



Shadows over
VATHAK

PECULIER PETS OF ROSEMARIE STRAUB

5TH EDITION HORROR

An Adventure for 5th level characters for
Shadows over Vathak Horror Roleplaying Game

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Based in South Carolina, USA, Fat Goblin Games was founded in 2011 to create Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products. With a focus on high-quality production values and providing a creative environment for our team of freelancers (The Fat Goblin Hoarde), Fat Goblin Games has quickly become a recognized force in the world of Third Party Publishers of not just the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and 5th Edition Fantasy, but also supporting the vs. M Engine, our own Difference Engine, and TinyD6 games originally produced by Gallant Knight Games. With hundreds of support books, visual aids, campaign settings, and quality stock art, Fat Goblin Games continues to provide exciting content and fantastic worlds in which gamers can immerse themselves.

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Adventure Primer

Adventure Level: 5th Level

Estimated Duration: 1-3 hours

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Rosemarie Straub was a local historian and amateur occultist. Smart and well respected, her sudden death has left the town in a state of deep mourning. But the events of her funeral have caused panic and fear amongst the people, as an unnatural horror is creeping around the dark alleys and sewers. As attacks on innocent citizens rise and rumors of Rosemarie Straub's connection spread, local law enforcement is looking for any help solving this mystery.

Do the characters have what it takes to investigate the strange events surrounding Rosemarie's death and how it is connected to the creature lurking in the shadows? Can they stop this abomination and save the reputation of Miss Straub?

ADVENTURE LOCATION

This adventure takes place in a small to medium city with many industrial conveniences, such as gas lighting, sewer systems, cobblestone streets, and local law enforcement. This victorian/gothic set dressing.

In Vathak, this city is Eisenstrat in the region of Grigoria. Eisenstrat is known for its steel production and weapons manufacturing for the vindari military.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The GM is free to contrive any means necessary to get the characters involved with this adventure. Some possible ideas include:

- ✎ **Known Acquaintance:** If any of the characters have academic connections they might know of Rosemarie and heard of her untimely death, perhaps even being invited to the funeral. In addition, if they have connections to the occult, Rosemarie might have invited them to visit and discuss her latest discovery before she died.
- ✎ **Witness at the Scene:** The characters might not know Rosemarie at all and witness her death while walking through town. If this is the case, the local constable and any law enforcement might want to question them as well as asking them to remain in town. Whether they attend her funeral or simply hear of the incidents there, is up to the Gamemaster.
- ✎ **Caught in the Commotion:** Rosemarie Straub was beloved in the city of Eisenstrat and her funeral was attended by nearly everyone. Simply being in the area might cause the characters to be swept up in the funeral procession and find themselves attending an event, clueless of any other circumstance.
- ✎ **Invitation of Fear:** The creatures that infested Rosemarie Straub were encountered at an archaeological dig. She was not the only person there and anyone of those present could have invited the characters out of concern for Rosemarie or what they believe they found.

This adventure outlines a series of events and locations allowing the Gamemaster to insert the characters where best fits their needs. Depending on this choice the adventure could include elements of investigation and research or simply be a monster hunt.



Welcome to the world of Shadows over Vathak, a realm of dwindling hope and despair. As players, your characters fight to survive in a land threatened with destruction by the rise of the ancient and evil Old Ones and their spawn. Your characters may represent points of light in the darkness or give in to wicked temptations. Most will fall somewhere in between — survivors struggling to eke out another day. Though the followers of the One True God speak of divine providence while battling the Old Ones, the sins of the Church often rival those of their enemies. In the world of Vathak, your character's perceptions of heroes and villains is a thin line drawn by their own personal morality and, of course, determined by the victor.

This adventure is set in the dark fantasy world of Vathak. As such there are references to the history, characters, and locations of that world. However, with a little bit of alteration, these adventures can be suited for any horror themed 5th edition game.

If you are new to Shadows over Vathak, make sure you join our [Patreon](#) and receive a free copy of the *Explorer's Guide to Vathak*.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

To run this adventure, it is recommended that you have copies of the 5th Edition core rulebooks.

