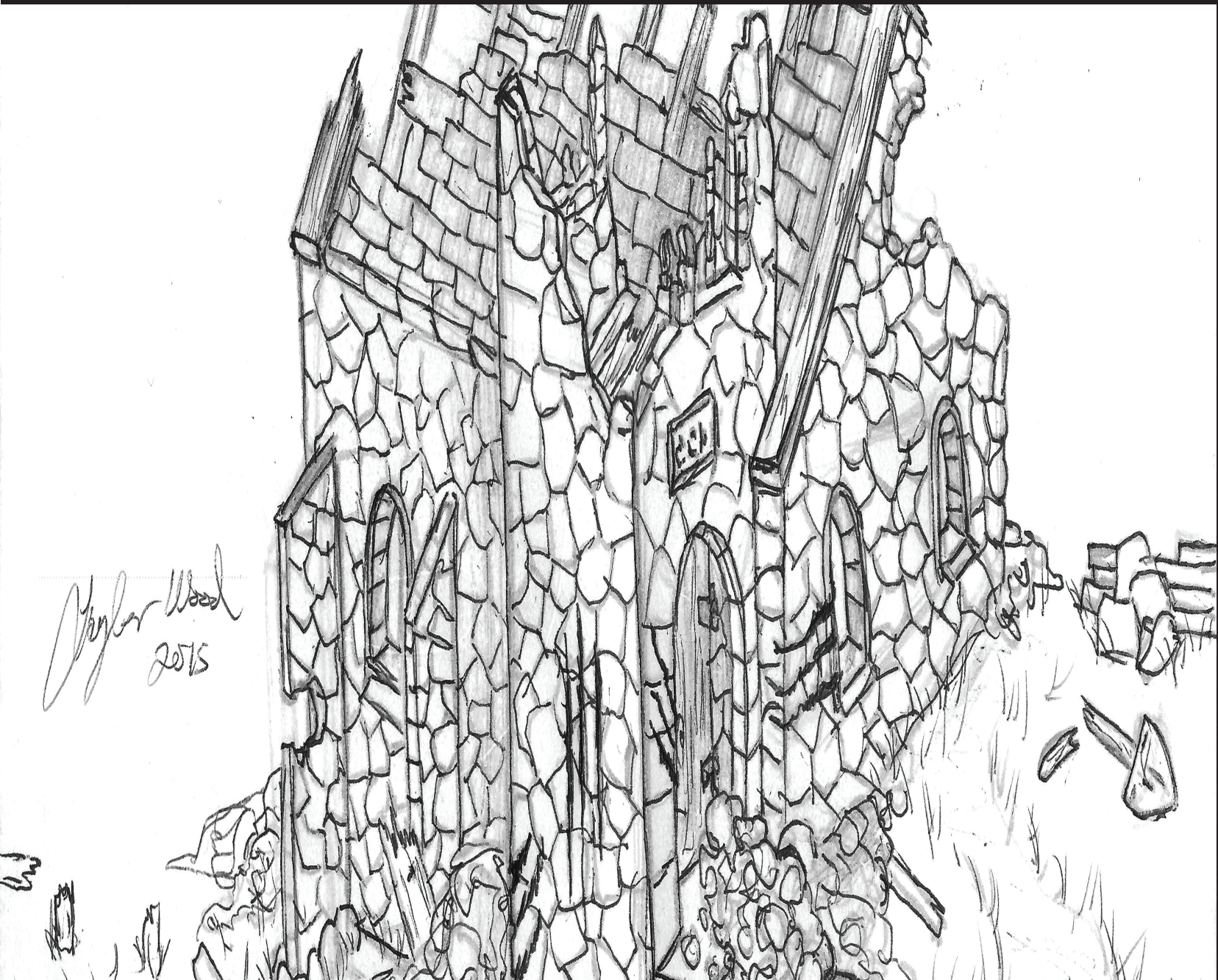


THE DEMONIC INTERFERENCE AT NEW RITUPIS CHURCH

Written by Joshua Tuttle

An adventure for 3-6 characters of 4th-6th level.



Gothic Roleplaying Accessories

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Dedicated to Dad, who taught me the game and played it with me.

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INTRODUCTION

In The Demonic Interference at New Ritupis Church, the adventurers will come face to face with a malevolent interference with the holiest of holy acts—the construction of a new church. Each night, the work that was done the previous day is being undone, the materials found scattered in a local field known as “Witch’s Meadow” each morning. The townsfolk, of course, suspect demons. Especially strong now that demonic footprints have begun to appear at the local quarry...

The adventure can be placed in any setting that is filled with remote villages populated by a superstitious populace.

To truly succeed in this adventure, the PCs will need to think beyond the first layer of what they see and hear. There are layers within layers of deception in Ritupis, and to solve the troubles for good will require not brawn but emotional sensitivity. Those players who yearn for a bit of Romance in their gaming should find much to enjoy here.

What’s Actually happening here

Recently, a new priest has come to this small village, and he wants to make a name for himself by being the man to successfully rebuild the church. But, he is not content to simply stop there. He knows of the local legends, and he wants to add “Demon Vanquisher” to his reputation. He has paid a strange sorcerer to hinder the construction efforts, and make it seem like demons were harassing the town. After a suitable effort, the hindrances will stop, the church will be built, and he will be a hero—which should be enough to convince his superiors to transfer him to a better parish. In the process, he intends to get rich off the local tithes.

Unfortunately, an adventuring party (the PCs) has shown up, and this complicates his plans. The sorcerer will continue for a little while, but will then show up to demand more payment, because he was not told he was going to have to fight a band of heroes to earn his money.

The priest contacted the sorcerer through magic to preserve his identity. The priest claimed to be a spirit who promises to reward him if he can prevent the townsfolk from rebuilding their church. The sorcerer correctly assumes that

this spirit is someone being dramatic in their messaging, but little does he know there actually IS a spirit in Ritupis who desires the church not be built. It turns out the legend of Witch’s Field is true, and the ghost of one of these witches is about to seek her revenge!

Adventure Summary

Presumably, the adventuring party will arrive in Ritupis and spend some time getting to know the town, the people, and the history. There are numerous rumors and side-adventures to be explored if the PCs are so inclined. Gradually, the party should become involved in the troubles of New Ritupis Church. Once that happens, a probable chain of events is as follows:

The sorcerer contacts the priest by magic:

The party may overhear the priest’s end of the conversation. The sorcerer asks what to do now that there is an outside investigation; the priest tells him to take care of the party.

The party is attacked by the sorcerer and his minions: If the sorcerer escapes, he goes immediately to the priest in person to demand more money and to vent his anger. This could be very inconvenient for the priest, especially if the party also comes to him, say for healing...

If the priest is not caught, the sorcerer demands exorbitant payment for his trouble thus far, perhaps in the nature of some sort of promise in addition to worldly goods. The priest nominally accepts, but...

