



The Witch's Hound

An adventure for low-level characters.

Adventure synopsis

IN CROSSROADS HOLLOW, something has come to inhabit and torment the otherwise sleepy village. Creatures of darkness and shadow are taking up residence, their motives inscrutable. But the most immediate threat comes from a witch who is using her power over a hell hound to torment the village.

THE VICAR'S TERROR

It's twilight. Vicar Almsworth rushes into the alehouse, pale from fright. "I-I-I've seen it! Shepherd protect me, I've seen it! A hound, wreathed in flame and straight from hell, chased me from the chapel!"

Anyone who races out of the alehouse may inspect the area.

Skill check: Perception

Easy. Sees nothing, but hears the baying of the huntsman's hounds just on the outskirts of town.

Medium. Catches just a whiff of sulfur on the evening breeze. Is it from the hound or does it come from the apothecary?

Hard. Follow the vicar's path back toward the chapel. There are large paw prints at the heels of the vicar's own footprints.

Investigation: The huntsman

Baris, the huntsman is securing his kennel. His hunting dogs are agitated. He points to his largest hound, Ceasar, who is eager to be released from his pen. "The old boy got out, I'm afraid. Had to chase him down. Caught up to him just outside the church yard. He can be vicious. He didn't bite anyone, did he? Don't know what got into him."

Investigation: The apothecary

Deirdre the apothecary is closing up her workshop. "Yes, I've been using sulfur, why do you ask? It's a common ingredient in many alchemical compounds. It can be noxious, so I work with the shutters open. I lock things up at night, though."



Investigation: The chapel

Esmeralda, an acolyte, has been in the sacristy, cleaning the utensils used during the worship service. "No, I haven't seen or heard anything unusual. Well, there's been the sound of dogs barking, I suppose, but nothing usual about dogs, is there?"

MISCHIEF OVERNIGHT

Anyone keeping watch overnight has the opportunity to spy upon some mischief.

Pumpkin-Head Lookout

Skill check: Perception

Easy. By moonlight, you spot one particularly large, ripe pumpkin in a patch of much smaller gourds.

Medium. You must be seeing things. That large pumpkin doesn't appear to be in the same place as last time you looked. In fact, now there are two large pumpkins in the patch.

Hard. You did not just see that! That large pumpkin just got up and walked on legs of vines and moved to the edge of the patch facing the village before settling back down.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Pumpkin-heads			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

Fiona the pumpkin-head, an animated plant, and her compatriot gourd, Gaston, are watching the village from this patch. If confronted, they will attempt to make their escape. They will fight only in self defense, entangling foes with their vines or

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pelting them with pumpkin seeds. They will not press an attack if they get the advantage.

They speak in the languages of druids and sylvan creatures. "We are lookouts sent by the hedge-wizard Homer, who suspects the village is secretly being visited at night. Come, we can show you, or we can take you to Homer."

Follow pumpkin heads to Homer's cottage.

Homer is a kindly looking old man in the coveralls and straw hat a gardener might wear. He is staying up late awaiting a report from his pumpkin scouts. He shares his suspicions. "I believe creatures of darkness and shadow are visiting our village. I don't know their intent, but I've seen signs of their visiting. Small items taken, scratches at window sills and doors, the bodies of small animals killed for sport. Yet, I did not think the threat grave until I heard about the vicar's encounter with a hellish hound. Now I am truly concerned."

Should the PCs report an encounter with such creatures, Homer shakes his head in resignation. "My worst fears are true. Sadly, I do not know how to combat them. I implore you, as stalwart adventurers, to investigate further. I will help you in whatever small ways I can, but this menace is beyond my reckoning."

Follow the pumpkin heads to the dark folk.

The pumpkin heads lead the PCs stealthily down the street, keeping to the shadows. They stop and point toward the apothecary's shop.

Skill check: Perception

Easy. Shadows cast by moonlight.

Medium. A shadowy figure crouches beneath the locked shutters of the apothecary's cottage.

Hard. A short, stout creature, under 4 foot tall cloaked in midnight blue cloak and hood and tunic of rags, crouches beneath the window to the apothecary's workshop. The short creature holds a

serrated dagger in its left hand, which appears pale white in the moonlight.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Midnight skulker			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

The midnight skulker fights with a poisoned dagger and can cast a spell creating a magical darkness. It is a scout, sent to find a source for chemical reagents, which such midnight skulkers use for poisons. It will attempt to flee into the darkness if it senses it is losing a combat.

