EVENREACH GAMES

What the Cardinal Flower Protects

FOR 3-5 PLAYERS · TIER 1 · 2.75-4 HOURS

A Nothing Truly Lost Adventure

A marsh town loves the woman it calls healer, but a grieving son wants her held accountable.

Written by Sara Duniphin

Watercolor illustrations by Viviana Moyano (Saironwen)

DAGGERHEART COMPATIBLE

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Version 1.1

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Watercolor illustrations by Viviana Moyano (Saironwen), used under license.

For Nick, who is always there for me. Even though.

SAFETY TOOLS

X-Card (John Stavropoulos). Tap or lift to skip any content.

Lines & Veils (Ron Edwards). Before play, establish what your table won't explore (lines) and what happens off-screen (veils).

Open Door Policy. Any player may step away from the table at any time, for any reason.

CATS (Concept, Aim, Tone, Subject). Before play, agree on what the story is about, what the table wants from it, the tone you're aiming for, and any subjects to include or avoid.

More tools at ttrpgsafetytoolkit.com (the TTRPG Safety Toolkit, compiled by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk).

CONTENT NOTE

This adventure contains themes of grief, terminal illness, the death of a parent, and the threat of someone being taken against her will.

LEGAL

What the Cardinal Flower Protects is an original work by Sara Duniphin, published by Evenreach Games, and a direct sequel to Where the Watermint Grows.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits & Legal	2
Running This Adventure	4
Characters & Locations	9
Scene 1: Sedgewick	12
Scene 2: The Crossing	22
Scene 3: The Old House	27
Scene 4: The Kelpie	32
Scene 5: The Willow	35
Resolution: Word Reaches Sedgewick	45
Cardinal Flower Additions	46
Appendix: Loot & Adversaries	49

KEY

Three kinds of box run through this book. Each one looks like the example below it, so you can tell them apart at a glance.

A box like this is read-aloud text. Read or paraphrase it to your players.

A box like this is a note for the GM, such as an adversary or environment stat block.

A box like this is loot: a magic item or a piece of equipment.

A bold line like this is a thrown worldbuilding question. Ask it directly, mid-scene, and treat whatever answer you get as true for the rest of the session.

Running This Adventure

A Tier 1 adventure for 3–5 players, in which a grieving son blames the local healer, and the Accord comes to collect her.

DAGGERHEART COMPATIBLE · FOR 3-5 PLAYERS · TIER 1 (LEVEL 1) · 2.75-4 HOURS

Complexity Rating: ●●○○○

PITCH

A marsh town loves the woman it calls healer, but a grieving son wants her held accountable. Out past the reeds and the things lurking there, an officer in white has come to take her.

WHAT THIS ADVENTURE IS

As people from Sedgewick often do, Ellen Reed traveled to Fiona's home in the marsh a few weeks ago. She was elderly and suffered from an incurable and agonizing illness. Before she died, she asked that Fiona take a lullaby from her. It belonged to her family, but her child is grown and has no children of his own. Fiona offered the woman an easier last few weeks in return. She would take away Ellen's pain. Ellen agreed, gratitude suffusing her voice.

The woman died not long after. Her son, Corwin Reed, was away when this happened. All he knows is that his mother visited the marsh woman and came back changed.

Fiona warned Ellen that Corwin's memories of the tune would fade too, the way a Hand's memories fade once their name is Collected (see The Amaranth Accord, below). Ellen agreed anyway. She wanted the lullaby kept.

Fiona was once Aoife (EE-fa). She traded her name to an Accord officer to save her sister, Niamh (NEEV), from Fen Sickness (see Corwin Reed in Scene 1). As was customary, the officer took her name and gave her a new one. Niamh was Collected. Niamh rests in stasis, in a jar in the Accord's Archive at Aurenmouth. Fiona remembers none of it, save for faint traces that linger.

By the end of this adventure, the party should have heard the Accord's true name: Amaranth. Fiona also gives them a lead on one of the Accord's bases of operations: Aurenmouth. If they talk the Censor down and the kelpie lives, she gives them the Kelpie-Strung Bow, locally known as the Fen's Answer.

Countdowns run in two scenes. In Scene 4, a standard countdown tracks how long the kelpie waits

while a party keeps failing its test. In Scene 5, linked Progress and Consequence countdowns race the party's arguments against the Censor's patience.

This one-shot also uses thrown worldbuilding questions, short prompts you put directly to the table or to one specific player, mid-scene, and then treat the answer as true for the rest of the session. They're marked throughout in bold. Plenty to choose from; use the ones that fit your table. Try to choose 2 to 3 per scene.

