

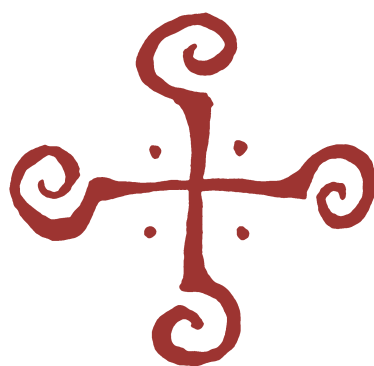
FREE LEAGUE

VAESEN



A WICKED SECRET

AND OTHER MYSTERIES



Based on the book *Vaesen* by
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A WICKED SECRET

AND OTHER MYSTERIES

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PREFACE

Mysteries are the heart of *Vaesen*. Brief and focused tales of strange encounters, delicate problems and heart-pounding horror – much like the short stories of Selma Lagerlöf, M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe. This book contains four Mysteries from across the Mythic North letting the players face four powerful vaesen on their own lands.

In *The Silver of the Sea*, something ugly is stirring in the beautiful archipelago on Sweden's west coast. The player characters will need to travel to the god-forsaken Wrecker Isle to investigate the case of a murdered priest. Once there, they will encounter the feared herring baron and other grim-faced locals, all wary of meddling outsiders.

In *A Wicked Secret*, the player characters travel to the vast forests of the north to investigate strange sights in a remote and isolated village. Once there, they will realize that all is not what it seems and that some people want to continue their way of life the way they have always done, no matter the cost.

The Night Sow is the tale about a weird and murderous creature roaming the southern coastal town of Mölle. While investigating a string of murders and disappearances, the player characters will come to face an old evil summoned to battle the sins of modernity.

Lastly, in *The Song of the Falling Star*, the player characters will travel to Arensburg on the island of Oesel in what today is Estonia. There they will investigate the case of a missing child and discover clues that point to ancient craters and the vaesen that call these places holy.

These four mysteries can be played as one-shots or, with a little work by the Gamemaster, be strung together to form a short campaign on their own. So, go forth and discover these strange tales of vaesen and make them your own!



THE SILVER OF THE SEA

THIS MYSTERY FOR the role-playing game *Vaesen* brings the player characters to the wild and barren Swedish west coast, at the time a haven for privateers, wreckers, herring barons and other riffraff. The mystery will test the characters' deductive reasoning, social skills, and—if they are not careful—their ability to fight for their lives.

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based. There is an invitation to kick off the session, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to the fishing hamlet Fjällbacka and Wrecker Isle. The section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Game-

master will initiate at some appropriate time during the mystery – and a catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in their efforts. But first we will look back at the events leading up to the mystery.

BACKGROUND

Life in the Bohuslän archipelago has always been closely linked to the sea and the gifts brought up from its depths. When the herring come in, the islanders live in rich abundance – when the herring inexplicably disappear after a few decades, they descend into dire poverty and hardship.

At the beginning of the century when this game takes place, the herring were absent for many years, and a ter-

rible famine ravaged the islands outside Fjällbacka. Like many other fishermen at the time, spouses Benjamin and Abela Amundsson struggled to put food on the table for themselves and their three sons Paul, Pete, and Pace.

The Amundssons saw no other option than to resort to wrecking. The archipelago is difficult to navigate, with strong currents and treacherous shallows. Full-rigged ships often passed through there on their way to Christiania or Gothenburg. Hard to maneuver with their huge square sails, many were sunk by storms, along with their precious cargo and coffers.

At first the Amundssons only looted abandoned shipwrecks, but when one day the captain of a sunken vessel came floating in on a raft with the ship's cash box on his lap, they beat him to death and stole the money. The murder was never discovered, prompting the Amundssons to grow increasingly callous.

Between wrecking raids, the family continued to fish. One day they caught something strange in their net – a small, human-like creature. Benjamin wanted to throw the toddler back into the sea, but Abela would not let him, insisting that they should take it home with them. And so they did.

The boy from the sea, whom Abela named Zacharias, quickly grew and proved to have a God-given talent for fishing and sailing. As a child Zacharias was brought along as the family plundered shipwrecks, and with him present the raids were always very successful.

Benjamin, a bitter and jealous old man, never cared for the boy and would often beat him. But once Zacharias outgrew his father, he no longer tolerated the abuse. One day when Benjamin was about to administer another beating, the boy hit back. Hard. The fight ended with the father dead on the floor. The family did not mourn the old crank's passing; on the contrary, Abela was happy to be rid of him.

Abela took charge of the family, with Zacharias as her greatest ally. The slow-witted siblings Paul, Pete, and Pace did as they were told. With the father out of the way, Zacharias explained that he could increase the family's wealth, making them rich beyond their wildest dreams. All they had to do was offer a human sacrifice to his true mother – a mermaid – every new

moon. And they did, finding it easy to come across suitable victims thanks to their wrecking and piracy.

The result was immediate and overwhelming – not only for the Amundssons, but for the entire archipelago. The herring returned in unprecedented quantities and marked the beginning of a herring period the likes of which Bohuslän had never seen before.

Abela and Zacharias had great plans for the times ahead. With the money they stole from wrecked and passing ships they bought a decrepit old house on Wrecker Isle which had been used for train oil production during the last herring period. They renovated the place and opened an inn for fishermen and other seafarers that came during the subsequent herring rush.

The inn was an immediate success and Wrecker Isle became a hub for maritime traffic in the region. Some days the sea lane was so clogged with boats and ships that people could walk across them halfway to Fjällbacka. Soon even the passenger boats between Gothenburg and Christiania stopped at the huge, newly built docks of Wrecker Isle.

While Abela was running the inn with an iron fist – allegedly selling more than 20,000 liters of liquor a year – Zacharias dedicated himself to the herring industry. He set up the region's largest fish saltery on Wrecker Isle and had a large warehouse built next to the inn. The stench of the herring saltery spread far and wide, but most did not mind, as long as the liquor and money kept flowing. The Amundsson family had struck it rich, to say the least.

Wrecker Isle attracted all manner of dockside scum and hooligans, and the inn became known for its wild and violent nightlife. This did not sit well with everyone – particularly some members of the local church. Wrecker Isle was a thorn in the side of Vicar Carl Eric Hedqvist on the mainland.

Hedqvist, a disciple of the great evangelist Henric Shartau, visited Wrecker Isle on several occasions to put an end to the debauched lifestyle that characterized the place. His goal was to convert the herring baron, as Zacharias was now called, to an honest and decent life. Each time the vicar was thrown out, as no one on Wrecker Isle cared about what he had to say.

But inside Hedqvist blazed the flames of religious fervor, and he refused to give up.

On a late summer's night, one month before the player characters become involved in this mystery, Vicar Hedqvist once again returned to Wrecker Isle. This time he carried a pistol, wise from previous experiences on the island. He confronted Abela and Zacharias at the inn, accusing them of doing the Devil's bidding. A commotion broke out and shots were fired, resulting in the vicar being thrown out yet again.

But Zacharias had had enough. Drunk on aquavit, he came up with an idea. The next new moon was due in only two days. Originally, his plan had been to sacrifice the young waitress Justina Johansson to the mermaid. Instead, Zacharias decided to kill two birds with one stone – appeasing the mermaid while at the same time getting rid of the insufferable vicar once and for all.

With the plan laid out, Zacharias told Paul, Pete, and Pace to find the priest, who was sulking at the

docks, waiting to catch the boat home at dawn. The brothers overpowered him and dragged him into the herring warehouse, where they tied him up and put him in one of the barrels.

Two days later Zacharias, Abela, and the three brothers loaded the barrel (with the priest still inside) onto their sloop and sailed out to Deep Reef, where all sacrifices to the mermaid take place. But the sloppy brothers had failed to see that the priest still had the pistol tucked into one of his boots. As they opened the barrel, Hedqvist drew his pistol and fired. After hitting Paul in the shoulder, he found himself surrounded with only one shot left. Rather than being sacrificed to the mermaid the priest shot himself in the head.

This was a disaster for Zacharias. The mermaid had to be appeased, but she only accepted living sacrifices. There was not enough time to find a new victim before dawn. He raised an oar at Paul, the oldest and dumbest



of the brothers, and dropped him with a single blow. None of the others dared protest, and so Paul fell victim to the mermaid. They dumped the priest's body into the water as well, before returning home.

The vicar's disappearance caused concern on the mainland, especially from his adept, a young priest named Oscar Uddgren. A week later Hedqvist's corpse washed ashore at Whale Isle, where it was found by a family of sailors and brought to Fjällbacka. Even though the body was badly damaged, the cause of death was identified as a gunshot to the head at point blank range, and the case was written off as a suicide.

Uddgren was not convinced. He suspected that the herring baron on Wrecker Isle was involved, but did not know how to prove it. He needed help. During his studies in Upsala a few years prior, he came into contact with members of the Society and assisted in one of their investigations. Uddgren decided it was time to call in a favor.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery is the one between the young priest Oscar Uddgren and the herring baron Zacharias Amundsson. Uddgren is convinced that the herring baron and his mother are responsible for the death of his mentor, Hedqvist. He wants the player characters to help him expose the herring baron as the Devil's henchman and put a permanent end to his operation. Zacharias and Abela, on the other hand, want to stop Uddgren and the player characters, making sure that nothing disrupts the commerce on Wrecker Isle or the sacrifices to the mermaid.

The secondary conflict is linked to the primary one and also concerns Oscar Uddgren. What he does not tell the player characters is that he has another reason to distrust the Amundssons. His childhood crush Justina Johansson has taken up employment on Wrecker Isle, and Uddgren is convinced that she was brought there against her will and forced to work at the inn. This is not the case, however – life on Wrecker Isle is certainly hard, but Justina makes a decent wage and is there by choice.

INVITATION

This mystery takes place in late summer and starts with the Society receiving a letter at their castle in Upsala. The letter, which is also presented as *Handout 1A* at the end of this book and available for download on Free League's website, reads as follows:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Oscar Uddgren, priest in the fishing village of Fjällbacka. It is with a heavy heart that I write these lines. I am at wits end with my current predicament, and so I turn to you. I met with members of your exalted order during my studies in Upsala a few years ago, and now I place my hope in your particular talents and expertise.

My best friend and mentor, Vicar Carl Eric Hedqvist, is dead. His body was found a week ago, washed up on a beach in the Fjällbacka archipelago. The coroner has identified the cause of death as a self-inflicted gunshot to the head and written it off as a suicide. I refuse to accept this conclusion, certain that there is something unnatural afoot. And I know who is responsible. What I lack is proof and the means to do something about it.

I last saw Carl Eric alive one week before he was found dead. He was once again heading out to Wrecker Isle in the archipelago, to bring the word of God to the depraved seafarers frequenting the inn on the island. Wrecker Isle is a hub for maritime traffic and the site of the largest herring saltery in the archipelago. Some days the sea lane is so clogged with boats and ships that people can walk across them halfway to Fjällbacka. Wrecker Isle reeks with herring and sin, a godless stain on this Earth.

The proprietors of this den of thieves, herring baron Zacharias Amundsson and his mother Abela – whom the locals call “the Godmother” – are openly defying the teachings of our Lord and have thrown out the good vicar every time he visited Wrecker Isle.

I am convinced that the herring baron and the Godmother – along with Zacharias' feeble-minded but dangerous older brothers Paul, Pete, and Pace – are doing the Devil's bidding and are to blame for Carl Eric's untimely death. I shall go to Wrecker Isle to find proof of their guilt and face these henchmen of Satan face-to-face. I require your assistance in this perilous endeavor. If you cherish your God and wish to help His humble servant in his time of greatest need, meet me in Fjällbacka at your earliest convenience.

*With highest regards,
Oscar Uddgren*



OSCAR UDDGREN

“Begone, Satan!”

Like his mentor, Carl Eric Hedqvist, the 25-year old priest Oscar Uddgren is a disciple of the great evangelist Henric Schartau. Schartauism is a conservative and very strict Christian doctrine which, at the time of this story, is widespread in the western parts of Sweden. Uddgren is zealous in his faith and loyal to Vicar Hedqvist, and would do anything to honor and avenge his mentor.

But the young priest harbors other strong feelings as well: a fierce desire for his childhood crush Justina Johansson, whom he has never managed to get over. But Uddgren is ashamed of his romantic feelings and tells himself, as well as others, that he simply wants to save Justina from the grip of the evil herring baron.

Uddgren is a skinny but vigorous young man with short dark hair and a clean-shaven face. He always wears his black cassock.

- ◆ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 1**
RANGED COMBAT 1 VIGILANCE 3
OBSERVATION 3 INSPIRATION 4
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol, cassock, crucifix

PREPARATIONS

As usual, the player characters can prepare for the journey at their headquarters and thereby gain an Advantage (see chapter 9 in the core rulebook).

Player characters who go looking for information about Wrecker Isle in Upsala will not find much, as the settlement is remote and recently established. With regards to Fjällbacka, the characters can learn the basic facts – for example that the fishing village was founded roughly 200 years ago and is now a hub for herring fishing on the West Coast. Its ups and downs have always depended on the quantities of herring available – a commodity also known as “the silver of the sea.”

THE JOURNEY

The characters have a long journey ahead of them, first by stagecoach, then by boat through Göta Canal, and another stagecoach afterwards. As usual, the player characters can gain an Advantage during the journey. After several days of arduous travel, they finally reach Fjällbacka, a small fishing village cowering under the huge mountain of Vetteberget. It is summer and the weather is sizzling hot. The new moon is almost here.

On the horizon across the shining sea, the player characters can see the rounded shapes of numerous barren, granite islands, increasingly blue the farther out one looks. Give the player characters some time to take in the scene and maybe ask around the docks. They are immediately greeted by a young man in priestly garb with an austere look on his face, seemingly unbothered by the heat and the noise around him. He introduces himself as Oscar Uddgren and thanks the player characters for coming so quickly.

He leads them onto a hired sloop whose skipper is setting off for Wrecker Isle amid a light summer breeze. The voyage takes about an hour, giving the player characters time to speak some more with Uddgren. In addition to what he mentioned in the letter, the priest can disclose the following:

- ◆ The Amundssons were once a poor fishing family. It is said that they made a living from wrecking.

The father, Benjamin, died under dubious circumstances – some say he was beaten to death by his youngest son, Zacharias.

- ✦ When the herring returned some thirty years ago, “Godmother” Abela bought Wrecker Isle and opened an inn on the island. Business has been booming ever since.
- ✦ Zacharias runs the herring saltery on the island and is commonly known as the herring baron. He is a clever man and quite popular with the ladies – unlike his three older brothers Paul, Pete, and Pace, who are all unsightly and simple-minded.
- ✦ Rumor has it that Paul has gone missing. He has not been seen at the inn for several weeks.
- ✦ Vicar Carl Eric Hedqvist was armed with a revolver during his last trip to Wrecker Isle, having had his life threatened on previous visits.
- ✦ According to the coroner, Hedqvist was killed by a gunshot to the head at point blank range, fired from his own revolver. The weapon has yet to be found.

ARRIVAL

Even from far away the player characters can tell that they are approaching Wrecker Isle. They see countless fishing boats and freighters moored far out in the sea lane, bow against stern. They hear shouting sailors and snapping sails, and smell the sour stench of herring and train oil spreading like disease in the gentle breeze.

As they come closer, the player characters first notice the yellow herring warehouse, absolutely massive for such a small island. Next to it are two other wooden buildings, also quite large, but still dwarfed by the warehouse. Uddgren points out the inn and the Amundsson family residence (see the map on page 11).

The stench and the bustle become more and more intense the closer the characters get. The large dock is extremely crowded. Sweaty fishermen and sailors are hauling barrels of herring and train oil between boats and the quay. A full-rigged ship on its way to Gothenburg is about to head out, and a swarm of smaller schooners and barges compete for the space left behind by the large vessel. Small dinghies are

used to transport people and goods between the dock and the numerous ships floating offshore.

Eventually the captain of the player characters’ little sloop finds a vacant berth, and they can climb ashore together with Uddgren. Place the map of Wrecker Isle on the gaming table. They are free to explore the island as they please, but a steady stream of people moves to and from the inn, and the priest suggests that the group head over there to get a room.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters’ visit to Wrecker Isle, and the investigation of the vicar’s death, will lead to reactions from the locals. Unless the player characters steer the development in a different direction, the conflict between the priest Uddgren and the herring baron will end in disaster. The following events can be used to increase the pace of the game when necessary, and to push the players toward the final confrontation:

COUNTDOWN

1. Uddgren confronts the waitress Justina at the inn. He wants her to come with him and leave this “*den of sin*” immediately. Justina is reluctant and asks him to calm down. Godmother Abela intervenes and tells the priest to leave. When he refuses, the Godmother asks Pete and Pace to throw him out, which they are more than happy to do. The player characters can intervene if they want. If they try to stop them by force, the brothers will defend themselves. If Pete and Pace are defeated they retreat, but will return at a later time (see paragraph 3 below).
2. Uddgren climbs atop a liquor barrel at the dock and delivers a sermon of fire and brimstone, painting the inn as “*the Devil’s temple on Earth*” and the herring baron as the Evil One himself. Some stay to listen. After a while the audience has had enough and people start throwing bottles at the priest, who refuses to stop. Some sailors (equal in number to the player characters) attack Uddgren and try to shut him up

SUPERNATURAL EVENTS

When Zacharias becomes aware of the player characters' presence on the island, he starts using his magic against them, to test and intimidate them – but subtly, so as not to reveal his true nature. Zacharias will escalate the use of his magic if the player characters continue their investigations. This can be handled as a countdown.

1. A player character notices something supernatural and strange. Perhaps the fish on a player character's plate comes to life and starts talking (a good time to mention the new moon). Perhaps a huge throng of crabs comes massing out of the water, the claws clattering against the rocks. The vision vanishes as quickly as it appeared. No one else sees anything unusual.
2. Several player characters suffer the same terrible nightmare. The room where they are sleeping is filled from the roof down with saltwater that reeks of rotten seaweed and algae. The characters are unable to move and must make a **Fear** test against Fear 1. Their mouths and noses are filled with water, and they must each make a **FORCE** test – those who fail suffer a physical condition. They wake up a moment later, and the water is gone – but they are still sputtering and choking on the dark saltwater...
3. At some point when the player characters are traveling by boat (perhaps on their way to the fishing cabin), or simply find themselves close to the water, a heavy wind springs up and rain comes pouring down. The storm comes out of nowhere – just a few moments earlier there was hardly a cloud in the sky. Great waves crash against the player characters, who must pass a **FORCE** test to avoid being swept into the water. Those who fail must make an **AGILITY** test to swim and get back on board (or ashore). Multiple **AGILITY** tests are allowed, but with each failure the character suffers a physical condition. Other player characters may help. After a few minutes the wind abates as abruptly as it started.

by throwing him into the water. The player characters can intervene if they want.

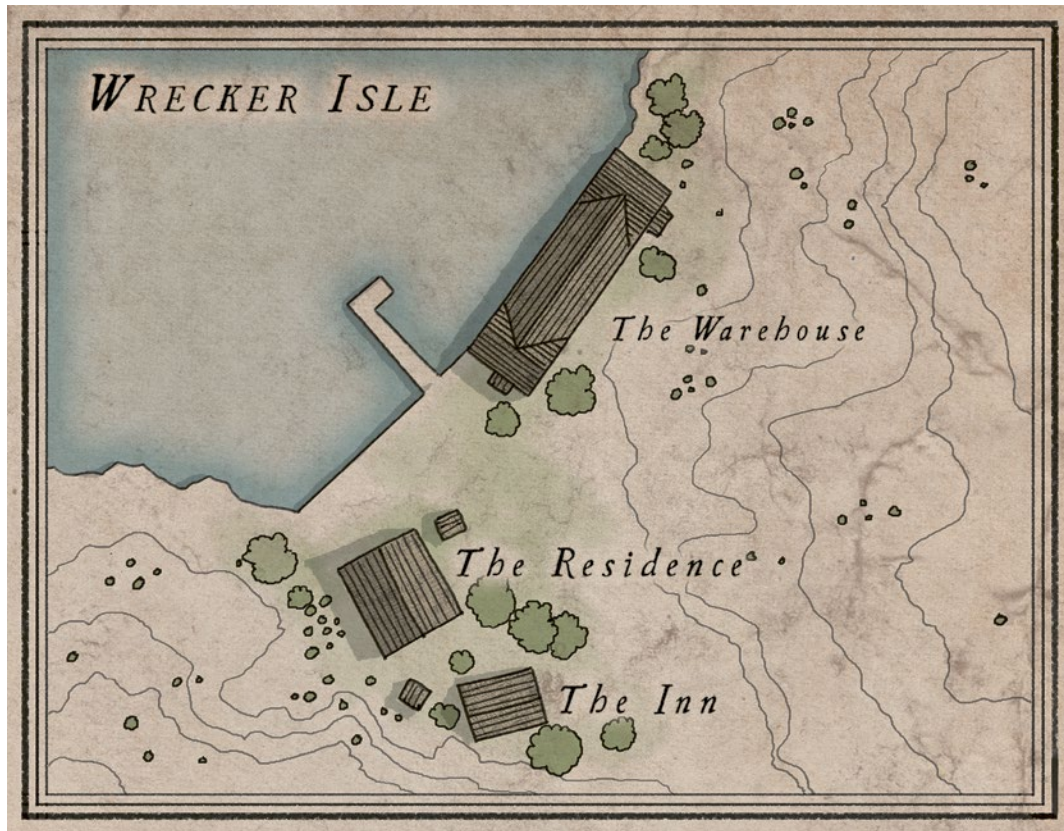
3. The herring baron has concluded that Uddgren and the player characters pose a threat to his operation and must be eliminated. Like Vicar Hedqvist, they will be sacrificed to the mermaid. The herring baron sends Pete and Pace to seize them and place them in separate herring barrels. With the player characters out of the way, Uddgren is considered harmless. If possible, the brothers will target one player character at a time. Captured characters will be loaded onto the herring baron's boat and taken to Deep Reef along with the Godmother and the brothers. You can read more about this under Confrontation.

CATASTROPHE

Uddgren has had enough. Under the cover of darkness he empties several barrels of train oil around the inn and the Amundsson residence, and sets them afire. Both buildings go up in flames, and their occupants come rushing out in panic. Among them is the herring baron himself, stumbling as he slaps at his burning pajamas. Uddgren waits outside with a drawn pistol and shoots Zacharias, who falls dead into the sea. The mermaid wreaks a terrible revenge – a great storm blows in over the archipelago, and boats, cabins, and entire fishing camps are crushed by huge tidal waves. When the storm finally subsides, the herring are gone. A new period of starvation and hardship awaits the Fjällbacka archipelago.

THE NEW MOON

When the player characters arrive on Wrecker Isle it is almost new moon, which means that the mermaid will soon require another sacrifice. You may want to mention the new moon at some point during the opening of the mystery, as a setup for later. Do not forget to have Orvar mention the new moon during his first encounter with the player characters (see *The Inn*).



LOCATIONS

The following paragraphs outline the most important locations which the player characters may investigate in this mystery: the inn, the Amundsson residence, the warehouse, and the fishing cabin. If the characters wish to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is perfectly fine to simply explain that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing for them there.

THE INN

The infamous inn on Wrecker Isle is a sturdy, wooden, two-and-a-half story building. The ground floor holds a dining room, a kitchen, and a storage room, while the two upper floors mainly house the staff and wealthy overnight visitors in small guest rooms.

Here the player characters can be accommodated for a pretty penny – it requires Resources 4 or higher. If none of the player characters can afford it, they will have to sleep on the boat.

The tavern on the ground floor is a lively place almost around the clock. Enveloped in huge clouds of tobacco smoke, sailors sit at folding tables, drinking aquavit and playing cards. Lightly dressed waitresses bearing chicken feathers dance between the tables. On top of a liquor barrel in the corner sits “Godmother” Abela Amundsson, harsh eyes scanning the room, a shotgun in hand, wrapped in an apron so stiff with filth that some say it can stand by itself when she takes it off for the night.

