

SHADOW
SWORD &
SPELL

THE STEW

JORJO



THE STEW

**ROGUE
GAMES**

CHICAGO & TORONTO

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1

Background

Five hundred years ago there lived a powerful woman named Astrid Ladengast. Residing in her tower located high atop the Spineback Mountains' southern slopes, Astrid ruled the region known as the Brass Pass. Her legend grew powerful with each advancing year. According to some of the legends told about her, Astrid was capable of destroying cities with a wave of her hand. Some claimed she fought two wyrms, and that she even survived a battle with a demon. As to the veracity of these legends, the truth is not known.

What is known is that Astrid lived in a tower the location of which no one quite knew. From here, she gathered ill-gotten gains to fund her research into the dark arts. Her wealth was legendary, and she was said to have had a love for items of great beauty.

At the apex of her power, Astrid mysteriously disappeared. It is speculated that she died in an explosion during one of her experiments, but some contend that she met her doom summoning a demon.

The truth about Astrid's life and death revolves around the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift*. These men were her bodyguards, but not always her devoted servants. When Astrid disappeared it was the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* who were at the center of a foul plot.



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Swearing oaths of undying loyalty, the group's duty was to protect not only Astrid but her plans as well. As the operation grew in size, new, less devoted members were sworn into the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* to expedite the accumulation of wealth. It was this group of scoundrels who hatched the plot to murder Astrid so that they could lay claim to her wealth. The original members of *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* caught wind of this, and moved to stop it.

While late in preventing Astrid's murder, these members did manage to avenge her and kill the culprits. In the years following the murder, the members' wavering loyalty to their oaths saw the beginning of the abandonment of their watch over Astrid's treasure.

As time passed, the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* dwindled along with the treasure and eventually the tower became an empty ruin. One hundred years ago, settlers arrived in the area and began building the village of Flatrock.

Hunters and shepherds exploring upper alpine pastures discovered a set of ancient ruins. Seeing the available stone, the would-be villagers plundered the ruins for building material for the village down in the lower valley. During one of these plundering sessions, the remains of a collapsing wall toppled, killing three people. This event caused many to swear the ruins were haunted and led them to avoid the ruins altogether.

As to the origins of the ruins, to this day no one knows their true beginnings. What is known is that the ruins have always been there, and strange markings are found on most of the surviving walls. Occasionally a secret chamber is found, containing artifacts from an earlier age. Those visiting the ruins claim they radiate evil, and some feel the ruins are a small part of a much larger complex. Still, the reputation of the ruins stops most from exploring them further, and eventually attracted the attention of two people. One of them was Marcel Moreau.

Arriving in Flatrock three years ago, Marcel claimed to be a scholar who was interested in studying the ruins. The villagers warned him the area was haunted, but Marcel laughed the stories



off as superstitions. In truth, Marcel was a wizard and a practitioner of the dark arts.

Discovering old records in his native Bluff, he learned of a sorceress by the name of Astrid Ladengast whose demonic cat-like servants robbed and devoured merchants traveling to the City States of Dôärn. Yearning to find her tower and unlock its secrets, he began researching her further. Finally Marcel discovered her tower was located northwest of present day Flatrock, deep in the northern reaches of the Vintage. Soon he was seen traveling along mountain trails.

Some swore that they saw a strange shadowy shape trailing in Marcel's wake and a small clay figure mysteriously walking alongside him. Some claim that they saw nothing out of the ordinary when Marcel went up into the mountains. For this was the last time any would see Marcel Moreau again.

The reason for his disappearance, and many more like it, is the maniacal hunter Franz Krunz and his ragtag band of cannibalistic trappers and shepherds. Arriving in Flatrock nine months ago, Franz's group relocated here after their dark practices and worship of Caim became open knowledge in the village of Grensdorf. In their wanderings, they discovered the ruins of Astrid's tower and decided it would be an ideal location to honor their goddess. Offering his services to Flatrock as a professional hunter, Franz was warmly welcomed by the villagers. The reason for their warm welcome was due to the gruesome injuries that the village's former hunter, Adolph Hildenbrandt, had suffered.

Adolph appeared in the village one morning with both of his hands missing, and his throat gruesomely slashed. Near death, Adolph was nursed back to health and managed to survive, but his wounds have left him mentally shattered and physically unable to speak.

Unknown to the village, Adolph received his wounds at the hands of Franz and his worshipers. Adolph was abducted while hunting in the upper pastures, and was to serve as the main course for a feast honoring Caim. Managing to escape, Adolph suffered at the hands of his captors before doing so. Thinking that a foul monster was loose in the area, the villagers asked



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Franz and his men to find it and slay it. Unfortunately, the hunters were unable to find any evidence of the monster.

Since this time, shepherds, trappers and hunters have gradually disappeared one by one in Flatrock's upper pastures. Others have spent increasing time in the wilderness vaguely stating they must help Franz "gather meat." All the while, Franz and his men continue to provide meat for the village and look into the disappearances. Now, even more shocking, Franz stopped coming to the village about a month ago. The reason for this is that Franz has begun to undergo a transformation. The years of cannibalism and his eating of the dead have begun to transform him into one of Caim's favored. His appearance is such that the residents of Flatrock would know that Franz is not the nice man he appears to be. He now sends one of his hunters to the village to buy supplies and to sell freshly butchered meat. The sudden reclusiveness of Franz has prompted Hannes Sagebrecht, the local priest of Sabrael, to venture forth into the upper pastures to meet with Franz. It has been three weeks since Hannes left, and he has yet to return.

Meanwhile, in the city of Gravina, the wizard Gerd Ladengast was busily organizing a collection of family papers. Hailing from a long line of wizards, Gerd had no clue of his legendary ancestor. While going through the papers he discovered his relationship to the famous Astrid. Tracing his family tree, he learned that she was a distant cousin on his father's side. Questioning his father, Gerd learned that he was indeed related to Astrid, and that no one had any knowledge about her demise, let alone her life. Gerd, who loved challenges, spent the next few years searching through his family papers and records for any information he could find out about her.

It was during the winter months that Gerd discovered an ancient journal. While visiting his parent's villa, he was in his father's library, when the book literally fell on his head. Glancing at it, Gerd discovered that a relative had written about visiting Astrid in her tower. Though the journal contained no map, the detailed entries provided enough information that the location could be pinpointed. Ecstatic that his search was near



completion, Gerd bid his family farewell and raced to Crossroads where his mercenary company *Faust der Ravens* was wintering.

Arriving two weeks later, Gerd told his company of his research, and revealed his desire to locate the tower. His companions were underwhelmed by the news, and the prospects of looking for a dusty tower bored them. In the end, Gerd decided to find his own way to the tower and announced to his company that he was taking a year's sabbatical. Gerd and his family are wealthy, and a year's wages would not hurt him too much. Besides, once he found the tower, he would have enough wealth to enable his early retirement.

Gerd believes Astrid was a powerful sorceress, but he does not know the truth. Gerd's record of his distant cousin, unbeknownst to him, is based upon the recounting of an elderly minstrel who looked to turn a Moon or two with a story he could match with their name. Though Astrid has become a legend, few accurate details of her life can be found. Gerd's work has uncovered much, but with the access to Astrid's papers and journals, Gerd hopes to uncover much more. While the truth may disappoint Gerd, he currently believes he will be able to discover untold magic and possibly a forbidden formula or two.

Gerd loves magic; in fact he is obsessed with it. He will do whatever it takes to lay his hands upon anything magical in nature, especially anything magical that has a direct link to the Ladengast name. However, no one ever said such persistence would come without a suitable degree of badgering. While he trusts his mercenary company and realizes that the position he has put his hirelings in is one he has experienced countless times before, he cannot help but stress again and again the important nature of recovering these priceless family heirlooms from such a historic site as the Ladengast family tower. When he sees the current state of said tower, the players characters may see Gerd change his tune.

Beyond this, Gerd is somewhat of a nuisance when traveling over rough ground such as a goat trail. While he has experience, no one ever said that such experience has clicked with Gerd. He may very well be the most likely person to fall and twist an ankle



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or sprain his wrist when climbing through the pastures. He pays well, and the player characters may feel obligated to keep their mouths shut.

Any sort of monetary sum is not important to Gerd. It is the books and family papers he is after. The player characters can even claim the works of art in the tower as far as Gerd is concerned (once he sees the rundown state of the tower). Be sure to play Gerd as an intrepid adventurer who does not quite have the physical presence to overcome the forces of nature. He has an overbearing sense of family history that may be annoying, but knows his way around the battlefield, and understands the rigors of overland travel.

Searching for his ancestor's tower has been Gerd's life long ambition. For the past two years the family genealogy has consumed him, and he has built up in his mind many assumptions about Astrid. He has traced any stories and legends he has found, and he feels that Astrid was the most powerful wizard to ever live. Sadly, the truth about Astrid will shatter Gerd.