In this adventure you might come across spells, abilities, creatures, magic items, and other references to content from these corebooks. When this happens that item will appear in bold/red text, like this:

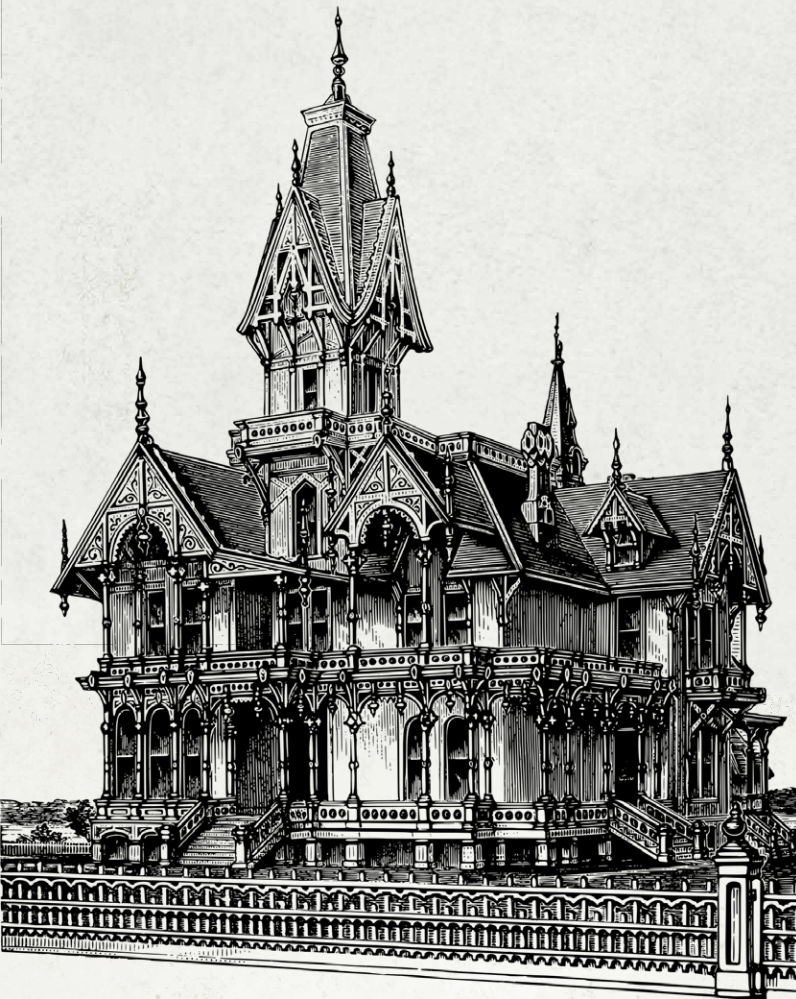
"The **goblins** are waiting to attack the caravan as it comes around the steep bend."

If the content is new (such as monsters or equipment) and not included in one of the corebooks, we will make note of the source or include the item in an appendix to the adventure.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following are a collection of common abbreviations that might be used in this adventure.

AC	Armor Class	GP	Gold pieces
CE	Chaotic Evil	HP	Hit Points
CG	Chaotic Good	LE	Lawful Evil
CN	Chaotic Neutral	LG	Lawful Good
cp	Copper pieces	LN	Lawful Neutral
CR	Challenge Rating	N or TN	Neutral, or True Neutral
d%	Two d10s die one as the 10s the other as the 1s	NE	Neutral Evil
d10	A die of 10 sides	NG	Neutral Good
d12	A die of 12 sides	NPC	Non-Player Character
d20	A die of 20 sides	PC	Player Character
d4	A die of 4 sides	pp	Platinum pieces
d6	A die of 6 sides	sp	Silver Pieces
d8	A die of 8 sides	Stats	The statistical representation of a character
DC	Difficulty Class	XP	Experience Points
EL	Encounter Level		
EP	Electrum Pieces		
GM	Game Master		



THE FUNERAL

On the day of Rosemarie Straub's funeral nearly all businesses have been closed for the event and most of the city takes part in the funeral or gathers to watch the procession to the local cemetery. Although the city elites and upper class quickly fill the pews of the church, no one says a word to the many others standing against the walls, surrounding the building, and filling the cemetery in order to pay their respect.