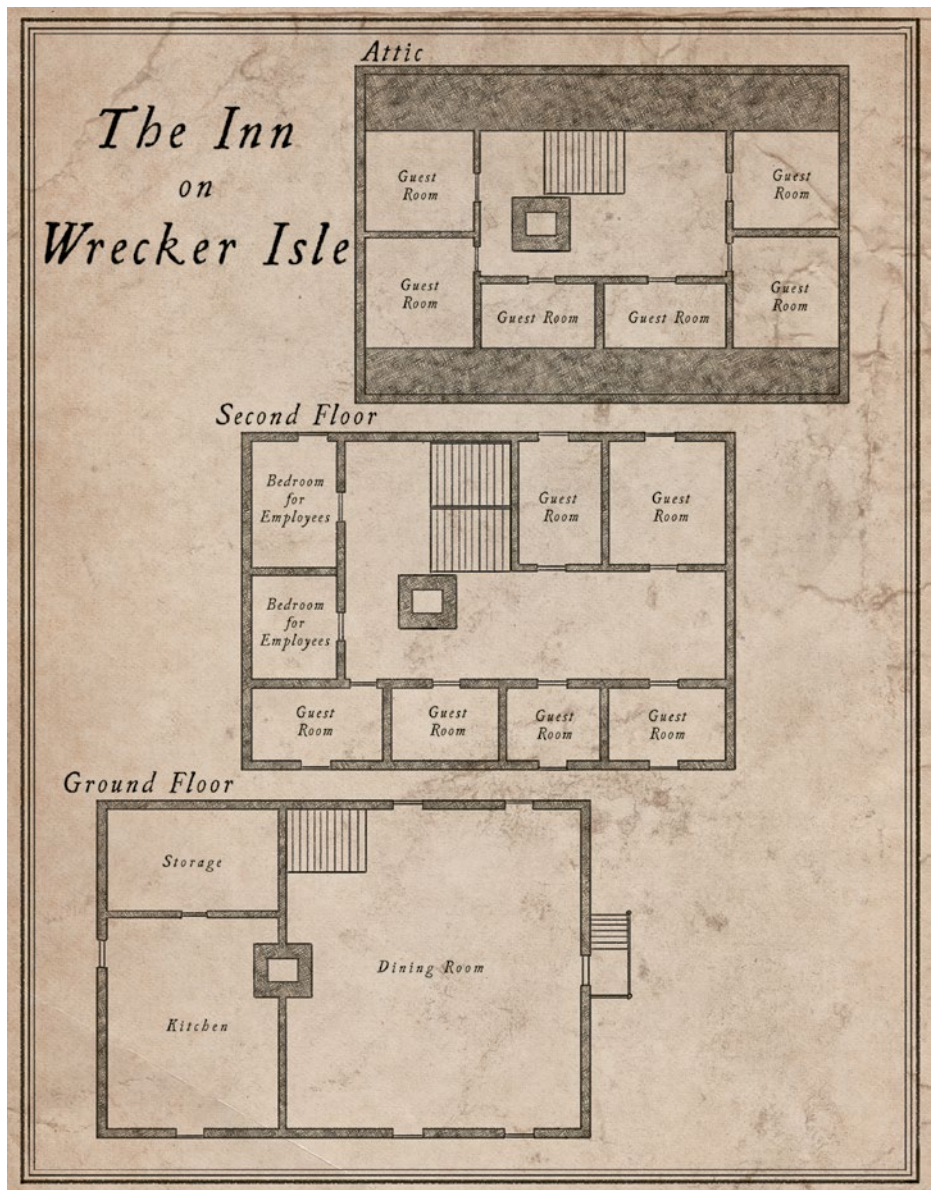
Here the player characters may eat and drink. The inn offers sandwiches smeared with a grease that tastes more like train oil than butter, and beer for those who do not care for hard liquor. The player

characters can talk to the guests and staff to gather information. Abela, Pete and Pace are often at the tavern, as are the waitress Justina and the old fisherman Orvar.

CHALLENGES

The inn is the focal point of the mystery, and many interesting things can happen here. Below are some suggestions on events and challenges:

- ✦ Uddgren recommends that the player characters speak with the waitress Justina Johansson, whom he has known since his youth. She is reluctant to talk, and it takes a **MANIPULATION** test to make her reveal what she knows (see *Clues* below). If the conversation goes on for too long, Abela will interrupt them and tell Justina to get back to work.
- ✦ Godmother Abela and her sons Pete and Pace are unwilling to answer questions (see *Clues*). With a successful **OBSERVATION** test the player characters can tell that the family members know more than they are letting on.
- ✦ Uddgren gets into an argument with two sailors who are harassing the waitress, Justina. They threaten to beat him up, and the player characters can intervene. If a fight breaks out, Godmother Abela raises her shotgun and fires into the ceiling. Pete and Pace throw out the troublemakers, with force if required.
- ✦ The old fisherman Orvar walks up to the player characters. Clearly inebriated, he shakes his finger at them and says that, if they value their lives, they should leave the island as quickly as possible.



"The sea gives, and the sea takes away. Soon it will take you too if you're not careful. The new moon is almost here," he bellows, his breath reeking with booze, before disappearing into the night. With a successful **OBSERVATION** test the player characters realize that Orvar is telling the truth and that his warning is sincere. Orvar is too drunk to continue the conversation, but he may show up later on and the player characters can seek him out at the fishing cabin.

- ✦ The brothers Pete and Pace walk up to the player characters and invite them to supper with the herding baron at his residence. The invitation does not

extend to Uddgren. If the characters accept, they are told to be at the residence a couple of hours later. For more details, see *The Amundsson Residence*. If they decline, Zacharias sends Pete and Pace to follow the player characters. See the text box on page 14.

- ◆ Step 1 of the countdown occurs. See page 9.

CLUES

There is a great deal of information to collect at the inn:

- ◆ Pete has the vicar's pistol tucked into his belt, and Pace has his pocket watch in the pocket of his vest. Uddgren will not notice this unless the player characters point them out, in which case he recognizes the items.
- ◆ Abela or some other customer implies that Uddgren is infatuated with Justina. Uddgren indignantly denies it, but the player characters can see through his lie with **OBSERVATION**.
- ◆ Justina can tell them that Vicar Hedqvist was here a month ago. He was having a loud argument with Abela and the herring baron himself. Pete and Pace threw out the vicar, who swore that he would return. Later that night Justina woke up to the sound of another argument, this time outside the warehouse. Nighttime turmoil is an ordinary occurrence, however, so she thought nothing of it.
- ◆ Godmother Abela, or Pete and Pace, admits that Vicar Hedqvist came to the inn a month ago, caused trouble, and was consequently thrown out. They claim that he has not been seen since.
- ◆ If the player characters ask Abela, Pete, or Pace about the third brother, Paul, they will claim that he is away on a trip to Gothenburg, that he is ill, or something similar. Asking different people about Paul will yield different answers.
- ◆ Justina or some other customer can tell them that Paul disappeared about the same time as the vicar's visit to the tavern. No one knows where Paul is.
- ◆ Everyone at the inn knows who fisherman Orvar is and that he lives in the cabin on Graveyard Isle. He is a regular at the inn and generally regarded as an oddball.



GODMOTHER ABELA

"You dog, you shark, you blasted whale!"

Abela Amundsson, known on Wrecker Isle as "the Godmother," runs the inn with an iron fist. Whenever the sailors get too drunk, she dilutes the liquor with saltwater so the guests will throw up their drinks, and buy more.

Godmother Abela is over 70 years old, but does not hesitate to use violence to protect her family. Zacharias is the apple of her eye, even though he is not her biological son – on the contrary, she has a special love for him because his birth did not cause her pain. Abela and Zacharias are the "brains" of the operation on Wrecker Isle.

Abela wears her gray hair in a tight bun and constantly walks around in a very filthy apron.

- ◆ **Physique 4 Precision 3**
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ◆ **CLOSE COMBAT 3 RANGED COMBAT 4**
VIGILANCE 5 OBSERVATION 4
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Shotgun



PETE AND PACE

"Do as you're told, or we'll rough you up."
"We'll rough you up, if you do as you're told."

Pete and Pace are the two remaining sons of Abela. They are exceptionally stupid and blindly follow Abela and Zacharias' orders.

The brothers are superficially polite in conversation with others – at least initially – but always with a nasty grin on their lips. They watch the player characters as a predator would its prey. Pete and Pace are not very bright and often repeat what the other brother, the herring baron, or the Godmother just said.

Pete and Pace are two heavyset men in their 50s. Both suffer from extremely poor dental health and are dressed in coarse working clothes.

- ◆ Physique 5 Precision 3
Logic 1 Empathy 2
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 4 FORCE 5**
STEALTH 3 RANGED COMBAT 2 VIGILANCE 2
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol (Pete), knife (Pace)

STALKED BY THE BROTHERS

The player characters' presence on the island is attracting attention, and the herring baron thinks it best to keep an eye on them. For this purpose, he has them followed by his brothers Pete and Pace – either after the supper at the residence or immediately after inviting them (if they decline). This can be handled as a countdown:

1. The brothers stalk the player characters wherever they go. If they head out to investigate the warehouse or visit Orvar's fishing cabin, the brothers will follow. In order to detect their followers, the player characters require a successful **VIGILANCE** test against the brothers' **STEALTH**. If the brothers are discovered they will try to come up with some excuse for their presence.
2. The brothers confront the player characters and threaten to beat them up unless they stop "*sticking their noses into other people's business*." If attacked, the brothers will defend themselves.
3. The brothers attack the player characters, preferably one lone character rather than the entire group. They make no attempt at killing the target, however, as the attack is intended as a warning.



JUSTINA

"No one tells me what to do."

Justina Johansson was born in Fjällbacka and has waited tables at the inn on Wrecker Isle for the past year. It is hard work, and sometimes the sailors make a pass at her, but Justina can take care of herself and God-mother Abela pulls out her shotgun if things get out of hand.

Justina dreams of going to Gothenburg, or even further out into the world, and building a new future for herself. Above all she does not want to go back to the boredom of Fjällbacka. She likes Oscar Uddgren as a friend, but has no romantic feelings for him.

- ♦ Physique 3 Precision 4
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ♦ **AGILITY 3 CLOSE COMBAT 2 VIGILANCE 2
OBSERVATION 1**
- ♦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife



SAILORS

"Another drink!"

The guests at the inn on Wrecker Isle come from lots of different places, but many are sailors from the boats waiting to be unloaded at the docks. They pass the time smoking pipes, drinking, and playing cards.

- ♦ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ♦ **CLOSE COMBAT 2 FORCE 3**
- ♦ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife or makeshift weapon

ORVAR

See page 20.

THE AMUNDSSON RESIDENCE

The herring baron's large residence is a beautiful two-story building made of wood. No coarse sailors are allowed in here. The ground floor contains a drawing room, a kitchen, and a storage room, as well as the maid Lura's quarters. The herring baron's bedchamber and study are found on the second

floor, along with bedrooms for Godmother Abela and the brothers.

The easiest way for the player characters to visit the residence is to accept the herring baron's supper invitation. Otherwise they can always sneak inside.

CHALLENGES

Below are a number of suggested challenges which the player characters may face at the residence.

- ✦ The front door is unlocked, but sneaking inside without being detected by the maid, Lura, requires a successful **STEALTH** test against her **VIGILANCE**. If the characters are detected, Lura will shoo them out and call for the herring baron or the brothers if they refuse to leave.
- ✦ Sneaking up to the second floor requires another **STEALTH** test, this time against Zacharias' **VIGILANCE**. If they are discovered, Zacharias becomes hostile and accuses them of thievery. He threatens them with a pistol and calls for the brothers. However, he will not use his **MAGIC** unless his life is in danger. This can be a way to reveal the herring baron's true nature. If exposed, Zacharias will do anything to capture the player characters and sacrifice them to the mermaid.
- ✦ If the player characters are invited to supper, the herring baron receives them in the large drawing room. They are served herring in all its forms, with plenty of liquor to wash it down. The brothers and Abela are there as well, mostly glaring at their guests in silence. Zacharias is friendly and welcoming, while discreetly trying to find out what business the characters have on the island.
- ✦ After supper Zacharias orders Pete and Pace to follow the player characters (see the text box on page 14).

CLUES

There is plenty of information to be found at the residence.

- ✦ If the player characters investigate the herring baron's study, they can make a **LEARNING** test to make sense of the financial records. On success

LEARNING TEST

When the PCs have met the herring baron and spent some time on the island, preferably after a dinner at the residence, they can at any time make a **LEARNING** test to gain the information below. Only one PC can make the test and only one roll can be made. If the test fails, the PCs will need to find the information elsewhere, primarily by talking to NPCs.

- ✦ **ONE SUCCESS:** Meeting the herring baron and his family reminds you of old folk tales about the mermaids. It is said that they rule over the seas and the creatures living in the depths. It happens that fishermen catch mermaid children in their nets and they are raised as humans. Such sea children never stop longing for the sea, often growing up to become excellent swimmers and fishermen.
- ✦ **TWO SUCCESSES:** Seafarers would be wise to give mermaids offerings. She may repay such acts with favorable winds or a huge catch of fish, or punish those who fail to give her what she wants by sending storms or placing icebergs in their path. Some mermaids require human sacrifices. Those who throw the wrong things into the sea may have their ship attacked by a giant sea monster summoned from the deep. Mermaids can also enchant humans with her song.
- ✦ **THREE SUCCESSES:** The mermaid dreads metal. Those under her spell can regain control of themselves if their bare skin touches steel.



they realize that only a fraction of the inn's liquor sales are accounted for. However, they have no legal right to steal the records from the study.

- ✦ Zacharias' bedchamber is filled with a musty odor, like that of rotten seaweed. There is a large bottle of perfume on the nightstand.
- ✦ During supper the player characters notice that Zacharias smells heavily of perfume.
- ✦ If the player characters ask him about the dead vicar, Zacharias pretends not to know who they are talking about and expresses his condolences. With a laugh, he dismisses all claims about his family having engaged in wrecking or him killing his father. According to Zacharias, his missing brother, Paul, is currently abroad selling fresh herring in the Mediterranean region.
- ✦ During supper a successful **OBSERVATION** test can tell the player characters that Zacharias is lying.
- ✦ If the player characters ask too many intrusive questions, Abela loses her temper and mutters "*mind your own business, landlubber*" and then "*watch yourself nosy one, the new moon is almost here.*" Zacharias interrupts her and asks the characters to excuse his mother, describing her as "*long in the tooth.*" With a successful **LEARNING** test the player characters are aware that the new moon will take place the following night. Abela refuses to answer any questions about what she meant.

THE HERRING BARON

"I am the archipelago."

Zacharias Amundsson is not really human, but a sea child (see page 140 in the core rulebook). He has used his skills and talents to great success during the current herring rush in the Fjällbacka archipelago, and is widely known as "the herring baron."

The herring baron looks like an attractive, muscular man in his 40s. Usually dressed in expensive clothing, his thick dark hair is beautifully styled with pomade and his wide mustache is waxed to perfection. His eyes are dark, with very little white showing, which gives him a mysterious and intimidating look. But the strongest indication of Zacharias' origin in the depths of the sea is that his skin smells of seaweed and algae, which he masks with large amounts of perfume.

The herring baron is polite and courteous to strangers. He always tries to keep his cool, but may explode in fits of rage if sufficiently provoked. Only then does he use his **MAGIC**.

Technically, Zacharias is handled like an ordinary NPC, not a vaesen, except that he has the **MAGIC** skill and a number of magical powers (see the text box *The Herring Baron's Magic* on page 18).

- ✦ **Physique** 4 **Precision** 5
Logic 4 **Empathy** 5
- ✦ **AGILITY** 4 **CLOSE COMBAT** 4 **STEALTH** 3
LEARNING 3 **VIGILANCE** 4 **MANIPULATION** 5
OBSERVATION 4 **MAGIC** 6
- ✦ **Mental Toughness** 3 **Physical Toughness** 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife

THE HERRING BARON'S MAGIC

The herring baron uses his magical powers with great care, so as not to reveal his true nature. Some examples of Curses he can cast:

- ✦ **SALTY VISION (VIGILANCE).** The victim starts to see visions and perceive the world differently, in some way that is related to fish or the sea.
- ✦ **ALLURE OF THE SEA (VIGILANCE).** The victim feels compelled to seek out Zacharias and will try to overcome any obstacle with force or cunning. Extra successes deal mental damage.
- ✦ **ENSLAVE (OBSERVATION).** Zacharias controls the victim's actions. Extra successes deal mental damage. The victim cannot be made to hurt herself. You either take over the player character for the rest of the scene, or instruct the player (through notes or a secret conversation) on how to act.
- ✦ **SALTY NIGHTMARE.** The victim is tortured by terrible visions of drowning, as if she suddenly finds herself deep below the surface of the sea, surrounded by the dark depths and monsters. The victim makes a Fear test – the Fear value is determined by the number of successes rolled by Zacharias.
- ✦ **STORM WAVE (FORCE).** A sudden tidal wave comes sweeping toward the victim, who must pass a **FORCE** test not to get sucked into the sea. Swimming and getting back on board/ashore require an **AGILITY** test. Multiple **AGILITY** tests are allowed, but with each failure the victim suffers a physical condition. Can only be used near the sea.
- ✦ **WATER THROAT (FORCE).** The victim's throat is suddenly filled with suffocating saltwater. The victim suffers a physical Condition. Extra successes for Zacharias deal additional physical damage.

HOUSEMAID LURA

"An honest day's work is its own reward."

Lura has been the Amundssons' maid ever since they first opened the inn on Wrecker Isle. She thinks the herring baron is a bit strange and that he smells weird, but has never asked about it and merely concentrates on her work. Lura rarely leaves the residence.

- ✦ Physique 3 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 2
- ✦ **FORCE 3 VIGILANCE 2 OBSERVATION 1**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Rolling pin (bonus +1)

THE WAREHOUSE

A huge, yellow warehouse dominates the harbor on Wrecker Isle. At the far end of the building there is a train oil boiler from which a foul stench emanates. The main part of the warehouse is packed with barrels of salted herring and train oil. During the day there is feverish activity at the warehouse. Train oil is being cooked in three large cauldrons and herring salted in countless barrels. It is cramped, warm, and smelly.

CHALLENGES

Below are two possible challenges which the player characters may face at the warehouse.

- ✦ The stench at the warehouse is so intense that player characters visiting the place must make a **FORCE** test. Failure renders the person **EXHAUSTED**.
- ✦ If the player characters come here at night, followed by Pete and Pace, this is a good time for a **VIGILANCE** test against **STEALTH** to see whether the player characters detect the brothers' presence.

CLUES

At the warehouse the player characters can find traces of Pete and Pace's attack on Vicar Hedqvist one month prior.

- ✦ If the player characters make a thorough search of the warehouse and pass a **VIGILANCE** test, they will make an important discovery: Next to a couple of herring barrels in a secluded corner of the warehouse lies a small pendant in the shape of a crucifix. If shown to Uddgren he immediately recognizes it – the pendant belonged to Hedqvist.
- ✦ Next to the pendant is a dried, dark stain on the floor. A player character who passes an **INVESTIGATION** or **MEDICINE** test can conclude that it is a blood stain.

THE FISHING CABIN

On the barren Graveyard Isle, about an hour's sailing west of Wrecker Isle in light wind, lives the fisherman Orvar in his secluded little cabin. Fishing nets are drying outside, and by the jetty some thirty meters from the cabin is where Orvar's fishing boat rests whenever he is not using it.

The player characters can find their way here by asking Justina or other staff members at the inn, or fishermen at the docks. All the locals know where old man Orvar lives. They can get to Graveyard Isle by hiring the same vessel that brought them to Wrecker Isle, or some other boat if they so desire. There are plenty of skippers who would gladly give the characters a ride for a bit of coin.

CHALLENGES

Below are two possible challenges which the player characters may face.

- ✦ If the player characters are being followed by Pete and Pace (see the text box on page 14), the brothers will sail after them in their sloop. Let the player characters make a **VIGILANCE** test (straight roll) to notice that a boat appears to be following them. It is too far away for them to identify the passengers, unless the characters have access to binoculars.
- ✦ Suddenly, halfway to their destination, they are struck by hard winds and heavy rain. The storm comes out of nowhere – just a few moments earlier there was hardly a cloud in the sky. It is the mermaid who is whipping up the storm on Zacharias'

request, as he saw an opportunity to get rid of the player characters. Each character must pass a **FORCE** test or be swept overboard by the waves. Those who fail must make a successful **AGILITY** test to swim and get back on board. Multiple **AGILITY** tests are allowed, but with each failure the player character suffers a physical Condition. Other player characters may help. After a few minutes the wind abates as abruptly as it started, and the journey continues.

- ✦ The player characters find Orvar inside his cabin, passed out from drinking the night before. For him to regain his senses the player characters must either use **INSPIRATION** or offer him a drink of liquor. Otherwise Orvar will get angry and start fighting the player characters. After suffering a physical Condition he surrenders and starts to talk. If the player characters are defeated or run away they will have to come back later.

CLUES

If the player characters manage to wake Orvar up and make him talk, he has a lot to say.

- ✦ Orvar knows the truth about the herring baron and his family – that they were wreckers and murderers, that Zacharias was found at sea, that he is a “sea child,” and so on. However, he does not know about the sacrifices made to the mermaid. Present the players with the information from the Background section (except the part about the sacrifices), preferably in the form of an incoherent tale that makes it difficult for them to determine what is true and what is not. An **OBSERVATION** test reveals that Orvar believes the story is true.
- ✦ Orvar can also tell them that, at every new moon, the herring baron and his family sail out to a skerry on an outer part of the archipelago – one that is not marked on any nautical chart and is only occasionally seen above water. Orvar calls the rocky island *Deep Reef*. He has never been there himself, as he thinks the island is cursed. But he knows how to find it and can show the way if the player characters manage to **MANIPULATE** him. Orvar does not know the truth about Deep Reef (see below).



ORVAR

"The sea gives, and the sea takes away."

The old fisherman Orvar is something of a local legend. He has lived in his cabin on the island of Graveyard Isle as long as anyone can remember. He has no family, and no one remembers where he came from. Orvar knows everything that happens in the archipelago, including the fact that Zacharias is a sea child.

Orvar's weakness is the bottle, and he often drinks himself into oblivion at the inn. He is a gangly old man with a gray beard, dressed in a wool sweater, fishing pants, and boots.

- ✦ **Physique 3 Precision 4**
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ✦ **AGILITY 1 FORCE 2 CLOSE COMBAT 2**
VIGILANCE 2 OBSERVATION 4
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife

CONFRONTATION

The final showdown will likely take place on the mysterious island of Deep Reef. On the night before the new moon – probably the night after the player characters' arrival on Wrecker Isle – the herring baron and his family sail out to Deep Reef in their sloop with their intended sacrifices trapped in herring barrels. These victims are either the player characters themselves (one or several) or the waitress Justina, in which case the brothers seized her the night before (an event that may be witnessed by the player characters).

Deep Reef is located far from the coast, twice as far out in the deep waters of Skagerack as the Weather Islands by the outer edge of the archipelago. Sailing from Wrecker Isle to Deep Reef in light wind takes 3–4 hours. There are several ways for the player characters to find Deep Reef:

- ✦ They follow the herring baron and his family's boat as they set sail at night.
- ✦ Orvar shows the way to Deep Reef, and the player characters await the family's arrival from a distance.
- ✦ One or multiple player characters are themselves intended sacrifices and brought to the island on the family's boat.

THE MERMAID APPEARS

What happens on Deep Reef depends largely on the player characters' actions. Zacharias and his family will pursue their plan as far as possible before they are interrupted by the player characters. Zacharias, Abela, and the brothers disembark at Deep Reef and carry the barrels with their victims ashore. They do not drop anchor – strangely enough, their sloop remains stationary anyway.

Player characters traveling on their own boat can also moor at Deep Reef. If they are careful they will initially go unnoticed by the family who, focused on their task, are not expecting visitors. If the player characters investigate the island, a successful **LEARNING**



CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE

The visit to Deep Reef is the crescendo of this mystery, and you should strive to make the scene as atmospheric as possible. Read the following text aloud or put it into play:

The boat sails off into dark waters, with no guiding light but the stars and the brilliant band of the Milky Way. The moon is nowhere to be seen, as if swept out of the sky, and the last dying rays of the evening sun glow faintly on the western horizon. The cliffs and islets of the archipelago cower around you like dark shadows against the glittering water.

As the hours go by, the pink of the horizon turns into purple before it dwindles and fades. The bow of the vessel cuts relentlessly through the waves. You pass the last of the islands and find yourself alone on the vast, black sea. The breeze is gentle and the reflections of stars glitter on the surface of the water, erasing the line between sea and sky.

A glowing light suddenly appears in the water around you. A symphony of sea-fire in turquoise, blue and green dances around the vessel, so bright it hurts your eyes. In the depths below, a wondrous sight emerges – a huge palace of gold and silver, with slender arches and narrow towers shimmering deep down at the bottom of the sea. The sight bewitches your senses, making you want to slip silently into the water and swim down into the deep, never to return.

