

Shadows over
VATHAK

WHAT PRICE SALVATION?

5TH EDITION HORROR

An Adventure for 4th Level Characters in
Shadows over Vathak Horror Roleplaying Game

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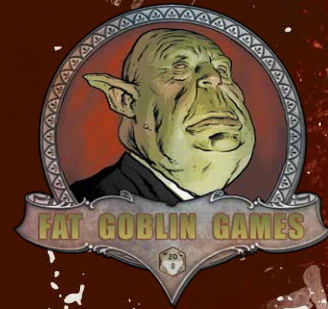
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Based in South Carolina, USA, Fat Goblin Games was founded in 2011 to create Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products. With a focus on high-quality production values and providing a creative environment for our team of freelancers (The Fat Goblin 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: 4 characters of 3rd to 4th level

Estimated Duration: 2-4 hours

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

About a month ago, odd happenings began to occur in the village of Heidersdorf. A three-beaked chicken was seen clucking down the street, swirling clouds of iridescent smoke wrapped around the bakery for an hour, no one so much as stubbed a toe on one day, and other such peculiar things. The villagers have turned to the Bürgermeister and his advisors (all older men of good reputation) for guidance, but they can do little aside from urge people to pray for protection. Many have turned to the solace of a drink and good cheer at the local tavern, *The Three Sisters*, at night, careful to leave for their homes in groups of two or more. As the characters arrive in Heidersdorf, a silent explosion of purplish-green lights erupt from the center of the village.

ADVENTURE LOCATION

This adventure takes place in Heidersdorf, a village of roughly 100 people nestled in the Grünbergen, a range of sparsely populated, heavily forested hills. Most of the villagers are of vindari stock, but a handful of romni call the place home, too.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

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

- The characters could be native to the Grünbergen (either from Heidersdorf or a nearby village), and be returning home for a visit between adventures. They will have had no inkling that something is amiss, until they arrive...
- While travelling through the Grünbergen, the characters begin to encounter animals that are either not native to the area (e.g., creatures more at home in other biomes entirely), or have strange deformities, as they near Heidersdorf.
- The characters can run into a traveller on the road or at an inn, who is returning from the Grünbergen. If they mention they are heading in that general direction, or if they ask for news or rumors typically of interest to adventurers, the traveller will mention a series of strange incidents in Heidersdorf that caused disturbances in the village and ultimately drove him away.

THE GRÜNBERGEN

The Grünbergen are a series of low hills stretching eastwards from the Gray Peaks, on the frontierland between Grigoria and Sileasia. Thick stands of oak, maple, and birch grow here, providing shelter for abundant wildlife. A handful of villages are nestled in narrow valleys between the hills, largely cut off from the major political events in Vathak. The people here live according to their own rhythms, and would be perfectly happy if everyone left them alone. There are signs of habitation going back many centuries.

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		

SOMETHING WEIRD IN HEIDERSDORF...

Whichever hook is used to bring the characters to Heidersdorf, the action begins with the eruption of a mysterious, gushing fountain of magical energy in the middle of the village, producing a variety of weird occurrences. Please roll on the table below to determine what occurs, or choose whatever suits the situation best. The occurrences last for as long as they need to (i.e., GM choice).

