Vella

Warlock · The party · In game, party member 1

Vella is the party's warlock and its mind: dry, curious and never saying everything she knows, with a pact mark on her hand that flares when something old is near.



The painted concept sheet



TYPE	Companion (party member)
LOCATION	The party; a house in Meneferu (closed for now)
HOME	Valponte, the Castellani villa *(proposal)*
FAMILY	Guido and Ilaria Castellani, her parents; Nico, her brother (alive and well; names working)
AFFILIATION	The party
ROLE	Warlock, the party's mind
CLASS	Warlock (home class, fixed; the director, 2026-09-30)
PACT	Pact of the Door; patron the Doorkeeper *(working; proposal)*
VOICE	ElevenLabs "Olivia", model eleven_v4
3D MODEL	`chr_vella` v0 (52k triangles, rigged)
STATUS	In game, party member 1

What happens after the prologue is told in full below, spoilers included (Beyond the prologue).

> ***The end of Chapter 1 (in the game since 2026-11-03):*** *when the lich falls the stair collapses. Stalvan finds the crew's plank door, and the party leaves by the sea dock and the water cave on the door as a raft, out of the Glavica's east cliff. At the pier it finds its own boat sunk; Peels gives the Cut Splinter, and Nana pays. Vella's portal, the Severed Thread, the thread walk and the dig face are not in the game (parked; they may return later). See the Chapter 1 script, Scene 8. On this page: her mark flares once in Chapter 1, at the hollow lich.*

Summary

- With the hero and Stalvan from the first scene of the Prologue.
- A warlock of the **Pact of the Door**: at fifteen she bargained with the Doorkeeper for her drowning brother's life *(proposal)*; her mark is the thread through the whole prologue.
- The daughter of a rich landholding family of **Valponte**, in the middle of the first island, who chose her own road in Meneferu; her family is alive and well, and she can always go home.
- One of the first two companions built as a playable 3D character (2026-09-29).

Appearance

- A slender woman with dark hair drawn back into a low ponytail, freckles and hazel eyes.
- A long-sleeved rust-brown tunic, dark leggings and tall black over-the-knee boots.
- A calm, poised bearing.

Personality

- Dry and curious. Never says everything she knows (prologue plan, Cast).
- Understatement and dry wit; serious lines get quieter, not louder (the sound-manager's casting notes).
- She corrects Stalvan's reading of the contract on the first page of the story, and keeps her pact mark to herself: asked about it, she says "Later."

Background

A proposal (WARLOCK-PACTS-1, 2026-10-26), awaiting the director's yes. Names marked (working) are placeholders. Full lore: `docs/design/lore_warlock_pacts.md`.

Valponte and the Castellani

Vella Castellani *(working)* was born about twenty-seven years before the game in **Valponte**, the inland market town in the middle of the first island, where the road goes over the river on a long stone bridge. Her family is the one the island plan already names as Valponte's landholders: grain, flax and wool, the livestock fair, the bridge tolls, and an old villa with a walled garden at the edge of town. That is why her name sounds of the interior, not of the coast.

- **Her father, Guido** *(working)*: big and loud, laughs at his own jokes, knows every shepherd on his land by name, sits on the bridge council and can't keep a secret.
- **Her mother, Ilaria** *(working)*: keeps the family's books better than anyone on the island. She taught Vella to read a ledger upside down from across her desk, which is why, on the first page of the story, Vella turns Stalvan's contract the

right way up without looking.

- **Her brother, Nico** *(working)*: eight years younger, who wants nothing more than to be like her.

She was a clever, curious, sharp-tongued girl who asked the questions adults don't answer. Her favourite place to read was the old cemetery on its knoll outside town, in the valley fog: not because it was grim, but because it was quiet.



Valponte (concept). *The inland market town from the river meadows: the many-arched bridge, the ochre houses and the market square, the Castellani villa with its walled garden at the edge of town, and the old cemetery on its knoll in the valley fog.*

The river and the door

The spring the river flooded, Nico, seven, chased the dog onto the bridge and fell from the third arch into the brown water. Vella, fifteen, went in after him. She found him under the water and couldn't find the surface. In the dark stood a door: a plain wooden door, like a cellar's, open on a quiet light, and Nico was drifting toward it. On the threshold stood someone with no face, who said, very politely:

> *"He is early."*

"Then shut it," said Vella.

> *"I can shut it today, if you will keep it for me afterwards. There are dead the world holds back from me. Send them through."*

She said yes before it had finished. She came up on the gravel under the third arch with Nico coughing in her arms, and with a mark across her palm like an old burn. Nico remembers only cold water and his sister. Guido threw a feast and gave the bridge a new railing. Vella told no one, and for years the mark only itched when she walked past the old cemetery.