It is possible that noise from the fight could bring the night watch, simple citizens who take their turn patrolling the village in the evenings. The two watchmen who appear are the school teacher, Ichabod, and a local farmer, Jeremiah. If there is no sign of the dark folk, they may suspect the PCs as being the culprits.

If so, it will be up to the magistrate, Kilbride, to sort things out. If needs be, the watch will take the PCs into custody and hold them in the inn common room until Kilbride can be summoned.

Meeting Kilbride

The magistrate prides himself of being a good judge of character. But if the evidence points to the PCs being the ones trying to break into the apothecary, he steels himself to make a hard choice, and sentence them to the stocks. Just

then, the pumpkin heads will return with Homer, urging the hedge wizard to speak in defense of the PCs.

THE NEXT MORNING

The Dead Steed

There is a commotion in the village. Daylight reveals a horse slain on the outskirts. The horse is Daredevil, belonging to one of the farmers. Its throat had been ripped out.

Skill check: Perception

Easy. The grass is pressed flat from the thrashing of the horse in its death throes.

Moderate. Another set of prints. Paw prints, as if belonging to a large hound.

Hard. The tracks seem to head to the hunter's home. Again, the whiff of sulfur.

Huntsman's home.

Baris is not home. His wife, Leda, says he set out this morning after Cesar, who got out of his pen again last night. She said he was following tracks into the woods.

If Killbride or the watchmen accompanied the PCs to the hunter's home, one of them might express the thought, if the PCs haven't, that maybe it's Baris' hound Cesar who is responsible for chasing the vicar and killing Daredevil.

INTO THE WOODS

Fog is thick. The air is damp and chilly in the early morning. The landscape is gray, a wall of despair; no means of getting a bearings.

Three Ladies in White

The ghosts of the three ladies in white inhabits these woods. Legends holds they were witches who practiced white magic who were betrayed, but though that tale persists, no one knows if it is true.



CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Three ladies in white (specters)			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

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The ladies, each a specter, appear singly, at first. Then in a clearing, they appear at three points equidistant from each other, effectively surrounding the PCs. They speak in a lyrical, sing-song voice, a sound as forlorn as the surroundings.

*"Our sister meddles,
when darkness settles;
hellish powers doth make
see the village elders quake
follow the trail, lonely ahead
else forfeit the huntsman's head."*

Their singing is punctuated by the baying of a hound. The ladies in white depart and the fog lifts, revealing a path deep into the forest. On the wind comes a human cry. "Help me. Is anyone there? Help!"

