

CABIN IN THE WOODS

AN ADVENTURE FOR 2ND TO 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS



**AVERN
ALES**

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CABIN IN THE WOODS IS A FIFTH EDITION horror-comedy one-shot adventure for **three to six characters of 2nd to 4th level**, optimized for a party of **four 3rd level characters**. The strange cabin in the Twilriden Wood has been rumored to be haunted for decades. Hunters who've used it as a resting place during their expeditions have repeatedly reported strange sightings in its vicinity, and rumors persist that people have died trying to uncover the cabin's history. Unbeknownst to all, the cabin is actually the careful construction of a powerful archmage working in the service of a dark, ancient god who demands offerings of fear. Can the adventurers brave the horrors of the cabin and find the secret laboratory hidden below its surface? Will they treat with the archmage's assistant who resides inside, or instead punish him for the horrors he has helped inflict upon innocents? This adventure is set near the villages of Orsovo county in the Siothas campaign setting, but can be adapted to any campaign setting featuring dense, dark woods and evil ancient gods.

BACKGROUND

Vebeus Raharad is a powerful archmage and former court wizard for the king of Lusovo. Vebeus long had a fascination with the ancient gods, a fascination which he could not fully indulge while working in the service of the crown, for civilized, well-meaning folk should rightfully have nothing to do with great beings of tremendous dark power. No good comes from the occult. But Vebeus cared more for power and knowledge than he cared for goodness, so he left the service of the king in good standing to secretly pursue his dark obsession. Years later, consultation of an ancient eldritch text led him to a site within the Twilriden Wood where Vebeus was beset by visions of an Old One known as Iav'agna, who told Vebeus that the heart of his brother, Mh'eggad, was buried deep within the earth at the site many thousands of years ago. In tribute to his brother, Iav'agna would promise Vebeus incomprehensible knowledge in power if Vebeus would serve Iav'agna by constructing a shrine on the site that would harvest fear in Mh'eggad's memory. Vebeus agreed, and the shrine was to take the form of the cabin in the woods, luring unsuspecting folk into its depths and then inflicting horrors upon them. With the help of Iav'agna, Vebeus conducted several foul rituals to bind the services of three evil entities to the cabin that would each serve to bring innocents to unfortunate ends. In his hidden cellar workshop below the cabin, Vebeus would monitor the cabin's visitors and ensure that the evil entities did the dark work of Iav'agna by harvesting their fear before ultimately killing their victims.

The cabin has existed for nearly five decades now in the Twilriden Wood. None of the local villagers have

the faintest idea of when it was built or who originally constructed it. Vebeus ensured that it would appear aged and abandoned from the moment it was first built to encourage its exploration. Those who have investigated it have noted its large size and numerous beds, resulting in the common thought amongst the villagers is that it was supposed to be an inn though it never opened for business. Many stories have been concocted about its potential owners. None of them are true.

Luckily for the characters, when they arrive at the cabin, the archmage Vebeus is away on other business. In his place is his much less capable student-turned-assistant named Strosior Zogast. Strosior has been house-sitting the cabin for some weeks now, eagerly awaiting any potential visitors so that he may oversee its dark work for himself. Strosior is a loyal servant of Vebeus and is willing to do anything in his power to avoid disappointing his superior. Should the characters prove resilient against the horrors of the cabin, Strosior might choose to take matters into his own hands.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins as the characters arrive at the cabin in the woods. During their investigation of the cabin, the characters will encounter three strange objects — a locket, a diary, and a silver sword — each of which have been planted by Vebeus to summon spirits bound to the items. After the characters slay the spirits bound to the objects, Vebeus' assistant Strosior will emerge from the workshop below the cabin, desperate and furious that the characters have not been killed yet and worried that his master Vebeus would punish him for his failure. Strosior confronts the characters and attempts to finish the job himself. After the characters deal with Strosior, what they do with the cabin is up to them.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the adventurers might be interested in investigating the cabin in the woods. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

A New Authority. Drogodil Woodmere II has recently inherited the county of Orsovo from his late father, Baron Drogodil Woodmere I. A more active participant in governance than his alcoholic father, Drogodil is interested in cleaning up his realm. Having heard the rumors of this "haunted cabin in the woods," the new baron is looking to hire a party of adventurers to investigate the cabin and deal with any hauntings they may find, promising 400 gold pieces for their troubles.

A Missing Friend. A local hunter connected to a party member's past, or a current friend of the party, has gone missing in the Twilriden Wood in the area of the cabin. All



of the locals suspect the cabin has something to do with the disappearance, and people fear the worst. The party decides to set out for the cabin in the woods in search of the hunter.