Astrid was nothing more than a petty wizard who formed her own group of highwaymen. The *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* were feared in the Brass Pass region, and were a nuisance to many travelers and merchants. Because Astrid knew a number of minor spells, many thought she was more powerful than she was. Astrid's tower was nothing more than an abandoned ruin she found. The ruins were fixed up, and she used it as a hideout for herself and her men.

Astrid's death was due to many of the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* growing tired of taking orders from a woman. As new members joined, they rankled at taking orders, and this bred disloyalty. Plotting behind her back, a small group spearheaded a coup against her. Though unsuccessful, the group managed to kill Astrid and a number of her loyal followers. Those surviving attempted to keep the *Shwärzaus Durchstreift* active, but within a few years, the group died out and disbanded due to attrition.

The power of Astrid is nothing more than a myth, and it is one that Gerd has bought into completely. He has visions of a tower



full of monetary and magical riches. When he sees the actual state the tower is in, it will devastate him. Gerd is pompous beyond belief, and feels that the tower is an omen portending his ascension to greatness.

However, things have not been going well in Flatrock. Franz's hunters' pursuit of trappers and shepherds is taking its toll. The origins of these attacks are believed to lie with an unusually active group of mountain cats. Others whisper that the no-good traveler Marcel must have stirred something up in the ruins of the upper pastures. Some even fear Franz's disappearance is actually a cover, and that the good priest is secretly a thrall to some foul god. In truth, Franz has reached a state of ghoulishness that prevents him from encountering any outside of his court of madmen. He wears a dead skin mask at all times (ironically, it is Marcel's face), and seeks just one more blood sacrifice to complete his transformation. His followers seek more meat, and are contemplating taking action closer to the village, as no one will risk a trip alone to the upper pastures any longer. It will be at this point when Gerd and a party of wayward travelers descend on the tiny village.

A NOTE ON THE NPCs

Some of the NPCs described in this adventure might have Sanity and Vitality stats that do not conform to how the values are calculated per **SHADOW, SWORD & SPELL: BASIC**. This is done purposely, and reflects the fact that some of the experiences the NPCs have had have left their mark on them.



2

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

Read or summarize the following to the players:

It was only a few weeks ago that you were sitting at a table in a lower class tavern in Gravina, down to your last coins and wondering how you were going to pay the landlord for the meal, let alone sleeping space tonight. It was while you discussed the joys of sharing a stable with a horse that you were approached by a young man, clearly well-to-do and out of his place in a dive such as this, with an offer of work. His obviously full purse caught your eyes, so you smiled and listened politely, hoping his money would soon become yours.

And so the young man, Gerd Ladengast, told you a fantastic story about a glorious ancestor, a wielder of magic, like himself. (Note to the GM: Feel free to embellish Astrid's tale as you need to reflect Gerd's fantasies.) At first you thought him mad or delusional, but the details he revealed and the depth of his research lead you to think he was on to something. And when he came to the end and not only offered you 500 silver Moons, but all the gold and art treasures in her tower, reserving only her books, papers, and any magical items to himself, you were convinced that Uriel himself had smiled upon you. Deciding not to rob your new benefactor, you instead accepted his offer.



Two weeks later, you find yourself traveling in Gerd's service through the foothills of the Spine Back Mountains, northwest along the Brass Pass. Your destination is the village of Flatrock, where you will begin the search for Gerd's "legacy," as he likes to call it. The journey so far has been uneventful, and might have been pleasant if it were not that Gerd has turned out to be the most annoying person you have ever had the misfortune to know.

The wizard is not suited to life on the road, and his complaints about the heat, the bugs, the dust, the bumpiness of the road... Well, you get the point. To make matters worse, Gerd is not friendly, and views you simply as hired help, sticking strictly to the terms of your contract. Only the prospect of a fortune at the end keeps you from dumping him in a ditch, somewhere.

Though the days have been nice, it is early summer and the weather can be quite changeable. One day it will be hot, the next you will be buffeted with cold mountain rain.

Finally, as you reach the crest of a ridge, you see below you a sheltered valley. The road you follow leads down into the valley, where a small trail splits off from it to head to a large wooden bridge spanning the Salmon Scale river, which flows north to south. North of the bridge lies a mill with a waterwheel, while on the other side of the river you see a small town surrounded by a wooden palisade, with an empty stockyard to the south. It is late afternoon, and Flatrock lies before you.

If the characters own their mounts, they will be riding them. Player characters not owning their mounts have had normal mounts provided for them by Ladengast. Such is Gerd's hubris about the vast fortune he is about to discover; these horses are given to the player characters free of charge.

As for Gerd Ladengast, he is less powerful than he has let on, and is a bit deranged due to his obsession with his family legacy. Gerd is arrogant, as well as pushy when it comes to getting things his way. To say he lacks decorum, would be an understatement.



The Contract

The PCs have taken service as mercenaries in the employ of Gerd Ladengast. As their characters live in this world, the players will know the following terms.

Duties:

Gerd is their “Captain,” and they are expected to obey his reasonable orders, protect him from harm, and fight as he directs. Failure to do any of this can lead to dismissal, forfeiture of fees, and the spread of a bad reputation among prospective employers. Gross dereliction can even lead to suit in civil court, with the employer seeking damages. Should the employer be crippled, maimed, or die while under the mercenaries’ protection, they might again face suit in court or even a prosecution by grieving relatives for wrongful death.

Compensation:

In return, the mercenaries receive the agreed fee (see above), plus a riding horse for each for as long as the mercenaries are in the employer’s service. In return for their service, the employer is expected to treat the mercenaries fairly and pay their room and board and any reasonable medical and equipment expenses. Failure on his part to meet the terms void the contract and leave him liable to suit in court.

GERD LADERGAST

Brawn 4, Quickness 5, Toughness 3, Wits 12, Will 11

Vitality 35, Resolve 55, Sanity 35

Skills: Lore [+13], Magic—Ball [+13] and Healing [+13], Study [+13], Resist [+12]

Disorders: Nightmares, Delusions of Grandeur, Obsession—Family History

Gear: Typical Traveling Gear, Dagger [DV 2(35) R 10/20/30, RoF 2/1], and Short Sword [DV 6(80), P +1]



3

WELCOME TO FLATROCK

As you reach the top of a hill you see below you a sheltered valley. The road you follow leads down into the valley, and splitting off from it is a small trail leading to a large wooden bridge spanning a river flowing north to south. North of the bridge and nestled on the riverbank, a water wheel slowly turns, moving the grindstone inside the mill.

A few yards past the bridge, a wooden wall some fifteen feet in height surrounds a small village. A single gate stands open, allowing access to the village. South of the village lies the stockyards, which are currently empty. Near the stockyards, and on the bank of the river, a wool mill stands, its water wheel slowly being rotated by the current of the river.

Flatrock is a small hamlet with a population of just over 100. Most of those working and living in Flatrock are either shepherds or hunters. Nestled at the base of the Spineback Mountains, Flatrock is located fifty miles west of Crystal Pass. The high mountain pastures here are ideal for raising sheep, and the wool this area produces is some of the best found in The Merchant League. The village dates back some one hundred years, and has stayed relatively unchanged since its founding.



