olympiad map, shouting, "It's not worth it!"

You burst into the pub to find an enormous jelly mold thrown off to one side. In the middle of the floor, pulsing with unholy life, is the largest strawberry blancmange you have ever seen. In its wobbly grip is Valenna Liastradel, experiencing her most unjust desserts.

#### Malignant Blancmange

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 8, Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60), Speed 20 ft.

STR 16 (+3), DEX 7 (-2), CON 18 (+4), INT 1 (-5), WIS 6 (-2), CHA 1 (-5)

Damage Immunities: Acid, Cold, Lightning, Slashing

Condition Immunities: Blinded, Charmed, Deafened, Exhaustion, Frightened, Prone

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), Passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

**Amorphous.** The blancmange can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Corrosive Adhesive.** A creature that touches the blancmange or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) acid damage and must make a

DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On failure, the creature is engulfed by the blanchmange. If the creature hit the blanchmange with a melee weapon, they can choose to drop the weapon and allow it to be engulfed instead.

The blanchmange can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.

**Edible.** Bite attacks have Advantage against the blanchmange and are immune to the Corrosive Adhesive effect.

### **Actions**

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 8 (2d6) acid damage.

**Spread.** While the blanchmange normally occupies a 10-foot square, it can use a move action to flatten itself out and spread into one adjacent square, to a maximum area of 9 5-foot squares (unless it has been Split).

**Engulf.** When the blanchmange enters the space of a Large or smaller creature, or if a Large or smaller creature is in the blanchmange's space at the beginning of its turn, the creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw.

On a failed save, the creature takes 18 (4d6) acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature is restrained and takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the blanchmange's turns. If the blanchmange moves out of that square, the creature is released.

An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 14 Strength check. On a success, the creature is no longer engulfed and may move normally.

### **Reactions**

**Split.** When a blanchmange with at least 40 hit points is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, a smaller blanchmange splits off. This blanchmange is Medium sized, has 20 hit points, and cannot Engulf, Split, or Spread. The original blanchmange loses 20 hit points and can spread to 1 fewer squares maximum.

When the blanchmange has been subdued, you finally have a chance to take in your surroundings. The Silver Sylph is decorated in delicate pastels, with lace curtains and

rose-patterned wallpaper. Shelves of ceramic figurines line the walls, although a few of them have been smashed in the melee.

Valenna sits down and wipes a bit of jelly off her apron, understandably shaken.

“I was trying to create the world’s biggest blancmange,” she explains. “It was going to be my crowning achievement. But it kept collapsing. So I bought a scroll of Animate Objects from the discount scroll emporium, just to hold it up...I guess I should have bought it from a more reputable wizard...”

Valenna pours you your extra crisp lagers. “Would you like any dessert to go with that? I’ve got a nice lemon jelly in the icebox...”



## Encounter: The Cave Dragon

*Sometimes the most fun you can have with your players is a good old misdirect.*

**Stop Number:** 5

**Pub Name:** The Cave Dragon

**Proprietor:** Onga, half-orc barbarian 10

**Signature Beer:** Braggot mead. An utterly delicious beverage of fermented malt, honey, and...well, don't ask. Intoxication save: DC 9.

One of the more unusual stops of the Olympiad, the Cave Dragon is actually situated in a natural cave in a seaside bluff. That makes it one of the darkest, dampest establishments you're ever likely to set foot in.

The Cave Dragon is reputed to be the toughest tavern in Waterdeep. Thugs, mercenaries, gang members, and even denizens of the Underdark can be found here any day of the week. Onga, the half-orc proprietor, is in her usual place with her booted feet on the bar and a flagon of her own wares in her hand.

"Doing the Olympiad?" she asks. "It's a fool's game, if you ask me. You want a drink, just go drink. Don't waste all night wandering around."

But she's obliging enough when you ask for Braggot Mead.

You drink your sweet, thick mead, looking around nervously. A dragonborn with a large scar running across one eye glares at you and returns to his drink. At the next table over, a young boy lays out a mismatched assortment of purses and quite nonchalantly begins to count up their contents. In the corner, a square-jawed gang enforcer flips a dagger in one hand. No one seems interested in you.

As you drink, the dragonborn gets up and approaches the bar. He whispers something to Onga and she surreptitiously slips him a rusty key. He disappears down a narrow side tunnel and through a small, nondescript door, which he locks behind him. If you try to follow him, Onga will stand up and shout "No! You can't go in there!"