The priest tells the party that he has divined the presence of a demonologist, and urges them to destroy him with utmost haste: He gives them a ring that has been tuned to the demonologist’s essence to allow them to find him (the ring, coincidentally enough, also links to the crystal ball he has in his quarters...). He also tells them that it is imperative that they not allow the demonologist to speak under any circumstances, as his very words could cause untold corruption. He can provide them with scrolls of silence, or perhaps a wand of *uncomprehendable languages* with two or three charges on it, to make the demonologists words unintelligible. The priest is hoping he can get the party to take care of the problem without them finding out that he himself hired the demonologist.

At this point the party has now either completed the job for the priest perfectly, or the party discovers his duplicity and must confront him: But they had best be careful, as the priest

Background Timeline

100 Years ago	The sisters Amira, Zillah, and Meara Thalme arrive in Ritupis and seek employment at the Ritupis Orphanage. A plague moves through Ritupis. The three sisters are quickly accused of witchcraft and are dismissed.
99 Years ago	The Thalme sisters open their Apothecary.
97 Years ago	Kaiden Clarke begins his affair with Amira Thalme.
96 Years ago	Amira Thalme becomes pregnant with Kaiden Clarke's child.
95 Years ago	The Thalme sisters are betrayed by Kaiden Clarke and burned by the people of Ritupis. Amira Thalme curses the town of Ritupis and summons demons to destroy Ritupis Church.
94 Years ago	Amira Thalme rises as a Witch Banshee on the anniversary of her death and begins haunting Witch Meadow.
75 Years ago	Kaiden Clarke dies, and his son inherits the inn. In his will, he stipulates that the inn be quietly renamed to Three Sisters Inn.
70 Years ago	Rector Pacificus, the old priest of Ritupis, dies. He is replaced by Rector Sighebert.
10 Years ago	Kenneth Clarke, grandson of Kaiden Clarke, inherits the Three Sisters Inn when his father dies.
8 Years ago	Mayor Gaius institutes safety campaign for anniversaries of The Burning. Victims of Witch Meadow fall drastically.
3 Years ago	Malvern is suspected of evil deeds and is exiled to Ritupis.
2 Years ago	Rector Sighebert dies, and Vicar Malvern takes his place.
1 Year ago	Vicar Malvern begins lobbying to get Ritupis Church rebuilt.
3 months ago	Construction of New Ritupis Church begins. Construction is hindered by demonic activity.

is in fact a real member of the clergy, and if they don't consider this they could find themselves in hot water if they didn't have incontrovertible proof beforehand. In this case, they must find proof after the fact somehow. Some suggestions for how this proof could come about, depending on how easy the DM wants to make things for the players:

1. The priest, being a high narcissist, has kept a journal of his dissatisfaction with his lowly post in the church, and how he has concocted a scheme to advance in rank.

2. The priest was originally sent to Ritupis, a town in the middle of nowhere, as punishment of some kind. If the party were to convince the authorities to look into the background of the priest, it might be discovered that he was not in especially good standing with his order. If he is of a good religion, he may have done something suspicious that couldn't be proven. If he is of an evil religion, he may have been exiled for his ambition by someone more powerful than him but still threatened by him in some way, someone willing to say almost anything to ruin his reputation, even after his death.

3. As a last resort, the party could be subjected to investigation by higher authorities. Depending on the realm, this might be fairly benign or it could involve withstanding torture. However, once authorities with the proper resources become involved, there are ways of determining the truth of things (magical divination, truth detection, speaking with the dead, etc). Depending on who performs this investigation, the party could become known to powerful political forces, which could be to their benefit or doom—but in any case would lead to many more opportunities for adventures!

Finally, once the “demonic” troubles have been resolved, construction of the new church continues: On the first full moon after construction begins to make significant progress (alternatively, if the PCs are still in the area and the DM would prefer a more climactic, drawn out emergence of the final chapter, this could be delayed until the full moon after the new church is consecrated) the spirit of Amira Thalme is awakened to fulfill the curse she uttered on the night of her death. The PCs will need to deal with her spirit in order for the town to finally be safe. This is where the PCs will have to rely upon their emotional sensitivity rather than their swords to right the wrongs of the past to make for a safe future. See “Resolving the Witch’s Curse” for more information.

THE TOWN OF RITUPIS

Cast

The Priest: **Vicar Malvern** had a meteoric rise within his order, until one of his superiors, High Priest Dinoot, began to suspect that Malvern was committing evil deeds to get ahead. No proof was found, but Dinoot was able to get Malvern exiled to the Parish of Ritupis, where it was presumed that Malvern could do no harm. Dinoot was wrong; Malvern has more than tripled the rate of tithing in Ritupis, and most of the increase is going into his own pockets. The rest is being spent on the reconstruction of the Ritupis church. Malvern is not satisfied with an increase in money; he desires above all to get back into high society. He has hatched a plot based on local legends in order to heroize himself as a "Demon Vanquisher."

"Do remember, your station in the afterlife is determined by your devotion in this one—tithe generously."

Vicar Malvern (8th-level cleric): Str 10 Cha 15 Con 11 Int 14 Wis 14 Dex 6; AC 10; MV 12; HD 8; HP 35; THAC0 16 (15 when using staff of withering); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (staff of withering); SA spells (priest); SD see items below; SZ M; ML 15; MR nil; AL CE; XP 2,000

Possessions: Vicar's Robes (nonmagical), crystal ball, candle of invocation, amulet of proof against detection and location, staff of withering (23 charges), wand of uncomprehensible language (3 charges), scroll of cure light wounds (x5), healing potion (x5), potion of neutralize poison, 2,500 gold pieces (collected from tithes; expressed in small denominations of copper, silver, electrum).

Malvern's prepared spells (4/3/3/2): *command*, *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary*; *enthrall*, *flame blade*, *heat metal*; *animate dead*, *cause disease*, *curse*; *abjure*, *poison*.

Tactics: Malvern seeks above all to preserve his reputation, as he believes it is through the reputation he is building that he will return to glory. As such, all of his tactical decisions are based on discrediting any foe he encounters. For example, defeating the heroes might not be enough, but if he can successfully *wither* a few limbs he might be able to convince the ignorant townsfolk that the hero was touched by demons, and that he was only "doing what was



necessary.” Similarly, if someone is publically speaking out against him, he might use one of his *uncomprehensible language* scrolls to make someone speak in gibberish, which he might then take as an excuse to perform an exorcism—something likely to be fatal to the victim.

The Demonologist: Vinalth is a demonologist by trade. He became an old demonologist by being careful, and he avoids unnecessary risk. When Malvern used magic to contact him he found it amusing, and he played along, though he could have easily figured out who hired him. He enjoys the mischief he is causing at Ritupis, but Vinalth would prefer to avoid a fight if possible. He is evil at heart, but his motivations are monetary and he does not desire to draw official notice. He prefers to do a job and be done with it, without letting ego become a factor. He will gladly run from a fight he isn't sure he can win, and he'd turn on an employer in a heartbeat to save his own skin.

