

Shadows over
VATHAK

One Dark Night

5TH EDITION HORROR

Chilling Murder on a Night of Festivities for
Shadows over Vathak Horror Roleplaying Game

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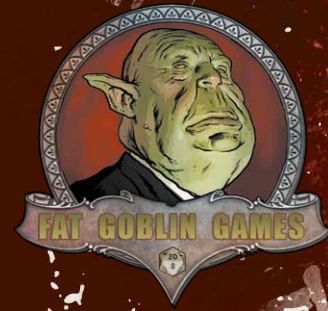
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Adventure Primer

One Dark Night is intended for 3 to 5 players with an average party level of 5th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Wilhelm's Eve, named for a popular vindari poet, Jacob Wilhelm, is held on the winter solstice each year. During most of the day, the faithful of the One True God gather in boisterous crowds, singing and making merry in order to ward off evil. Near sunset though, criminals and heretics are executed before those same crowds, as popularized in Wilhelm's poetry. After the executions the vindari return home, lock their doors, and bar their windows. Evil spirits are believed to wander openly on Wilhelm's Eve Night, and it is considered grave misfortune to be outside while the moon shines.

Each year, people are killed on Wilhelm's Eve, seemingly at random, in different vindari cities around Vathak. They are found the next morning butchered in the street, by someone or something colloquially known as "the Wilhelm Killers." Although some have been "brought to justice" for these killings, they never stop, and this year is no different. A Wilhelm Killer has come to Kandar, and the PCs find themselves outside after sunset.

ADVENTURE LOCATION

This adventure can be placed in any northern city with a gothic aesthetic. If you're playing in the world of *Shadows Over Vathak*, then the adventure takes place in the Vindari Quarter of the city of Kandar, deep in the northern reaches of Moorhaven.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The key to this adventure is getting the PCs to the Vindari Quarter, and keeping them there after nightfall. It is easiest if they are new to the area and have yet to make any real connections there, as the adventure relies upon them not being allowed into any of the homes in the quarter.

As to why they might be there, Wilhelm's Eve is still a holiday, despite its many dark elements, and the executions are a popular event. The PCs may be there to deliver someone to justice or witness the execution of a criminal they had previously apprehended. They may also simply have been in the Vindari Quarter on other business with the Church or one of the wealthy merchants who lives there.

If something more is required to get your players involved, perhaps a concerned NPC will hire them to patrol the streets in case the Wilhelm Killers strike, or maybe a fortune teller has foreseen their tangle with the Killer.

One Dark Night makes several assumptions about the situation in which the PCs find themselves and how things will play out in order to achieve a certain feel. The intention is to make this adventure feel like a slasher film: a deadly and mysterious killer stalks the PCs. It is a horror story, and explaining horror makes it less scary. All that being said though, you should feel free to change or adapt any of this content to better fit your own game. If you want to make this part of a bigger storyline, have the killer be part of a conspiracy, or a red herring, or whatever you want. It's your game, the adventure is just a suggestion.

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:

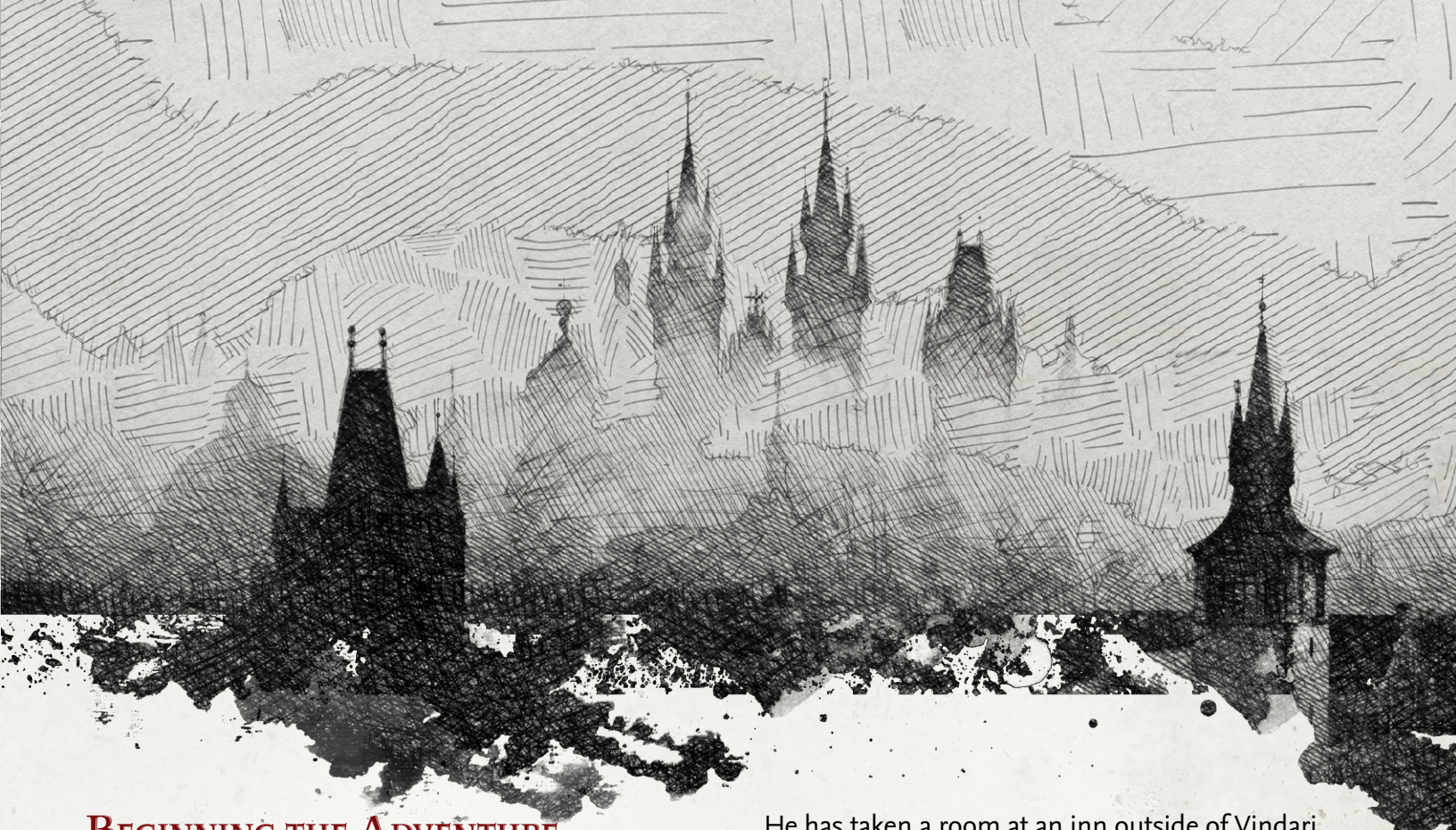
“The **goblins** are waiting to attack the caravan as it comes around the steep bend.”

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

The adventure begins just after nightfall, with the PCs still in the Vindari Quarter after the locals have all gone home and locked their doors. Businesses are closed, their proprietors at home with their families or guests at a party thrown by one of the city's well-to-do vindari. The streets are dark and quiet, without even guards to patrol them. It is an eerie kind of silence.

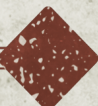
THE WILHELM KILLER

A mysterious stranger has come to Kandar with the intention of killing anyone he can find out on the streets on Wilhelm's Eve. He is driven by a sincere desire to serve the One True God: by acting as one of the Wilhelm Killers, he believes that he is both punishing those with the hubris to be out this night, and reminding the faithful that they should do as the Church and tradition demand of them, for their own safety.

When the PCs encounter the stranger on Wilhelm's Eve, he will be wearing a heavy hood that conceals his features. He wears dark leather armor whose studs have been painted black so they don't reflect light. He has close cropped, dark brown hair and an easily forgettable face.

He has taken a room at an inn outside of Vindari Quarter, and has spent little time there during the day. He avoids attention, renting his room under the name "Jacob Wilhelm," and carries no identifying items. If the PCs manage to track him back to his room, they will find only simple traveller's clothes, a coin purse containing 25gp, and a small book filled with verses from scripture, copied by hand in a tight script. Neither the innkeeper nor the other guests know anything about him, saying that he has kept to himself in his room. If the PCs find themselves investigating the Killer's activities before Wilhelm's Eve, feel free to drop some red herrings in there. Another guest might suggest that they saw him arguing with a local herb seller, when in reality this was some other person entirely, mistaken thanks to "Jacob's" nondescript features.

The killer is meant to be mysterious. He is not part of a larger cult or plot, he is not a local but has come to Kandar from somewhere else in order to kill. If the PCs manage to capture him alive, they will be hard pressed to get him to talk, and he will take every chance he can to either escape or take his own life. Should the PCs make use of supernatural means to read his mind or otherwise take what information they want from him, feel free to make up whatever mundane backstory you wish.



"JACOB WILHELM," KILLER 3,900 XP

Medium humanoid (vindari human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Point 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +4

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +3, Perception +3, Stealth +10

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Thieves' cant, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 8 (3,900 xp)

Assassinate. During his first turn, Jacob has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit he scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Cunning Action. Jacob can take a bonus action on each of his turns. This action can only be used to make the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Evasion. If Jacob is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Jacob deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when he hits with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll.

