

*Lallinan's Test sometime in the Imperial era (10 May 2001) Lallinan faces her adversary. (Ainar III) (Lallinan)*

## **Lallinan's Test**

Six other Sages have been named in the past, and yet live, though they are scattered across many settlements, their powers deemed too valuable to keep them together in the City of Standing Stones, and there is no way that they could be summoned together to have any say in this -- not that they, being lesser than Lallinan herself -- should. And tradition regardless demands that the matter of Naming be resolved before sundown on this holy day. As it is, it's already well into the afternoon.

On the left side of the stage stands one Lallinan, a young woman with dusty-colored fur and adorned in humble travel clothes of various hues of brown, her only article of ornamentation being a bracelet of twisted golden wire on her right forearm -- its significance known only to her.

On the right side of the stage stands another Lallinan, or so it has been declared, though she is easily three years younger than the first ... and one might even think more so, though to suggest as much would be to accuse someone of impropriety in putting this girl up for her Naming before the acceptable time. At first glance, her attire is similarly dull brown and simple, but it evidences fine tailoring, evenly dyed fabric, and little touches that betray this girl's not-so-humble upbringing.

Her eyes are dark, her fur a more earthy tone than the first Lallinan, and she bears a familial resemblance to Caretaker Unato -- the wealthy and influential man about whom it is sometimes rumored that he is more powerful than even the Scholars in the affairs of the common people. If it could be that he might sway the Scholars into proclaiming his own daughter Lallinan instead of Kizun (provided she is even a Sage at all), then the rumors must be true.

That is, of course, unless the elder "Lallinan" isn't at all who she thought she was. But that is not a thought to entertain lightly. The name of Kizun has been so lionized that anyone identified as such would be surely driven out of every settlement, if not simply stoned on the spot.

The atrocities of the Kizun of old are so well remembered that it can turn peaceable people into an angry mob at the specter of such things happening again. All the appeals for peace of every Elder and respected man would fall upon deaf ears, if the higher authority of the Scholars called for action.

And right now, even though the older girl known as Lallinan has employed her amazing powers of persuasion to convince the Chief Scholar Ansessa to allow some sort of test, it is evident that Ansessa is already decided on who the winner should be. All she needs is an excuse to declare it.

Whatever thoughts are passing through Lallinan's mind at this are interrupted by the arrival of Mitzuna, who comes up to the stage, standing beside her to offer support, but also quietly whispering, "This is not the only way. I can claim that your Sagehood was a hoax, perpetrated by myself. Foundoon and Karessa are willing to come forth and express their doubts of my claims. You would be innocent of any wrongdoing, and you could not possibly therefore be Kizun..."

Lallinan sighs and says to Mitzuna, "That is a way, I suppose, but it is not the right way..." Her gaze falls upon the other Lallinan, and she speaks to Mitzuna more softly. "What do you know of Caretaker Unato? Doesn't that girl seem to bear a striking resemblance to that man?"

Mitzuna nods. "I have learned that she is his daughter. That would explain much."

The "other Lallinan" casts her dark eyes toward Lallinan, and then quickly looks away again, holding her nose high, as if disdainful of the "impostor".

Lallinan looks around to determine if Unato himself is in the audience. "We can't let this mockery to continue," she says, to Mitzuna again. "What sad day it is indeed when the Scholars themselves are corrupt. What would the Ancestors think?"

Lallinan asides to Mitzuna again. "I don't doubt that Ansessa will find some excuse upon which to disqualify me. Please try to spread the word among the crowd that this other girl is the daughter of Unato..."

Unato smiles proudly at his daughter from the audience, and does not so much as look in Lallinan's direction. Mitzuna nods sadly. "I shall do what I can. But please remember ... if she is indeed Kizun, then, like Kizun, she will possess powers of persuasion. According to legend, she can make enemies think that she is their friend, and she can plant suggestions in their minds. That would be a terrible adversary."