D12 Roll	Location	Occurrence
1	Village Square	A trio of svirfneblin appear, confused over being teleported from their distant forest home. They grab anything small that seems valuable and hunt a chicken or similar small livestock before fleeing.
2	Village Square	Giant illusory trees have appeared, creating a seemingly impenetrable forest in the midst of the village (to see through the illusion, one must make a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, or become lost until found by someone who made the check.)
3	<i>The Three Sisters</i>	All of the cutlery, dishes, and silverware begin attacking patrons (treat as tiny, unaligned constructs with 1 hit point and +0 attack, which inflict 1 hit point of piercing or bludgeoning damage on a successful hit).
4	<i>The Three Sisters</i>	Anyone inside the tavern must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be forced to sign and dance for one minute. Each occupant must repeat this save each minute they remain inside.
5	Apothecary	Colorful and fragrant poisonous gases fill the shop — anyone inside must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be overcome with nausea and spend the next minute throwing up.
6	Blacksmith	The force area begins shrinking and anyone entering it, or already inside, shrinks to a height of one inch for a minute.
7	Half of the Village	A blizzard coalesces over a large, open area in the village (regardless of the time of year) and begins to drop an inch of snow every 10 minutes (movement or non-combat actions in the affected area must succeed a DC 10 Dexterity check, and increase the difficulty by 1 every 10 minutes afterwards, cumulatively).
8	Random House (GM choice)	The gravity inside of the house reverses polarity, and everything “falls” to the ceiling (falling damage may apply).
9	Half of the Village	The affected area becomes silent; no action or living thing within is able to make a sound, and no one inside can hear anything outside.
10	Random Field (GM choice)	All of the plants in the affected field grow rapidly, churning up the soil and damaging walls and buildings.
11	Cemetery	An apparition of a former villager appears outside the walls of the cemetery, seeking revenge for some minor wrong done against it.
12	Entire Village	Every creature in Heidersdorf gains two levels of Exhaustion instantly; those already suffering from exhaustion may suffer more severe effects, up to and including death.



The characters should feel compelled to try to help the villagers (especially if one or more of them is from Heidersdorf), and the GM is encouraged to use more than one event in order to increase tension, as well as heighten the sense that All Is Not As It Should Be. The occurrences last as long as they need to, but it should become apparent to the characters that these phenomena are anything but typical, and that they will not be easily solved.

SPELLS IN HEIDERSDORF

Due to the active and erratic font of magic plaguing Heidersdorf, spell casting is tricky at best, dangerous at worst. Any magic-user can instantly tell a swelling of random magical energies is spilling into the world. While the font of magic is active and erratic, every arcane spellcaster within the font's area of effect (basically the village) must roll d_{100} every hour. If the result is 50 or less, all spell effects are *amplified* by a factor of "1" (e.g., combat spells inflict one extra damage die, bonuses increase by an extra +1, range increases by 10%, etc.) However, if the roll is 51 or greater, all spell effects are *reduced* by a factor of "1" (i.e., the opposite of the examples above.)

The exception to the above is if the die roll is a natural 100 ("00"), in which case the spellcaster takes 1d8 hit points of necrotic damage and is unable to cast any magic whatsoever for the next hour as the erratic magic energies create a feedback and saps them of energy.

A SAVIOR?

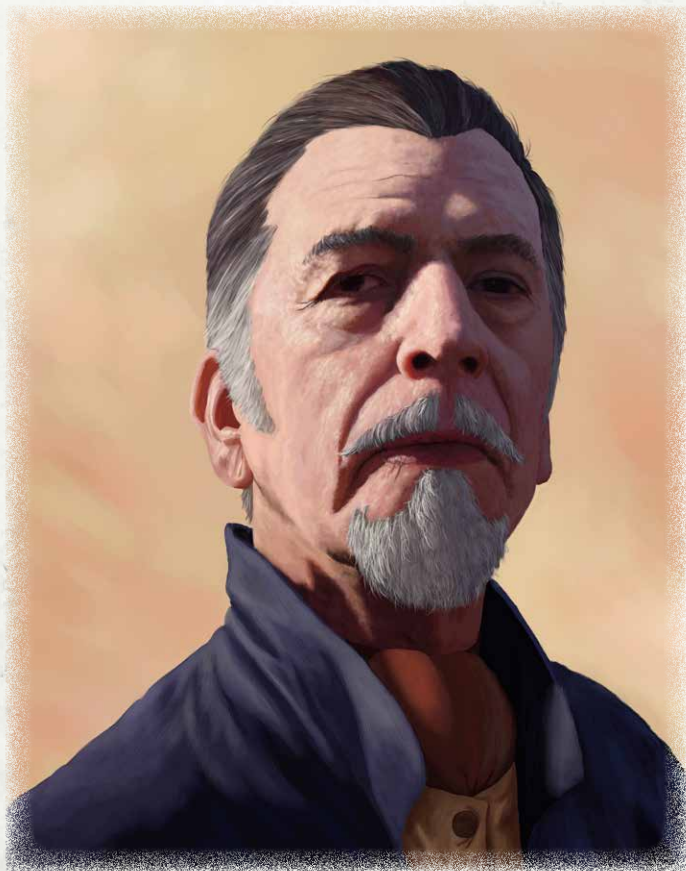
At some point, after the characters have had enough time to fail to "fix" a magical problem, an elderly man, well dressed in fine travelling clothes, comes into town with literal fanfare trumpeting (magically) their heroic deeds (none of which the characters will have heard of) and blasting out, "FEAR NOT! Adelard the Insightful shall calm this storm!" (see Adelard's writeup at the end of this module for full stats). He visits every afflicted site in the village, and seems to cause the magical effects to end by making sweeping gestures and uttering words of power (DC 20 Perception check to notice a discreetly-worn ring that glows softly). As calm descends once more upon the astonished populace, he calmly approaches the middle of the village and the magical font, which begins to become a visible stream of energies flowing from the village square and into him. He utters several syllables and the energies dim and slow, soon fading into nothingness.

