



# THE TRAIL of STONE and SORROW

AN ADVENTURE FOR  
NEOCLASSICAL  
GEEK REVIVAL  
AND OSR ADVENTURE GAMES  
BY ZZARCHOV KOWOLSKI

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COVER ART

*GEMSEN IN EINER ALPINEN LANDSCHAFT*  
BY MORITZ MÜLLER

WORDS

ZZARCHOV KOWOLSKI

EDITING

JAMES MALISZEWSKI

LAYOUT & ILLUSTRATION

ALEX MAYO

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## BACKGROUND

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In a sleepy little village located in one of many sleepy alpine valleys, a growing fear has begun spreading among the populace. A young boy gathering tinder from the pines on the mountainside stumbled upon a stone statue of a bear. Fetching his parents, there was no doubt that it must be a bear turned to stone. Speaking to the men in the village, worry grew when no one had seen anyone from the Kosovel's farmstead at yesterday's market and a wandering merchant had mentioned to the alewife that he had seen a statue of a cow on his ride into town yesterday. The alewife had assumed he was trying to set up some awkward joke and had ignored the quip until now. The townsfolk are wondering if the strange foreigner from the other side of the mountain who lives in his mountainside chalet might be a warlock who is behind these occurrences. The town elder has promised a barrel of ale if someone can put the issue to rest.

### THE CHALET OF DOCTOR BRENNER

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Dr. Brenner arrived at the start of last winter with a small entourage of servants in tow. He quietly crossed over the mountains from the cantons on the other side, something that is exceedingly rare for those who aren't fleeing the law. Combined with the other two strikes of being rich and foreign, his suspicious method of entry put the entire town on edge. An emissary will come to town once a month to buy sundries with hard currency, so he has been tolerated by the town under the unsaid agreement that he remain apart from them.

He lives in a rented chalet along the mountain side. It is a lovely three-story wooden building, with a large stone chimney and two-story windows made of actual glass. The interior of the chalet is largely an open concept room dominated by a large hearth. There are a small number of sleeping rooms off the main chamber.

Dr. Brenner is an alchemist who is living here with his six servants. One servant is an elderly Danish woman, while the other five are large muscular men of Saami ancestry, who appear to be mute. Dr.

Brenner has set up a large amount of alchemical equipment in the chalet, and is mostly preoccupied with fetching samples from nearby glaciers and distilling the water. There are vials upon vials of water, stoppered with silver solder and labelled with date ranges. He is obsessed with water frozen in different eras for use in potions. There are also two moderately sized lead casks containing a substance suspiciously like kerosene labelled "Dwarf Tears". In one of the rooms is a strongbox with 12,000 silver coins in treasure.

Dr. Brenner is not involved in the local spate of petrifications, but does have interest in the matter. He will offer to pay 2,000 silver coins for the remnants of the item or creature causing the issue. He suspects a gorgon.

**NGR:** Dr. Brenner is 4th level. He is 2 part wizard (Sage, Anti-Magic: Dispel, Psychic Potential) and one part rogue (Expert). He has a random grimoire (see *Hark! A Wizard!*)

**OSR:** Dr. Brenner is a 4th level magic-user or alchemist with a random assortment of spells.

### THE FOREST

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The young boy or his parents can easily be persuaded to show the party the statue of the stone bear for a token amount (as little as 2 copper pennies). While they will be skittish, they do know the direct route. There will be a statue of a bear digging into a rotted log, its head and neck craned to one side, as if looking over its shoulder at an unexpected sound. It is indeed a bear turned to stone. If the party explores the area, they may stumble across trees marked with notches. These trees have snare traps for small game at their bases. If these are tracked, they will lead to a small log cabin that serves as a hunting camp. A party may also find heavy hoof-prints in the area. If they track them from whence they came, they will lead to a fairly steep cliff with evidence that something ox-sized rolled and fell down said cliff, breaking their fall on the boughs of a tree. Scaling the cliff will lead to the party to the Valley. If they follow the tracks in the other direction they will find the pasture.