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker that he can see hits him with an attack, Jacob may use his reaction to halve that attack's damage against him.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jacob makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

THE VINDARI QUARTER

Home to almost all of the vindari of Kandar, this section of the city is noticeably different from the rest and modeled in classic vindari fashion. Straight streets lined with row houses radiate out from the Church of St. Juniper, the *Burgherhaus* (home and workplace of the city's burgher), and the drafty prison known as the Block. Though not officially barred from entrance, romni are unwelcome, especially after dark, and several gothic gates mark the border between the Vindari Quarter and the rest of the city. These gates hang across the narrow streets from brick and timber posts. During the day they are left open, but at night they are shut and locked, barring both foot and horse traffic.

The row houses are generally two or three storeys tall, and grouped together in units of three to six, separated either by streets or narrow alleys. While there are lamp posts at corners and near the major landmarks and mansions of the district, the streets are usually lit by patrolling guards with lanterns. Those guards are, of course, indoors on Wilhelm's Eve. Wherever there is space between two sets of row houses, it ends up being used by the locals for extra storage or work space, garden plots, cooking, hanging laundry, or throwing trash. Children and ne'er do wells often use them to move about while avoiding the main streets, and the homeless and destitute sometimes sleep in them. Some locations of interest are described below.

CHURCH OF ST. JUNIPER

This grand gothic building is by no means the largest church in Vathak, but it is somewhat bigger than it needs to be, considering the size of the parish, and is certainly the most imposing building in the city. The bell tower can be seen from anywhere within Kandar, and its bells can be heard for miles beyond the boundaries of the city. Though built mostly from local stone, the arches of the doors and windows are marble, imported at great expense, and carved with a motif of juniper berries and leaves, in honor of the patron saint.

The church is normally locked at night, with one of the lesser priests or a lay attendant there to open it

for those in need. The exception is on Wilhelm's Eve, when only those participating in an all-night devotional are admitted, one hour before sunset. After this the doors are locked, none are admitted, and it is considered a breach of doctrine to interrupt the faithful, putting one's very soul at risk.

REICHSGRAF MANOR

Reichsgraf Jann Tobler is the ranking priest in the region and lives in a well-appointed home adjacent to the church (on the west side). He is well liked by his parishioners and the local romni, who know that he is willing to work with them instead of espousing the fire and brimstone style so popular with the Church of the One True God. Each Wilhelm's Eve he hosts a gathering for a variety of select guests, and the bustle of activity can be heard from outside.

BURGHERHAUS

Serving as both the center of government and the home of Burgher Elias Vantino, recently appointed leader of the city, the *Burgherhaus* is actually a set of row houses, four units in total, which have been converted into offices and the manor of the burgher and his family. Guards are usually posted outside the doors, but they have been moved inside for Wilhelm's Eve. Like the reichsgraf, the burgher is hosting a gathering of some of the most influential and wealthy vindari in town, as well as their servants who are working the event. The *Burgherhaus* is just west of Reichsgraf Manor.

THE BLOCK

West of the *Burgherhaus*, and separated by the gallows, is the Block, a squat, drafty, and dour prison that handles all the more tactile business of government. It houses the treasury and, in case of invasion, can serve as a fortress to protect the burgher and other officials. It features as the center of the daylight activities of Wilhelm's Eve, and the guards who are usually posted outside are, of course, inside this night. The doors are heavy and made of sturdy wood, reinforced with steel, and there are no windows on the first floor.

MARKTPLATZ

This cobbled space, about half the size of a city block and situated in front of the Church of St. Juniper, was where vindari artisans used to sell their wares when they first established themselves in Kandar. In the years since, as the vindari and romni communities worked out how to relate to each other, many merchants now have a presence in the much larger Kandar Market, outside of the Vindari Quarter. Some maintain stalls here to accommodate vindari who prefer to stay in the neighborhood, but for the most part this is now a place to congregate, for musicians to perform, and for painters to try to capture the church on canvas.



ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WILHELM KILLER

The Wilhelm Killer wants to kill, but he also takes a sadistic glee in creating a sense of fear. While he is a rather daunting foe, he won't try to go toe-to-toe with the party. He will stalk them, strike from the shadows, and then disappear again as quickly as possible. He will try to make use of his Assassinate and Sneak Attack abilities whenever possible, and when he loses the advantage of surprise, he will use his Cunning Action to get away again. He will generally try to focus his multiattack on one target in order to drop them as quickly as possible, but if hitting two targets is a better choice, he will do so. He will generally target unarmored characters first, but he learns from his mistakes and if such a target proves too difficult, he will adjust accordingly.