Vinalth (7th-level Mage): Str 10 Cha 9 Con 13 Int 18 Wis 15 Dex 13; AC 6; MV 12; HD 7; HP 19; THACO ; #AT 1; Dmg ; SA spells (wizard); SD see items below; SZ M; ML 10; AL NE; XP

Possessions: serrated knife, *cloak of the bat*, *bracers of defense* AC 6, *wand of magic missiles* (7 charges), powdered chalk, red and black ritual candles, spellbook (bound in human flesh), occult books, scroll of *wraithform*, scroll of *magic jar*, a small swatch of cloth that matches Vicar Malvern's robes, four rubies worth 500 gold pieces each, *Death's Band* (ring; see **F1 Folkloric Interludes: Marriages and Brides to Evil** p. 2, also published by Gothic Roleplaying Accessories and available at DriveThruRPG.com)

Vinalth's known spells (4/3/2/1; * indicates prepared spell): *chill touch**, *dancing lights**, *shield*, *spook**, *infernal torment**; *darkness*, *15' radius*, *ray of enfeeblement**, *misdirection*, *summon swarm**, *hideous laughter*, *induce belligerence**, *corpse detonation*; *clairaudience**, *clairvoyance*, *vampiric touch*, *corrupt**; *shadow monsters**, *enervation*, *summon Vinalth's minions*.

Tactics: Vinalth is a prudent man who is unafraid to abandon a plan that is not working or to run from a fight he does not find to be to his favor. He prefers to strike from the shadows, and to send minions to do his fighting for him. If possible, he would prefer to never even see a foe. He has a flair for dramatics and atmospherics, so he enjoys using spells such as *dancing lights* to unnerve his foes in hopes of scaring them away. He uses his

cloak of the bat to stay hidden whenever possible. If forced into combat, he attempts to summon minions to help him, which usually means casting *shadow monsters* to summon demons (or at least their fascimiles). Then he leaves his minions for dead and tries to escape with his cloak. Depending on the situation he may employ hit-and-run tactics if he thinks a clean getaway isn't an option.

The Woodcutter: Einar is familiar with the local forest, including Witch's Meadow. Einar has a skeptic's discerning eye, but he can personally vouch for the truth of the unsettling legends about the place. More than once he's gone miles out of his way rather than cut through it.

"It's not that I'm afraid of the Meadow, exactly. It's just that, well, the place is spooky."

Einar the Woodcutter (2nd-level fighter): Str 17 Cha 10 Con 11 Int 9 Wis 5 Dex 14; AC 8; MV 10 (old injury); HD 2; HP 17; THACO 18; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6+1/1d8+1 (woodsman's axe), 1d6+1 (longbow, Rng 6/12/18); SA none; SD none; SZ M; ML 10; MR nil; AL NG; XP 35

Possessions: Leather armor, woodsman's axe, longbow, 20 flight arrows, jerked trout.

Einar has the tracking proficiency, which he uses at a -4 penalty (he is not a ranger). Due to his low mental ability scores, he is terrible at it, but he is earnest in his attempts.

The Mayor: Gaius (0th-level, LN) is a stickler for the rules. He puts order higher than justice, and maintains that the Witches got what they deserved. He is beginning to question Malvern's outrageously high tithing requests, but thus far they have merely been unusual, not illegal, so he continues to enforce them. He can point to the exact statutes and precedents that allow for every ruling he makes, including the one that says his position as Mayor has become hereditary.

"I'm quite glad to see the Church being rebuilt, because the Law says we're supposed to have one!"

The Innkeeper: Kenneth Clarke (0th-level, N) has owned the Three Sisters Inn for nearly ten years. Before that it belonged to his father, and his father before that. Kenneth doesn't take sides in political discussions as a rule, though he encourages—and arbitrates—vigorous discussion among his patrons. If forced to discuss anything about Witch's Meadow or The Burning, he'd do his best to avoid letting anyone know he found

some letters a few years back that indicated his grandfather Kaiden Clarke was the one who started the rumors about the Thalme sisters, and that he did it to cover up the fact that he'd had an affair with one of them. On any subject other than politics Kenneth is warm and welcoming, and is a very good listener, though he is a shrewd businessman and never sells anything on credit or below market value.

"It's cold outside. Why don't you come on in and have a drink? Two copper. What's that? You're from out of town? Six copper."

Stephen and Logan Brackfay: These two young troublemakers (0th-level, CG; youths) were the ones who found the "demon tracks" at the quarry, where their mother specifically told them they were not to go. The pair are excitable, but good hearted. They're a good source of rumors and information about the surrounding area (they should be assumed to have the local history proficiency, and have intelligence scores of 10 and 11 respectively).

"Sure we know the woods around here, we're the best demon hunters around, ask anyone! Just don't tell our mom or we'll get in trouble."

The Witches, Amira, Zillah, and Meara Thalme: These three sisters moved to Ritupis a hundred years prior to the start of the adventure. They were gifted hedge witches, and wanted to be close to a growing farm community so that they would have people they could help with their salves and poultices. At first the people of Ritupis were suspicious of the Thalme sisters, but very quickly the villagers realized the benefits of having a trio of friendly witches nearby. It was frowned upon to admit it publicly, but there was hardly a man or woman in town who had not been to the meadow apothecary for something or other at one time. Unfortunately, Kaiden Clarke, the innkeeper, took an unhealthy interest in the oldest sister, Amira. Despite the warnings and protestations of her sisters, Amira fell for the charismatic Kaiden, and soon she was pregnant with his child. All might have ended happily if not for the fact that Kaiden already had a wife. Kaiden knew that it would be trivial to fan the flames of religious persecution, as Rector Pacificus was already quite upset that the townsfolk were getting their cures from the witches instead of from the church. The sisters were cornered by an angry mob, boarded up in their apothecary, and burned. Zillah and Meara perished, but Amira, so overcome by betrayal,

endured as an angry spirit that still haunts Witch's Meadow.

(See "Witch's Meadow" for the vengeful spirit of Amira's statistics.)

Locations

Ritupis Village

Ritupis is a small human village with less than a hundred inhabitants. The populace is highly superstitious, as well as religious. Ritupis is not an economic hub, so only goods and products common to farmers are available, though it might be possible to find the odd set of armor (up to studded leather is common) available. Simple weapons are readily available, as they often have farming applications, but dedicated weapons such as swords are very difficult to come by. There is no apothecary in town (who would volunteer to open one, after what happened a hundred years ago?), and the only source of potions or magic comes from Malvern, who keeps a small store in his secret back room for emergencies.