You can nevertheless attempt to pick the lock (DC 12) or force the door (DC 15 Strength check). If you do, you discover what's in the locked room. It's the bathroom.

## Portrait of Three Women with an Owl

*Three artists disappear under mysterious circumstances in occupied France. Eighty years later, a retrospective art show seeks to address some unanswered questions.*

Some artistic movements are not fully appreciated until after the artists' time. Some enjoy immediate fame, only to fade from the spotlight as the years pass. And then there are the movements that, through no fault of the artists, never quite have their moment in the sun. Into this third category falls the subject of the Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM)'s excellent new exhibition, *Surradia: A Retrospective*.

*Surradia* has frequently been misclassified as a subgenre of surrealism (*Gardner's Art Through the Ages* still makes this mistake as of the 16<sup>th</sup> edition). Thus, the *surradists*, when they are shown at all, are often relegated to a small "female artists" corner of a larger surrealist exhibition.

Many critics and historians are predisposed to dismiss female artists out of hand. Women's art is often seen as small, personal, and unambitious, with little to say about the outside world. *Surradia*, with its themes of self-knowledge, may initially seem like an easy target for such criticisms. However, within the intimacy of the *surradists'* art we find incisive and groundbreaking attitudes in stark contrast to the modest domesticity expected of female artists.

But the greatest barrier the *surradists* have faced is undoubtedly the movement's abrupt and enigmatic ending. Disappearing as they did in the midst of the German occupation of France, they left no heirs, few connections in the art world, and a long list of unanswered questions. Who is the artist of the unsigned canvas known as "Portrait of Three Women with an Owl?" Were they responsible for the fate of the SS officer who occupied Vidal's house? Do they have any connection to the legendary Fox Girl of Fontainebleau? We may never know. But the MNAM exhibition provides tantalizing new clues.

Like many art movements, the boundaries of *surradia* are difficult to define, and some have argued that *surradist* scholars are too prone to classify artists by the manner of their death rather than the content of their art. MNAM, however, chooses to focus on the three artists who are almost universally acknowledged as the heart of the movement: Alice Penderwood, Corine Moriceau, and Amaya Vidal.

The auburn-haired Penderwood came to Paris from Connecticut in 1936 as the lover of André Breton. She received much critical acclaim for her early work, such as "The Debutante" (1937), which already featured the recurring motif of a fox. But though she was fascinated by the psychological side of surrealism, she often clashed with the

opinionated surrealist leader. When asked her opinion about woman's role as the male artist's muse, her reply was one word: "Bullshit." Unsurprisingly, she soon left Breton and began developing her own style. An avid cook, she abandoned oil paints and began making her own egg tempera using natural pigments, creating paintings with jewel-like tones that evoke medieval art. Later, beginning with "Procession at the Penderwood Estate" (c. 1938), leaves, twigs, dirt, and other natural materials began to enter her work. The MNAM exhibition has done an admirable job establishing a chronology out of these often-undated pieces.

The Dominican-born Moriceau also began her art career among the surrealists, who she initially met as a model. But unlike the brash Penderwood, 19-year-old Moriceau felt intimidated among so many famous names. She rarely spoke at gatherings. While she painted prolifically, she hesitated to show or sell her work, much of which she gave away to friends or family. MNAM has managed to locate two of these previously uncatalogued works: "A Young Girl Discovers the Phases of the Moon" and "The Invention of Music" (both c. 1936). Close friends with Penderwood, she left the surrealist group shortly after her friend did.

Moriceau is easily the most overlooked of the surradists, and it's refreshing to see an exhibition finally acknowledge her central role in the movement. Her work is deeply personal, featuring lone individuals in fantastical versions of homelike settings. Moriceau's large eyes and heart-shaped face appear on the subjects of her paintings, whether male or female. Her most common motif is a white stag, appearing either as a whole animal, a human with antlers, or, as in "The Pantry of Grandmother Night" simply a pair of antlers in the background. Several excellent essays have already explored the question of why Moriceau's animal avatar was a stag and not, as might be expected, a doe; however, the MNAM exhibition does not touch on this question.

Vidal, a French-born artist of Argentinian descent, was unique in her refusal to associate with the surrealists, though their influence is nevertheless apparent in her work. The eldest of the surradists, she already had a successful art career by the mid-1930s. Most of the writing about Vidal has focused on her eccentric lifestyle, wearing elaborate feathered gowns and allowing her beloved Persian cats to eat off her plate, and MNAM does fall into this trap, exhibiting several of her surviving outfits. But it also features a broad selection of her dark, eerie paintings with their themes of death and decay. The animal that appears most frequently in Vidal's work is, curiously, not a cat, but an owl.