Rumors of Treasure. Many believe that the cabin is haunted because a legendary adventurer retired in the area and buried much of his wealth near the cabin. The adventurer passed peacefully after staying in the cabin for a few years and living off of the land, though even in death, the spirit of the adventurer could not bear to be parted from its treasure. It persists in the area to scare off any who might discover what belongs to it. Having heard this story, the adventurers decide to investigate the cabin in the hopes of finding clues that might lead them to the adventurer's treasure.

CABIN GENERAL FEATURES

The cabin in the woods is a single-story cabin of stacked logs with a single stone chimney that emerges from its shingled roof. Railed porches abut the west and south sides of the building, and numerous single-pane fixed windows around the building's perimeter walls fill the cabin with light during the day. The cabin's interior is otherwise unlit, though empty scones on the walls provide an opportunity for interior light. All of the cabin's doors are unlocked. Ceilings in the cabin's common room are twenty feet high, while ceilings in the cabin's cellar and other rooms are eight feet high.

The following locations are keyed to the provided map of the cabin in the woods.

I. FRONT PORCH

A two-seater rocking bench and a weathered picnic table occupy the west and east ends of this spacious front porch, respectively. A pair of double doors are fitted with matching brass knockers resembling the heads of snarling snakes.

The bench and picnic table are mundane and unremarkable. The porch creaks loudly under the weight of characters Medium-sized or larger but otherwise remains structurally sound.

2. COMMON ROOM

The ceiling rises to thick crossbeams at a height of 20 feet in this vast common room. Multiple couches and chairs are organized around a central stone hearth. Two long communal eating tables occupy the north end of the room. Bookshelves line the east wall. A modest spinet piano sits on the west side of the entryway. To the northeast, the room extends into an open-concept kitchen area. Doors exit in all directions.

A thick layer of dust covers everything in this room. The bookshelves in this room hold mundane works of fiction, mostly common fairy tales. The leather couches are worn and patinaed. The hearth is cold and full of ash.

Enchanted Piano. A casting of detect magic reveals an aura of enchantment magic emanating from the piano. The piano is enchanted with a simple spell that causes it to play a brief melody every few minutes before quickly falling silent again. The enchantment was put in place by Vebeus as a red-herring and to induce fear and unease within the cabin's visitors.

Treasure: Crystal Chess Set. A marble chessboard with crystal pieces sits on an end table between two armchairs near the west side of the hearth. The marble board and the crystal pieces are of exquisite craftsmanship; the board is worth 25 gp, and each crystal piece is worth 10 gp. There are 32 pieces in total.

2A. KITCHEN

A U-shaped wooden counter and stove flank the east and south walls, extending outward to form a bartop lined with stools that divides the kitchen area from the adjacent common room. Crates, barrels, and opened cupboards hold cooking and eating utensils as well as dried ingredients such as wheat, flour, and legumes.

Nobody has used this kitchen in years. There is nothing of value here.

Encounter: Swarm of Spiders. Characters searching through the cupboards below the countertop might disturb the

CABIN MAIN FLOOR



CABIN CELLAR



swarm of spiders that lurks within one of the cupboards. The swarm fights for one round before dispersing in all directions.

3. PRIVY

Four open stalls, each fitted with a holed bench above a bucket, occupy most of this room. Against the north wall are three steel wash buckets, each of which is empty.

The initials "P+B" are carved into the wall of the easternmost stall, surrounded by a heart. There is nothing of value here.

4. LOCKET BEDROOM

A bed flanked by end tables, a wardrobe, and a writing desk fill most of this room. Atop the writing desk is a locket of polished silver in the shape of one-half of a broken heart.

The Planted Locket and the Twin Spirits. A character who opens the locket finds that its interior is engraved with the word "friends." The locket is bound to the spirits of the Shimmervale twins, a pair of adolescent twin sisters murdered by Vebeus many years ago. Though the twins would prefer to rest, Vebeus' dark magic binds them to the service of the cabin. The moment the locket is disturbed, the spirits of the Shimmervale twins are summoned, and the characters begin to hear the echoing, spectral voices of the two girls as they argue over which of them will get to suck the life force out of the "latest victim." After 10 rounds, the spirits manifest and attack the party, appearing as two young teenage girls, conjoined at their balding heads with twisted expressions of dark glee on their faces. The twins use the statistics of a **wraith** and a **specter**. They act on separate initiative orders but share the same space and move with each other (e.g. if one twin moves 30 feet on its turn, the other twin comes with it and vice versa). They fight until they are destroyed.

5. GUEST ROOM

A queen-sized bed flanked by end tables, a wardrobe, a rocking chair, and a standing mirror fill most of this room. An iron-banded wooden trunk rests at the foot of the bed, fitted with an iron padlock.

The padlock on the iron trunk is unlocked and the trunk opens easily. There is nothing inside but a thin film of dust.

