

Steinhardt's guide to the ELDRITCH HUNT



THE VILE VILLAGE



UNCOVER AN ANCIENT EVIL HIDDEN IN THE REMAINS OF A BRUTAL PURGE

THE VILE VILLAGE

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The Vile Village is a 5th Edition adventure for **three to five characters of 7th to 8th level** and is optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 7**. Twisted monstrosities - former test subjects of the Radiant Church - stalk the forest and slaughter any who come near their village. Nearby, the city of Luyharna huddles behind sealed gates, battling a madness-inducing scourge, while the creatures remain outside, waiting for their chance to get into the city and eat everyone in sight. The adventurers must investigate the village of Jägerweiler, go toe-to-toe with the worst of the monsters, and uncover the horrific eldritch experiments performed by a secret branch of the Radiant Church.

BACKSTORY

Eldritch entities have forever used the seductive promise of power to lure in the greedy and foolish. And none are worse than those who forsake their oaths and succumb to the darkness they swore to fight. Some Radiant Church priests, once the symbol of hope and light for the residents of Luyharna, have begun to stray from the path of righteousness to one of despair and death.

A branch of the Radiant Church known as the Obitus Scholare broke from their traditions and began horrifying experiments to harness eldritch powers. A

corrupting madness swept the city due to these experiments, forever tainting its people. The Obitus Scholare priests secretly conducted their research in Jägerweiler Village, a small logging community. Sitting just outside Luyharna and in the shadow of its high walls, the quiet village was the perfect place to hide the twisted results of the horrific testing from the city authorities.

The Obitus Scholare forced its victims to consume eldritch flesh and blood, subjecting them to pain and agony while recording the effects to further their goals. The outcomes were initially impressive, and resulted in the creation of hunters augmented with strength, speed, and other supernatural abilities. Those who survived were brain-washed and trained to become warriors and assassins, tracking down other eldritch creatures and killing political opposition in exchange for gold to fund further research.

These hunters would eventually go mad, their minds shattered by the whispers calling from the shadows to the eldritch blood inside them. They became twisted monsters full of rage, and fled into the forest or among the villagers, slaying everything in their path. The Obitus Scholare could use their remaining hunters to eliminate many of the creatures, but there were simply too many. To erase all traces of their work and stop the monsters from attacking the city above, the priests arranged for a massive flood of an acid-like fluid designed to eat flesh and organic matter to wash through Jägerweiler, killing both monsters and villagers in the process. The priests, eager to leave Jägerweiler



Art by Wes Fraser

behind them, slunk away to continue their secret experiments in the ruins of a long-abandoned insane asylum, creating more successful hunters with their refined techniques. With Luyharna currently under the effects of madness-inducing moons, they can act with apparent impunity as the city looks further inward and descends into chaos.

However, Obitus Scholare's attempt to completely eliminate their gruesome failures was only partially successful. While the villagers were killed, many of the creatures survived—some even thrive in the now caustic village. A creature known as the Veiled Hunter has taken control of the other monsters, and the threat they represent to Luyharna continues to grow. The city's gates are barred while under quarantine, protecting the masses who are ignorant of what is happening just outside their city. However, the nobles who pull the city's strings and high-ranking church officials look upon Jägerweiler with growing concern that a mass assault by the creatures is imminent. The abominations wait in their forest village, readying themselves to crack open the city gates and feast upon the sweet meat quivering behind them.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters leave Luyharna to investigate Jägerweiler, a small forest village just outside and below the city. Upon arrival, they find the village empty and full of twisted monstrosities instead of villagers. While investigating and looking for the source, they stumble upon a dead test subject possessed and twisted by eldritch flesh sewed within the corpse. Other clues throughout the village point to a conspiracy among the Radiant Church and their experiments conducted in the village. After facing off against the Veiled Hunter, the party learns the horrifying truth behind the creatures' origins and Obitus Scholare's involvement.

Adventure Hooks

Here are a few ways to entice the characters:

The Village Below

After spending time within Luyharna, the characters begin to hear whispers about a village further down in the forests below the city. They say they've lost contact with the villagers of Jägerweiler, and the messengers sent into the forest have vanished. Rumors claim the watchmen atop the city walls all swear they saw a strange red flood rise and wash over the village. There

has been no communication with Jägerweiler since the flood, and strange creatures have been heard wandering the forests at night.

Enemy at the Gates

A group of twisted creatures has attacked the guards at the Luyharna gate that leads down to Jägerweiler, the forest village below the city. The gates have remained barred to maintain the city quarantine, while winged monsters have struck from above and patrols in the nearby forest report seeing strange horned beasts and bear-like creatures. The Radiant Church has been particularly interested, as the creatures' tainted wounds are resistant to any healing attempted by the church. The clergy reach out to the characters and ask them to investigate Jägerweiler and hunt the creatures before their corruption spreads.

Research Retrieval

Lord Jasper Roth is a successful nobleman from a minor house in Luyharna. He is widely known for his philanthropic efforts and support of the Radiant Church, particularly in medicinal treatments. Lord Jasper hires the party to find alchemist Klaus von Brunheimer, who lives in Jägerweiler, a nearby village that has recently gone silent. In particular, he was funding Klaus's research into various tonics and remedies that might help alleviate the current pandemic of hallucinations sweeping the city. Since the nobleman paid for Klaus' research and he is no longer in contact, Lord Jasper wants the party to retrieve it for him. He stresses the need for professional discretion, offering a generous sum of 1,500 gp up front, and promises 3,000 gp when the party returns with the research.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

An undercurrent of supernaturally induced madness underpins this adventure's primary themes of eldritch and body horror. As the characters progress through each location, they find pieces of information that eventually lead to understanding the larger conspiracy at play. They are fighting both the physical horrors and the creeping madness effects of an evil permeating the region that begins infecting their minds. The adventure is divided into three parts, which correspond to the three main locations.

In Part One, the characters first encounter twisted eldritch creatures in the flooded village of Jägerweiler. They find evidence of dark rituals using eldritch body parts and come face to face with the Veiled Hunter, the leader of the creatures in the village.

In Part Two, the party travels to nearby ruins rife with monsters, where they encounter a mad mage named Cerwyn Raolet. They learn he was responsible for flooding Jägerweiler with an alchemical acid at the orders of secret benefactors who tried to kill him afterward. Cerwyn knows where the sect was conducting horrifying experiments and where he started the flood.

In Part Three, the characters make their way to an ancient temple that once held the remains of an eldritch being. Cerwyn used the corpse in a ritual to flood Jägerweiler Village with acid, using the very same blood the Obitus Scholar used to transform them. The party battles the Veiled Hunter for the final time as he tries to take the eldritch carcass for himself.

Madness System

This adventure incorporates Steinhardt's Madness System and Vacuous Moon rule system (see page XX). The city of Luyharna and the surrounding area are under the effects of a Vacuous Moon. As the eldritch energy begins breaking down the characters' minds, they must also learn to deal with the afflictions that the moon causes to those under the effects of madness.

***GM Note.** As is common in psychological thrillers, this adventure builds up a sense of unease and creeping horror throughout the story. The question of who the story's villains are can change rapidly as new information comes to light. Give the players every opportunity for tactical planning and discussion amongst themselves to formulate their strategies, and allow the growing madness in that area to also grow within them, creating new and exciting situations.*

KICKING OFF THE ADVENTURE

The first challenge the characters must face is to find their way out of Luyharna. However, because of the quarantine affecting this city, the characters can't reenter without the direct support of a noble patron, such as Lord Jasper Roth, or a powerful faction, like the Radiant Church. Even then, the party must work with the local guards, either through bribes or by convincing them to reenter based on need or merit. Alternatively, a wealthy patron could provide a *spell scroll* of *teleport* that is enchanted only to return the party to the patron's specified location.