THE FORGOTTEN LODGE

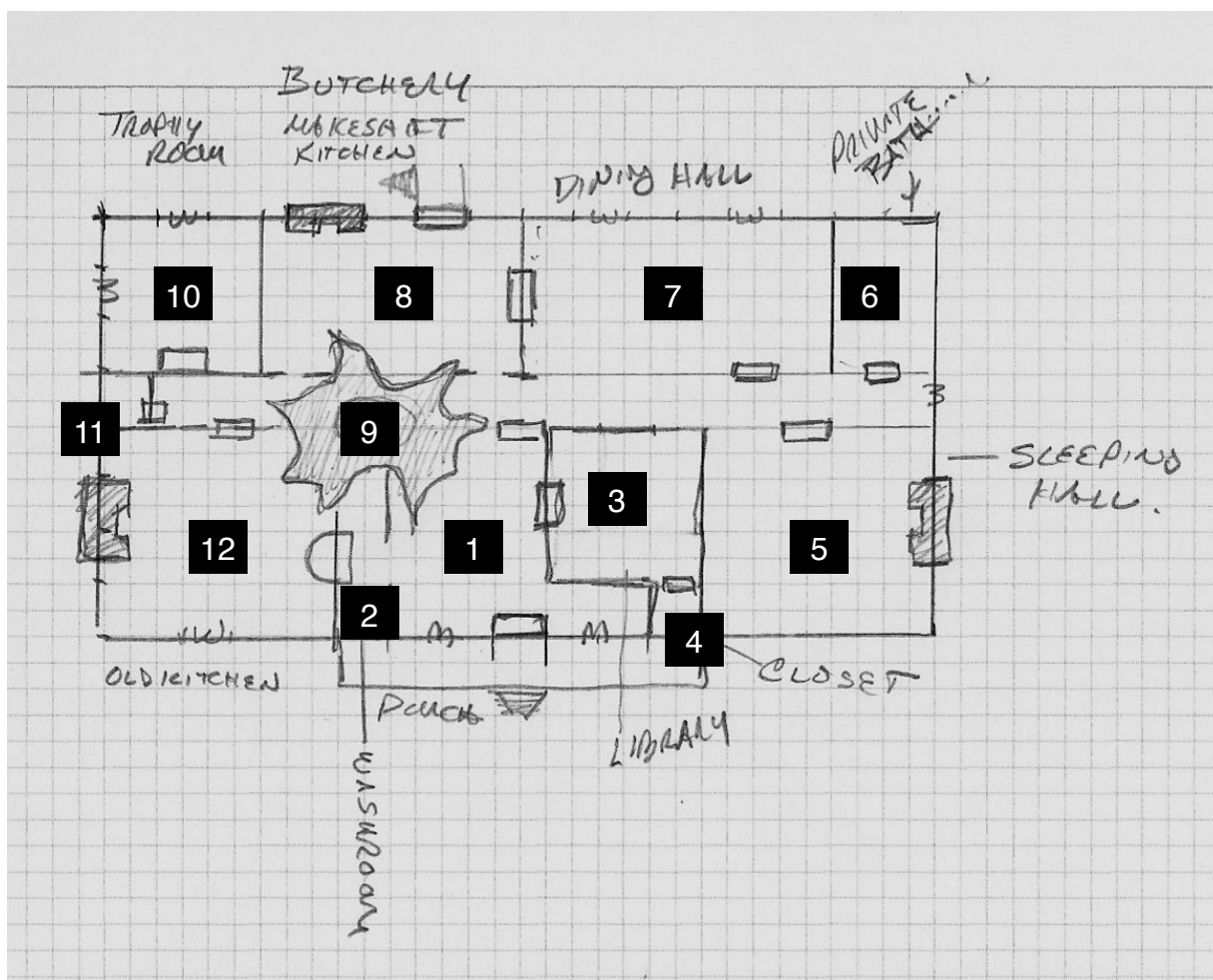
Following the voice leads the PCs to a ramshackle hunting lodge, a great black tree with barren branches, growing up through the middle of it. The cry of help comes from a pit in the lane approaching the home. Baris the huntsman's voice is clearly heard coming from the pit. He has injured his leg in the fall and cannot climb out of the pit without assistance.

The most riveting thing, though is the sight of the huntsman's hound, growling and snarling, defending its master, from a hellish hound cast in flames that is advancing on it.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Hell hound			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Ceasar, the huntsman's hound			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

In addition to the hound, a festrog, a type of ghoul that goes about on all fours, patrols the grounds. In daylight there is only a 1 in 6 chance of encountering the creature. At night, there is a 5 in 6 chance.



Mistress of the lodge

Miriska the witch has returned after years of study abroad, taking residence in the forgotten lodge.

Roaming the halls is Miriska’s pet cheetah, Raja. There is a 1 in 6 chance of encountering the cheetah at a given time.

Entrances to the lodge

There is a door from the front porch into the main section of the lodge. There is also a back door from a small stoop leading into the a makeshift kitchen, the hunters’ former butchery.

The map has a scale of 2.5 feet per grid square.

All the doors in the lodge are on hinges that swing close, but do not latch shut to allow easy access. Only one is locked — the entrance to the Old Kitchen, which is Miriska’s inner sanctum. The windows are narrow — too small for normal sized folk to squeeze through easily — and shuttered with locks on the inside.

1. Entry Hall

The growth of the black tree and roof damage has warped the wood floor, leaving it uneven and treacherous. Likewise, leaking rain has damaged the paintings that adorned the walls.

All three fireplaces are in use and should be considered “hot.”

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CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Conspiracy of ravens			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

Roosting in the tree is a conspiracy of ravens. They will attack any unwelcome visitors to the lodge as a swarm.

2. Washroom

This room, whose plumbing is shared with the kitchen sink on the other side of the wall, still functions. A pump brings fresh well water into the basin. A water mephit helps maintain this apparatus, as well as the piping to the private bath in Room 6. The mephit's only allegiance is to the fixture, not to any past or current occupant of the house, so it will not provide information about the lodge.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Mephit plumber			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

3. Library

The original lodge had a considerable library, but Miriska has added to it a wide collection of books on subjects sinister and scientific. Insisting that the library be maintained, Miriska's tiefling serving girls, Nadia and Opal, are likely occupied with dusting and arranging and repairing the collection.