Trick Mirror. A casting of *detect magic* reveals an aura of illusion magic emanating from this mirror. Characters who look into the mirror see their reflection appear as a rotting corpse. The mirror otherwise functions normally.

6. DIARY BEDROOM

A pair of single beds, a bookshelf, wardrobe, and standing mirror fill most of this room. In front of one of the beds is an iron-banded wooden strongbox. Lying on the floor in the middle of the room is a leather-bound journal tied closed with twine.

The strongbox in this room is empty.

The Planted Diary and the Spirit of the Hunter. A character who opens and reads through the journal finds it to be the diary of a hunter who lived in the region many years ago. Most of the entries are mundane, though the last pages span the course of a few days where the hunter expresses fears that he is being stalked by an unseen force while out on a trip. The diary is bound to the spirit of the hunter, who was slain by Vebeus. Whether a character takes time to skim through the diary or not, touching the book at all summons the spirit of the hunter. Any non-magical light in the cabin is immediately extinguished and its walls and floors begin to creak as if the entire cabin was shaking in the wind. After 15 rounds, the spirit of the hunter emerges from the surrounding wood to arrive at the cabin, gradually breaking through any barricaded doors if necessary to reach the characters and attack. The spirit appears as a towering, fleshy zombie dressed in hunting gear and carrying a large cleaver. It uses **flesh golem** statistics, though it has 13 AC and it makes attacks with its cleaver, dealing slashing instead of bludgeoning damage. When the hunter's spirit falls to 0 hit points, its body bursts into flames and burns quickly to nothing, leaving no ash behind.

7A, B. BUNKS

Each of these rooms contains wardrobes, a writing desk, and four sets of bunk beds. Beneath each bunk bed is an iron-banded wooden strongbox.

Treasure: Necklace. All of the strongboxes are unlocked, and all are empty except for one, which contains a slightly-dirtied set of commoner's clothes as well as a gold necklace bearing the symbol of the goddess of the harvest, worth 25 gp. The belongings were left by a previous victim of the cabin and Vebeus forgot to clear their belongings.

CI. CELLAR DOOR

These doubled cellar doors are heavily chipped and bear deep scratch marks. A crossbeam locking mechanism has been smashed apart.

The appearance of these doors has been staged by Vebeus to imply an attack of some sort. Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher can spot a smashed iron padlock lying in the grass just a few feet from the doors. A character who examines the doors and makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check can determine that the

CABIN WORKSHOP



scratch marks are consistent with a large, clawed creature such as an owlbear or perhaps a werewolf. The cellar doors open easily, revealing a dark wooden staircase below.

C2. MAIN CELLAR

The air in this cellar is thick with dust and its walls and corners festooned with cobwebs. A few rotting shelving units appear to hold rusted tools and abandoned hunting gear. In the middle of the room, an armored skeletal corpse lies face-up and clutches a sword of untarnished silver. A corridor leading to more rooms extends to the west.

The Planted Sword and the Werewolf Spirit. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check of the corpse finds evidence of wounds consistent with the marks made on the cellar doors above. Touching the corpse or the sword in any way, however, summons the werewolf spirit bound to the blade by Vebeus. Moments after a character interacts with the body, a blood-chilling howl can be heard from the forest surrounding the cabin. After 15 rounds, the werewolf spirit will arrive at the cabin to hunt the party, doing whatever it can to break down any barricaded doors or smash through any available windows. The werewolf spirit fights until it is destroyed. It uses **werewolf** statistics, though it has AC 14, 100 hit points, and makes three attacks with its multi-attack instead of two. When the werewolf spirit falls to 0 hit points, its body bursts into flames and burns quickly to nothing, leaving no ash behind.

Hidden Trapdoor. A casting of detect magic reveals a powerful aura of illusion magic emanating from the floor between two shelving units near the southeast corner of this room. Vebeus has cast a modified hallucinatory terrain

spell to conceal the trapdoor leading to the hidden workshop below the cabin. Characters can make a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) spell to disbelieve the illusion, which will reveal the vague, superimposed image of the trapdoor on the illusion. The trapdoor itself is protected by a powerful arcane lock spell that can be dispelled with dispel magic (DC 20).



C3. ADJACENT ROOMS

The other rooms in the cellar contain little other than rotting scraps of wood, fallen shelves, and broken pieces of furniture. There is nothing of value to be found here.