Whether or not the characters have secured a route back in, they must find a way out of the locked down city. The characters' patron or a local friend first recommends they speak to Lieutenant Captain Adelle Roux of the city watch and attempt to work with her directly. If the characters fail to make their way through the gate, they must get creative in how they can get over (or under) the city walls.

If the characters decide to coordinate with the city watch and leave through the gates, proceed to the "Leaving the City" section below. If the party decides they prefer to leave without bothering the city watch, they can find many options available to them if they are creative enough. They could find a smuggler in a nearby tavern with hidden tunnels to escape under the walls—for a price. There are also gate guards who would look the other way after a little gold crosses their palms. If the party chooses one of these options instead, once they have successfully exited the city, proceed to the "Traveling to Jägerweiler" section.

Leaving the City

Once the characters head towards Luyharna's gate to Jägerweiler Village, read aloud the following:

After preparing for the journey in Luyharna and slipping through the city's night-shrouded streets, the final obstacle is the barred gates and heavily armed guards. As you approach, the city guards finger their swords warily while running professional eyes over your gear.

Characters who succeed on a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception)** check notice that the guards' armor is worn and damaged in places from what appear to be claw marks. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, it's also clear that the guards are on high alert, checking every shadow, and are extremely jumpy.

Once the characters get closer, one of the guards calls out wordlessly, and the watch commander comes to speak with the characters. Read aloud the following:

The watch leader and a robed priest step out of a small stone building tucked next to the gate. A wind chime made of raven feathers and bones sways in the wind the door makes as it closes behind them. The commander appears weary yet resigned to her given tasks, while the young priest looks sullen and drags his feet slightly. The watch leader steps forward with a nod of greeting and says, "Hail, adventurers! I am Lieutenant Captain Adelle Roux, and this is Acolyte Bram LeGrand of the Radiant Church, who is also my nephew. We were told to be expecting you, and while these gates are still closed due to quarantine, I believe we may come to agreeable terms that are beneficial to all."

Lieutenant Captain Adelle Roux (LG human **knight**) is a Luyharnian loyalist dedicated to protecting its citizens. She is a stocky woman in her mid-thirties with tawny brown skin and a square face framed by short, raven-black hair. Respected among the guards as a fair leader, Adelle works hard to maintain that reputation and is willing to work with the party as long as they do not threaten the city or its people. She is protective of her nephew Bram, but feels he needs to see the outside world a bit and sees the characters as an opportunity for him to get dirt under his nails for once.

The guard commander knows little about what is happening in the village below, but that little is enough to make her wonder and worry, especially with the increase in monster attacks coming from outside the gates. She agrees to let the party come and go, with the stipulation that Bram goes with them as a witness to their actions, and they give him a little advice about adventuring. If the party refuses to bring Bram with them, they must succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Adelle to let them leave alone; she refuses to let them leave through the gates without him. This check can be made with advantage if the characters mention they are under contract by the Radiant Church. A failed check results in the characters being forced to get creative with how they leave the city. For example, they might hire smugglers with access to a secret tunnel or cross over the wall when the guards are distracted.

Bram the Acolyte - SIDEBAR

Bram LeGrand (NG half-elf priest) is a quiet young man in his early twenties with a slight stammer and a nervous tick in his left eye. He spends most of his days cloistered with research books and studying the teachings of the Radiant Church. His aunt, Lieutenant Captain Adelle Roux of the city watch, stepped in after his mother (Adelle's sister) passed away years ago and has been looking out for him ever since. He respects his aunt, but feels smothered at times.

Bram stays out of harm's way as much as possible in combat, assisting where he can. As an observer and trainee, he has limited capabilities and often makes poor decisions that put his life in danger.

Traveling to Jägerweiler

Once the party has successfully exited the city, they must work their way down the winding switchbacks into the forest below and travel another hour to reach the flooded village. Read aloud the following:

The stone road winding down from the city switches back and forth, as empty as the cloudless night sky above. The moon shimmers with pale light, giving a hazy view of the fog-filled forest waiting below. With each step closer to the forest's edge, a strange sense of being watched washes over you.

The Veiled Hunter (see “Alpha Hunter” sidebar, page XX) monitors the characters' progress from afar, using his ability to see through trees. He waits to see what the party intends to do in the village before confronting them, learning what he can about them through their conversations. The characters can spend their trip inspecting the twisted, diseased trees and guarding against the animalistic shapes moving in the mists that never actually come close enough to identify.

Once the characters come in sight of the village, read aloud the following:

A light breeze sweeps through the rotting trees, carrying a sickly stench of decay and rotting meat. The road leads further into a large flooded clearing, and the pale moonlight shines down onto a haphazard village built in the center of a small lake. A thick layer of red algae swirls on top of the water, making the lake look filled with blood.

The characters can choose to swim through the algae-covered lake (see “Toxic Waters” sidebar) to reach the village or devise a safer method to enter at any point they choose. The lake is 1 mile in diameter, with the village at the center.

Toxic Waters - SIDEBAR

Cerwyn and the Obitus Scholare flooded Jägerweiler Village with their acidic chemicals in an effort to kill all living organisms and clear any proof of their experiments. However, the attempt failed, and many creatures survived in the village by building above the toxic waters. Unique crimson-colored algae began to grow on top of the newly formed lake, absorbing the acidic properties and amplifying them.

Creatures entering the contaminated waters take 4 (1d8) acid damage and an additional 4 (1d8) acid damage at the start of each of their turns for as long as they remain in the water. They also become covered in sticky red algae. After each minute, if it is not removed, any nonmagical object it touches is destroyed. If the covered object is either metal armor or a metal shield being worn or carried, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. As an action, the algae can be washed off a single character with a single waterskin or equivalent liquid.



Map V.1. Jägerweiler Village

PART ONE: JÄGERWEILER VILLAGE

Once a simple logging village, Jägerweiler Village was used by the Obitus Scholare as a staging ground to exploit innocent victims in their eldritch experiments. They created horrific creatures that now live in the village remains above the very toxic waters that were used in an attempt to wipe them out of existence. Only remnants of the previous occupants and the monsters remain.

Most of the creatures in the village spend their time hunting in the nearby woods, returning with their

spoils at various intervals. At any given time of the day, there are few monsters here, other than the Veiled Hunter and a handful of others.

Leaving the Village

Throughout the village are many clues and a map the characters can find that point them towards Cerwyn Raolet, the mage who flooded the area with acid (see “The Mad Mage,” page XX). Once the party decides to leave and look for him, proceed to “Part Two: Fortress Ruins” on page XX.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout Jägerweiler Village, unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The current structures were built using the remnants of the previous buildings destroyed in the flood. Every piece of wood and cloth in the village is rotting and disintegrating, barely held together by rusted nails and frayed ropes.

Doors. Most buildings here do not have doors. Any doors noted in the adventure text are made of light pine wood that can be quickly forced open or broken apart with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

Lights. Torches and braziers are placed throughout the village, casting bright light in the keyed locations and dim light in between.

Toxic Waters. The buildings sit on a corrosive lake (see “Toxic Waters” sidebar, page XX).

Moon Madness. The first time a creature looks at the moon, it must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, their mind is filled with a brief vision of the Vacuous Moon drawing in all of the surrounding light as shadows deepen to an impenetrable darkness, and they gain disadvantage on their next saving throw made against a madness effect. Note which characters failed their saves, but don’t inform them of the future disadvantage. You can pass along the vision to each character privately as a way to amplify the unsettling ambiance.

Random Events

When characters step onto those areas on the provided map marked with a red X on Map V.1, roll a d4 and consult the table below to determine a random event or choose an event that has not yet happened.

D4

EVENT

1 A swarm of rotting maggots bursts from beneath the docks and crawl their way over to engulf the nearest creature. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour from the maggot infection.

2 The closest character begins to hear whispers telling them to dive into the water. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or become charmed and dive into the corrosive lake (see "Toxic Waters" sidebar, page XX), ending the charmed condition once submerged.

