

Schauermärchen

A Very Scary Little Game



by
John Wick

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Now kids and cats and long-tail rats
will nevermore be seen
They've all been ground to sausage meats
In Dunderback's Machine

— Children's Folk Song

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(the German Who Walks)*



Introduction

The Village is made of rust, oil and steam. Every corner is jagged, catching and ripping clothes. Thick black clouds of smog keep the sun and moon far away from the Village and no waves ever roll up on the shore. The sea sits like a corpse, its dark waters still and silent. Iron clocks hang over the streets, clicking away the hours, but none of them tell the same time.

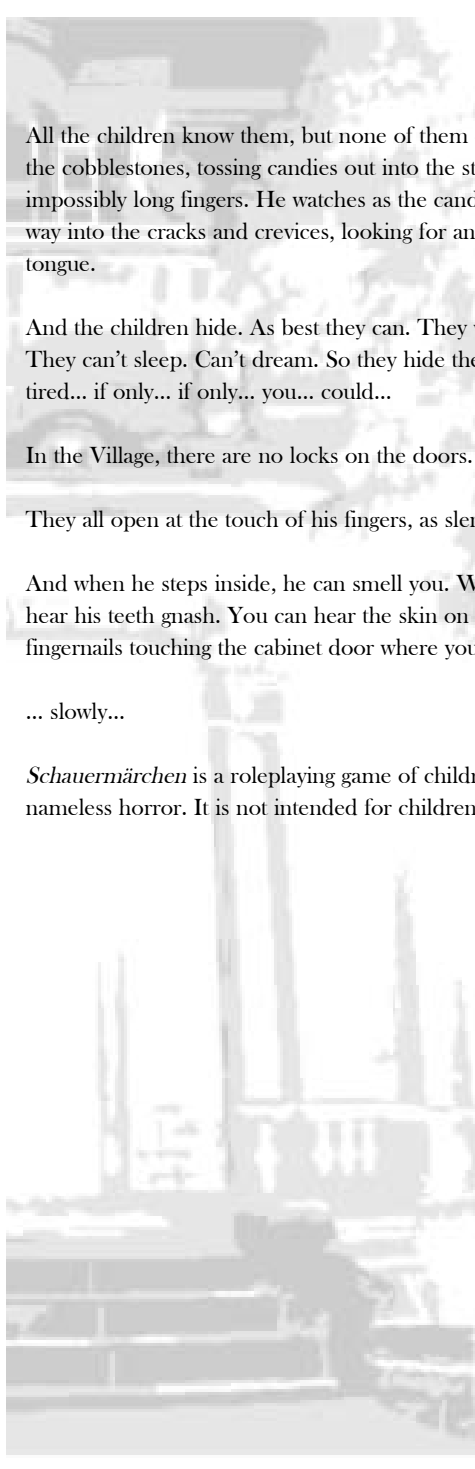
The cold, damp days are awful, but when the sky turns from dark to pitch, the cold wind whips through the Village's thin streets, and the lamp posts flicker to life. There's the sound of a carnival's calliope trickling in from the east and the *clip-clap clip-clap* of a silver-tipped cane on the cobblestones.

There are no carpenters in the Village, no coopers or blacksmiths. No tanners, no glassiers. No fishermen, no farmers, no butchers, no bakers, no candlestick makers. All the buildings are empty and filled with junk as if everyone picked up and left, taking everything valuable with them. Only the children are left behind.

No grown-ups, no parents, no older brothers and sisters. Just children, wandering through half-empty buildings making tools and toys out of the junk they find. They awaken in the Orphanage, a building empty except for cast-iron beds and the stale hospital smell. They awaken in the empty building... and they never dream again.

But the children are not alone in the Village. There are two others. One of them lives in the tall house on the hill, sending a deep shadow across the center of the Village. The children hear the tinkling of an out-of-tune piano and the garbled voice singing along with it. Songs of gleeful murder, songs of graveyard dances. Then, at night, he steps from the front door, his hat on his head, his cane in hand, and he walks through the Village's cramped streets, his smile flashing, his eyes hidden behind black glass, his skin as pale as the moon hidden by the thick clouds high above.