*GM Notes for later reference:*

- **Empathy** (Wis) - page 85  
*Vitality cost: 1*  
*Can be used Untrained at -4*  
*Roll to determine the DC of the saving throw the target must make, not to be "scanned":*

<b>Roll - 1d20</b>	<b>DC</b>
<i>up to 5</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>6 – 15</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>16 – 25</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>26 – 35</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>36+</i>	<i>30</i>

- **Friendship** (Cha) - page 86  
*Vitality cost: 1*  
*Allows user to make a "Diplomacy" check without actually talking to target. If this check fails, attempt cannot be repeated against the same target for 24 hours.*

Lallinan turns to look at the other young girl, and attempts to use Friendship on her.

*GM Notes:*

- *GM rolls 1d20+3, getting 11 for Lallinan's "Friendship".*
- *GM rolls 1d20+1, getting 12 for girl's "Sense Motive".*
- *Attempt fails, at cost of 1 VP, leaving Lallinan with 2 left.*

Mitzuna notices Lallinan staring at the "other" Lallinan, and at last whispers, "I shall go and see what can be done." As he takes off, however, something strange happens. There is a noise in the sky, as if a screaming sky-lizard ... or a whole chorus of them. And then, a large and very un-sky-lizard-like thing comes into view. It looks like some sort of a flying talisman, shaped remotely like a cape-brooch, though evidently much larger than that. It has wings, though they do not flap, and they are strangely positioned, going a short distance out from a round body in the center, to join vertical "wings" that go up and down.

The reaction of most of the crowd is to cry out in alarm, and to scatter for cover. Not an unreasonable reaction, probably, given that Lallinan has never seen such a thing before.

Lallinan looks at the thing in the sky, trying to gauge its bearing and speed.

It is coming from the direction of the sea, and it must have traveled at considerable speeds, but even as she watches, it seems to be slowing to a pace no faster than that of a bird, as it hovers over the edge of the canyon, dipping down into the Forbidden Grounds.

Unato is quick to shout out, "A monster! Summoned by Kizun!"

However, most people are not listening to him, being more concerned about getting out of sight of this "monster".

Lallinan glances in Ansessa's direction quickly.

Ansessa seems to be awestruck, staring slack-jawed at the strange sight ... though as she becomes aware of Lallinan's eyes on her, she abruptly closes her mouth, and adopts a more dignified pose.

*GM Note:*

- *GM rolls 1d20 + 4, giving 20 on Lallinan's "Legends and Lore" roll, identifying the strange thing as a star ship of the Ancients.*

The "other" Lallinan pipes up, "I will prove myself by going and driving away this monster!" She sounds a bit nervous, almost desperate, though she feigns bravery in the face of this strangeness.

"The Ancestors are angry," Lallinan says, not forcefully, but loudly enough that everyone may hear her.

Ansessa works her mouth, then says to the "other" Lallinan, "It has landed in the Forbidden Ground. Any who go there will be unclean, and inherit four years of bad luck, and be unable to participate in the festival, lest they share their bad luck with others." She regards Lallinan with an unreadable expression.

Unato, for his part, looks terribly nervous. Despite his quick reaction to try to pin the blame for this "monster" on "Kizun", it looks as if he's not quite so certain of the wisdom of his action ... or at the very least, he isn't producing anything further to say to carry on this line of reasoning.

Lallinan turns to Unato, maintaining her outward calm as much as possible. "The Ancestors are angry with you, Caretaker Unato."

"Wha-- ... me?" Unato retorts, then does a more commendable job of looking properly indignant.

Lallinan nods, acting as if she somehow already knows the entire story, hoping the bluff works upon Unato, and the rest of the audience as well. "Please end this silly ruse now, before another, stronger omen comes to pass."

"What ruse?" Unato blurts out, then half-winces, as he all too well sees that he's just set up for Lallinan to dramatically proclaim what she thinks this ruse to be.

The "other" Lallinan, however, doesn't seem to be about to wait for that. "I don't care about bad luck!" she barks out, and starts to clamber down from the stage. "I'm going to go send the Ancestors away! I'm Lallinan! I can do that! I know I can!"