Meneferu: her own road

She wanted to know what she owed, and to whom: a debt you don't understand is a debt you can't pay. At eighteen she went to **Meneferu** on the second island, near the Library of Papyria and the temple archive, where the old tongues and the old dead are studied. Her father wanted her home. Her mother paid for a house in the gardens district with a walled court:

"If you're going to be stubborn, be stubborn in a house with a well."

There she learned the pact's rules the hard way: the mark fills only from raised dead destroyed near her; its doors are short; its patron keeps exact accounts. And she found she was good at the one thing it asks: laying the walking dead to rest. Tomb robbers' leftovers, cursed burials, a hedge necromancer's mess: she became the warlock you hire for the dead nobody else will touch. She doesn't need the money. She takes pay because a fair price lets frightened people sleep, and because Stalvan won't take hers. Every raised dead she lays down is someone sent home: she keeps her bargain as a promise, not a chain.

Home

Her parents are alive and well, and they know about her adventures: the dead-work, the tombs, the travels. They don't know about the pact. She writes home every month. Her mother writes back with the town's gossip and the price of wool, and her father adds one line at the bottom: *"Come home for the fair."* Nico wants to come adventuring and isn't allowed. Most years she goes home for the livestock fair. Valponte is the place she can always go back to, and chooses not to stay in: she is finding her own road.



Home for the fair (concept). *Vella comes back to the Castellani villa: her father laughing on the loggia steps with his arms open, her mother at her ledgers, Nico at the well, and the dog running to meet her.*

Stalvan

About four years before the game she was hired to clear an old tomb outside Meneferu, and Stalvan was the muscle the tomb's owner hired with her. The tomb wasn't clear. When the ceiling came down he carried her out on one shoulder, and she put down the dead that followed them. They have worked together ever since. He knows she has "a patron thing", and doesn't care. He is poor and proud: when he pawned his red-stone armour this spring she offered to redeem it, and he refused. So she takes paid jobs he can earn from.

The letter, and the third

- Last month a soft-spoken gentleman from the islands, the mayor of Stara Luka himself, handed Vella a letter with her name on it at Imsa's inn in Meneferu, and paid her room. Walking dead in Stara Luka, a harbour town on the coast of her own island: her pact's work, and not far from home. *"I ask you to liberate the town."* Stalvan was in at "I have doubled the fee."

- They geared up, and Vella wanted a third. **Vella:** "One to hold the line, one to think, and one to lead. Stalvan holds. I think. Neither of us wants to lead." They waited at Imsa's.
- On the last day the hero walked in with a note: *"Imsa's inn. Ask for Vella. She needs a third."* Nobody admits to writing it *(proposal; the hero's own background is the director's)*. Waiting for the hero cost them three days, and they missed the new moon the letter asked for: Nana's "You're late" in Chapter 1.

Class and abilities

- **Class:** Vella is a **warlock** (the director, 2026-09-30), her fixed home class.
- **Resource:** Pact. **Talent branches:** Hex (damage over time), Binding (her familiar, the *mora*, and control) and Price (sustain and support).
- **Pact:** the **Pact of the Door** *(proposal)*: from level 3 it gives her own gifts by level, among them the pact door (hidden, never in the Prologue), Lay to Rest, Hold the Door and, once Act 1 wakes it, grave-sight. The other pact, the Thread, is the Puppeteer's.
- **Weapon:** none (working).
- She can mix in tiers 1–3 of other trees, but tiers 4–7 and the capstones stay open only while every point is in the warlock tree. Plan a build in the talent calculator.
- **In the prologue** she has two abilities:

Slot	Ability	What it does	Damage / effect	Cooldown
Main	**Lightning Bolt**	Hits one target, then arcs to the 2 nearest enemies	5 lightning to the target, 2 to each arc	None, uses cast speed
Second	**Urok**	An instant curse on every enemy in a circle at range	No damage; debuffed enemies take +5 from every hit for 5 s	Suggested 12 s

- **As a companion (AI):** Urok on the largest cluster of 3 or more, preferring one Stalvan has just taunted; Lightning Bolt where both arcs land; she keeps 6–8 m behind Stalvan and backs toward him when targeted.
- **Armour:** *Unconfirmed — awaiting the director* (an open decision of the prologue).
- **Spell effects:** a violet and magenta core, a hot white-blue lightning filament and a dark smoky edge: a forked bolt with a scorch mark, a crackling channel arc, a shockwave ring with violet lightning for Urok, and a ring of abstract lines for the summon.
- **Spell words:** short Latin commands, spoken in classical pronunciation ("Ignis, obedi!", "Umbra, tene!").