The other is a frail-looking woman, clouded by the colors of the sky. Bright blues twist around her, her long, white arms falling dull at her side. The silent woman dressed in blue silks, her face mercifully hidden behind a thick veil. He speaks to her in a high, broken voice, singing to her sometimes, but she says nothing, only follows alongside, as silent as the sea.



All the children know them, but none of them dare look. With every step, he clicks his cane on the cobblestones, tossing candies out into the streets, into the gutters, into the alleyways with his impossibly long fingers. He watches as the candies trickle down from his fingers, finding their way into the cracks and crevices, looking for any shift in the shadows, listening for any slip of the tongue.

And the children hide. As best they can. They woke up here and they can't go back to sleep. They can't sleep. Can't dream. So they hide the best they can while their eyelids grow heavy. So tired... if only... if only... you... could...

In the Village, there are no locks on the doors. No bars on the windows.

They all open at the touch of his fingers, as slender as spider's legs.

And when he steps inside, he can smell you. Wherever you are. Wherever you hide. You can hear his teeth gnash. You can hear the skin on his dry fingers flittering. Hear his long, thin fingernails touching the cabinet door where you're hiding. It opens slowly...

... slowly...

Schauermärchen is a roleplaying game of children trapped in a nameless Village, hunted by a nameless horror. It is not intended for children.

Game

Children awaken in the Orphanage. The first thing they notice is that the building is empty. All that's left are beds, wire hangers and other junk. No food. No water.

The Orphanage is on the edge of Village. When they exit, they're standing on a small hill, looking down at the ruin below. The Village looks like it's been at the bottom of a sewage tank for fifty years. It smells. All the metal is rusted. All the stones are slick and slimy. The sky is black with clouds. No sign of the sun.

Down below, the other children in the Village begin to stir. A few of them are even walking this way. They're coming to explain what's happened... at least, what they know.

Hand out a blank piece of paper to each player. Don't worry about details; there aren't any. Every kid has two Traits: **Hope** and **Fear**.

The rules are simple. Every kid starts with two Ranks in each Trait. Whenever your kid acts out of Hope, he gets another Hope Point. Whenever he acts out of Fear, he gets another Fear Point. When you get a number of Points equal to your Rank, your Rank goes up by 1. Whenever one Trait goes up, the other one goes down.

Acting Out of Hope

Whenever you put someone else's safety ahead of yours, whenever you do something brave, whenever you put yourself in danger, whenever you help another child overcome her fears, you get a Hope Point.

Acting Out of Fear

Whenever you put your safety ahead of someone else's, whenever you hide, whenever you hesitate from putting yourself in danger, you get a Fear Point.

Rolling Dice

Players only roll dice when a Risk is involved. A Risk is an important action; one that has an impact on the story.

Whenever your kid takes a Risk – an action who's outcome is uncertain – roll dice based on what kind of action it is. Is it a Hopeful action or a Fearful action? Roll a number of dice equal to that

Trait's Rank. If you're hiding from the Bad Man, roll a number of dice equal to your Fear. If you're distracting the Bad Man so other kids can escape, roll a number of dice equal to your Hope.

The Game Master also rolls dice. He rolls one die for Easy Risks, two dice for Difficult Risks and four dice for Hard Risks.

Each 4 and 5 is worth one success.

Each 6 is worth two successes.

Each success allows you or the GM to state one Fact about the Risk you just took. Whoever rolled fewer successes goes first. Facts one player states cannot be contradicted by another player, but they can be modified.

Example

As he's running away from the Bad Man, Annie's kid wants to jump from one rooftop to another. The GM decides this is a Difficult Risk and that she has to use her Fear Dice to do it. Annie has a 3 Fear, so she rolls four dice. Because it is a Difficult Risk, the GM rolls two dice.

Annie rolls a 4, 2, 1, and 1. Only one success.

The GM rolls a 4 and a 5. That's two successes. Because Annie rolled less successes, she goes first.

She uses her single success and says, "I jump across the gap between rooftops and make it to the other side."

Then, the GM uses one success and says, "Yes, but the shingles snap on the rooftop, and you slip."

He uses the second success then and says, "You fall, but catch the edge of the roof, hanging there by one hand."

A Matter of Intent

"Not all actions have good or bad intentions."