After extinguishing the last of the odd magical effects, Adelard is hailed as a hero of Heidersdorf, and is tasked with keeping the magical energies from wreaking havoc again — a duty to which he readily assents. But he insists that in order to be able to do so, the villagers must follow his commands unerringly, else the font springs to life again. The Bürgermeister and his advisors see no serious issues with this and grant him the title of "The Savior of Heidersdorf". Adelard begins his first day on the job with a series of decrees, outlawing any magic or weapons not authorized by himself and inspected for "chaotic taint." He will claim he is doing this in the name of safety and to determine the source of the magical eruptions, though his specific answers to inquiries about the nature of the font are always vague. Any creature may wear or use weapons or magic if they agree to be village guards under his exclusive command. If the characters agree to be village guards, proceed to the next scene ("*Trading Old Troubles for New*", below).

TRADING OLD TROUBLES FOR NEW

If the characters decide not to become village guards under Adelard's leadership and keep their weapons, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check every time they encounter a villager, who makes a passive Wisdom (Perception) check against their score of 12. If one or more characters fail, they will be reported to Adelard, who will insist that they either agree to become village guards in his employ, or leave Heiderdorf forever. If the characters accede to the demand, go to the "Other" ending under "Final Outcomes", but if they decide to confront him, proceed to Scene 3 ("The Savior Unmasked").

If, however, the characters agreed to become village guards, they will be allowed to keep their equipment and exercise considerable authority in Adelard's name. It should soon become apparent that Heiderdorf's purported savior is not the benevolent hero everyone thought he was. Some sample encounters are provided below, but the GM is encouraged to develop more as needed.



ATTACK OR WATCH?

The characters may wish to attack or watch Adelard at this point. If they insist that they attack, despite the cheering of the locals, proceed directly to the final scene ("The Savior Unmasked", below). If they wish to watch, Adelard will complete his work and accept the honor of being the village savior, and proceed to cast his shadow over everything. He will not respond to inquiries until after the magical energies coming from the mysterious font have been absorbed. Once the magical energies are no longer visibly erupting from the font (i.e., about 5 minutes), Adelard will adopt a haughty mien, and deflect any direct questions about himself except to relate stories (real or not) of his heroism and goodness. Any character who thinks to ask if they have heard of Adelard the Insightful may attempt a DC 25 Intelligence check, but even a natural "20" will only reveal that the character in question overheard someone mentioning his name at some point in the past.

TAXES AND MORE TAXES!

Adelard begins levying taxes from the villagers in exchange for his continued protection, and his careful management of the font of magic (which he visits every few hours). Village guards are exempted from his taxes. During the first week Adelard demands one-tenth of whatever a villager owns, but this amount increases steadily to half of what every resident owns, collected weekly. Each increase is explained away as being necessary due to "unforeseen complications in the font that require more of my strength", and most people seem to accept the condition with minimal fuss (the Bürgermeister and his advisors have been *charmed*, and are using their influence to convince others that everything is fine). Some locals, nevertheless, grow angry and protest the rising taxes — and are quickly ostracized by their neighbors after guards confiscate what is owed. The characters will witness the worsening situation, and will be ordered on occasion to collect money from people who clearly have little enough of their own. If they decide to confront Adelard about it, proceed to Scene 3.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD...