If the characters are witnessing the funeral, read the following:

As Herr Brandenberger is finishing his blessing of Rosemarie Straub's body a low guttural moan can be heard from the table she lays upon. The whispers and confusion of the crowd are quickly interrupted when her body begins to twitch and shake uncontrollably.

Panic sets in amongst the witnesses as gasps of horror and shuffling feet fill the room. The body now loudly and furiously shaking and jolting, the sound of growling and murmuring increasing each second.

Without warning, Rosemarie Straub's torso bursts open, spilling and splattering blood and entrails across the floor. What can only be identified as a crustacean-like creature is seen scurrying away from the gruesome scene and slipping into an old grate on the church floor.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Early in the morning, Rosemarie Straub was hurriedly walking the streets from the merchant district to what is believed to be the direction of her home. Quit suddenly she collapsed to the ground and died. Witnesses rushed to her side and town guards were called for aid, but all evidence of a cause of death were unknown.

Word travelled fast and the evening edition of the newspaper announced the passing of the beloved Rosemarie Straub, local historian. The funeral was expected to take place in the next couple of the days and most of the city is preoccupied with grief over the event, plans for the funeral and possible memorial, and sharing fond memories they have of Miss Straub.

CONSTABLE RAMSEIER

Constable Ramsier and a handful of his guards were not in the church to witness the events, instead, outside patrolling the large gathering of folks unable to enter the church. When people start fleeing the building and expressing horror over the strange carnage they witnessed, him and his men will quickly enter to investigate. While the guards questions and close off the scene, Constable Ramseier will inspect the body and especially the grate with the trail of blood leading to it.

This is a good time to have the characters questioned, if they are present at the funeral. In fact, depending on their response to the local guard, they might find themselves detained for further questioning, as they are considered outsiders and generally suspicious by nature.

Eventually, Constable Ramseier will want to talk to the characters.

- If the characters know Rosemarie Straub then Ramseier will be friendly with them, ask for any details on what might have happened, and will ask them for their help - especially if the characters have ties to the military, noble families, or the occult.
- If the characters were sent by another party to investigate, the Constable will ask them to share any information they have and possibly encourage them to continue to investigate.
- If the characters are strangers passing through, the Constable will blackmail the characters into helping him investigate, as they are an easy target to pin the weird event on without any outcry from the city. He feels having an unbiased group to aid him is beneficial.

Although Constable Ramseier is a clever detective, his specialty is crimes of violence, and doesn't have a head for things of the supernatural. In fact, any such crime typically goes unsolved as he shys away from them.

ROSEMARIE STRAUB'S HOME

Miss Straub lives in a well-to-do area of the city in a modest house. The house is spacious and well kept, full of unusual trinkets and healthy plants. No one else lives with her and the residence is locked. If the characters are working with Constable Ramseier, in a friendly collaboration, he would have given them the key. A Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) at DC 20 will also unlock the door.

If the characters investigate Rosemarie Straub's house, read the following:

The interior of the house is nicely decorated, leaning towards the modern design aesthetic of most vindari upper class. Carved wooden sculptures, masks, and other objects feel out of place perched around the rooms amongst the more modern decor.

Her study stands out amongst the pristine elements of other rooms, as it is as chaotic and disorderly as a can be. Papers and notes litter the area, books on history and anthropology stacked haphazardly on every surface, and strange and unusual bones hang from the ceiling.

Miss Straub's desk seems to be dedicated to one single subject, a recent archeological discovery of a burial site for an unknown tribe of humanoids, which she believes has been extinct for thousands of years, possibly before the bhriota arrived in Vathak.

Many of her notes are addressed to Sir Thomas Gersbach, the curator of the local history museum.

If the players spend time going over all the notes available, they quickly find that Rosemarie was meticulous in keeping track of both her research and thoughts. An Intelligence (Investigation) check at DC 20 reveals the following.

- The initial site was discovered by a vindari military unit seeking shelter. They only explored the initial caves. The location was reported to higher ranking officers who eventually shared it with a Professor Volker of the University of Eisin' Dorf.
- Several weeks into researching the caves, the team discovered a passage that led to an older system of tunnels carved from volcanic rock; these tunnels would eventually open to a large chamber with a vast subterranean water table.