Kenneth's Inn & Brewhouse

Kenneth's Inn is warm, dry, and unremarkable. There are a dozen patrons here most evenings, discussing peasant philosophy over warm brews. Almost everyone can be found at Kenneth's bar at one time or another, and all of the legends and rumors of Ritupis can be discovered with enough talk and copper spent on ale. Stephen and Logan Brackfay frequent the bar every chance they get, which infuriates their mother.

Nighttime Encounters: The party should be told a spooky story relating to the town and the parts of the legend they haven't already heard:

The legend of Witch Meadow; The legend of the claw marks on the ruins; A story about a secret cave in the quarry that housed some sort of ferocious creature: *It's probably the lair of the demon! Ol' Albert saw it himself, scared the vitality right out of him, poor bloke. Wasted right away and died of The Sickness not three months later.*

Note: The cave houses a cave bear, and Albert died of pneumonia.

Malvern's Rectory

Malvern's home is a small building on the west side of town. It consists of a 20' x 30' main room with

a prayer altar and furniture for entertaining. The decoration is consistent with a priest of Malvern's order, but it is rather ornate for his rank. A door at the back leads to his bedroom, which is opulent with silk sheets and fine fur bedding. A locked chest contains his diary (see **Appendix III**) and effects. A secret door in his bedroom leads to a room with a table and *crystal ball*, which he uses to communicate with Vinalth.

The Woods

The woods immediately surrounding Ritupis are fairly safe, as the village has been here for centuries. Near Witch Meadow, however, things are more dangerous. Will-O'-Wisps, vampiric mists, and evil Fey are not uncommon, as well as the normal wild animals, which are more aggressive than usual in that area of the forest. Deeper into the forest lurk the traditional monsters of legend: manticores, trolls, ogres, dire wolves, and worse. The DM is encouraged to play up the rugged and forbidding nature of the deep forest. If it's something the Brothers Grimm could have dreamt up, it probably lives there somewhere.

The Orphanage

The orphanage is run by a well-meaning old woman named Madoline (0th level, LG). There are currently only a handful of orphans, most being the product of hunting or construction accidents, as the last few decades have been peaceful. Madoline is very protective of her charges, and she is deeply religious. She brings the children to religious services regularly, and is terrified at the idea of the spirit of the witches returning to take vengeance on Ritupis' most helpless citizens.

The Old Church Ruins

The ruined church before you has seen better days. Of the original structure, very little remains. The once proud walls have crumbled, and what little is visible of the pews and altar inside look sad and forgotten beneath the crushing weight of the fallen ceiling. To top it all off, everything has a coat of dirt left by the recently-removed ivy. On the North wall are clearly visible some scratches that the townsfolk describe as 'claw marks.' The creature that made these marks would appear to have three claws, and would be consistent with the demon footprints left in the quarry.

The Old Ritupis Church has lain in ruins for nearly a century after it was destroyed shortly after the witches were burned in Witch Meadow. It is (or was) a simple stone parish church. Until recently it had been overcome by ivy, but Malvern has since had the townsfolk clear most of it away.

Daytime Encounters: None, although the place is certainly spooky and is structurally far from stable. It would be ill advised to go poking around.

Nighttime Encounters: None.

The new church construction site

Before you lies the foundation of a new church. Despite constant work, no progress beyond the foundation has been made for months as demons keep tearing down the work. Frustrated workers surround the foundation dutifully adding stone and mortar, but they have the look of a defeated and scared people. Building supplies, fresh from the quarry and lumber mill, are stacked in neat piles.

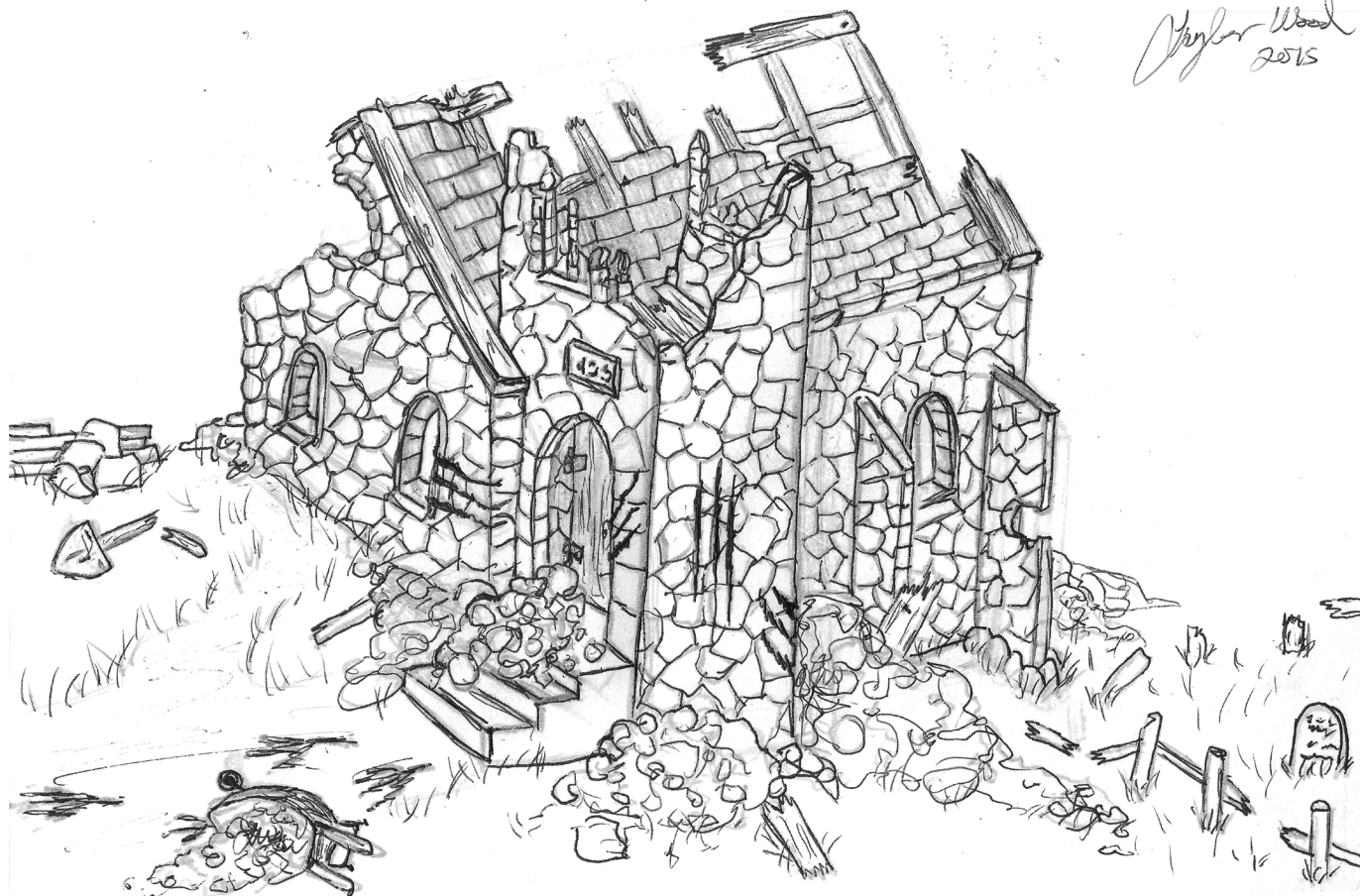
The new construction site lies on the other side of town from the ruined church. Malvern did not want the townsfolk to be able to see the old ruins from the new church, as he wanted them to think only of progress when they enter the building for worship. Only the foundation is intact; the rest of the construction is torn down nightly by Vinalth's minions. The building materials used for each day's construction are removed to Witch Meadow and strewn about as if by an angry spirit.