The sharp voice of the skipper breaks the spell, and the underwater city fades before your eyes. Some hundred meters in front of the boat rises the dark silhouette of a jagged, rocky island. You have reached Deep Reef. Something tells you that you will never be the same after setting foot on this place at the edge of the world. If you return.

test reveals that the rock is not actually granite, like in the rest of the archipelago, but some other type of stone which the characters have never seen before.

Zacharias walks to the outer shore of Deep Reef. He sits down and splashes the water with his feet, unbothered by the wetness. Time passes. The first light of dawn glows red in the east. Suddenly there is a ripple in the water a bit further out. A splash, and then another. A creature emerges from the waves – a woman with long, flowing hair and a fishtail instead of legs, unspeakably beautiful, yet horrible and terrifying. She slides up on the shore ten meters from Zacharias, smiling enigmatically at her son. Player characters who witness the mermaid must make a Fear test against Fear 1.

Zacharias gestures to Pete and Pace who have so far kept their distance. They bring forth the barrels and open them. The dazed victims are dragged out at gunpoint and forced onto their feet. The mermaid smiles at the victims and gestures for them to come closer. Then she starts to sing, a song more beautiful than anything the player characters have ever heard.

The victims walk spellbound toward the mermaid, who takes their hands and leads them into the water. If a player character is among the victims, you test the mermaid's **MAGIC** (10) against the affected character's **OBSERVATION**. On failure the player character becomes Enslaved until the end of the scene, or until the Curse is broken – this happens if the mermaid is harmed or the Enslaved come into contact with metal. Enslaved victims follow the mermaid into the deep, never to return.

SHOWDOWN

If the player characters interfere with the ritual sacrifice, Abela, Pete and Pace's eyes all go black with rage. But Zacharias calms them down and tries to convince the player characters that he is doing the right thing:

"Fools, you don't know what you're doing. These sacrifices are a small price to pay for the riches we receive in return – herring, the rich silver of the sea. By denying the sea its sacrifices and breaking our covenant, you will doom the whole archipelago and all its people to poverty, starvation, and death. I beg of you, be sensible!"

Let the players consider this and act as they see fit. If they oblige and let the mermaid have one of the victims – a player character or an NPC – the queen of the sea is satisfied and vanishes into the deep. However, Zacharias and his family will try to kill any remaining player characters as soon as their backs are turned – they know too much and cannot be allowed to live.

If the player characters do not cooperate, the family turns to violence. Zacharias, Abela, and the brothers will try to kill them, or capture and sacrifice them to the mermaid. The mermaid does not actively participate in the fighting unless attacked, but may order Enslaved individuals to attack the player characters. If the characters get into trouble, perhaps Orvar or their skipper can come to their aid?

If a player character about to be sacrificed manages to resist the mermaid's Curse, the family will try to overpower him/her and drag the victim into the water. The mermaid's Curse is also broken if she is attacked by a player character and sustains at least one point of damage, or if the Enslaved person comes into contact with metal.

THE SEA CHILD RETURNS

If Zacharias becomes Broken and the family is defeated by the player characters, the sea child will surrender in an attempt to save himself. Then, as soon as he has the chance, he quickly tries to crawl back into the sea and disappear beneath the waves.

The player characters can stop Zacharias with a fatal attack. However, his death will have grave consequences for the Fjällbacka archipelago – see *Aftermath*.

THE KRAKEN AWAKENS

If the confrontation on Deep Reef ends without anyone being sacrificed (Zacharias does not count), the mermaid will be furious. She throws herself back into the sea and disappears. Moments later the entire island starts to quake, then rises from the deep with tremendous force. Everyone on Deep Reef is flung into the air like rag dolls and lands in the water. Each

player character must pass an **AGILITY** test – on failure they suffer a physical condition.

Deep Reef keeps rising and eventually reveals its true form – the entire island was merely the crown of a giant kraken's head! All player characters must make a Fear test against Fear 2.

THE ESCAPE

The immense tentacles of the kraken, as thick as tree trunks, churn the salty sea into a frothing maelstrom. The player characters are in mortal danger. Luckily, they see that their boat (or the family's, if all player characters arrived on their vessel) is unscathed – the player characters must make their way to it in order to survive.

Swimming to the boat and climbing on board requires two **AGILITY** tests from each player character – one for swimming and one for getting on board. A failed test means that the character suffers a physical Condition.

Each turn the kraken attacks a random player character – roll a die to decide which one. The attack is rolled with the kraken's **MIGHT**, which is 14 (damage 1). The player characters cannot harm the kraken or parry its attacks, but may be able to dodge them (fast action).

If a player character becomes Broken, another player character in the water can rescue them with an extra **AGILITY** test; otherwise the Broken individual will drown. This test has the same effect as if the

THE MERMAID AND THE KRAKEN

Stats for the mermaid are found on page 140 in the core rulebook. Remember that the mermaid's spells can be broken through contact with metal.

The kraken has no stats other than **MIGHT** 14. The players cannot fight the monster in any way.



Broken person had made it herself, but failure means that the savior suffers a physical Condition.

If the player characters manage to climb on board, they will escape the kraken with their lives. The sea monster will not pursue them, but the winds are rising and turning into a storm. The boat takes off, but its sails are nearly torn away by the heavy gusts.

THE TIDAL WAVE

After some time of perilous sailing, when the monstrous kraken has disappeared beneath the stormy waves and the player characters are nearing the islands of the archipelago, a deep rumble is heard from the sea itself. A great tidal wave, several meters high, approaches at terrifying speed.

The player characters cannot escape. Their boat manages to stay afloat, but each character must pass a **FORCE** test not to be swept away by the giant wave. Those who fail must make a successful **AGILITY** test to swim to the boat and get back on board. Multiple **AGILITY** tests are allowed, but with each failure the player character suffers a physical Condition.

Once the tidal wave has passed the boat, the player characters can see it sweep over islands of the archipelago, where fishing huts, jetties, and boats are crushed by the water. Then the sea becomes calm once more. The mermaid has returned to the deep.

AFTERMATH

The outcome of this mystery might have a huge impact on the archipelago, and depends largely on the player characters' actions.

- ✦ If Zacharias is killed, the mermaid turns her back on the archipelago. The herring disappear out to sea, and the entire region is once again plunged into poverty and hardship until the next herring period. The inn on Wrecker Isle is abandoned and soon becomes a dilapidated ruin.
- ✦ If Zacharias is Broken but makes it back into the sea, the herring period continues for a short while longer. But without Zacharias, the herring saltery on Wrecker Isle does not last long. The inn is shut down by the authorities and left to fall apart. If Abela, Pete, and Pace are still alive, they may seek revenge on the player characters.
- ✦ If Zacharias survives and remains on Wrecker Isle, the business there continues to flourish for many years. Uddgren, if still alive, is very resentful toward the player characters and may well seek revenge on them.

At this point the player characters can do little but return to their headquarters in Upsala, where they are awarded experience points (see page 25 in the core rulebook).





A WICKED SECRET

In which the player characters seek out a small village in the northern woods, where they encounter a sawmill, a medieval church, and a guardian beast...

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based. There is an invitation to kick off the session, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to Härnösand and then on to Färnsta. The section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Gamemaster will initiate at some appropriate time during the mystery – and a catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in their efforts. But first we will look back at the events leading up to the mystery.

BACKGROUND

The forest has always been one of mankind's greatest assets, providing building materials for our houses and furniture, fueling our fires, and becoming the wagons and boats that have brought us forward. But the woods have always had many secrets, from the fear of getting lost to fairy tales about the wood wives who rule them. Humans would eventually try to tame the woods, and in the mid-19th century, the forests of the north became the cradle of Swedish industrialism. Large sawmills were built along the rivers, and large amounts of timber were sent downstream to the sea and eventually shipped to other parts of the country, or even abroad. With the advent of the steam

engine, several sawmills began running on steam and the harvested timber was soon transported by train. The modern era, where humans would bring nature to its knees, had come to the forest.

But not all forests can be tamed overnight, and not all forests will allow themselves to be tamed. One place where the taming has just begun is Färnsta village, located in the northern woods of Ångermanland, next to a brook called the Färnsta Stream which flows into the Ångerman River. The village is rich in timber and has its own little sawmill, powered by a watermill, unlike the large steam-powered sawmills on the coast.

Färnsta has always been self-sufficient thanks to its abundant natural resources, and its people are well off, though isolated from many of the neighboring communities. Perhaps that is why they have managed so well on their own: because the village is located deep in the forest and can only be reached by traveling paths many would not dare to take. Or perhaps, as some believe, it is because the villagers are said to have a bloody past that persists to this day. If asked about their faith, no one in Färnsta would know what you were talking about, having practiced Christianity since the 12th century, as attested by their old church.

But the rumors are not completely baseless. A number of cruel traditions have indeed lived on in Färnsta. The reason they have been able to support themselves so well is, at least according to the villagers, their pagan beliefs and the human sacrifices made – at least one per generation is required for the land to remain fertile. This belief has secretly persisted among Färnsta's elite, who call themselves *Liberorum Foedus* – “the Free Ones,” as in free to interpret the word of God. As Christianity swept the land in the 12th century, the Free Ones maintained their traditions away from the public eye and started holding secret meetings in a subterranean cave system, while taking up worship of the Christian Lord.

The entrance to the caves is next to the church. To protect it a cat was sacrificed and buried in the foundation of the building. And so a church grim appeared to watch over the church, but also the caves where the Free Ones perform their rituals. Some-

one who threatens the Free Ones might therefore be deemed a threat by the church grim, which the cult has benefited from for hundreds of years.

But now the cult's greatest threat is the changing times, and the way its members have changed with them. The growing industry requires more and more resources, and the lush woods of Färnsta are of the greatest interest. Roughly three weeks before the start of the mystery, Gottfrid Hammarström and his assistant Nils Lindesköld were sent to the village. They worked on behalf of the industrialist August von Meijer out of Härnösand to negotiate the purchase of large tracts of forest and enlist the local workforce to secure timber from Färnsta. This offer has divided the Free Ones – many of its members would like to abandon the dark and morbid traditions of the cult, while others believe this would put an end to their freedom and self-sufficiency. They also learned from Dorotea Skytt that Färnsta is sitting on a large deposit of iron ore, and the truth is that von Meijer is primarily after the ore in the caves underneath Färnsta, but to get at it he would have to tear down the church, which would not be a problem if enough people sold him their land.

The leader of the Free Ones, sawmill owner Märta Karlström, wanted to keep an eye on the two men and their motives and invited them to stay with her. She found a letter from von Meijer that revealed their true agenda, and quickly recognized the threat he posed to her cult. A week ago the time had come to act. Hammarström was left a message stating that the priest wished to see him at the church in order to help him persuade the villagers to sell their land. This meeting was actually a trap set by Karlström, who had forged the priest's handwriting, and it was there that Hammarström met his ultimate demise. He was waiting alone in the woods when a pair of glowing red eyes suddenly appeared in the dark. It was the last thing he ever saw, before the church grim tore the poor man apart because of the threat he posed to the church. Hammarström's remains were left in the woods, covered and hidden by nature itself.

Having killed Hammarström, the church grim headed to Karlström's house where its next target

was waiting: Nils Lindesköld. Hammarström's associate woke to a strange sound outside his window on the second floor. Looking out he saw a huge figure with red eyes, seemingly determined to climb up to his room. Wearing only his nightshirt, the terrified Lindesköld rushed outside to a horse hitched in front of the house. He heard heavy footsteps approach from the other side of the building. Lindesköld got up on the horse, and out of the corner of his eye he glimpsed a terrifying creature before fleeing on horseback. The cry of the church grim echoed through the night as he rode for dear life, never looking back. When he passed the edge of the village the cry stopped, but Lindesköld kept riding as fast as the horse would carry him.

He returned to Härnösand, frightened out of his wits, rambling incessantly about the beast and its ghastly red eyes. The two men's employer, the wealthy industrialist August von Meijer, realized that there was something very wrong with the place and feared that it was haunted by vaesen. He was told that the Society could investigate such macabre and mysterious cases involving vaesen, and requested their services

shortly thereafter, hoping to find out what creature haunted the place and what horror had befallen poor Gottfrid. He still had every intention of purchasing the forests of Färnsta, but first he had to make sure that whatever was there – if anything – was driven away.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery is between Märta Karlström and the outside world, which she believes will be the ruin of Färnsta. Quarrying the land for iron would expose the caves of the Free Ones and jeopardize their pagan sacrifices, which Karlström thinks are the reason for Färnsta's prosperity. She therefore believes the best outcome would be for Färnsta to be left alone and the outsiders driven out, or even killed. She hoped that killing Hammarström would accomplish this, but his associate Lindesköld got away before the church grim could fulfill her command, and now she worries that new outsiders will make things even worse. Karlström will therefore speed up the ritual she believes will give her power over those she considers her subjects, and thereby claim the village for herself, while at the same time eliminating her greatest threats in the village.

The secondary conflict is linked to the primary one, and stands between the members of the Free Ones and its leader, Märta Karlström. Several members have long had doubts about their violent religion, which demands human sacrifices. The opportunity to sell their land could be their ticket out of there and allow them to escape the horrible cult to which they reluctantly belong. They are aware of the iron deposit and that the money they stand to make could give them good lives elsewhere. The leader of the would-be apostates is the landowner Dorotea Skytt. But their biggest threat is Karlström, who they know would not hesitate to set the grim on them if she learned of their conspiracy against her.

The final conflict is between the church grim and those who threaten the church. The grim's purpose is to guard the church above all else and stop those who might do it harm. It will therefore

THE SWEDISH LOGGING INDUSTRY

In the mid-19th century, the logging industry emerged as one of Sweden's leading industries, particularly in the northern regions. Huge sawmills with lots of workers were built on the coast, where timber was treated and later sold to other parts of the country or shipped abroad. They were constructed in the lower reaches of rivers which were used for so-called log driving, where logs were floated downstream to the mills. Initially the sawmills were powered by water (often via water wheels), but as technology advanced they eventually started running on steam. For lumberjacks the most common tool was the axe, until it was replaced by the two-man crosscut saw in the 1860s, which in turn was replaced by the one-man version 30 years later.

be driven to harm anyone who threatens church lands, regardless of its master.

INVITATION

This mystery takes place in springtime, when the snow has melted and the sun shines longer every day. It begins with a letter reaching the Society's mansion. The letter, which is also available as *Handout 2A* at the end of the book and downloadable from the Free League website, reads as follows:

To whom it may concern,

I urgently request your assistance. My name is August von Meijer. I am a forest owner and industrialist, and own one of the largest sawmills in northern Sweden, located here in Härnösand, where I am working to modernize this region. To this end, I am procuring heavily forested tracts of land and employing large parts of the local population in said areas.

Some time ago, two of my employees — Mr. Gottfrid Hammarström and his assistant, Nils Lindesköld — were sent to a small village called Färnsta north of Härnösand. It is located deep in the woods, and the land was said to be highly fertile and abundant with forests. Hammarström was therefore responsible for ensuring a transaction between the villagers and yours truly.

But now, alas, tragedy has struck. One night, poor Nils returned on horseback, wearing nothing but his nightshirt. He was in a frantic state, rambling about some evil beast he beheld in the village. Nils has not been the same since and can barely speak. Hammarström is missing, and I fear what may have befallen poor Gottfrid. I sense that something is amiss — there is more to this place than meets the eye.

That is why I am writing to you. I would like to enlist your services in uncovering the truth about what has happened to Hammarström, and stopping the beast mentioned by Mr. Lindesköld, at any cost! You come very highly recommended, and your expertise would be invaluable in our current predicament. Should you accept this task, you will of course be richly rewarded.

Please reply with utmost haste, for time is of the essence. I shall wait for you in Härnösand to explain more and arrange your trip to Färnsta.

*Sincerely,
August von Meijer*

PREPARATIONS

As usual, before leaving their headquarters, the player characters can prepare for the journey and gain an Advantage. For more information, see chapter 9 in the core rulebook.

Player characters seeking information about Färnsta will not find any, as the village is small, remote, and very isolated from the outside world. However, they can dig up information about the local logging industry (use the text box on page 28) and learn that August von Meijer is a very wealthy and successful industrialist who has built a logging empire in northern Sweden by purchasing much of the Ångermanland forests. He also tends to hire the locals wherever he invests, which has allowed him to still maintain a good reputation. He himself describes it as an opportunity for civilization to expand north.

THE JOURNEY

The journey north from Upsala will be a long one, first by train to Ånge before taking a stagecoach to Härnösand. The day of departure is a warm and sunny spring day, and the sound of the steam whistle fills the air at the station, along with clouds of black smoke. It is a 24-hour train ride with the night spent on board. The stately green trees of the Swedish countryside slide past the windows, and lingering snow can be glimpsed on the mountaintops as the train continues further and further north. Ånge is currently as far as the railroad goes from southern Sweden, and the journey continues by stagecoach for another two days, with overnight stops along the way. The air here is crisper and cooler than in Upsala, and the flowing of brooks is heard outside. The closeness to nature is felt through the whole body.

Finally, the player characters arrive in Härnösand and find von Meijer's sawmill, located where the Ångerman River flows into the Bothnian Sea, and they see several cargo ships being loaded with timber, as well as a huge number of logs being floated down the river. The sawmill is a modern, steam-powered fa-



cility, and the loud roar of the steam engine blends with the sound of numerous toiling workers.

They are greeted by the elegant von Meijer, who asks whether they had a pleasant journey and offers them something to eat. He meets them in his well-furnished office and answers any questions they may have:

- ✦ Hammarström and Lindesköld were tasked with purchasing land on von Meijer's behalf, and left for Färnsta two weeks ago. Färnsta is important to von Meijer, as the area is heavily forested and the soil is said to be very fertile.
- ✦ The village is isolated and has almost no contact with the outside world, as it is more or less self-sufficient.
- ✦ Other villages in the region have warned about Färnsta. They say its people have the blood of God on their hands, despite their old church, and that many disturbing things are going on there. Many in the neighboring communities are therefore grateful that they stay away. *You can convey this information to the players if their characters stop at an inn on the way to the village, in which case someone could warn them not to go there.*
- ✦ The player characters' mission is to find out what has happened to Hammarström and put an end to the beast mentioned by Lindesköld. If the characters can also take over Hammarström's task of seeing the deal through, they are more than welcome to do so, in which case they would be even more handsomely rewarded by von Meijer.
- ✦ Accommodation has been arranged for the player characters at the home of the village head, Märta Karlström, who generously offered to take them in when she heard they were coming to Färnsta.

The player characters can also meet poor Lindesköld, who by now appears to have lost his mind completely. He is kept in a locked room at the sawmill, mostly to stop him from hurting someone else. Lindesköld is in a very bad state, constantly alternating between crying and screaming in despair, but if they go near his cell, he may well get physical and possibly dangerous. The following can be learned from Lindesköld:



AUGUST VON MEIJER

"It is about time that civilization came to the north."

August von Meijer is a very wealthy and successful industrialist in his fifties. Though his name suggests noble birth, he has worked very hard to get where he is and has managed to build a vast industrial empire. His greatest investments have been in forest land and related industries, and he now owns much of the Ångermanland forests.

As implied by his name and position, von Meijer is a very elegant gentleman, which rubs off on his appearance. He has broad shoulders and excellent posture, and is quite stout, but with plenty of muscle. He has a large, neat mustache and well-combed hair, and his deep baritone commands great respect.

- ◆ Lindesköld is rambling almost exclusively about a dark beast he saw as he was leaving the village, constantly talking about its red eyes. He does not describe the beast's appearance in detail, other than the fact that it was big.
- ◆ Mentioning the name Gottfrid or Hammarström causes Lindesköld to burst into uncontrollable tears. He will not say anything else if asked about Hammarström.
- ◆ He has lots of scars from scratches left by branches and brush as he fled on his galloping horse. He is very thin, having barely eaten since his return.
- ◆ A successful **MEDICINE** test can reveal that Lindesköld appears to be suffering from severe shock.
- ◆ Lindesköld may occasionally start to screech and growl like some large beast.

NILS LINDESKÖLD

"Red eyes! They stared at me! A devil's eyes!"

30-year-old Lindesköld does not look like much, with his reserved tone and small mustache, but his pocket watch indicates that he is a successful man. He works for von Meijer's sawmill as Gottfrid Hammarström's assistant and right-hand man.

Lindesköld is more cautious than Hammarström was; some would call it cowardice, but he calls it awareness. It was this awareness that made him realize danger was near when he woke to a beast trying to get into the house where he was staying. He ran out and fled on horse, but not before he had caught a glimpse of the monster's eyes, losing his mind as the grim put a curse on him. Now he is haunted by the glowing red eyes staring at him, while mourning what he thinks has happened to poor Gottfrid.

August von Meijer gives the player characters a cash fund to compensate Märta Karlström for generously allowing them to stay at her residence. Finally, he takes them to one of the sawmill's own stagecoaches which will take them to Färnsta.

ARRIVAL

It is a day's journey by stagecoach from Härnösand through the woods to Färnsta, along the Ångerman River where the logs are floated downstream. The farther they get, the worse the roads become, and the sky is increasingly hidden by trees. Few people ever come this way, and it shows.

The sun has already set when the characters arrive in Färnsta, but the tower of the old stone church, raised in the early Middle Ages, can still be glimpsed in the moonlight. It is the only stone building in the village, whose cabins and houses are exclusively made of wood. The rest of the village is not much to look at, with houses for the villagers, a modest general store (and post office), and a simple village hall. The stagecoach rolls deeper into the village, and near the end of the highroad the player characters can see the sawmill by the Färnsta Stream, before the coach turns off toward Märta Karlström's house. It is a beautifully ornamented building whose lumber is a testament to its age.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters' investigation into Hammarström's fate will soon elicit a reaction from Märta Karlström, who considers them a threat, but also from Dorotea Skytt who sees in them a chance to break free from the Free Ones and their horrible religion. The Gamemaster can use the following events to quicken the pace of the game when necessary, and to push the players toward the final confrontation:

COUNTDOWN

1. Karlström tries to implicate the village priest, Ingvar Nyström. She approaches the player characters and asks to speak with them in private, then spins a tale about the priest meeting with Hammarström on the night of his disappearance. She also claims the priest, being a God-fearing man, detests people like von Meijer who think they are gods capable of conquering nature. He wanted to eliminate the temptation Hammarström presented to those willing to sully Färnsta by selling their land.
2. The priest Ingvar Nyström is onto Karlström and suspects that something is wrong. He decides to look into the situation himself. That same night the grim rings the church bell at the stroke of twelve, indicating that someone will die the following night. The night after the bell has tolled, the priest finds the entrance used by the Free Ones and follows the caves to the gruesome ritual site, where he discovers fragments of an old text on how to stop the church grim. Appalled by the lie on which Färnsta is built, he leaves with the evidence to persuade everyone to sell their land. But when he re-emerges from the caves, the church grim is waiting for him, as the priest is now seen as a threat. He desperately tries to flee into the church, but does not stand a chance. In the morning his corpse is found, severed hand still clutching the metal ring of the heavy wooden door, while the rest of his body is lying on the stairs, torn apart like a crumpled leaf. A character who investigates the body will find one of the old texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*), unless they have already been found.
3. At the stroke of midnight, the church bell rings again, and the next night another life will be claimed. Karlström realizes that in order to regain her power she must dispose of the greatest traitor among the Free Ones: Dorotea Skytt. It could also be an opportunity to demonstrate her power to the other members by performing a new ritual with a new victim. That night she sends the church

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE MYSTERY

- ✦ **MÄRTA KARLSTRÖM:** Owner of Färnsta's sawmill, leader of the Free Ones, and the person who controls the church grim.
- ✦ **DOROTEA SKYTT:** Major landowner in Färnsta and member of the Free Ones, but wants to leave the cult and sell her land to the sawmill.
- ✦ **VILHELMINA SKYTT:** Dorotea's teenage daughter who loves nature and dreams of leaving Färnsta.
- ✦ **INGVAR NYSTRÖM:** The village priest. Has no knowledge of the Free Ones.
- ✦ **GOTTFRID HAMMARSTRÖM:** Business representative and negotiator from the sawmill, killed by the church grim.
- ✦ **NILS LINDESKÖLD:** Hammarström's associate who fled the church grim and Färnsta.
- ✦ **AUGUST VON MEIJER:** Owner of the large sawmill in Härnösand, and the player characters' client.

grim to kill Dorotea Skytt – it tears her throat out and drags away her daughter Vilhelmina, whom Karlström has decided to sacrifice. For more information, see *Confrontation* on page 49.