Lallinan indicates the other, much too young Lallinan. "That ruse." She looks at the crowd.

"I'm not a ruse! I'm Lallinan! Take it back!" the girl retorts.

There's not much of a crowd left anymore ... but those that are left probably matter nonetheless -- several Elders and Scholars, and a few braver townsfolk. None of those who came with Lallinan for her Naming are present, however, save for Mitzuna.

Ansessa looks a little less certain herself, regarding the "other Lallinan" with a little more skepticism. Not that Unato could have seriously fooled her with any influence he might have, but perhaps seeing a craft of the Ancestors has made her reconsider things...

Lallinan looks at Unato again. "I can forgive your desire for prestige ... but not the manner in which you have recklessly endangered her," she says, indicating the young girl. "She has taken it upon herself that she shall go to the Forbidden Grounds, where she shall surely inherit irrevocably bad luck, if she comes back at all." Her eyes narrow. "You would do that ... to your own daughter?"

Unato, his ears red and his voice hot with anger, blurts out, "And what is the alternative? Have her branded as Kizun?"

Mitzuna raises an eyebrow at Unato's less-than-well-crafted retort.

"You can tell us the truth," Lallinan says. She looks around at the remaining audience. "There are not so many people left here now, Unato. There is no reason to hide it, not from us."

"I'm Lallinan!" the girl cries out, looking on the verge of tears. "Tell them, Papa!"

Lallinan erfs softly, feeling genuinely sorry for this little girl.

Unato looks as if he's on the verge of breaking down. He looks desperately to Ansessa. "She was first! She declared that she was Lallinan ... it was all according to tradition! You can't let her change that! My child is not Kizun!"

Ansessa looks more than a little uncomfortable, as most eyes turn to her. "It is possible that we, the Scholars ... were hasty in our proclamation," she concedes.

Lallinan feels that this is just a bit of an understatement, but does not reprimand Ansessa or the Scholars, out of respect.

"NO!" the "other" Lallinan squeals, and scrambles the rest of the way down off the stage. "I'm going to go to the Ancestors! They'll tell you who I am!" Somehow, the strange craft has gone from monster to ancestor in the child's mind, but perhaps it's just an excuse for what she would likely really like to do about now, which is to run away -- which she promptly does, dashing away from the stage, and toward the more distant (and quite narrow and winding) walkways leading up the cliff faces.

Unato seems frozen in horror, and some of the Elders move to protest. "Stop!" "You can't go to the Forbidden Grounds!" "Come back!" The girl pays them no heed, however.

Lallinan watches the girl, and turns to Ansessa. "Elder Ansessa, please allow me to follow this girl, so that she may not be unwittingly injured by forces that she does not understand."

Ansessa frowns fiercely at the emotional outburst of Unato's child, then nods silently to Lallinan, without taking her eyes off of the fleeing girl.

Lallinan takes off after the girl, hoping to reach her before she enters.

The girl has a head start, and while she may not be as old as Lallinan - nor has she so long of a stride -- she still manages to put a lot of ground between her and the heart of Standing Stones. She soon dashes up the winding walkway at a pace that is less than safe, though so far she hasn't managed to stumble along the way -- a fall here wouldn't mean a plummet all the way down, but rather just down to the next tier of the zigzagging path, but it would still result in a bad tumble nonetheless. (And it would certainly bring this race to a quick close.)

Lallinan doesn't try to catch up with the girl as much as keep her in sight until she hopefully slows down.

Toward this end, Lallinan manages to keep the girl in sight ... until such time as the girl actually, amazingly enough, reaches the very top. At this point, she moves out of sight, onto the top of the canyon walls ... and, presumably, into the Forbidden Grounds. Lallinan is able to catch up to this point shortly thereafter. She can see a jumble of broken stone walls and columns, remnants of ancient monuments. Of the girl, she can see no sign ... though she can hear some crunching noises, as of foliage being pressed underfoot. The foliage here is dry and scraggly, though there is some greenery in the form of clinging vines.

