

The Pilgrimage



by Åsa Roos

An adventure with religious overtones for Dragon Age RPG
The adventure is part of the 20,000 characters project

The illustration is made by the writer



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The Pilgrimage

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Sister Araina looked up from her chores. She still had five patients in the cottage hospital, looking to be healed of Maker knows what. She was bone tired, exhaustion gnawing at her like a hungry wolf. Despite her tiredness, and despite the endless complaints and moans of the sick, she went to wash her hands. She noted that the Elfroot poultices were running low, and that the healing salves she asked Layna to mix still weren't in their cracked and chipped jars. Sister Araina was weary to her soul.

Sighing heavily, the only sigh she would allow herself today, she called for the next patient. A young girl, blessed with the pure features of Andraste herself, walked through the door.

"Sit down, my friend, and let me see if I can ease your pain."

The girl jumped up at the bed, looking at Sister Araina. "Sister, I don't think you understand. I'm here to ease your suffering. The Maker has a purpose for you."

Caveat lector!

The Pilgrimage is an adventure in the 20.000 characters project. This ideas is taken from the book "Blood in Ferelden" by Green Ronin for the RPG Dragon Age.

Since it is an adventure in the 20.0000 characters project, it is not a complete adventure and it hasn't been playtested. I encourage the GM to read through the adventure carefully in order to catch any weaknesses and add information where needed, such as with maps.

The Mood

The Pilgrimage is a mysterious adventure, intended to keep the characters guessing. Is the Maker really working through sister Araina, or is it just nonsense fabricated by an overworked chantry sister?

Synopsis

Sister Araina from the Denerim Chantry has been given a mission by the Maker, or at least that's what she says. The Revered Mother of the Chantry has agreed to let sister Araina to travel from Denerim to the Korcari Wilds, but only with an armed escort. The Revered Mother is not convinced, but sister Araina has been working very hard the last few months and needs a change of scenery.

The characters join the story when the Revered Mother puts out a discreet call for adventurers who can help her escort sister Araina to the Korcari Wilds. In other words, the characters are given the mission to escort sister Araina.

Even from the start, the otherworldliness radiating from Araina should be apparent. She's lit by an inner fire. The farther they travel together, the more miracles will be performed by the good sister.

During the travels, she'll perform what could be described as magic, but sister Araina have no magical skills. She's not a mage. Her reputation spreads and when the sister and her escort passes through Arl Brockston's lands, the Arl becomes suspicious and wants to perform the rite of Tranquility on her, or have

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her imprisoned in a Mage tower. In the eyes of Arl Brockston, she's an apostate and should be executed.

The characters will have to make several choices along their journey, and the most difficult comes at the end. They can follow the path of least resistance and hand sister Araina over or take the more difficult path, and oppose Arl Brockston and fight for Araina's life.

Introduction to the adventure

Nicolai Crane, a well known and respected Templar, contacts the characters. He has found the characters through a request from the Revered Mother Julia in the Denerim Chantry. Their reputation as trustworthy and reliable has spread to the Chantry. Ser Crane needs help escorting one of the Chantry sisters to the Korcari Wilds. Ser Crane doesn't want to give any details about the mission, but he does mention he'll pay extra for no questions asked.

If the characters accept the mission, Ser Crane gives them money up front, and asks them to be at the market outside the Denerim Chantry in two days just before dawn. They'll meet Ser Crane there. Together with sister Araina whom they are to escort.

This means that the characters have at least a day to use the money Ser Crane has given them. It's up to the GM to determine the sum.

Sister Araina

Before they even meet sister Araina, rumors about her miracles are talked about among merchants, visitors at the market and others.

It's told that a person visiting Araina when they are sick will always be helped. It's said that the fire of the Maker burns in Araina. It's said that her prayers makes the Maker listen, smile and give.

A concrete story of how the sister has helped and created miracles is told at the Pearl. If they reveal that they're to escort Araina, an old man by the fire speaks up.

"Araina helped my sister", he says. "When her husband died, five years ago, Katrin was childless after a long marriage. Katrin didn't want to remarry, but she was desperate for a child. A daughter or son to pass the family along. Just a few days after the husband died, she prayed at the chantry together with sister Araina. Eight months later she gave birth to a son and a daughter. They're four years old now. Miracles. The gift of the Maker through sister Araina."

There is of course room for interpretation in the story. Maybe Katrin was already pregnant when her husband died, she may have been unfaithful and so on. The man is however convinced it was the Maker - through Araina - who made sure his sister got the children she had always wanted.