Vidal was the inventor of the split-canvas motif that would become so distinctive over the next two years. A wall, tree, or other barrier divides the canvas into two scenes which are interrelated, yet subtly different. "Memory of Autumn" (1933) depicts a forest that is in leaf on one side of the painting and bare on the other. In "Portrait of

Alice Penderwood" (1939), Penderwood passes through a gateway and comes out wearing a steel breastplate. Are the two sides past and present, or dream and reality? Or, perhaps, are both sides equally illusory? All three surreadists would delve deep into this enigma during their time together.

In 1938, Vidal invited Penderwood and Moriceau to leave Paris and come stay at her house in Fontainebleau, and over the following year, surreadia truly came into its own. There has been much speculation about the nature of this living situation, particularly between Penderwood and Moriceau, and several affectionate letters between the two featured in the exhibition will no doubt add fuel to the fire. It was here that Moriceau coined the name "surreadia," which, she claims, came to her in a dream.

Art lovers may find the next room of the exhibition difficult to stomach. After the French surrender, the surrealists scattered, relying on American friends or even arranged marriages to get out of Europe, but the surreadists lacked their connections and were forced to remain. A division of SS officers led by the brutish Oberführer Baer occupied Vidal's house, where they forced the women to cook and clean for them and defaced their artwork. I admit I was unable to maintain scholarly objectivity at the sight of the paintings that had been slashed with knives or painted with crude Nazi slogans. Saddest of all, the exhibition includes several photos of Penderwood's lost masterpiece "Who Are You, Silent One?" (c. 1939), which was burned in the bonfire of July 27, 1942 in the gardens of Jeu de Paume.

We don't know what incident proved to be the breaking point for the surreadists, but we do know that in early 1940, the three women abandoned their house to the Nazis and fled into the woods, leaving their artwork behind.

Most of the locals assumed Baer had killed the women, and this opinion is still held by some in the art world to this day. But the postwar discovery of a small log lean-to in the woods reveals a different fate. The lean-to had apparently been abandoned for some time. It was in disrepair and, based on the strong animal smell, various creatures had used it as a den. Several types of scat were found inside, as well as an abandoned birds' nest near the fire hole. It contained a cooking pot, an axe, three moss-lined sleeping pallets, and the crown jewel of the MNAM exhibition: The unsigned painting "Portrait of Three Women with an Owl" (c. 1940), painted on a wooden panel using only natural pigments.

The three women in the painting are unmistakable. But which one was the artist? Wisely, MNAM takes no position on this question. The owl, of course, suggests Vidal. The use of natural materials points to Penderwood, though it may have been a matter of simple necessity. And the setting—a kitchen that resembles a medieval alchemy lab—most closely aligns with Moriceau's work. The three women surround a cauldron, clad

only in leaves and lichen, each holding a long spoon handle. A vaulted archway divides the room. On one side are Penderwood and most of Moriceau in a dark brick room stocked with bottles of mysterious substances. On the other side is Vidal with her owl on her shoulder, but now the kitchen is made entirely of old, knobby trees, one growing into the next.

The surradists, it seems, survived in the woods for several months.

What became of them? The final room of the exhibition is devoted to this question. Three artworks of uncertain provenance that have been attributed to the surradists are on display. One, a landscape that showed up at an auction in Chicago, attributed to Penderwood, is almost certainly a hoax, but the two Vidals—one found in an abandoned house in Fontainebleau, the other recovered from the basement of a church—are much more intriguing. Found in 1949 and 1952 respectively, each set off a wave of speculation that the artist was still alive. Forensic experts have verified the works' authenticity, but it's impossible to determine when they were originally painted.

Here the otherwise strong exhibition finally falters, devoting the entire back wall to an overly credulous display of mysteries and enigmas that have been linked to the surradists over the years. There are several newspaper articles covering the rash of unusual animal encounters in the Seine-et-Marne area in the postwar years, including multiple sightings of leucistic deer and one case of an owl that flew into a house and refused to leave. One amusing (if unconvincing) inclusion is the original drawing of the Fox Girl of Fontainebleau, a cryptid sighted by a 14-year-old girl in 1976. She claimed she was walking in the woods when she saw a woman with wild red hair, dressed in a tunic made of animal skins. The woman ran into a copse of trees and, when the girl reached the copse, she found nothing but a fox fleeing into the underbrush. The story has been widely discredited—the reporter who first broke the story was a notorious hoaxer—but there are still scattered claims of sightings to this day.