Adelard is secretly using the magic of the font to attract creatures — magical and otherwise — to Heidersdorf for his own nefarious purposes. Every few days (or whenever the GM feels it is appropriate), roll on the following table to determine what kind of visitor shows up. Some of the visitors can be bargained with, but many could attack a seemingly defenceless village if they were powerful enough. If two identical rolls occur in sequence, go to “*The Spoils of Victory*” below. The attacks continue until the characters decide to confront Adelard (in which case go to Scene 3). If the characters decide to leave Heidersdorf to its own devices, go to the “*Bad*” ending under “*Final Outcomes*”.

D8 Roll	Encounter
1	1d4 svirfneblin bandits
2	2d8 giant rats
3	1d6 cockatrices
4	2d4 human bandits
5	2d4 zombies
6	1d6 ghouls
7	1d8 werewolves
8	1 adolescent Dark Young

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

If, when rolling for encounters on the table above, two rolls in a row are identical, run the second encounter as indicated. However, when the conflict is over the characters are approached by a villager wearing a ribbon denoting Adelard’s favor, who says he has been sent to “collect” any unconscious or dead attackers, as well as anything of value they had. If the characters think to ask, the villager says that this policy has been in place for “quite some time”. The characters can search their own memories, but even a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Insight) check will draw a blank. If the characters ask what happens to the loot, the villager tells them that everything is brought to the house Adelard has claimed as his own. Given that the villagers’ lives are not improving in any way, it should become clear that the “Savior” of Heidersdorf is keeping everything for himself. If the characters decide to challenge Adelard on this, proceed to Scene 3.

HAVE I GOT A JOB FOR YOU!

Not content with siphoning off his subjects’ money, Adelard announces that stone columns will be built around the edge of the village, ostensibly to support a defensive wall that will one day be built. This is in fact an experiment to see if the font’s energies can be directed to ritualistically prepared containers, which he has hidden within each column. Ultimately it is a failure, but not after many hours of forced work constructing the columns, which pulls the locals away from their regular jobs. At first the effect is unnoticeable, but soon enough there is a shortage of candles, bread, ale, and other staples that the locals depend on — Adelard is still well provisioned, thanks to the tribute he continues to receive. If they are village guards, the characters could be entrusted with overseeing the workers; otherwise they could be press-ganged into donating their time. If they confront Adelard about it, proceed to Scene 3.

BUT I DON’T ACTUALLY WANT TO KILL THE CHARACTERS!

It is possible that the GM could roll a powerful encounter when the characters might be injured or otherwise not at their best. There are several things to keep in mind. First, the odd properties of the magic font could very well enhance the abilities of spellcasters in the party, which could tip the scales in their favor. Second, the characters need only *defeat* the intruders, rather than kill them outright, as many of them are intelligent and will not sacrifice themselves for dubious gain. Finally, Adelard could take notice and use the opportunity to reinforce to the villagers how wonderful and powerful he is — this also provides an opportunity to give another hint to the players that the man isn’t what he seems to be, especially if he drains the life force of a pack of ghouls before their eyes.

THE SAVIOR UNMASKED

The characters have seen and heard enough; Adelard is not the benevolent figure he pretends to be, and instead of a savior he has turned out to be a tyrant. What they have no way of knowing, however, is that Adelard is not even human and his ambitions go far beyond merely ruling a village.