Meeting sister Araina

When the characters arrive at the market at dawn, sister Araina and Ser Crane are already there waiting for them. Sister Araina is a short and chubby woman in her forties. She's dressed in a Chantry dress and the sun of the

Maker is glowing from her chest and skirt. Araina looks completely normal until she welcomes the characters with a warm smile. Her hands are warm and soft as she greets them by holding their hands in both of hers. A fresh smell of herbs and freshly cut hay accompanies her. When she smiles, she appears as if she's surrounded by light.

Ser Crane handles the introductions and after a short farewell where sister Araina blesses Ser Crane it's time to head out towards the wilderness.

The Road to the Wilds

The way the characters and sister Araina takes should be the western road towards Ostagar. The road follows the Drakon River towards South Reach and Lothing. At Lothing they can use the Imperial Highway towards Ostagar and from there it's not too far from the Korcari Wilds. The whole journey is approximately 40 miles.

The village by the River Drakon

Just a few days after the company has left Denerim, sister Araina asks them to stop at a little village she's often visited.

The villagers are very happy to see sister Araina, but something in the village is terribly wrong. Nothing growing in the fields and a large bonfire with trees, cattle and grain is burning right outside the village. The villagers tell the characters that the Drakon River has been poisoned by an apostate mage who has settled upstream. They think that they've poisoned the river with their unholy experiments.

The villagers ask sister Araina for help. Sister Araina promises to pray by the river and takes the characters aside. "These people are suffering underneath this affliction. Help me right the world and ease their pain."

The characters can decline, but in that case sister Araina will elect to continue on her own.

Eye to eye with the apostate

The characters head off towards the apostate's home, upstream along the Drakon River. After an hour walking, the river Drakon becomes dirtier and dirtier until it takes on a blackish red color that obfuscate the bottom. Dead fish are floating on the surface. After another short walk, they arrive at the apostate's home. It's a water wheel placed above the river. It used to be a mill. The water running over the water wheel is almost completely black.

The building - the mill - is a two storey stone building. The door is locked and no one answers if they knock or call. The characters have to break in to investigate the mill. If they do, they find an apostate in the hands of a Desire Demon. The demon has persuaded the apostate to poison the river. By defeating the demon the characters can free the apostate, or for that matter kill him.

The apostate's name is Damor Firth and they're young and inexperienced, one reason why the demon got it's claws into them. What the characters do to Damor is up to them, but regardless of the outcome for the apostate, the alchemical brews that Damor poured into the river will stop.

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Back to the Village

When the characters are back in the village, the water is already getting clearer and a couple of fish fry and fingerlings have found their way up river. Sister Araina has been in deep prayer while they were gone and during that time, fresh leaves have started budding on the trees and in the fields. The villagers take it as a sign that the Maker has heard Araina's prayers.

The characters can still harbor doubts, but the villagers don't care about rational explanations.

Small steps, small miracles

The village becomes a guidepost for how the rest of their travels will look. Araina always has time for the sick and the needy and the rumor is spreading that she can heal anyone, anything.

Arl Brockston's spies

Two weeks out of Denerim, sister Araina and the characters are crossing Arl Brockston's lands.

Brockston has a reputation for being a fanatic mage hater. There are stories about him bringing in apostates in the basement of his castle, burnt mages at the stake and performed Rites of Tranquility with the help of Templars without a conscience. He wants to purge the plague of magic from his dominions.

Brockston has also heard the rumours about sister Araina, but he doesn't believe it's the Maker that gives Araina her abilities. He thinks Araina is a mage, an apostate that through guile and misdirection has kept herself out of the Circles.

The Maker reveals a plot

One rainy morning the characters find themselves walking along a field with ripe grain. Sister Araina suddenly stops to listen, she asks the characters to stop. None of them can hear anything. Sister Araina says "I can hear the battle of weapons and the sound of feet. May the Maker reveal our persecutors." As she says this, the sun breaks through the clouds and a mighty gust of wind bends the field. The rain stops and in the field that bends for the wind a group of Arl Brockston's men are standing, revealed.

Before the characters have time to react, the men have laid down their arms "in the name of the Maker", and they're asking sister Araina for a blessing. They will also tell the characters about Arl Brockston's hatred towards mages, and asks sister Araina to be very careful. Arl Brockston lost his wife in childbirth and his sons to magic. The oldest son was a mage, but Brockston refused to send him to the Circle. His son became an abomination and killed the younger brother. Brockston himself killed his oldest son to free him from the demon.