The centerpiece of this final room, however, is an exhibit on the death of Oberführer Baer. Baer was found dead in the living room of Vidal's house on December 4, 1940. His body was covered in bruises and contusions, there were bite marks on his arms, and his face had been gouged by a bird's talons. The windows and doors of the house were thrown open, the floor scattered with leaf litter that had apparently blown in.

The coroner ruled that he had been mauled to death by wild animals, and though the ever-paranoid Vichy police classified it as a murder and investigated the whole town on the suspicion that someone might have somehow lured the beasts inside and set them on him, they were unable to determine who could have staged such a bizarre crime. Baer's death remains unsolved to this day. The exhibition features Baer's

torn SS uniform, as well as the original police photos of the crime scene, laid out for the viewer to piece together.

Surradia is a beautiful and deeply underappreciated movement, one that was cut short before its time by its creators' sudden disappearance. One can't help but speculate how the history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century art might have gone differently had the artists survived the war and gone on to take their rightful place in the art world. This extensive and well-curated exhibition is sure to spark renewed interest in these extremely interesting women and their art, as well as in the natural world they loved so much. I myself, while I was composing this review, was struck to see a large gray owl perched on the fence outside my window, fluffing its feathers and staring at me.

**SURRADIA: A RETROSPECTIVE** will be on display until June 20.

## Publications

*A full list of my finished, published games, stories, and articles. The games listed here are all independently published, the novel was traditionally published, and the stories and articles were all published in paid magazines, anthologies, and podcasts.*

## Games

*Keep it Together.* Created as part of Lunar Tide Games. Unity game, 2022.

*Nimos.* Unity game, 2022.

*A Crumb in Winter.* Dungeons and Dragons 5e module, 2021.

*The Adventures of Houdini.* Interactive fiction, 2012.

*The House of Fear.* Interactive fiction, 2011.

## Fiction

*Among the Red Stars*. HarperTeen, 2017.

"Palio." *The Lesbian Historic Motif Podcast*, 2022.

"Fold." *Vastarien* Volume 4 Issue 2, Grimscribe Press, 2021.

"The Sound of Wolves." *A Cold Christmas and the Darkest of Winters*, Cinnabar Moth Publishing, 2021.

"Los Angeles Is Sinking." *Field Notes from a Nightmare*, Dreadstone Press, 2021.

"Unshackled." *Cinnabar Moth Literary Collections* Volume 1 Issue 1, Cinnabar Moth Publishing, 2021.

"Neofan." *Voyage*, 2021.

"The Curious Case of the Cave Salamander." *Utopia Science Fiction* Volume 2 Issue 4, 2021.

"The Empress and the Marauder." *Cosmic Horror Monthly* Issue 5, 2020.

"Blacktooth 500." *Hear Me Roar*, Poise and Pen Publishing, 2020.

"The Song of the Machines." *Truancy* Issue 8, 2020.

"Seven Cups of Tea." *Curiosities* Issue 7, 2020.

"All the Daughters of my Father's House." *Glittership* Spring 2020.

"Portrait of Three Women with an Owl." *The Future Fire* Issue 53, 2020.

"The Black Handkerchief." *The Lesbian Historic Motif Podcast*, 2019.

"The Beast that Ate the Stars." *Pioneers & Pathfinders*, JayHenge Publishing, 2019.

"The Difference Engine." *Well Said, O Toothless One*, Reshwity Publishers, 2018.

"The Ibex Tattoo." *Dates* Volume 2, Margins Publishing, 2017.

"All's Fair." *Likely Red*, 2017.



## Articles

“Banning 'Maus' Is Just the Latest Case of Sanitizing History for Kids' Comfort.”  
Coauthored with A.R. Vishny. *Washington Post*, February 10, 2022.

“Banning Books Like 'Maus' Is Part of Sanitizing History.” Coauthored with A.R.  
Vishny. *Teen Vogue*, February 9, 2022.

“Gideon, Harrow, and the Value of Problematic Relationships in Fiction.” *Tor.com*,  
December 1, 2020.

“Aging Properties in Fiction.” *Putting the Science in Fiction*, 2018.