Each scene closes with a Moving On read-aloud that carries the party to the next location.

WHAT HAPPENED IN WHERE THE WATERMINT GROWS

The party ended up here because of a letter in a trunk or a naiad in a pool. In Where the Watermint Grows, the party met the Accord, not by name, through Voss Aldren, the Warden of Auren Names. They probably recovered the stolen naiad's name from his house. If they searched the house, they would have found a bundle of letters in his trunk. Most were routine correspondence between Voss and scholars or other Wardens. One of these was signed Fiona. It named a stretch of marsh called Greywick Fen.

Fiona writes to inquire whether Voss has any more of the green sealing wax she is so fond of. The missive is courteous, but short. She includes that the cardinal flowers along Greywick Fen came in beautifully this year.

Otherwise, they could have learned of Fiona from the naiad herself.

If a character gave Voss their name, they arrive without one. They fade like a Hand: the memories tied to their old name are gone, and the people they meet lose hold of them after a while. Unlike a Hand, they got nothing in the trade, and the Accord gave them no new name. Finding one is another matter.

THE AMARANTH ACCORD

Nothing is truly lost while it is kept. The only death the Accord fears is Erosion, the great forgetting. Erosion erases all memory of something from history. To the Accord, Collecting these precious items and keeping them from Erosion is a mercy, no matter the cost to the individual from whom they are taken.

Hands. These are the Accord's mortal field agents. Some sacrifice is always required to show loyalty. Most often, they trade their name for slowed aging and a borrowed fluency in the true nature of things. The Accord calls this ability a Catalogued Mind.

The cost is less advertised. Without their name, Hands are hard to hold in the memory. The title can stick in people's minds, but the individual does not. The Accord calls a Hand who fails to fade Undimmed.

When their name is Collected, they lose the memory of its previous associations. The prospect of someday rising in the ranks is dangled before Hands, but it will never come to pass.

Titles. The Accord imparts titles that describe their positions: Voss, Warden of Auren Names, for instance. Fiona's title is the Warden of Greywick Fen Partings. All inhabitants of Sedgewick know of the Warden. A Warden is a Hand given charge of a place.

Hands answer to officers such as the Censors, and the officers answer to whoever sits above them, and so on.

The Censor. As a fey officer of the Amaranth Accord, the Censor's job is to correct Hands who drift too far from Accord doctrine. Fiona's gentleness and the fact that the people in Sedgewick hold on to fond memories, when they shouldn't be holding on to memories of her at all, put the Warden firmly in her sights.

She arrived in Sedgewick about a week before the party. While in town, she asked the populace a series of thorough questions. When she finished, she had Mara pole her out to Fiona's house, and she hasn't left.

The Adjudicator of Precedent, also known as the Arbiter to most of the Accord, ranks above her.

The Tally. The Accord is a long-lived organization. So are the grudges it holds. If the party killed Voss Aldren or brought him to justice, they already have a mark against them. Keep a note of each mark; the higher the Tally, the less patient the next agent of the Accord the party meets. Add a mark when the party kills or brings an Accord agent to justice (as with Voss), kills a Warden, or drives off an officer by force; killing or driving off an officer counts as 2 marks. Carry it forward.

DEEPER THREADS

Here is a little extra for those who want to know more about the Sedgewick NPCs.

Mara Quill. The day she ferried the Censor out, Mara waited at the landing past dark to make the return trip. The stranger never came back, and still hasn't. Mara tells herself Fiona can handle anyone. She won't mention any of this unprompted, but it stays with her. Mara now wonders whether it's prudent to take every stranger who asks out to the marsh woman. She fears she betrayed Fiona's trust. She rarely troubles herself over anything, so the feeling has had room to fester. She isn't used to it.

A quieter thread is her relationship with Rowan. They grew up together as childhood friends. Being around him makes her toy with the end of her braid. Mara hasn't examined this. She believes wishing is for the weak, and she's never considered whether that is still true when it comes to him. More telling, he is the only person in town her busybody sister hasn't tried to set her up with yet.

Corwin Reed. Underneath his anger, he believes his mother said something to Fiona in her last days. Something that Ellen Reed intended for him to hear, but Fiona Collected and kept from him. Words that she had never been able to say to him directly, that were his by right.

He knows it isn't fair, but he can't think of any other possibilities.

Nan Pell. Whatever Fiona did for her was a kindness she doesn't often share. When she was young, people raided her home village. She ran. She has no idea who in her family or friends died or made it out. She ran from the running. Finally, Nan landed in Sedgewick. She heard of the marsh woman who made trades.