CATASTROPHE

Karlström proceeds with the pagan ritual to sacrifice Vilhelmina. All members of the Free Ones who do not participate in the ritual are attacked by the church grim, which considers them a threat. Karlström is soon left with only a few loyal followers and much of the village's blood on her hands, having eliminated all threats to the church and the Free Ones. After this slaughter no outsider will want to visit Färnsta ever again, and within a year the soil becomes more fertile than ever and the forest thrives like never before – so much so that the little village is swallowed by nature. Färnsta becomes but a distant memory.

TEXTS OF TRUTH

Several locations in this mystery contain excerpts from old 12th century texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*) describing the origin of the church grim, where it is, and how it can be stopped. These texts could serve as clues to be uncovered in a number of ways – for example through investigation, gaining the trust of certain villagers, or by searching a particular dead body. Exactly where and when they are found may therefore vary considerably, as they are essential in solving the mystery. It is also crucial that the player characters find them at a suitable point in the story. The text is therefore divided into different stages, so the characters will find the right stage depending on where they are in the story (for example, they might find the first part in the Church, the second in Dorotea Skytt's home, and the final one at the Sawmill, if they go about it in that order). They should be scattered across the different stages of the mystery – the first clue (*Handout 2B*) should be found relatively early, so the player characters understand what they are dealing with; the second clue (*Handout 2C*) should be found roughly halfway through the mystery; and the final clue (*Handout 2D*) should mark the beginning of the Confrontation. Make sure that they are found frequently enough to maintain suspense and momentum, but not too close together. Finding clues too early may detract from the mystery, but finding them too late means it might feel like a Deus Ex Machina, and not finding them at all will make the Confrontation virtually impossible. The locations featured in this mystery come with suggestions on how the player characters could obtain the texts, but the Gamemaster may of course come up with other ways and more suitable places to find them. Keep in mind that the further into the mystery the characters have progressed, and the more they know about what is going on, the easier it should be to find the texts – not least to minimize the risk of them missing the clues or getting bogged down in the search. At the same time the player characters should be given time to reflect and follow different leads based on the texts – after all, there are many pieces to examine in the mystery.

LOCATIONS

Below is a summary of the most important places the player characters may visit in this mystery: the village hall, the church, the Skytt residence, and the sawmill. If the player characters want to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is also perfectly alright to simply explain that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing of interest there.

MÄRTA KARLSTRÖM'S HOME

Märta Karlström lives in one of the oldest and finest houses in Färnsta, two stories tall and built from dark lumber, with exquisite nature motifs carved into the facade. The house has been in her family for generations and is located near the sawmill that also belongs to her. The hand-carved nature motifs are a recurring element inside the house and may seem quite spooky at night.

Karlström is very friendly and smiles jovially at the new visitors before she shows them upstairs where they may sleep in a room with comfortable bunk beds. She immediately offers her guests a hot meal of venison, beer, and a splash of aquavit. Clean-living individuals may have water instead, which tastes much fresher than it does in Upsala. She is sociable, but leaves the player characters alone if they so wish.

Märta Karlström stays close to the characters in order to easily keep an eye on them. She does not want to kill them right away, as that could lead to new people showing up and snooping around. Instead she hopes to direct their attention to the priest.

CHALLENGES

Märta keeps a watchful eye on the player characters during their stay at her home, which makes it difficult for them to move around without her noticing. At the same time she does not want to draw suspicion to herself.

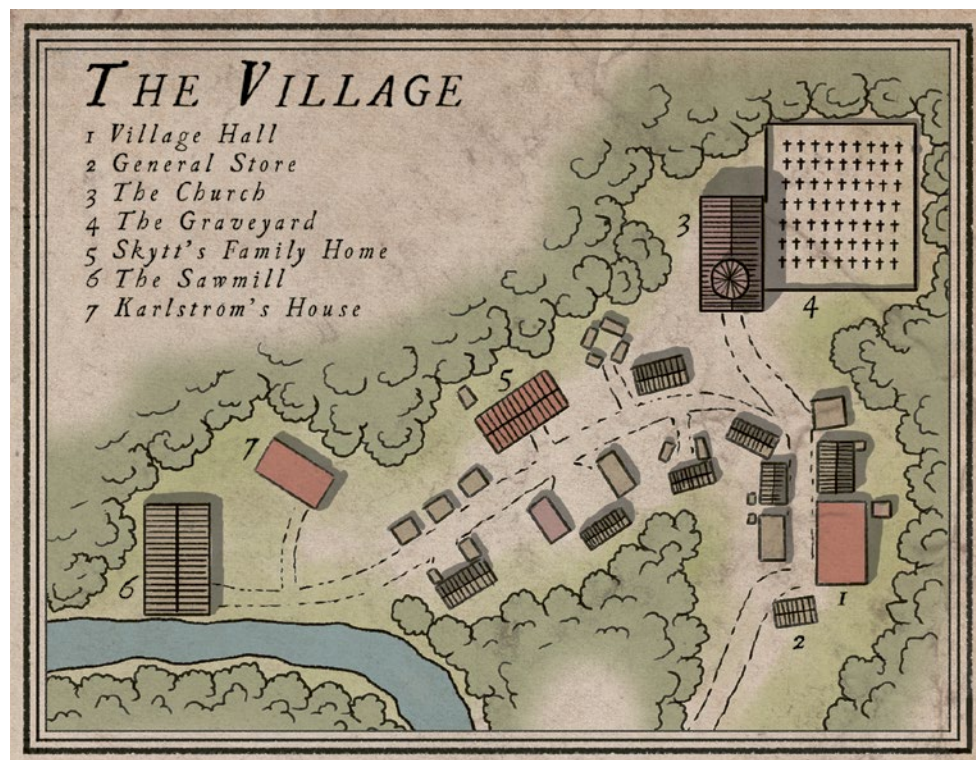
- ◆ When the player characters return to Karlström's home (perhaps at night), a successful **VIGILANCE**

test can show them that someone has rummaged through their belongings. Something (primarily a weapon) might be missing from the pack of a character who failed the test. Such items are stored in Karlström's room at the sawmill (see page 48). If the player characters confront Märta about this, she will seem shocked and explain that Vilhelmina Skytt was there earlier in the day and must have been the one who searched their packs.

- ❖ Late in the mystery there may be PCs-1 members of the Free Ones waiting here to ambush the player characters. They will first threaten the characters by demanding that they leave Färnsta immediately – their things are packed and ready. The cult members will leave them alone if they appear to be leaving Färnsta, but do not stay long enough to make sure that the characters actually do so. A **STEALTH** test may be required. In the event of combat you can find the Free Ones' stats on page 55.

CLUES

- ❖ Märta Karlström introduces the player characters to Färnsta. She explains that the village has always been close to nature and that the surrounding forest is something they are all proud of. She can also provide basic information about the various locations in Färnsta.
- ❖ If the player characters ask about Hammarström she replies that he came to see her and wanted her to sell the sawmill to von Meijer, which she needed some time to think about; after all, the sawmill is her pride and joy.



MOONLIGHT CAN BE DECEIVING

If the Gamemaster wants to increase the sense of mystery and not reveal exactly what kind of vaesen is terrorizing Färnsta, there is ample opportunity to plant false clues about it being a werewolf. In order to fuel these false suspicions, several leads could indicate that the attack on Hammarström (and possibly other victims) took place during a full moon, and people may have heard the church grim's cry in the night – one that could easily be mistaken for the howl of werewolf. Like many other vaesen the church grim shuns silver, and you could let player characters find clues on different victims where silver objects (such as coins or a pocket watch) have been left untouched, to fuel this suspicion.

MÄRTA KARLSTRÖM

“The forest is the greatest reward Färnsta has ever received.”

Sawmill owner Märta Karlström is a woman in her forties and one of the most powerful individuals in Färnsta, as her sawmill employs many of the locals and is an important source of everything from timber for construction to woody residues for firewood. It is a position of power she loves to be in. Her only rival is Dorotea Skytt, the largest forest owner in Färnsta, and Karlström must often pay large sums of money for the right to harvest timber on her land.

But this is not the only power she possesses. Karlström is also the leader of the Free Ones, a cult with pagan elements that ever since the 12th century has comprised the most powerful people in Färnsta. Since the Free One’s land is also guarded by the church grim, she uses it to her advantage by pointing out those who might threaten the church and letting the church grim take them.

Märta wears her blond hair in a neat bun, and her voice and commanding presence can straighten any back. She is unmarried and has been so for a long time, as she has little interest in other people.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 5
- ◆ **RANGED COMBAT 2 VIGILANCE 2**
MANIPULATION 4 OBSERVATION 3
- ◆ Mental Toughness 3 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Revolver, ritual dagger



- ◆ If the player characters ask about the beast, or what it was that attacked Hammarström and Lindesköld, Karlström stops and whispers that a local legend tells of a large beast guarding the church. It is said to be quick and strong, more agile and dangerous than a wolf, with glowing red eyes, and that those seeking to damage holy ground end up in its maw. She goes on to say that it would surely obey someone who has ties to such a place, and imagine if someone were to use it for their own ends. With a successful **LEARNING** test a player character realizes the description of the beast matches that of a church grim.
- ◆ If the player characters ask about someone who met with Hammarström and Lindesköld, she will say that they visited Dorotea Skytt, who is the largest landowner in Färnsta. Karlström claims that the Skytts are not to be trusted (especially if the player characters’ packs have been searched). She can also imply that she saw Dorotea speaking to the priest and suspects they are conspiring together.
- ◆ The player characters could use **STEALTH** to sneak into Märta Karlström’s study. There they find her bureau, and on it a letter that belonged to

Hammarström with instructions from von Meijer (*Handout 2E*). Mentioning this to Karlström triggers Phase 1 of the countdown, and Märta says the letter shows a clear motive for the priest's involvement in Hammarström's death.

- ✦ If the player characters have progressed a bit further in the mystery and still do not suspect the priest, or if the story has come to a halt, phase 1 of the countdown occurs. In a serious tone, Karlström asks to speak with the player characters. She presents the letter from von Meijer (*Handout 2E*) and explains why it proves the priest's guilt. Once the player characters have spoken to Karlström about the letter, phase 1 of the countdown ends.
- ✦ Märta Karlström could store one of the old texts serving as essential clues (*Handouts 2B–2D*) in a safe in her study. The player characters must pass a Challenging **STEALTH** or Challenging **FORCE** test to break into the safe, or Challenging **MANIPULATION** or Challenging **LEARNING** test in conversation with Karlström. In addition, Karlström keeps the code in her secret room at the sawmill (see page 48).

VON MEIJER'S INSTRUCTIONS TO HAMMARSTRÖM AND LINDESKÖLD

I am writing this in response to your previous letter regarding the developments in Färnsta.

In addition to purchasing its fertile forests, the discovery of an iron deposit has made securing Färnsta a top priority. It is my understanding that most of it is located under the village church, which will have to be demolished, but I shall naturally finance the construction of a new one. With the majority of landowners on my side this will not be a problem. Offer them whatever it takes. This deal must go through, for the most valuable ore is at stake.

VILLAGE HALL

The village hall is a red two-story building, and the laughter inside can be heard even before entering. Here a bunch of villagers are sitting around, drinking aquavit, singing songs, or playing cards. But this hullabaloo stops as soon as the player characters cross the threshold, and it is impossible not to feel exposed: they are outsiders. Someone mutters that “new outsiders are here,” but as long as the player characters keep their cool the joyful atmosphere will resume, although the villagers remain frosty toward them. But if they behave themselves they can get a bit to eat, with beer and aquavit to wash it down.

CHALLENGES

The challenges at the village hall mainly involve getting the villagers to talk. Färnsta does not take kindly to outsiders – everyone manages fine on their own, and has done so for a very long time.

- ✦ The player characters can get some of the villagers to open up and provide clues by impressing them. Player characters with Resources 5 or higher can easily afford to buy everyone at the village hall a drink, **FORCE** might beat some of them in arm-wrestling, and a successful **MANIPULATION** test can make the villagers open up and reveal clues.
- ✦ If the player characters cause trouble by acting rudely or even aggressively, it may well lead to a fight between them and the villagers, whose stats are found on page 38. If the player characters defeat the villagers, they will be able to force clues out of them.
- ✦ If the player characters are on to Karlström (for example if phase 2 of the countdown has occurred), a large group of villagers could ambush them in the backyard. See their stats on page 38. They are there to intimidate the player characters and demand that they leave Färnsta at once. Should this prove unsuccessful, the villagers will attack. If the player characters defeat them the villagers are too afraid to say who sent them, but hand over the Free Ones' robes, which the player characters can use. If the player characters use

lethal force the villagers carry the robes in their packs. They could also have one of the old 12th century texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*).

CLUES

The player characters can speak to the villagers and get some clues about Färnsta and the missing Hammarström, as well as learn a thing or two about the church grim.

- ◆ Gottfrid Hammarström and Nils Lindesköld came to Färnsta roughly two weeks ago to inspect the forests surrounding the village, and were very impressed with what they found. Many in the village wanted nothing to do with them, but that is always the case with outsiders. The player characters can also learn that Hammarström was often seen visiting the Skytt family residence.
- ◆ If they ask whether the villagers noticed anything strange on the night Hammarström disappeared, many will recall hearing noises from the church and seeing a flock of black birds flying toward the full moon from that direction, as if something had startled them, and some swear they heard a loud cry or howl. With a successful **OBSERVATION** test some villagers remember having their sleep disturbed the night before by someone ringing the church bells at midnight. If the player characters mention that the creature is a church grim, they will admit that the bells always toll on the night before it goes hunting.
- ◆ If the player characters ask about work in Färnsta, most villagers will say that they are loggers or employed at the sawmill. But some whisper that no one knows what hidden treasures lie in the ground, considering how fertile the soil is in Färnsta.
- ◆ If the player characters ask about important figures in Färnsta, people will reply that Märta Karlström “*thinks she is the queen of the village*” because of her sawmill, but that Dorotea Skytt “*is actually the richest, with all the forest she owns, but she never liked it here!*” Most mutter about the two of them never getting along.

- ◆ If the player characters ask around about a large beast, a vaesen, or something related to the church grim, the villagers will suddenly go quiet and stare at them with dread. **INSPIRATION** can cause the villagers to calm down and open up. They explain that a large beast is protecting the church and the graveyard. No one has had a good look at it, but they have heard stories about it being as large as a wolf, but lean and agile, with red eyes. It has watched over Färnsta for as long as they can remember, ever since a sacrifice was made many centuries ago. With a successful **LEARNING** test the player characters recognize that this is a church grim (if they have not figured it out already).

THE FÄRNSTA VILLAGERS

“We don’t need any outsiders bothering us!”

The villagers of Färnsta avoid the outside world, and are quite happy that the world is avoiding them in return. Though the village is small, it is not a place where you stick your nose where it does not belong or ask unnecessary questions, and people usually keep to themselves. As Färnsta is self-sustaining, many of the locals are hunters, others fish in the stream, but most are lumberjacks, in some cases employed by Karlström’s sawmill. When they are not working, many spend their nights at the village hall – singing, playing cards, or having a drink.

- ◆ **Physique 3 Precision 2**
Logic 1 Empathy 1
- ◆ **CLOSE COMBAT 3 FORCE 2**
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Axe or knife



THE CHURCH AND THE GRAVEYARD

The old stone church is impossible to miss; its imposing square tower and facade of gray stone make it an awesome sight, a reminder of a bygone age. Virtually the only building not made of wood, the church is located on the outskirts of the village, with its graveyard facing the great, dark, and mysterious forest. Hidden under the church are the tunnels used by the Free Ones during ritual gatherings.

Player characters who enter the church looking for the priest will be greeted by Ingvar Nyström. He is timid and shy, but perfectly polite. He often mentions wanting what is best for the village, and one can detect a certain frustration in his voice, based on a sense of powerlessness.

The player characters can visit the church by following clues from the village hall, or be invited by the priest himself, who is curious to meet these strangers.

CHALLENGES

Below are a number of potential challenges the player characters may face at the church and the graveyard.

- ✦ If the player characters want to sneak into the church, mainly to access the sacristy where Ingvar Nyström keeps his notes, it takes a successful **STEALTH** test against the priest's **VIGILANCE**, or **MANIPULATION** against his **OBSERVATION**, to talk to him and keep him distracted while someone else sneaks into the sacristy. On failure the priest reminds them that they are in a house of

MEDIEVAL TEXT 2B

If you hear the sound of fleeing birds, snapping branches, and loud footsteps, you shall be its next victim. Pray then that your fate will be swift; for staring into its infernal gaze can plunge even the purest mind into madness. Those who threaten the place of God will suffer its wrath. This fell guardian is our Church Grim. Larger than a stag, stronger than a bear, and more agile than a lynx, it watches over God's acre. Running faster than a horse it hunts down anyone who endangers this place. It rests at the place where the Lord's eyes are watching.

MEDIEVAL TEXT 2C

East of the third great stone to the north is the entrance. Deep in the bowels of Färnsta rests its fell guardian. The path twists and turns, but at the place where the Lord's faith is based lies its resting place, like a light in the dark.

MEDIEVAL TEXT 2D

The cruel fate of the cat, baptized by fire in the name of the Lord, gave it life anew. Now it watches over this place, and it always will, sworn to be its protector. Only when its bones suffer the same fate that once brought it into existence will it perish.

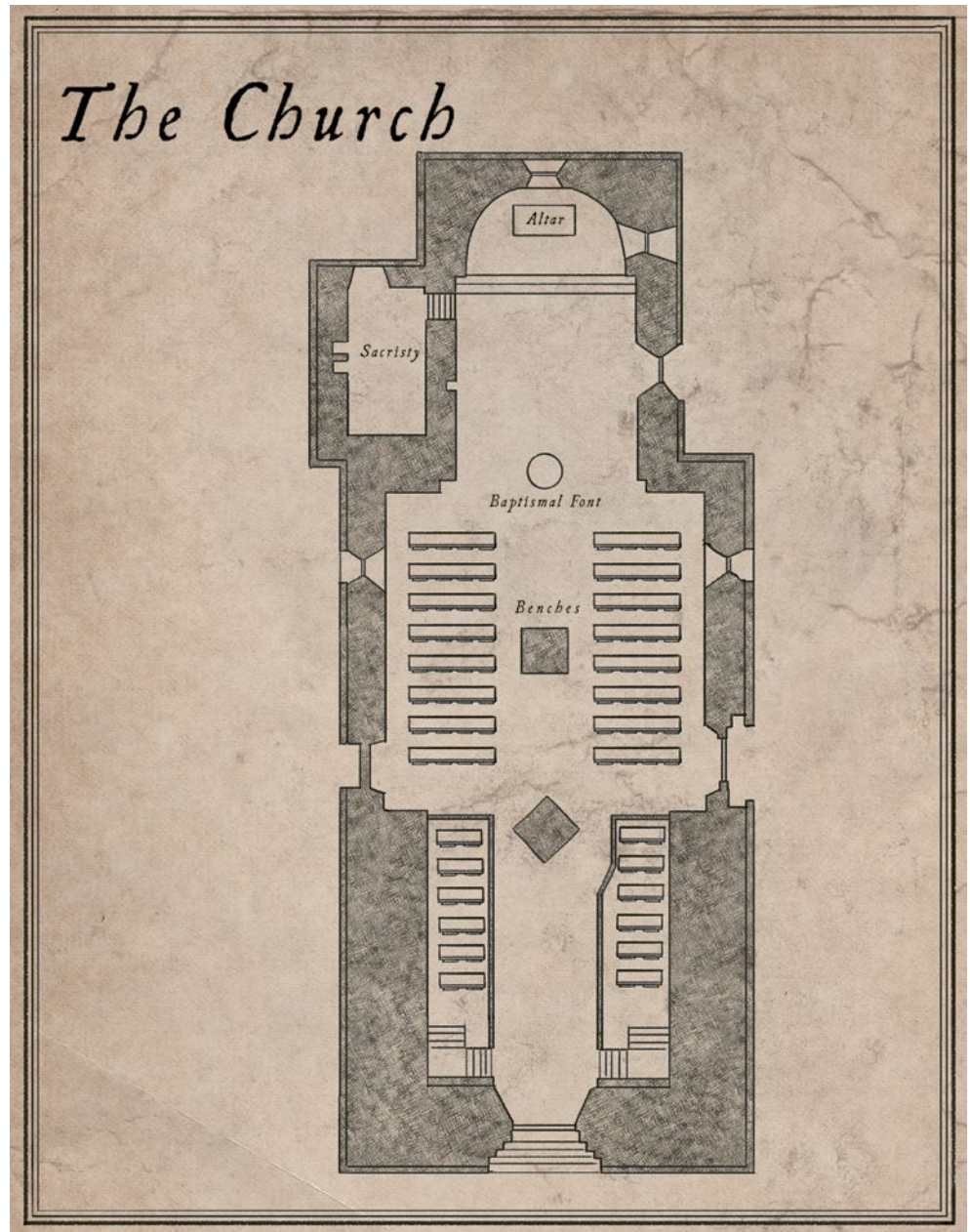
God and that they better show Him the proper respect. If the player characters persist, he will not hesitate to throw them out, or at least make an awkward attempt.

- ✦ Approaching the grove, the player characters may make a **VIGILANCE** test. If successful they see a dark figure armed with a bow watching them from the woods! Allow the player characters to react and act as they see fit. A failed test means that the figure takes them by surprise, sneaking up on them and possibly scaring them. Soon she comes forward and introduces herself as Vilhelmina Skytt, who has come to the forest to hunt. If she managed to surprise them, Vilhelmina will giggle at the fact that they did not see her coming. She explains that she is the only daughter of the widow Dorotea Skytt, one of the largest landowners in Färnsta, and tells them where to find their house. She is clearly very excited to meet people from the outside world, as she dreams of leaving Färnsta. If asked about Hammarström or Lindesköld, Vilhelmina reveals that they came to her family's home on several occasions to see her mother.
- ✦ If the player characters keep an eye on the entrance to the Free Ones' caves, they will eventually notice villagers disappearing through the opening. Player characters who follow them must pass a **STEALTH** test against the lookout's **VIGILANCE** to avoid detection. On failure the player characters will be chased by PC number of cult members (see page 55) – escape requires a successful **AGILITY** test. A failed test may result in a fight, or just threatening warnings not to poke their noses in other people's business.
- ✦ Player characters visiting the church or the graveyard at night risk coming eye to eye with the terrible church grim who is guarding the area. They can hear its great, thudding footsteps coming from inside the church, and if the player characters should break into the building, the vaesen would not hesitate to defend it. But the characters may also catch a glimpse of it with-

out putting themselves at risk, especially if the beast is in search of a victim: the church doors slam open and they hear an enormous creature rushing out of the church. Whatever it was, it is huge and dark, which makes it difficult to spot, but in its haste it will startle a bunch of black birds in the graveyard and make them fly off into the sky. Characters who see the church grim for the first time must also make a Fear test. The church grim's top priority is to defend the church and the graveyard. It will not attack if the PCs treat the place gently. In an encounter with the church grim they will see a large beast with glowing red eyes, growling menacingly at them, its breath turning to steam in the cold air. If the player characters turn back it will leave them alone, but if they do not the grim will attack (see page 56). With a successful **LEARNING** test the player characters recognize the creature as a church grim.

- ◆ Phase 2 of the countdown occurs. The player characters could witness the gruesome attack on the priest, but it would likely be more effective if they arrive afterwards and find the priest's body utterly destroyed, much like Hammarström's. He is lying on the steps of the

church, his severed hand still clutching the great iron ring handles on the doors, blood covering the facade where the rest of the small man's body appears to have been thrown around like a leaf in the wind. Player characters who examine his body will find one of *Handouts 2B-2D*.



CLUES

There is plenty of important information to uncover at the church and the graveyard.

- ✦ If the player characters speak to the priest about Hammarström and Lindesköld, he replies that he had little contact with the outsiders, but met Hammarström on a few occasions. However, the priest is noticeably uncomfortable talking about Hammarström, and with a successful **OBSERVATION** test the player characters can extract information about Hammarström having talked to the priest a great deal about how to entice various villagers to sell their land – something that made the priest very uncomfortable.
- ✦ Player characters who gain access to the sacristy will find the priest's notes (*Handout 2F*). He writes that Märta Karlström seemed very interested in Hammarström's affairs during his stay in the village. He ends by wondering whether she has given in to temptation and will tempt others in the village to sell their land?
- ✦ If the player characters pass a Challenging **INVESTIGATION** test in the sacristy, they notice a loose

stone in the wall. Hidden behind it is one of the ancient texts, the essential clues (*Handouts 2B–2D*).