Wrong. All intentions have intent. Even if it's just idle curiosity. Every action has motive; people who do dangerous or risky things for no reason at all... well, that's the definition of "insane."

Every action has intent. Nobody does anything for no reason at all. So, how do you judge whether or not a mundane action is out of Hope or Fear? Easy.

Any action that isn't either out of Hope or Fear isn't important enough to justify a die roll.

When contesting another character – kid or horror – you both roll dice and use the very same system.

If nobody rolls 4, 5, or 6, the GM narrates what happens and the player gets a Fear Point.

Injury & Death

There is a good chance a child will be hurt during a Risk. This usually happens when the GM uses one of his successes. If a child becomes hurt, mark the injury down on your sheet. Anytime you try a Risk while injured it will be harder. Each injury (that would affect the Risk) adds 1 die to the GM's Difficulty.

The Village

To the north, you can see Mountains. They reach up high above the black clouds. To the south is the Sea. It sits still, black, and threatening. Some kids tried making a boat once. They never came back. To the West and East is the Forest. The trees sway in the strong wind. Sometimes, as it whips through the branches, you can hear laughter. The gibbering laughter of something not quite human. Every once in a while, you can hear the cry of a train whistle far off in the distance. More often than not, it sounds as if it was coming from across the water.

The Village itself has many buildings. Most of them are empty except for piles of junk: broken plates and cups, bent forks, smashed tables, cold ovens, wet books and magazines. Sometimes, under all that junk, is something useful. A record player – but no records. A fountain pen – but no ink. Bullets – but no gun.

The Orphanage

This is where new children arrive. Every morning they show up, asleep in the beds, wearing whatever they were wearing when they fell asleep. They are cold, hungry, and confused.

Things you can find here:

Beds
Bedpans
Bed frames
Broken thermometer
Bandages
Mostly empty medicine bottles

The Baker

This place is filled with ripped bags of flour, wheat, and sugar. They're mostly empty, although a bit of work could gather together a handful of each.

Things you can find here:

Ripped bag of flour
Ripped bag of wheat
Ripped bag of sugar
Baking pans
A book with the pages torn out
Broken measuring cup

The Butcher

The butcher's has a pile of refuse shoved into the corner. It is otherwise empty. The cold case has no ice and the big door in the back that leads to the cooler has a smashed lock.

Things you can find here:

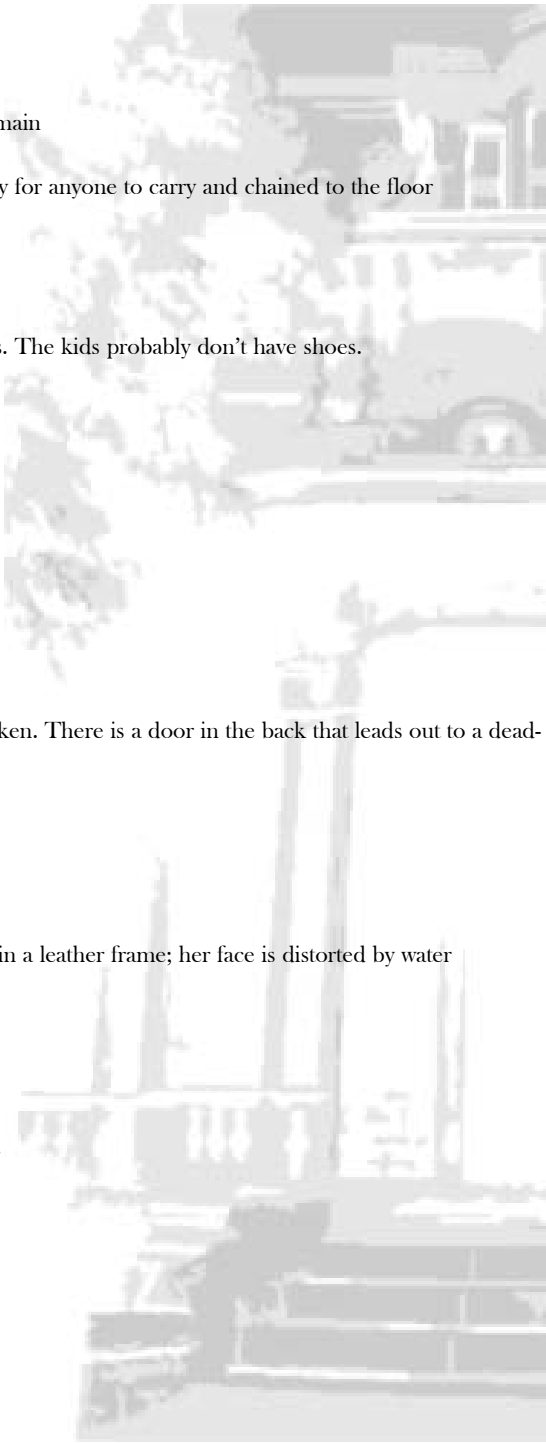
Handle of a butcher's knife
Broken meat hook (no sharp points)
Butcher's apron
A copper ring turned green (big enough for an adult's ring finger)
A meat tenderizer
A ream of butcher's paper (stained and sticky with old blood)

