

TALES OF ARCANA™ ROLEPLAYING CARD GAME

Go Outside the Sandbox™

The Caves of Valesh Kanos

Story Guide by Matt Knicl

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Introduction

The Caves of Valesh Kanos is a one-shot story session designed to be played with the Tales of Arcana™ Roleplaying Card Game, though it could be adapted for play with other RPG systems. It is designed for one Story Master (SM) to narrate and three Players, with the overall session lasting 1.5–2.5 hours. Players will randomly generate their characters as laid out by the Tales of Arcana™ Rules Booklet. Only the SM should view this Story Guide and should read through it before the session begins. Read the *Italicized* text aloud, and shape the rest of the text to your group's experience as you see fit. Occasionally you will receive tips from two natives of Arcana: Manitous, the god of reality and Glytch, a fablead (story nymph). Glytch is very helpful, but it might be best to just ignore Manitous.

**WE'RE FOURTH
WALL BREAKERS MEANT TO
EXPLAIN THINGS TO YOU DUMMIES
IN TERMS YOUR TINY MORTAL
BRAINS CAN COMPREHEND.**



**MANITOUS
GOD OF REALITY
(KIND OF AN ASS)**

**OH, DON'T
WORRY ABOUT HIM.
HE'S BEEN GRUMPY SINCE
THE DAWN OF TIME.**



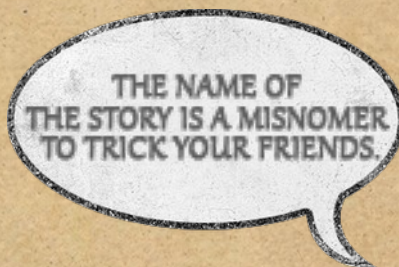
**GLYTCH
STORY NYMPH
(FIRST DAY ON THE JOB)**

Overview

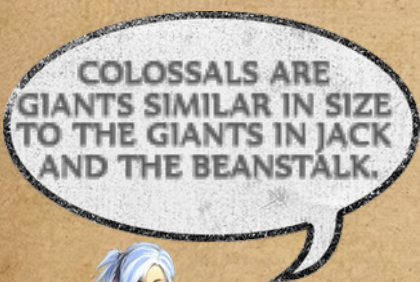
The Caves of Valesh Kanos is a story where your Players have already been approached by a mysterious woman whose husband vanished into the dangerous, legendary Caves of Valesh Kanos. The Players will have already accepted and embarked on the quest when the campaign begins, awakening in what they believe to be the ancient depths of Valesh Kanos when in fact they have been tricked. The woman was actually a Colossal Witch who tricked the Party, drugging them and bringing them to her home in the Cloud Realm. They will awake in a dark cauldron, about to be cooked, and they will need to use their brains and cards to figure out their true situation, escape the cauldron, face off the dangers of a gigantic kitchen, and defeat or evade the Colossal.

Things to Consider

Your Players will come up with their own unique characters based on the cards they have been randomly dealt. As the SM, make sure the players describe their characters — who they are, how they look, their personality — but also what is their character's goal? Try to have them sum it up in one word or phrase, like "I want money" or "I'm looking for my lost love." As the SM, do your best to integrate these goals into the narrative. Will the Players find gold hidden in the Colossal's home? Did the Colossal kill the Player's lost love? This can lead to fun, impromptu story elements for you; however, if you are new to this sort of game or narrating for the first time, it is okay to stay closer to the Story Guide material. Additionally, ask the group how their characters know each other — have they just met or have they quested with each other before?



Narrative



"Your story begins like many stories do. A group of travelers gathered in a tavern, approached by a townspeople in distress who is hoping a passing band of adventurers could help find her husband. Her name was Greta, the wife of the miller, Pauld. Through tears she explained to you that the Empire was going to foreclose on their mill and that Pauld sought riches in the dangerous Caves of Valesh Kanos. He hasn't been heard from in over a week and the Empire guard refused to leave the city to search for a commoner, especially one as foolish to venture into the dreaded Caves of Valesh Kanos. Your party decided to help her, mainly because you've heard tales of powerful magic relics and great storerooms of treasure, but also because it's kinda sorta the right thing to do. Greta was so grateful, she wiped away her tears and embraced you. She treated you to dinner at the tavern, which resulted in a night of drunken revelry... which is where it gets kind of hazy. You do remember leaving the tavern, ready to take on the ancient evils deep in Valesh Kalos, but that's the last thing you remember. Now the throbbing pain in your head causes you to awake. You open your eyes but see only blackness. You try to pull yourself up from the ground, but it feels like the earth below is shifting and you fall over. You hear water all around you, each move you make echoing in what can only be the dread Caves of Valesh Kanos. You don't know how you got here, where your party members are, or what dangerous creatures stalk you in the darkness."