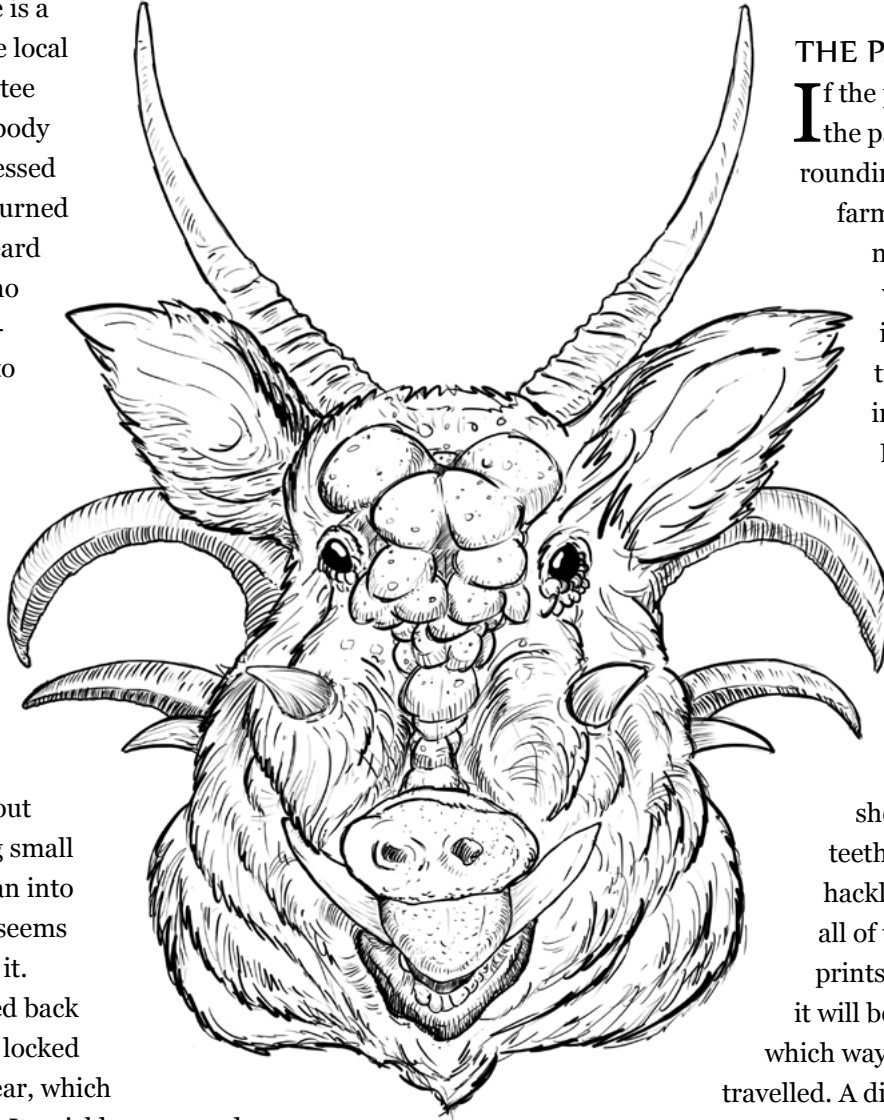
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## THE HUNTING CAMP

If the party follows up on the game trails they will come to a small log cabin surrounded by a wicker fence. Inside the wicker fence is a fire pit and several animal pelts being stretched and dried. The sole inhabitant of the cabin is Ol'Lady Bibic. She is a crass mountain woman of the decrepit age of 27. She's been called Ol'Lady Bibic since she was 21 as her hair turned grey prematurely. She makes a living hunting, trapping, and foraging for mushrooms.

Technically, she is a poacher, but the local lord is an absentee landlord, so nobody cares. She witnessed the bear being turned to stone. She heard a loud crash echo through the forest and moved to investigate. She saw a beast like a large ox with an oversized misshapen head and coat of snake scales running down its back in a stripe.