Without knowing the specifics of the trades, she made the trip out to Fiona's only to be disappointed. Fiona wouldn't take her memories of her experiences after all. She said she had nothing of equivalent value to trade with Nan. However, she did offer her a purpose: selling plants and cuttings. The marsh woman helped Nan be at ease with herself and her memories. Now, the town of Sedgewick considers her a good-luck charm.

Bett Marrow. Years of watching doors taught Bett to ferret out motive from a stranger's questions before they've finished. She would never think of herself as consciously doing any of this.

She is an eye and ear for a scattered network of generally well-intentioned individuals who call themselves the Lantern Bearers. They have no roster nor headquarters. Some part of her clocked the Censor as exactly the kind of thing she should be watching for, without being able to say why.

STRUCTURE & RUNTIMES

SCENE & TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
Scene 1: Sedgewick (45–60 min)	The party arrives following a lead and gathers information on Fiona. Sedgewick has 4 NPCs to talk to; how many are engaged changes the time.
Scene 2: The Crossing (15–20 min)	The party crosses the fen with Mara by boat or on foot along the reed path.
Scene 3: The Old House (30–45 min)	Fen lights haunt the ruin of an old house. A fight, and the party finds a journal.
Scene 4: The Kelpie (15–25 min)	An unexpected guardian blocks the last stretch of path and challenges the party.
Scene 5: The Willow (45–70 min)	The party walks in on a confrontation between Fiona and the Censor. They make the final argument. The climax varies the most depending on the route.
Resolution: Word Reaches Sedgewick (15–20 min)	The party returns, and the town reacts.
Total (2.75–4 hours)	Fits within a standard con slot.

TONE & FEEL

Bittersweet, Tense, Tender, Uneasy

TOUCHSTONES

Celtic fey folklore, the cost of a bargain

PLAY STYLE

- Conversation and investigation
- An eerie fight with a reward for the curious
- A crossing with a guardian that the party can talk or fight their way past
- A case pled, with a fight as the last resort

HOPE AND FEAR

Start the session with 1 Fear per PC. This adventure saves most of its Fear for the end. As a guide: Scene 1 is incidental (0–1 Fear), Scene 2 is minor (1–3 Fear), Scene 3 is standard (2–4 Fear), Scene 4 is minor (1–3 Fear), or standard (2–4 Fear) if the party fights the kelpie, Scene 5 is major (4–8 Fear), and the Resolution is incidental (0–1 Fear).

CHARACTERS

Any level 1 characters work for this scenario. A party continuing from Where the Watermint Grows can carry their characters straight over.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Letter in the Trunk. In Where the Watermint Grows, the party found a bundle of letters in Voss Aldren's trunk. One was signed only "Fiona." In it, she mentioned the cardinal flowers along Greywick Fen.

Rumors of a Healer. On the coast road, the party hears that a healer of some renown lives in the marsh reeds outside Sedgewick. It might be worth looking into.

The Marsh Woman. One character grew up hearing stories about "the marsh woman" from a relative. Curiosity, more than anything else, brings them to Sedgewick now. Ask that player: **"Who told you the stories, and what was the one detail they always got wrong?"**

CHARACTERS & LOCATIONS

The following NPCs and key locations play important roles in this adventure. Their full write-ups appear in the scenes where the party meets them.

Mara Quill

SEABORNE HUMAN (SHE/HER) · THE DOCKMASTER

Runs the dock and poles most of the traffic to and from Greywick Fen. She speaks of Fiona as if she were kin. She ferried the Censor to the fen a week ago.

Which of the PCs does Mara decide needs the most help out on the fen, and what does she tell them to watch out for?

Corwin Reed

SEABORNE HALFLING (HE/HIM) · THE GRIEVING SON

A small-time merchant, away on circuit when his mother died. He wants to hold someone accountable, and Fiona is the last person his mother went to for help.

What did Ellen always do for Corwin when he came home from his circuit?

Nan Pell

WANDERBORNE ORC (SHE/HER) · THE FLOWER SELLER

Fiona gave her the plants to start her stall long ago. She'll talk about them, and about her, to anyone who will listen.

Which of Nan's flowers does she insist one PC take, free of charge?

Bett Marrow

SEABORNE ELF (SHE/HER) · KEEPER OF THE SALTY REED

Founded the only tavern in Sedgewick, the Salty Reed. She hears all of the town's business. The woman in white disturbs her more than she admits.

What's Bett's favorite drink at the Salty Reed? Does she serve it to anyone else?