Tip: If Players protest that their Characters wouldn't have listened to Greta, or that they wouldn't have become drunk, and so forth, try to have them find a reason why their character would have followed through. If they can't, you or another group member could offer a possible reason.

Part 1: Inside the "Cave"

Greta is a Colossal Witch who gains her magical power through an ancient cooking ritual that involves consuming the soul essences of sentient beings. Though Colossals are trapped in the Cloud Realm, Greta has found a way to descend a giant beanstalk to enter the mortal world. She shrank her size and invented the story of Pauld to trick the Party. After roping them in with her sob story, she drugged them and took them back to her home, where she regained her normal, titanic size.

The Cauldron:

- **Pitch Black** – The Characters are currently inside a massive cauldron with the lid closed, making it pitch black.
- **Shifting Terrain** – They are all floating on separate slices of giant vegetables. When they move, they cause their vegetable rafts to move in the water.
- **Echoes** – The interior of the cauldron echoes the noises they make.
- **Increasing Temperature** – If the Players take too long to figure out their situation, they will note that it is getting warm and the water is beginning to boil.

The Party's first priorities when waking up will be to figure out where they are, what happened, where's Greta and if they are in danger. Prompt them to use their Cards to try to figure out where they are and what to do. A Player with a Fire or Light Ability might quickly reveal their situation to the group, but then the Players need to find out how to open the cauldron's lid and climb to the edge of the massive pot. The lid will not fall off, only move enough for them to crawl out. If the Players have no cards that they or you think might be useable to leave the cauldron, they could make a ladder standing on each others shoulders.

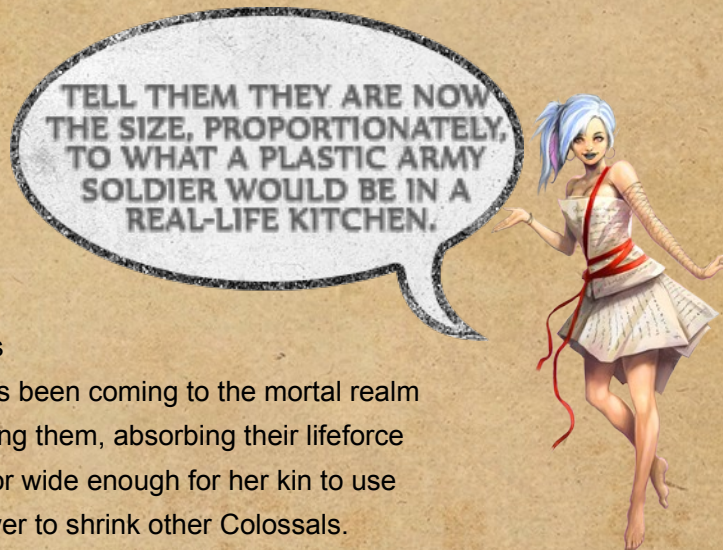


Lore Facts: Valesh Kanos. This ancient dwarven civilization fell into history many centuries ago after it had conquered the majority of Arcana's subterranean region, known as the Deep Below. In its high points, Valesh Kanos was the wealthiest nation on Genesis, the planet where Arcana is a continent, and maintained their power with technology infused with Arcane and Earth magics. If a Player tries to use their cards to search for knowledge they might have about Valesh Kanos before the reveal, they might know that the caves are now inhabited by feral tribes of Lizardfolk, powerful Dragons and even possibly hordes of Demons broken through from the depths of Hell.

Part 2: Kitchen Nightmares

You have pulled you and your comrades out of the giant cauldron. You gaze across the scene and your mind reels from what you see. You are in a massive kitchen and you are dwarfed by the quaint cottage décor that towers imposingly above you. It is clear that this is the home of a Colossal, a massive being that before this day you thought only a myth. You stand on the edge of a massive cauldron atop a burning stove and take a look at your surroundings. The stove is connected to countertop on both sides, with a sink on the right and a spice rack and bags of sugar and flour on the left. Directly in front of you, which would seem to be a chasm away, is a preparation table where the giant vegetables were being cut by a knife easily four times your size. A mountain of dough sits on a wooden board next to a large rolling pin. Along the left wall you notice double doors, and on the right, you see a window, as high as a mountain, where all you can see is rolling clouds in the distance. Along the far wall are more cupboards as well as a massive ice box. You also see a door that leads into another humongous room, though there is a saloon-style partition obstructing your view of it. In the distance, almost like thunder, you hear a slow, smooth song being sung from the other room — your host it would seem, who could return at a moment's notice. You need to find a way out of this kitchen, but before that you should probably find a way off the cauldron, avoiding the flames heating the cauldron directly beneath you.

