The Artist’s Gateway: A Puzzle Encounter

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Read to Player (Hook):

You stand before a grand archway, its surface polished to a deep obsidian sheen. Five sculpted hands, each glowing with a different vibrant color, serve as handles – a fiery red, a cerulean blue, a verdant green, a sunlit yellow, and a royal purple. Above the archway, a panel etched with swirling patterns displays a riddle in shimmering light:

> “Born of two, I bring forth spring’s delight. Seek not my kin, but where they unite.”

A faint hum emanates from the gateway, growing louder the closer you approach.

Setting:

- This encounter can be placed within an artist’s abandoned studio, a forgotten art gallery, or a hidden chamber within an academy of magic.

Solution for Dungeon Master

The key to unlocking the Artist’s Gateway lies in the riddle. “Born of two” refers to the creation of green, the color of spring, by mixing the two primary colors, blue and yellow. Players must pull the **blue** and **yellow** handles simultaneously.

Pulling any other combination of handles could trigger a some type of negative effect.

Here are some examples:

- Pulling one handle creates a harmless but startling illusion of paint splattering across the room.
- Pulling two unrelated handles conjures a harmless, animated paintbrush that flits around for a few moments before dissolving.
- Pulling three mismatched handles triggers a more disruptive effect, such as a colorful smokescreen that obscures vision for a short time.
- Pulling the wrong handles triggers ethereal tendrils to lash out from the gateway, draining a random party member of a vital essence (Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, etc.) by one point per handle pulled.
- A wrong guess unleashes a chaotic burst of magical energy. The gateway distorts reality, causing the party members to swap positions with each other (including potentially falling through walls or landing in hazardous terrain) for a short duration (1 round). This can lead to confusion and potentially disastrous positioning during combat encounters.
- A severe penalty for a major misstep. Pulling three incorrect handles fractures the gateway, creating shimmering portals that teleport individual party members to random locations within a designated danger zone (a nearby monster den, a pit trap-filled corridor, etc.). This forces the party to regroup and potentially fight their way back together.

Further Ideas:

- After solving the puzzle, the gateway might reveal a hidden room filled with lost masterpieces, a forgotten artist’s workshop with powerful enchanted tools, or a portal to a vibrant realm inspired by art.
- The riddle’s wording could be further simplified, depending on the players’ experience level.
- The different colored handles could hold additional clues when examined closely. For instance, the blue handle might be decorated with flowing water symbols, and the yellow handle with depictions of the sun.