It wandered about aimlessly eating small plants until it ran into the bear which seems to have startled it. The beast started back in fright until it locked eyes with the bear, which turned to stone. It quickly recovered its composure and seemed to become more aggressive. It pawed at some trees with its hooves and then ambled down towards the pastures.



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## THE VALLEY

If the players scale the twenty foot cliff face, they will reach a small ledge and a still quite steep slope leading to a small meadow valley, no more than 5 acres in size. The valley is largely empty other than a small cave containing a hot spring and a stone statue of a chamois (similar to a mountain goat). The area shows obvious signs that a large herbivore has been living in the valley for some time, wintering in the cave.

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## THE PASTURE

If the players come to the pastures surrounding the Kosovel farm, they will

notice a clearly visible stone cow in a hillside pasture, staring off into the treeline.

If they examine further into the pastures they will see a field containing a dozen living sheep, three stone sheep, and a stone

sheepdog with its teeth bared and its hackles raised. Given all of the large hoof prints from the cow, it will be difficult to tell which way any creature travelled. A difficult tracking

check will show something moving from the woods, through the fields in a zig-zagging motion, then bee lining directly towards the farmstead in a run from a point near the location of the stone dog.

## THE FARMSTEAD

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The Kosovel farmhouse is a single-story wood plank building with a brushwood roof. There was a wooden porch, but it has been destroyed in some massive impact. There is also a large wooden barn, and a few other small outbuildings (sheds, an outhouse, similar things). Poor Polde Kosovel was turned to stone by the beast, his frightened wife (Ivana) and son (Anton) have barricaded themselves in the house, only having once left to drag his statue inside. They will be relieved to be rescued and beg the party to slay the beast. Ivana describes it much the same as Ol'Lady Bibic: it came bolting from the pastures at full speed and rammed into the side of the porch, seemingly intent on uprooting the porch. Polde ran out from the barn with a crossbow and the beast hunched down and seemed to almost stalk towards Polde, turning him to stone as their gaze met right before Polde could fire. Then the beast raised to its full height and slowly walked over to Polde. It stared at him up and down for a few minutes until Ivana went running out with a hot fire poker. The beast seemed to be spooked, as it never even bothered to look around, it just bolted wildly towards the road, at one point knocking over the pigeon coop.

If asked, Anton will ramble about the events in fragments, getting more and more worked up. If convinced that it is important (**NGR:** Social Conflict, **OSR:** Charisma check), he tells all of the details, noting that the beast had its tail tucked between its legs and seemed almost to be yelping when it ran back and rammed into the porch. If asked why Polde had a crossbow ready, it is because some large animal had been attacking their flock.

## CHAOS ON THE MAIN ROAD

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A team of pilgrims is trying to fix their hand-pulled cart that contains all of their food and camping supplies. They are whittling a sapling into a new axle. A large misshapen ox-like creature came barrelling through them and broke their wagon. It came from the direction of the Kosovel farm and went deeper into the woods. The tracks are very evident. The beast hit their wagon and went into a roll. It was not looking where it was going. One of the

pilgrims is a priest and is willing to bless the leader of the party if they promise to end the menace of the creature.

## THE CATOBLEPAS

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The beast is hiding in a small grove of trees near a spring. It has suffered some pretty obvious scrapes and bruises from the slide down the cliff. It will defend itself but will try to flee if able, and only attack back if cornered or unable to flee. As you have probably guessed, the beast is currently Polde Kosovel. When it meets the gaze of another creature, first their minds switch and then the target is turned to stone. For this reason, a sentient mind inhabiting the body of the Catoblepas will meet the gaze of an attacker only as a last resort. An animal is not able to make that deduction. Reversing the petrification on a statue, will not reverse the mind switch. Killing the Catoblepas will not undo the petrifications. The Catoblepas can hear, and depending on the mind inside, may even understand speech, but it cannot speak.