After the incident at the field, both sister Araina and the characters know that the Arl is following them.

A host of pilgrims

One morning as the characters wake up they're more or less surrounded by people they've never seen before. A man in his fifties is asking for an audience with sister Araina. They want to join her on her pilgrimage and see the miracles she performs. Sister Araina looks tired and worn, and to the surprise of the crowd gathered there, she says no. She tells them that the pilgrimage is her burden and that if the people gathered here decide to follow her, things could get bad. She doesn't want to hurt anyone, or risk anyone getting hurt, so she asks them to return home again, and lay to the Maker in their own villages. A few days after the pilgrims have arrived and joined their travels - at a distance - they arrive at yet another village.

Cats among the pigeons

The Chantry in the village has already heard about sister Araina's arrival. Sister Mafalia and Ser Borain receives them with a quiet dinner in the Chantry. During dinner, they tell their guests about the huge rat problem they're having. The rats says sister Mafalia, eat all the grain the villagers harvest.

At the pace they're going going here won't be enough to both eat and sow come spring.

After dinner, sister Mafalia asks sister Araina to stay for a while and talk privately with her. Ser Borain takes the characters on a tour to the grain stores. There are really quite a few rats here and they're not afraid of people. They're also quite large.

If the characters are vigilant, they'll be able to see that the rats come from an opening, barred by iron bars and rotting wood. Behind the opening is a forgotten basement, bricked up a long time ago. In the basement, the rats have built a giant nest.

The characters have a few different choices. They can brick up the opening so the rats nets and condemn the rats to die of starvation, they can open the bricked up basement and kill the rats quickly and mercifully or they can move the rats out into the forest where they won't hurt anyone and where there is plenty of food for them to make it through winter.

After the investigations into rat infested building, they're rejoined with sister Araina, who seems tired and worn after her chat with sister Mafalia she seems unusually sad and doesn't want to talk to the villagers. She goes straight to bed in the rooms the Chantry has provided for her and for the characters - it's obvious she has something weighing on her mind.

The next day it is announced by the Chantry that sister Araina will pray for the village and for the rats to stop eating the grain in the stores.

Sister Araina is placed outside the Chantry together with a set of rat traps that seem full to the brim with rats. She sits for a long time in contemplation. Occasionally reciting parts of the Chant of Light aloud after a couple of hours of prayers, she finally looks up and sister Mafalia orders the cages to be opened.

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Instead of rats, a flock of white doves soar into the sky. When the doors to the grain stores are opened, the sound of wings can be heard. Doves are flying out the doors and nary a rat can be seen.

During the feast that follows, Araina is still depressed and not at all her former self.

Arl Brockston's Orders

In the middle of the festivities eight armed men appear in the village. They're Arl Brockston's men and they're demanding that sister Araina immediately leave for Arl Brockston's keep, half a days journey from their present location.

Their pilgrimage will make them dangerously close to the keep regardless. Unless they're prepared to make a detour of a few weeks. Arl Brockston's men have an arrest warrant for sister Araina, but the villagers won't let her be taken away.

Sister Araina's dilemma

Araina wants to continue her pilgrimage and explains to the characters that she'd rather take the long way around Arl Brockston's keep than risk a confrontation.

After yet a few days wandering and ministrations for the sick and lonely, one of Arl Brockston's couriers reach them. It's one of the men from the field who refused to take arms against Araina. He brings grave news.

Fifty of the women, men, and children who are convinced of sister Araina's divinity have been arrested by the Arl for heresy, and the Arl is threatening to kill them, one each day, if sister Araina won't submit to a trial. The courier says that the Arl has promised not to begin until the courier returns or within seven days.

Sister Araina does not have a lot of time to decide what to do, and she seeks the characters' advice. She puts her life in their hands. She makes it clear that she doesn't want to die, but that she also doesn't want innocents to die for her. Sister Araina is frightened and seeks comfort. It's up to the characters now. A few possibilities:

- They can hand sister Araina over to Arl Brockston
- They can hide her and smuggle her out of there
- They can try to free the hostages
- They can disguise one of the characters to be sister Araina, etc

Nothing is written in stone. If the characters decide to hand Araina over, or if one of Arl Brockston's patrols capture them, the final miracle happens. This is the miracle that will hopefully inspire faith in everyone.