- ✦ With a successful **INVESTIGATION** test in the graveyard, the player characters can see that someone has tried to sweep the gravel path to hide what seems to be the tracks of a large feline, almost twice the size of a grown man's, leading away from the church.
- ✦ If the player characters ask the priest about the church grim, he will evade their questions and seem shocked at their suggestion that "a monster" (as he describes it) would be lurking in the house of God. A **MANIPULATION** test can make him slip up by referring to it as "*Färnsta's guardian*" and explain that it is a church grim that has watched over Färsta ever since the church was built, as a result of a cat being buried in its foundation. If the characters keep asking questions, the priest claims not to know anything else: "*except that it will do everything to protect this sacred ground.*" If the player characters have already found Hammarström, the priest's tone suggests that Hammarström was trying to desecrate God's acre, which led to him being attacked by the church grim.
- ✦ Searching the graveyard near its border with the surrounding forest, the player characters will see a large flock of crows in the branches overhead. A **LEARNING** test can impart the information that crows often feed on cadavers. As they

INGVAR NYSTRÖM'S NOTES

Ms. Karlström recently came to visit for a cup of coffee. We had a conversation and she complimented me on how I unite Färnsta in our faith. Her praise warmed my heart and the woman was very sweet.

She then started asking questions about Mr. Hammarström, the man from the large sawmill in Härnösand. She wanted information about the business deals he was trying to negotiate, and there was something unsettling in her tone of voice. I see temptation in her eyes, temptation suggesting that she is not a godfearing woman. Perhaps she will tempt the others to sell their land?

THE NOTE ON HAMMARSTRÖM'S BODY

To Mr. G. Hammarström

Meet me at the church after dark. I have some words that may help you in your endeavor.

*Regards,
I. Nyström*

approach, the player characters can smell the stink of something rotten in the air. Once they reach the place with the crows, they find Hammarström's twisted corpse lying on the ground. A successful **MEDICINE** or **LEARNING** test leads to the conclusion that some huge predator must have attacked the man – a bear or a large wolf are the only reasonable alternatives based on Nordic fauna, but if it was a vaesen, it could have been anything from a church grim or werewolf to something much worse. Player characters who search Hammarström's body will find a note in his pocket, with a message (*Handout 2G*) from Ingvar Nyström to come see him at the church. It looks like the priest's handwriting, but a Challenging **OBSERVATION** or Challenging **INVESTIGATION** test can reveal that it is not – someone has tried to copy his handwriting. It was actually written by Karlström to lure Hammarström to the graveyard and cast suspicion on the priest.

- ◆ If confronted with the note, the priest will deny having written it and be deeply offended by what the player characters are suggesting by showing it to him. He demands that they leave Färnsta immediately. The characters can use **OBSERVATION** to see that he is genuinely upset and frightened by the note.
- ◆ If the player characters confront the priest about von Meijer's plan to tear down the church and move it (for example by showing von Meijer's letter), the priest replies that this is the first he has heard about it. But he is deeply upset by the idea and asks how the player characters can work for a man who would even consider destroying this old church. He shrugs hopelessly and says that if the villagers had their way, he would not have any other option. With a successful **MANIPULATION** test he informs the player characters that Dorotea Skytt intended to sell her land, in which case most of the villagers would probably follow suit.

DESCRIPTION OF HAMMARSTRÖM'S BODY

The poor man's remains are a gruesome sight, and an excellent opportunity to create an atmosphere of horror. Describe in detail the hideous injuries and the terrible state of the body, which can barely be recognized as human. Alternatively, the Gamemaster can read out the following text or portray it in play:

The putrid stench grew increasingly intense, and soon its source became apparent. The crows scattered into the air, revealing what they had feasted upon under the shrubbery – a body, seemingly dressed for some fancy occasion, but now its fine garments had been reduced to bloody rags. Although it was human, it looked more like something thrown into a potato masher. Its broken limbs were pointing in different directions, and though its chest was facing the ground, the head had been twisted around, to stare at the sky. One eye was missing, munched by one of the crows, and in the empty socket lived a colony of maggots. The jaw was broken, dangling off the savaged face at an odd angle, and there were large cuts along the side of the head, along with patches of bare skull, with tiny marks most likely pecked by the crows. By now the dry, brown blood looked more like the soil on which the body rested. But despite the grotesque state of the body, one could still see the fear in the man's face – the terror Hammarström had felt as he was torn to shreds.



INGVAR NYSTRÖM

“The Lord can guide us through these times of change.”

Ingvar Nyström has been Färnsta’s priest for many decades, since he finished his ecclesiastical studies as a young man and shouldered the responsibility when his predecessor tragically disappeared in the forest under mysterious circumstances. Ingvar is a timid man, but also a great listener, and he always appreciates those who come seeking solace in the word of God.

Obviously, the priest has no knowledge of the Free Ones and the pagan elements in their Christian faith.

Ingvar Nyström is short and thin, with hair that barely covers his increasingly bald dome and a small mustache leading up from a pointy nose on which a pair of round spectacles are perched.

- ❖ **Physique 1 Precision 2**
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ❖ **MEDICINE 3 LEARNING 4 INSPIRATION 3**
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**

LEARNING TEST

When the PCs have investigated the mutilated corpse and visited the church, they can at any time make a **LEARNING** test to gain the information below. Only one PC can make the test and only one roll can be made. If the test fails, the PCs will need to find the information elsewhere, primarily by talking to NPCs.

- ❖ **ONE SUCCESS:** The horrific damage to the victim and the vicinity to the old church point in one direction: a church grim. You remember the tales about such beasts guarding houses of God and graveyards against looters and thieves – a vaesen in the service of God.
- ❖ **TWO SUCCESSES:** You recall that a church grim is created in a very particular way: a ritual of sacrifice where an animal is walled in alive in a church wall. After this, the church grim enters its service as a guardian.
- ❖ **THREE SUCCESSES:** Sin. The church grim reacts to sinful acts. Blasphemy against God or desecration of holy symbols will spur it into action.

THE SKYTT RESIDENCE

The Skytt family home is a red wooden house with two stories and an inclined roof, handed down over generations and renovated time and time again. It is large and spacious, a bit too large for Dorotea and her daughter, who have been its only occupants since Dorotea became a widow. Behind the house one can see the vast expanse of Dorotea’s forest, where Vilhelmina spends lots of time walking and hunting. Smoke can be seen rising from the large chimney, as the fire of the hearth rarely goes out thanks to the endless supply of firewood. There is also a substantial, but simple, outhouse standing in the yard.

Player characters knocking on the door are greeted by Dorotea, smiling in the doorway, saying that she

wondered how long it would take before they showed up. She offers them coffee, sandwiches with whey butter, and simple homemade cookies. Even though they are very well off, Dorotea and Vilhelmina do not keep any servants, choosing instead to handle such duties themselves – a rare thing this far from the cities.

CHALLENGES

Below are some challenges the player characters may face at the Skytt residence.

- ✦ Player characters wishing to sneak away to investigate the house (and find Dorotea's secret cache) can do so with a successful **STEALTH** test against Dorotea's **VIGILANCE**, or **MANIPULATION** against her **OBSERVATION** while someone is distracting her with conversation.
- ✦ The Skytts could be watched by Märta Karlström, who is conspiring against Dorotea. In that case she is hiding in the bushes outside the house. The player characters can detect her with **VIGILANCE** and notice a figure lurking in the shrubbery. Catching her requires a successful **AGILITY** test, otherwise she disappears into the forest. On success the player characters see that it is Märta Karlström, who defends herself by claiming that Dorotea Skytt is a dangerous and ungodly woman worshipping dark and terrible powers. Karlström explains that she was watching over the player characters to make sure that they were not in danger.
- ✦ Phase 3 of the countdown occurs. The thunderous steps of the church grim are heard from outside the house, and Dorotea asks everyone to stay indoors for their own safety. Outside it is possible to glimpse the shape of the giant beast and its glowing red eyes. Soon there is a large bang as the creature tries to knock down the front door. Dorotea braces herself against the door, shouting for the others to leave the room. Before long the door breaks down and the grim instantly tears Dorotea's throat out. Her lifeless body falls to the ground, her head folding over due to the missing neck. The grim bursts into the house and grabs Vilhelmina, but instead of tearing her

apart, it drags the girl away. No matter how hard Vilhelmina tries, she cannot resist the enormous beast and is dragged to the ritual site. You can also have Dorotea scream at her to escape through a kitchen window while Dorotea tries to block the front door. Soon Dorotea will feel the pressure on the door ease, and realize that the church grim is hunting her daughter. Dorotea runs out to attract the grim's attention, and the player characters can hear her dying shrieks as she is attacked, followed by Vilhelmina's calls for help as the grim takes her away. To find out what happens next, see the Confrontation. If combat should occur, remember that the church grim has primarily come for Vilhelmina and possibly to kill her mother. It uses its speed to avoid a fight, but will defend itself if necessary. To create a sense of chaos and horror, focus on building up the church grim as a dangerous presence outside the house. Player characters who encounter the grim for the first time must make a Fear test.

CLUES

The Skytt residence contains several clues, mostly relating to the business arrangement Hammarström came to discuss. If they are lucky, the player characters can also learn about the Free Ones and the church grim.

- ✦ If asked about Hammarström, Dorotea informs the characters that she met him several times and invited him to her home. She owns more forest than anyone else in the village and wanted to sell it to von Meijer's company, so the purpose of Hammarström's visits was to negotiate a deal that would satisfy her.
- ✦ If they ask why Dorotea wanted to sell her land, she answers that she is tired of the isolation and limitations of Färnsta, and that her daughter Vilhelmina deserves to see the world: keeping her here is difficult enough! With a successful **OBSERVATION** test, the player characters notice that Dorotea has other reasons as well, but pointing this out will only scare and upset her.

DOROTEA SKYTT

“Färnsta could use some new blood.”

Dorotea Skytt is the largest landowner in Färnsta and owns much of the village’s forests, its most important and valuable resource. Dorotea is well aware of its worth, which is why she is selling lumber expensively to Karlström. Dorotea was widowed shortly after giving birth to Vilhelmina, when her husband Anton died from an infection after cutting himself on a saw blade. She raised her daughter on her own, and the two of them are very close.

Dorotea is also a member of the Free Ones, as her family was one of the village’s founders. But she has never mentioned the cult to her daughter, who will soon be old enough to be initiated – something Dorotea hopes will never happen. She finds the cult vile and brutal, and would like to leave it along with the isolated Färnsta. She hopes to sell her lands in order to move away from there, and hopefully bring an end to the god-forsaken religion.

Dorotea is in her late thirties, with big red hair that she often wears down and eyes as blue as the water up north.

- ◆ **Physique 2 Precision 3**
Logic 5 Empathy 4
- ◆ **MEDICINE 2 VIGILANCE 3 LEARNING 2**
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT: Knife**



With **MANIPULATION** or **OBSERVATION** Dorotea explains that it was she who told Hammarström about the iron deposit underneath the church, which compelled Hammarström to do everything he could to secure the deal. On the night of his disappearance he said he had probably found an acceptable solution. If the characters ask what she thinks of Märta Karlström, Dorotea simply snorts at her name.

- ◆ If they ask about the beast in Färnsta, Dorotea will recoil at such a question unless she trusts the player characters. If she does, or with the help of **INSPIRATION** or **OBSERVATION**, she reveals that there is a church grim, a large beast summoned from a cat that was buried in the foundation of the church at the time of its construction. It watches over the church and the graveyard, and defends both above all else. The church bells always toll on the night before it hunts its next victim. Dorotea has always hated that sound, as she knows what it heralds. If the player characters have found out that Dorotea is a member of the Free Ones, she also adds that the grim is under Märta Karlström’s control.
- ◆ If the player characters manage to sneak further into the Skytt residence without being detected,
- ◆ Questions about the deal or mention of Märta Karlström makes Dorotea explain that the whole deal came to a halt as Hammarström could not get Märta to sell her sawmill, which he wanted to sort out before making a deal with Dorotea.



they can get to Dorotea's chamber and find a secret cache where she keeps her ritual objects: an amulet in the form of a pentagram engraved with the words "Liberorum Foedus," and an ornate black robe. In here Dorotea may also keep one of the old texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*). If confronted with these objects, Dorotea suddenly looks terrified and says that they better leave, that it is too dangerous – they have seen and heard too much, and if they keep asking questions their lives might be in danger. But an **INSPIRATION** test can calm her down. If the player characters are on good terms with Vilhelmina, she too can calm her mother. Dorotea tells the characters to search the sawmill, where they can find more answers about this god-forsaken cult she has been forced into, and adds that Märta Karlström must be avoided. Should you wish to play out this scene even though the player characters themselves never snuck off to her chamber, you can let Vilhelmina do so instead, after which she confronts her mother and asks the player characters to help her get out of here, while Dorotea begs her to listen and understand that they would soon be in danger, but also that she too would like to leave this place for good.

VILHELMINA SKYTT

"Mother says I deserve to see a world beyond Färnsta."

Vilhelmina is the teenage daughter of Dorotea, raised by her mother since her father, Anton, died from an infection when she was very young. Her mother has always taken good care of her, without being overprotective. Vilhelmina has always been inquisitive and Dorotea encourages her daughter to follow her curiosity.

This has given Vilhelmina a deep interest in nature and the taming of it. She is an excellent archer, and despite her mother's considerable wealth, it is often her hunting that puts food on the table. But this curiosity also makes her dream about seeing the world outside Färnsta, and like her mother, she would like to leave the village behind.

Vilhelmina is in her late teens, with an athletic build and her mother's distinct eye and hair color.

- ✦ **Physique 4 Precision 5**
Logic 3 Empathy 2
- ✦ **AGILITY 3 CLOSE COMBAT 2**
RANGED COMBAT 3 INVESTIGATION 3
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Bow, knife

- ✦ If Dorotea trusts the player characters and they are missing one of the old texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*), she can give it to them, to help them stop Karlström once and for all – either after they have found the clues about the Free Ones in her house, or because the characters have shown empathy and trust in her and Vilhelmina (in which case she may also tell them about her faith). If phase 3 of the countdown occurs, one of the texts should be found on Dorotea's corpse.

THE SAWMILL

The sawmill is located on the bank of the brook, with a great water wheel powering the saw inside the building. The foundation is made of stone, and the rest of dark wood. Owned by Märta Karlström, the sawmill saws and treats the timber used in the village – much of which must be bought from Dorotea Skytt, as Karlström's own forests pale in comparison.

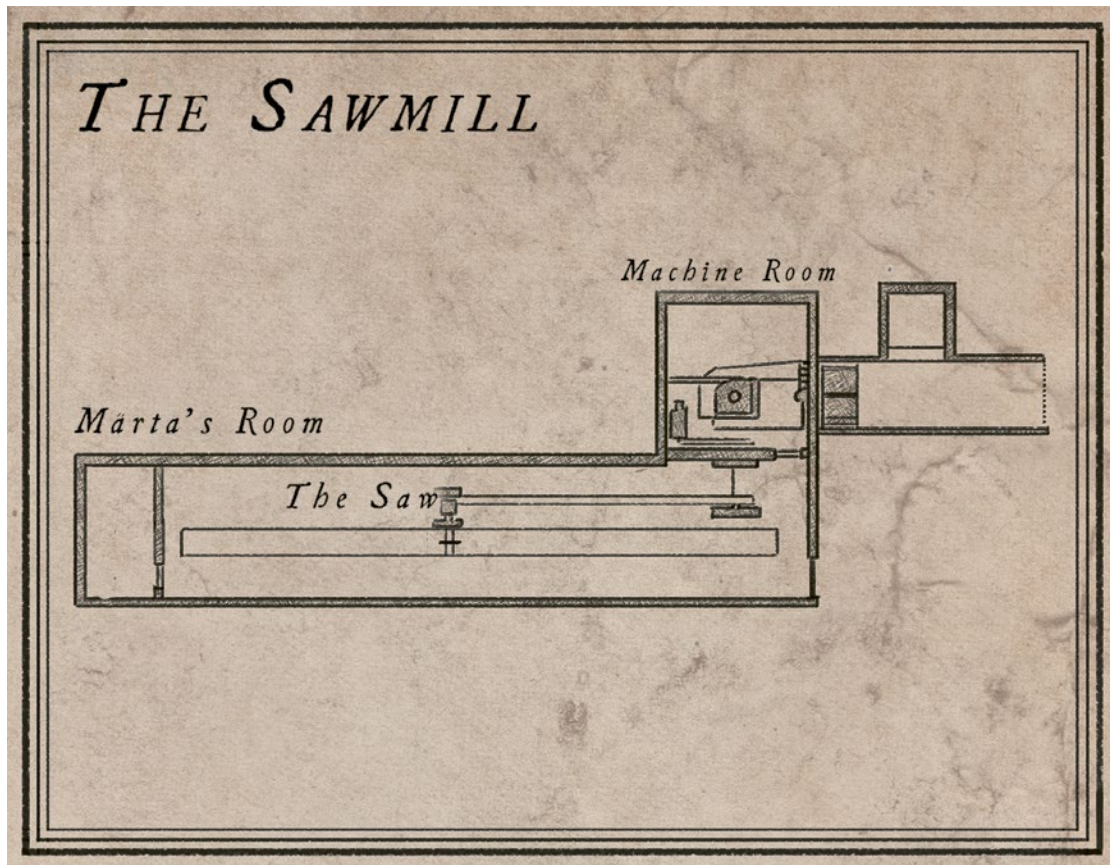
The player characters can visit the sawmill during the day to see Märta Karlström, who meets them here rather than at home and gives them an enthusiastic tour of the mill, stressing that innovations like steam power will always lack the precision of good old manual effort.

The sawmill also holds a dark secret: Märta Karlström is using it as a meeting place and comes here to prepare the sacrificial rituals taking place underneath the church.

CHALLENGES

The player characters can encounter several challenges at the sawmill, particularly at night.

- ✦ During the day there is a group of villagers working at the sawmill. They are all loyal to Karlström and will not hesitate to beat up those who anger her. The workers have no intention of killing the player characters, but they (or Karlström herself) will say that this is their final warning and that they better leave Färnsta before nightfall if they value their lives.
- ✦ The door to the sawmill is locked at night, but it is still possible to get in. A player character can pick the lock with **STEALTH**, or use **FORCE** to smash it open, though the latter would of course leave a trace. If they break into the sawmill, people at the village hall will be upset about it the follow-



ing day. It is also possible to obtain a key from Karlström or her workers. The player characters can steal it with **STEALTH**, take it up from a villager after knocking him out or drinking him under the table, or use **MANIPULATION** to convince a villager that they are helping Karlström and need access to the mill.

- ◆ If Countdown 2 has occurred, the sawmill will be patrolled at night by loyal members of the Free Ones (PCs-2 in number, but at least 2). The cult members are wearing their robes and carrying lanterns. The player characters may be able to sneak past them using **STEALTH** against their **VIGILANCE**, or even defeat them in combat. They are loyal to Karlström and will keep fighting until they are either killed or incapacitated. Player characters who examine a killed or unconscious member of the Free Ones will not only notice their ornate robes, but also the amulets around their necks, shaped like a pentagram and engraved with the words “Liberorum Foedus”.
- ◆ If a large battle breaks out with shots being fired, Karlström may summon the church grim to stop the attack. The player characters will then see birds take off from the graveyard, and soon they hear something running at great speed, branches snapping as it approaches. Now the characters have a chance to react – either flee with **AGILITY** or hide with **STEALTH**, as the church grim may be far too dangerous for them to defeat in combat. Those who see the grim for the first time must make a Fear test.

CLUES

The sawmill holds many clues, both about Märta’s plan and the terrible secret on which Färnsta is built.

- ◆ It is impossible to search the sawmill during the day, as Karlström never leaves the player characters’ side and her workers are instructed to keep them under constant watch. A successful **VIGILANCE** test can make the characters aware of this, if they have not noticed it already. Furthermore, during

the guided tour of the sawmill, Karlström will try to divert their attention from a certain closed door. If asked about it, she claims it is a storage room. A successful **OBSERVATION** test confirms that she is hiding something in there.

- ◆ At night the player characters can gain access to that room, which is where Karlström goes to make her preparations. There they find a green and elaborately ornamented robe, and a large pentagram painted on the wall with “Liberorum Foedus” carved into it – a **LEARNING** test translates it to “The League of the Free”. Carvings on the wall describe a sacrificial ritual to be performed at least once per generation. **LEARNING** can reveal that it is pagan in origin, though with Christian elements woven into it. This room also contains one of the old 12th century texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*). If the player characters have still not found all the texts, the code to Karlström’s safe is also available in this room.

CONFRONTATION

The final confrontation of the mystery will take place in the ritual chamber located in the caves underneath the church, where Märta Karlström has summoned the members of the Free Ones to perform the sacrificial ritual that will ensure the village’s prosperity for yet another generation, and at the same time destroy her greatest rival. It is also an opportunity for her to kill any wavering cult members by setting the church grim on them, thus securing victory once and for all. That would make Märta the sole ruler of Färnsta, but as described under *Catastrophe*, page 33, her victory will not last long, but rather curse the village to be swallowed by nature.

The player characters can find the place by following the directions found in the old texts (*Handouts 2B–2D*) or by watching the graveyard on the night of the ritual, in which case they will see the robed members of the Free Ones head down into the caves. Note that the church grim is guarding the graveyard,

so player characters sneaking in must be careful to avoid detection (and make a Fear test if they have not seen it before). The characters could also let the cult members lead them to the location, for example by following guards from the sawmill, who will go to the graveyard once the player characters have found the clues available there. The player characters could also disguise themselves as members of the Free Ones by wearing the same robes and accompanying similarly dressed individuals on the way to the graveyard. No one will suspect the player characters as long as they do not act suspiciously.

THE TUNNELS AND THE RITUAL

Just east of the church, where the graveyard meets the forest, there are three large boulders. The third one to the north can be pressed (may require a **FORCE** test if the Gamemaster deems it necessary) to open a way down into an old cave system. It is dark and damp

down here, and one can feel the slimy surface of moss growing on the walls. The caves vary in size, some having enough room for several humans to walk side by side, others forcing them to crouch. The stones are very dark and smooth, and with a successful **LEARNING** test the player characters can see that the tunnels are largely made up of iron ore – a massive deposit! The cave system runs parallel with the foundation of the church, and parts of the smooth foundation are visible to those who keep their eyes open. The passage continues around the corner of the foundation, into a large, round cave chamber stretching several meters in all directions. The cave walls are adorned with symbols like the ones on the Free Ones' robes, and trenches have been carved into the middle of the floor to form a large pentagram, around which the cult members gather. The ritual chamber is lit by torches, but the tunnels themselves are completely dark, making it difficult to see without a portable light source (which the player characters can use to their advantage to avoid detection).



Soon the members of the Free Ones gather in the ritual chamber, all wearing their robes. They are heard worshipping God along with other pagan entities and ask these beings to hear their prayers. The person leading the ritual steps into the middle of the pentagram, wearing the ornamented green robe the player characters found at the sawmill (if it was destroyed the new robe is black, but equally ornamented) and the player characters recognize the chanting individual as Märta Karlström. Read or quote the following:

"We, the Free Ones, have sworn a blood oath to honor nature in the name of the Lord. This has given us everything worth having and allowed Färnsta to prosper. It is the most precious thing we have, but now others are trying to take it from us! We have survived so much, but now our greatest threat comes not from without, but from within, from those who would destroy the house of God and its protector in pursuit of profit. I understand that many of you have doubted our faith, or worse, turned traitors against this village and all we stand for as members of the Free Ones. That is why I have summoned you here — tonight, each of you will prove, once and for all, whether you are believers or not. And the time has also come to present our offering to the divine. Bring forth the sacrifice!"

Two figures emerge from the dark holding a person, dressed in a white nightshirt, whose upper body is covered by a large potato sack. The nightshirt shows smudges of dirt and blood from where its wearer was dragged and beaten. When the sack is removed, the person turns out to be Vilhelmina Skytt, her hands tied behind her back and face bloodied from resisting her captors. She is taken into the middle of the pentagram and pushed to her knees, as Karlström pulls out an ancient dagger of black iron and holds it out in front of her. She turns to Vilhelmina, then to the gathered members, and says the following:

"Now, dear child, you will be given the greatest gift anyone will ever receive. You have been chosen to become one with nature, and you shall be our offering to the Lord. Your blood will nourish the roots

THE RITUAL IF PHASE 3 OF THE COUNTDOWN HAS NOT OCCURRED

In phase 3 of the countdown, Karlström sends the church grim to kill Dorotea Skytt and bring back Vilhelmina to be sacrificed. If that never happened, Dorotea will participate in the ritual to keep up appearances. When it is time for the sacrifice, the victim is brought in with a sack over her head and revealed to be Vilhelmina (kidnapped by Karlström once the rest of the Free Ones had gathered). Karlström will use this to test Dorotea by appointing her to make the first cut. She hands Dorotea the knife while circling around her, asking how loyal she really is to the Free Ones, and reminding her of the oath she took. But Dorotea would never harm her own daughter, so instead she cuts the ropes binding her and shouts at her to run (but Karlström has anticipated this and posted some of her members in the tunnel to block the exit). If Dorotea is aware of the player characters' presence and feels that she can trust them, she will try to take advantage of the situation and draw attention to herself so they can rescue Vilhelmina and stop Karlström. She does this by hesitating as long as possible to buy some time, and will help the player characters if combat should arise (as will Vilhelmina, if she is freed). However, if the situation becomes hopeless, Dorotea is ready to cut her daughter's throat and then her own, rather than being sacrificed to the terrible, pagan gods. Before doing so she says:

"Father, forgive me."

for an entire generation and keep our soil fertile. Your life will be a gift to us all. Now we present our offering to the Lord, and you, fellow members, will all make the cuts. The blood will flow, and the girl will be drained. It is time for you to honor your oaths, or leave the Free Ones forever.”