- ☛ Official reports mention a possible unknown tribe living in the underground caves before the arrival of the bhriota. Based on artifacts and wall carvings, they believe this humanoid race was some sort of crustacean.
- ☛ It was reported that a tunnel collapse caused Professor Volker and several others of the party to perish. The remaining survivors declared the site hazardous for further exploration and had the military dynamite the entrance.
- ☛ In reality, Rosemarie says they found a tunnel that seemed to purposefully be collapsed, excavation of the tunnel led to what appeared to be some sort of nesting areas. Believing the egg remnants they found to be fossilized, Professor Volker and several others attempted to move them, causing “strange” creatures to hatch and kill the crew. She refers to the creatures as *Volker’s Perculiers*.

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

The Gamemaster should set the events to coincide with their timeline as well as the actions of the players.

History Museum - Sir Thomas Gersbach is the director of the city’s history museum. If the characters go to the museum to talk with him, they will find him dead in his office. His torso will have been completely emptied of organs, leaving a hollow cavity - a clear trail of blood is smeared across the floor leading to a metal grate in the floor of a small kitchen. Searching his notes the players will learn that Thomas was one of the members of the expedition and he had been corresponding with Rosemarie to keep quiet on the events that happened.

Reporting to the Constable - If the characters report back to Constable Ramseier of discoveries they have made, he will inform them of the death of a beggar who witnesses saw being attacked by a similar creature as reported at the funeral. He will also mention that several ratcatchers working the sewers found stray dogs killed in the same manner, which was confirmed by the investigating doctor.

Ratcatchers - It didn’t take long for these men to sell their story to the newspaper and for that news to spread. Players who don’t report to Constable Ramseier will most likely hear the story from any resident interacting with them or even overheard conversation from concerned citizens.

The ratcatchers swear they saw the creatures in the sewer and there was more than just one. Their descriptions will be vague, with some giving descriptions that resemble a large crab and others closer to that of a shrimp. Clearly, whatever the ratcatchers encountered was traumatizing, as the ramble and repeat themselves with every question asked, often changing details slightly.

They can however, with most certainty, give the location of where they believe the creatures are making a home. They can provide a crude map to the players if they ask, but will refuse to take them there.



THE SEWERS

Eventually the players should make their way down into the sewers to continue the search. The ratcatchers can easily provide the location of a nearby entrance in the basement of an abandoned building. The sewers are dank and smell of rot and decay, decomposing waste serves as the primary resource for the many rats infesting the areas. Black, greasy water glistens as it sluggishly flows down the center of the tunnel.

SEWER EVENTS

These are some event ideas that can happen as the characters make their way to the creature's lair. Gamemasters can choose to roll randomly or hand-pick the ideas they find most interesting.

- 1 *Trinket* A trinket shines in the darkness of the water. Someone must have lost a treasured trinket.
- 2 *Unholy Shrine* Someone or something has carved a shrine into the wall, venerating some dark deity or creature. Any character that inspects it must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw, gaining a short term madness on a failure.
- 3 *Eavesdropping* A grate above leads to a part of the city where two or more people are discussing something interesting. It could be cultist chatter, or some political secret.
- 4 *Rat Swarm* Hundreds of rats pour down the tunnel in your direction, their screeching filling the enclosed area. They are running from something, driven by fear, they scratch and bite in a frenzy.
- 5 *Squater's Camp* The camp sits in a small alcove, littered with trash and blood. Whatever was sleeping here is now gone, but it was clearly humanoid.
- 6 *Glimpse of the Creature* A movement in the shadows up ahead, the sound of stone being scrapped as something scuttles off into the darkness.

THE CREATURE'S LAIR

When the characters reach the creature's lair, read the following:

As you move closer to what appears to be the creature's lair the air becomes warm and humid, a faint greenish glow radiates on the walls and seems to pulsate and move, a low humming vibrates in your chest.

You realize almost immediately as you move closer that the walls are not moving, it's the fat finger-sized maggots frantically dancing in the light. They cover the entire room, smothering it with a vile grease, dancing to a faint humming that seems to radiate from the shadowy corner.

