

The Business of Emotion



**A FIFTH EDITION-COMPATIBLE ADVENTURE
FOR 3-5 PCs OF 2ND-3RD LEVEL**

"The Business of Emotion" is designed to introduce new players to basic roleplaying concepts, and features opportunities for both storytelling and combat. Lanidor has not been delivering trade goods—wheat, oats, wool, lumber—to market. This adventure could begin if the party is sent on a quest to investigate Lanidor by a local governor, with a letter to substantiate their mission, but it could also be used to fill in the "next village down the road" in a sandbox setting.

GM INTRODUCTION

THE QUIET VILLAGE OF LANIDOR IS SUFFERING from a case of the love-dovies. Merchants and those with other traveling professions have returned home to find everyone in town, including their own spouses, enjoying a summer of love. Within days, the travelers' rage inexplicably passed, and they too threw caution to the wind and picked up new lovers. This debauchery has signaled a marked reduction in productivity for the city, which has failed to fulfill all of its trade contracts.

Upon investigation, the party will discover the source of this "love plague" is a gnome flower farmer. Upon the advice of a local witch, a potent love potion was brewed to drum more "emotion" to spark his otherwise lackluster sales. The pair began dripping the potion into Lanidor's water supply a few months ago.

Meanwhile, the witch has secretly been using the magic on the local wildlife to breed cross-species monstrosities. Whether more monstrosities now roam the countryside is up to you.

How the party deals with the threat can create many further plot hooks for an ongoing campaign or serve to show new players how their actions have consequences on the world. One such plot hook could be the corpse of Hermia's owlbear itself. Finding a buyer could be a quest of its own. A sportsman may want its pelt for his lodge, or its organs might be sought-after magical reagents.

WRITING PAUL OKLESH

ART JEN TRACY
ELLIS GOODSON
DAVID REVOY

MAPS MICHAEL TUNEY

EDITING JAMES HAECK

LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

BACKGROUND

Lanidor sits in a fertile valley at the confluence of two rivers, and is the breadbasket of the region. Lanidor is a peaceful place full of even-keeled and conservative people. The twin rivers, (Trom and Polyne), upon which the village was built, converge south of town into the great Polyne-Trom river and provide passageway to sea to the South facilitating trade with cities near and far. The Trom is the primary water source for the village, since the Polyne's water carries undrinkable silt and sediment from the northeastern badlands.

Plain in style and proud of their dependability, the people of Lanidor maintain trade contracts with many larger cities within the region, exchanging their abundant agricultural production for military protection.

A few years ago, a gnome named Two-lips Thistlestrip and a small group of his kin arrived in Lanidor. They established a farm north of town, along the River Trom, and began to grow exotic flowers. At first, the people of Lanidor were intrigued by the new crop, but they quickly lost interest; their plain tastes valued function over form.

Two-lips became increasingly desperate as his sales plunged. Barely able to keep his business afloat, he was approached in the field one day by Hermia, a witch who promised to help him save his foundering farm. She offered to brew an extremely potent love potion, suggesting that Two-lips might see an increase in sales if he could influence the emotions of the village. Together they devised a plan to slowly drip

the potion into the River Trom, at its source in a cave far to the north. For her part, Hermia requested no compensation from Two-lips. She used the potion's powerful magic to corrupt the local beasts of the forest, creating cross-species monstrosities like the owlbear that guards her lair at the river's source.

Their plan worked. Love filled the air in Lanidor and flowers sold like never before. Weeks later, though, the village devolved into debauchery. Realizing his mistake, Two-lips searched far and wide for Hermia, but to no avail. He ventured towards the mouth of the River Trom, but Hermia's intoxicating magic had caused the animals near Lanidor to grow savage and restless. Unable to do anything on his own, Two-lips decided to ride the wave of profits and hope that no one caught on.