The Kelpie

KELPIE, GUARDIAN OF THE CROSSING (IT/ITS) · THE GUARDIAN

A water horse that drowned travelers until Fiona befriended it with the gift of a name. Now it stands as her Guardian and tests all who would meet with her.

The children of Sedgewick face the kelpie in a trial of courage; what gifts do they bring?

Fiona

WILDBORNE HUMAN (SHE/HER) · THE WARDEN OF GREYWICK FEN PARTINGS

The healer and marsh woman Sedgewick adores. Which is exactly why the Accord sent someone to Collect her.

What does Fiona quietly note about the party?

The Censor

FEY, OFFICER OF THE AMARANTH ACCORD (SHE/HER) · THE CENSOR OF UNDIMMED NAMES

Clinical and out of patience. She means to settle this matter with Fiona today.

The Censor carries a notebook with her everywhere she goes. What has she tucked between its pages to preserve it?

Sedgewick

LOCATION

A fishing town elevated on stilts at the edge of a coastal marsh. Red flowers bloom on every third doorstep or so.

The Crossing

LOCATION

Mara's stretch of channel and the old reed path out of town lead through Greywick Fen, past the Crossing Stones.

The Old House

LOCATION

A ruined fieldstone house sits not far off the path; cold blue lights gather where grief lingers.

The Willow

LOCATION

An enormous willow, grown into a house, stands at the fen's heart. Glass jars line its shelves.

SCENE ONE

Sedgewick

A town that loves its healer, with four people offering their views on the events. Investigation and conversation.

Sedgewick, a fishing town at the edge of a coastal marsh, is the kind of place where people don't feel the need to lock their doors. Everyone recognizes everyone else. In that same vein, everyone knows Fiona, and they usually have something warm to say. Word that outsiders have come seeking her will reach the docks within the hour.

Read the following aloud as the party arrives:

The road ends without warning at a grouping of buildings rising from the swamp on stilts. One dock extends into the deeper water. This town suits poled boats better than traditional roads.

Screeches ring out as gulls try to wrest the tastiest tidbits from each other in the shallows. To the left, drifting from an open window, comes the scent of frying fish, laced with green notes from the marsh.

Well-tended pots of red flowers decorate every third doorstep or so. The flowers are bright, like the cardinal they are named for. Their clusters of tubular flowers grow from a central spike, extending lip-like petals for a hummingbird's kiss. The shade startles the eye when viewed against the gray, salt-washed wood of the buildings.

The cardinal flowers that adorn the dooryards started as Fiona's habit. She handed out cuttings to protect against the fen. Ask the table: **"What do people in Sedgewick say happens to a house that lets its red flowers die?"** Whatever the answer, the villagers keep the flowers as insurance against the fen, though few can say who started the custom.

Mara Quill runs the dock and takes people to the fen. Corwin Reed sits on the steps near the dock most days. Nan Pell runs a market stall selling plant cuttings. Bettina Marrow runs the Salty Reed, Sedgewick's one tavern.

SEDGEWICK
Tier 1 Social

A fishing town on stilts where everyone knows everyone, and nearly everyone has kind words about the marsh woman.

Impulses: Spread news fast, close ranks around Fiona, keep the red flowers blooming

Difficulty: 11

Potential Adversaries: None.

FEATURES

Word Travels - Passive: Whatever the party says to one villager reaches the rest within the hour. A PC who was kind to one Sedgewick NPC has advantage on their next roll involving Sedgewick villagers. A PC who was rude has disadvantage on theirs.
Who carried the story, and how much did it grow on the way?

Red on Every Doorstep - Passive: Any villager will part with a cardinal flower for a stranger who asks politely, and Nan sells them by the bundle. Holding or wearing one matters out in the fen (see Shies from Red on the Fen Light stat block). A flower used for advantage on a roll wilts afterward and no longer counts; the fen lights' fear of red never wilts one.
Which doorstep gives first, and who answers?

A Line Gives Way - Action: At any point while the party is at the dock, Ellen Reed's old skiff snaps its mooring line. See A Line Gives Way, below.
Who on the dock is closest, and who is quickest?

Not in Front of Us - Reaction: When a PC speaks ill of Fiona where a villager can hear, that PC's next roll involving Sedgewick's villagers (other than Corwin) has disadvantage until that PC makes amends.
What does it take to win them back?

WHAT THE PARTY NEEDS TO WALK AWAY WITH

After speaking to the villagers, the party should know some of the following:

- Most people here trust Fiona, with one notable exception.
- Something guards the way to her.
- Someone unpleasant reached her before the party did.
- The woman in white asked about an old house out in the fen.