

Shadows over
VATHAK

LIGHTLY GRILLED FISH HEADS

5TH EDITION HORROR

The Food is Exquisite at the Whiskey Wraith Tavern in
Shadows over Vathak Horror Roleplaying Game

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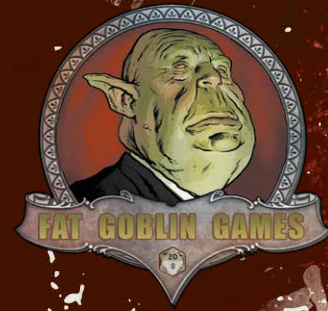
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Lightly Grilled Fish Heads is intended for four players with an average party level of 1-2.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Squid is the cook at the Whiskey Wraith Tavern, and as typical of this cambion's daily routine, has wandered off to the forest to forage for his kitchen. Unfortunately, he has run into trouble and found himself under siege by a small band of Kuo-toa.

As the dinner rush nears at the tavern, his absence is quickly noted, and a rush to find him is underway. The players are quickly recruited to search the nearby forest and bring Squid back safely.

Squid luckily climbed a tree to avoid the Kuo-toa, however they stole his knapsack, which included his most-prized possession, his handwritten recipe book. He employs the party to track down the vile fish-men and retrieve his recipes, even going so far as to lead the group in the direction the creatures traveled, and where he believes they are living.

Can the adventures help Squid retrieve his recipes as well as return for supper at the Tavern?

ADVENTURE LOCATION

This adventure takes place at the Whiskey Wraith Tavern, a medium-sized tavern at a well-travelled cross-roads, typically a few miles from a town or city. The Whiskey Wraith Tavern can exist anywhere in Vathak and is designed to be flexible for that purpose.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Lightly Grilled Fish Heads is designed as an introductory-level adventure to bring new players into the game, although it can easily be modified for new players. Below you will find several adventure hooks to get players involved.

- ☛ **Just Off the Road.** If the players have already met and started adventuring together, the Whiskey Wraith Tavern makes a great stop on their journey. If this is the case, upon entering the tavern the group is thrown into the chaos of the tavern owners, staff, and patrons frantically looking for Squid and pleading for help.
- ☛ **Everyone Loves Squid.** This hook works if the adventurers have been at the tavern for a while, whether they know each other or just happen to be patrons or even staff. Allow them to talk and mingle, several people will mention the great food Squid makes, even offering to buy them supper later that evening so they can see for themselves. Building an interest in Squid and understanding the fear of him going missing. How can the characters not volunteer for the search party?
- ☛ **No One Works for Free.** This last option is simply being offered some sort of reward to help find Squid by the owners. It can be a few coins, a free meal and night's lodging, or something else (in addition to the rewards listed in the adventure).

WHAT IS THE WHISKEY WRAITH TAVERN?

Don't worry, at the end of the book is an Appendix giving you information on the tavern, including the staff, patrons, and more.

SHADOWS OVER VATHAK

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		



Beginning the Adventure - If the players do not know each other and you are not using the adventure hook *Just Off the Road*, allow the characters to get to know some of the staff and patrons. The *Appendix: The Whiskey Wraith Tavern* will provide you with all the information needed to allow the characters to get a good feel of the establishment and those who reside there.

As the characters socialize at the tavern, more people slowly start to arrive. The tavern will noticeably get louder, music will be played amidst much laughter, and card games are started. When you are ready, start the next section.

HAS ANYONE SEEN SQUID?

“Supper is soon, has anyone seen Squid? The kitchen is empty, nothing has even been started!”

The gentleman is loud and not addressing anyone in particular, apparently questioning all who might have information on Squid. This man is Gottfrid Scherzinger, owner of the tavern and well respected in the area, as the conversation and general merriment is halted by his words.

Whispers and mumbling quickly stir the tavern as concern grows with every suggestion. The major consensus is the Squid hasn't been seen since the morning and no one is sure of his whereabouts. Gottfrid asks for some of the regulars to start searching around the tavern and nearby grounds, this will include a search party willing to check the forest.

- If one of the characters works at the tavern, Gottfrid will request them directly to gather some help and go search the forest.
- If the group is just patrons of the tavern, Gottfrid will comment on their youth and strength and ask if they can search the forest, even offering supper on the house if needed.
- If the party still seems hesitant to help in the search, Gottfrid will begin to panic. He will start to emphasize the importance of Squid and his safety, how his kind are often treated horribly by people for their “curse” — and importantly, how Squid is like a son to him, rambling on about taking him in as an orphan and raising him. Don't be afraid to really pull those heart-strings.