The Candlestick Maker

This place is filled with cobwebs and little black spiders.

Things you can find here:

A little nub of a candle



Two wicks
A box of matches – only two matches remain
Broken candlesticks
Large vats for making candles – too heavy for anyone to carry and chained to the floor
A bellows

The Glass Blower

The floor here is covered in broken glass. The kids probably don't have shoes.

Things you can find here:

A mirror (unbroken)
Broken chandelier
Long steel tube
One thick glove
A compass
Glass cup with broken handle

The Shoemaker

The door is stuck, but the window is broken. There is a door in the back that leads out to a dead-end alley.

Things you can find here:

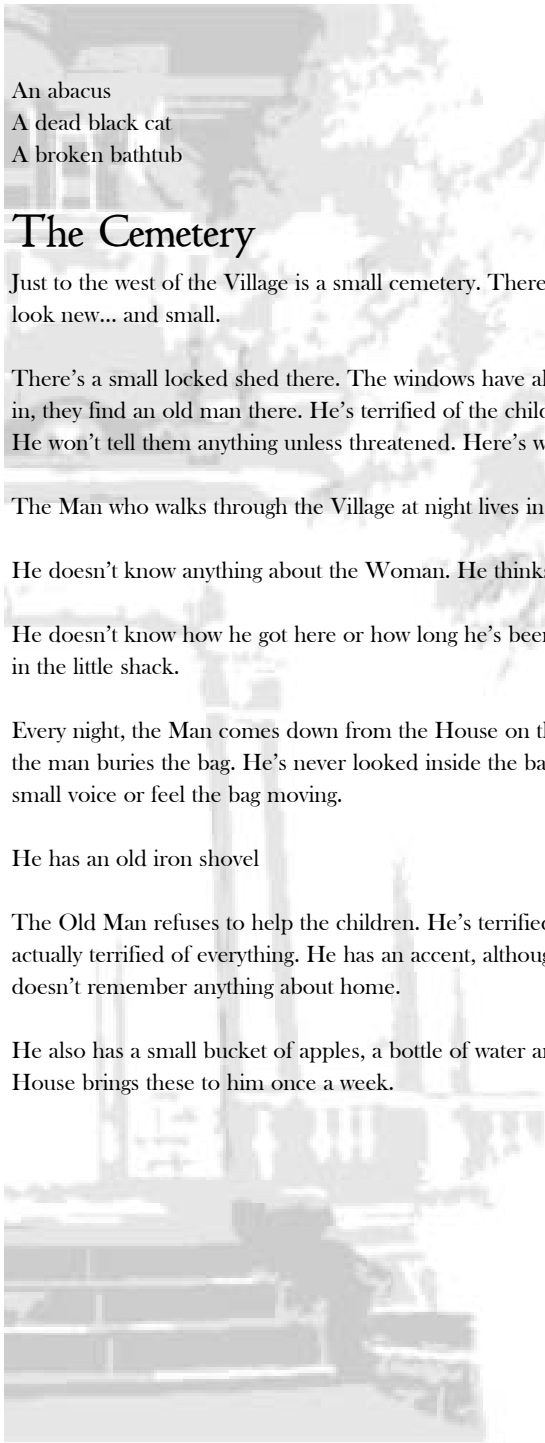
One shoe, size 10 1/2 (men's)
Measuring tape
Wind up phonograph
Photograph of a beautiful young woman in a leather frame; her face is distorted by water
Shoehorn
A sock

The Grocer

The grocer's smells bad, like rotten milk.