Karlström will reach out the hand with the dagger and let the members cut into Vilhelmina’s flesh, one by one. All who follow the ritual will throw off their robes and expose their naked bodies, while stepping forward and cutting the girl, and smearing themselves with her blood. The rest of her blood runs down into the small trenches that make up the pentagram, which soon shines red in the torchlight. But most members will refuse, keeping their robes on and stepping back toward the cave wall. Once all true believers have cut the girl, Karlström will take the knife and slit her throat, draining the last of her blood. Then she strokes the flat of the blade against her own chest to feel the sticky blood against her naked body, thoroughly enjoying the moment.

Soon after this an almost deafening rumble echoes through the tunnels, as if a runaway locomotive is moving through the caves at full speed. The huge, black shape and its glowing red eyes reflect the fire and anger it represents. From the darkness of the tunnels appears the grim in all its glory. The beast is huge, with drool dripping from its jaws, mixing with the blood in the ritual chamber and turning it pink. Its heavy breathing blows like the wind in the face of everyone present. Its panting blends with the gasps of the unbelievers, as they realize what fate awaits them. Karlström flashes a final smile before the church grim attacks those who threaten the church it has sworn to protect. The carnage is total. Loud screams echo from people being torn apart. Bones crunch as they break. Blood spatters all over the chamber. Body parts are scattered. And standing in the middle of the mayhem is Karlström, delighted, with her loyal members by her side. The blood flows through the room and forms a pool that covers the pentagram. If Karlström has accomplished this, that means the Catastrophe has occurred.

CLIMAX

The player characters’ efforts to stop the ritual, Märta Karlström, and the church grim before it is too late become the mystery’s climactic finale. At this point the characters will therefore face several challenges: putting an end to Karlström (violently or otherwise) and resisting her loyal followers, and possibly the church grim as well – a situation that could easily end in tragedy for the player characters. But there are also several ways for them to solve the mystery, some of which are described below.

INFILTRATION

The cave passages and the ritual site are dark, which the player characters can definitely use to their advantage. They can sneak more or less unhindered through the tunnels and watch the ritual from there; the Gamemaster decides whether a **STEALTH** test is required in order to stay hidden. The player characters can also disguise themselves in the robes of fallen cult members, such as the guards at the sawmill, members who can be stalked, or the ones guarding the entrance until everyone has gone down into the crypt. Wearing the robes would also allow the player characters to enter the ritual site itself without raising suspicion. As they remove the robes from their owners, the player characters see that they are naked underneath, and may choose whether or not they should be as well. There could also be a dramatic moment where the loyal members get naked, while the player characters throw off their robes and turn out to be fully dressed, armed, and ready for battle!

The easiest way to stop the ritual is to render Märta Karlström either dead or Broken: her loyal followers will then try to flee the turmoil. Karlström will be defended in combat by PC +1D6 cult members. But the greatest threat is the church grim, which Karlström will summon after 1D6+1 turns. If she should fall before summoning it, the beast will remain in the church. The player characters can also use **INSPIRATION** to convince doubting cult members to join their side and help the player characters, which can easily be

handled mechanically by reducing (perhaps entirely) the number of members fighting for Karlström.

A DEAD CAT ON THE LINE

The greatest danger is the church grim patrolling and guarding the church and its graveyard. Getting past it undetected can be a challenge as the player characters try to access the tunnels to the ritual chamber – **STEALTH** tests against **VIGILANCE** may be required if the Gamemaster deems it necessary (but be careful, as failed tests could lead to the player characters being slaughtered). However, moving through the woods undetected can allow the player characters to avoid such a confrontation.

To stop the church grim, the player characters must find the original sacrifice – a cat that lies buried in the foundation of the church – and burn its bones. When the fire burns the hottest they will hear the tortured screech of the church grim echo through the night, as it too catches fire. The giant beast will then run into the church and set it on fire as well, forever reducing it to an empty ruin. Now the old texts (Handout A – C) come in handy, as they offer clues about where to find the bones and how to destroy them. The bones lie buried in the smooth foundation of the church, behind a stone whose color is much lighter than the others. If the Gamemasters deems it necessary the PCs may make a successful **INVESTIGATION** test to find the precise location where the bones are buried and a **FORCE** test to dig them out. As they tear out the stones, the investigators will find the skeleton and bones of what used to be a cat of some kind: these are the ones they must burn to stop the church grim. If the Gamemaster wants to make this more challenging and exciting, you can let the grim feel that someone has dug up its bones and come after 1D6 turns.

You can also let the player characters divert the church grim's attention, especially if some of them go to stop Karlström and the ritual while the others burn the church grim's bones. There are many ways to attract its attention, the easiest of which would be to desecrate something at the graveyard or inside the church (could be anything from simply throwing a

stone at the church to digging up graves). The grim will then come after the perpetrator and make every effort to catch him/her. The player characters must then do whatever they can to flee the church grim, who is as fast as a galloping horse, which as it happens would also be their best means of escape. Escaping the grim on foot requires a Difficult **AGILITY** test, while a horse lowers the difficulty to normal. The player characters can also lower the difficulty of **AGILITY** and confuse the church grim by running through brush and rough terrain, which results in a Challenging **AGILITY** test. For each successful test, the beast will pursue them for 1D6+1 turns. Failure means that the church grim either catches and attacks them, or is called back by Karlström.

ESCAPE

Karlström is a pragmatist and will know when all hope is lost. If she notices that her ritual has been infiltrated and the player characters start a fight, she will flee to save her own skin and try to get to the church grim which will protect her. She runs for 1D6 turns, and once she reaches the grim she will seek refuge inside the church, where it will be virtually impossible to attack her without being ripped to shreds by the massive jaws of the grim. But there will of course be nothing to protect her if the bones are burned and the church grim is stopped: then she will meet her fate in the same fiery inferno.





...all är den som
läter sig värda
om den fattige
Kon. Båb 412

TORCHES AND PITCHFORKS

Many of Färnsta's inhabitants are not part of the Free Ones and would likely oppose their brutal religious practices. The best place to gather them would be the village hall, and the player characters will be taken there if they inform the villagers (who are not members of the Free Ones) of what is going on. They will be lined up in the middle of the village hall and showered with questions about what has happened, and many will be very skeptical (and possibly suggest that the player characters are the real blasphemous conspirators). A successful **INSPIRATION** test can convince the villagers of what is going on, in which case they will join the player characters and help them. Soon a mob gathers outside, torches in hand, armed with everything from axes to pitchforks. Together they march to the church to put an end to the unnatural atrocities taking place there.

A climax at the church could play out in many different ways. The mob could be terrified by the church grim and not dare to continue until the player characters have drawn it away from there, or simply fail to notice the beast until it goes berserk on parts of the mob, forcing the player characters to end things quickly. In that case the mob could serve as a distraction that prevents the church grim from being called by Karlström. If the mob reaches the ritual chamber, there will soon be a great turmoil where several of those not on Karlström's side may be killed as well. The cult members might also hear the noise of the approaching mob. Karlström will then seek refuge with the grim at the church, with the angry mob standing outside and frantically trying to get in to mete out the punishment they believe she deserves. The priest (if still alive) will try to calm the mob, to no avail. Here a challenge could be that the mob is trying to break in, and the player characters must find and burn the grim's remains before the angry villagers enter the church and risk being killed, or that Karlström and the grim escape once they open the church doors.

LIBERORUM FOEDUS – “THE FREE ONES”

“Accept this blood sacrifice and hear our prayer.”

The Free Ones is a cult with pagan practices composed of many of Färnsta's most prominent families, and has existed since the 12th century. Its name refers to their freedom to rule as masters of the village. At least once per generation they perform a human sacrifice to make the soil fertile for the next generation, and the time has come to continue this tradition. Witnessing these macabre sacrifices has given them the ability to see vaesen. As their ritual site they use the underground caves watched over by the church grim.

Each cult member is given an amulet in the form of a pentagram, engraved with the words “Liberorum Foedus,” worn in secret as a tribute to their faith. A successful **LEARNING** test will translate these words as “The League of the Free.” All members wear ornate black robes during rituals, with nothing underneath. When it is time for the sacrifice, they cast off their robes and smear themselves with the blood of the murdered. They are naked as a way of getting closer to nature, and in mockery of the Christian prudishness.

- ✦ **Physique 3 Precision 3**
Logic 2 Empathy 1
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT 3 RANGED COMBAT 2**
STEALTH 2 VIGILANCE 2
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Ritual knives or crossbows

THE CHURCH GRIM

The church grim's stats are found on page 129 in the core rulebook. Originally created by the sacrifice of a cat, this massive feline makes grown panthers seem like kittens. It has shaggy dark fur, glowing red eyes, and a huge maw with razor sharp fangs that make short work of flesh and bone alike. Its original body lies buried in the foundation of the church, at a place that leads to the caves used by the Free Ones—that is why it is guarding their entrance as well. It will attack anyone who threatens the church and its land, which the Free Ones have used to neutralize threats to themselves. At night it keeps watch inside the church or at the graveyard, ringing the bell on the night before someone is to be killed. It runs with the speed of a galloping horse, and as it races across the graveyard, black birds from the souls of the buried will fly off in terror.

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ **ENCHANTMENT:** Animals flee. The church grim is a terrifying presence, not least to animals around the village. It can be seen in everything from birds leaving their nests to horses squealing and bolting around their paddocks. The church grim can steer these animals by striking fear into them. Above all, it can make animals flee in panic as it storms out of the graveyard in search of its next victim. While it is running at full speed, it is possible to track the grim's movements by following the trail of panicking animals, unless it has set a trap and made them flee straight into its claws...
- ✦ **CURSE:** Horror. Staring into the glowing red eyes of the grim can drive you mad, and those who do will have terrible visions haunting them like hell itself. It was this curse that cost Lindesköld his sanity.

AFTERMATH

The consequences of this mystery, and the fate of Färnsta, depend largely on if the player characters manage to stop Karlström, the Free Ones, and the church grim.

- ✦ If the player characters stop Karlström and the Free Ones, the truth about their vile rituals will soon be exposed. Soon persecutions will begin, not unlike the 19th century witch hunts, in search of loyal members who are at best driven from the village and at worst lynched. Before long the village will have rid itself completely of the pagan faith. Dorotea Skytt (or if she did not make it, Vilhelmina) convinces the landowners to sign von Meijer's contracts and sell him their land. The little sawmill that once belonged to Karlström is expanded and equipped with a steam engine, new roads are built, and Färnsta becomes a major logging center. However, the greatest riches come from the caves and their iron ore, making Färnsta a prominent location for the mining industry as well. But at the same time the fertile soil and the closeness to nature will be gone, and the famous trees of Färnsta will never grow as tall again. Whether this is caused by the greedy industry or the absent offerings to the nature gods remains a mystery...
- ✦ If the player characters stopped the church grim, the old church is now a scorched ruin that will soon be torn down, and a modern, white church is built in a different location, so that the caves can be excavated. The bells will never again toll at the stroke of twelve on the night before a death, and the sound of startled birds will no longer be heard at the graveyard. However, Färnsta's church has lost its guardian and with its rapid growth the village will be plagued by grave robbing.
- ✦ If the player characters fail to stop Karlström and the church grim, the soil of Färnsta will be more fertile than ever and the trees will grow quicker and denser than ever before. Soon they

will cover the roads, and no one will be able to visit or leave Färnsta, and within a year the village will be covered by trees and moss. Once in a while, people who go near the woods that were Färnsta will claim to have heard a terrible, bestial sound. The place has been permanently reclaimed by the forest and, eventually, its name will only be mentioned in ghost stories about a village swallowed by nature, and it is said that the forest is guarded by a terrible beast that is stopping mankind from taking it back.

Before they go home, the player characters will be able to visit Härnösand, where von Meijer meets them to wrap things up, mostly by asking what happened to poor Gottfrid. The somewhat greedy von Meijer may also ask whether he can send a new representative to Färnsta to conclude his business there. If the player characters managed to stop Karlström, the Society will also be financially rewarded by the wealthy industrialist. After a time of recuperation in Härnösand there is nothing more for the player character to do but return to their headquarters in Upsala, where they gain experience points (see page 25 in the core rulebook).





THE NIGHT SOW

IN ORDER TO help their old acquaintance Linnea Elfeklint, the player characters travel to southern Sweden where they are forced to handle Satanists, puritans, and a vaesen feeding on people's supernatural powers. The mystery takes place during a cold and stormy winter, and can easily be set during Christmas time – maybe even on Christmas Eve.

PRELUDE

The first part of the text focuses on the invitation and the conflicts. It describes the player characters' journey to the small fishing village of Mölle in southern Sweden as well as the location itself. There is a countdown of events to be used during play. The

mystery's vaesen is also described – a huge, pig-like creature known as the gloson.

In the second part we present the various places the characters may visit and describe the final confrontation. The mystery concludes with a rundown of important non-player characters.

BACKGROUND

In the northwest part of Skåne in southern Sweden, a strange rock formation rises from the flat clay land. This area is known as The Hill, and at its tip stands an ancient lighthouse. For hundreds of years the eldest son of the Lundin family has served as its keeper. The Lundins believe they have a secret – The Hill was created by the Devil, and there is always a danger of

wicked creatures emerging from its caverns and ravines. It is the duty of the lightkeeper to hold off this evil and prevent ignorant humans from accidentally channeling the black magic of the underworld, which could potentially bring about the apocalypse. What the family does not know is that it is their own belief that is creating vaesen on The Hill, and making spells and rituals particularly effective in the area. Likewise, the lightkeeper's own magic is a product of this belief in his sacred mission.

The current lightkeeper is Magnus Lundin, who in recent years has seen the once isolated The Hill and its small fishing village of Mölle become thronged with tourists from the rest of the country, as well as from Denmark and Germany. The reason for this is an entrepreneur named Katarina Jönsson, who a few years ago built a luxurious seaside hotel in Mölle and is encouraging her guests to bathe together at the beach. Guests of both sexes – albeit in full bathing suits – are allowed to mix on the same beach. Rumors of the sin in Mölle have spread across Europe, and everyone who is anyone, or wishes to be, visits the hotel.

Most residents of Mölle, including the village priest and the lightkeeper, are ardently opposed to tourism and despise Katarina Jönsson. But some fishing families have taken up employment with her and earned enough money to build fine homes for themselves on the slope above Mölle's old fishermen's houses.

Last summer, Lightkeeper Lundin took matters into his own hands and tried to burn down the hotel, but failed and was caught. Authorities from Höganäs intervened, and it was clear that Katarina had the law on her side. But that has not caused Magnus to give up.

That same summer, the hotel was visited by Olga Kraus, a former member of the Society. She left the organization twenty years ago to learn magic through contacts with satanic cults. She has since surrounded herself with a group of women who share her ambition – they regard themselves as witches and call themselves the Sisters of Satan. When others are

around, they often pretend to be a group of traveling artists.

During her visit to Mölle, Olga stumbled upon a cave near the Hill Lighthouse and sensed that it was well-suited for magical rituals. Little did she know that this was the Rooting Cave – a place where the gloson (see below) can take form if someone performs the necessary rituals. Olga left Mölle, only to return with the other Sisters of Satan a few months later when the tourist season was over. They started investigating the Rooting Cave and planned to perform a magical ritual.

Realizing what the witches were up to, Lightkeeper Lundin decided to get rid of them and Katarina Jönsson at the same time. By kidnapping Katarina's dog Kosta and luring her with magic, he drew her to the Rooting Cave. He attacked Katarina, tied her up, and locked her in a cage in the back of the cave. Magnus prepared her body so that a gloson could use it to take form.

When the Sisters of Satan gathered in the Rooting Cave, the ritual they performed created magic energy that soaked into Katarina's body and turned her into a gloson. The creature broke out of its cage and attacked the witches, but they made it back to the hotel unharmed. Magnus is now controlling the creature with the help of a linden staff, and he intends to use it to kill the witches. He has the gloson wait outside the hotel to attack them as they try to leave.

Olga understands that they cannot leave the hotel and has desperately sent a letter to her old friend in the Society – Linnea Elfeklint. Linnea asks that the player characters go to Mölle to help.

THE NIGHT SOW

The gloson summoned on The Hill calls itself the Night Sow. It sprung into being as Lightkeeper Magnus Lundin lured Katarina Jönsson to the Rooting Cave, where the witches of the Sisters of Satan – without realizing it – brought about the transformation with their magic. The lightkeeper now controls the Night Sow with a staff of linden wood.

The Night Sow has retained some of its human memories and carries a burning hatred for the lightkeeper. It wants nothing more than to feast on his entrails, but is forced to act against its own will as the lightkeeper orders it to attack the Sisters of Satan and then the player characters. The Night Sow is mainly active after dark, and spends the daylight hours hiding in or near the graveyard. It does not like to enter people's houses and is unable to climb stairs.

Keep track of how many humans with magic powers or the Sight are killed by the Night Sow. When-

ATMOSPHERE

The mystery takes place in a winter landscape coated in snow. It is cold and windy, and everything is covered with ice. Describe the dramatic landscape of The Hill with steep rock faces clothed with trees and bushes, deep ravines, and strange caverns. In the background is the sea, frozen solid for hundreds of meters. Being outdoors should feel dangerous. Keep in mind that there are few hours of daylight this time of year.

Use the prowling Night Sow and the lightkeeper to give the player characters a feeling of being watched. Make sure to convey how terrified the Sisters of Satan are.

The people of Mölle are weird, somewhat inhospitable or overly inquisitive. Exaggerate their accents so that the player characters have a difficult time understanding them. People seem to be up to strange things, and they are moving between houses late into the night. What is going on?

This may well be turned into a "Christmas mystery," in which case you should have the fishing families celebrate the holiday with Christmas ham, pickled herring, decorated trees, and lit candles.

ever this happens the creature may raise one of its characteristics (see *Glossen* on page 74).

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict is between the Night Sow and lightkeeper Magnus Lundin who is trying to control it. The lightkeeper will force the creature to attack the player characters as they start to investigate the mystery. This conflict also includes the witches of the Sisters of Satan, who have come to The Hill to exploit the area's latent magical powers – something the lightkeeper has vowed to prevent.

The secondary conflict regards Mölle's approach to its summer tourists. Lightkeeper Magnus Lundin, Chaplain Algot Kransvik, and the fisherman's wife Anna Svensson are the main proponents of preserving the community's virtuous reputation and tearing down the hotel, while Katarina Jönsson, Anna Svensson's daughter Lisa, and a couple of others believe that Mölle should welcome the tourists.

INVITATION

Linnea Elfeklint (see chapter 6 in the core rulebook) sends a message to the player characters asking that they come and see her at Upsala Asylum (see text box and *Handout 3A*). They move through the snowy streets of Upsala, past children ice skating on the Fyris river and beggars slowly freezing to death. The asylum seems dark and foreboding. As an orderly guides the characters to Linnea's room, they can hear both wails of anguish and the wind whistling through the corridors. Even indoors it is cold enough for water to freeze overnight.

Linnea receives the player characters in a small room lit by a single candle. She invites them to sit down and apologizes for not offering them something to eat or drink. Those who have met Linnea before notice that she seems unusually tired and concerned.

Linnea shows them Olga's letter (see text box and *Handout 3B*) and asks them to go to Mölle and help her

LINNEA'S INVITATION

Dear friends,

I would be very grateful if you would visit me at the hospital at the earliest convenience, where I have had to re-admit myself following a particularly difficult period. It is a matter of great urgency, and I must also ask that you prepare for a longer journey.

Yours truly,
Linnea

(Note: the letter is written in shaky and barely legible scrawl.)

friend. She has already written to Olga and told her to meet the player characters when they arrive, and see to it that they are housed and fed. Linnea explains that she and Olga were members of the Society and became close friends, but that Olga chose to leave the organization twenty years ago to pursue the art of witchcraft.

No matter what the player characters say, Linnea will not reveal anything about the events at Castle Gyllencreutz which Olga refers to in her letter. If they insist, Linnea becomes increasingly stressed and finally has a nervous breakdown. Nurses come rushing in and take her away to try and calm her down with an ice bath. The player characters will not be allowed to see her again for several weeks.

CLUES IN UPSALA

Player characters looking for clues in Upsala will find the following (no die roll required):

- ✦ A newspaper article about the sin in Mölle (see text box and *Handout 3C*).
- ✦ A paragraph in a nearly fifty-year-old list of Society activities describing the magic energies resting inside The Hill (see text box and *Handout 3D*).

OLGA'S LETTER

Little Lilli!

You barely remember me, do you? The years have fluttered by like butterflies and I shall soon turn seventy. But who is counting?

I wish the purpose of this letter was to renew our special connection, which I have missed dearly, and that I would like to see you to discuss the strange events that occurred at Gyllencreutz so many years ago — and though this is also true, I write to you regarding another matter.

Lilli, I need your help. The situation is very dire indeed, or I would not have had the nerve to contact you. I assume that you are still living in Upsala — surely you have not abandoned our beloved city? Anyway, I am currently located in Mölle, a small fishing village in the south. My friends and I are staying at the Mölle Seaside Hotel. You must come and help us Lilli — I can tell you no more than that, for fear that someone else might read this letter. That it must be you of all people has to do with our special secret, our way of seeing things, which brought us together all those years ago.

Bring all the weapons, tools, and strange items you can find. Anything might prove useful. Until then, my friends and I are stuck at the hotel. This is a mess of our own making, but nevertheless, despite everything, I ask for your help.

Love,
Your (hopefully?) dearest Oggo

(The letter was written by a person who presses hard with her pen and has gloriously winding handwriting, beautiful but barely legible to a modern person.)



TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday June 17th 5 öre

"THE SIN IN MÖLLE"

For the past two years, the remote fishing village of Mölle in northwestern Skåne has been torn by conflict over the hotel that has opened in the area. Tourists, mainly Danish and German, are encouraged to engage in mixed-gender bathing at the beaches – something the locals are very much against.

Our reporter Elias Ragnér has visited the so-called heart of sin in northern Europe – a small community at the tip of the rocky area known as The Hill in the south of Sweden. Here in Mölle, Katarina Jönsson runs a successful seaside hotel frequented by tourists from far away. Katarina tells us: "Here on The Hill, Europe's cultural and intellectual elite meet for refreshing baths and relaxing walks in a spectacular landscape. My business is about to lead Mölle into the next century."

Many local representatives have less positive views of the hotel – especially Katarina's decision to let women and men frequent the same beaches – at the same time! Chaplain Algot Kransvik describes it as "a very unfortunate and ill-advised project that is causing strife and promoting sinful lifestyles," while the fisherman's wife Anna Svensson says she "is forced to see gentlemen in suspenders and ladies in corsets, which is a sad reminder of our mortality."

In any case, your dear reporter Elias is enjoying a cold bath in the crisp waters of the North Sea – and the view on The Hill is spectacular indeed!

THE OCCULT HERITAGE OF THE HILL

Comprehensive studies of the region have unearthed a folktale regarding the genesis of the mountain itself, where farmers and fishermen believe The Hill to be the creation of, and thoroughly imbued with, supernatural energies. Supposedly, these forces caused the ground to rise from the flat clay like a volcanic rock from the sea. It is said that there are caves and ravines where supernatural energies dwell, waiting for humans and animals to be used as vessels for their manifestation into the world. It is also said that a family blessed with the Sight has watched over The Hill for centuries, to prevent its energies from taking physical form and indulging in all sorts of destructive urges. My personal studies failed to locate the family in question, on which the myth of the so called "Hill Man" is based, or any form of vaesen, but did however identify strong tendencies toward the sublime and abstract, and a strange aptitude for seeing the unseen and creating the uncreated. It seems to me that this part of the south should be strictly monitored. Perhaps a smaller headquarters should be established in the area?