INTO THE FOREST WE GO

After about 20 minutes traveling down an old path through the forest, paraphrase the following:

As the narrow, well-worn path snakes its way through the dense forest, you come across what seems to be the remnants of a fight. A few small broken jars, blank parchment paper, and various kitchen utensils litter the ground. The sound of crying breaks the silence.

It isn't hard to determine the sound of the crying coming from a tree nearby, and Squid is easily visible clinging to the branches in fear. The characters need to make a Charisma (Persuasion) check at DC 12 to convince Squid to climb down the tree and that everything is safe. If they fail to convince him, he will request the characters to do a bunch of tasks to convince him it is safe, such as checking the surrounding area, gathering his stuff up, and even showing him they have weapons for protection. Once he has been satisfied, he slowly makes his way to the ground.



Squid has the following to say:

Thank you for finding me. . . I was just here gathering some pine nuts and heath hen eggs, and I found some and would have been perfect for this dish, but. . . I was ATTACKED!

I don't know what they were. . . like big walking fish-things! They grabbed my satchel and my stuff as I quickly climbed that tree. I think they wanted to eat me! They kept trying to knock me down with rocks and sticks, but then just wandered off that way with all of my things.

When the players are ready and try to make their way back to the tavern, Squid will refuse and begin walking in the direction the creatures headed.

It doesn't matter how scary they are, they took my recipe book and I need it back. I can't cook anything without it and it's mine!

No convincing will change Squid's mind about retrieving his recipe book. He will tell the characters he thinks the creatures headed to the old caves at Turtle Shallows, a series of small ponds nearby. He knows the characters can fight and beat the fish-men, but if not, he will try to sneak in and get his recipe book. Nothing will change his mind. If the characters need more convincing to help Squid, he will offer up some travelling snacks (free) for when they leave the tavern and will even go so far as mention possible treasures the creatures could have collected for the taking.

TURTLE SHALLOWS - THE KUO-TOA CAVES

Turtle Shallows are a series of three small ponds in a clearing in the forest. The ponds have muddy banks and clear water, easily revealing an abundance of small fish and old turtles swimming the day away. Near the largest of the ponds is a stoney mound with a mossy overcrop, and a shallow hollow, not really a cave at all.

It is easy to spot four of the creatures sitting under the rock outcropping, eating what appears to be fish, raw from the pond. All of them appear to be busy

eating and talking amongst themselves in a sort of bubbling-grunting language. If any of the characters happen to speak kuo-toan, or possess a magical means of understanding what the creatures are saying, the conversation centers around who caught the most fish and what they might like to hunt later in the day. Near where the creatures are sitting is a pile of what seems like junk they have collected or gathered from victims they have attacked.

ENCOUNTER: KUO-TOA (4)

The **kuo-toa** should be relatively easy to defeat; if the characters have any difficulties, the creatures will try to flee the area rather than die.

TREASURE: KUO-TOA JUNK

Most of the items the creatures have collected appear to be broken junk, waterlogged, or generally worthless. DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal Squid's recipe book stuffed inside an old wet boot. It is generally unharmed, although a bit damp. Other items of note include.

- 75 Copper
- 50 Silver
- 4 Gold
- 19 gallon(s) of ale (3 gp)
- 1 book of vindari children's stories (2 sp)

If the **kuo-toa** are defeated, and once Squid has acquired his recipe book, he will take a knife from his belt and begin filleting the creatures where they lay dead. This will include gathering large cutlets as well as their heads. If the characters question what he is doing or try and stop him, he responds.

Fish in the hands of a skilled cook can become an abundant source of gustatory pleasures. I'm not going to let these fish fester in the sun and feed nothing but birds and worms. Tonight we have one of my best recipes, lightly grilled fish heads.

LIGHTLY GRILLED FISH HEAD RECIPE

There isn't much meat on a fish head but the little there comprises the choicest parts of the entire fish.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 fish head, cleaned and rinsed
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 wedge lemon or orange

INSTRUCTIONS

Dry the fish head a few hours by placing it on a rack in the sunlight. Start the wood burning on the grill to get the embers hot and ready for cooking. Sprinkle half the salt on the cut-side of the fish head and grill to slightly char it. When the fish fat begins to bubble and spittle, turn the fish head over. Sprinkle this side with the remaining salt and grill to slightly charred. Serve immediately with a lemon wedge.

If the kuo-toa survive the encounter and flee, Squid will grab a discarded net from the pile and begin casting in the pond, it will only take a few throws for him to have a basket of fish for supper at the tavern.