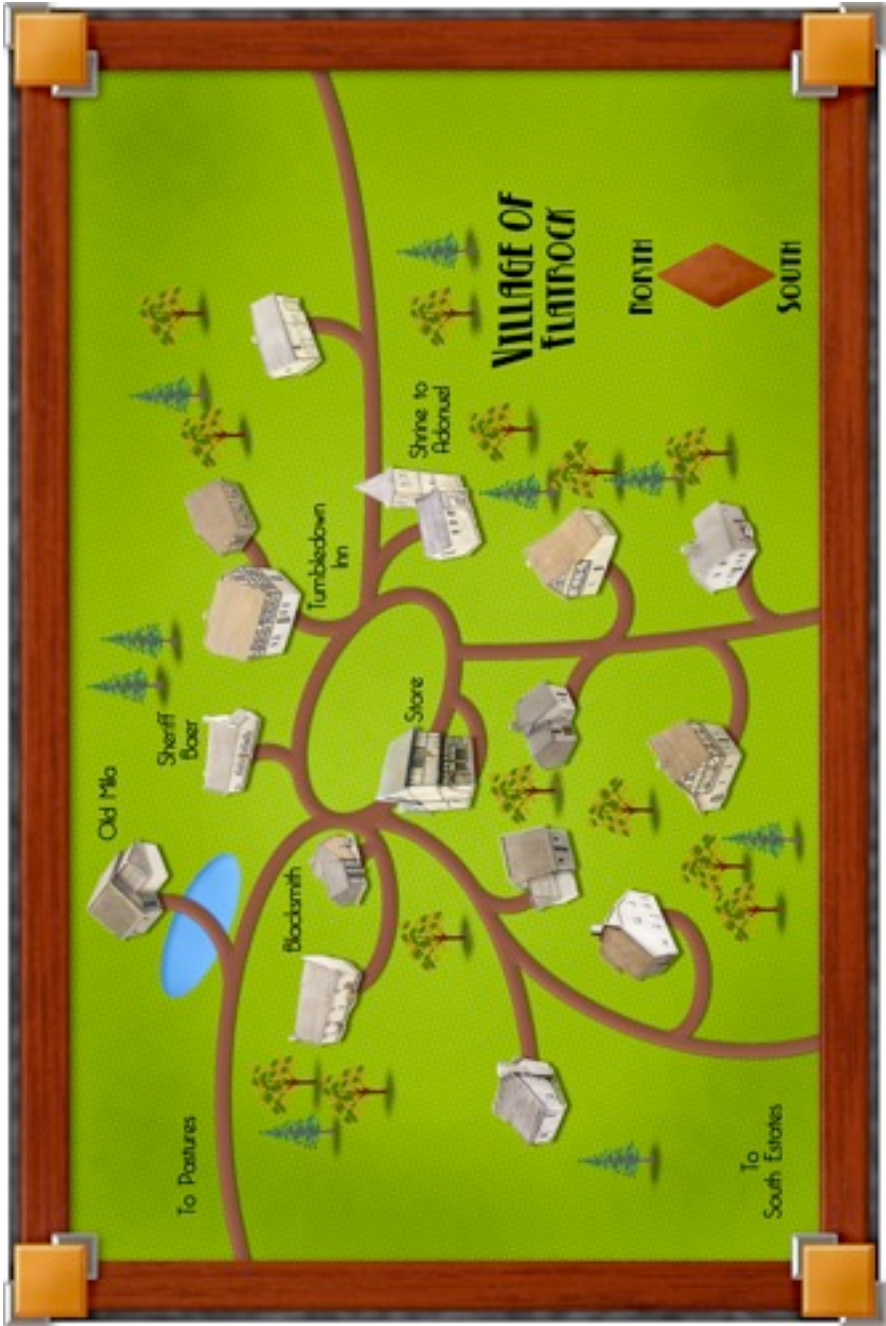
HISTORY OF FLATROCK

Founded 100 years ago when a group of hunters were looking for a place to set up winter quarters, Flatrock is located in the high pastures of the Spineback Mountains' southern slopes. The hunters who came here soon found herdsmen coming to the area to raise their flocks. The remoteness of the hamlet has done much to limit its growth, and its current population has stayed steady for the past twenty years. Flatrock is a simple community, and most make their living here through the wool industry, either as shepherds for the vast sheep flocks, or working in the wool mill located on the Wine River.

The government of the hamlet consists of a collection of elders who are nominated to the post by the residents. The Elders take a hands off approach to much of the running of the hamlet, and they mainly interest themselves in setting the price for wool, and overseeing which flock can graze where. Protecting the hamlet is a sheriff, who is helped by three assistants. In times of crisis the hamlet can muster about twenty hunters.

Flatrock is a peaceful, quiet place, where change comes rarely. The people are honest and friendly, but leery of strangers.

WELCOME TO FLATROCK



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It is late afternoon when the characters arrive in the village, and a lot of activity can be seen near the center of the hamlet. As the characters ride into the village, a sense of not being welcome is hard to ignore. An Empathy Test check has the characters feel as if the villagers are scared of them.

The characters can see a lot of people coming to and going from a medium size, two-story stone building. This building is called Tumbledown; it is the hamlet's inn, and the local gathering place for the villagers. Entering Tumbledown's spacious and dimly lit common room, a massive stone fireplace that lies along the west wall is hard to miss. The walls are covered with numerous bear, boar, and deer heads, whose eyes seem to follow anyone passing them. The room has the feel of a hunting lodge, and the food offered consists of mutton and ale. The inn is run by Didier la Fort, and rooms are easily obtained for a fair price (8 SC for a private room, 6 SC for a double room, 3 SC for sleeping in the common room), but meals are not included. There is a pot of stew on the fire, and the characters can help themselves for a cost of 20 CC. The stew gives off a mouth-watering smell, and those tasting it find the meat to be the sweetest they have ever tasted. (The Gamemaster should keep track of which characters ate the stew. Those who did are in for a surprise).



DIJDER LA FORT

Brawn 5, Quickness 11, Toughness 5, Wits 7, Will 7

Vitality 20, Resolve 65, Sanity 65

Skills: Brawl—Grappling [+7/+10], Empathy [+10], Streetwise [+12]

Gear: Loose fitting clothing, Apron, Club [DV 2(40)] (under the bar), 100 Suns, 330 Thumbs (in a locked box under the bar).

Any characters wanting to have something other than stew for dinner find that the menu has a wide selection of game, as well as mutton, river trout, and a selection of roasted root vegetables, all of which are cooked in the small kitchen found at the back of the common room. The menu is heavy on meat and game, and this is due to the community's location, and the availability of it.

A meal costs anywhere from 20 CC (for the stew) to 1 SC (for half a loin of mutton). Bread is available as well, and it tends to be hearty, full of oats, and very chewy (1 CC for a loaf, free if you buy the stew). As far as drinks go, Didier's bar is meager, and other than ale (5 SC for a tankard), there is but some cheap wine (2 SC for a glass) as well as gin (6 CC for a shot glass) and whiskey (2 SC for a mug). A warmed spice apple cider is also available, and is surprisingly very good and contains mint (3 SC for a mug).

Gamemaster's Note: Make sure to take note of which characters ate the stew. This is important at the end of the adventure and the surprise in store for said characters.

Didier is normally quick to welcome visitors, but he is currently busy talking to two rugged looking men. A successful Observe Test has the characters notice the men carry packages wrapped in a stained cloth tied with twine. For each additional successful Observe Test the characters notice one of the following:

- ☑ One of the men wears an extremely supple, nicely cured pair of leather pants.
- ☑ The other man seems incredibly uncomfortable, especially for being a hunter.
- ☑ Both hunters sweat profusely and constantly lick their lips.

Characters watching this scene, or specifically indicating they have an interest, see Didier and a young boy carry five packages to the kitchen area. Once done, Didier completes the transaction in candles, wine, and a small amount of coin. The men leave, not seemingly all that friendly as they fail to make eye contact with anyone. Characters watching them leave see them head off into the mountains, odd even at this late hour. Once his business is complete, Didier is happy to collect the characters' money and will point them to a meal and bed.

It is possible that the characters will grow suspicious of the hunters and elect to follow them out of the inn. Gerd, who is more interested in the discovery of his ruins, looks down on the characters for doing so, reminding them of their obligations. Characters still insisting on doing this can follow the hunters outside, and will notice that they are leaving the hamlet. Once outside the wooden palisade, they follow a goat trail north into the mountains. The hunters seem very at ease with their route, and notice the characters on a successful Observe check (the Target Number is the characters' Stealth



Test). Keep in mind that there is very little for the characters to hide behind, and that hiding from the hunters is an extremely difficult prospect. Noticing the characters, the hunters will stop and confront them with questions about why they are following them and worse, accusations that the characters plan on attacking and robbing them.

Characters still insisting on investigating the hunters will soon find themselves in a fight with them. The fighting attracts the attention of the sheriff and his men, who come running in four rounds to see what the commotion is. Since the characters are outsiders, and the residents of Flatrock favor the hunters, the hunters quickly spin a tale that the characters attacked them. The characters taking part in the attack find themselves under arrest, and locked up for the night in jail.

HUNTERS

Brawn 8, Quickness 11, Toughness 6,
Wits 7, Will 7

Vitality 35, Resolve 35, Sanity 10

Skills: Archery [+15], Melee [+10],
Observe [+9], Stealth—Camouflage
[+13/+17], Track [+10]

Disorders: Obsession—Human Flesh

Gear: Shortbow [R 50/100/150, RoF
2/1], 12 Arrows [DV 3(60)], Short Sword
[DV 6(80), P +1], 3 Knives [DV 2(35)],
Leather Armor [AV 20].

The next day, Gerd arrives to tell the sheriff that he has nothing to do with the arrested characters, and that he is content to let the hamlet decide how to proceed and determine their fate. What happens next is up to the Gamemaster, but the end result is that the hamlet decides to keep the characters in jail for a few days.

For player characters who did not follow the hunters, they can ask Didier about them, and he gushes about how nice they are, and about the fine meat they provide to not only the inn, but the hamlet as well. Didier mentions the hunters are a small group that makes their home up in the mountains, and that they are associated with the fine fellow known as Franz Krunch. Didier states that Franz and his hunters are great people who have done a good job of keeping the hamlet safe.