They may think they have shrunk, but they have been abducted by Greta, a Colossal Witch. Colossals are giants the size of skyscrapers. Long ago, they found the gods and lost. They were banished to the Windscape, the elemental realm of Air. But a few years ago, Greta uncovered a portal to the mortal realm made from a doorway whose frame was magic beanstalk. The door was too small, so she used her magic to shrink herself. She has been coming to the mortal realm human-sized, tricking wayward adventures and then cooking them, absorbing their lifeforce to increase her magics so she might one day open the door wide enough for her kin to use in a plan to retake Genesis. She doesn't have enough power to shrink other Colossals.



Greta's Movements. Greta is in another room. As the players move around the kitchen looking for a way out, if they make too much noise or whenever they move to a new area (like the sink or floor), roll a D6. If you roll a 1, have Greta casually mosey into the Kitchen. The players should use their cards to hide, and if a player doesn't hide well enough, you could roll to see if Greta finds them. If the players encounter Greta in this way, add 4 to her Story Points (SP). She will probably kill the players if this happens. If they are dead set on fighting her and they succeed, the players will still need to find a way out of the kitchen and still have to fight the other hazards of the Kitchen.

Note: If Greta were about to find the players, you could have **Aloysius Mildebrandt** get their attention from a crack in a nearby wall that would result in his encounter to begin (see his entry below).

Tip: Remember, the players should be using their cards. Now that they have opened the lid, how do they get down from the cauldron? How do they avoid the flames that are heating its water?

Story Combat – Getting Down. Story Combat is much like regular combat, though it involves the players playing their cards to deal with an obstacle or challenge instead of a monster or adversary. Each player should play a card to see how they attempt to get down from the cauldron and/or avoid the flames.

Part 3: Invading Spaces

You've made it to the counter, but you're still in metaphorical hot water. You are trapped in the kitchen, but now you need to find a way out.

At this point, let the players do what they want to do to explore the Kitchen. Show them the map of the Kitchen and let them figure out the best course of action. Feel free to improvise what they see based on their questions, but provided below are two statements you can read to help them reach the conclusion that they are dealing with a giant problem (which can be altered if a card is used to discern them and they roll poorly or well).

*What's outside the **window**?: You can hardly see from your vantage point, but outside you see only clouds. As you squint, you notice homes floating on these clouds, resting as a building would on the ground. You are unsure how large they are, but you can guess they are also as massive as the one you stand in now.*

*Do we **hear** anything?: Other than the bubbling sound of the water echoing in the cauldron, you are able to discern a faint singing coming from the other room. It sounds sweet and serene, until you discern the words: "Fee Fi Fo Fum, I'm gonna eat some Empire men."*

1. If the players stay on the counter, they will encounter **Aloysius Mildebrandt**.
2. If the players lower to the tile floor, they will encounter **Mr. Scramplepants**.
3. If the players attempt to go under the icebox, they will encounter **Dust Bunnies**.
4. If the players enter the food pantry closet by going under the door, they will encounter **Giant Termites**.

In between each location/encounter, allow the players the chance to move around and explore, and always feel free to adapt this material by changing what they find and who or what they fight. Once the players have encountered two or three of the above challenges, or if it is getting late, have Greta enter the kitchen and notice the players aren't in the cauldron.

(See **Section 4. Greta**)

3a. Aloysius Mildebrandt, the Lost Knight

"Over here, wayward travelers!" a man's voice calls. You turn to see a grizzled man standing before you. "You too have been taken here, but fear not, I shall now protect you." The man is dressed like a knight, but it seems he has made his armor from discarded items from the kitchen. He is an aged man in his fifties who wears a thimble as a helmet and is armed with a large needle the size of a sword and a button he wears attached to his arm like a buckler shield.