CONCLUSION

The entire tavern will be delighted when the characters return with Squid, with mugs clinking and cheers all around. Gottfrid will pull Squid aside and give him a stern talking about wandering off like that, but is generally happy to have him home. After a few minutes of excitement to have him back, Squid quickly grabs his apron and heads into the kitchen with his bounty.

Gottfrid will thank the characters for all the help in bringing Squid home and offer them supper on the house as well as a free room for a few days if they need lodging.

THE WHISKEY WRAITH TAVERN

The Whiskey Wraith Tavern is a large building resembling an old country house, weathered and worn, but creates a sense of coziness amongst the surrounding wilderness. Soft candlelight always seems to beam from its windows and the smoke from the chimney carries delicious smells into the night.

Inside the common room are a handful of tables and chairs, a rustic old bar that looks like it was salvaged from a much nicer establishment, and worn benches bathed by the light of the stone fireplace. A small stage rests in the corner, and there are doors to a series of small rooms. In the back one can hear the sound of pots and pans and the smells of unusual dishes.

A small set of stairs lead up to a balcony where several small rooms are available for the night at a reasonable rate for weary travellers.

THE STAFF OF THE WHISKEY WRAITH TAVERN

Gottfrid Scherzinger is a tall and wiry vindari, standing around six foot three and probably weighing little more than 160 lbs. He has short, curly brownish red hair and a matching beard. While he may have had a less than savory past serving as a lieutenant in the vindari military, Gottfrid has long since changed his ways for the most part and values the success the tavern has given him.

Ediline Krause is a vindari woman, short in stature, delightfully curvy, and has the fighting spirit of a hundred soldiers. Ediline is a woman who can be both overly friendly yet quite uncontrollable when her temper gets flared up. She's a woman with a powerful personality, and is very extraverted in most aspects, including her emotions. Despite her temper, Ediline is a woman with a heart of gold, which ironically can be bought for 4 sp a night.

Requiem Nazari is a haunting bard of bhriota descent and is noticeable by his ash gray skin



and stark white clothing. He does odd jobs around the tavern, helping Gottfrid when he can, and in the evening entertains playing his hurdy-gurdy and singing old folk ballads. He is also the only person who has successfully communicated with the whiskey wraith.

Squid is a short, broad-shouldered young man at five feet, four inches in height, weighing 230 lbs. His right eye is missing, and there a few front teeth gone as well. He has numerous scars on the top of his balding head and a terrible gash-like scar that runs down the right side of his face. However, his most noticeable feature is obviously the six inch tentacles growing from his jaw and his crab-like right hand. Whatever horrors his appearance might stir up, he is well-loved by both the staff and regular patrons of the tavern, who cherish his company and warm meals.

PATRONS OF THE WHISKEY WRAITH TAVERN

Here are some people the characters are likely to meet when they visit the tavern. The GM is encouraged to create others as they see fit.

Cerafina Kinderstein is a braggart and a sailor of vindari descent. She operates a small fishery offshore with a few boats and around 3-4 staff at any given time. She claims she was once a buccaneer, but few actually believe her. Despite this, they enjoy her stories all the same.

Mandalas Brova is a retired miner of romni descent who decided to spend a quiet retirement in the area near the tavern. Something he saw in his youth caused half of his hair to go white, but he doesn't like discussing it. Rumors say he avoids dogs and corners, though he gets fairly angry when asked about it, and has yet to confirm it.



Tobias Tir-Utur is an orphaned teenage boy of bhriota descent. He's quick witted, quick handed, and quick footed. His talents make him a ready pickpocket, but he has warmed up to the tavern enough to abstain from his larcenous ways and instead performs magic and sleight of hand tricks to earn his pay. He hasn't yet taken up the practice of drinking, but he likes performing for those who do, as spirits tend to loosen inhibitions and purse strings. Tobias hopes to hone his performance skills and some day go to a bigger city to perform.

The Whiskey Wraith is actually the ghost of Uncle Dieter, a regular patron of the tavern long ago, when it was under a different name and management. Uncle Dieter unfortunately drank himself to death in the tavern and has returned in ghostly form every night at midnight since. He has a reserved barstool for these nightly hauntings and drinks from a spectral cup that forms in his hand, never emptying. After about an hour of sitting at the bar, Dieter simply gets up and heads to the door, waving before vanishing.

FOOD AND DRINK AT THE WHISKEY WRAITH TAVERN

Boiled Eggs and Beetroot, Tankard of Ale	11 cp
Peas Porridge, Mug of Bitter	3 cp
Roasted Sausage and Dried Mushroom, Tankard of Beer	9 cp
Mutton and Barley Bread, Tankard of Mead	9 cp
Pickled Deer Sausage and Walnut Bread, Glass of Whiskey	1sp

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