

HOW DID YOU DIE?



5e one-shot for 5th level adventurers

Crosshill Studios - Patreon

Tuonela

Tuonela is where the souls go when they die. It is a dark place, located on the wrong side of the world. There is no light and a mysterious mist floats everywhere. Great forests of lifeless trees cover the vast majority of Tuonela. Dark pine trees loom over small paths that lead to who-knows-where.

In the middle of Tuonela flows a river. The dead emerge from it and travel towards the castle of Tuoni, their final resting place. It is almost completely quiet in Tuonela. Not even the river makes any noise.

Tuonela Effects

Each character has memories equal to their Charisma + Wisdom + Intelligence modifiers (minimum of 2). They can use their memories in different ways during the one shot.

If a character fails a skill check, saving throw or an attack roll, they can turn it into a success by spending one memory.

When spending memories, encourage the players to explain which memory they forget. If a character spends their final memory, they become a Forgotten, forgetting who they are. Otherwise losing memories has no mechanical effect.

If a humanoid falls to 0 hp they don't begin making death saves. Instead their max hp drops to half (rounded up) and they lose a memory. Humanoids always have at least one hp and cannot die in Tuonela (they are already dead).

The characters cannot gain benefits of long rest once in Tuonela. They are able to have a Short Rest once during this adventure.

The adventure has five encounters: Lampreys, Shop, Village, Forgotten and Castle. If the adventure is going too quickly, you might add random encounters.

Random Encounters

When the party travels in the quiet forests of Tuonela, they might encounter many things. Roll 1d8 for each hour of traveling.

- 1 The character with the highest passive perception has a sudden feeling that they are being watched. Nothing is found if investigated.
- 2 A pitch black swan flies over the characters. It sings with a high and longing voice. Each character has to succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or lose one memory.
- 3 The party finds an old sauna. The stove is icy cold and cannot be lit by any means.
- 4 The party meets a recently dead woman, asking them if they know the directions to the Castle of Tuoni.
- 5 2d6 bandits try to rob the party for memories. Upon dropping to 0 hp, the bandits do not die but retreat back to the forest.
- 6 The party stumbles upon an undead orchestra playing melancholic music. Four humans play drums and kantele. Everybody that hears the music must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be forced to join the band. A character can cover their ears to prevent themselves from hearing the music.
- 7 A forgotten attacks the party in the woods. (See Appendix)
- 8 Roll twice.

The Adventure

The adventure starts with the introduction of each character, including their past and deeds. Once everyone is introduced, a question is asked:

HOW DID YOU DIE?

The players then describe how their character died. Once ready, they start their journey in Tuonela, land of the dead.

Read out loud

You open your eyes but you only see darkness. You cannot see anything but you can feel the cold water around you. You can feel yourself sinking towards the bottom, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot swim up. It is almost like you weighted a thousand stones.

Suddenly you see light. Not from up but from down. Running out of breath, this seems like your only hope and you follow the light. With your last bit of strength you swim towards it, deeper and deeper, only to suddenly breach a surface of a dark river.

One by one each of your heads emerge from the cold and calm water. The sky is pitch black and the only light seems to come from strange mist that seems to float everywhere in this place. Maybe 100 feet from away, you can see the river bank, full of tall, dark pine trees. The water is starting to feel freezing cold. What do you do?

Lampreys

When the characters are about to reach the shore, they are attacked by 6 Lampreys of Tuonela (see Appendix). The Lampreys feed on recently-dead and suck their remaining life force. Have the first lamprey attack the character with the lowest passive perception.

As you are nearly on the shore, one of you suddenly feels a great pain in their leg. When you turn to look, you see a large, thin fish, maybe 3 feet in length, attached to your leg. The creature has ten eyes, five on both sides of its body. Its mouth is full of tiny sharp teeth. You can feel your remaining life force starting to be sucked out of your body. The rest of you see five more of these creatures circling you. Roll initiative!

During the fight, suggest using the memories to succeed in checks and attacks.