Aloysius is an adventurer just like your players. He was taken here years ago, but he managed to escape. While it might seem like he has been trapped in Greta's home all this time, in reality he has become crazed over time. He is in love with Greta and continues to live in her walls, creepily watching her from afar. In his delusions he believes they are in love, though Greta doesn't know he's there. Aloysius is almost like a post-apocalyptic survivor, fashioning himself armor and weapons out of what he could find in Greta's home. But to the players, he should present as a noble hero who is willing to help them, though in his madness, upon learning their intent to harm Greta or leave (which would be crazy since Greta's presence is perfect), he will attack them.

Roleplaying Aloysius: After you read his introduction, see how your players interact with Aloysius. Do they attack or attempt to talk with him? His goal is to get them out of the kitchen and behind the wall through a crack to the right of the stove of the map (he might explain that Greta's kitten prowls the area and they need to hide or be eaten). He is a Don Quixote type character, so you may have him talk and act like a Shakespearean actor hamming it up playing a knight. Once they get behind the wall, feel free to have Aloysius's sanity begin to slip. He can start referring to Greta as an angel. If the players want to leave the house, get home or kill Greta, have Aloysius become confused. As far as he is concerned, Greta loves him and the players have been chosen just like the others. Unless your players are incredibly political and avoid confrontation, they will have to fight Aloysius.

"You have besmirched my lady's honor, you brigands! Prepare to meet justice at the end of my sword!"



**ALOYSIUS
MILDEBRANDT**
(CLINICALLY CRAY CRAY)

Name: Aloysius Mildebrandt

SP: 6

Race: Human

Class: Knight

Personality: Aloysius uses large, fancy words and acts like a true gentleman. He believes in honor, though when his reality is questioned he will "do his duty" to protect his "love" and attack the players, not because he wants to, but because it is necessary to restore Greta's honor.

Abilities: Aloysius is **Armored** (deflects physical weapons), fights with a sharp **Sword** and is almost preternaturally **Quick**.

Combat: If Aloysius were a player, his cards would be **Human, Knight, Quixotic, Longsword, Quake, Sneak**. Alternate him casting **Quake** to deal 1 damage to each player, or slashing twice with his **Longsword** and hitting the two closest players for 1 damage. If the players miss due to poor rolls, or Aloysius is close to death, you could have him **Sneak** into the shadows to flavor avoiding the next attack, but do this only once or twice in the combat (as he would feel hiding during battle isn't honorable). When he is killed or incapacitated, he reaches forward with one outstretched hand, the other on his heart, and says, "Greta, my sweet, I have failed you," as the combat ends.

WHILE KNIGHT ISN'T A
CARD YET, IT WOULD BE
SIMILAR TO A PALADIN...

...ONLY WITH
DEVOTION TO A PERSON
INSTEAD OF TO A
CHURCH OR GOD.

IN THIS CASE,
INSTEAD OF A KING
ALOYSIUS SERVES
GRETA.

HE ALSO LACKS THE
ABILITY TO HEAL.



3b. Mr. Scramplepants, the Dire Kitten

You've arrived on the floor; massive tiled linoleum stretches before you with the counter and the kitchen island towering above you like wooden canyon walls. But you only have a few seconds to take in the sights before you hear the deep meow behind you.

The players turn to see the Dire Kitten, which is, to the shrunken players, the size of an elephant.

Name: Mr. Scramplepants

SP: 8

Abilities: Mr. Scramplepants is covered in sharp **Spikes**. He swipes with **Claws** and bites with powerful **Fangs**.

Combat: Mr. Scramplepants likes to play with his food. He plans to kill and eat the players. He attacks and deals 2 damage when he attacks. He will focus that player unless someone distracts him, in which case he'll go after that player. If a player moves far away from the others, Scramplepants with **Pounce** that player and keep them in their mouth, doing damage each turn but still attacking other players with its claws. Upon his death, the players might attempt to use their powers to move or disguise the body to avoid Greta finding it. The battle will only attract Greta's attention if the players are incredibly loud. If they haven't fought the kitten when Greta enters the room, he will leave through the door and not return into the kitchen.



MR. SCRAMPLEPANTS
(PLAYS WITH HIS FOOD)

3c. Termites

You see that there is enough space under the pantry door to slide under. You find yourself in a dark room, but there is enough light coming through the panels in the door from the outside to see several massive shelves with cans of food on them the size of small houses.

The players will only encounter these enemies if they try to search around the pantry. They will need to use abilities to get up to other shelves, but if they try to look behind any of the cans they will find a large hole in the wall and three termites the size of a horse. They will attack the players.