*GM Note:*

- *GM rolls 1d20+3, yielding 13 on Lallinan's "Listen" roll against a DC of 10.*

Some of the crunching sounds about right to be due to the girl's tromping through the underbrush, just on the other side of one of the stone walls, within easy reach. However, the other noises must belong to someone else, further on.

Lallinan attempts to focus on the girl for now, speeding up to catch her.

Sure enough, as she heads around the wall, she finds the girl crouched down behind some rubble, intently gazing at ... the thing. So intent is her gaze that she doesn't even notice Lallinan's approach. Beyond, Lallinan can see the object of her gaze ... It looks like the size of a shrine, just as strange as it appeared in the air, though it stands on fairly spindly columns -- legs? -- and rests on the ground.

Though it looks like a shrine, it is most certainly the same curiosity she saw flying through the sky but a moment before. It has a look about it of being fashioned from dark metal with a bluish hue, perhaps discolored from heat. At one end, there is a large sphere, with a window of glass revealing a throne inside.

The window is round, and divided into many frames, like the facets of a gem cut by one of the city jewelers -- and, indeed, the throne room inside has many glowing gems. This sphere is suspended from the ground by thin columns, and from each side, short and thick wings stick out, ending in angled walls that rise upward, their surfaces patterned with many arcane shapes.

Two strange men walk about, in suits of black, with plates of bright white armor, brighter than any bone or ivory Lallinan has ever seen, and not a patch of fur is to be seen poking through their costumes.

Their heads are hidden by helmets, and it seems that their muzzles must be very small, and their ears terribly cramped inside. They are at once wondrous and frightening, walking about clutching black metal scepters or cudgels of some strange design.

One of them walks about to the side of the building directly opposite the round window, and, working some sort of strange miracle with his hand on the arcane shapes on the wall, he compels the wall to open up to form a ramp that lowers to the ground. He disappears from Lallinan's point of view, walking up this ramp and into the building -- or, that is, the star-ship, as that must be what this is, according to what Lallinan knows of legends.

Lallinan approaches the girl quietly, not wanting to startle her, but not wanting to attract the attention of the strangers either.

As the girl watches -- still heedless to Lallinan's approach, even as Lallinan gets right beside her -- the man then comes right back out again, holding a small white chest by a handle set in its cover. The two strange men in black and white walk away from the shrine, stepping over rubble and around scrub-bushes, walking toward one of the statues of the Ancients.

Lallinan waves her hand in front of the girl's face ... not too closely.

The girl sucks in her breath suddenly, making a light squeak ... but the two strange men, already disappearing from view in the foliage, don't evidence any notice of it. The girl hisses to Lallinan, "What are you doing here?"

Lallinan whispers, "It's not safe here. We should go back."

The girl looks up to Lallinan. "I'm ... I'm not going back. Not until ... until I have proof ... that I'm not Kizun."

Lallinan regards the girl curiously. "Is it certain you are a Sage at all?"

"Sure," the girl says. "I can fix scratches. Except on myself. Just like Lallinan." Actually, healing wounds isn't an ability exclusive to Lallinan, according to legend ... it's just that she was the best at it, so it's most often associated with her.

*GM Note for later reference:*

- **Heal Another** (Wis) - p. 86, 87  
*Vitality point cost: minimum of 1 (varies)*

<b>Roll</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>VP Cost</b>
<i>up to 9</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>10 - 14</i>	<i>stabilize seriously wounded character</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>15 - 19</i>	<i>restore 1d4+1 vitality points</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>20 - 24</i>	<i>restore 1d6+2 vitality points or 1d4+1 wounds/ability</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>25 - 29</i>	<i>restore 1d8+4 vitality points or 1d6+2 wounds/ability</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>30+</i>	<i>restore 2d6+6 vitality points or 1d8+4 wounds/ability</i>	<i>6</i>