If the fight seems too easy, have 3 more lampreys join the fight. Make sure the players realize they don't have to kill the lampreys, since they won't follow them on land. Once on shore, the players can start traveling

Shop

Behind the trees you see a glimpse of an old wooden hut. Its roof is growing moss and weeds, and the walls are starting to rot. There are no windows, only a wooden door, which is slightly open.



If the characters go in

You step into a dark room, which seems to be the only room in the whole building. In the back wall you see shelves, on top of which there are different items, each old but not broken. In front of the shelves there is a desk and behind it is a creature. This creature, humanoid in shape, has almost a skeleton-like appearance, only a thin layer of skin is covering his bones. The creature starts to speak in a raspy voice: "Welcome to my shop, what would you like?"

The shopkeeper is a withered old thing, no longer a human. He is ancient and is sustaining himself on the memories of his customers, although needing more and more memories day by day. He is not interested in any other form of payment than memories.

The shops inventory includes:

- Any Weapon +1
- Hat of Vermin
- Cloak of Elvenkind
- Immovable Rod
- Shield +1
- Amulet of Health

Each item costs one memory. Trying to take the items by force, also costs one memory per item.

Village

You see a small group of buildings in the middle of the forest. In the middle there appears to be a few dozen creatures sitting around a dim campfire. You can hear some instruments and singing. You cannot recognize the song however, it sounds like half of the lyrics are missing.

This is a village of the dead. Nobody remembers their names, but some still remember more than others. The villagers tell the characters about the scary forgotten, dead that have lost themselves completely, that roam around the woods. To not become a forgotten themselves, the characters should head to the castle of Tuoni.

The villagers enjoy music and if the characters perform for them, they gain inspiration. This is also a good place to have a short rest.

Forgotten

You suddenly hear branches breaking in front of you, and on your path steps a creature. It almost looks like a human, although its face is completely pale, and emotionless. Its white eyes don't seem to be looking anywhere. It stands still a moment, almost like it didn't notice you. Then it suddenly sprints towards you. Roll initiative!

The forgotten was once a brave warrior. When he died, he felt like it was not his time to go yet, so he swore to find a way out of Tuonela. His search for a means to escape lasted for decades, but he eventually found it. Unfortunately, the decades in Tuonela had not been kind to him and he had already forgotten why he wanted out. Eventually he also forgot the key out.

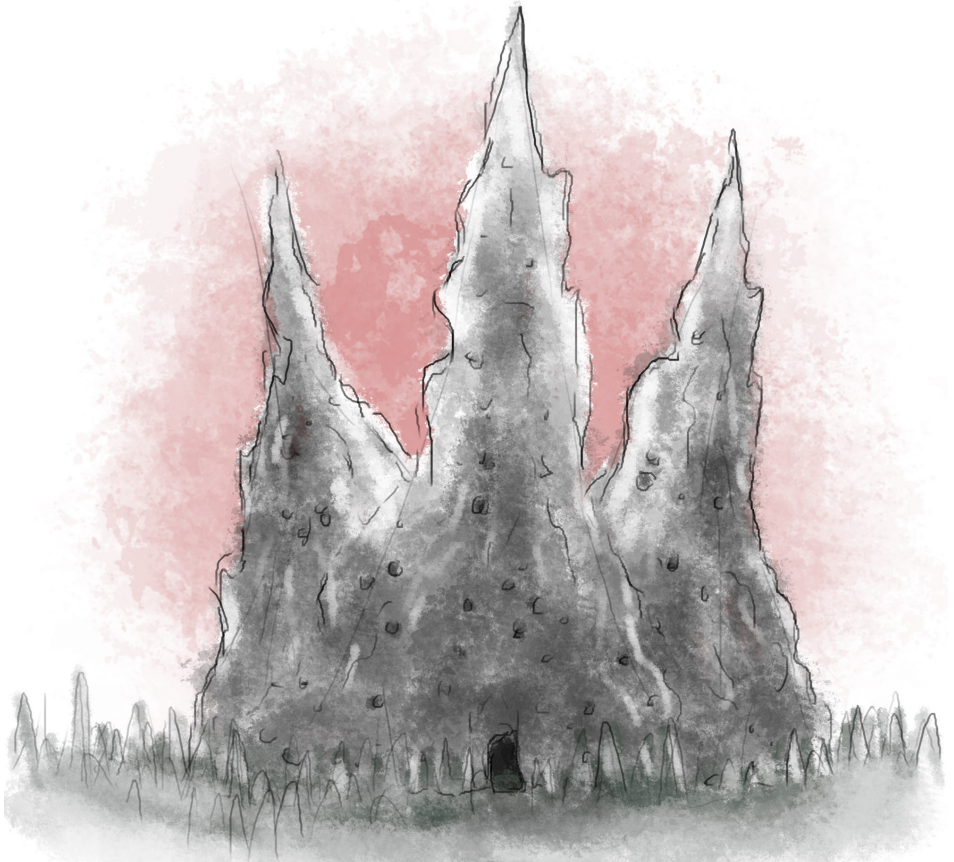
A glimpse of the memory comes back when the forgotten sees the characters fight, because they remind him of himself, a brave warrior and adventurer. He still doesn't remember who he is or how to get out, but he knows where that memory is: In the Castle of Tuoni.