Daytime Encounters: Characters talking with any of the workers can hear rumors relating to the construction—and nightly destruction—of the new church site. Most workers are terrified, but are encouraged by the righteous fire in Malvern's sermons. The workers believe that they will one day complete the church, despite the interference of demons. Regardless, the workers are clearly scared.

"The demons tore down our old church many years ago, and we have finally begun construction of a new one. The progress, unfortunately, has been slow. The demons, it seems, have a long memory, and are not pleased with our attempt to crawl out from the curse put upon us by the witches of past generations."

Nighttime Encounters: The new construction is torn down nightly by Vinalth's minions sometime between midnight and dawn. Anyone near the construction site at this time would see them capering and jeering wildly as they gleefully undo the painstaking efforts of the townsfolk before dragging the haul to Witch Meadow and strewing it throughout the clearing.

Taylor Wood
2015



First Encounter: Vinalth's minions jeer and attempt to frighten anyone who catches them. They run away into the forest if attacked. If followed, their trails eventually lead to some natural hazard. (2d4 Minions; see **Appendix I: Monsters**)

Second encounter: Vinalth's minions attack those who disrupt their mischief, but run away if they are injured. (2d4 Minions)

Third and subsequent encounters: The same as above, but this time there will be twice as many, their tactics will be aggressive, and they only run if they take casualties. (2d8 Minions)

Witch's Meadow

This overgrown meadow has tall, wild grass with the occasional clump of discarded masonry and tools poking through where the demons have scattered them. In the early mornings a cloying ground fog permeates the clearing, seeming to grasp at the lower extremities of anyone foolish enough to enter. At night the meadow is noticeably chilly regardless of the season, and the faint scent of brimstone permeates the area until dawn. This clearing is obviously haunted.

The meadow should be described to the players as

having all kinds of sinister whispers coming from the nearby forest, an uneasy damp chill all of a sudden, snapping twigs, cloying ground fog, and various building materials strewn about the tall grass.

Local legend states that there was a group of witches generations before that was in conflict with the town. The witches summoned demons to destroy the place of worship of the town, and in retaliation a mob stormed their hut, dragged the witches into Witch's Field, and burned them alive (this isn't quite how events actually went down, but this is the version of the story most townsfolk tell). The mist clinging to the ground is said to be the semi-sentient soul-essence of these witches, which is why it seems to cling and grab at one's feet, and some say that at dawn, just as the sun breaks over the trees, one can catch a faint whiff of ashes on the cold, damp air. With her dying breath, one of the witches cursed the town that if they ever should rebuild the church, her spirit would come back to redo the work they had done in life. For quite some time, the town never did rebuild their church, and held their services in the town square.

Note: If a careful survey of the entire meadow is conducted by someone familiar with geology

(mining proficiency or similar), he might discover that the area under the meadow is geologically active, and that there is a vent underfoot which is still active. This vent is usually harmless, but is likely to build up pressure over time, leading to periodic discharges of toxic gas.

Note: Because of the equipment and materials strewn throughout the meadow and the poor ground visibility due to the grass, the entire clearing is considered difficult terrain.

Daytime Encounters: None.

Nighttime Encounters:

1. The party might encounter a group of Vinalth's minions discarding the night's destruction.

First encounter: The demons attempt to frighten but will run if confronted in force. If tracked their trails will lead to natural hazards. (1d4 Minions)

Second encounter: The demons will attack if confronted but will run if injured. (2d4 Minions)

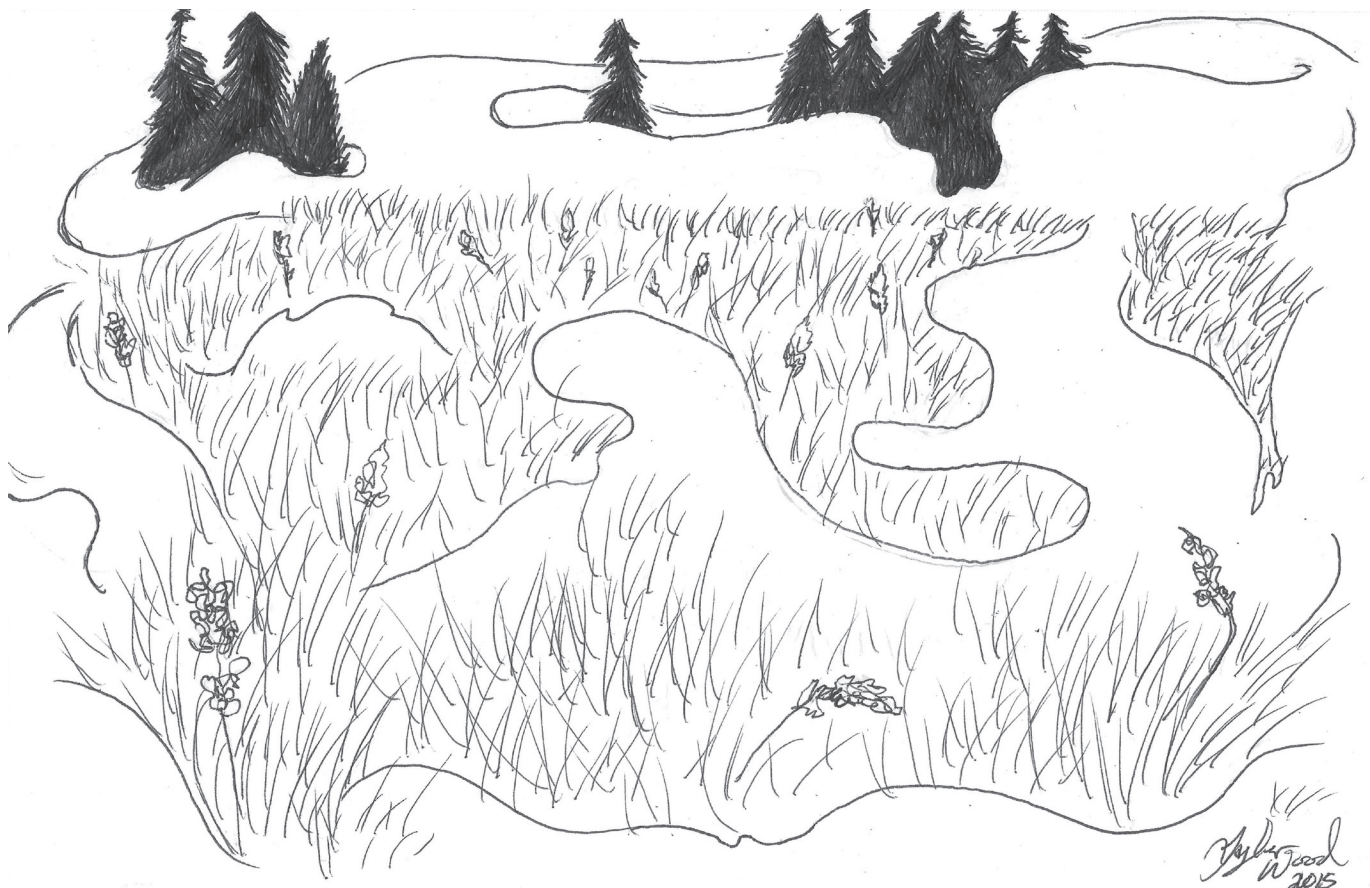
Third and subsequent encounters: Same as above, but there will be twice as many demons, their tactics will be aggressive, and they will only retreat if they take casualties. (2d8 minions)