STROSIOR'S APPEARANCE

Assuming the characters have interacted with all the spirits of the cabin and have not found their own way inside the cabin's secret workshop, Strosior (a mage), who has been observing them from below with scrying magic, becomes frustrated enough to confront the party himself. He barges through the secret door in the cabin's cellar and engages the characters in combat as soon as he can, all the while shouting his frustrations: "You're supposed to be dead," "The Dark Lord cannot stand for this," and "Vebeus will have my head." Strosior fights until reduced to 0 hit points unless the characters can engage him in conversation with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Strosior knows the following information, which he may share any or all of with the characters depending on the circumstances:

- The entire cabin was built as a shrine of offering to the old god named Mh'eggad, who feasts on fear.
- The diary, sword, and locket each bind spirits to the cabin that feast on unwary visitors.
- The cabin was created by the great archmage Vebeus, who is currently away visiting the lower planes.
- Vebeus and Strosior can watch the cabin's occupants from a hidden workshop below using scrying magic.
- If Mh'eggad does not continue to receive offerings or the cabin is destroyed, he will wreak havoc on the land (this is untrue, though Strosior believes it). The cabin therefore must remain in operation for the good of the realm.
- If the characters manage to survive and escape the cabin on Strosior's watch, Vebeus will punish him severely when he returns.
- The door to the facility below is hidden in the cellar by illusion magic.
- A secret door in the office below the cellar provides access to the materials room and workshop.

After Strosior confronts the party, the hidden door in the cellar is revealed as the illusion magic concealing it temporarily fades.

W1. OFFICE

The walls of this room are lined with shelves stocked with books, vials of strange liquids, spell components, herbs, and other miscellanies. Against the south wall is a large writing desk big enough for two people that is covered in notes, documents, and stationery supplies.

Vebeus and Strosior detail their processes and record their findings in this room.

Documents. The documents at the desk are the arcane and occult research of Vebeus. A character who spends some time reviewing the documents can learn the following information about Vebeus and the cabin:

- The spirits bound to the cabin were originally slain by Vebeus himself.
- The spirits cannot be permanently destroyed while bound to the cabin. Should a spirit be defeated, it manifests again after the next full moon.
- Vebeus believes that at least one sacrifice every four months is the "minimum viable amount" to avoid Mh'eggad's wrath.

Treasure: Potions. Two potions of greater healing, a potion of hill giant strength, and a potion of invisibility can be found amongst the vials in this room.

Secret Door. A switch in one of the cupboards on the west wall opens a secret door to the materials room (area W2) beyond. The switch can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the characters have learned about the secret door from Strosior, they can find the switch without an ability check.

W2. TROPHY ROOM

Shelves in this room hold surgical tools and various body parts suspended in liquids. A door exits to the south.

Vebeus takes trophies from the corpses of his victims and keeps them on display in this room for his own pleasure. Also stored in this room are trophies unrelated to the cabin that Vebeus has collected during his adventures, such as the skull of a basilisk, the brain of a stone giant, and the hand of a hag.

Treasure: Wand. Atop one of the shelves in this room is a *wand of secrets*.

W3. WORKSHOP

This spacious room is filled with a pair of surgical tables, a chair fitted with straps, and a large furnace in the south wall. A body covered in a white sheet lies on a wheeled gurney beside the furnace. Glowing cables run from a gem-encrusted control panel against the east wall towards four braziers that glow with bright blue flame.

Vebeus occasionally experiments on the bodies of his victims before incinerating them in the furnace in this room, which vents out of an extended tunnel that stretches for a half-mile away from the cabin.

Foul Magi-tech. A casting of detect magic reveals strong auras of enchantment and necromantic magic emanating from the control panel, cables, and braziers in this room. A character who makes a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check can determine that through a complex

magi-tech system, the control panel powers the braziers, which collect ambient fear in the vicinity of the cabin and concentrate it into a raw essence that is offered to Mh'eggad. The control panel and braziers have AC 15 and 27 hit points each. Their magic can be dispelled with a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 20) on each component. Destroying the components also negates their effects, though such variable measures cause the magic to run haywire; each component that is destroyed has a 50% chance of summoning an evil spirit tied to the cabin (a **wraith**) that attacks the party and fights until it is destroyed.

Gurney Body. If the characters are at the cabin because of the "A Missing Friend" hook, the body on the gurney is the one they are searching for. Otherwise, the body is a human male, seemingly in his mid-thirties and covered in deep gash wounds. It has been stripped naked in preparation for cremation.

Treasure: Control Panel Gems. There are 250 gp worth of small gems encrusted into the surface of the control panel which are essential for its operation. These gems can be removed with a few minutes of work and a set of thieves' tools or similar instruments.

AFTERMATH

In truth, Vebeus has been killed while visiting the Hells, though Strosior nor the characters have no obvious way of knowing this. As a result, if Strosior is dealt with, the characters are highly unlikely to face any long-term consequences for their actions if they, for example, decide to destroy the cabin. Any items previously belonging to spirits bound by Vebeus have their curses lifted and become mundane magical items if taken a distance of at least 1 mile from the cabin. The spirits can also be freed from their bond to the cabin if the cabin is destroyed.

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