In the game

- Joined the party on 2026-09-29 at the director's request: *"use vella and stalvan 3d models for the companions now, not the capsules"*. **Party member 1:** she follows the hero and fights on her own (the player controls only the hero, 2026-10-08).
- **Chapter 1:** she reads the clues aloud (the barred door, the fish scales, the drag marks), names the lich's trick, and pieces together what happened to the lost crew at the berth. See the Chapter 1 script.
- **Meneferu (2026-10-23):** one of the party of five in the walkable town. Her house there was built as a closed shell with a walled court (MEN-BLOCK-3, 2026-10-24).

Story

- **Vella's portal:** not in the game for now. Chapter 1 ends with the way out through the sea dock (her portal ending is parked and may return later).
- **Chapter 1 (parked):** her mark flares when she touches the hollow lich's severed thread, and again at the dig face; only the player sees it the first time, and Stalvan notices the second. The Severed Thread and the dig face are parked with the portal ending.
- **Chapter 3:** as the ship leaves Ragosa she names Papyria's great library as the place where the answer is written down.
- **Chapter 4:** in Meneferu she asks the innkeeper for a caravan to Papyria.
- **Chapter 4 in the game (2026-10-28/30):** at Sabu's stall she hears the dead keeper Henut through the door and gets the calling and rest words of Hetsa ("A warlock. Who keeps the dead of Hetsa?"); at Hetsa she says the word that puts the sleepers to rest ("Hetsa nebu, sedjer."); in the car yard her spark starts Manfred's engine ("A spark. Is that all."); on the drive she rides the front seat and bolts the riders in front ("Library first. Questions later. Lightning now."). Every line is in the Chapter 4 script.
- **Chapter 5:** she rides in the front seat of Manfred's car beside him. In the vault her mark flares at the stone, and Zanze notices.
- **Chapter 6:** the Puppeteer, speaking through a gold death mask, sends his regards to her patron. She says nothing.
- **Her patron and backstory:** proposed in Background below (WARLOCK-PACTS-1); awaiting the director's yes.

The story, as you play it

All of this is proposal, *Unconfirmed — awaiting the director*. In Chapters 1 to 7 Vella sees no ghosts.

Act 1. At the first fire after Stalvan's escape she wakes screaming. A dead man's face is roaring right above hers. Nobody else sees it.

Act 2. She brings all five of you home to Valponte, where her brother Nico has ridden into the night of Where the Day Ends. At the masked ball she sees thirty-one dead standing on the great stair. Zanze names her gift: grave-sight. In the jungle a tall warrior flirts with every fire, and Stalvan stands up very straight. Vella notices.

The final act. On the road home a dead man walks behind Ser Filip, the mayor. On the mausoleum hill a woman and a small girl are waiting.

How it ends Spoilers

Her pact mark has filled with every walking dead the party put down, and it opens her eyes to the dead who wait. The first ghost is Captain Harl. He was shouting the warning he died holding.

The mayor is the Puppeteer. He chose her, and he wrote the hero's note. In the last fight she tells him his daughter is not on his threads. As the ship leaves at dawn, she alone sees him on the hill with his wife and daughter, and nods to him once.

Across the stories Spoilers

- **Act 1.** Harl was not attacking her. He has followed his water-stained contract, carried since Chapter 1. "What was that?" / "I don't know." *(beat)* "Yet." Zanze takes out her notebook.
- **Act 2, at home.** Her father's letter brings the party to Valponte for the livestock fair. The party brings Nico back, and at the end the Count's invitation waits at the Castellani villa.
- **Act 2, the ball.** Zanze: "Grave-sight. You see the ones who haven't gone on." / "Lucky me." The stair holds the plain-masked dead of thirty-one autumns. In the side quest *The Things on the Seat* she matches what the lost left in the coach-

man's carriage to the dead on the stair, and the stair thins: "They've gone."

- **The final act.** Harl walks behind Ser Filip and never takes his eyes off him. The girl on the hill wears a white dress. In the last fight: "That isn't her. She isn't in there. She's on the hill, with her mother."
- **Not decided:** her patron, the Doorkeeper, and why the Puppeteer sends it his regards; whether her portal returns; whether *The Captain's Watch* side quest is wanted.
- Sources: STORY-MAYOR-3, WARLOCK-PACTS-1 and the Act 2 arcs.

Grave-sight (STORY-MAYOR-3, a proposal)

Vella's sight of the dead belongs to the acts after the Prologue; in Chapters 1–7 she sees no ghosts.