The night is quiet and the major topic of conversation concerns the missing people. The characters are able to overhear (successful Wits Tests) the villagers talking about the strange happenings in the village. If their curiosity gets the better of them and the characters ask about this, they must succeed at the Diplomacy or Streetwise Test; failing the Test, the villagers ignore the characters and do not talk with them. If the characters succeed at the Streetwise Test, the characters are able to begin questioning the villagers and talk with them in the common room. What follows is a summary of what the characters can learn by interacting with the villagers and making successful Diplomacy or Streetwise tests.

Monsters have been plaguing the higher pastures for the past nine months. These creatures have been seen only briefly, and Sheriff Baer seems unable or unwilling to do anything about them. There are conflicting stories about the appearance of these creatures. Some of the villagers say that the monsters resemble huge black cats, while others say they are transparent ghost-like apparitions. They all state the monsters emerge from the shadows, killing sheep, shepherds, and trappers.

Inquiring about the missing people, the characters hear an ear full. The disappearances began in earnest some six months ago, and at first, no one seemed to notice. Now it seems almost weekly that a shepherd or trapper disappears in the mountains. As

shown by his inability to stop the monsters, Baer has been unable to discover what is behind the disappearances. The villagers also blame Baer over what happened to the village's former hunter, Adolph Hildenbrandt.

Adolph appeared in the village one day with his eyes missing and his throat badly wounded. No one has been able to discover who attacked Adolph because he has lost the ability to talk. Even Franz Krunz and his band of hunters could find no trace of the attacker. Franz Krunz is a well-respected local hunter, and he and his group live up in the mountains and supply the village with a lot of fresh game. Strangely, Franz has not been seen in town for over two months. The meat is still delivered, but it is delivered by one of Franz's loyal men.

Further prying will allow the characters to learn about Hannes Sagebrecht, a local priest, who was angry over the disappearances. He argued that no one was doing enough to stop the monsters or to find the missing people. Hannes disappeared three weeks ago when he went up into the mountains himself to investigate what is going on. All of this stems from the vicious attack a local hunter named Adolph Hildenbrandt lived through. His experiences with the horrors in the pastures have left him blind and mute. Characters inquiring about Adolph learn that he lives with his sister's family, about a half-mile south of Flatrock.

If the characters ask about Astrid's Tower, no one knows what the characters are talking about. No one has ever heard of a tower, and the villagers flatly state that nothing like that exists in Flatrock, though if anyone would know it would be Old Mila. Mila is a very old woman, who knows much about the area. She has lived in Flatrock her whole life, and has helped many with her cure-alls and everyone thinks very highly of her. The characters are quick to learn she is very highly respected.

Nothing else happens during the night, and the rest of the evening passes uneventfully. By midnight the common room is empty and the innkeeper has sent everyone home or to their rooms for the night.

With the new morning the characters are free to explore the village. Outsiders are a rare sight in Flatrock, and though curious, the villagers avoid the characters as much as they can. Any



characters wanting to talk with the villagers need to make successful Diplomacy Tests; failing has the villager walk away as fast as they can. The characters learn nothing new and hear close to what they might have heard last night. If the characters want to visit with Old Mila, Sheriff Baer, or Adolph Hildenbrandt, they can learn where they are/live with successful Diplomacy or Streetwise Tests. Refer to Map 1 for a layout of the village.

Digging around Flatrock

Players being players, they will probably want to use their “day off” to investigate the little burg they’re in. Consequently, provided below are three brief encounters that you can use to occupy their attention and distract them from the three key encounters, below. No stats are provided; these encounters are for roleplay and fun. If needed, use the profiles from **Chapter 9** of **SHADOW, SWORD, & SPELL: BASIC** as you see fit.

LOST CHILD

Near one end of town, where a side gate leads to farm fields, a young mother runs up to the characters and begs for help; her young daughter, only four years old, has gone missing. Easily followed tracks show that she left through the gate and wandered out into the fields. With all the troubles of late, Anna, the mother, is nearly frantic about her little “Netti,” but she can’t leave to look for her because she has an infant at home. Should the characters agree to search for her, a Tracking Test (TN +4) will lead them to her in about an hour. Netti is trapped in a deep hole she fell into when trying to recover the doll she had dropped. She is uninjured, but is frightened and wants her mother. Characters can either risk the soft earth to climb down to her rescue (Athletics Test, TN -2), or make creative use of rope.

WRASSLER

Some villagers are taking a break from work and enjoying a bit of friendly sport. Seeing the newcomers, they challenge the characters to put up a champion against the town’s best wrestler, Bruno, and they won’t take no for an answer. (Use the Barbarian profile on page 100 of *SS&S – Basic*, but Bruno’s only skill is Brawl

- 12) Best two out of three falls, losers buy beer for the winners. Bruno will fight fairly, and any cheating on the part of the characters will lead to a general street brawl.

FANS

A small gaggle of children, aged 5-9, will follow the mighty mercenaries like ducklings marching behind their mother. They will imitate the characters, try to act military, and in all ways be like their heroes. They will also get very much in the way. Kind characters will show patience and good humor; eventually the children will get bored and run off. Mean characters who yell at the children and drive them off, on the other hand, will earn the enmity of the townsfolk and a -3 penalty to the Target Number for any Test of social skills for the remainder of their stay.

OLD MILA'S

Old Mila's house is near the north end of the village. A skilled herbalist, her simple one-story cottage has numerous plants and flowers growing in the yard. Mila spends most of her days working in her garden and when the characters visit, they see her tending her plants. Seeing the approaching characters, Mila stops what she is doing and greets them warmly. Mila is old, walks with a hunch, and is very friendly and polite. A trusting soul, she is friendly to everyone, and is always eager to help.



OLD MILA

Brawn 4, Quickness 4, Toughness 4, Wits 13, Will 13

Vitality 20, Resolve 65, Sanity 65

Skills: Divination—Tea Reading [+12/+16], Heal [+17], Lore [+14], Sense [+18], Resist [+20]

Gear: Knife [DV 2(40)], Walking Cane

QUESTIONS

Mila knows a lot, and making successful Diplomacy Tests, the characters can learn one of the following:

Have you heard of Astrid's Tower?

- I have never heard of Astrid's Tower, but there are strange ruins to the northwest of the village.*

What do you know about the ruins?

- Many years ago while harvesting plants growing there, I felt a sense of evil emanating from all around. Since that day I have never been to the ruins.*

Where are the ruins?

- I know where they are, yes. I warn you, spirits haunt the area, and monsters most likely inhabit them as well. When the village was being built, stone was quarried from the ruins to build the wool mill. Once the mill was built, a wall collapsed, killing the miller inside. An evil spirit curses the stones from the ruins, and that is why everyone avoids the ruins to this day. Do you still want to know where the ruins are? They are to the northwest of the village, high up in the mountains in a pasture.*

Do the monsters exist?

- Though I have not seen them personally, I know they exist. They arrived about nine months ago. I remember this because that was when my parsley*



stopped growing. The monsters first plagued the sheep and goats, but they now seem more interested in trappers and shepherds.

Are the monsters behind the disappearances?

- ☑ *Yes child they are, I saw the signs in my tea leaves yesterday morning.*

What is the story about Hannes?

- ☑ *Two weeks ago Hannes went up into the mountains, and the reason for this is due to Sheriff Baer. Baer thinks nothing is wrong, and that these monsters are nothing more than large wolves or mountain cats. Since this is the case, Baer feels that the noble stranger, Franz Krunz, can deal with the problem. Hannes does not trust Franz, and he decided to look into the matter himself.*

Why does Hannes not trust Franz?

- ☑ *I do not know. Though Hannes has told me much, he never has told me why he does not trust Franz.*

Who is Franz?

- ☑ *Franz is a local hunter who hunts and traps with a small group of men. In recent months, some local trappers have joined Franz's band in the high pastures to help find the cause of the disappearances, which now puts their numbers at about fifteen. These men are very well respected by the villagers and have done much to protect Flatrock. Franz seems to be a nice man who is sometimes quick to anger, though I've only dealt with him personally on one occasion.*

In addition to the information Old Mila knows, she is also a herbalist, midwife, and healer. Characters willing to talk with her soon learn that she has a number of natural curatives available for sale. These curatives, according to Mila, are old recipes and guaranteed to aid those who need it.