The confrontation with Adelard can occur anywhere in Heidersdorf, but is most likely to occur at the places he frequents most often — his residence or the magical font. If the GM wishes to make it random they can roll 1D6: On a roll of 1–2, he is in his home; on a 3–4, he is at the font; on a 5 he is wandering about the village, and on a 6 he is enjoying a free meal at the *Three Sisters*. GMs should keep in mind that wherever the characters end up fighting him, the possibility of collateral damage, in the form of possible destruction of buildings and injuries or death of villagers, is a very real possibility. Adelard will make no effort to protect innocent bystanders if his life is threatened, and if he can he will consume the life energies of anyone who dies near him with the aid of his ring (this counts as an Action).

Regardless of where the battle takes place, none of the villagers will come to the characters' aid. The Bürgermeister and his advisors are so thoroughly *charmed* that they are convinced Adelard has their best interests at heart, despite the evidence before their eyes. Even if Adelard is unmasked, and revealed for who (and what) he really is, they will remain in his thrall. Those who were not won over will still feel too afraid to stand against him — even more so if they witness his true form.

While Adelard appears to be a handsome, well-dressed older man, he is actually of the **serpentfolk** (please refer to the sidebar for more information), and his real name is Ssuthum. Ssuthum is old, even by the standards of his long-lived race, and has been spying on Grigoria for decades. He is not about to let mere humans stop him. Combat information for Ssuthum can be found at the end of this adventure.

In terms of tactics, Ssuthum will maintain his human guise as long as possible, and use *major image* to confound (and if possible, frighten) his opponents. If

reduced to 50% of his hit points or less, Ssuthum will *shapechange* into his true form in the hopes of shocking his opponents (anyone who sees the transformation must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom (Fortitude) save or be paralyzed for one turn).

The GM should remember that Ssuthum is crafty and knows he cannot stand alone in a fight with a party of adventurers for very long if he can't put some of them out of action quickly. Should Ssuthum lose more than 75% of his hit points, he will use *mirror image* to create three illusory duplicates of himself in order to flee. Should he manage to escape the fight, he will abandon Heidersdorf and regroup, but will add the characters to his list of enemies and seek his revenge someday...



WHO ARE THE SERPENTFOLK?

Long before Vathak was home to humanity, it was ruled by a highly-intelligent race of ophidians proficient in magic and science, who built a great civilization and revered the Great Old Ones. Their realm was disrupted by the arrival of Prince Vathak and his people, the Bhriota, who passed through in search of a new homeland. A period of intense warfare erupted, which resulted in the sinking of much of the serpentfolk's territory. Their culture shattered, the survivors fled underground to rebuild, finding their way eventually to the deepest regions of the Filth Reaches. While the humans have long since forgotten them, the serpentfolk have never forgotten what they lost and dream of reclaiming the surface, and exterminating the descendants of those who destroyed their empire.

Although most serpentfolk rarely leave their subterranean cities, some venture to the surface to gather intelligence and seek out remnants of their people's former glory — usually magical artifacts and the like — that can be recovered and used against the humans when the time is right. Serpentfolk are a long-lived race, but use magical means (such as Ssuthum's *ring of energy cycling* — see below) to prolong their lifespans even further, so that they may attain even greater power.

More information will be provided about the serpentfolk in future products.

FINAL OUTCOMES

Depending on how the final confrontation with Adelard turns out — or if the characters decide not to deal with him at all — there are several possibilities outlined below. GMs are free to modify them to suit their own campaigns.

GOOD

Adelard has been killed or driven off by the characters. The magical font remains, but now produces a gentle, steady flow of magic that actually benefits the village by enriching the soil and improving the health of anyone

who lives within 300 feet of it (in game terms, everyone who spends at least 12 consecutive hours within the area of effect has Advantage on saves versus disease and poison for the subsequent 24 hours).

For their good deeds, the characters are also made heroes of Heidersdorf, and are welcome to use the village as a home base for as long as they remain in the Grünbergen. As an added bonus, prices for basic goods are reduced by 10%, and the local smiths will repair their weapons and armor free of charge. At the GM's discretion, the characters can also find one low- to medium-power magic item in Adelard's hoard — a protective item would be a good suggestion.