Things you can find here:

Rotten fruit
Rotten milk (in unbroken glass bottles)
Rotten potatoes (in potato bags)



An abacus
A dead black cat
A broken bathtub

The Cemetery

Just to the west of the Village is a small cemetery. There are no gravestones, but the graves all look new... and small.

There's a small locked shed there. The windows have all been blackened. If the children break in, they find an old man there. He's terrified of the children and will try to run away from them. He won't tell them anything unless threatened. Here's what he knows:

The Man who walks through the Village at night lives in the house on the hill.

He doesn't know anything about the Woman. He thinks they are brother and sister.

He doesn't know how he got here or how long he's been here. He just woke up one day in bed in the little shack.

Every night, the Man comes down from the House on the Hill. He gives the old man a bag and the man buries the bag. He's never looked inside the bag, although sometimes, he can hear a small voice or feel the bag moving.

He has an old iron shovel

The Old Man refuses to help the children. He's terrified of the Man from the House. He's actually terrified of everything. He has an accent, although it is difficult to tell from where. He doesn't remember anything about home.

He also has a small bucket of apples, a bottle of water and a lump of cheese. The Man from the House brings these to him once a week.

The Woods

If the children venture into the Woods, they'll be surrounded by tall trees and cold winds. Deeper in the woods, they may stumble across a broken down shack. A woman lives in the shack, under the bed. Her hairs have been pulled out and her fingernails torn out. She has no teeth and her eyes are mad. She laughs at the children when they approach, calling all the boys "Jacob" and all the girls "Rachel." She won't leave from under the bed, no matter how the children coax her. She cannot walk - her legs are useless.

She threatens the children if they stay too long. She'll tell them that her husband is coming home soon and he'll kill them and feed them to her.

Things you can find here:

Chopped wood

An axe head - no handle

Dry leaves

A cast-iron bed frame with no mattress (and a screaming woman under it)

Empty cabinet

Empty cupboard

The House on the Hill

High over the Village stands the House where the Man lives. In order to get to the House, the kids must walk up a long road through the Woods. The walk takes at least an hour. There are no lights out here, but there are many sounds... including the laughter.

Once they reach the House, they'll find all the doors locked and the windows protected by iron bars. There is a front door, a back door and a cellar door. The front and back door are locked with two locks. The cellar door is locked with a padlock.

The First Floor

The front door opens up into the Entryway. The back door leads to the Kitchen.

The Entryway

The floors are tiled like a chessboard: black and white. Four doors lead from here. A stairway runs along the west wall up to the Second Floor.

The Red Room

This room feels bad. It makes your guts knot up and your head swoon. This is a bad place. The walls are covered in red wallpaper and the furniture is red and copper. White drapes cover the furniture: a couch, loveseat and a wooden writing desk. While in this room, everyone's Fear is one Rank higher.

The Blue Room

This room is very large. Two doors from the Entryway lead into here. A large dining table sits in here with six chairs. At the south end of the room, there is a couch and a loveseat with a small table between them. A picture of a woman is on the east wall. She's wearing a blue dress, her face uncovered. She's beautiful... and the same woman in the picture frame in the Baker's. This room is very cold; colder than the rest of the House. Another door leads from here to the Kitchen.

The Kitchen

In the cabinets here, children can find plates, saucers, and silverware (yes, that includes knives). There is no food in here. The back door leads outside. A cast-iron spiral staircase leads up to the Parlor on the Second Floor. It is untrustworthy at best. There's also a small locked door. When opened, it reveals a wooden stairwell leading downward into a dark cellar. The smell of wet wood reaches up and grabs anyone looking down.

The Library

The bookshelves are empty, as are the seven reading chairs. The Library extends upwards to the second floor where a balcony spirals around the room. A chandelier fixture hangs from the ceiling, but there is no chandelier.