Brother Johan Trana – member and First Ekvilator of the Society



THE JOURNEY

Read the text box aloud to the players and let each of them play a scene to gain an Advantage.

Linnea has helped plan your trip and bought tickets with her own money. She has written to Olga and told her to meet you in Mölle.

Early in the morning you gather at Upsala Train Station. The darkness lies heavy on the city, but the snow reflects the light from the station's gas lamps and illuminates the area around you. When the train rolls in its cars are covered in snow, and upon boarding, you find that the compartments are not even heated. The only refuge from the cold is the dining car, and virtually all the passengers gather there. A count by the name of Christian Granath purchases the train's entire stock of punch and generously offers it free of charge. After a couple of hours the mood turns merry, someone takes out an accordion and people spontaneously start to dance between the tables, until the conductor finally has enough and silences the car by dropping a silver platter on the floor and announcing that music may only be played in the rear cars – where the animals are kept.

In the afternoon you reach the town of Helsingborg in southern Sweden. It is getting dark, and there is a sleepy atmosphere in the dining car. After disembarking at the Helsingborg train station, you learn that your connection to Höganäs is more than an hour late. You pass the time wandering through the empty streets of the city. Freezing gales sweep in from the sea and make their way through your clothes. Once you finally get moving you are more than a little late. An old steam locomotive pulls the cars along the coast, up the slopes of The Hill, and finally arrives in Höganäs. From here you travel by stagecoach through the spectacular landscape – which you can barely glimpse through the impenetrable darkness.

You reach the station south of Mölle, tired, hungry, and cold – and very late. The coachman drops you off at a place marked with a black-painted post. Olga is nowhere to be seen, and soon your clothes are covered by the falling snow.

ARRIVAL

Once you have read out the description of the journey and played the scenes where the player characters gain an Advantage, you can set a scene where they have just gotten off the stagecoach outside Mölle. Even if they wait, Olga will not show up, as she has been killed by the Night Sow. Consequently, the creature raises its **MIGHT** by 1 (see *Glossen* on page 74).

The player characters must grab their luggage and walk into the village. Around a corner they see an oil lamp burning on the ground. A couple of meters away lies the lifeless body of Olga. Something has cut her open from the genitals to the chest and fed on her entrails. When they see the body, the player characters must make a Fear test against Fear 1.

With a successful **INVESTIGATION** test (requires two successes because of the dark and the cold), a player character can notice the following:

- ✦ The body is still warm, which means that Olga was killed no more than half an hour ago.
- ✦ The body was opened with a single cut from below by someone with inhuman strength. The wound is irregular and seems to have been made by a large number of sharp objects.
- ✦ Most of the entrails appear to have been eaten by a creature with long and sharp front teeth.
- ✦ The snow covers all tracks of both victim and killer.

When the news of Olga's death reaches the village, the locals send for the county constable in Höganäs. You can read more about this in the text box titled *The Murders in Mölle*.

Now the player characters have two options in terms of accommodation – they can go door-to-door in Mölle or head for the Mölle Seaside Hotel. Give them the impression that there are creatures moving in the dark. It could be the Night Sow stalking them, or owls and foxes.

THE HILL

The Hill is a peninsula in northwestern Skåne where the bedrock has risen from the land, jutting up to form high cliffs and little bays with beaches along the coast.

Further inland, the landscape is more dramatic with crevasses, caves, and ravines. Everything is covered by dense deciduous forest that harbors a great variety of fauna. Small farms are found here and there, and at the tip of the peninsula stands the Hill Lighthouse. There is roughly five kilometers between Mölle and The Hill, and a path has been laid between them for the sake of the tourists – this is called the Italian Road.

MÖLLE

Möller consists of roughly a hundred buildings constructed in a semicircle around the harbor, most of them wooden gingerbread-style houses – one-and-a-half stories tall with a small top floor being used as a bedroom. The buildings climb the steep slope, and ten lavish villas have recently been built at the top. That is where the owner of the hotel, Katarina Jönsson, resides. Bays with sandy beaches are found along the coast.

In the center of the village lies the Mölle Inn – a large, wooden, two-story building – where food and drink are served to fishermen and tourists alike.

To the south of the village is the chapel – a small church building of whitewashed stone with a hilly, rocky graveyard that gradually transitions into wilderness. The stagecoach stop where the player characters arrive is located nearby.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

This mystery has two countdowns. The first concerns the Night Sow attacking the Sisters of Satan and eventually the player characters. The second is about the lightkeeper spying on, and then attacking, the player characters. Use the events that fit your story.

The Night Sow's countdown involves the death of several people. Since the player characters already



made a Fear test upon seeing Olga's corpse, which was mutilated in a similar manner, no further Fear tests are required when the remains of other victims are found.

THE NIGHT SOW'S COUNTDOWN

1. The Night Sow kills one of the Sisters of Satan and gorges on her entrails. Raise one characteristic by 1. The victim is named Josefin, but calls herself "Demonia." The body is left in the snow where the player characters can find it.
2. The Night Sow uses the Enchantment **PHANTOM LIGHT** to create light, luring out and killing another Sister of Satan. Raise one characteristic by 1. The deceased is named Klara, but goes by the alias "Melancholia." The Night Sow notices the player characters and starts to spy on them. They can see its eyes glowing in the dark.
3. The Night Sow kills the last remaining Sister of Satan – a woman named Frida, or "Sanguina." Raise one characteristic by 1. The Night Sow shows itself to the player characters – suddenly it is standing right in front of them, blocking their path, perhaps next to the corpse. All who see it must make a Fear test against Fear 1. Then the creature leaves and disappears into the terrain. If the player characters manage to follow it, (**AGILITY** against the creature's **BODY CONTROL**) the great pig will launch attacks against them until they leave it alone.

CATASTROPHE: The Night Sow attacks one or multiple player characters with lethal intent, either drawing them out or sneaking into the hotel.

THE LIGHTKEEPER'S COUNTDOWN

1. The lightkeeper uses the Enchantment **TEMPEST**. A great storm darkens the sky with icy rain and snow. The winds make it difficult to walk the slippery paths. The lightkeeper uses the darkness to spy on the player characters. If discovered, he explains that he hates the hotel and is always curious about visitors.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MÖLLE

- ✦ **ALGOT KRANSVIK:** The village priest.
- ✦ **NILS CORFITZON:** Middle-aged gentleman who runs the rather profitable inn. Boisterous and curious.
- ✦ **KATARINA JÖNSSON:** Owner of the Mölle Seaside Hotel.
- ✦ **ANNA SVENSSON:** Fisherman's wife leading the local opposition to tourism. Abhors sin; domineering and unwelcoming.
- ✦ **LISA SVENSSON:** All-purpose helper at the hotel, against her mother's wishes.
- ✦ **MAGNUS LUNDIN:** Lightkeeper.
- ✦ **THE NILSSONS:** Fishing family employed by Katarina Jönsson. Pompous and loud.

2. The lightkeeper uses the Curse **TWIST VISION** (see the core rulebook) on one of the player characters. If it succeeds, the character perceives (for a brief moment) one of the villagers as having glowing eyes and pig's tusks in her mouth. The purpose is to make the player characters distrust the villagers, and create conflict between the fishermen and the player characters. The people of Mölle will not respond well to strangers making accusations. If the Curse fails, the player character has a vision of Katarina Jönsson's dog Kosta trapped in the lightkeeper's basement.
3. The lightkeeper uses the Curse **LURE** (see the core rulebook) to compel one of the player characters to sneak out alone on The Hill, where the Night Sow will attack her. If the Curse fails, the player character has a vision of the lightkeeper out on The Hill, trying to lure the player character to him.

CATASTROPHE: The lightkeeper uses the Enchantment **IGNITE** to set fire to several parts of the hotel – preferably while the player characters are in the building.

LOCATIONS

There are three locations for the player characters to visit: Olga's room at the Mölle Seaside Hotel, the Rooting Cave, and the Chapel. They will most likely start by heading to the hotel. In addition to these places, you can entice the player characters to investigate the fishing families by letting the fishermen be rude and suspicious of strangers (i.e. the player characters).

MÖLLE SEASIDE HOTEL

Located in the north part of Mölle is the newly built and spectacular seaside hotel – a white, wooden three-story building with gingerbread detailing and towers with parapets. The porch offers a marvelous view of the sea. In wintertime the red tile roof is laden with snow, the windows covered with ice, and the building quiet and empty.

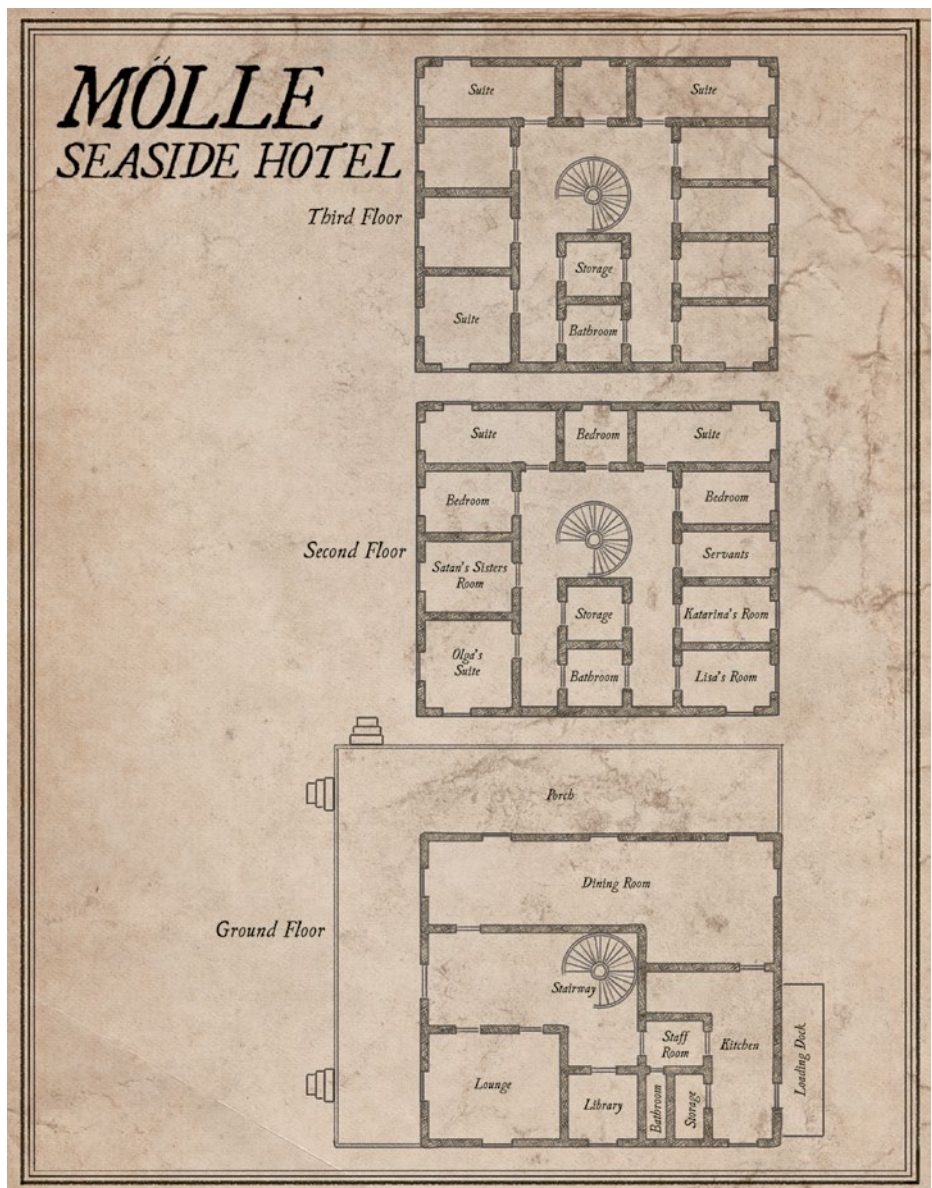
The ground floor houses a restaurant, a library, and a lounge, while the two upper floors have rooms for guests and staff. A winding staircase with a beautiful carpet and statues at each floor rises like a spine through the building. In the basement there is a larder with an ample supply of wine. From the porch there are long wooden stairways leading down to the bays and their beaches.

Only a small part of the house is heated during the winter, and the entire business operation is run by the proprietor Katarina Jönsson and her helper Lisa Svensson. At the moment, the only guests

at the hotel are Olga and her fellow Sisters of Satan, masquerading as a group of artists.

The people present at the time of the player characters' arrival are Lisa Svensson who works for Katarina Jönsson as a helper, the three remaining Sisters of Satan (Josefin, Klara, and Frida), and a handful of German tourists.

Player characters with Resources 3 or more can find food and lodging at the hotel. The rooms are simple, but well kept. Food is served in the dining hall. The lounge is where the sisters keep the oil paintings which they have allegedly come to The Hill to create. A successful **LEARNING** test reveals that the paintings are of extremely poor quality.



THE MURDERS IN MÖLLE

The atmosphere in Mölle has already grown tense since Katarina Jönsson disappeared, and there are rumors that she was murdered. When Olga is found dead, the villagers become very concerned. The County Constable in Höganäs is informed and arrives in Mölle by stagecoach to interrogate anyone who may have seen or heard something. The interrogations are held at the local inn.

The inn becomes a gathering place for the villagers – they form groups around different tables, based on their views regarding the hotel. There is talk about the player characters, and many are curious about them – some to such an extent that they will start spying on them. Someone could approach the characters directly and ask what business they have in Mölle and what kind of relationship they have with Katarina and Olga.

The death of the Sisters of Satan further intensifies the situation. People arm themselves and become suspicious, and some start to behave aggressively toward the strangers in the village. Perhaps someone will try to catch the murderer themselves?

Since the events at the Rooting Cave, the sisters have moved all their beds into a single room. Olga's room is a suite which the Sisters of Satan also use as a meeting place, a workspace for occult studies, and a storage room for occult material.

Olga's room contains two beds, a closet, a bookcase with ten or so occult volumes on its shelves, and a desk covered by sheets of paper with maps and notes about The Hill and its magic powers. Hanging in the closet are four black, hooded robes, and there is a shelf with two black candles and two figurines – one depicting a horned, naked, and sexually aroused Devil, the other a naked witch riding a stallion. There are also chalks of black, red, and white, glass bottles containing some kind of cloudy liquid (water mixed with herbs), and two wands (non-magic) made of birch wood.

LEARNING TEST

When the player characters have investigated the mutilated body of any of the gloson's victims and seen any tracks or the beast itself, they can at any time make a **LEARNING** roll to gain the information below. Only one PC can make the test and only one roll can be made. If the test fails, the PCs will need to find the information elsewhere, primarily by talking to NPCs or by reading Jonsson's memoirs.

- ✦ **ONE SUCCESS:** The way the victim has been killed, with it's stomach split open and the intestines partly eaten, aligns with old folk tales about the gloson. An enormous boar-like creature with powerful tusks and razor-sharp bristling on it's back.
- ✦ **TWO SUCCESSES:** According to legends, a gloson attacks those who perform a Year Walk. An old ritual performed to get knowledge about the future. By charging against the person and running between the legs, the beast could split the human with its sharp bristling.
- ✦ **THREE SUCCESSES:** The gloson is fond of apples and nuts. These can be used to get the beast's attention.

CLUES

- ✦ Lisa can tell the characters that the proprietor of the hotel, Katarina Jönsson, went missing ten days ago, after heading for The Hill to look for her dog, Kosta. The villagers organized a search party, but her body has not been found. Lisa suspects that Katarina has fallen to her death in a ravine.
- ✦ Since Katarina's disappearance, Olga and the other "artists" have seemed unusually nervous. They have stopped painting and stayed indoors, often looking out the windows. At one point, one of them went out to see the priest, but came running back. Lisa thinks it was the woman named

Josefin; she can also tell the player characters that Olga left to meet them an hour or so before their stagecoach arrived.

- ◆ If the characters ask Lisa about Mölle, she describes the conflict surrounding the hotel, including how she went against her mother Anna Svensson who wants the hotel demolished.
- ◆ If the player characters can get the Sisters of Satan to reveal what they know, the witches explain that they have come to The Hill to contact the Devil and perform rituals that will grant them riches, eternal youth, and the gift of foresight. Olga found a cave where they performed several rituals, but a terrible beast with glowing eyes and great jaws appeared and drove them away. The sisters think it is the Devil who is punishing them for their arrogance.
- ◆ On the desk in Olga's room lies a hand-drawn map (*Handout 3E*) that shows the way to the Rooting Cave. In the margin Olga has written "extremely charged with arcane potential—portal to Hell?" If the characters examine the books in the room, stating that they are specifically looking for supernatural pigs, they can find an excerpt from Chef Jonsson's diary (see text box and *Handout 3F*).
- ◆ Soon after the player characters arrive at the hotel, Josefin sneaks off to see the village priest, thinking that he can protect them from the Devil. She is killed by the Night Sow before reaching the chapel. But the player characters can follow her, find her body, and talk to the priest.

CHALLENGES

The Sisters of Satan are not likely to trust the player characters, and maintain their facade as artists. The player characters can either gain their trust through **MANIPULATION** or break into Olga's room using **STEALTH**. Should they wish to follow Josefin as she sneaks off to seek help from the priest, the player characters must pass a **VIGILANCE** test not to lose track of her on the way through the village.



LISA SVENSSON

"Excuse me, sir, I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but you are standing on my foot."

After a childhood marked by a dominant and abusive mother, Lisa left home at the age of seventeen and got a job at the hotel—despite the fact that her mother is leading the struggle to demolish it. She is now a browbeaten helper whose life is governed by the whims of Katarina Jönsson. But Lisa is loyal and believes that her hard work will one day lead to a position as hotel manager.

Lisa is a shy, polite, and hardworking young woman with dirty blond hair kept in a ponytail. She is curious about strangers and loves to hear stories about the world outside Mölle. The right side of Lisa's face twitches when she is nervous.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 3
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 INVESTIGATION 1 MANIPULATION 1**
OBSERVATION 1
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1



THE SISTERS OF SATAN

"I see a demon walking by your side."

The three women Josefin Adler, Klara Berg, and Frida Svensson have followed Olga across Scandinavia under their aliases Demonia, Melancholia, and Sanguina, and together they make up the Sisters of Satan who worship the Devil in pursuit of magical powers. None of them have the Sight, and their magic leaves much to be desired – it is strong enough to whet the appetite of the Night Sow, but too weak to be useful in any meaningful way. The three are devastated by Olga's death and believe the Devil is punishing them for their arrogance.

Josefin – a short, stuttering woman who blushes easily – is the youngest member of the group and the one who is most in touch with reality. Klara is passionate about rituals involving blood, sex, and other bestial elements. She is heavyset with intense eyes that never seem to blink. Frida is the oldest of the three and the one most people find the strangest as she suffers from delusions, which she interprets as messages from the Devil. She is extremely thin, with a hoarse voice and long black hair. All three wear black clothes and black hats. They claim to be artists who have come to Mölle to paint the landscape and the sea, but none of them actually know how to paint.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 2 Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ◆ **STEALTH 2 LEARNING 2 VIGILANCE 2**
- ◆ **MANIPULATION 2 OBSERVATION 2**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1

CHEF JONSSON'S DIARY

When my sister was found dead with her abdomen slit open, I stopped being a child and became an adult. It was an early New Year's Day, and my sister Else led the rest of us around the church, having heard that one could see the future by peeking through a keyhole. We were playing with forces we did not understand, and the unseen punishes the arrogant.

As we approached the church door, our path was blocked by the biggest boar I have ever seen. Its eyes glowed in the dark, its back was covered with sharp bristles, and its mouth was equipped with massive tusks. Else grabbed an apple from her pocket and threw it on the ground, which made the beast forget about us for a moment, and we were able to escape. But soon we heard its hooves thunder against the ground behind us. Suddenly Else, who had been running next to me, was no longer there. I stopped and saw her walk toward the great swine, and then I ran as fast as I could. She sacrificed herself so that we might live.

For many years I have collected rumors and tales about this creature, whose name is the gloson. It is said to seek out witches and those with the Sight, devouring their innards to absorb their power. But I have heard of people who escaped that fate by distracting it with apples or nuts. Some say the creature can be controlled by a witch using a staff of linden wood. After what happened to my sister, I never go outside on a winter's night, nor do I let my children leave the house.

Chef Niklas Jonsson in Åstorp, excerpt from diary.

THE ROOTING CAVE

In the north part of The Hill lies the Rooting Cave – a place where a gloson can be summoned. The cave has been used by witches for hundreds of years, and is well known to the lightkeeper.

There is a path leading to the cave, which is located deep down a ravine full of loose rocks, slippery ice and snow, and grasping branches. The entrance is one meter in diameter, but the cave quickly opens into a tapered chamber. There are traces of fire and animal bone fragments, and the walls display symbols carved over the centuries.

In the center of the room, the Sisters of Satan have drawn a pentagram in chalk. There is a human skull with a hole drilled into the top of the head, where several incense sticks have been inserted, and a plate of dried pig's blood has been placed in the middle of the pentagram. Those who make their way to the back of the cave will find a broken wooden cage.

CLUES

- ❖ The player characters can read the inscriptions on the wall with a successful **LEARNING** test. Among other things, it says: *"The Rooting Cave," "The powers of the Swine shall amass and consume the seeing" and "With linden and nut the sow shall be mutt."*
- ❖ A player character searching near the wooden cage can pass an **INVESTIGATION** test to find bits of torn rope and a cloth gag with dried saliva and blood on it. Judging by the thickness of the rope, it could have been used to bind a human's arms and legs inside the cage.
- ❖ Player characters who search the first part of the cave and pass an **INVESTIGATION** test can see hoof tracks left by what seems to have been an extremely large pig.

CHALLENGES

Even with the map from Olga's room, getting to the cave through the snow of The Hill is extremely strenuous and takes several hours each way. The player characters must pass a **FORCE** test or suffer a physical



Condition. Climbing down the ravine is difficult and requires a successful **AGILITY** test – failure results in a physical Condition.

MÖLLE CHAPEL

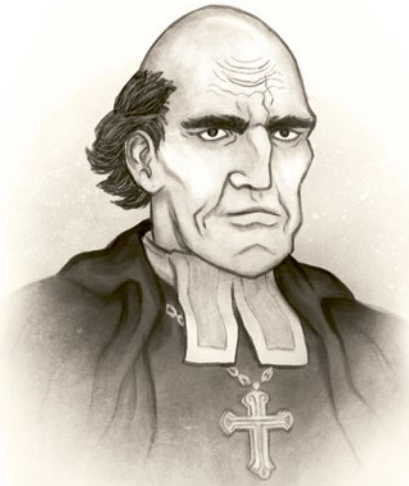
The chapel is located just south of Mölle. It has a hilly and partially overgrown graveyard where the Night Sow hides during the day.

The chaplain, Algot Kransvik, lives in a small stone house next to the chapel, along with four cats and three dogs, as well as a tame crow that often sits on his shoulder, cawing threateningly at strangers. Algot welcomes the player characters and offers them a cup of tea.

CLUES

The chaplain can tell them about the conflict surrounding the hotel. He suspects that Katarina is dead, as she has been missing for more than a week, but cannot imagine that someone in the village would go so far as to harm her – not even the fisherman's wife Anna Svensson who despises the hotel.

However, it seems to him that lightkeeper Magnus Lundin hates the hotel more than anyone, and last summer he was caught trying to burn it down. The authorities in Helsingborg intervened, and the only reason Magnus was not convicted was that the chaplain put in a good word for him. The priest explains his actions stating that the lightkeeper for centuries has been an important figure for the people of Mölle. In the legends he is called "the Hill Man" and is said to watch over The Hill. Had Magnus been jailed and



convicted, the Lundin family would not have been able to continue this legacy.

The priest once spotted the Night Sow on the outskirts of the village, and is convinced that the creature was sent from Hell to punish Mölle for its sins. He has managed to find some information in his personal library and can hand the player characters an excerpt from Chef Jonsson's memoirs (see above) if they have not already found the text in Olga's hotel room. The chaplain knows that the creature is called a gloson, and believes it to be in league with witches. He has heard tales of rival witches using the gloson to steal each other's power.

CHALLENGES

Chaplain Algot is kind to strangers, but it takes a lot to gain his trust. The player characters must pass a **MANIPULATION** test to convince him that they are no friends of Katarina Jönsson, nor involved in any way with Olga's murder. On success they get him to talk and provide the information above.