3 The closest character sees flashes of blood and hears screams of agony that only they see and hear. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX).

4 The decayed arms of a zombie (it has immunity to acid damage) burst upwards through the rotting boards and attempt to grab the ankles of the closest creature. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled (escape DC 15) and pulled through the boards into the corrosive lake (see "Toxic Waters" sidebar, page XX).

Keyed Locations

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on Map V.1. Jägerweiler Village.

1. STORAGE SHACK

This small shack appears ready to collapse at any moment. The sounds of bestial snuffling and chewing drift through the partially opened doorway.

There is nothing of actual value in this room.

Encounter: Just Right. A **revenant bear** (see Appendix, see page XX) has decided the rotting supplies are good enough to eat and is munching its way through the rotting body parts stacked like kindling here. A stealthy character who succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check can safely peek through the open door and see what's inside. Otherwise, the revenant bear hears the creak of the boards outside the shack and bursts through the doorway to attack.

1a. Bridge

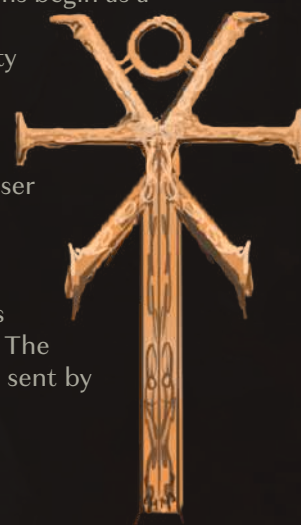
The boards of this bridge creak and groan with every step. The bridge collapses if more than 400 pounds are placed onto it simultaneously. Any creatures on the bridge fall into the corrosive lake (see "Toxic Waters" sidebar, page XX).

2. MEAT LOCKER

A swarm of flies engulfs a dozen large pieces of rotting meat that hang from rusted hooks set in the ceiling. Right below them is a pile of rats chewing on the remains of a human torso.

Encounter: Rot Flies. The two swarms of insects in this hut instantly attack once anyone enters. These flies are afflicted with a flesh-eating disease from exposure to the chemicals in the rotting meat. Any creature that suffers damage from the swarms must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become infected with rotgut. Once infected, symptoms of rotgut begin to appear in 1d10 minutes. The symptoms begin as a queasy feeling and painful stomach cramps, inflicting a -1 penalty to ability checks and attack rolls. This penalty advances by an additional -1 every 24 hours until cured. The affliction lasts for 1 week or until cured by a lesser restoration spell or similar magic.

Treasure. A holy symbol (5 gp) in the shape of the radiant church's symbol is around the severed neck of the torso. The body was one of the previous hunters sent by the church to inspect the village.



3. DEATH DOCKS

Four small rowboats in various states of disrepair float tied to the docks here. Splashes of old, long-dried blood stain each of them.

These small boats were left by previous attempts to enter the village by failed hunters. Each of the four boats can hold up to three hundred pounds before sinking into the lake.

Encounter: Lost Boys. Three **screechings** (see Appendix, see page XX) are hanging out on the rooftops of a building near the docks and eating their latest meal. They attempt to ambush the party (DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check) when the characters' backs are turned.

Treasure. Searching the boats uncovers a backpack filled with the same gear found in an *explorer's pack*, except for the rations and waterskin. Tucked inside the backpack is a parchment bearing the crest of the Radiant Church, which instructs the bearer to enter the village and return with information. It's signed with the initials C.R. (for Cerwyn Raolet, the mage who flooded the village with acid (see "The Mad Mage," page XX)).

4. HUNTER'S HUT

The door to this hut is shut tight and can be opened with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. The creatures inside wake up if the party makes any noise while attempting to open the door. Once the characters enter the hut, read aloud the following:

The stench of unwashed flesh mingles with the buzz of a swarm of flies hovering over a pile of refuse sitting just inside the doorway. Bits of broken furniture and torn papers lie against a wall next to a heap of uncured animal skins and discarded bones. Bloody runes and sigils are painted across the walls and floor, with claw-like gouges scratched next to each one.

The Veiled Hunter (see "The Alpha Hunter" sidebar, page XX) is rarely in his lair, as he often spends his time delving into the mind of Klaus von Brunheimer in the Vulgar Temple (area 5). A character proficient in Religion or History, or who succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Religion or History) check, recognizes the bloody symbols as obscure sigils relating to an ancient god-like entity from a long-dead religion. Characters inspecting the sigils in this manner must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX).

Encounter: Guard Bears. Two **revenant bears** (see Appendix) stand guard over this room and are sleeping on the pile of animal skins unless awakened by the party making too much noise.

Journal. A character looking through the broken furniture and papers discovers the destroyed journal of one of the old loggers that lived here. Water damage destroyed most entries, but the last few can barely be made out:

- "Been a bit under... feverish. Maybe... should visit the priests."
- "Feeling much better after the tonic the priests gave me. Thank the gods they're here. Too many lost to the fevers lately."
- "Had a strange dream last night... The moon was on fire and bleeding at the same time. Feeling much better now, though... stronger than ever, in fact!"



Art by Clayshaper

5. VULGAR TEMPLE

Once the characters come near this building, read aloud the following:

A massive creature's rib cage and skull sit on top of the largest building in the village. Flickering light filters through the shuttered windows and under the tightly closed door.

Characters attempting to listen at the doors or windows must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX). The Veiled Hunter is chanting parts of the *Obitus Scholare's* notes in an attempt to learn more of the processes they used. Before him sits the mutated alchemist Klaus von Brunheimer. He already knows of the party's presence and has been waiting for their arrival.

Once the party enters the building, read aloud the following:

Candles ring the walls of this large, open room, filling the cathedral-like space with flickering light. A cluster of wooden pews faces a small platform that looks ready to collapse at any moment under the combined weight of a multitude of papers

and a table covered in alchemical tools. An older man sits tied to a chair in the center of the platform, staring up at the ceiling as still as a corpse. In the shadows behind him, a figure in flowing black cloth peers out through an antlered skull mask. The figure chants a strange language in a raspy voice that pierces your skull just for a second before it suddenly stops and laughs, tilting its head at an impossible angle. "So you've finally arrived. How amusing. How do you like our little village, hmm?"

Encounter: The Alpha. The **Veiled Hunter** (see Appendix, see page XX) wants to manipulate the characters for his purposes. He uses his monstrous appearance and abilities to keep the party on their toes while toying with them as long as they don't attack. He reveals that all the creatures they've encountered in the village were former residents transformed by the true monsters that disguised themselves as priests, "except for dear old Klaus here, who has been so helpful to me." The Hunter knows the following information:

- Priests from the Radiant Church came one day to Jägerweiler Village looking for volunteers.
- The priests experimented with a new power source and promised that any participants would become faster and stronger than ever.
- They needed hunters to fight against the ever-growing hordes of monsters roaming the realm.
- The experiments worked at first, and the volunteer hunters became powerful. Then, it all went horribly wrong and whatever they put inside them began to burn and whisper in their minds.
- The others were too weak, but he fought back. Eventually, the coward priests tried to wash away their sins with a flood of acid to kill them all. They failed; some "lived".

He doesn't know the truth of the *Obitus Scholare* and their access to the eldritch blood. When he grows tired of the conversation, or if the characters attack him, the Hunter tests the party's capabilities to see if they're powerful enough to take on the "false priests who did this." He fights until he is reduced to half his total hit points and flees. He cackles that he'll "see them soon" as he uses his abilities to escape into the woods, where he remains at a distance to watch their progress.