Name: Termite

SP: 2

Abilities: Giant Termites are **Huge** and have giant **Mandibles** to try to bite their enemies. They create an **Acid** that would do double damage to any character who happens to be made out of wood.

Combat: All three termites will attack the same player, the one that initially discovered them. They only do 1 damage with their attacks, but you should roll to see if they crit. The fight might seem pretty straight forward, but if your players don't concentrate on a specific termite the focused player will probably lose all their cards in two turns. Abilities that protect or heal might be more useful here than straight out attacking. After the termites are dead, the players will find the hole leads only to hundreds of termites that are oblivious to the players, and there is nothing else of note in the pantry that can help them leave.

3d. Dust Bunny Horde

You proceed under the icebox. Luckily there is enough space for you to stand upright, though it is still dark and somewhat cramped underneath. Your senses are overwhelmed by the amount of dust. The ground is slick with dust and you see the shadowy outlines of dustballs all around you.

There is not really anything here for the players, however, if they progress further under the icebox the dustballs will begin to move and a mass of bunnies made from dust will attack the players.

The dust begins to move and takes shape — dozens of silhouettes of bunny ears. Your eyes adjust and now you see a swarm of at least a hundred dust bunnies moving as one with beady red eyes that rush towards you.

Name: Dust Bunnies

SP: 5

Abilities: These bunnies are more accurately “dust elementals” — magical creatures made of inanimate material that replicate the form and behavior of a living animal. They attack, deal damage and take damage as if they were a single enemy. They **Bite** and attempt to **Smother** and **Suffocate** the players.

Combat: The dust bunnies deal their damage to each player, and attack for 1 damage a turn, though be sure to roll to see if the attacks hit. **Air** attacks and **Water** attacks can be used to blow or wash the dust bunnies away, giving the players an attempt to escape. The bunnies will not follow the players into the light of the kitchen. After reducing the horde’s SP to 0, the remaining bunnies will scramble.

4. The Final Fight: Greta

The ground begins to vibrate, low and ominous beneath your feet. The vibration intensifies and the giant door opens and Greta walks through. Each step shakes the ground and you try to keep yourself from falling. Greta, the woman who asked you to find her husband, which was clearly a lie, stands as tall as the sun. She is inconceivably large. You even notice she wears ship anchors on her bracelet like they were charms. She walks over to the cauldron and you hear the cauldron lid drop on the counter, its ring deafening. “Where are you, puny mortals!” Greta yells. “You have no chance of escape without the locket I wear around my neck! It is the only portal that will take you back to your world, but the only place you’re going is straight down my gullet!” she screams.

At this point, the players will need to decide what to do. The only way out is the portal inside her locket. If the players try to go out the door or do anything other than hide she will find them. But you should prompt your players to figure out how to fight her, either in open combat or by utilizing what is in the kitchen to take her down.



GRETA COLOSSAL WITCH

(TECHNICALLY YOU ARE TRESPASSING)



YOU KNOW WHAT, I
ADMIRE HER INITIATIVE. I HOPE
YOUR PLAYERS LOSE.