**NGR:** The Catoblepas is as big as an ox (size modifier 2) with tremendous strength (16 strength), and a hearty constitution (12 health), but it has great difficulty seeing (5 awareness). Its intelligence, social, and spirit scores are determined by the mind currently inhabiting the body. Its head is that of an oversized boar with ox horns, making it count as wearing a helm. Its scaled back and thickened hide count as partial mail and light armour respectively. The hooves of a Catoblepas count as large blunt weapons. It can also make a gaze attack. It may make a detection roll against an opponent with open eyes. An opponent specifically keeping their eyes closed or hidden behind a shield is immune (though they would suffer their own penalties). A successful hit causes a d20 of potential damage and the same amount of potential stress. If the target would both be killed and driven insane, the target has their mind switched with the Catoblepas and they are turned to stone. Otherwise there is no effect. Technically this is an innate spell "Curse of the Catoblepas", and the beast has a mana pool of 50, though only an elf or a wizard with the "Create Spell" power would be able to control it as such. A Catoblepas's

eyes reduce the cost of the spell to 1 per power level, though once the Catoblepas is dead they are consumed in the casting.

The Catoblepas has taken 1 point of damage from the fall.

**OSR:** The Catoblepas has 5 hit dice and may attack by kicking for 2d8 damage, or make a gaze attack, requiring a saving throw versus petrification or the target switches minds with the Catoblepas and is then turned to stone. The Catoblepas has armour as hide armour or scale mail. It has taken 4 points of damage from the fall.

## THE CHAIN OF EVENTS

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For decades uncounted, the Catoblepas was trapped alone in the alpine valley. That changed just yesterday when a pack of chamois (similar to mountain goats) managed to go up the cliff and down the valley. Sure enough, the Catoblepas met gaze with a goat. Not understanding it wasn't a chamois, it tried to escape with the rest of its herd out of the valley. It barely made it up the slope, only to fall when it tried to use its now non-existent climbing skills to make it down the cliff. Slightly injured, it wandered the woods, nibbling on plants until it stumbled upon a bear. In the surprise, they locked vision. After some slight confusion, the bear became agitated at the trees and wandered down to attack some livestock. It stalked a cow and rushed out of the woods to attack, catching the cow's gaze. As a spooked cow, it sauntered back towards the other animals, where it met gaze with a ewe, who in turn met gaze with a ram, and then another ewe, as the animals panicked and the dog began barking and moving in to attack the Catoblepas. The Catoblepas, thinking it was a ewe, ran towards the dog for protection, meeting its gaze. Not understanding what was happening, the dog-minded Catoblepas ran back to hide under the porch, but it of course would no longer fit. When Polde can running out of the barn yelling, the Catoblepas thought it was in trouble and skulked over, meeting Polde's gaze. Polde was stunned at the shift, but, to his credit, quickly realized the gist of what was happening. When Ivana came running out of the house, he closed his eyes

and bolted away, knocking over the pigeon coop and bounding over the road, crashing into the wagon, as he couldn't see. Eventually, he opened his eyes when he was certain he was alone and hid as he tried to figure out what to do next.

## SPELLS

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### Curse of the Catoblepas

**Template:** PETRIFY

**Difficulty:** 5 per power level

**Cost:** 20 per power level

**Range:** Short Missile Range

**Complexity:** 4

This spell allows the caster to either turn the target to stone immediately AFTER swapping minds with the target. This is permanent unless dispelled, but dispelling the stone will not undo the mental swap. This spell deals the equivalent of a d20 potential damage per power level and the same result of potential stress. If this potential damage would kill the target and the potential stress would also drive them insane, they are turned to stone after swapping minds. Partial damage can be ignored as described in "Immunity to Normal Weapons".



CHALET of  
DR. BRENNER



to  
THE VALLEY



HUNTER'S  
CAMP

X - STONE  
BEAR

VILLAGE



PASTURE



KOSOVEL  
FARM



X - PILGRIM'S  
WAGON

THE  
**TRAIL**  
of STONE and  
SORROW

X - CATOBLEPAS



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