When the forgotten is defeated he doesn't die but instead calms down. The forgotten asks them to bring him back his memory from the Castle of Tuoni. He gives them his final memory, a memory of the memory, and then falls into a sleep-like state. The character who takes the memory will regain one memory.

Castle

You see a huge three peaked mountain that has taken a castle-like shape. Ominous window-like caves spot the exterior wall, and you can see the main gate at the base, a huge cavern leading inside the mountain.

At the gate, there is a line of creatures, waiting to get in. Just at the doorway of the cave there is a huge, four meters tall creature with black robes and hood veiling his face. This is Tuoni - god of Death. He holds a giant book and a quill, marking down something every time the line progresses. On Tuoni's belt you can see a chain with a lot of keys.



Tuoni speaks to everyone who tries to get in:

“Who does wander to my small gate?
Why does one come all this way now?
Tell me, what name did they give you.
Tell me how your end came to be.”

The characters have to answer truthfully to get in.

“Lot of people I let in here.
Few escape these walls I tell you.
Now good night my sweet, sweet children.
Daughter of mine shows you the way.”

A character can try to steal the keys with a successful DC 20 sleight of hand check as the characters walk past Tuoni. On a failure Tuoni does not seem to notice but the character is unable to get the keys and the opportunity is wasted.

You see a long dark hallway which seems to continue forever. There are doors on both sides of the hallway, each having a name written on them. Tuoni's daughter is waiting for you. She is a tall woman with raven black hair, pale skin and simple black clothes. She wields a lantern and without saying a word she starts leading you down the hallway.

Characters are let into the castle. The doors on each side of the hallway lead to the rooms of the dead, their final resting places. When the characters have walked for a while they see that another hallway splits to right. They can see a pair of huge doors in the end. The character with the memory of the forgotten can feel the memory pulling towards the door. That's where the memories are stored.

The characters can try to slip away but if they don't think of anything, they see a random door opening and a guest wandering out. The Daughter shows them to stop and goes to help the guest back to their sleep. Now is the chance!

Memory Heist

The door is locked. It can be opened if the characters stole Tuoni's keys but also if they succeed on a DC 25 Thieves tools check. The door has 50 HP and resistance to all nonmagical damage. If the characters make a noise the guests will wake up and start whispering to be quiet. Tuoni will send two of his sons to check out the noise.

Inside is a large room with memories floating around. Characters see glimpses of different lives of different people, some memories of agony, some of joy, most of normal good lives. The characters can try to find the correct memory with a DC 20 Investigation check. The character who took the forgotten's memory will have advantage on this check.

The characters can also try looking for their own memories. Finding one is DC 20 and on a success, they regain one memory back

The characters have 2d4 rounds before the Sons come in. The only way out is past Tuoni.

