

CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE PRIEST'S CABIN



**CLASSIC MONSTERS
ENCOUNTERS**

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MEDIUM**

CASTLES & CRUSADES®

THE PRIEST'S CABIN

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THE PRIEST'S CABIN

As the party walks along the old road from this town to that city, a small church is seen a few hundred feet to the south. As the sun seems to be sinking for the day, and the smell of rain hangs heavy in the air, the old church looks rather inviting. A few tombstones dot the front of the shack and one may glimpse a garden behind. A light shines from under the door and smoke bellows from the chimney. Atop the building, a weathervane creaks as the wind blows it about. It is this weathervane that gives away the purpose of the shack, for it is in the shape of the holy symbol of a local agriculture god worshiped by the farmers of this land. As the rain begins to fall, the door opens and a figure steps out. It waves its hand and, even at this distance, it is obvious it is beckoning the party inside.

The creature in the shack is a huecuva. The shack did indeed once house a priest of the faith, but the undead now living here murdered him a few days ago and buried the body in the garden out back. Once it is sure the party is intent on entering the shack, it will use its polymorph ability and turn into a small, black crow. It will then fly into a cage of its own making. The huecuva has carried this cage for years and uses it while in its mundane form. The cage is magicked to hide the alignment of anything within it. If a detect alignment spell is cast upon the crow, it will reveal it as neutral. Anything placed in the cage will reveal a neutral alignment as well, though it is quite small. When the party enters, the shack will be empty save the crow. The huecuva is loath to leave the cage and will not do so unless forced. If someone reaches in in an attempt to grab it, the huecuva will peck at the person (which are the actions of a normal crow in this instance).



The party finds the shack sparsely furnished, with two small cots in the back, a table in the center and a fireplace with a pot in the smoldering ashes. A wooden holy symbol hangs on the wall and various mundane holy items (books, prayer beads, fetishes, etc.) are strewn about. Aside from these items, and a back door to the garden, nothing of importance is visible. It appears that whoever waved them inside has vanished.

Outside, the rain has begun in earnest. The crackle of lightning followed by bellowing thunder shakes the old building and water begins to leak near the window. It looks like it will weather the storm, however, and the beds look warm and inviting. If the party goes out the back door, they are greeted by a nice sized garden, tended to and apparently yielding a tidy harvest. It is dark and stormy, so not much is visible in detail. One thing that the party can make out in the lightning is a scarecrow guarding the garden from varmints.

The scarecrow is a malevolent beast summoned by the huecuva. In all appearances, it looks to be just a regular scarecrow. A detect magic or detect alignment (evil) will reveal it is more than it appears, however. The scarecrow will not attack unless the party ascertains its true identity, tries to destroy it (i.e. burning it) or attempts to dig up the body of the old priest.

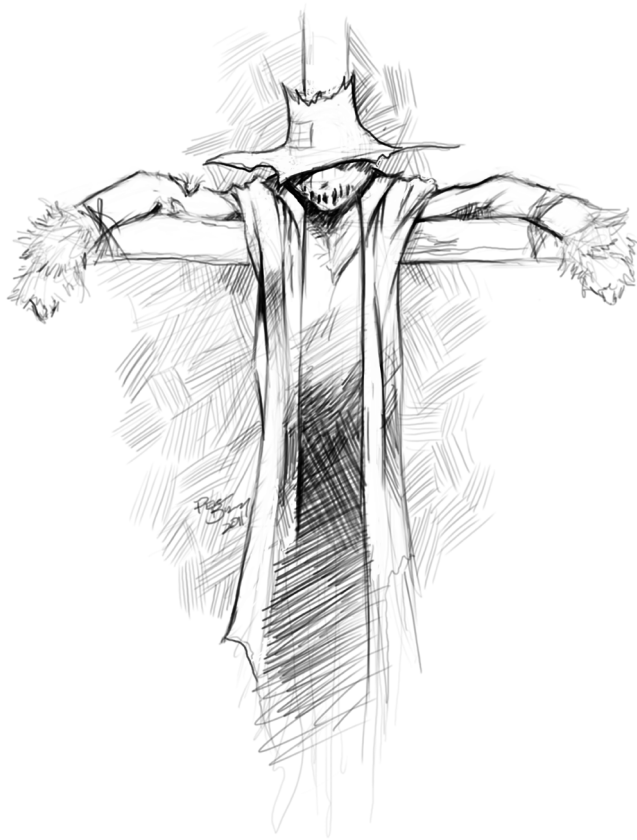
If the party waits inside and rides out the storm, the huecuva, in the guise of the crow, will listen and use its telepathy to gently probe the mind of one party member. The CK can randomly choose a character or pick one of his choosing. The huecuva has no preference.

In the morning, as the party is eating breakfast or making to leave, the crow will fly from the cage and alight somewhere in the room. It will then use its polymorph ability and attempt to murder its victim using its illusionary powers. Once killed, the huecuva will again polymorph into a crow and fly away.

HUECUVA (*This extraordinary undead creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 20, AC 17. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a touch attack that causes 1d6 damage. Against a chosen victim, the creature appears as an illusion of its greatest fear, exactly mimicking the spell phantasmal killer.*)

In the morning the rain will have let up and the garden can be searched. Anyone actively searching should roll a wisdom check (CL – 4) to discover a pile of newly tilled soil in the shape of a grave. Digging here will reveal the body of the priest that lived here, buried about three feet below. At this, the scarecrow (if still alive) will leap from its stand and attack.

Buried with the priest, one will find his personal treasure. Strapped to his side is a bone-hilt dagger with a blade of gold known as Varunastra. The weapon will only let itself be known to a cleric, druid or paladin. Others will never know the true identity of the item.



SCARECROW (*This aberration creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 23 each, AC 14. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a touch attack that causes ability drain. Each successful attack does 1d6 damage and drains one point of constitution. If a victim is reduced to 0 constitution they are slain.*)

Varunastra: Only exceptionally holy and pious individuals are granted access to the powerful weapons known collectively as Varunastra. When first granted, the weapon appears as a small knife with a hilt of bone and a blade of gold. In this form, it is a +2 weapon that does 1d3 damage. Once wielded by the chosen recipient for a week, he will learn the true power. In combat, the wielder can wish the weapon to change form into any weapon he can desire and it will twist and grow into the desired form. No matter the weapon, the wielder can use it with no penalty. The damage for the weapon is that listed in the **Player's Handbook** plus an additional 1d4. Aside from the extra damage, the new weapon is of the +2 variety. The weapon can be ranged or melee and is limited only by the imagination of the wielder (or a mean CK). Regardless of weapon, it will always be fashioned of bone and gold.

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