The first time the PCs encounter the killer should be at a distance, after coming around a corner. They might see him standing silently in the street for a brief moment before vanishing into the shadows. This is a trick that he can use more than once, and the longer he hunts the PCs the more he will attempt to frighten them. He might attempt to douse torches or break lanterns, especially those at corners or on buildings. He will avoid snow-covered ground when trying to get away, but might also leave obvious tracks in order to lure the PCs into an ambush. Should the PCs split up he will focus his efforts on individual targets. If he does manage to kill one of the PCs while they are away from the group, he will take what time he has to stage the body in such a way that finding it should come as a shock to the survivors. While this adventure assumes that the PCs and the Killer are the only people outside in the Vindari Quarter, that doesn't mean that he can't have killed some innocent people "off screen," and these victims would be left out to be found.

Throughout all of this, the Killer should remain silent. He doesn't taunt them, and he can't be drawn out by mundane attempts to provoke him. He has prepared himself as a weapon of the One True God, and his refusal to engage should make him a more unsettling opponent. His mission follows certain rules though, and at the first hint of daylight, unless he has an opportunity to take down one of the PCs, he will disengage and attempt to get away.

SANCTUARY

The PCs may decide that finding sanctuary is the easiest way to elude the Killer. A good idea, but one that may prove difficult. Homes and business are locked up tight, and nobody will be willing to let them in. They could try to force their way in somewhere, but this is unlikely to end well.

Most people will assume that the PCs themselves are the Wilhelm Killers, and respond with fear, violence, or both. Screaming, throwing cutlery, and barricading themselves in rooms are all likely responses. Enough noise could draw the attention of the neighbors, and they might even try to help. These people can be treated as **commoners**, but the occasional **noble** or **thug** may also be present.

Most businesses are maintained on the first floor, while the owners live above them, so trying to break into a closed shop or tavern might be easier, but the PCs will have to remain quiet if they don't want to deal with the residents. There are several small warehouses in the district, mostly near the borders with the rest of the city, but these will have guards inside. The same goes for houses of those at the parties: they might be empty but they likely have at least one guard. Such guards are likely to be **veterans** if they are trusted with such work.

The priests, staff, and guests of the Church will not abide anyone forcing entry into their sanctum. Those already within the Church might consist of at least one **priest**, as well as several **acolytes** and numerous **commoners**. There may even be a **knight** or the like staying there.

Attempting to crash either of the parties will no doubt result in the arrest of the characters, even if they can convince the burgher or the reichsgraf that they aren't the Wilhelm Killers. These parties are full of **nobles**, as well as the occasional **priest**, **spy**, **scout**, or even **mage**. There will certainly be **veterans** posted just inside the doors.

Forcing entry into the Block is, effectively, a death sentence. At the very least, there are several dozen

guards on staff, led by **veterans**, and at least one **priest** or **mage**.

Trying to get out of the Vindari Quarter is another option, and in this case the PCs need only get past the locked, but unguarded, gates. Picking the lock (a DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check) or climbing are the best options, though significant force (a DC 20 Strength check) might break one down. The romni of the city are having their own celebration — the much more raucous Resvrrectvris Festival — with masks, music, and generally boisterous activity in the streets. That celebration is beyond the scope of this adventure, but suffice it to say that the romni know about Wilhelm's Eve, and while they don't fear the Killers, they aren't going to get involved.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs manage to capture the Wilhelm Killer, they can bring him before the law and attempt to get some information from him, though this should prove difficult. It may prove difficult to get much help from the law here. If none of the PCs were slain, his actions could be considered assault at best. If the Killer murdered any innocent victims in the course of the night, that might make it easier to make a case against him. If you included any such NPCs in the adventure, survivors might serve as good witnesses.

If the PCs killed the Killer, they might end up facing the law themselves, though as "Jacob Wilhelm" is a stranger to the city, his death will not be much pursued if the PCs don't bring it to the authorities themselves.

Should the PCs escape the Vindari Quarter, find refuge inside, or put the Wilhelm Killer to flight, he will return to his rented room at sunrise and then leave town as quickly as possible — he doesn't want any surviving PCs to identify him, after all. Should the PCs decide to track him down this could make for some exciting stories, but is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Should the PCs convince the authorities of what happened, they will be thanked for their efforts, and perhaps given some token reward. Their actions may even earn them some friends in the Vindari Quarter. Any rewards should be minimal though: The Wilhelm Killers have been at this for a long time, and nobody would think that his man is responsible for all the slayings. They have not ended a threat to the people of Vathak so much as inconvenienced it. There will be other Wilhelm Killers, each with their own means, methods, and motivations, and with few if any connections between them. The real reward for this adventure is surviving it, and the lesson that not all threats in Vathak are supernatural, or easily understood.



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