Nadia and Opal work well together. Opal will try to distract the party allowing Nadia to flee and warn her mistress of the intruders. Instead of running to the old kitchen, she will make for the washroom and shout a warning, which can easily be heard on the other side of the wall.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Nadia and Opal, tiefling serving girls			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

4. Closet

Cleaning supplies and clean linens are kept here.

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5. Sleeping Hall

Polo, a winged homunculus, attends to his mistress in this room appointed solely for her and her two servant girls. Polo hates the tieflings, who return the animosity, but on threat of pain, will not bicker in their mistress' presence.

Polo vigorously defends any intrusion into this room.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Polo, winged homunculus			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

6. Private Bath

The centerpiece of the room is a freestanding copper bathtub, whose plumbing is connected to the washroom. Miriska keeps a batch of dire leeches in a container (for medicinal purposes, of course). Otherwise this room is filled with cosmetics and toiletries.

7. Dining Hall

Though they come and go at all hours, Miriska employs a band of hobgoblins to chop firewood, hunt game and do all the physical labor necessary to maintain her operation. As part of their payment, they have access to her dining hall and kitchen, and can help themselves in preparing and eating meals.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Hobgoblins			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

8. Makeshift Kitchen/Butchery

Svetlana, a falconesque harpy, has come to the lodge to be near the Tree Between Worlds. She senses the dimensional power of the object, and has entered into a truce with Miriska, who has agreed to let her stay so long as she does not feast on anyone under her protection. As long as Svetlana is in a room connected to the tree, she can fly out of the lodge. She sometimes joins the hobgoblins on their hunting parties.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Svetlana, falconesque harpy			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

9. Tree Between Worlds

It's dark. It's evil. And its roots run deep. It is drawing all sorts of likeminded creatures to the region, including the midnight skulkers who are infiltrating the village. Miriska has not yet begun to truly tap into the power of the thing, which is more dangerous than even she knows.

10. Trophy Room

Hunting trophies line the walls. Miriska has scratched a summoning circle in the wood floor with an awl. Presently, a handful of lemures occupy the room, a result of her most recent summonings.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Lemures (devils)			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

11. Linen Closet

Filled with clean linens.

12. Old Kitchen

Miriska's inner sanctum. She keeps a dire bat in here and has animated a hat tree and a poker. If warned about any intrusions, she has prepared a list of spells and gathered to her some powerful talismans, including a broomstick of flying, her cauldron and a brooch of defense.

Included in this room is a record of correspondence with other like-minded witches. Miriska has invited them to share her lodge and form a proper covey. She emphasizes the

presence of the Tree Between Worlds in all her letters.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Animated objects			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Dire bat			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

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Miriska the witch wants revenge on the inhabitants of Crossroads Hollow for perceived past wrongs. She once lived in the village, thought wise in the ways of relationships. But she left years ago under a cloud of suspicion that she used her matchmaking magic to manipulate others while furthering her own lusty and illicit affairs.