MILA'S OFFERINGS

Balm of Grassy Binding

This balm has a strong mint and rosemary smell to it, and is a pale green in color. When applied to a wound, the balm heals 8 Vitality. The balm must be applied and allowed to stay on the wound for a period of 8 hours. After the balm has been applied, any physical activity causes the balm to be sweated off. The entire balm must be used for the effects to take hold. Mila has enough of the balm for twelve applications. (Cost 20 SC)

Tea of Soothing—1 pound

This tea, once brewed and drunk, cures a person of nausea and sickness. The tea has a deep orange and thyme aroma. One pound of tea has enough to make 20 mugs of tea. (Cost 8 SC)

Balm of Soothing Cool

This pale blue ointment gives off a peppermint smell, and when applied to the skin goes from cool to hot. The balm, once used, cures one sprain, be it an ankle or a wrist sprain. The entire application must be used, and must remain on the sprain for 8 hours. Any type of physical activity causes the balm to cease functioning. (Costs 20 SC)

Refreshed Night Sleep—1/4 Pound

This strong, powerful tea smells of strawberries and fresh cut grass. This tea is a powerful brew that helps revive and refresh a person who did not get enough sleep. Brewing and drinking this tea, a person feels as if they had slept for a full eight hours, even if they only slept for two. The downside of this tea is that a Toughness Test must be made the next day, or the person requires twice the normal amount of sleep. If the tea is drunk again, the Test is made at a -1. As long as the tea is drunk the effects of lack of sleep are put off. Once the tea runs out, the person passes out and falls into a deep sleep lasting for a period of 8 hours multiplied by the number of days the tea was drunk. Mila only has a quarter-pound of this tea available for sale. (Cost 1 GC)



SHERIFF BAER

Sheriff Baer is easy to find; he spends most of his time at his house. The house is located near the village center, and is a large imposing stone building. The lower half is devoted to a jail, and iron bars dot the walls. A stone staircase leads from the street, up to the second floor, which is where Baer lives.

Baer is a no nonsense man who has lived and worked in the village for ten years. Suspicious of everyone, the characters need to stay on his good side by making a successful Diplomacy Test. Failing the test, the characters will not get Baer to talk to them, but he will threaten to arrest the characters if they do not move on. Passing the test, the characters will find Baer to be lacking in conversation skills, and he states only the facts and embellishes nothing.

SHERIFF BAER

Brawn 12, Quickness 5, Toughness 12, Wits 7, Will 7

Vitality 60, Resolve 35, Sanity 35

Skills: Brawl [+14], Defend [+14], Intimidation [+9]

Gear: Short Sword [DV 6(80)]

He knows a lot and by making successful Streetwise Tests the characters can learn one of the following:

What are these monsters?

- I agree with Franz that these monsters are nothing more than mountain cats. All who have claimed to see these monsters describe them the same way: big black cats appearing only at night. These cats are silent, and have not bothered anyone but sheep. All this monster talk is nonsense, just nonsense.*

Have you looked into these monsters?

- I personally asked a local hunter by the name of Franz Krunz to look into this and he found nothing. I trust Franz completely, and he even supplies me with fresh venison from time to time.*



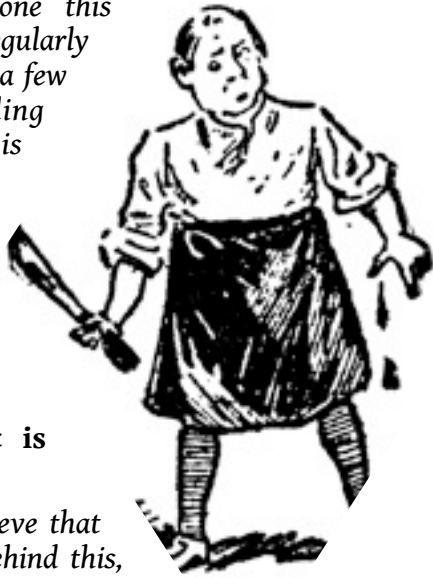
There are no monsters, period.

What about the missing people?

- ☑ *The rumors started about six months ago, when a few shepherds disappeared, but soon changed when other people began vanishing. The latest person to disappear is Hannes Sagebrecht, who went up into the mountains two weeks ago. Unfortunate, really.*

What about the rumors of Hannes thinking you have not done enough?

- ☑ *Hannes is a hot-head, and honestly, he has done this before. The priest regularly leaves the village for a few weeks without telling anyone where he is going. Yes, he has been angry because he feels no one has been doing anything about the monsters or disappearances.*



Why does Hannes think it is monsters?

- ☑ *Hannes does not believe that wolves or cats are behind this, he believes evil walks at night, and only human blood slakes its thirst.*

Is this true?

- ☑ *I don't know. I like Hannes, and I never had problems with him. However, Hannes has a tendency to exaggerate.*

Do you know where Astrid's Tower is?

- ☑ *I've never heard of this tower, or even heard of Astrid before. Who is she? You might want to ask Old Mila or even Franz Krunz about this. Mila is old but knows much about the area, while Franz is also very knowledgeable about the area as well.*

ADOLPH HILDENBRANDT

The final person the characters can visit is Adolph Hildenbrandt. Asking around the village, and making a successful Diplomacy Test [-1], the characters can learn he was a trapper and hunter who lived to the south of the village. Now he lives with his sister and brother-in-law in a small house just west of the village.

Finding the house is easy; it is a large wooden building with numerous pelts curing out front. A man is seen working at the front, scraping a rather large bear pelt. Wary at first, a successful Diplomacy Test [-1] brings an invitation for the characters to step inside and join him for dinner. After all, it is not every day that strangers arrive and bring with them the latest news and gossip. He is eager to share his table, and will be doubly eager if any character in the group outwardly appears to be of an academic background.

The man is Adolph's brother-in-law, Edmund. The dinner table seats six others, including Adolph's mother, wife, and Edmund's four children. After a simple meal of bread and stew, Edmund asks in a low tone if these travelers would be willing to see his wife's poor sick brother. If so, he takes them to the back room where, having excused herself earlier, Helga (Edmund's wife) is feeding Adolph some broth. Edmund relates to the player characters how six months ago the man before them was a hale and hearty hunter who freely roamed the upper pastures. He, much like the rest of the village, has been incapacitated and can no longer do as he pleases. Adolph is blindfolded (to hide the scarred remains of his eye sockets) and looks pallid and sickly. His hair is wild and unkempt, his beard is raggedly trimmed, and his fingernails are long and claw-like. Edmund tells the characters that Adolph made it back from the upper pastures after being blinded, and the trauma of the experience rendered

him mute. Neither Hannes nor Old Mila has been able to cure him.

Characters wanting to examine Adolph must make two consecutive Diplomacy Tests, one to convince the family (which gets a +1 bonus to the next skill tests that apply) and one for Adolph lest he become highly uncooperative. Success means they can examine Adolph and upon a successful Physick Test (-1), can see that the damage to his eyes appears to be from two separate punctures. Heroes should make a Study Test (-1) to know a claw stroke could not have done this because the wounds are uneven. Another Physick Test (-2) will allow the characters to discover that one puncture is almost surgical, while the other is a bit hasty and jagged, leaving a scar across the cheekbone. An examination of the throat and mouth shows no signs of wounding or damage.

ADOLPH HILDBERBRANDT

Brawn 3, Quickness 3, Toughness 5, Wits 7, Will 5

Vitality 20, Resolve 30, Sanity 5

Skills: Archery [+13], Observe [+8], Stealth [+12], Tracking [+7]

Disorders: Nightmares

EDMUND HILDBERBRANDT

Brawn 5, Quickness 11, Toughness 5, Wits 7, Will 5

Vitality 30, Resolve 30, Sanity 25

Skills: Archery [+13], Observe [+8], Stealth [+12], Tracking [+7].

Some characters might be tempted to try and cure Adolph of his blindness (using a Healing spell), but one look at his eyes makes it apparent that there are some things that even the realm of magic is incapable of healing. Adolph's eyes are too badly damaged, and there is nothing to be repaired.

Questioning the family about the disappearances brings the sad tale of Adolph, if it has not already been told. Edmund advises the characters to stay away from the upper pastures and get out of Flatrock as soon as possible. If the characters make their intent of heading to the upper pastures known, Edmund offers the characters Adolph's old gear. The gear consists of a battered

longbow (+1 to all Archery Tests), a quiver of ten green fletched arrows, a battered backpack, and a dagger. All of this gear (except for the longbow) is given to one character, and if it is kept together, the gear confers a +1 bonus to all Fear Tests. If any of the gear is separated, this Fear Test bonus disappears. As to why the gear confers the bonus, that is a mystery, but Adolph did survive his trauma, so some higher force or power might have been looking out for him.

If they are asked about Astrid's Tower, Edmund and his family say they know nothing about a tower. Characters asking about a tower in Adolph's presence see him open his mouth, looking as if he is trying to form words. He only moans and soon passes out. Troubled, the family asks the characters to leave, as Adolph is having one of his spells. As they leave, Helga makes her way outside and tells the characters that Adolph once mentioned a set of ruins in the upper pastures. She says that they always gave him an uneasy feeling when he pursued game there. With that, she wishes them good luck and heads back into the house.