2. A Will-O-the-Wisp that leads the party to a natural hazard.

3. On the anniversary of The Burning, the spirit of Amira Thalme (the anniversary is roughly 3d100

nights from the arrival of the PCs) haunts the meadow. She will cause smoke to rise up within the entire clearing that smells of brimstone and has similar characteristics to a *cloudkill* spell. Once the smoke has risen she rises out of the spot where her apothecary once stood (because of this, most people have never seen her spirit and don't know she's here). She will kill all who she finds within her meadow, targeting anyone related to the man who started the rumors that resulted in the murder of her and her sisters (AKA, Kenneth). Though all three Thalme sisters were wronged, only Amira's anguish at the betrayal of her lover was strong enough to trap her spirit at the location of her death.

Those who are brave enough to get close to her might notice that her translucent belly has a bulged appearance (an intelligence check might clue the observer in that she was pregnant when she died). Barring access to anyone of Clarke ancestry, she will target men first, screeching the name Kaiden at the top of her lungs. Anyone struck by her ghostly touch must save vs. Death Magic or have a brief vision of her relationship with Kaiden Clarke, though the PC struck will not know what the vision means unless she thinks carefully or notices a resemblance to Kenneth: roll 1d4; 1. happy memory of romance with Kaiden;



2. argument with Kaiden; 3. Amira having morning sickness; 4. Kaiden promising to kill Amira and her sisters if she doesn't leave town.

Witch Banshee: Int exceptional (15); AC 0; MV 15; HD 7; HP 38; THACO 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA: brimstone smoke equivalent to *cloudkill* centered on her once per night (continuous on anniversary of The Burning); SD +1 or better weapon to hit; Weakness: Warm ale will cause 2d4 points of damage per pint (it reminds her of Kaiden); SZ M; ML elite (13); MR 50%; AL CE; XP 4,000

The Quarry

This stone quarry has been harvested haphazardly, giving it a labyrinthine appearance. Shadows loom in every corner, and it is easy to understand why the townsfolk are so ready to believe that demons have come to haunt their village. Discarded and broken tools scatter the ground, despite claims by the builders that they lock their tools up at night. Footsteps echo mysteriously, and truth be told not all of them are clearly identified as your own footsteps...

This large stone quarry has served the people of Ritupis for centuries. Over the years the stone excavations have become quite extensive, and without the disciplined plans of a master miner the townsfolk have taken to grabbing some stone "here and there," giving the quarry as a whole a mazelike appearance. Dark shadows populate the quarry even in daylight, and it is no surprise that many rumors have sprung up recently. Left unchecked, it might not be long before all but the bravest refuse to venture into the quarry for stone.

Notable features:

1. A cave bear has taken up residence in one of the abandoned caves in the quarry. It has been mistaken for a demon by the populace. While incorrect, it might not be a bad thing for the townsfolk to avoid that particular section of the quarry as the bear is extremely dangerous. It is a miracle that the Brackfay brothers haven't been eaten by it already! (See "The Quarry Demon" rumor)

2. Now and again Vinalth has seen fit to plant "demon footprints" in the quarry to further his scare tactics for Malvern. The tracks are destroyed by the stonemasons each day. Vinalth created the tracks by an alchemical process smelling of brimstone, which is put onto a pattern and pressed into the stone, effectively "burning" a demonic footprint into it.

Daytime Encounters:

1. Finding the "demon footprints" in the morning.

The smell of brimstone will be evident until at least midday.

2. Finding the cave bear lair. The cave bear is highly aggressive, and will attack anyone in that area of the quarry. (If investigated at night the bear is 50% likely to be sleeping, but will awake if anyone approaches within 30 feet of the cave without taking precautions.)

Cave Bear: Int Semi (3); AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+6; HP 28; THACO 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8/1d8/1d12; SA: Hug for 2d8 if claws hit with 18 or above; SD: Continues to fight for 1d4 rounds at 0 to -8 hit points; SZ L; ML 8; MR nil; AL N; XP 650.

Nighttime Encounters: The party may encounter Vinalth's minions setting tracks, breaking into toolsheds, etc. (1d4 Minions at the moment of encounter with 2d4 more Minions elsewhere in the quarry who can respond within a few rounds.)

Rumors & Side Quests

1. Stephen and Logan Brackfay have wandered off again, and Mrs. Brackfay is beside herself with worry. She'll provide lodging and home cooked meals to anyone who can retrieve them from the woods. Guests will stay in Stephen and Logans' bed (*they can sleep in the barn, the louts, for scaring their poor mother so!*), and the home cooked meals include her famous gooseberry pie! The boys are just out fishing, and will be back in a couple of days dirty but otherwise unharmed. If found they offer to share their fish in return for not telling their mother where they were.

2. Malvern needs assistance collecting a tithe from a local knight, Sir Abernathy. He needs the tithes, which are admittedly a bit high, because the church construction is going so slowly due to the demonic interference. Malvern tells the PCs to tell Sir Abernathy that he should be glad the Church isn't requesting his martial services to deal with the demon! If that doesn't work, he makes vague references to a parable about a lord who didn't pay his tithes. The lord in question is convinced to alter his attitude after the requesting priest casts speak with dead to pull up the spirit of a lord long dead who can't find peace because he was excommunicated for failure to pay his tithes. (Any bards or similar would be familiar with the legend, and the DM is encouraged to elaborate and embellish the tale as much as possible for maximum enjoyment!) If the PCs are having trouble with the adventure, Sir Abernathy could

be convinced to assist if pressed (6th-level fighter, LN).