The Alchemist. The body of Klaus von Brunheimer has been altered by the Veiled Hunter's attempts to recreate the mutation process. Dozens of sinister black eyes blink and watch from the dead man's forehead,

giving the impression that he is still alive. Any creature that looks directly into the eyes must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX). A character inspecting the body who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check finds surgical scars in strange places across the body. The most recent surgical area is at the base of his neck and is oozing a black sludge that smells foul. A creature that touches the sludge must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Documents. A casual search of the documents on the platform reveals the following:

- A partially burned notebook details scientific observations that show the progress of an experiment to augment humans with supernatural strength and speed.
- A supply list bearing the crest of the Radiant Church shows an absurd amount of alchemical supplies signed by Cerwyn Raolet (see "The Mad Mage," page XX).
- An undelivered letter from a Jägerweiler villager to her sister tells the story of a strange sickness overtaking the community and the disappearance of many residents into thin air.
- A crude map of the forest surrounding the village with various points of interest listed. One set of ruins is heavily circled with the initials C.R. scrawled next to them (this is where Cerwyn Raolet can be found, see "Part Two: Fortress Ruins," page XX). The map shows a short river path the characters can take using the boats from the docks (area 3) or an alternate route trekking through the woods (see "Traveling to the Ruins," page XX).

Treasure. If the characters follow the Research Retrieval adventure hook, they easily find the folder on the table containing Klaus von Brunheimer's research that Lord Jasper Roth funded. The beakers and other equipment are enough to assemble a set of alchemist's supplies. A character inspecting the concoctions who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can identify one of them as a *potion of greater healing*. On a failed check, however, they incorrectly identify the potion and pick up a deadly *potion of poison* that deals twice the amount of poison damage instead.



THE VEILED HUNTER - SIDEBAR

Once a simple woodsman and hunter who lived a quiet life in Jägerweiler Village, Brayden Lilyguard was chosen by the Obitus Scholare as one of the first to undergo their eldritch experiments. After being infused with the dead blood of the eldritch entity Gazgokoth (see "Blood of the Beast," page XX), he gained inhuman strength, speed, and the ability to tap into the natural world of the forest he loved so dearly. But as time went on, he and his fellow huntsman began to change. They began hearing dark whispers in their minds that eventually became a cacophony of terrifying screams. Their bodies morphed and changed into feral creatures. Brayden fared better than his comrades in retaining most of his sanity, but couldn't stop the change into the specter-like being he had become. After the church's failed attempt to wipe them out with a flood of acid, he gathered the mutated "survivors" and rebuilt the village into what it is today. As the Veiled Hunter, his only passion is for the survival of his new people and the utter destruction of those he holds responsible.

Roleplaying the Veiled Hunter

As intelligent as he is insane, the Veiled Hunter is far more dangerous than the lesser beasts and creatures within the village. The shadowy figure feeds on the fear his presence inspires in others, and prefers to toy with his prey when possible. He is well aware that his current appearance is another weapon in his arsenal, and he uses it to full effect. It is impossible to keep a conversation going while his barking laughter interrupts his own arguments with himself on how to kill and eat them, and the whole time, his head and body twist at impossible angles with disjointed limbs.

The Veiled Hunter appears as a putrid mockery of his former self, with rancid flesh peeking through the rents in his cloak and peeling around the bone mask he wears to hold his face together. Thick stitching from the forced introduction of eldritch flesh into his body has created a tableau of scars, and the rot around them became a breeding ground for maggots. Their constant wriggling gives his decomposing skin the appearance of always being in flux. His favorite tactic is to grapple an opponent, expel these maggots onto their face, and laugh at their gagging screams.

6. FEEDING PEN

The bones of a dozen types of creatures are piled in a closed-off ring, along with other rotting flotsam and jetsam. Some of the bones still have bits of armor and clothing attached to them.

The village creatures dispose of their meal waste in this particular location. A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes that it seems strange for supposed mindless monsters to care about doing this.

Encounter: Fish Food. Three swarms of quippers (they have immunity to acid damage) are feasting on bits of flesh still on the bones. They fiercely defend their feeding ground to the death.

Treasure. A character searching the bones who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that one skeleton is wearing a pair of black leather gloves edged in green that are still in pristine condition and can be identified as *gloves of missile snaring*.

7. CHARNEL HOUSE

Humanoid skeletons lie arranged in neat rows across the floor of this otherwise empty building. Long-dead flower petals sit across the eye sockets of each skeleton, and one wears a bronze medallion across its chest.

A character inspecting the bones who is proficient with alchemist's tools or who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the bones are smooth and unmarked, as if the flesh was melted off them. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check reveals the flower petals over the eyes are part of a local ritual to send the dead into the afterlife. These are the remains of the villagers killed by the acid flood. The Veiled Hunter laid them here as a reminder of what the village had lost.

Cursed Medallion. The bronze medallion bears the symbol of an eagle in flight. It was once a magical item that became cursed from the amount of death and despair it absorbed when the acid hit the town. The medallion has the same properties as a pair of *eyes of the eagle*. However, the first time the wearer succeeds on a Wisdom (Perception) check that relies on sight, the wearer becomes cursed. While cursed in this way, the wearer of the medallion has disadvantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, and

they see shadows and other movements out of the corner of their eyes. The medallion can only be removed with a *remove curse* spell or similar magic.

8. FOUL LODGE

The doorway to this building is an elk hide strung up to cover the entrance. Once the characters enter, read aloud the following:

This building reeks of unwashed animals and sulfur. Two rows of partially constructed beds flank an open path leading down the center of the open room. Each one is covered in animal hides and small trinkets.

The mutated creatures use this lodge as their primary sleeping quarters. A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes that it seems strange for mindless monsters to live in this way. This observation hints that the creatures are more than just random monsters that have taken over the village.

Hazard: Toxic Fumes. Creatures spending more than 1 minute breathing the fumes in this chamber must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour.

Trinkets. Some mutated villagers have collected objects from their former lives and hoard them on the beds. When a character searches a bed for the first time, they find a letter, signed by Cerwyn Raolet, and addressed to Gareth Mordon recommending him to the mages guild. For each of the other beds, roll a d10 and consult the Village Trinkets table to determine what they find (reroll any duplicates).

VILLAGE TRINKETS - TABLE

D10	TRINKET
1	A dirt-covered cloth doll wearing a dress and missing a button eye.
2	A book of elven poetry that has been waterlogged and is unreadable.
3	A wooden toy horse that appears to have been chewed on by an animal.
4	A baby's bonnet and a broken wooden rattle.
5	Half of an old fishing rod.
6	A brass wedding ring engraved with the words 'Ericka and Vincent Forever'.
7	A hunk of jagged blue glass wrapped in silver wire on a broken leather strap.
8	A silver coin that has been rubbed entirely smooth on both sides.
9	A broken gold pocket watch (1 gp).
10	An expertly carved ivory chess piece of a knight (1 sp).

PART TWO: FORTRESS RUINS

These old ruins were once a military outpost, abandoned after a fire tore through the building decades ago. The mage Cerwyn Raolet has been camped here for the past few weeks, fending off the creatures from Jägerweiler and hiding from the Obitus Scholare assassins looking to silence him forever. He is currently engrossed in studying one of the corrupted creatures he captured in an arcane cage (see area 6).

The Mad Mage

Cerwyn Raolet (LE human mage) is an older man in his late sixties with tight leather skin covered in liver spots. His body has been mutated and twisted into unnatural angles from exposure to the eldritch powers mingling with his blood. A bitter and curmudgeonly person who prefers the company of books over people, Cerwyn was a recluse who specialized in combining alchemy with the arcane. The Obitus Scholare sought him out for this expertise, and used him to flood Jägerweiler with alchemical acid to kill their failed experiments and witnesses. Afterward, they attempted to kill the angry mage, but he managed to escape. He's now hiding in these ruins and plotting revenge against those who tricked and wronged him. The mad mage lacks empathy towards life and sees what he did to Jägerweiler Village as nothing more than experimentation in the name of progress. He has no qualms about murder if it furthers his research.