There is nothing else to learn in the village. No matter whom they talk to, the characters learn the same thing. If the characters have not talked to Mila, she comes to the inn and talks with the characters. By evening, word of the characters has spread throughout the village and Mila wants to meet them. Run the encounter similar to what is written above in the encounter with Mila, with the difference being that it takes place in the common room of the inn.



4

TO THE RUINS

After asking around Flatrock, you were led to the location of the trail leading to the ruins. The trail is actually an old goat's trail, and it winds up the Spineback Mountains taking you to the alpine pastures located above the village. The morning goes by uneventfully, and you have traveled through mountains. Other than sheep and goats grazing in the pastures, you see little else. Gerd insists that the ruins are actually the tower he is looking for, and despite the lack of evidence, you find yourself pressing on.

Just when the characters start to relax, a group of Franz's hunters who are hiding among the rocks fire one arrow each at the party and then flee. An Observe Test has the heroes realize that the arrows came from both the hills to the west and east, but they see no sign of their attackers. (A successful Observe Test [-4] allows the hero to catch glimpses of the hunters). Franz and his hunters plague the party twice during their trek up the trail. When they attack, the hunters fire 1 arrow per character, and then move further up the trail. After the hunters make their second attempt, they head for the ambush spot further up the trail.

HOW ARE THE HUNTERS HIDING?

The Players being players, they are going to want to know how the hunters are firing at them unseen. As the Gamemaster, you have read this adventure and have a good idea of how skilled the hunters are. They have been picking off unsuspecting people, and are skilled in not only hunting, but also remaining unseen. You also know that the hunters and Franz are dangerous. Still, this does not answer inquisitive players' questions. One explanation is that the players cannot get their bearings while they are being shot at. Attempting to find a trail among the rocks and boulders strewn across the mountains is extremely difficult. The player characters, unlike their attackers, are not familiar with the terrain, and they find it difficult to find clues.

So how do the hunters manage to avoid discovery from by the players? The hunters are extremely knowledgeable about the area, plus they use their skills of hiding and hunting to stay out of the player characters' line of sight. The hunters are under orders from Franz to simply harass the heroes as they make their way to the designated ambush spot. You are encouraged to only use this tactic once or twice, as you do not want to anger the players or their characters, simply harass them a little.

No matter how you explain it, do not give away too much, and allow the mystery to build. You are the Gamemaster, and it is up to you to build the suspense of this adventure. If the players complain, hit their characters with an arrow!

After about four hours of hiking, the trail grows steeper as it passes through many smaller pastures. As the characters travel up the path the ambushes have stopped, but to make matters worse, the hunters have placed a few animal traps along the path. There is a total of one bear trap per hero hidden along the trail. Bear traps are nasty, but are avoidable with a successful Observe Test. Failing the test, the hero should make a Quickness Test, with failure meaning the trap has sprung, and is clamping down on the hero's ankle. The bear trap causes 2 Damage per round to any foot caught in it. A Dramatic Failure has the trap not only cause 2 Damage per round, but it breaks the victim's ankle, which causes the character a -1 to all Tests while the ankle is broken. To remove a bear trap requires a successful Brawn Test; a failure has

the trap clamp down again, causing another 2 Damage (Dramatic Failure causes double damage).

By dusk, the heroes should be bruised and battered, as they reach a large alpine pasture. The pasture is deserted and the grass looks to have not been grazed for months. The pasture has many large boulders spread across it, which would be perfect for an ambush.

Hiding among the rocks are six of Franz's Hunters, and they are the same ones who harassed the characters earlier in the day. Tracking the characters, they have lain in wait, and plan on attacking them once they reach this spot.

HUNTERS

Brawn 8, Quickness 11, Toughness 6,
Wits 7, Will 7

Vitality 35, Resolve 35, Sanity 10

Skills: Archery [+15], Melee [+10],
Observe [+9], Stealth—Camouflage
[+13/+17], Track [+10]

Disorders: Obsession—Human Flesh

Gear: Shortbow [R 50/100/150, RoF
2/1], 12 Arrows [DV 3(60)], Short Sword
[DV 6(80), P +1], 3 Knives [DV 2(35)],
Leather Armor [AV 20].

The tactics of the hunters are straightforward: three will shoot at the characters from cover, while the other three spring from behind cover, surprise the characters, and attack them. The hunters fight until their numbers are reduced by half, and as soon as this happens, they attempt to flee. Characters wanting to chase after them can do so, and this requires successful opposed Quickness Tests, due to the rough terrain of the pasture, as well as the night being dark. Remember the hunters are very familiar with the terrain, while the characters are not.

Capturing any of the hunters alive, the player characters might question them. This is difficult due to their fanatical nature and their devotion to Franz. The following is a summary of what the characters might learn with successful Diplomacy (or Intimidate) Tests:

- ☑ (-1) “We’re loyal to Franz, and have been so since we joined his band.”
- ☑ (-1) “Franz told us to stop you. Why? You are getting too close.”
- ☑ (-2) “Adolph? No we had nothing to do with him.”
- ☑ (-2) “We joined Franz’s group a few months ago; we lived in Flatrock, but Franz has shown us a better way.”
- ☑ (-3) “We saw Hannes a week ago, he was poking around the ruins. We tried to tell him to be careful, but he did not listen to us.”
- ☑ (-4) “The ruins? They are our base.”
- ☑ (-4) “There are no monsters, there never were any monsters.”

The hunters do not say anything else. Searching them, the characters find only the weapons and the gear the hunters carry. An Observe Test has the characters notice that the hunters do not look “right”, and in fact, they look a little sickly. Their cheeks and eyes are hollowed, while their skin looks dry and taut. With another successful Observe Test (-1), the characters find that

tattooed on each hunter is the symbol of Caim (a round black circle). Questioning the hunters about this elicits no response.

The rest of the night is uneventful, and the characters may wish to spend an uncomfortable night on the slope, or they may make a comfortable camp in the pasture.

Morning comes, and once again you begin your trek up the goat trail to the high pastures of the mountains. Unlike yesterday, no one harasses you on your journey, and the trip is pleasant. By mid-morning, you come to a small plateau. From here the view of the land below is breathtaking, and you can see the village of Flatrock, as well as the Wine River.

The plateau is nothing but a grassy pasture dotted with a few rocks. Characters making a successful Observe Test find a bit of charcoal that appears to have been burned within the past week. Another successful Observe Test (-2) yields the discovery of a carved wooden medallion with the symbol of the god Sabrael (successful Study test) on it.

Leaving the plateau you notice that the trail becomes steeper and rockier the higher you go. Every step seems to dislodge loose rock and stone, and the climb grows harder.

The trail has become treacherous and the characters begin to lose their footing. Each character must make a successful Quickness Test, and failing it causes them to lose their footing and start to slide down the trail. Characters take no damage, but there is a 50% (role a d12, and bad stuff happens on a odd roll) chance that they twist an ankle or sprain a wrist. A sprained ankle cause the character to suffer a -1 to checks requiring Quickness, as well as a -1 to Initiative; spraining a wrist causes the character to suffer a -1 to Melee, as well as tasks requiring the use of hands. The effects of the sprain last until the end of the adventure, or until a character uses magical or skilled means to heal the sprain.

By noon you make your way to the higher elevations, and the trail leads you to a large flat plateau. Piles of rocks are everywhere, and form what look to be the ruins of a tower and a wall that surrounded it. Tall grass covers the plateau in a sea of swaying green. The trail you followed cuts

*through the grass, and leads straight to what at one time
might have been a gate in the wall.*

Exploring the area, the characters notice a tower once stood here, and they can make out the foundations of a few buildings and other structures. The old cobblestoned area contains some racks, the type that would be used to stretch animal skins. There are various tools lying about that would be used for cutting, scraping, or stretching of hides. At this point in time, there is a skin stretching on the rack that looks strangely humanoid. A successful Wits Test allows the characters to notice that no arms or legs are attached. The torso is of the correct proportion and the color is strange in that it is unlike that of any furred animal. Any character making a successful Physick Test notices that the hide is actually human.

Searching the site the characters find a small stone building. There is a single door in the east side, and it seems untouched by the ravages of time. Inspecting it closer, a successful Wits Test (-2) indicates the door looks new. The wood is solid, the nails show no signs of rust, and the hinges are oiled and show little sign of age. The door is not locked, and opens to reveal a set of stairs descending into darkness. It is impossible to tell how far down the stairs go.





5

THE RUINS OF ASTRJD'S TOWER

AREA 1

The stairs lead you down into the depths. They look to have been carved from the rock because they are devoid of seams or joints. The stairs wind down 100 feet, and the deeper you go the colder the air becomes. Suddenly, the stairs straighten out and end in a long hallway, brightly lit by candles giving off a bright, smoky yellow light. The air hangs thick with a foul smell, reminding you of burned meat and rancid oil. The floor is littered with numerous bones, and they crunch with each step you take. Mixed with the bones is trash lining the floor as well. Gerd looks around worriedly and begins to silently groan.