Across the stone floor are large eggs, translucent and wet. Movement can be seen within as the glowing light penetrates them. You watch this grotesque scene unfold until you realize some of the eggs are hatched and strange shelled creatures move in and out of the darkness, their slender hard-shelled legs squishing the maggots with every scuttle.

The humming is interrupted by shuffling in the corner, a human-sized creature hasn't noticed you yet, as it moves and cares for newly laid eggs sacs. Its body twists and turns in a barbed shell, a shimmering exoskeleton, a twitch of antennae and a snap of claws.

The creature will attack as soon as it notices the characters or they attack it. It will fight to its death to defend its young. The smaller shelled offspring will not attack unless the mother is killed, but might engage with characters not in direct melee.

EPILOGUE

Once the creature is defeated, and the threat is gone, the characters can go to the Constable. He will inform the characters that there had been a pooled reward offered by nobility for stopping the deaths. Some kind of proof, like a claw or a dead grub will suffice as proof. It is possible that the truth of this event may require a cover up, and the events are seen as a mysterious occurrence at best, or a damning conspiracy at worst.

The characters will receive a reward that amounts to 5d6x100 gold pieces. Some of this reward may come in the form of art, jewelry, or even land grants. Anything that might make the next adventure more interesting can be included, such as a minor cursed item, a mysterious letter, or a map to an underground ruin. Finally, consider including a +1 weapon of some sort if the characters are lacking in magical weapons.

APPENDIX 1: ENCOUNTERS

SWARM OF PECULIER GRUBS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 8
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	2 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature’s space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can’t regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm’s space. **Hit:** The target is infested by 1d4 peculiar grubs. At the start of each of the target’s turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per peculiar grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target’s next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these peculiar grubs. After this time, these peculiar grubs are too far under the skin to be burned. If a target infested by peculiar grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies. Within 1d4 days after death, a skittish peculiar will burst from the target’s corpse. Any effect that cures disease kills all peculiar grubs infesting the target.

SKITTISH PECILIARS

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Wisdom +6
Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +2, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages —
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Dense Jumpers. The skittish peculiar can jump three times the normal distance.
Hardened Carapace. Any critical hits against the skittish peculiar become normal hits instead.
Spider Climb. The skittish peculiar can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, a target takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the beginning of each of its turns. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If this attack or the poison inflicted by this attack reduces a target to 0 hit points, the creature dies. If the target slain by this attack is Small or larger and not a construct or undead, 1 minute after the target’s death, a peculiar grub swarm pours forth from the target’s orifices.

VOLKER'S PERCULIER

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 161 (19d8 + 76)

Speed 40 ft., **climb** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	19 (+4)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +12

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +6, Stealth +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages understands Undercommon

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Shadow Stealth. Volker's Peculier can hide as a bonus action if it's in dim light or darkness.

Standing Leap. As part of its movement, the Volker's Peculier can jump up to 20 feet horizontally and 10 feet vertically, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Volker's Peculier makes two claw attacks and one bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8 + 4) piercing damage. *If this attack* reduces a grappled target to 0 hit points, or it bites a target that's already at 0 hit points, it implants an egg in the target. The deposited egg grows for 1d4 days before hatching. If the implanted victim is still alive, it loses 1d2 Constitution every 24 hours and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. After half the time has passed, the victim is incapacitated and blinded. When the egg hatches, a skittish peculier erupts from the victim's body, causing 1d10 bludgeoning, 1d10 piercing, and 1d10 slashing damage. A lesser restoration spell can kill the egg during its incubation..