BAD

Adelard defeats the characters. If he kills them, he consumes their life energies to fuel his own magic. In the meantime, he continues to drain Heidersdorf, ultimately consuming the villagers themselves once he has extracted all the wealth he wants. After several months, once the last drop of life energy is consumed, the font itself runs dry and Adelard moves on in search of another magic source to tap... and another opportunity to exact vengeance upon humanity. Heidersdorf crumbles into a foreboding ruin that is reclaimed by nature in the following years, but the odd desolation of the place deters anyone from resettling it.

If the characters are defeated, but survive the encounter, they can always regroup and try to save Heidersdorf, this time knowing what they are up against.

OTHER

If the characters decide to leave Heidersdorf, or not to confront Adelard, then the results of the Bad outcome above occur, albeit more slowly. Should they have a change of heart and try to free the village they may do so, but Adelard's hold on the people will be stronger.

APPENDIX 1

ADOLESCENT DARK YOUNG

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Skills Nature +5, Perception +6, Survival +6, Stealth +7 (+10 in forests), Survival +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Aklo, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Magic Resistance. The dark young has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Reactive. The dark young can make one reaction on every turn of a combat.

Unearthly. The dark young is immune to confusion, insanity, and diseases.

Unnerving Susurrus. The dark young constantly whispers and murmurs from its numerous mouths unless it is unconscious. Whenever a non-aberration creature starts its turn within 5 feet and can hear the dark young, it must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, it is magically frightened by the eerie, grating sound until the start of its next turn. On a successful save, that creature is immune to that dark young's Unnerving Susurrus for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark young makes two tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be grappled (escape DC 14). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and the dark young can't attack any other creature with that tentacle. The dark young has five tentacles.



SSUTHUM (ADELARD THE INSIGHTFUL)

Serpentfolk sorcerer

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Skills Arcana +6, Religion +6

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Aklo, Common, Serpentfolk

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The serpentfolk's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *minor illusion*

1/day each: *charm person*, *major image*, *mirror image*, *suggestion*

Keen Smell. Ssuthum has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Magic Resistance. Ssuthum has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Shapechanger. Ssuthum can use his action to *polymorph* into a Medium humanoid, or back into his true form. His statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He doesn't change form if he dies.

Spellcasting. Ssuthum is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Ssuthum has the following sorcerer spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*

1st level (4 spell slots): *inflict wounds*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (2 slots) spell slots: *misty step*, *web*