The final miracle

If sister Araina is finally standing eye to eye with the Arl, regardless of how it happens, the final miracle happens. When Araina is captured, her shackles won't lock, and the same goes for the prisoners the Arl has taken. Doors won't lock, irons open themselves and can not be closed again. The Arl, a paranoid man, suspects his own guards.

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The trial is a parody. The Arl proclaims that sister Araina is an apostate and heretic, counter to what the chantry representatives say. He sentences the sister to death.

Since he doesn't trust his men, he'll be the one to execute her, but finds that his sword won't cut her. Before he can strike again, the sister's face is turned heavenwards and a beam of light has fallen on her. She says "my Maker" and crumples to the ground at the Arl's feet, dead. The adventure is over.

Some advice for the GM

This adventure can seem sketchy and linear without much leeway given to the players, which is why I've put together a table of events the characters can investigate while Araina is healing and comforting villagers. These can be added at any point and feel free to add your own.

2D6	Events
2 - 3	Kidnapped! When one of the characters move through a distant area between two villages, one of them is kidnapped and brought to a settlement. They need help killing a man-eating bear.
4 - 6	Eorn! A warrior, and avvar, has been caught in a trap in the woods. He asks the characters for help getting loose.
7 - 8	Beautiful Helena. The characters and Araina end up in a village where the men and some of the women are obsessed by a lonely woman. She's possessed by a desire demon and can't be saved.
9 - 10	Sleep, sleep. The characters make camp and are overwhelmed by sleepiness. When they wake up, their food is stolen. A couple of children in a cabin nearby have stolen the food. Their parents have died by disease, and they're all alone.
11-12	Will o' the Wisp. Right before the characters make camp and the sun is sinking on the horizon, something flickers in the wilderness. It's a lost mage, looking for the road.

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Spelledarpersoner och monster

Syster Araina (level 2 Rogue)

Sister Araina is a dedicated, happy and strong person. She's been in the Chantry for a long time and has devoted her life to the Maker. Lately however, she's been troubled, in part due to her lack of energy and in part because she feels she's not fulfilling her promise to spread the word of the Maker.

The young girl that visits Araina, saying she was sent by the Maker and wearing the face of Andraste, was an unexpected gift. When the young girl, Drian, told Araina that she had to travel among the people to find her purpose, Araina trusted her. Araina doesn't know why she has to go to the Korcari Wilds. She only knows that her purpose will become clear to her.

When she hears of Arl Brockston's hatred of mages and by extension her, she realises her purpose to make an old man repent, even if it means giving up her life. She's scared and tired and doesn't want her life to end on a bonfire.

Abilities (Focuses)

1	Communication
0	Constitution
1	Cunning (Healing, Religious Lore)
0	Dexterity
1	Magic
1	Perception (Empathy)
0	Strength
0	Willpower

Arl Brockston (level 4 Warrior)

Arl Gareth Brockston lost his wife and sons to magic, or at least that's what he tells himself. Brockston's wife died giving birth to his youngest son, and his oldest son killed his brother while possessed by a demon. Brockston himself had to ram his sword through his oldest son, who was laughing while he did it.

Brockston has convinced himself that his avoidance to contact the Circle of Magi isn't the reason his whole family died. Magic is. As a result, Brockston will not allow any magic on his lands. He arrests anyone showing the least bit of talent and has all mages or apostates even getting close to his lands killed. He's a cruel man, created by his own guilt.

Abilities (Focuses)

3	Communication (Leadership)
2	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning (Military Lore)
3	Dexterity (Light Blades, Riding)
-1	Magic
1	Perception
5	Strength (Heavy Blades)
3	Willpower (Courage)

Combat ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor rating
13	40	15	10

Attacks

Weapon	Attack roll	Damage	Range
Long Sword	+7	2T6+5	
Dagger	+5	1T6+6	
Crossbow	+1	2T6+2	30/ 60 Yards

Powers

Favored Stunts: Disarm and Defensive Stance

Class Powers (Warrior 4): Stunt Bonus (Dual Strike 3SP)

Talents: Armor training (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Novice), Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman)

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades and Spears

Equipment

Heavy Plate Armor, Medium Shield, Long Sword, Dagger, Crossbow and 20 bolts.

Nicolai Crane (level 2 Warrior)

Ser Nicolai Crane is a devoted templar who is secretly in love with sister Araina. Because of both of their oaths to the Chantry, he's never told her he loves her, but he would do anything for her.

If you want, you can have Ser Crane following the company and reveal himself if/ when Araina is about to die. At that point he confesses his love for her and falls down dead next to her.

