

CHARACTER STORY: SAGE

Knowledge is like a plant. Given fertile soil and nourishment it blossoms and expands, nurturing and supporting everything around. It is truly a beautiful thing. And much like a plant – it is not meant to be contained.



The ancient buildings of the Blackmoor Circle were covered in creeping vines – I remember feeling a serene, tranquil air whenever I would pass my hand over the dark stones and the leaves enveloping them. I have spent a long time there with others who dedicated their lives to pursuit of knowledge. It felt like an island of sanity, civility and peace amidst the swirling sea of violence and chaos that has consumed our lands ever since the Calamity struck.

Located on the very edge of a vast marshland teeming with all manner of wildlife, it provided a fertile source of curious specimens and rare ingredients to examine, study and combine as my colleagues and I sought to salvage and expand the knowledge that our civilization once possessed. I remember these early days – the long nights poring over ancient texts, the insightful conversations with the wise elders, eye-opening expeditions into the swamp. My mind was swelling with knowledge and my heart was soaring with the hope that this knowledge could help so many people – more full bellies, more cured diseases, less suffering and death.

I soon found out the reason why the Blackmoor Circle could stay as serene and unharmed as it did. The knowledge we produced was a valuable commodity and those who could pay for it were the ones who benefitted from it most. The guards to keep the monsters at bay, the lavish meals, the flowing robes, the incense, the antique quills – all that came at a cost and the elders were prudent in exacting a price to keep our sanctuary as safe and comfortable as they could. Except it meant that those who could not pay could not benefit from our wisdom. And almost nobody could pay. I remember sitting in my room dumbfounded by my realization that all that we produce – the wisdom filling our books in exquisite calligraphy, the poultices able to cure many ailments – none of that was helping the common people. I decided to change that.

My forays out from the Circle started with visits to the neighboring villages. I went, I helped those who suffered, I swore them to secrecy and I would come back. A cured sickness in one hamlet, a fertile seed to plant in another – I tried to spread the wealth of our knowledge as far as I could reach without raising suspicion. The elders were starting to get concerned that my expeditions did not produce the results they once did – I came back empty handed blaming poor luck and focused on library research instead, planning my next journey.

I tried to be generous with what I could offer, and I went too far. One of the village elders begged for a book that he thought would be in our library's archives. A simple family tree, wanted to know who his forefathers were. I snuck it out from the Circle and I brought it to him. The book itself, while full of names, seemed to possess some additional glyphs and diagrams that I could not quite place, but in my desire to help, I did not ask for an explanation.

We received news later that the village was under attack by a corrupt monster emerging seemingly out of nowhere. Many lives were lost. The book was found in the splintered ruins of the elder's house – occult writing having awakened the dark energies within. It all came back to me. For much like a plant that has been twisted into a misshapen wretched thing by the corrupted soil it grows from – knowledge can be deadly in the wrong hands.

I confessed, for I could not bear to keep such a secret.

My exile from the Circle was swift. I was not to return under the penalty of death.

My travels were hard – my robe covered in mud, my legs aching, my vision swimming from hunger and weariness. Spending most of my life in the sheltered confines of the Blackmoor Circle, I was ill prepared for the perils and tribulations of the outside world. Yet if there was one thing I knew how to do – it was how to learn. So, I learned. I went from village to village begging in one place, doing dirty manual labour in another, helping cure an illness in third. The healing was hard with no access to the Circle's herbs – I knew what would help and had no way of obtaining the needed ingredient. I had to say that I could not help often – the people's gazes immediately drowned in desperation.

Yet I helped as much as I could, and sometimes people helped me in return. Drenched, dirty and hungry, for the first time in a long time – I no longer felt ashamed of what I was doing.

The life of wandering led me to a hamlet on the very edge of the Scarred Wastelands – the region most affected by the Calamity. I lived there for many years, trying to leave my past behind, helping deliver babies and staving off diseases that often threatened the hamlet's inhabitants. I looked after children and I knew and cared for the people who eked out an existence on the verge of monster-infested wastes. I always wished there would be a way to obtain a good supply of ingredients for my healing and an opportunity finally presented itself in the strangest manner.

A hooded young man spoke of mysterious ruins of a long-forgotten civilization, rich in knowledge and advanced in the ways of alchemy and medicine. The journey to the ruins would be fraught with peril, he warned, but the rewards we could find would be worth the risk. He needed someone familiar with the ancient lore to help with the expedition and sought me out, for my knowledge resulted in somewhat of a reputation.

My eyes gleamed at the thought of having so much to aid me in helping the people. With such tools at my disposal, I could make a real difference, to put my knowledge to work doing good for all – not just those living a life of luxury. For too long my knowledge felt impotent and useless. I had to agree.