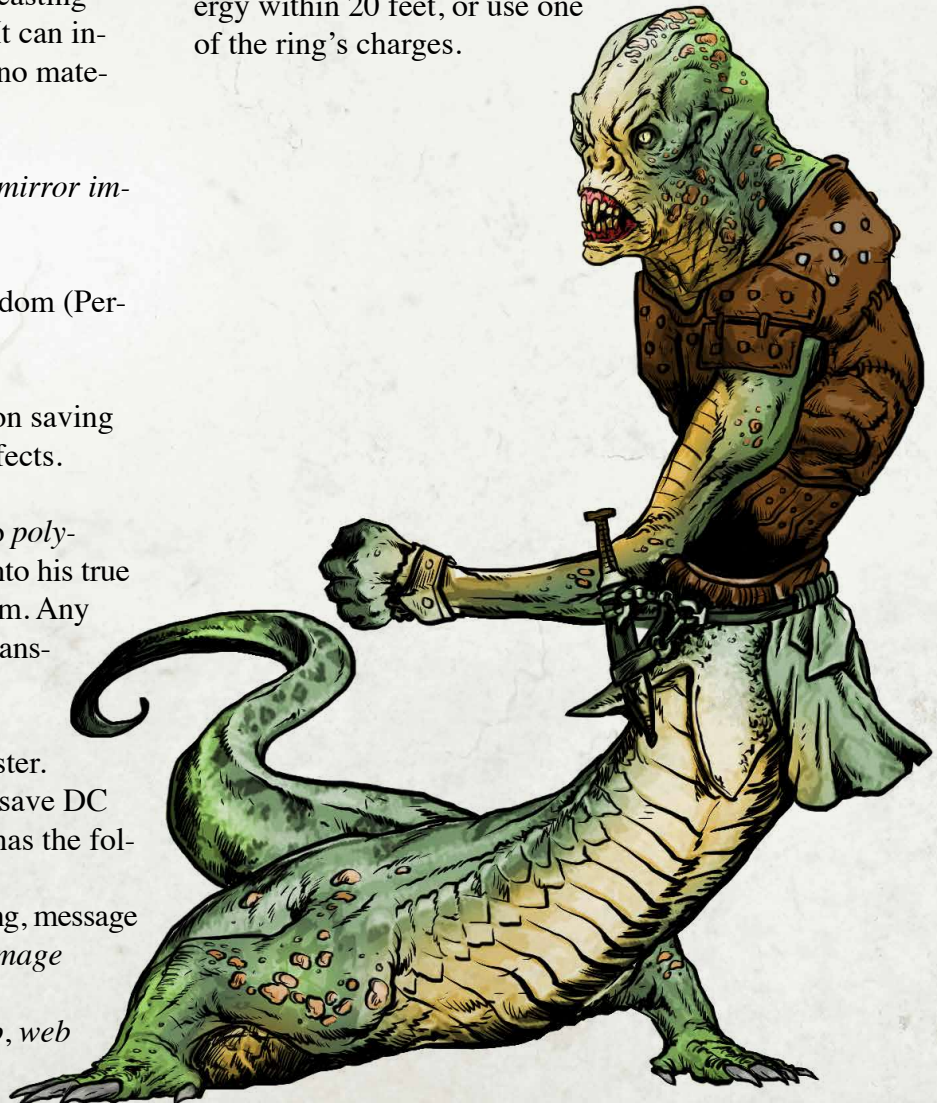
ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ssuthum makes two attacks: one with his bite and one with his dagger.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failure, or half as much damage on a success.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failure, or half as much damage on a success.

Ring. Using his *ring of energy cycling* (see below), Ssuthum can tap into a source of magical or life energy within 20 feet, or use one of the ring's charges.



NEW MAGIC ITEM

RING OF ENERGY CYCLING

Ring, very rare (requires attunement)

A creation of the serpentfolk, this magical ring is crafted of copper fashioned in the shape of four writhing snakes that wrap around the wearer's finger and embrace a tiny humanoid skull that looks like it is made of bluish-gray stone. Two tiny pieces of onyx rest in the eye sockets, giving the skull a piercing stare.

When worn, the ring can tap into any source of magical energy within 20 feet and drain a portion of it, in one action. Static sources of magical energy (such as the font) are automatically tapped, while spells cast directly at the wearer can be absorbed only if the wearer succeeds on a saving throw against that spell; otherwise, the spell works as intended. The ring cannot absorb area effect spells. Successful absorption of magical energy in this way produces 1 charge in the ring.

The wearer can also take an action to try to drain the life force of another being within 20 feet; doing so is considered an evil act. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution save or take 3d6 necrotic damage and physically age 1d4 years. Successful absorption of life energy in this way produces 1 charge in the ring.

On their turn, the wearer can take an action to drain a source of magical or life energy to acquire a charge, as outlined above, or they can use an action to consume a charge in the ring to perform one of the following effects:

- ☞ Heal 3d6 hit points instantly.
- ☞ Reduce their physical age by one year (doing so also inflicts 4d4 necrotic damage, which can only be healed through rest).

The ring has a maximum capacity of 10 charges, after which the absorption function will cease to function until charges are expended. It can be recharged again after that point, as long as it has fewer than 10 charges. Should the ring be depleted of all charges, it will lose its potency and become a mundane, if slightly disturbing, ring (worth 100 gp). In this adventure, Ssuthum's ring has 2d4 charges.

As a creation of the serpentfolk, the *ring of energy cycling* is attuned to them on a primal level. Wielders may be of any race, but prolonged use will cause certain physical changes that will give them a snake-like appearance (e.g., scaly skin, a forked tongue, a sinuous body shape). These physical changes do not confer the racial benefits enjoyed by serpentfolk, but will attract unwanted attention.



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