Syster Mafalia (level 2 Rogue)

Sister Mafalia is a manipulative and calculating sister who would rather have had a different life, but her father put her in the Chantry when she was a girl. Sister Mafalia sees an opportunity in sister Araina - to finally resurrect the faith in the Maker in her little village, and by doing so getting the attention of the Chantry.

She more or less forces Araina to participate in her, tricking the villagers. She trades the cages of rats for cages of doves. Araina's playing along is a guarantee that Mafalia won't tell Brockston's soldiers that Araina is in the village.

Ser Borain (level 3 Warrior)

Ser Hanric Borain is a justified, some might even call him arrogant man who has found his true calling in the Chantry. He's heavily addicted to lyrium and always carry a potion on his belt, when he feels under pressure or bothered he uses the lyrium and immediately feels better.

His addiction has made him blind in the face of Mafalia's manipulations, but he still believes in the grace of the Maker. It's possible to win the support of Ser Borain, but only if sister Mafalia's manipulations are uncovered.

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Soldat (level 1 Warrior)

The soldiers can be used as Arl Brockston's men and as padding in the adventure. Feel free to manipulate the stats, increase the level to challenge the players etc.

Abilities (Focuses)

-2	Communication
2	Constitution
0	Cunning
1	Dexterity (Riding)
-1	Magic
0	Perception
4	Strength
2	Willpower

Combat ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor rating
11 (10*)	38	13(11**)	4

Attacks

Weapon	Attack roll	Damage
Fist	+1	1T3+4
Long Bow	+1	1T6+3
Long Sword	+4	2T6+4

Powers

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow

Talents: Archery Style (Novice), Armor Training (Novice) och Weapon and Shield Style (Novice)

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades och Spears

Equipment

Heavy Leather Armor, Medium Shield, Long Sword och Long Bow (20 pilar)
(*utan rustning, **utan sköld)

Apostaten (level 2 Mage)

The apostate's name is Damor Firth and they're a quiet young person that has managed to become possessed by a demon. Damor can still be saved, since their senses hasn't yet been overwhelmed by the demon. The values below apply for when Damor is not possessed. The GM can decide the gender/ sex of Damor

Abilities (Focuses)

2	Communication
1	Constitution
3	Cunning (Healing)
1	Dexterity
3	Magic
2	Perception
-1	Strength
1	Willpower (Concentration, Self-discipline)

Combat ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor rating
11	30	11	0

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Attacks

Weapon	Attack roll	Damage	Range
Arcane Lance	-	1T6+3	16 yards
Fist	-1	1T3-1	-
Quarterstaff	-1	1T6	-

Powers

Spellpower: 13 Mana: 26

Favored Stunts: Mighty Spell and Mana Shield

Talents: Chirurgy (Novice)

Spells: Drain Life, Glyph of Paralysis, Mind Blast and Spell Shield

Equipment

Quarterstaff and wand

Råtta

Use the values for Giant Rat at page 34 in the Game Master's Guide (Boxed Set 1)

Demonerna

Use the following values for the Desire Demons that possesses the apostate and the woman in the village.

Abilities (Focuses)

4	Communication (Deception, Persuasion, Seduction)
2	Constitution
4	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Brawling)
6	Magic (Arcane Lance, Entropy)
2	Perception (Empathy)
5	Strength
4	Willpower

Combat ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor rating
13	50	13	7

Attacks

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+7	1D6+5
Fist	+5	1D3+1

Special features

Spellpower: 15 (17) Mana: 55

Spells: Affliction hex, blood slave, daze, drain life, paralyze and vulnerability hex.

Favored Stunts: Scream (3 SP) and Taunt.

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Sister Araina looked up from her chores. She still had five patients in the cottage hospital, looking to be healed of Maker knows what. She was bone tired, exhaustion gnawing at her like a hungry wolf. Despite her tiredness, and despite the endless complaints and moans of the sick, she went to wash her hands. She noted that the Elfroot poultices were running low, and that the healing salves she asked Layna to mix still weren't in their cracked and chipped jars. Sister Araina was weary to her soul.

Sighing heavily, the only sigh she would allow herself today, she called for the next patient. A young girl, blessed with the pure features of Andraste herself, walked through the door.
"Sit down, my friend, and let me see if I can ease your pain."

The girl jumped up at the bed, looking at Sister Araina. "Sister, I don't think you understand. I'm here to ease your suffering. The Maker has a purpose for you."



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