Examining the bones, the characters notice that they are a mix of animal as well as human bones. A successful Physick or Wits (-1) Test has the character able to pick out the human bones from the animal bones. A careful study of the human bones (successful Physick (-1) or Wits (-2) Test) has the character notice that some of the bones look to have been broken, perhaps in a fight.

There is nothing of value found here, and this marks the start of the bad things that happen to Gerd. He was not prepared for this, and seeing the state of disrepair of the ruins, and now seeing



this hall, he feels that something might be wrong. Characters attempting to talk to him, find him non-responsive, and instead he mutters to himself.

AREA 2

The hallway leads into a large square chamber. Hanging from chains on the west wall are two dead bodies that have suffered grievous treatment.

Seeing the bodies, the characters must make a Fear Test (-1), and failing it they will lose their composure and become ill. It takes a number of rounds equal to the Degree of Failure (double if Dramatic Failure) for the characters to regain their composure after seeing the bodies (-2 to all tests). Characters failing the test lose 4 Sanity (8 if Dramatic Failure); if the characters succeed at the test, examining the bodies will reveal that they appear to have been field dressed, and suffered from grievous injuries. The first of the bodies is of a missing trapper, and the second is that of the missing priest, Hannes Sagebrecht. Characters who examined Adolph realize that the bodies found here have many of the same injuries.

AREA 3

This small room looks to serve as a kitchen. There is a hole in the southwest corner and next to it is a wooden bucket with a long rope attached to it. In the northwest corner a fireplace has been built and in front of it is a table. On the table rests a knife and some small well-cleaned bones.

A Physick Test (-1) reveals that the bones are hand and finger bones of some humanoid creature. The knife resting on the table is very sharp, and very well balanced (+1 to Throw Tests). Besides the knife there is nothing else of real value in the room. **Area 4**

This large room is crammed with crates, boxes, and bits of equipment. A wine rack lines the south wall, but whatever bottles that once were there are long gone. Six large chests fill the center of the room, and the locks look old and rusty.

This small room is used for nothing more than storage, and there is a 50% (roll a d12, call odds or evens) chance for any type

of normal item to be contained here. A lot of the items are very old and show signs of heavy use.

The locks on the chest are old and corroded (+2 TN to be opened). Once the chests are opened, the characters find 100 GC, and 5 sapphires (15 GC each). In one of the chests there is an old map of the area that dates back to the time of Astrid, along with her journal from the two years prior to her murder. This is all that remains of Astrid's wealth, and seeing this Gerd begins to whimper and mutter about losing his legacy. He quickly gathers his wits, and claims the map and the journal as his.

AREA 5

Spread across the floor, and mingled with the collection of bones, are ten bedrolls. The room is squarish, and the tall ceilings give it a sense of height. Glowing from wall sconces are short, fat, yellow-white candles giving off a smoky yellow glow. The room smells of unwashed bodies, decay, and death.

Searching the bedrolls for more than a round, the characters find a small leather bag. Examining the bag, the characters notice that it is made from soft leather. The leather is nothing like anything seen before, and resembles no leather from an animal (it is actually made from cured human skin). The bag contains 50 SC and 25 BC in various coin denominations.



AREA 6

The first thing you notice upon entering this room is that a foul odor permeates it. In the center of the room, a small hole has been excavated, and by its looks, serves as an outhouse for the inhabitants. The walls of this room are lined with numerous bookshelves. Resting on the shelves are numerous books that look the worse for wear.

At one time this small room was a library, and bookcases lined all four walls. A quick study of the collection (four or more rounds) informs literate characters that the subjects of history, anthropology, zoology and theology were covered. The collection is very old, and some of the books are titles of which no one has ever heard.

The new inhabitants of the ruins have apparently found a better use for these books, as most have been defiled with waste while others have been ripped to shreds for no apparent reason. When Gerd discovers this, he must make a Will Test (-4) or begin to cry for five minutes straight. This was Astrid's private collection of books, many of which she kept simply because of the value illuminated texts carry. Searching the books for at least five rounds the party can find 1d12 texts that have escaped destruction. Gerd claims any book that is found, and he mutters that something good has to come from this destruction.

AREA 7

This large room is a jumble of furniture, which has been pushed to the walls, clearing a large space in the exact center. Standing here is a large, black table, and chained to this table you can see a man. Tall candelabras ring the area by the table, and the candles are still lit, casting everything in shadows.

This is a large room that was once Astrid's workshop, but now everything is in ruins and pushed to the walls. The man groans in pain as soon as the characters enter the room. He was once a member of Franz's strange cult, but unfortunately he was the weakest physically. In recent days, there has been a shortage of human prey, and Franz ordered that one member must give up their own flesh for the good of the group. Any characters making a Wits Test will recognize the man as one of the ones selling meat at the inn when they arrived in Flatrock.

If the characters examine the man, they see that he has suffered great injuries and shows signs of torture. The man is unable to talk, since his tongue has been cut out, and characters who examined Adolph notice with a successful Physick Test that the wounds on this man match those of Adolph. The sight of the

man is unsettling, and characters need to make a successful Will Test (-2) or become ill for 1d12 rounds. While ill, the characters suffer a -1 to all actions, and spellcasters must make a successful Wits Test to cast any spells.

A successful Observe Test (-2) has the character notice that the tabletop is carved. Due to the man chained to the table it is hard to make out what the carving is. Removing the man (both his arms and legs are shackled to the table, and the locks are poor quality and give a +1 to Tests to open them, but require four Subterfuge Tests (TN -2) to unlock the chains) from the table, the characters notice the carving depicts a large black circle. A successful Lore Test has the character notice the symbol is actually a depiction of the new moon, and is the symbol of the god Caim.

AREA 8

Upon entering this room, you notice that it is cramped and has a sickly sweet smell pervading everything. The room is cluttered, but unlike the rest of the lair, the place is well kept. Lying along the east wall there is a makeshift altar, and resting on it are four candles covered in a dark crusted substance.

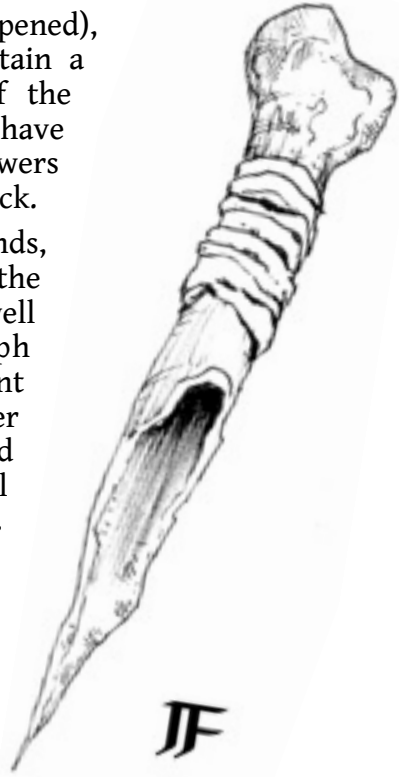
Hanging on the wall, directly above the altar, is an intricate carving of a diseased hand grasping the full moon. Along the south wall there is a worktable, and a fire pit. Resting above the fire pit, supported by a tripod, is a cauldron, while resting on the tabletop numerous molds can be seen, along with a ball of twine. In the northwest corner of the room there is a makeshift bed, as well as an iron chest.

This is the private chamber of Franz, and it is here where he not only leads his group, but also worships his god Caim. The cauldron is filled with a bubbling substance that is the source of the sweet smell in the room. The molds on the table are actually candle molds, and they resemble the candles that have been found throughout the lair. The substance that is bubbling in the cauldron is human fat. Characters making a successful Wits Test can realize this, and they can also come to know that the candles are made from human fat.

Examining the altar, the characters notice that it is made of human bones, including a skull. The bones have been bleached white. The red sticky substance on the candles is actually human blood. The symbol that hangs from the wall is the symbol of Caim, and characters making a successful Lore Test realizes that the altar is dedicated to the god.

The chest is locked (-1 to be opened), and once opened is seen to contain a small ledger documenting all of the atrocities that Franz and his group have committed, as well as offering answers to what has been going on in Flatrock.

Reading the ledger for four rounds, the characters learn of all of the humans killed and consumed, as well as the failed attack on Adolph Hildenbrandt and his subsequent blinding. Also included in the ledger are details about the man chained to the table, and his communal sacrifice for the good of the cabal. Even more shocking, the ledger contains the sordid details of the meat provided for the villagers and Franz's gleeful comments about them eating their own priest. Also found in the chest are 120 SC, some quills, and an incredibly sharp knife (+1 to Melee, looks to have been created



from a piece of bone), a ring of indiscernible blue-white metal (a crashing wave is carved on the upper part of the ring (+1 to Athletics—Swimming Tests)), and a small bottle filled with a thick red liquid (the bottle is a simple glass one, with a black stopper; the liquid tastes like cinnamon, and gives off a very nice smell, and is actually one dose of the drug Gift of Life).

