



The Man of the White Houses

Physical traits An old man, dressed in what was once a luxurious robe, now worn and frayed with time.

Personality Wise, resentful, inquisitive.

Behavior He is obsessed with watching his rival, the King who banished him from court. He will shamelessly interrogate anyone he encounters in order to learn about their relationship with the King and their opinion of him.

Acting traits He feels superior to everyone else. He is used to his word being law and to everyone fearing him, as they once did when he was the official court wizard.

Background The King banished him, tired of his dark practices. The man fled to his secret refuge deep in the forest, the White Houses. One night, he returned to the King's palace and, in revenge, kidnapped his three daughters and his eldest son. He transformed the son into a blue bird, which he gifted to the enemy kingdom. The daughters he keeps locked away in a very special room within one of the White Houses.

Since then, every day he climbs a small tower high in the mountains and spies on his former King for hours, savoring the sight of him slowly descending into madness.

He has lived this way for years, but he has a problem: he needs to renew his staff of servants. Since the last ones were untrustworthy, he turned them into birds, one by one. Some he even cooked and ate, but the rest serve as his eyes in the White Houses when he is absent.

He is accustomed to the comforts of the palace, so whenever an adventurer appears at his houses, he always offers them a night's lodging in exchange for a household chore. During the night, he decides if the visitor is trustworthy and, if so, offers them work as a cook, servant, or stable boy.

Aware of his old age, he not only seeks new servants but also hopes that one day one of these visitors will prove to have enough spirit to become his apprentice or else join the chorus of his little birds.

The White Houses

Deep in the forest lies a cluster of white houses. Only the Man of the White Houses lives there. The houses are rather neglected, but with a bit of care they could even become cozy. Around them, some crows caw as if announcing your arrival.

Upon entering, a shiver runs through your body. The layout of the houses is labyrinthine, and it is easy to get lost walking through the long, narrow hallways. The smell of dampness and bird droppings fills your nostrils. Light barely filters through the shutters covering the windows, and the sound of the creaking wooden floors follows you everywhere.

Old furniture is scattered throughout, along with many cages most empty or broken, but some still holding birds: a turtledove, a pigeon, a robin. As you walk through the house, you get the unsettling feeling that the birds are watching you, though in a strange way.

In the largest house, at the end of one corridor, there is a peculiar door. The door is made of finer wood than the rest and, covering its entire surface, a relief carving depicts a vast garden with three young women dancing around a fountain. When the Man of the White Houses is absent, you can hear the voices of young women talking or sobbing behind this door.

If you accept the job offered by the Man of the White Houses, he will hand you a set of keys and warn you:

"You may go wherever you think necessary, but never, ever dare open the door at the back. If you do, I will know, and I will drink every last drop of your blood."

The hair on your arms stands on end, and something in his tone tells you that he is not joking.