3. Kenneth the innkeeper is running out of firewood because Einar is two days late with his delivery. Kenneth asks the PCs to go check on him (he lives half a mile or so into the woods). The PCs find everything in order, and his woodcutting kit is missing. If they can successfully track him (trivial if they have anyone with the tracking proficiency, otherwise very difficult) they find him a mile from his shack, trapped up a tree by a very large badger that he accidentally angered. The badger will of course attack any would-be rescuers. If the PCs cannot find Kenneth, his body is found two days later by Stephen and Logan, the body horribly mutilated. This is of course taken as further evidence of demons.

Giant Badger: Int 3; AC 4; MV 6, Br 3; HD 3; HP 24; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d4; SA none; SD none; ML Angry (12); MR nil; AL N; XP 65.

Legends

*By dark of night the evil came,
Women form'd black as sin.
They came to make the children sick;
Crones born evil's three twins.*

*Three hags upon our town arrived
The crones were witches three
They three were sisters, one, two, three—
With witches, always three.*

*They came to build a temple in
Our fair sweet hovel pure,
But ev'ryone knows be vigilant
Lest the evil endure—*

*The bold of Ritupis did scorch
Them dead, but in return
Our church by black magic they did
Destroy; Our loss we mourn.*

*Now thanks be our fortunes despite
No house for our worship
And though we ne're rebuild our church
There are no witches three.
— The Hags of Ritupis*

Ritupis is rich with folklore, and many local stories and traditions pertain to the adventure at hand. Most anyone in town knows them and will gladly tell what they know to any who ask. Civic pride is important, after all!

The Legend of the Witches ("The Burning")

Many years ago, in the time of our grandparents, a coven of sisters moved into Ritupis from beyond the Wood. These women were mistrusted, for they were always muttering to themselves and each other, putting curses on the townsfolk and bewitching the good men of the town. When they were denied positions in the local orphanage on account of suspicion that they would bewitch the children, the sisters swore that they would go into business for themselves. Seemingly overnight, a shack materialized at the edge of town, and the sisters opened what they deemed an apothecary, though everyone was quite sure they were selling more than medicine. The townsfolk told each other by candlelight of the strange lights they saw from the shack on the rare occasion that they walked by at night.

Despite the official mistrust, their magic shop became quite successful. This disturbed the religious sensibilities of the town elders, as they well understood that the corrupting touch is usually quite soft. Unfortunately, one of the periodic plagues came through Ritupis, and after the second child succumbed to The Sickness, someone cried "Witch." Rector Pacificus used all his impressive magic to whip the townsfolk into a religious fervor, and that very night a mob trapped the sisters in their shack and burnt it to cinders. Amidst the screams of the dying hags those present swore they heard demonic incantations. Whether this was true or whether it was simply invented justification, on the night of the full moon following the burning, Old Ritupis Church was struck by lightning and destroyed, and Pacificus was killed by the collapsing stones. Those brave enough to unshutter their windows swore they saw the misshapen forms of demons dancing over the freshly ruined church.

When the townsfolk ventured from their homes the next morning at dawn, it was decided that it must have been the spirit of the witches come for vengeance. It was agreed that they would not rebuild the church, and when the new priest, Sigeberht arrived they convinced him to hold services in the town square rather than rebuild the church. And so it was for two generations that the townsfolk have practiced their warding signs and warned their children to stay out of Witch's Meadow, lest the cloying fog clutch at their throats and suffocate them. When the moon is full, some still say they can hear the cackling of

the old hags on the wind. On the anniversary of The Burning, the people of Ritupis know to stay well clear of Witch's Meadow, as deadly brimstone rises from the ground to choke anyone who comes near. In recent years Mayor Gaius has instituted a safety campaign, and the next anniversary of The Burning will hopefully be the fourth in a row where no one has been killed.

The Legend of the Claw Marks

After Malvern came to Ritupis and used his persuasive powers to convince the townsfolk to rebuild, "claw marks" were discovered under the heavy coat of ivy that had all but reclaimed the old building for nature. This caused a hush to go through the group of workers who discovered it, and as they looked at each other a somber look of understanding tinged by fear passed from man to man—this proved to them that it was in fact demons who had torn down the original church at the terrible bidding of the hags burnt a century ago. Only after Malvern performed a cleansing would the workers return to the site.

Resolving the Witch's Curse

Amira Thalme's ghost is a force to be reckoned with, and it might be deadly to assault her directly. Destroying her physical form or abjuring her is only a minor setback, as she will reappear at the next anniversary of The Burning (DMs wishing to have her recurrence take place more quickly might substitute the next full moon instead). Short of creative use of magic (dispel evil or wish might do it), there are two ways the town of Ritupis can be rid of her. The first is by rebuilding her apothecary and reburying her and her sisters in proper graves. This would be difficult as nothing remains of the old shack, and no one still lives who had seen the original placement.

The second is by bringing the true circumstances of The Burning to light: Kenneth Clarke must tell all he knows about the misdeeds of his grandfather. (The critical part is that the deeds and circumstances come to light; it need not be Kenneth who reveals them. One possibility might be if someone found his grandfather's letters.)

In both of these cases Amira's vengeful spirit will be laid to rest and trouble Ritupis no more. Should *both* events take place, *and* the apothecary restored to operation (perhaps by the PCs), all

creations will be of slightly above average grade (+1 or +5% to effect, adjudicated by the DM). In addition, Amira's spirit will assume a sort of guardianship over Ritupis, and the villagers born in Ritupis (as well as all their descendants) will enjoy Amira's protection ever after. To use this protection, they need only enter Witch's Meadow and invoke her name—Amira's spirit will rise to bring all her powers to bear in the defense of her friends in the meadow.

APPENDIX I: MONSTERS

Vinalth's Minions

Vinalth's Minions: Int low (7); AC 5; MV 6; HD 4; HP 25; THACO 17; #AT 3 (2 claws and a bite); Dmg 1d6/1d6; Special: On hit save vs. poison or contract Dream Fever (see below); SZ S; ML low (7); MR nil; AL CE; XP 175

Vinalth's Minions are small mischievous humanoids that stand about four feet tall. They have a batlike appearance, and small horns. They are maniacal by temperament, and live to cause trouble (in that sense they are similar to gremlins). Vinalth's current task to mislead the people of Ritupis by ransacking their church construction nightly is perfect for these vile wretches.