ADVENTURE START

As you crest a small hill, the plains before you dip into a long, shallow valley. Two rivers slip down into this valley and converge on their way to the sea. Nestled between the rivers sits the sleepy village of Lanidor. Green and amber squares checker the valley, signaling the presence of the many farmsteads that supply the region's agricultural trade. One in particular, far to the north and blurred by the haze of distance, shines in strips of vibrant color. As you descend into the valley, you find many of the farms in ill-repair, with rotting crops and wandering livestock.

AREA A: THE ROAD INTO TOWN

ENCOUNTER A1: THE HEARTBROKEN

You walk along a wagon-rutted dirt path down the gentle slope into the valley. Between the path and the nearest field of grain rests a wagon and a handful of ragged tents. From behind the tents, you hear a frenzied shouting.

The encampment belongs to a small band of traveling merchants who recently returned home to find their spouses in the arms of new lovers. Enraged by the turn of events and scared by the Lanidor's current state, they have set up outside of town as they plan their next move.

The men have recently butchered a sheep and the bleating of the animal and smell of blood has attracted four wolves. Following closely behind the wolves are two swarms of ravens who expect an easy meal of whatever leftovers the wolves leave. The ravens will arrive in the second full round of combat.

As the party approaches, the wolves are slowly circling the merchants.

A group of five men shout and wave their arms about, trying to scare off a pack of four snarling wolves. The men stand around the recently butchered remains of a sheep as the wolves circle them menacingly. As if on cue, the wolves begin to tighten their orbits, approaching the terrified men.



Town NPCs

Francine Dunwit, Human Barmaid

A densely built woman, she looks like she could heft two bales of hay in her broad arms just as easily as she could a half dozen tankards of ale. Assumes that any present PCs are “paired” and treats them as such. If there are any “spare” (unevenly matched) PCs, assumes they’re still looking. Sounds like a plain-talkin’ country woman, don’tchaknow.

Markus Dunwit, Human Carpenter

A remarkably wide man, as solid as the wooden bar upon which he’s leaning. Currently smitten with his new love, Emilia Fulton, despite the fact that his wife stands across the bar. Will begin a fight with the PCs, involving four other men nearby, if a character returns Emilia’s advances. Has a booming, strong voice.

Emilia Fulton, Human Housewife (estranged)

A petite and very attractive young woman. As “dainty” as it comes in an agricultural town like Lanidor, although she could still probably crack walnuts with her bare hands. Will begin flirting with a random PC present at the bar, or whoever speaks to her first. Has a tawdry, small voice; a listener can almost hear her eyelashes fluttering.

Graben Turnbull, Dwarf Innkeeper

An old dwarf, hunched and not much for adventuring. Arthritic and pudgy around the middle, “fast” isn’t a word many would use to describe him. Graben was once a notable miner, but he was banished from his clan when, to his eternal shame, a mine he dug caved in part of an ancient dwarven burial ground. He has since settled in Lanidor and established the inn, The Glossy Bedpost. An opportunistic profiteer, unaffected by the potion due to his dwarven resilience, Graven remains very private. He sounds like a gravelly old western prospector—his speech is marked with many “um’s” or “er’s” like a lumbering stutter.

After the battle, the thankful merchants will invite the party to join them. They will openly discuss most things about the village but get dismissive when discussing current state of Lanidor, only warning the party to stay away. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check prompts the merchant to reveal one of the rumors from the Rumors table.

There is a 50% chance one of the men in the group will fall madly in love with the character with the highest Charisma score, much to his fellows’ dismay. You can either play this for humour or more seriously, depending on the style and mood of your players.

Rumors (1d8)

- 1 There are flowers everywhere in town, and that damned gnome’s face is plastered all over the place. **(True)**
- 2 There have been strange circles carved into the wheat the last few weeks. We usually just chalked it up to damned youths, but maybe there’s more to it than that. **(False)**
- 3 As you can see, none of the work is being done. Harvest time is on us, there should be dozens of people out here in the fields. Instead, they’re all shacked up in town like the world’s ending. **(True)**
- 4 I don’t know if I’d trust the “virgin” oracle’s visions anymore after what I saw her doing with Ol’ Turnstall...and his son.... **(True)**
- 5 I secretly started harvesting and stockpiling grain at night when everybody is sleeping. With no work being done, it’ll be worth a fortune soon! **(True)**
- 6 I always knew that my wife had something for that bastard down the street. If you see them, give them my regards! **(True)**
- 7 We don’t get many fey around here, but I’ve always just sorta known when they were around. It’s like I can smell ‘em or something. They’re around here somewhere, I just haven’t found ‘em yet.... **(False, not counting Hermia)**
- 8 We’ve spent a lot of time thinking of what could be causing this. It really seems like some mess *that witch* would be involved in, but I’m not about to go knocking on her door to find out.... **(True)**