Traveling to the Ruins

The characters can travel to the ruins overland or via boats they procure from Jägerweiler. The map found in the Vulgar Temple is detailed enough to guide them along either route. If they choose to travel by land, it will take them three hours by foot. For each hour of travel, roll a d6 and consult the Random Encounters table below to determine what they run into along the way. If the party chooses to sail, the trip takes one hour and is uneventful. Once the characters reach the ruins, they arrive at the Landing (area 1) on Map V.2. Fortress Ruins.

Random Encounters - TABLE

D6	ENCOUNTER
1	The Veiled Hunter (see Appendix, see page XX) uses his Rootprison ability to ambush the party, without revealing himself, before fleeing. A skuling shade (see Appendix, see page XX) then attack.
2	A revenant bear (see Appendix, see page XX) roars out of the misty forest, straight for the party.
3	The mist grows thick, and shadows of horrific monstrosities are seen walking just out of reach around the party. The party loses an hour of travel, and each creature must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX).
4	Four screechwings (see Appendix, see page XX) fly from out of the tree tops and attack the party. They each flee when reduced to fifty percent of their total hit points.
5	Three corrupted dryads step from the trees and scream their rage at the party, attacking them on sight. They are covered in open sores, lesions, and leaking pustules, as if diseased. They are immune to acid damage, and their melee weapon attacks deal an additional 3 (1d6) necrotic damage.
6	The hour passes without physical assault, but each character must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or suffer visions of melted corpses lining the path and hanging from tree branches. A failure results in gaining 1 point of exhaustion. Attempts to touch the remains result in them dissolving into smoke or exploding into a swarm of buzzing insects that dissipate into the forest.



Map V.2. Fortress

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the fortress ruins unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The old fortress was burned to the ground decades ago, and only crumbling stone walls, and a few wooden platforms exist.

Lights. The full moon fills the area with dim light.

Toxic Waters. The flooding of Jägerweiler also reached these ruins, infecting them with the same toxic red algae (see “Toxic Waters” sidebar, page XX).

Keyed Locations

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on Map V.2. Fortress Ruins.

1. LANDING

Once the characters arrive at the ruins, read aloud the following:

You arrive just outside what appears to be a long-abandoned military fort, with a large collapsed building to the north and a smaller ruined tower to the south. Rivers run through the crumbling walls with a thick layer of crimson algae that makes the water appear as flowing blood. A massive tree lies just ahead, covered in thick red pustules glistening in the moonlight.

2. CORRUPTED TREE

The alchemical waste Cerwyn carelessly dumps into the waters has corrupted this tree. It is sturdy enough to walk over with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid slipping into the toxic water below.

Encounter: Crimson Ooze. When a living creature comes within 5 feet of the tree, the red pustules form into two **crimson oozes** (they use **black pudding** statistics, and the Split reaction is additionally triggered by taking poison or necrotic damage).

Treasure. The remnants of the crimson oozes can be harvested and sold to an alchemist for 100 gp or traded for a *potion of resistance* of any damage type.

3. FEEDING GROUNDS

The sounds of snarling and crunching bones echo loudly off the walls of what must have been the fortress' main hall. In the center of the room are two grotesque bear-like creatures fighting each other over a bloody elk carcass. In one corner of the room is a wooden platform with a pair of newer-looking barrels tucked along one wall.

Cerwyn uses this area to dump animal carcasses to appease any mutated creatures that might stumble into the area. His magic blocks their senses, and they either kill each other or are appeased with his offerings enough to leave after the feast.

Encounter: Barely Enough. The two **revenant bears** (see Appendix) are too busy tearing into their meal and intimidating each other to notice the characters arrive unless they are being especially noisy. They fight to the death to protect their meal.

Barrels. The two barrels on the platform originally contained supplies that Cerwyn brought with him, but they now hold alchemical waste he has yet to dump into the water. If a creature opens the lid to a barrel, it is hit by the fumes and must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) acid damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Touching the waste directly results in an automatic failure on the save. Each barrel weighs 50 pounds, and can be sold to an alchemist for 200 gp each or exchanged for six vials of acid.

4. BROKEN BRIDGE

Someone attempted to rebuild a washed-out bridge here from scrap parts. The toxic waters are 4 feet deep along this section of the river, and the areas with broken bridge pieces are considered difficult terrain.

4a. Escape Boats

These boats are in excellent condition, and a quick search of one reveals it is packed with a week's worth of rations, water, and supplies in watertight packs.

5. PITFALL

Characters walking through this area who succeed on a **DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check** notice there is a slight, 30-foot-wide circular depression in the exact center of this room. Applying 400 pounds or more to the depressed area triggers a large pitfall trap, dumping any creature standing on top into a 20-foot-deep pit, where they fall onto a multitude of bones from previous victims. The trapdoor resets by itself after 1 minute. Triggering the trap alerts Cerwyn in area 7 to the party's presence; he casts *mage armor* on himself in preparation.

6. THE CAGE

If the characters enter this room before Cerwyn releases his prisoner, read aloud the following:

Barrels and crates are stacked around the mostly intact walls of this chamber. In the center stands a monstrous humanoid creature with four green eyes, curving horns, and a maw full of razor-sharp fangs. It stands unmoving in an arcane circle of glowing runes that crackle with lightning, illuminating a barely perceptible energy cage.

Encounter: The Silent King. Cerwyn captured a **wisp liege** (see Appendix, see page XX), and is studying the effects of eldritch blood and the creature's tolerance to his alchemical concoctions. An arcane circle empowers an energy field similar to a *forcecage* spell that Cerwyn can deactivate with a verbal command. If the wisp liege is released, it instantly rampages towards the creature closest to it, intent on killing everything in sight. If the wisp liege is released before the characters meet Cerwyn, he casts *mage armor* on himself, observes the fight from a distance, and taunts them, as per The Angry Mage encounter (see area 7).

Supplies. There is a month's worth of food rations and water tucked into the crates and barrels in this room. There are also enough arcane components to build two component pouches.

7. MAGE'S TOWER

The air in this crumbling tower is filled with more scents than a spice market in the summer. These smells waft over from a table filled with beakers of various colors cooking above small flames. Open crates are scattered haphazardly around the room, and a set of stairs lead to a large wooden platform that exits through the southeastern corner of the tower. A disfigured humanoid wearing a filthy green robe steps out of the shadows on the balcony above and sneers down at you. His eyes gleam with madness, and his leathery skin pulls tight to his skull with a rictus grin. "Think you've caught me, do you!? I hope you enjoyed what those damn priests paid you because you'll not leave here alive!"

Encounter: The Angry Mage. If Cerwyn (**mage**) was alerted to the party's presence by triggering the trap in area 5 or by making a commotion, such as releasing the wisp liege in area 6, he is alert and has cast *mage armor* on himself. He believes the party is a group of assassins sent by Obitus Scholare to kill him. If the **wisp liege** (see Appendix) in area 6 has not been released, Cerwyn ends the imprisonment spell, and the creature roars into battle. The mad mage cackles and taunts the characters as the wisp liege does the brunt of the work, preserving his spells for tactical support and defense, only attacking when needed. Characters can convince Cerwyn they're not assassins with a successful DC 19

Charisma (Persuasion) check. This check can be made with advantage if Bram the Acolyte (see "Bram the Acolyte" sidebar, page XX) is with the party and vouches for them. If successful, Cerwyn uses an action to reactivate his imprisonment spell on the wisp liege if it's still alive, instantly teleporting it back into the arcane circle in area 6. Otherwise, Cerwyn flees towards his boat (area 4a) once the wisp liege is killed, or if he is reduced to half his hit points or fewer. If he reaches his escape boat, he quickly casts off and heads down the river at a rate of 60 feet per round.