The Second Floor

The stairs creak when the children climb them. As they do, one or more of them looks down and sees a sudden flash of movement. A wedding dress, a scream and a rope... the sound of a neck breaking. At the top of the stairs, if they look, the children will find a part of the banister that looks scarred - as if a rope were tied here.

The Master Bedroom

The bed is large and curtained. There is no way to see if anyone is sleeping in it without pulling the curtains aside. The curtains look black in this light – the only way to see in this room is with artificial light.

There is a desk and a dresser. The room smells stale and feels very cold.

There is also a small bathroom. The curtain in the tub is shut. The mirror is smashed. The sink is full of black water.

As for the bed and the tub... both have curtains obscuring their contents. Pushing them aside reveals... nothing. But the tub is full of black water and the bed... is warm.

The Other Bedroom

This is obviously a woman's room. The colors are softer. There is a great deal of blue. The mirror on the dressing table is intact. In fact, most of the furniture looks perfect (unlike the rest of this place). There is a hair brush on the dressing table and other little baubles.

The bed is empty. The bathroom smells perfumed. There is the impression that someone *lives here*. Things look used, although maintained. When the children are in the room, there is always the sense that whoever lives here may come back *at any moment*.

And remember – the room is blue.

The Study

An empty room. Barren. No other exit than the door you just entered. Mounds of trash are piled up here and there. Nothing useful.

The Parlor

A cast-iron spiral staircase leads down from this room into the Kitchen. It is untrustworthy at best. This room has many chairs – all overturned – and a small couch. There are tables on either side of the couch and a coffee table in front of it. Two small bookshelves, both empty. A double door opens to a balcony on the south side of the House.

The Ballroom

There's a piano in here, standing atop the bandstand. It is out of tune and most of the keys do not work. Chairs lie on the dance floor, upturned and broken. The windows are spaced out just enough to provide halos of light, shining in to the dark room. Between the light of the windows, the room is pitch black.

The Cellar

The Cellar can be reached through the Kitchen and the Cellar Door outside the House. The outside door is padlocked and barred from the inside.

Coming down from the Kitchen is a slow process; the wooden stairs are rotten and narrow. There are small, bloody handprints on the wall and small muddy footprints on the stairs.

Down at the bottom, the dirt floor is almost freezing. There is no natural light in here. No windows at all. Lighting the room is difficult: it is very large.

In the cellar is a furnace. It is dark and cold, but there are blackened bones inside. And skulls.

There is also a chopping block. It is stained red. On either side of the chopping block are two leather straps. They are also stained.

On the wall is a set of butcher's tools. They shine like stars. They do not look like anything the children have seen before: they are curved in strange ways with letters they do not understand branded into the silver. There are six tools. There are also a leather apron and gloves. The gloves and apron also have strange markings on them.

Five children are down here, each lashed to the wall. They are naked and terrified. Each of them screams when they see light, begging not to be taken first. When they realize other children are here, they plead to be let go. That should be when the Man of the House shows up.

The Grinning Man

He is very tall, well-dressed and grinning. Always grinning.

He does not roll Hope or Fear dice. He just rolls 8 dice for everything he does. He has no qualms about killing children, although he would rather capture them first. It should be obvious what he does to them after he catches them.

The Man cannot be killed, except by his own butcher's tools. When wounded with these tools, his body bellows black smoke and he screams. He must suffer six wounds before his body collapses.

Finally, the children must use the tools to take the Grinning Man apart. He cannot be left in one piece, or he will rise again the following night.

If the children dismantle the Grinning Man, they will all grow very sleepy. If they fall asleep, they'll wake in their beds the following morning.



The Blue Woman

She's still there.

If you turn off the lights, look into a mirror
and say her name seven times,
she will come to you.

*This one is for Mary.
May you find peace, sweet lady.*

*In 1307, the Pope gave the King of France permission
to raid the coffers of his most trusted Order:
the Poor Knights of the Temple of Jerusalem.*

*When his soldiers arrived, thirty Knights Templar were
gone and the treasure was gone with them.*

In 2005, the Questions remain.

Where did the Templars go...

... why were they persecuted...

... and what was the Treasure they carried?

*The Answers are more dangerous
than you could ever imagine.*



A Little Game about a Big Secret