AREA B: THE SQUARE

You pass run-down farmhouses and enter the rustic town square. The otherwise drab village is dotted with bright spots of color, which on closer inspection, are huge bouquets of vibrantly colored flowers packed along every windowsill. Fliers are posted every few feet bearing a winking gnomish face and the message, “Two-Lips’ Flowers, The Perfect Gift for Your Sweetheart!”

To the East, a building marked as the “Polished Plate” is a din of activity and sound. A building across the square is labeled the “Glossy Bedpost” by a large carved sign that also advertises nightly rates. Hastily scrawled beside the nightly rates, in a fresh coat of paint, is an added message that states, “Hourly – 2 cp.”

AREA B1: THE POLISHED PLATE

You open the door and find a simple, rustic tavern that is filled almost to capacity. A lone barmaid hustles around serving drinks and food to her many patrons.

The people inside snuggle each other closely, lit by low-burning candles as a bard in the corner croons out ballads about mythic romances. A stand by the bar is filled with fresh-cut flowers and a friendly, winking gnome. The barmaid notices new customers and ushers you inside towards the bar.

Read or paraphrase the following if any of the PCs have attracted Markus’ ire by returning Emilia’s advances (see Town NPCs sidebar on page 4).

Markus Dunwit stands abruptly, his bar stool scraping noisily across the floor before falling to the ground. With the tavern brought to immediate silence and with every eye resting on him, Markus raises a call to the locals, “Men! These strangers think they can come in here and steal our women with their charms? Let’s teach them a lesson!”

Markus pulls a heavy mason’s hammer from his belt and charges at the party. Four townsmen jump to their feet to join him.

Markus Dunwit is a thug and his four friends are guards who abandoned their posts once the potion took hold. No one in the bar seems upset that their significant others are totally enamored of other people unless their current lover is disturbed. If confronted about this fact, a NPC will nonchalantly dismiss it with a statement akin to, “The heart wants what the heart wants,” or, “I’m just glad that everyone has been able to find true love.”

Through conversation it can be discovered that the new romances all began a few months ago. Hostility, either overt or through Intimidation, is met poorly. “Whoa there, that’s not a very loving attitude, is it? We’re all here to have a good time... Can I buy you a flower?”

If asked about Two-lips, Francine will openly provide:

- ▶ “He’s just a simple farmer like everyone else.”
- ▶ “He lives up north along the River Trom—it’s a colorful place, can’t miss it!
- ▶ “He brought his whole family to grow flowers with him, bless his soul. And ain’t it lucky? People started buying his flowers left and right after he showed up!”

Because the brewery in town draws from the Trom, consuming a drink from the Polished Plate should count as a minor exposure as described in the Odds and Ends section.

AREA B2: THE GLOSSY BEDPOST

A heavy oak door swings open, revealing an interior as plainly decorated as the exterior. A simple desk sits across from the door, manned by an old, gloomy-looking dwarf.

Not looking up from shuffling a stack of receipts around, he greets you emotionlessly, “Welcome to the Glossy Bedpost, finest inn in Lanidor. How many hours do you need?”

If the party requests rooms:

“Ah well... you see, most rooms are, er, “occupied” at the moment... But 7 and 9 should

be, um, opening up..." he pauses to consult a stack of papers, "within the, er, hour. Shouldn't be takin' more than a few minutes to get the rooms tidied up and with fresh linens..."

Graben is a private and tight-lipped sort of dwarf and is not quick to provide the PCs with information. Business has been very good recently, so he only relents under pressure.