- **Act 1, the waking.** A night or two after Stalvan's escape, the party of five sleeps by one fire in the hills north-west of Kaldvik. Close on Vella's sleeping face; her eyes open; instant fear; she screams. Her view: a dead man's face right above hers, roaring. The whole party is up at once, weapons drawn, and nothing is there. **Stalvan:** "What was that?" **Vella:** "I don't know." *(beat)* "Yet."
- **Act 2, the name.** At the masked ball Zanze, who has noted every time Vella stares at empty air, names it from the library's books: "Grave-sight. You see the ones who haven't gone on." **Vella:** "Lucky me." A side quest is the option.
- **What she sees.** Only the dead who wait: for a word they never said, for a wrong to be known, for someone they love. Only she sees them, and they never speak. The sight grows out of her pact mark, which fills from every walking dead the party destroys (the pact-door lore the director confirmed on 2026-10-15).
- What the first ghost was, and what the sight shows her at the end of the game, is on The Puppeteer (spoilers).



The waking (Act 1 concept). *A camp in the snowy northern hills. Vella wakes screaming under a dead man's roaring face; the party leaps up with weapons drawn and sees nothing.*

Who wrote the note (the final act)

The mayor of Stara Luka wrote it, and the letter too. He chose Vella because her mark wakes near the walking dead and the old stones: a compass that walks. He needed the hero most. *"I wrote to her. I came for you."* See The Mayor and The Puppeteer.

Suwena (Act 2, the jungle; a proposal)

Added 2026-11-19 (WARRIOR-STORY); Unconfirmed. In the jungle the party meets Suwena, a tall warrior who flirts with every fire she sits at, the hero's included, and on whom Stalvan has an instant, very correct crush. Vella is a little jealous, and it comes out sideways ("You're standing up straight."; "She smells of crocodile."). She and the hero are each other's crush and neither has said so (the user, 2026-11-18); the hero's replies are the player's. Her grave-sight settles the four peoples' oldest quarrel: "There's nobody here. That's the best thing I can say about a graveyard." The two women part with respect, and Suwena says what nobody else has: "He looks at you when you read. You look at him when he's deciding." **Vella:** "...Later."

Quotes

> *"You're reading it upside down. Here, let me turn that for you."*

> *"The last crew that took this contract never came back."*

> *"These weren't raised by accident. Someone is very good at this."*

> *"Careful. A lich keeps its life somewhere else. If we don't find where, it'll just—"*

> *"Binding magic. Someone was working it like a puppet, from far away."*

> *"We interrupted them."*

Voice

- **ElevenLabs "Olivia"** (warm, British, female): a low-mid voice, close and controlled, with a tiny pause before the important word.
- Model **eleven_v4**. She has 51 active lines.

Design and model

- `chr_vella` **v0:** made from her `new-design` Meshy model with the hero pipeline: the shared 66-bone skeleton, idle, walk and run, 52k triangles. The Meshy textures stay for v0; a painted pass comes later.
- **Cast animations (VELLA-CAST-1, 2026-09-30):** hand-made clips on her own skeleton: cast_quick (a one-hand thrust, 0.8 s), cast_channel (a held, pulsing loop), cast_area (an overhead slam, 0.93 s) and cast_summon (a low sweep, then a pull up). Her hands have sockets for spell effects.
- **ANIM-3 (2026-10-06):** a sharp curse gesture for Agony and a new poised caster's idle; her shoulder skinning was fixed.

Gallery





Concept scenes: the hollow lich in Chapter 1; the stone in the vault in Chapter 5.

Sources: docs/design/talents.md, talents.json (TAL-1); new-design/; "plan - future for prologue.md" (Cast, Party abilities, armour, AI, chapters 1–6, Open decisions); sound-manager DB (characters, lines; read-only); docs/decisions.md (2026-09-29, 2026-10-15 eleven_v4, 2026-10-08 PARTY-RULES-1, 2026-10-16 houses, 2026-10-22 ending, 2026-10-23 party of five, 2026-10-24 MEN-STEP4-PLAN); docs/plan/story_mayor_2.md §10 (STORY-MAYOR-3, the user 2026-10-26: "vella ability to see the dead can be introduced later", "vella and ghost ability should be introduced later not in prologue"); docs/design/lore_warlock_pacts.md (WARLOCK-PACTS-1, the user 2026-10-26: "she is from the rich family inthe center of first island (hence italian sounding name) but lives in meneferu ... her parents are alive and well and they know about her advenrutes"); pictures: references/concept/warlock_pacts/ (Nano Banana 2, look-dev only)

Last updated: 2026-11-17 (SYN-REST: full synopsis, D-WIKI-SYN-2)