Treasure. Cerwyn has a palm-sized wooden chest in his possession that he will not part with aside from his death, as it is linked to a *secret chest* spell that holds all his wealth. The chest has 30 days remaining before it expires. Inside are 1,000 gp, a deed to a small house in Luyharna, a journal with incriminating evidence against Cerwyn for the acid flood (he cataloged the effects of the acid on flesh and the process in a clinical, scientific manner), and a spellbook containing all the spells he has prepared as a **mage**. There are two *potions of resistance (acid)* on the alchemy table, along with a map and journal detailing the same information outlined in the "Talking with Cerwyn" section below. The journal also includes highly detailed torture methods that Cerwyn wished to enact on the Obitus Scholare.

Development. If Cerwyn is killed at any point, the arcane circle in area 6 loses all power, releasing the wisp liege if it is imprisoned.

Talking with Cerwyn

If the characters convince Cerwyn (see "The Mad Mage" section, page XX) to speak with them, he is more than willing to share what he knows about the Obitus Scholare and their plot. Still, he refuses to admit his role in the acid flood as anything beyond "an advisor" unless confronted directly with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check. He freely shares the following information:

- The Obitus Scholare is a sect of the Radiant Church that secretly experiments with strange rituals to augment hunters. He doesn't know any of their actual names or faces.
- They experimented with the villagers of Jägerweiler, and something went wrong.
- They sent a flood of acid to wipe away all traces, but when it failed, they fled and disappeared.
- He has a map leading to a hidden cave in the forest where the sect was working with something sinister.

Cerwyn can be convinced to give the party the two *potions of resistance (acid)* from the alchemy table with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. He otherwise gives the party the map with the cave's location, packs up his belongings, and leaves via his escape boat (area 4a). If the characters follow the map to the hidden cave, proceed to "Part Three: The Eldritch Temple."

PART THREE: THE ELDRITCH TEMPLE

Sometime in the past year, an acolyte of the Radiant Church was drawn to a secret location deep in the forest. Whispers in her mind and dream-like visions guided her to the ruins of an ancient temple. Within, she noticed strange carvings and sigils she did not understand. The acolyte followed the instructions and found the remains of what she believed to be a god-like entity and a path to a new power. The acolyte brought her findings to the leadership of the Obitus Scholare in secret, and was praised for her discovery. Instructed with the mission to find ways to augment monster hunters, this branch of the Radiant Church has *carte blanche* to fulfill this objective in whatever way they see fit. Operating in the shadows and hungry for ways to ascend to higher being, the Obitus Scholare seized this opportunity and began to harvest the corpse of the entity, whom they called Gazgokoth. Their experimenting unlocked the power within the flesh and blood, creating powerful hunters—until it all fell apart when the subjects were driven insane. When the failed experiments' exposure forced them to flee, the Obitus Scholare harvested as much of the eldritch corpse as possible before Cerwyn used the remainder to power his acid flood. Although the cave is now empty, echoes of madness still reverberate throughout the temple grounds.

The Veiled Hunter has tracked the party throughout their journey, hoping they would lead him to the source of the Obitus Scholare's power. He is waiting in the forest to take the characters by surprise once they tire themselves out fighting near the cave entrance within the temple.

Map V.3. Eldritch Temple



Traveling to the Cave

The characters can travel to the cave marked on Cerwyn's map by land or via boat from the fortress ruins. Either route takes one hour, and other than the effects of madness that may still be plaguing the characters, the short trip is uneventful. Once the party reaches the location, they arrive at the southern bridge, marked as location 1 on Map V.3. Eldritch Temple.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the ruined eldritch temple unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Void Moon. The area is affected heavily by the Vacuous Moon (see Appendix, see page XX), which appears as a black hole in the sky rimmed with an ethereal glow that drains all the light in the area. Whenever a Wisdom saving throw is made against a short-term madness effect while in this location, the check is made with disadvantage.

Toxic Waters. The flooding of Jägerweiler started from this temple, where the red algae started spreading soon afterward (see "Toxic Waters" sidebar, page XX).

Running this Location

This location is designed to be run in three distinct combat phases, referenced below as waves. Each wave starts 1 minute after the end of the previous wave or once the characters reach specific locations, as marked on Map V.3. Eldritch Temple.

Regional Effects

Eldritch magic has infused this location to the point that it has altered the surrounding area and created the following effects:

- **Corrupting Darkness.** Shadows in this location seem to absorb light. Creatures with darkvision have their range decreased by half. Additionally, all light source ranges are reduced by half while within this area.
- **Existential Dread.** An unshakable feeling of dread permeates this location. All creatures suffer disadvantage on saving throws made to maintain concentration while in this area.
- **The Edge of Madness.** The veil between the Material Plane and the Plane of Madness has become thin in this location, and echoes reverberate to those in tune. The total number of madness effects a creature suffers reduces its Proficiency Bonus by the same amount (this penalty can't reduce its Proficiency Bonus below +0).

THE TEMPLE GROUNDS

Once the characters arrive at the temple grounds, read aloud the following:

The winding, blood-colored river leads through the dark forest. With each passing moment, the surrounding vegetation appears more sickly and diseased until you reach a wide clearing. The moon above is a black hole sucking all the light into it, and the shadows it casts stretch further and grow darker here. The crumbling remains of ancient towers and walls are wrapped in thick vegetation, each stone carved with strange sigils. At the far end of the clearing is a large pool of water covered in dense red algae that flows from a jagged cave mouth.

Wave 1: Blood Bears

This wave is triggered once the characters reach either of the temple structures marked as 2 on Map V.3. Eldritch Temple. Two **revenant bears** (see Appendix, see page XX) have been eating the red algae, which has turned their fur crimson. They charge any creatures that come within 5 feet of either structure.

Temple Structures

Each ruin consists of cracked and crumbling granite blocks covered in thick, thorny vegetation. Clearing the vegetation reveals sigils etched into the stone, which a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Religion or Arcana) check recognizes as a representation of the Plane of Madness. If the characters inspected the sigils in the hunter's hut in Jägerweiler village, this check is made with advantage. Creatures that fail their checks must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or gain a short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX).

Wave 2: Winged Nightmares

This wave is triggered once the characters reach the cave marked as 3 on Map V.3. Eldritch Temple. With a screech of rage, winged creatures fly out of the cave entrance to protect their lair. There is a **skulking shade** (see Appendix, see page XX), a **screechwing** (see Appendix, see page XX), and two **swarms of blood bats** (they use **swarm of bats** statistics and they regain hit points equal to the amount of damage their melee weapon attacks deal on a successful hit). The creatures, now mad from the temple's influence, fight to keep the party from entering the cave.

Inside the Cave

The cave and interior temple were collapsed by the Obitus Scholare shortly after the acid flooded Jägerweiler, and they moved their operation to another location within Luyharna. A wall of heavy stones and rubble has filled the space, destroying every trace of their operation and leaving only a twenty-foot-deep empty cave behind. There is nothing of value or interest in this area.

Wave 3: The Veiled Hunter

This wave is triggered once the party has had a moment to explore this dead end of a collapsed cave. Read aloud the following to begin the third wave:

A chill wind picks up, and the hairs on the back of your neck prickle as a familiar raspy cackle drifts in from the cave entrance. Standing there is the shadowy figure of the creature from Jägerweiler Village, its antlered skull grinning as it peers at each of you. "Thank you for all your hard work in discovering this place. Now... hand over everything you've found and your deaths will be swift. You will not stand in the way of my vengeance!" As the creature raises a claw out towards you, a stream of blood-covered bats begins to screech and swirl around him, blocking all escape from the cave.

The **Veiled Hunter** (see Appendix) has tracked the party to this spot and confronts them for the final time. Two **swarms of blood bats** (they use **swarm of bats** statistics, and they regain hit points equal to the amount of damage their melee weapon attacks deal on a successful hit) assist the hunter. He believes the characters have discovered the true secret of the Obitus Scholar's eldritch process and grows angry when it's made clear that everything was destroyed. He fights to the death, believing the characters are hiding what they discovered from him and is unwilling to let them leave.