If asked about Two-lips specifically, Graben complains about the fact that, "his face is all over the dern'd place!" He also figures that Two-lips could be making a pretty coin or two off of the amorous attitude in town.

Graben is reluctant to give more information on Two-lips, but will guide the party to him if forced by a successful DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check. If the intimidation fails, or the party attempts to persuade him, he requests a deed be done to "help me out some, ya see?" To provide more information, he requests that the party clear out room number 3, which should have been emptied 23 minutes ago.

AREA B2.1: ROOM #3

You walk a short distance down the plain hallway and find a standard wooden door with a brass "3" nailed on its face. From inside you hear two voices making very content noises.

If the PCs knock, a muffled ruckus occurs inside and a voice meekly calls out, "Uh... what is it?" Whoever is inside refuses to open the door and insists that they paid for 2 hours and they still have time left. This is a lie; Graben provides a receipt confirming that they only paid for an hour. The players can force the tenants out through roleplaying or a DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. On a failure, the occupants ignore the PCs unless force is used.

Should they fail, Graben will authorize forcefully evicting them. Brandishing weapons or knocking down the door grants advantage on their next Charisma check against the occupants.

The door is sturdy and locked tight. A DC 15 Strength check is required to knock it down, or a DC 15 Dexterity check to pick the lock. Graben will request that the PCs pay 10 gp to replace the door, should they knock it down.

Inside the room are two clerics, one of a lawful good god and one of a chaotic evil god, who avoid the characters' gaze and quickly vacate the inn, their forbidden romance revealed. If the PCs evict the clerics, Graben reveals everything he knows about Two-lips, if he has not done so already, and offers to guide the party to the gnome's farm.

AREA C: TWO-LIPS' FARM

The sun burns brightly above as you travel up the River Trom, trudging up an uneven trail northwards out of town. As you round a bend in the river, you are momentarily dazzled by dozens of rainbow colored blocks of land, and almost choke on a sickly-sweet smell in the air.

A wide field of flowers surrounds a quaint farmstead in the distance. Outside, a crew of small figures loads a cart with colorful bundles of flowers.

Inside the farmhouse, Two-lips directs a crew of gnome workers around the farm. He blanches at the sight of the party, stammering, "You... you, you...? What are you doing here? Who are you?" Two-lips does his best to hide the fact that he's behind the recent outbreak of lovestruck villagers (shooing the party, trying to slip away to oversee the farm, insisting that he's too busy), but his defenses are pretty thin. After a bit of pressing (a DC 12 Charisma [Intimidation or Persuasion] check, or any explicit threat of violence), he caves and begins to confess.

While Two-lips is superficially apologetic about the incident and explains how he's attempting to "play it straight" or "make an honest living for once," he also seems to delight in how successful the plan has been in saving his farm.

If pressed, he will insist that the plan with the love potion was all Hermia's idea, and that all he

did was purchase the ingredients she requested. He will also direct the party towards the cave where he and Hermia set up the potion to drip into the Trom, but will not accompany them.

Two-lips, an experienced merchant, will react negatively to any attempts of extortion by the party, but he is “always willing to make a deal” and will pay handsomely to avoid punishment: 75 gp and “a year’s supply of white roses.”

Wild creatures now prowl the lands between Lanidor and the cave; including a pack of five **dire wolves**. Should the party encounter these wolves, they are attacked along the riverbank, and the wolves attempt to knock them into the river, exposing them to the love potion (Odds and Ends).

AREA D: THE TUNNEL OF LOVE

AREA D1: THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE

After traveling for several hours, you find a dense forest on the edge of the small mountain range, marking the end of the valley. The canopy of the forest before you is ominously thick, allowing little light through.

The lazy, meandering river gains pace as you exit the valley and follow it to a nearby mountain. At the base of the mountain you find the mouth of a large cavern, and the roar of water echoes from within.