Dream Fever: Vinalth outdid himself with this batch of demons. Anyone struck by the claws or bite (-4 to the save from a bite) of one of his Minions risks contracting Dream Fever if a save vs. poison is failed. Victims of Dream Fever suffer from terrible nightmares in which they go berserk and slaughter those close to them. As the disease progresses, this may well happen, as the victim loses 1 point of wisdom per week, negatively affecting the victim's temper, which becomes short and violent. On the three nights of the full moon they must make a wisdom check or go on a fevered rampage as if their blood had boiled (+1 on the check the night before and after the full moon). Each night of the new moon the victim may make a new save vs. poison to attempt to throw off the disease. Anyone whose wisdom is reduced to zero by Dream Fever becomes a raving lunatic spouting prophecies about the stars. A *remove curse* spell can cure Dream Fever before the victim reaches zero wisdom, but it requires a *heal*, *restoration*, or *wish* spell to restore a raving lunatic to sanity.

APPENDIX II: SPELLS

First Level Spells

Infernal Torment (Necromancy)

Range: 10'/level Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 rd./level Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 creature Saving Throw: Neg.

A creature that fails its saving throw vs. spell is cursed. Dim infernal energies sheathe the creature, inflicting an additional +1d6 damage from any melee attack that hits it. The material component is a pinch of brimstone mixed with fat into a smelly film.

Second Level Spells

Induce Belligerence (Enchantment/Charm)

Range: 10'/level Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 rd./level Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature Saving Throw: Neg.

A creature failing a saving throw vs. spell erupts into a murderous fury, attacking the nearest creatures, with a strong preference for allies. So much as touching (let alone bumping into) a belligerent creature virtually guarantees becoming the new target. The maximum duration of this spell is 10 rounds. The material component is a small vial of alcohol (minimum 80 proof) which is splashed in the target's direction; if the target is close enough to actually be splashed then the saving throw is made at a -4 penalty.

Corpse Detonation (Necromancy)

Range: 120' Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special Saving Throw: None

The caster points at any single corpse within range. The corpse then explodes with tremendous force. The explosion inflicts 1d6 damage per caster level to all creatures in a 10-foot radius (save vs. spell for half damage), to a maximum of 6d6 points of damage. All targets within a 20-foot radius are pelted by the fluids and pieces of the corpse. Animated undead do not count as corpses until killed, and corpses exploded by this spell are

completely destroyed, which precludes the use of this spell or any other spell which relies on a reasonably intact body, including *raise dead*.

Corrupt Flesh (Necromancy)

Range: 120' Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 day/level Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 creature Saving Throw: Neg.

The caster calls up a contragon birthed from the cesspits of hell, channeling it at the target. On a failed saving throw, the target's flesh becomes corrupted: the skin becomes mottled in appearance, and all natural healing is halted until the spell ends or it is removed by *dispel magic*, *cure disease*, or *remove curse*. The material component is a putrified corpse (such as a mouse). A raw rotten egg can be substituted, but the victim will get a +2 bonus to the saving throw.

Summon Vinalth's Minions (Conjuration/Summoning)

Range: Special Components: V, M
Duration: 1 day/level Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 30' radius Saving Throw: None

By the use of this spell, the caster conjures forth 1d4 Vinalth's Minions (see **Appendix I**). These minions understand complex instructions and will carry them out to the best of their ability. They act as Vinalth's hands in all the evil tasks he performs. Vinalth's Minions are particularly vicious and hate Elves in particular. At the end of the spell's duration the Minions fall to the ground, lifeless, and will rot completely within 24 hours. Forever after, all vegetation that grows on the spot of their decomposition will be sickly and misshapen, and will smell slightly of the grave. Touching the body of a dead Minion causes the person to become unclean for seven days. A caster may have a maximum of 1 Minion per caster level at a time; a new summoning that creates more than this limit causes the oldest Minions to die immediately. (Note: Some encounters in this module contain more Minions than Vinalth could reasonably have at a given time. Do not worry about this.)

APPENDIX III: VICAR MALVERN'S JOURNAL

Malvern's journal begins approximately three years before the current date.

Entry One

I am undone. My schemes have not, thank the gods, been discovered, but still I am suspected. I am glad I was so careful. They can prove nothing. Still, I am being reassigned to minister to a town in the middle of nowhere named Ritupis. I don't know anyone who's been assigned there. In fact, I've never even heard of the place. I'll have to look it up on a map. Damnation to inconvenient acolytes, may they all choke to death on poison. If he'd only stayed put for another few minutes...

Entry Two

I figured out why I've never heard of nor seen reference to the church in Ritupis. Strictly speaking, there isn't a church in Ritupis. Apparently it was destroyed nearly a hundred years ago and in all this time they haven't seen fit to rebuild it. Wonderful. Maybe the woods near Ritupis have a local Druidic order I could take over...

Entry Three

The journey to Ritupis was horrendous. I didn't do everything I've done to secure a place among the clergy so that I could spend the prime of my life ministering to ignorant curs who don't even have a church for me to preach in.

Entry Four

Some good news at last. Sigeberht, the doddering old fool who was in charge of the "church" of Ritupis for the last few decades, has finally gone to meet our maker, and I didn't even have to help him on his way. I've been sent to

the woods of Nowhereland to minister to the people of Dirtland, but at least I'm in charge now. I think I'll get them to build me a damn church. If I'm stuck here for the next five years, at least I can make these idiots help me. If I can't be assigned to a prestigious seat, I'll just have to build one.

Entry Five

Who am I kidding? The best I can do in this hole is pretend I can gather enough prestige to keep the stray dogs impressed by my majesty.

Entry Six

I spoke to the mayor today, and ordered him in the name of our deity to rebuild the ancient church. I used all my best oratorical techniques on him, but he didn't budge. Gods help me, these idiots are afraid to rebuild the church because it's CURSED!

Entry Seven

After some more measured thought, I've decided that this plays into my plans. I can use these local legends to bolster my reputation as a demon vanquisher. I must think.

Entry Eight

I have made contact with a sorcerer named Vinalth. I was clever and disguised myself by using magic to contact him, so he has no idea who is behind his task. Vinalth will summon his demons to harass the construction efforts. Once things get "bad enough" I will raise up a mob and "deal with the situation," thus becoming the hero of Ritupis as well as the Rebuilder of the Church. That should get me out of this awful place for good, where I can do something about High Priest Dinoot's legendary good health...

DUNGEON MASTER'S NOTES

The Demonic Interference at New Ritupis Church

The village of Ritupis hasn't had a church in nearly a hundred years (not since "The Burning"). Recently, a charismatic new priest has arrived in town, and he has grand ambitions to rebuild it. Unfortunately, a curse born of the town's troubled past is coming back to haunt the construction project—each night the work done the previous day is undone, and the materials are found strewn about Witch Meadow the following morning. This town could use some heroes.



Ritupis can easily be placed in any back country location with an appropriately isolated population that is at least somewhat superstitious, making it easy to incorporate into nearly any setting.

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