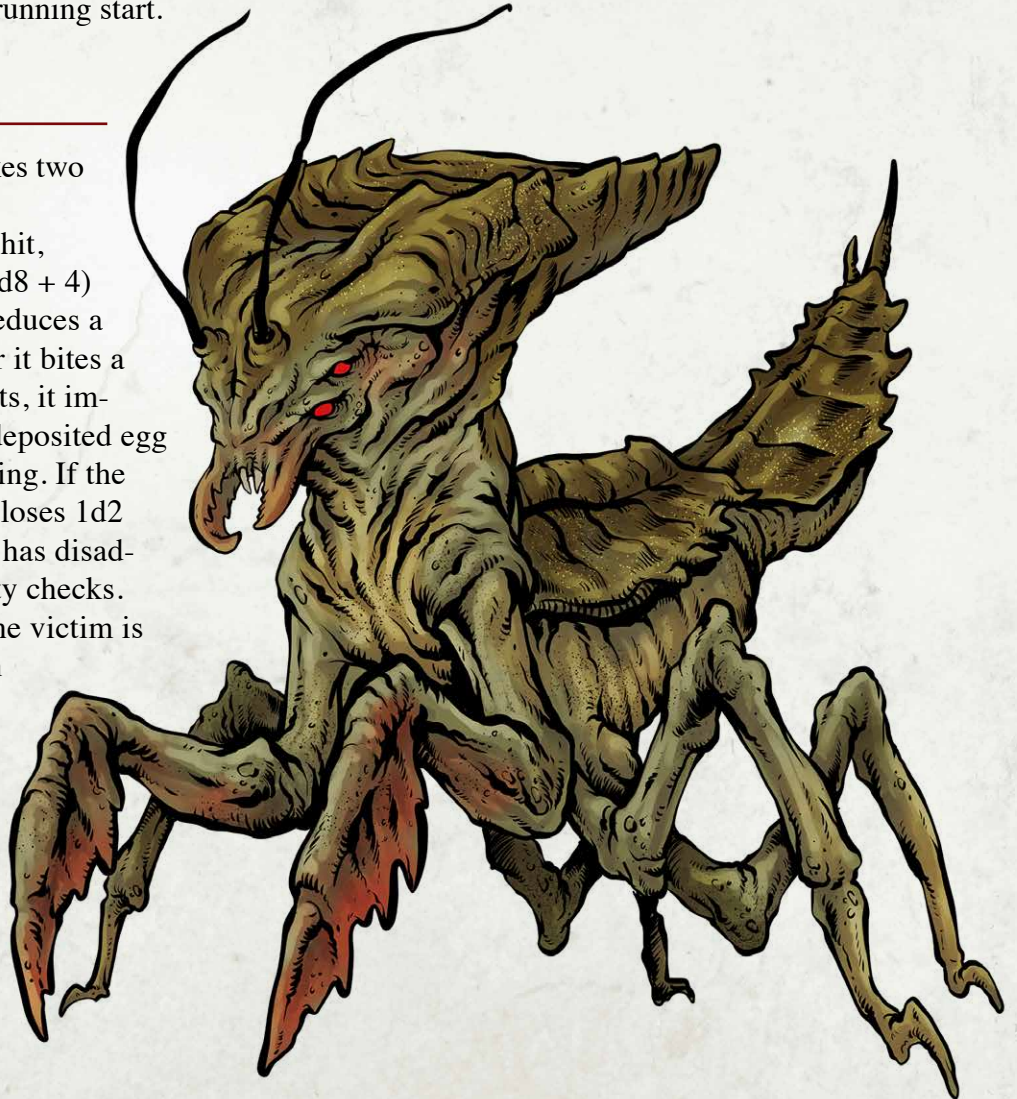
Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (3d8 + 4) slashing damage. If both attacks hit the same

Medium or smaller target in a single turn, the target is grappled (escape DC 14).

Specific details on what exactly Volker's Peculier is are scarce and even notes from Miss Straub's journals are only full of speculation.

At first it seems the creature might be some sort of Spawn of the Old Ones, but further details suggest the creature might be some sort of unknown insect, perhaps even prehistoric in nature.

Whatever its origins, clearly the fear of those involved in the expedition is that the creature might escape the caves and run rampant upon the lands of Vathak.





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Shadows over Vathak blends the Otherworldly, Cosmic Horror themes of New England's Lovecraft, the Macabre Mysteries of Poe, and the sensibilities of Victorian, Gothic Horror Adventure into an original fantasy setting.

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Though the followers of the One True God speak of divine providence while battling the Old Ones, the sins of the Church often rival those of their enemies. In the world of Vathak, your character's perceptions of heroes and villains is a thin line drawn by their own personal morality and, of course, determined by the victor.

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