CREATURE NAME / TYPE			
Miriska			
LIFE PTS	DEFENSE	INITIATIVE	MOVE SPEED
WEAPON		ATTACK	DAMAGE
SPECIAL ABILITIES			

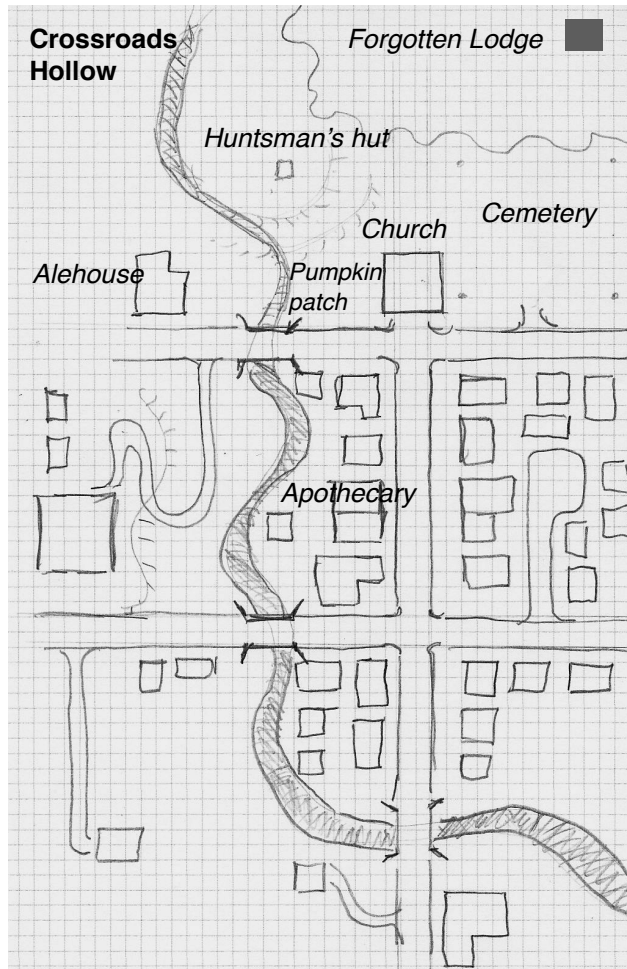
ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is not written for a specific system.

Those encounters that potentially may result in combat include a generic template for GMs to fill in with statistics particular to their given game system. This will require the GM to devote some time to preparation, either to find statistics that match the named monster or npc or to select a substitute.

The module is written as a generic fantasy, however, it can be adapted to other settings as the GM desires.

No specific spells or magical powers are listed for Mariska. The GM is free to develop these as she desires.



CROSSROADS HOLLOW

The village is filled with colonial-style buildings. It's most prominent features are the Alehouse on the west side of town, the stream that runs adjacent to the village and the three covered bridges that span it, the Church of the Shepherd and its adjacent cemetery. For this adventure, the Huntsman's hut, the pumpkin patch and the apothecary's are also indicated.

A GM should feel free to add details and fill in the blanks to this map as needed, especially if Crossroads Hollow is used for additional adventures.

Credits

Adventure, artwork and maps by Troy E. Taylor

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WITCH MATRIX

If you have need of creating a witch NPC on the fly, try using this matrix. Roll d20 for each category as the GM requires for a witch character

that has a type of witchcraft the character specializes in, their name, nickname, distinguishing feature and locale.

No.	Witchery	Female	Male	Nickname	Feature	Locale
1	Broom flyer	Sabrina	Stephan	Fat	Black hat	Deep woods
2	Weather whisperer	Gwen	Gareth	Slim	Wart	Hut
3	Wind walker	Tituba	Trevor	Sad	Pointy nose	Gingerbread cottage
4	Cauldron cookery	Molly	Mordecai	Happy	Broken nose	Cave
5	Bonfire summoner	Abigail	Abraham	Madam/ Mister	Cracked fingernails	Walking/Stilted house
6	Moon child	Cressida	Connor	Missy/Lad	Lacquered nails	Back alley
7	Enchanter	Isabelle	Ichabod	Grandmama/ Grandpapa	Pointed chin	Rooftops (chimney sweeps)
8	Matchmaker	Pandora	Paris	Nana/Papa	Cracked voice	Abandoned mansion
9	Diviner/ Soothsayer	Natasha	Nathaniel	Ma/Pa	Sultry voice	Parlor
10	Outcast/Recluse	Esmeralda	Everett	Cousin	Yellow teeth	Country kitchen
11	Remedy maker	Portia	Porthos	Wicked	Sharpened teeth	Bonfire
12	Hexer	Rebecca	Rasputin	Clumsy	Stooped	Standing stones
13	Free thinker	Samantha	Sebastian	Three-Fingered	Poppet	Rocky outcrop
14	Fertility devotee	Tatiana	Tabor	Ugly	Pointed shoes/ buckled boots	Enchanted glade
15	Seducer	Ursula	Uther	Ginger	Colorful skirts/ trousers	Noble house
16	Fate weaver	Veronica	Vernon	Flaxen	Black waist coat	Maelstrom
17	Bargainer	Wanda	Wendall	Raven	Black skirt/trousers	Cemetery
18	Guardian	Zenobia	Zebedee	Bloody	Broom	Apothecary
19	Stargazer	Yasmin	Yendell	Hazel	Foul breath	Inn
20	Medium	Jezebel	Jedediah	Clever	Scent of herbs	Stocks/Chained