Treasure. A leatherbound notebook with the Veiled Hunter's notes and musings can be looted from him after he is defeated. Much of it is written in code, and it takes 4 hours of intense study or a successful DC 17 Intelligence check to break the code. In the notebook is a detailed account of the experiments done on the villagers and the subsequent cover-up attempt with the acid flood. A list of three names belonging to suspected members of the Obitus Scholare is encoded into the back of the Veiled Hunter's journal. A small leather pouch on the hunter's belt holds ten small diamonds (100 gp each), an unfinished wood carving of a toy soldier, a heart-shaped tin locket on a broken leather

thong, and a vial filled with a purple and black sludge that smells of rotting meat and lavender. If a creature drinks the vial, roll a d6 on the table below to determine the effects.

D6	EFFECT
1	The creature gains one short-term madness effect (see "Steinhardt's Madness System," page XX).
2	You gain the effect of the gaseous form spell for 1 hour (no concentration required) or until you end the effect as a bonus action.
3	You take 10 (3d6) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. While poisoned, you take 10 (3d6) poison damage at the start of each of your turns. You can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of your turns to end the poisoned condition.
4	You grow a pair of bat wings on your back for 1 hour or until you dismiss them as a bonus action. The wings give you a flying speed of 60 feet.
5	Every strand of hair falls off your body, they start regrowing after 24 hours.
6	Your Strength score changes to 23 for 1 hour.

CONCLUSION

With the defeat of the Veiled Hunter, the gathered creatures in and around Jägerweiler no longer have a leader to hold them together. They fall further into their bestial states, killing one another and scattering into the forests, leaving the village to become an empty shell. The characters' decisions throughout the adventure affect the different outcomes described below.

Returning to Luyharna

Lieutenant Captain Adelle Roux allows the characters re-entry into Luyharna if Bram the Acolyte survived to confirm their tale, or they return his body and display the Veiled Hunter's antlered skull as proof the village has been cleared of monsters. Otherwise, the characters must use more creative measures to re-enter the city without being seen.

The Obitus Scholare

A list of three names belonging to suspected members of the Obitus Scholare is encoded into the back of the Veiled Hunter's journal. Each of the names is known to high-ranking contacts in the Radiant Church. The three

acolytes serve in the city's hospital for the mentally ill, Silverwing Asylum. They have been flooded with patients lately due to the curse. Perhaps a visit to the hospital is in order? If Cerwyn Raolet survived his encounter with the party, he might also be headed in that direction to enact his revenge.

Research Retrieval

If the characters return Lord Jasper Roth's research from Jägerweiler Village, he's more than happy to pay the 3,000 gp remainder of the promised reward. The philanthropist is pleased with the party's work and can become a good source of information and future adventures, as his wealth is invested in many places throughout the city and region. As one of the few Luyharnian nobles with a shred of decency left, he has not yet succumbed to the evil notions of selfishness and lack of empathy that his peers suffer.



APPENDIX: VACUOUS MOON

When the Vacuous Moon is visible, the following effects apply to the world.

Monsters

GM Note:

Monsters don't have a clear cut definition in the rules. As a GM, you can follow the rule of thumb that any non-humanoid creature is a monster. If a creature is a humanoid (or other potential player race), determine how self aware it is. If the answer is "not very", then count it as a monster too.

- Monsters of CR 5 or lower are blinded.
- Monsters gain blindsight out to 30 feet.
- Monsters have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
- Monstrosities gain the following trait:

Void Step: After the monster is damaged by a ranged attack, it can use its reaction to teleport to an empty space within 5 feet of the attacker and make a single melee weapon attack against it.

Travel

The world is engulfed in the darkness of the Vacuous Moon. The light of torches barely illuminates the filth-ridden streets and screams of madness echo through the night as the void weakens the barrier between the afterlife and reality.

STARING INTO THE ABYSS

If a character looks directly at the moon for more than 6 seconds, they are faced with the depths of the abyss, which gazes back at them. They must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against the Madness DC or gain a short term madness. The first time in a day that a character sees invisibility, they are compelled to stare at the moon for a round.

VACUOUS LIGHT

The void absorbs all light:

- Darkvision doesn't function.
- Dim light becomes darkness.
- A creature that can see invisibility doesn't suffer disadvantage on perception checks due to darkness.
- Creatures have disadvantage on saving throws against madness while not in bright light.

Madness

The madness section of each moon refers to a Madness DC, which is indicated in the following table.

AVERAGE PARTY LEVEL	MADNESS DC
1-4	11
5-8	13
9-12	15
13-16	17
17-20	19
20+	21

The void wears a heavy toll on the mind. Whenever a character fails a Wisdom saving throw they gain one short-term madness (saving throws against madness do not trigger this effect).

SHORT-TERM

Whenever a character gains a short-term madness under the Vacuous Moon, they see their regrets and sorrows take life. They are under the effect of the see invisibility spell for the duration of the madness. The effects of the spell cause them to see the shadowy figures of all the loved ones they lost, hanging upside down, chains wrapped around their neck, floating towards the moon. Observing that which should be reserved to the dead shatters one's psyche; they become frightened for the duration of the madness.



Concept art, not final

LONG-TERM

Whenever a character gains a long-term madness under the Vacuous Moon, the shadows they saw previously now become as clear as day, an image indistinguishable from reality. They are under the effect of the see invisibility spell and have disadvantage on all attack rolls, as they lose the ability to differentiate between reality and the beyond for the duration of the madness. A blinded creature doesn't suffer from this effect.

INDEFINITE

A character that gains an indefinite madness under the Vacuous Moon loses their grip on reality. Roll a d100; on a result of 33 or lower, the character becomes part of the void, and is able to cast the spell blink on itself at will, without providing components, shifting between planes of existence. If they use the spell 3 times in a day, when the spell ends, the character comes back into reality without their eyes and becomes permanently blinded. On a result of 34 or higher, the void swallows their vision, as the figures of their past rip out the character's eyes before vanishing with them, leaving the character permanently blinded.

APPENDIX: MONSTERS

Screechwing

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (half plate)
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 20 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances acid

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Disorienting Strikes. The screechwing has advantage on attack rolls against deafened creatures.

Echolocative Vision. The screechwing can see creatures it has hit with its Echoing Screech attack within the last minute past its blindsight range, up to 120 feet, and regardless of cover.

Swift Swordsmanship. After the screechwing hits a creature with a weapon attack, the screechwing can take the Disengage action as a bonus action until the end of its turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The screechwing makes two attacks with its shortswords.

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Screech (Recharge 4-6). The screechwing lets out a powerful screech in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) thunder damage, become stunned until the end of its next turn, and become deafened for 1 minute. A deafened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the deafened condition on itself on a success.



Revenant Bear

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)
Speed 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	14(+2)	16(+3)	2(-4)	13(+1)	7(-2)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Emaciated Appetite. The bear is in a state of constant hunger. After hitting a non-construct creature with an attack, the bear eats part of it, regaining 8 (1d10 + 3) hit points.

Spiked Body. Whenever a creature within 5 feet of the bear hits it with a melee attack, the creature takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage.

Hold Breath. The bear can hold its breath for 3 hours.

False Appearance. While motionless and partly submerged in water or acid, the bear is indistinguishable from a normal mound of dirt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bear makes two snapjaw attacks.

Snapjaw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the bear can't make snapjaw attacks against another target, and the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it's hit by this attack.

Art by Ryan Bittner



Wisp Liege

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	15(+2)	17(+3)	2(-4)	13(+1)	6(-2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, lightning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Wispfather. While the liege is within 60 feet of a will-o'-wisp, the will-o'-wisp can use its shock attack an additional time on each of its turns as a bonus action.