Intelligence (Investigation) checks outside the cave find the following:

- ▶ DC 10: Large, bear-shaped footprints in the mud along the river bank.
- ▶ DC 15: Tracks showing that whatever left the footprints dragged a large animal. These tracks can be followed to the corpse of a horse in the bushes.

The horse was attacked, dragged, and partially eaten by a large beast. Further Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) checks reveal:

- ▶ DC 10: Deep, parallel claw marks along the horse’s flank.
- ▶ DC 18: A single owl feather in a nearby bush.

Out-of-Town NPCs

Two-lips Thistlestrip, Gnome Flower Farmer

A portly, graying gnome with shifty eyes and a furrowed brow. The occasional glint of greed still flickers across his face with a crooked smile. Two-lips would sell his own mother if the price was right, and was kept at arms’ length by most of the other gnomes in his home village. His one true skill (aside from fattening his own pockets) was his green thumb. When it came time to leave the gnome village (after all but robbing it blind) he decided to try his hand at “an honest living” and started a farm on the outskirts of Lanidor. Notable facts: Greedy, but not callous. Confident even in defeat, but extremely paranoid. Gesticulates wildly with his hands as he speaks. Sounds Like: A fast talking aggressive salesman.

Hermia, Fey Witch

While disguised, she appears to be a wild but physically attractive hermit. In her true form she has dark green, warty skin and stands hunch-backed, her arms stretching to unnatural length and ending in clawed fingers. Though she is a hermit that lives far outside of town, Hermia willingly assists those foolish enough to seek her aid, but invariably twists their greed to further her magical experiments. Notable facts: Years ago she betrayed her coven, leading to her exile and the loss of most of her power. A shadow of her former glory, she will play herself off as a tragic figure to appear sympathetic. Sounds Like: Under disguise, a sultry nature spirit. In her true form, a gravel-throated, bitter old lady.

AREA D2: THE THROAT OF THE CAVE

As the players enter the cave, they soon find themselves standing above the river as it has cut its way through the stone.

The ground along the river’s edge (marked on the map) has been partially eroded by the river’s rapid waters. The first Medium or larger creature that steps in this area causes a five-foot patch to crumble. The player must make a DC 12 Dexterity

The **owlbear** smelled the PCs when they entered the cave, but obeys Hermia's orders, and dutifully guards the cauldron chamber. It watches the PCs, but attacks if they get within 10 feet of the cauldron.

On the second round of combat, Hermia arrives on the scene, having invisibly watched the party from beside her owlbear. She remains under her magical disguise as she approaches.

Hermia the Witch

Medium fey, neutral evil

AC 14 (natural armor)

HP 38 (5d8+15)

Speed 30 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Hermia's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *acid splash*, *shocking grasp*; *ray of sickness*, *witch bolt*

Actions

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2d6+4 slashing damage.

Unseen Watcher. Hermia may choose to become invisible as a bonus action as long as she takes no other actions and does not move on the turn she becomes invisible. Moving or taking any actions ends the invisibility effect.

Magical Disguise. As an action, Hermia may cast *disguise self* at will. This effect is permanent, unless she chooses to end it as a bonus action.

Hermia will not attack immediately, and momentarily calls off her owlbear to parley with the PCs. However, she instantly retaliates if attacked, if the players attack her owlbear after she arrives, or if she overhears the party discussing plans to destroy her potion setup.

If Hermia attacks or is attacked:



The beautiful female form before you dissolves, leaving a thin wisp of magical essence hanging in the air. A hideous, green-skinned monster now stands in her place. Her mouth opens wide as she cackles wickedly, revealing the sharp points of many shattered teeth. Her long arms and sharp claws drag behind her as she approaches. "You dare to disrupt my experiments?" she cries out. "This cave will be your grave!"

The scaffolding supporting the cauldron has 15 hit points and AC 10. It is resistant to piercing damage. It automatically fails saving throws against spells with an area of effect, like fireball. Its wood is damp from the river water, and it ignores the first 5 points of fire damage it takes each day.

If inspected, the scaffolding upon which the cauldron of love potion rests is obviously rickety. A DC 11 Investigation check reveals the structure is slightly off level, likely leading to the overdosing.