Name: Greta

SP: 7

Race: Colossal

Class: Witch

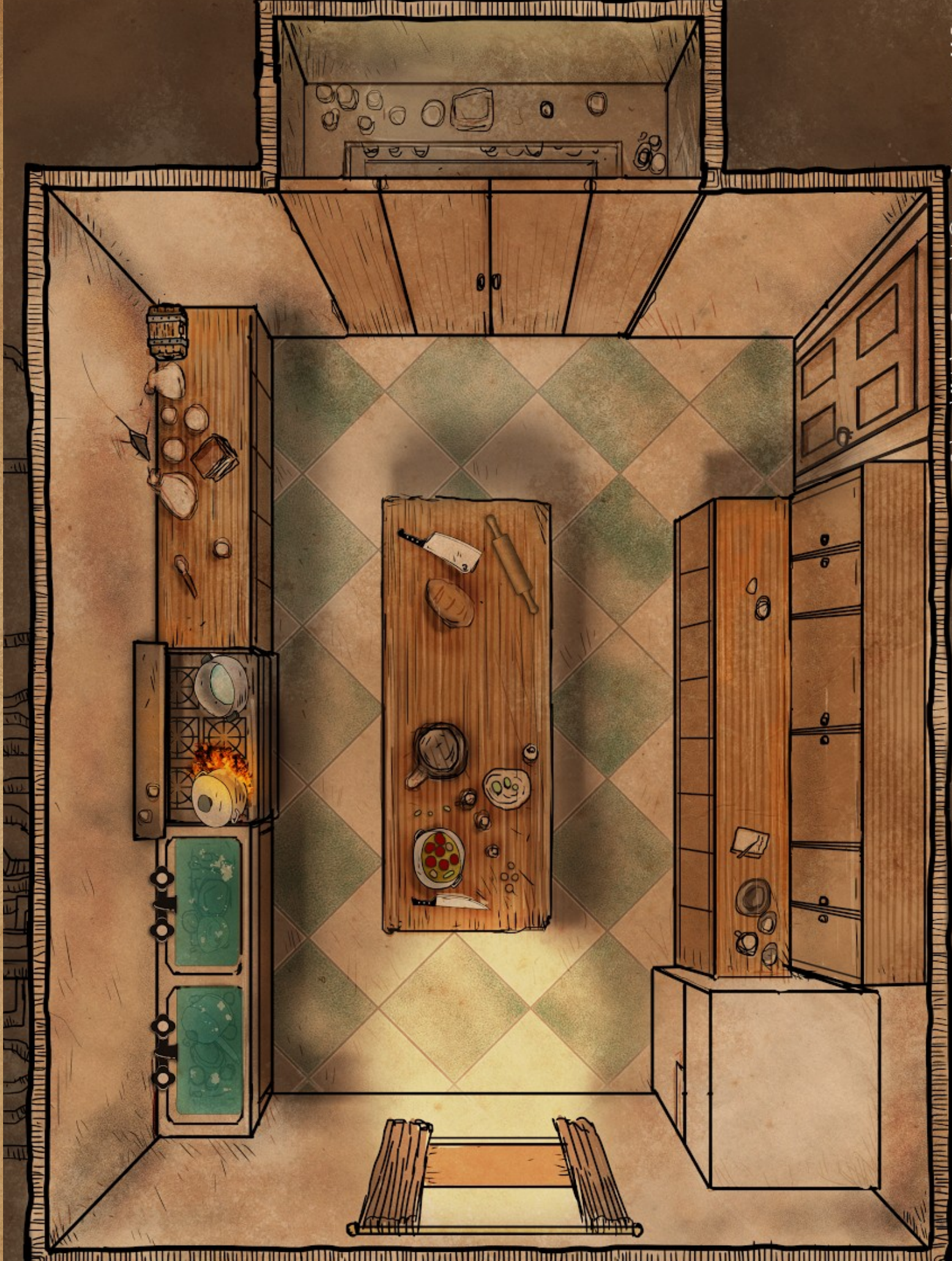
Personality: Greta is flirtatious and wicked. She sees this all as a game, but if the players hurt her, or she discovers they have hurt her kitten by seeing its body (see Mr. Scramplepants above), she will become enraged.

Abilities: Greta is **Massive** and can cast **Arcane Bolts** from her hands.

Combat: Greta **Stomps** or **Knocks Things Over** to deal 1 damage to each player, or she targets an aggressive player with her **Arcane Bolts** for 2 damage. You should roll a D6 for her attacks, and she misses with a 1 and does an additional damage for a 6. The players are not fighting her to kill her, only to incapacitate her. Players will need to think of tactical ways to bring her down, like making the floor wet with water or slick with ice, possibly using their abilities to cause her pain so she'll fall and hit her head or tie her legs together so she trips. When she falls, a **Locket** the size of a human will fall from her clothes, opening to reveal the **Beanstalk Arch** that will return them to Genesis.

5. Conclusion

Your players have just completed the first Tales of Arcana™ campaign. Greta has been defeated, or they have died horrible deaths, but hopefully they had fun with their characters (randomly generated or constructed). Use the attached character sheet to record their characters and what they did so you can remember the story you made. If they want, they can use them again or you can host another session and use new characters. If the campaign went differently than it was outlined above, like your players venturing out into the Colossal's Wind Realm or exploring other rooms in Greta's homes, this story might not yet be over. Feel free to use the multisection campaign rules outlined in the Rules PDF if this is the case.



TALES OF TM
ARCANA
ROLEPLAYING CARD GAME

NAME _____

GENDER _____ AGE _____

RACE _____ CLASS _____

ABILITIES/ARMAMENTS

INVENTORY

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
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CURRENCY

_____ €

BACKSTORY

ILLUSTRATION

ACHIEVEMENTS

NOTES