Escape

When players get out of the room, a chase scene begins. The chase scene has four turns. On each turn each character can try to do something to help them escape. The rounds are as following:

1. Main hallway
2. Past Tuoni
3. Into the woods
4. To the forgotten.

All checks are DC 15. If on any round less than half of the characters succeed, the party is caught. The characters can once again use their remaining memories to succeed.

When the characters reach the forgotten, they wake him up by giving him the memory. The memory turns into a key, which the forgotten then shoves into the ground opening a portal of light. Right when the characters are about to jump into the portal, Tuoni appears before them and time seems to stop. Tuoni speaks to the characters:

“If you wish to get out of here
you won't be the same you once were
You will have a scar from all this
You shall wield it until world ends”

“You shall feel pain you have not had
Never felt you this kind before
Mind of yours is broken up there
body of yours is even worse”

“I will give you just this one chance
I will ask you only one time
Stay here and you will have good sleep
there won't be the weight nor your pain”

Characters feel a sensation that they want to stay and forget all. They want to rest, they are tired, they don't remember well why they would leave or who they are.

The characters make a check of their choice using any ability score. It depicts different ways to resist the call of the grave

- Strength: pulling through with your might
- Dexterity: slipping away unnoticed
- Constitution: Withstanding death
- Intelligence: Remembering why you want out
- Wisdom: Knowing you should get out
- Charisma: Getting out by pure strength of will

Before the check the characters can give each other their memories.

After the check, the result is multiplied by the amount of memories left. Results are as follows:

- 0 The character turns into a forgotten.
- 1-19 The character stays in Tuonela and eventually goes to the castle to sleep forever.
- 20-39 The character escapes but is horribly scarred. They have a permanent mark from the near death experience. They most likely become mad. They don't regain their memories.
- 40-59 The Character escapes and is scarred but is able to continue their life as well as they can. They regain their previous memories but don't remember Tuonela.
- 60+ The character wakes up with only cosmetic changes. And they remember everything! They remember their adventure in Tuonela and will most likely seek out their companions in the future.

Appendix

Map of Tuonela



Statblocks

LAMPREY OF TUONELA

Small monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 5 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The lamprey can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. If isn't attached to a creature, the lamprey makes one Bite attack and one Water Pull attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8 + 4 piercing damage, and the lamprey attaches to the target. While attached, the lamprey can't make Bite attacks. Instead, the target takes 8 (1d8 + 4) necrotic damage at the start of each of the lamprey's turns. The lamprey can detach itself as a bonus action. A creature, including the target, can use its action to do a DC 13 Strength check to detach the lamprey.

Water Pull. The lamprey creates a wave towards it. Every creature of lamprey's choice within 15 ft. of the lamprey has to make DC 13 Strength saving throw or be pulled next to the lamprey.

Lampreys of Tuonela feed on the remaining life force of the recently dead souls. They inhabit the great river and attach themselves to their prey.



FORGOTTEN

Medium undead, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but cannot speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The forgotten makes one Mind Punch attack and one Howl of Forgetting attack if available.

Mind Punch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) psychic damage.

Howl of Forgetting (Recharge 5-6). Each creature within 30 feet of the forgotten that can hear it must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a target takes 11 (2d8 + 2) psychic damage and must use its reaction to make a melee weapon attack against one creature of the forgotten's choice that the forgotten can see. Constructs and Undead are immune to this effect.

A forgotten is a dead soul that has resisted the call of the Castle of Tuoni too long. Tuonela has drained their memories completely and they no longer know who they are. The forgotten wander the woods of Tuonela without a place to go. They are unpredictable and can attack unprovoked.

In battle the forgotten use their horrifying scream, which makes everyone who hears it forget themselves for a moment, turning on their allies.



A forgotten warrior



You have died.

You wake up from a river. The sky is pitch black and the water freezing cold. In the distance you can see a huge castle. You feel the castle calling you.

Welcome to Tuonela.