If the scaffolding is destroyed, the cauldron drops vertically towards the riverbank, pausing momentarily as it spins on its edge above the

ledge. Attempts to stop it from falling in will require a PC's reaction and should be judged based on a DC 16 Dexterity check (to catch it) and DC 13 Strength check (to hold onto it). Otherwise, it slowly rotates (for maximum drama) before toppling over the ledge, spilling the entire contents of the cauldron into the river—see the Spillage section of Resolving the Adventure.

RESOLVING THE ADVENTURE

SPILLAGE

Should the party act to remove the cauldron from the scaffolding, it must be both lifted and balanced. Lifting the cauldron requires a DC 13 Strength check, and balancing it requires a DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

On a failure on either check, roll a d% to determine the amount spilled. For each 10% (rounded down) spilled up to 50%, add 1 month to a base 6 month time period for the effect to dissipate. A character who fails one of the two checks can still hold onto the cauldron, but failing both causes the character to drop it.

If 50% or more of the cauldron is spilled (including if the cauldron falls into the river), the Trom will forever bear a minor love effect and become a local legend. In time, it may grow to attract love-seekers and potion makers from near and far. This does little to resolve the supply shortages, which may cause a regional famine unless Lanidor is brought to its senses.

HERMIA IS SPARED

Hermia can be forced to create an antidote if she is left alive. "The original potion was based on the essence of voles, because they find true love and mate for life. The opposite of the vole is the praying mantis, as they only mate once ... and there's no romance at all there," she explains. The potion she makes will cure the effect of the love potion, but if she's left to her own devices she'll add a bit of magic (DC 15 Intelligence [Arcana] to notice) that will create uncontrollable mutations, turning the townsfolk into hideous aberrations that proceed to plague the countryside and will require extermination.

HERMIA IS KILLED

Without Hermia's knowledge of the potion's contents, creating an antidote will be quite an undertaking and require many far-off components and a great deal of arcane knowledge. A DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the first component is a live praying mantis—this at least can be found in any trade city.

DEALING WITH TWO-LIPS

Whether the party punishes Two-lips for the trouble he's caused, or how they exact retribution, should be left for them to decide. Was it an honest (if poorly conceived, researched, planned, and executed) mistake, or was it something more nefarious? GMs should reward creativity when dealing with Two-lips.

ODDS AND ENDS

DETECT MAGIC

Should the parties cast *detect magic* while within 30 feet of the River Trom, they find the river itself radiates magic of the enchantment school.

INTERACTING WITH THE WATER

At several points throughout the adventure, whether through drinking beer in the village or falling into the river while fighting in the cave, the

PCs may come into contact with the enchanted water from the Trom.

The effects of the potion build with exposure and should be tracked for each PC. A minor exposure (drinking, washing, etc.) adds one point, while a severe exposure (falling into the river, etc.) adds three points. PCs with the fey ancestry or dwarven resilience racial traits have a 50% chance to resist gaining a level of exposure. This effect wears off after 1d6 days of not being exposed to the water.

Exposure Tracking

Exposure	Effect
1 (Slight)	A wave of peacefulness and confidence washes over the PC. At all exposure levels, the PC has advantage on Charisma checks.
2-3 (Low)	The affected PC immediately favors the first person of any gender they see after reaching this level of exposure. The PC compulsively does minor things to try to gain the favored person's attention.
4-5 (Medium)	Gaining the attention of his or her favored person is now the PC's primary concern. The PC behaves as though affected by a <i>charm person</i> spell cast by the favored person and will act irrationally to justify their actions.
6+ (High)	The PC is spellbound. If his or her favored person says "jump," the PC will ask "how high, my love?" If the PC's favored person provides a simple instruction ("attack that creature," "run over there"), the PC must make a DC 13 Wisdom save; if the PC fails this save, they must act as instructed, as per the <i>suggestion</i> spell. If the PC succeeds on the save, he or she may act freely this time, but the spellbound effect remains.

Player Character	Exposure Level						Player Character	Exposure Level					
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6