I ATE WHAT!?!

So, what do you do if the characters ate the stew? The realization of the fact that the meat in the stew was human has a major impact on the eaters. Immediately they lose 5 Sanity, and they must make a Will Test with failure having them lose another 1 Sanity and gain the Disorder, **Nightmare—I Ate The Stew**.

But is that all?

Kind GMs can leave the effects of cannibalism at the loss of a bit of Sanity and resulting nightmares. But, for a greater roleplaying challenge, treat the eating of human flesh as a magical ritual in the service of Caim, made more potent by Franz's devotion. For each person who ate the stew (or somehow otherwise managed to eat human flesh), roll a secret Test against the eater's Will (TN – 1). Those who succeed have the strength of spirit to resist Caim's corrupting touch. Those who fail, on the other hand, have been afflicted with a variant of "Curse of the Grave" (SS&S – Basic, p. 62) and will become ghouls at the end of 30 days. Those affected will feel the transformation gnawing at their souls soon, though they may not know what is happening to them, at first.

By what means characters can break this curse and save themselves is left to the GM, who is encouraged to use this as a source of further adventure. Characters who succumb, on the other hand, become Gamemaster characters under the control of the GM forever after.



6

BACK TO THE SURFACE

As you exit the lair, sickened by what you have seen and learned, you notice that everything has grown quiet. The ruins cast long shadows, and the sounds you heard upon entering are no more.

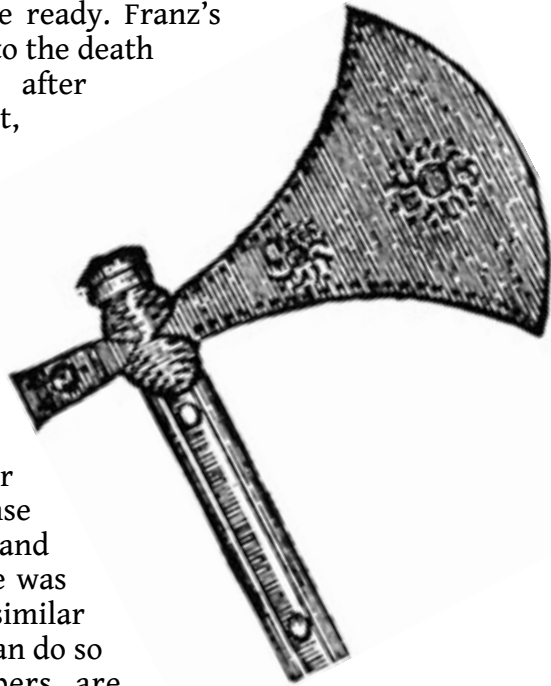
Franz and his men are waiting for the characters outside, and surprise them as soon as they reach the surface. He and his band of men have taken up strategic positions along the perimeter of the ruins so as to harass the intruders with a volley of arrows.

One of the hunters waits at the goat trail in the brush, and will fire a single arrow then await the arrival of the first intruder. On top of whatever damage he may cause, characters need to succeed at a Quickness Test or lose their balance and tumble forward as they trip on a thin tripwire placed in their path. Any character who suffers this fate becomes prone. The other seven men, along with Franz, are concealed by piles of rubble (consider this to be Partial Cover) around the area of the tripwire that has been set along the most direct route to the goat trail.

Any character crossing this area must make a Quickness Test, and success allows them to spot the wire and being able to leap over it in time. Failing the Test, they crash forward onto the hard cobblestones, taking 6 damage. If this happens, or two characters have not crossed the tripwire, the four attackers will leap out and



begin to attack the characters with their swords. Once the characters have begun to succumb to arrow fire and/or traps, the others leap forth with sword and axe at the ready. Franz's rabid followers fight to the death and, in some cases after felling an opponent, begin to devour the closest body (going for so long without human flesh has driven most of the party mad at the sight of blood).



Franz, on the other hand, still has a sense of self-preservation and believes that since he was able to escape a similar situation before, he can do so again. If his numbers are reduced by half or his Vitality reduced to half, Franz attempts to flee. If he is successful in this attempt, the characters will have a difficult time tracking him. He knows the area too well.

During all of this, Gerd will let out the anger and frustration he has been feeling since he discovered the truth of Astrid's tower. Something inside of him snaps, and he will use his magic to the best of his abilities.

FRANZ KRUPP

Brawn 10, Quickness 14, Toughness 13, Wits 11, Will 11

Vitality 57, Resolve 55, Sanity 0

Skills: Brawl [+12], Intimidation [+12], Archery [+16], Melee [+12], Observe [+13], Stealth [+16]

Abilities: Horrific Vision, Night Vision, Stench

Disorders: Addictions—Human Flesh, Hatred—Living Things, Megalomania

Gear: Shortbow [R 50/100/150, RoF 2/1], 12 Arrows [DV 3(60)], Short Sword [DV 6(80), P +1], 3 Knives [DV 2(35)], Leather Armor [AV 20].

WARTERS

Brawn 8, Quickness 11, Toughness 6, Wits 7, Will 7

Vitality 35, Resolve 35, Sanity 10

Skills: Archery [+15], Melee [+10], Observe [+9], Stealth—Camouflage [+13/+17], Track [+10]

Disorders: Obsession—Human Flesh

Gear: Shortbow [R 50/100/150, RoF 2/1], 12 Arrows [DV 3(60)], Short Sword [DV 6(80), P +1], 3 Knives [DV 2(35)], Leather Armor [AV 20].

FINALE

Once Franz Krunz and his men are dealt with the threat to the village is over. On their return, the characters are swamped with questions about what happened up there. “Did you find monsters?” “Is the town safe?” “Where were Franz and hunters?” “Did you see Hannes Sagebrecht, and did you find the tower?”

If the characters attempt to explain that Franz and his men were behind the disappearances and raise the specter of cannibalism, the villagers react angrily at first. Succeeding at a Diplomacy Test or making any suitably soothing speech calms the townsfolk. With that, the characters are asked politely to leave as soon as possible, with a room at the inn being offered free of charge for a single night, if need be. The village wishes to mourn the loss of their priest and so many good men in private.

If the characters bring the journal of Franz with them and expose the whole village as cannibals, chaos ensues. Accusations fly against the characters, against Headman Baer, and even against Didier and Old Mila, who is cursed as a witch. The characters can either calm the situation or attempt to leave before a riot and lynchings erupt. If the curse option described under “But is that all,” is used, then several townsfolk are already in the process of transforming into ghouls, including Headman Baer and Didier’s wife. GMs are free to deal with the consequences of this as they see fit.

If the characters bring back the corpse of Franz Krunz, the villagers are shocked at his transformation. They burn his body and mourn for Hannes Sagebrecht. If the party conceals the nature of the meat Franz gave the town, they will be treated as heroes for rescuing the village and will always be welcome in Flatrock. Didier promises them free room and board whenever they should visit, and a hot bowl of stew always ready for them...

When the time comes to leave Flatrock, regardless of the circumstances of their departure, Gerd, if he is still alive, will tell the characters he plans to return to the tower and rebuild it. It is his estate, his legacy, and he shall not be driven from it. He also releases them from his service, having no further need for

mercenaries. With that, he takes the items he has claimed and heads back up into the hills.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Reward the characters with Experience Points for items completed below:

- +2 Experience Points for finishing the adventure
- +1 Experience Point for befriendng Old Mila
- +1 Experience Point for befriendng Adolph
- +1 Experience Point for not eating the stew
- +2 Experience Points for defeating Franz
- +1 Experience Point for making the Will Test upon discovering they ate the stew

Appendix

THE CHOSEN OF CAIM

The **CHOSEN OF CAIM** are followers who have shown their devotion to the god and follow his hidden teachings. These teachings center on the consumption of the dead. Those who seek to be the **CHOSEN OF CAIM** embark on this path because it brings them closer to the god. The **CHOSEN** swear their eternal soul to Caim, and vow to bring him many souls. The **CHOSEN** kill in his name, and worship him by eating the dead. Those doing so eventually undergo a transformation, which changes them from a human into a **CHOSEN**. Though the **CHOSEN** resemble ghouls, they are not really; and though they look undead, they are not.

CHOSEN gain Night Vision, but also they take on the smell of the grave. This gives them the Stench ability (any creature in hand-to-hand combat range suffers a -1 to all Tests). **CHOSEN** also gain a Horrific Visage (whenever someone comes into contact with them, they must make a Will Test with failure causing them to lose 1 Sanity (4 Sanity with a Dramatic Failure)).