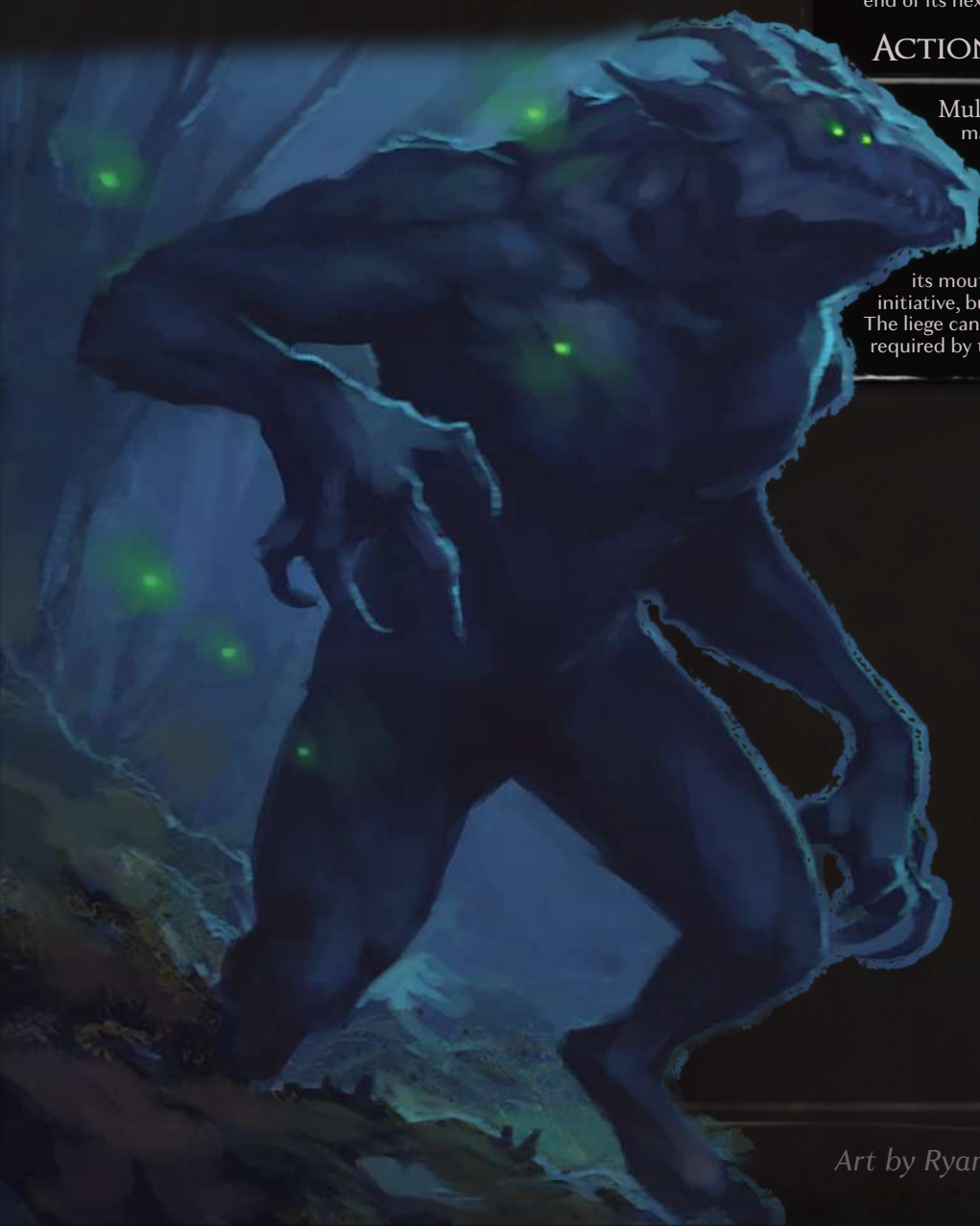
Dying Whisper. Whenever a will-o'-wisp is reduced to 0 hit points within 60 feet of the liege, the liege regains 5 hit points and has advantage on its next attack roll before the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The liege uses its Create Wisp, then makes two attacks with its claws.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage plus 1 slashing damage for each will-o'-wisp within 5 feet of it.

Create Wisp (Recharge 6). The liege opens its mouth to let out 1d4 will-o'-wisps. They share its initiative, but take their turn immediately after the liege's. The liege can command them telepathically (no action required by the liege), and they will follow its commands.





Art by Ryan Bittner

Skulking Shade

Huge monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 104 (11d12 + 33)
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21(+5)	14(+2)	17(+3)	7(-2)	14(+2)	5(-3)

Saving Throws Str +8

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances acid, necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Deep Speech but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Organ Ripper. Whenever the shade scores a critical hit against a creature with a melee attack, the target takes an additional 11 (2d10) piercing damage. If the attack reduces the target to 0 hit points, the shade rips out a vital organ from the creature (such as the heart or brain), recharges its Death Breath, and the creature dies.

Cull the Herd. The shade has advantage on attack rolls against creatures which are within 5 feet of one of that creature's allies or against creatures that it is grappling.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shade can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shade makes three melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage. The shade regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.

Crush. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target grappled by the shade. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Snatch. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). The shade can then fly up to its speed without triggering opportunity attacks.

Death Breath (Recharge 5-6). The shade lets out a breath of deathly energy in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (3d10 + 5) necrotic damage on a failure, or half as much damage on a success. All non-creature organic material in the area, such as plants, wood, or food, begin to rot and wither.

Veiled Hunter

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (16 with barkskin)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6(-2)	14(+2)	15(+2)	13(+1)	15(+2)	19(+4)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +7

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances acid, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Sylvan

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hunter's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The hunter can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: druidcraft

3/day each: blight, dominate beast, spike growth

Eldritch Mask. The hunter's mask is the source of its power. The mask has AC 22 and 25 hit points. The mask is immune to all damage except bludgeoning, fire, force, piercing, and slashing damage and it doesn't take damage from effects that target an area. While the hunter is wearing its mask, it has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects, can cast speak with animals and plants at will, and can't be magically put to sleep. If the mask is destroyed, it loses these benefits.

They Have Eyes. The hunter can use a bonus action to transport its senses into any tree within 500 miles of it has seen, seeing and hearing as if it occupied the tree's space, until it ends the effect (no action required). During this time, it is blind and deaf in regard to its own senses.

Treestep. Once on its turn, the hunter can use 10 feet of its movement to step magically into one living tree within its reach and emerge from a second living tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger. After using this trait, the hunter gains the benefits of the barkskin spell until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hunter makes two gravetouch attacks.

Gravetouch. Melee Spell Attack: +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 25 (6d6 + 4) necrotic damage.

Rootprison (Recharge 4-6). The hunter chooses up to five creatures within 30 feet of a tree the hunter can see. Each creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 18 (4d8) piercing damage and is restrained for 1 minute. Whenever a restrained creature uses its action to make an attack or cast a spell, it takes 9 (2d8) piercing damage. A creature can use its action to make a DC 15 Dexterity check to break itself or another creature within its reach free, ending the effect on that creature on a success.

Wooden Labyrinth. The hunter chooses a creature it can see within 120 feet of itself. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is magically lost, automatically failing all Intelligence (Nature) and Wisdom (Survival) checks it makes for the next 24 hours and being unable to escape the woods. The creature isn't aware of this effect. On a success, the creature is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours and knows it was targeted by some sort of magic.

REACTIONS

House of Leaves (3/Day). When the hunter is hit by an attack, it turns into a pile of leaves and reappears in the branches of a tree within 60 feet of it, causing the attack to miss.



THANK YOU!

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW AND SUPPORT ME, WITHOUT YOU I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT THIS PROJECT TO LIFE.

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PRE-ALPHA CONTENT FOR STEINHARDT'S GUIDE TO THE ELDRITCH HUNT

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