CONFRONTATION

The confrontation will most likely take place at the Hill Lighthouse. The player characters can have several reasons for visiting the lighthouse: they may have noticed Magnus Lundin spying on them and become suspicious, or seen it on the map and become curious. They may also have heard Chaplain Algot Kransvik

CHAPLAIN ALGOT KRANSVIK

"If Moses had tried to tame the storms of Kattegat, he would have been washed ashore on some frozen beach in Norway."

Rarely does anyone willingly come to The Hill just to serve, but for Algot the icy storms sweeping in from the North Sea came as a revelation, seemingly carrying the voice of God. Algot is a conservative priest who relies on the Old Testament. Consequently, his sermons are neither entertaining nor well-attended, which suits Algot's shy nature very well.

Algot is a quiet man in his fifties whose scalp appears to have risen from his hair like a shiny, egg-shaped cone. He is very well read and has a special fondness for theological philosophy and books on sin, devil worship, occultism, and exorcism. He always wears his church vestments, often with his hands clasped, nodding and smiling as he listens to whoever is talking to him. Algot loves animals and lets his cats, dogs, and his tame crow live with him in the house.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 2 Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ◆ **LEARNING 4 MANIPULATION 2 OBSERVATION 2**
- INSPIRATION 3**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1

or the fishermen in Mölle recount how Lundin tried to burn down the hotel last summer and been told about the myth of the Lundin family, who have served as lightkeepers for hundreds of years and are sworn to protect The Hill from evil.

Magnus is concerned when he sees the player characters approach the lighthouse. He uses his linden staff to summon the Night Sow, who comes running and hides nearby. If the player characters start acting aggressively, he commands the creature to attack them.

If someone knocks on the door, the lightkeeper shows up with his staff in hand. He rudely tells them to leave as he does not want visitors. The player char-

acters can try to sneak inside, but it requires a successful **STEALTH** against Magnus' **VIGILANCE**.

If the player characters enter the lighthouse, the Night Sow will wander around outside to wait them out – or even break down the door and come for them, though it cannot climb stairs.

Realizing that the player characters are onto him, Magnus attacks them with the Curses **TERROR** and **WOUND**. He then retreats up the lighthouse where he uses his linden staff to attack the player characters, while at the same time using curses as well as his pistol.

Breaking the linden staff cancels the magic that created the Night Sow and reverts it to its original form as Katarina Jönsson. A player character who seizes the staff is able to control the creature, but the magic only works on The Hill. Throwing the staff away will cause the Night Sow to haunt the area for many years.

A player character attacked by the Night Sow can easily be Broken and killed. Before the confrontation you should decide how deadly you want the mystery to be. It is certainly reasonable for the Night Sow to kill a Broken player character and devour her entrails, but you can also let the creature become confused in the heat of the battle and charge at one of the other player characters instead.

THE HILL LIGHTHOUSE

The lighthouse is a whitewashed tower attached to a stone house where the lightkeeper lives. There is a staircase leading from the bottom of the lighthouse to the lantern room at the top. A balcony runs along the outside of the tower.

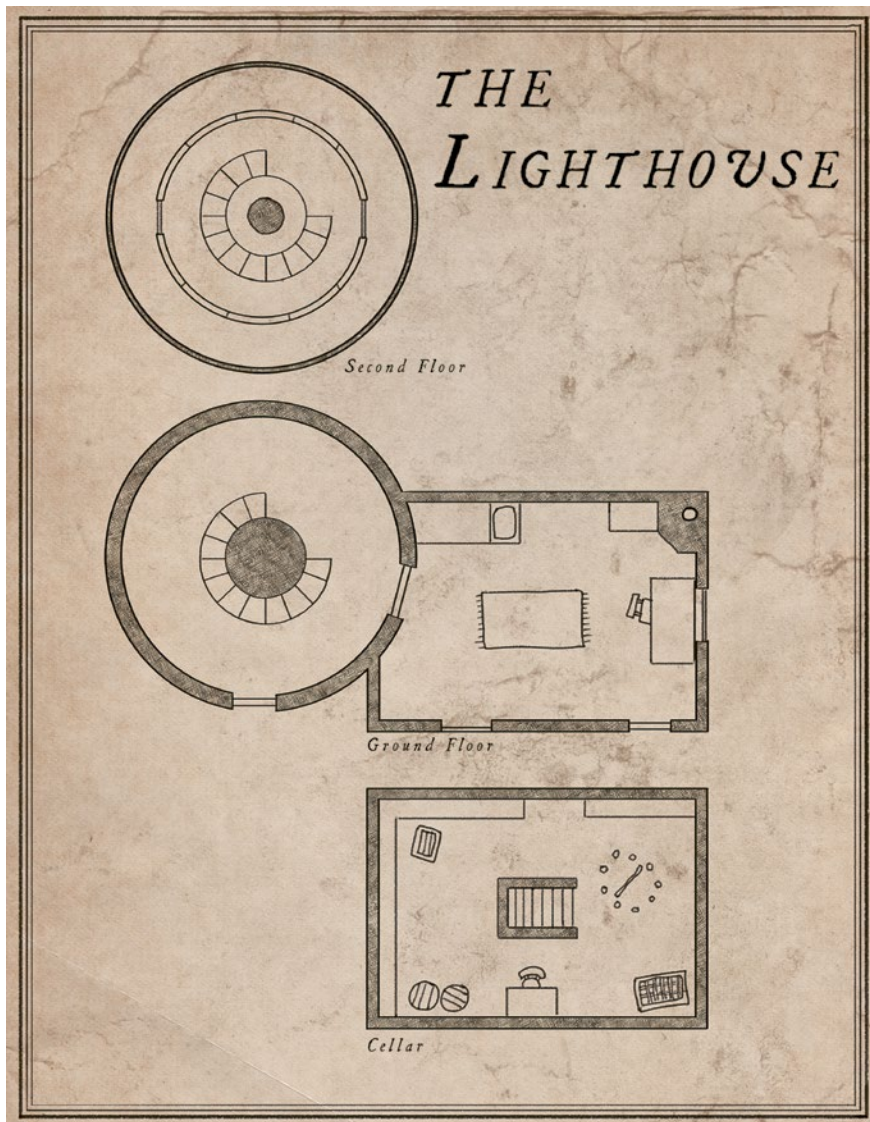
In the area surrounding the lighthouse, its keeper has set up some farming plots and built an enclosure for goats and chickens. Next to it is an outhouse.

The residence consists of a single room and a basement. The room has a front door and an entrance to the lighthouse, and is furnished with a bed, a desk, and a wood stove.

The trapdoor to the basement is hidden under a rug. Down there the lightkeeper keeps a larder, a chair and desk, occult books, and Katarina Jönsson's kidnapped dog, Kosta, trapped in a wooden cage. On the ground there is a magic seal made from autumn apples, in the middle of which lies the linden staff Magnus uses to control the Night Sow.

AFTERMATH

If the player characters manage to save Katarina, they will have earned her eternal gratitude and always be welcome at the Mölle Seaside Hotel. The characters will not be suspected of murdering Olga and her fellow Sisters of Satan, and are free to return to Upsala.





LIGHTKEEPER MAGNUS LUNDIN

"I am the Hill Man – guardian of The Hill."

Magnus was a fully-trained lawyer when he learned that his older brother (who in accordance with family tradition had assumed the role as lightkeeper) had died and left his post to Magnus. He gave up his life in Lund and traveled to The Hill, and has not left the lighthouse in fifteen years. Magnus is convinced that he is the only thing holding back the dark forces on The Hill and preventing the apocalypse. He wants at all cost to get rid of the Sisters of Satan, the hotel, and now the snoop-player characters as well – and thinks himself strong enough to control the evil, in the form of the Night Sow, and use it for his own purposes.

His many years of solitude have given Magnus a strong Christian faith, conservative views, and a short temper. He has the Sight and magic abilities which he thinks were granted by God. Magnus is a large, bearded man with a pipe in his mouth and always wears his blue uniform complete with a brimmed hat.

- ✦ Physique 3 Precision 3 Logic 3
Empathy 2 **MAGIC 9**
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 2 FORCE 1**
STEALTH 2 RANGED COMBAT 3 LEARNING 2
VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 3
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3
- ✦ **ENCHANTMENTS:** Storm
- ✦ **CURSES:** LURE, TWIST VISION, TERROR, WOUND
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol, axe, rifle, linden staff (allowing him to control the Night Sow)



KATARINA JÖNSSON

"I have huge respect for country folk – their ability to manage their daily activities despite centuries of inbreeding amazes me."

Katarina is the product of a family whose members for generations have built and conquered various business establishments in Stockholm and made an enormous fortune for themselves. As the favorite child of her parents, she was expected to take over the family business in Stockholm, but instead she moved to Mölle to open a hotel – an investment that has proven extremely profitable.

Today Katarina is a thirty-three-year-old woman who, despite many years in Skåne, speaks in a Stockholm accent that is nearly impossible for the locals to understand. She is tall, has a deep voice, and rarely smiles. Katarina loves conflict and challenges. She is good at getting what she wants and is often admired by the people around her. Her only weakness is her poodle Kosta, whom she loves more than anything.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ✦ **STEALTH 1 LEARNING 4 MANIPULATION 5**
OBSERVATION 3 INSPIRATION 3
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1

GLOSON

A gloson is a giant sow with huge tusks, eyes glowing like burning coals, and razor sharp bristles on its back. Sparks fly from its hooves as it moves, and its grunts can be heard from afar – except when it opts to sneak up on a victim, before charging with such force that the ground trembles underfoot.

The gloson can instinctively sense whether or not a human has the Sight or magic abilities. It tries to cut open their bodies with the bristles on its back, in order to feast on their bowels. In doing so the creature also absorbs the victim's supernatural powers and increases its own. The gloson is sometimes referred to as the Gobble Sow or Grave Sow, and is mostly seen at night. It can emerge spontaneously in areas where humans dabble in black magic, or be summoned through a ritual where a human being is forcibly transformed into the creature.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 8 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 4
MANIPULATION 2 Fear 2

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Draws two Initiative Cards and acts twice per round
- ✦ **FUR:** Protection 4
- ✦ **DEVOUR MAGIC:** Every time a gloson eviscerates a human with special powers (either the Sight or Magic) and feeds on her entrails, it may raise one of its characteristics by 1 – not including Fear. This can be done a maximum of 5 times.

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ Bloodthirsty and wild
- ☐ Vengeful but tactical
- ☐ Dazed -1
- ☐ Bleeding -1
- ☐ Badly wounded -1
- ☐ Broken – retreats and spends the next day in a graveyard

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Bite	2	0
Charge & eviscerate	3	1*
Devour entrails	0	0†

* The creature moves within the zone in which its victim resides. Requires one slow action and one fast.

† Can only be performed on a victim that has been Broken by the action *Charge & eviscerate*. Other combatants may use their actions to prevent the attack – otherwise the action succeeds automatically, and the victim is killed. If the victim is a magician or a person with the Sight, one of the creature's characteristics is raised by 1.

RITUAL

If the creature was a human before turning into a gloson, it can be controlled using a staff of linden wood. Breaking the staff reverses the transformation, and the creature becomes human once more.

One way of temporarily keeping a gloson at bay is to leave apples and nuts on the ground, which it will then gobble up while forgetting about everything else, if only for a moment.





THE SONG OF THE FALLING STAR

*Wherein a promise is broken, a child is swapped, a man is faced with a difficult decision,
and two powerful forces collide in the light and shadows of the Kaali crater.*

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based. There is an invitation to kick off the session, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to Arensburg on the island of Oesel. The section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Gamemaster will initiate at some appropriate time during the mystery – and a catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in

their efforts. But first we will look back at the events leading up to the mystery.

BACKGROUND

The proud trolls of Kaali village, on the island of Oesel in the Baltic Sea (Saaremaa in the local Estonian tongue), have lived in harmony with the local humans for thousands of years. They have their own community by the legendary craters around Kaali.

**EXCERPT FROM RUNE 47
OF THE KALEVALA**

Quick the heavens are burst asunder,
Quick the vault of Ukko opens,
Downward drops the wayward Fire-child,
Downward quick the red-ball rushes,
Shoots across the arch of heaven,
Hisses through the startled cloudlets,
Flashes through the troubled welkin,
Through nine starry vaults of ether.

The trolls trade and work with the humans, who in times of need leave offerings in the crater in exchange for a blessed harvest, recipes for beer or bread, cows rich with milk, or items such as tools or musical instruments.

To the trolls of Kaali, song is a magic power. It was through song that the old gods created the earth, heaven, and stars, and with their song the trolls can create powerful spells that reshape reality.

In the bustling town of Arensburg (*Kuressaare* in Estonian) live spouses Hugo and Agnes von Kaiserling. Hugo is of German descent and learned Estonian during his upbringing on Oesel. Like other so-called Estophiles, he is passionate about studying the local legends and songs. He was educated in Sweden and is now a graduate student at the Department of Social and Economic Geography at Upsala University.

Hugo has done field work on Oesel for his dissertation titled *Songs of Shadow and Fire*, where he examines whether the origin of the Kaali craters can be traced in local legends and songs. Hugo has for many years been convinced that the craters were caused by a meteorite, and not, as the accepted theory would have it, volcanic activity.

He came to Kaali Village in the hope of collecting tales and songs describing the history of the area. But he encountered problems – the villagers were suspicious of outsiders and would not share their rich folklore.

Frustrated that his research had come to a halt, Hugo turned to one of the village's leaders, Leelo Sisalik, proprietor of the Tuljak Inn, for advice.

Leelo, who is actually a troll, loaned Hugo a musical instrument known as a kantele (see the text box below). She told Hugo that if he learned to play the local melodies, perhaps the villagers would open up a bit more. She invited him to perform at Tuljak. Leelo said the kantele belonged in Kaali and must be returned once his dissertation was finished.

Hugo accepted the instrument in the largest of the craters where he was taking soil samples, not realizing that he had just made an agreement with a troll. He spent months learning to play the instrument and developed a deep love for the local music. Trolls in the villages were touched by his talent and his interest in their musical tradition. Hugo started making great progress with his research. He spent many evenings performing at Tuljak, and trolls and humans alike sang their local songs to his tunes.

He finally gained a deeper understanding of how the craters may have come into being.

He finished his dissertation a month or so before Agnes gave birth to their first child. *Songs of Shadow and Fire* introduced his theory that the craters were the result of a meteorite impact. It was described by his external reviewer as groundbreaking in both content and method, and had a significant impact in Upsala and Europe.

At that time, Hugo wanted to keep searching for more songs, and had no intention of returning the kantele. This angered the trolls, who have now taken

THE KANTELE

The kantele is a triangular string instrument similar to the zither. *The Kalevala* recounts how the shaman Väinämöinen created the first kantele from a pike's jawbone and hair from a troll's horse. The kantele was a magical instrument that could attract all creatures of the forest with its spellbinding tones.

his newborn child as security. In its stead they left a troll child – a changeling.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery centers around the Baltic German nobles Hugo and Agnes von Kaiserling, whose newborn son has been taken by the trolls of Kaali Village and replaced with a troll child. Agnes has seen the changeling in its true form and is convinced that it is the Devil's offspring. The trolls believe the child is theirs by right, since they gave Hugo a trollcrafted kantele (see the text box on page 77) and knowledge about local songs, which brought him great success as a musician and contributed to his dissertation, *Songs of Shadow and Fire*. The conflict with the trolls can be resolved through negotiation, if Hugo moves the mother troll to tears with his kantele or threatens to hurt the changeling. They will not be intimidated or influenced by crucifixes or holy water.

The mystery's secondary conflict is linked to the primary one. Agnes is deeply religious and places great trust in a Russian Orthodox priest named Father Cornelius. She has asked him for help. His advice is to per-

form an exorcism to drive out the demon he believes has possessed the child. He has made it his life's mission to convert the people of Kaali Village to Christianity. The priest will obstruct and counteract player characters who see the situation differently than he does. If the characters bring him along, he will complicate the situation with his missionary work.

INVITATION

One of the player characters receives a letter from his/her cousin, Count Hugo von Kaiserling. The letter, which is included as *Handout 4A* at the end of this book and available for download on the Free League website, reads as follows:

Dear Cousin,

I am writing to request your assistance in your capacity as a member of the Society.

Something strange is afoot, and I cannot for the life of me make sense of it all. My wife Agnes and I recently had our first child, Eduard. Suddenly, just a few weeks after his birth, Agnes was like a different woman. She wanted nothing to do with the child, and is now locked up at the Arensburg Sanatorium after going to the sauna in the middle of the night to, in her own words, "drown the monster."

Agnes has always been a wise and sensible person. I do not understand what has gotten into her. Perhaps it is my fault. I left her alone a lot as my dissertation took up much of my time. In addition, Eduard's christening was postponed because I was invited to give a lecture on my dissertation at Lund University. I am at my wits' end. She will not talk to me anymore, and the only person she has been in contact with is her priest, Father Cornelius.

Father Cornelius is convinced that Agnes is right, that the child has fallen victim to evil powers. He has proposed an exorcism. If he has his way, I fear for the child's safety. As a scientist I cannot accept the ludicrous idea that supernatural forces could be at work! I need your expertise to navigate the situation. Perhaps someone with your experience could convince Agnes and the priest?

I am desperate, dear cousin! Your help would be most welcome.

*Yours sincerely,
Hugo von Kaiserling*

THE BALTICS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In the mid-19th century, a national romantic trend arose in the Baltics after many years of Russian rule and serfdom. The Estonian language, which had thus far only been spoken, was recorded in writing by so-called Estophiles, often German or Swedish academics, who traveled around and recorded the languages, songs, and legends of bonded servants working on the rural estates. The collection of songs, or runes as they were also called, was published in Finland as *The Kalevala* and in Estonia as *The Kalevipoeg*, and the epics played a key role in the emergence of a cultural identity among the Finnish and Estonian peoples.



THE JOURNEY

The player characters set out from Upsala on a beautiful June day. They take a stagecoach to the a port on the Swedish coast, where they board the schooner *Letitia* and sail to Arensburg. The weather gods smile on them, and the player characters spend their voyage enjoying the sun and the wind. A herd of seals gathers around the ship, curiously watching the travelers. The crew sails to Oesel quite frequently and can tell the player characters more about Oesel and Arensburg.

As always, each player character may gain an Advantage (see page 24 in the core rulebook).

Show the players the map of Oesel above. It can also be downloaded from the Free League website.

ARRIVAL

It is early morning when the schooner *Letitia* approaches Arensburg Harbor. Even at sea the player

characters can see the harbor and the magnificent Oesel Castle with its moats and fortifications. It calls to mind another time when armored knights competed in tournaments.

As they disembark, the player characters find the harbor bustling with activity. It smells of fish, tar, spices, newly tanned leather, and livestock. Cargo is unloaded from the boats and fish is being auctioned. Dockworkers jostle with people waiting for shipments at the dock. Different languages are heard all over the harbor – German, Finnish, Swedish, Russian, and Estonian all color the buzz of conversation with their distinctive cadences.

At the harbor the player characters are greeted by von Kaiserling's scrawny valet, Teet, who asks where they want to go. Count Hugo is at home, while Agnes can be found at the Arensburg Sanatorium. The valet drives them wherever they want to go.

The player characters are invited to stay at the von Kaiserling residence.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters' involvement in solving the case of the von Kaiserlings' changeling will provoke reactions from Father Cornelius. Unless the characters steer the development in another direction, the conflict between the priest and the trolls will end in disaster. The following events can be used to increase the pace of the game when needed, and to drive the players toward the final confrontation:

COUNTDOWN

1. Father Cornelius comes to the von Kaiserling home and demands that he be allowed to take the child to his church, to protect it from evil. The wet nurse, Aino, is strongly opposed to the idea. Hugo is hesitant and asks the player characters for advice.
2. Aino approaches the player characters and hysterically explains that the priest has come to the von Kaiserling residence and is currently performing an exorcism in the nursery. If the player characters try to confront him, the priest will respond with violence. Performing the exorcism will not harm the changeling, but force it to assume its true form. The troll child flees up to the ceiling and out through a window. It returns to Kaali Village where it is cared for by Indrek.
3. The priest shows up outside the Tuljak Inn in Kaali Village, along with agitated members of his congregation, and stirs up trouble by accusing Leelo of witchcraft. They threaten to burn Tuljak to the ground. The player characters must get rid of him in order to speak with Leelo.

CATASTROPHE

Unless the player characters manage to stop him, Cornelius will eventually burn down all of Kaali Village. This causes the trolls to leave Kaali for good and disappear into the woods. The von Kaiserlings' child is never found. Agnes is transferred to a mental hospital in Riga. Hugo no longer takes any pleasure in either science or music, and hangs himself at dawn in the nursery.

LOCATIONS

The following paragraphs summarize the most important locations the player characters may visit in this mystery: the von Kaiserling Residence, the Sanatorium, the Church of Saint Nicholas, and the area surrounding Kaali Village. If the player characters want to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is also perfectly alright to explain that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing of interest there.

THE VON KAISERLING RESIDENCE

At the edge of Arensburg Castle Park with a view of the castle walls lies the von Kaiserling Residence. It is a stone building with six rooms and a garden with hollyhocks rising against the walls. The player characters are free to stay here during their time in Arensburg. Inside the house they can meet Hugo von Kaiserling and the wet nurse Aino.

Count Hugo von Kaiserling is sitting by the living room bay window, basking in the afternoon light. On his lap rests a triangular, multi-stringed instrument which he plays while singing a song. The song is beautiful and for a few moments it takes the player characters away from the city and the weariness of travel. Hugo looks up and stops playing. He puts down his instrument and goes to greet his visitors.

ARENSBURG

Arensburg (*Kuressaare* in Estonian) is the capital of Oesel, part of the Governorate of Livonia, in the Russian Empire under the tsar. In the time that Vaesen takes place, trade flourished in the area and the town was a popular health resort. Many sanatoriums were built on the beaches of Arensburg, where visitors could undergo various treatments for both physical and mental ailments.



“Welcome! I am eternally grateful that you have come all this way. I have tried to understand what has gotten into Agnes. I worry so much about her.”

The child and the wet nurse are in the nursery, whose beautiful windows overlook the garden. Three-month-old Eduard von Kaiserling is fast asleep in his cradle. He has pink cheeks and curly, light brown hair sticking up from the top of his head.

CHALLENGES

The challenges at the house mainly consist of gathering clues about the couple and the baby (see below).

Player characters watching the child after dark may get to see his true form, as the moonlight shining through the window suddenly quivers and the child’s features are twisted. All of a sudden the boy has dark eyebrows, marked facial features, and budding horns protruding from his hairline. He is still calm,

playing happily with his long tail in the moonlight. Player characters who witness this must pass a Fear test with Fear 1.

CLUES

At the house the player characters can gain clues by talking to Hugo and the wet nurse Aino, and by examining baby Eduard.

❖ Hugo has no more information to offer about what happened to Agnes, other than what it said in the letter. However, he can tell them about his research into the island’s songs and fairy tales, and is more than happy to talk at length about his dissertation and his theories regarding the craters outside Kaali Village. Hugo believes his wife suffers from melancholy caused by the agonies of childbirth, but has sought the player characters’ help since he cannot make sense of the situation.



AGNES VON KAISERLING

"I am not insane!"

Agnes von Kaiserling is 27 years old, Swedish, and has been married to Hugo for four years. She shares his love of music. Agnes is average height, with long dark brown hair and warm, inquisitive, brown eyes.

Agnes has always liked to read and is very interested in history and theology. Unlike Hugo she has difficulty making friends in Arensburg and feels lonely as a result. But though she is hiding it from those around her, she has found a new friend in Father Cornelius, and the congregation of the Church of Saint Nicholas has finally given her a sense of belonging and a place to connect with others in town.

Agnes has longed for Eduard to be born and to see him grow up in their house.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ◆ **LEARNING 2 VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 3**
INSPIRATION 1
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 2

COUNT HUGO VON KAISERLING

"There is truth in the old songs."

The Baltic German count Hugo von Kaiserling is 32 years old, with shoulder-length light brown hair, grayish green eyes, and a slender build. He gives the impression of being impatient and absentminded, but whenever he talks about his research there is fire in his eyes – suddenly his body language is different and his reasoning razor-sharp. Hugo is sure that he is about to uncover the truth about the origin of the craters.

While playing the kantele he loses himself completely in the music, and he is known in both Arensburg and Kaali Village for his creative renditions of the old songs. But Hugo is above all a scientist and has, despite his great interest in folklore and traditional songs, never noticed anything supernatural in his encounters with the villagers.

- ◆ Physique 3 Precision 3
Logic 5 Empathy 3
- ◆ **LEARNING 4 INSPIRATION 4 MANIPULATION 1**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Kantele, knife

- ◆ Aino was born on Oesel and feels apprehensive about the strangers, as she is ashamed of her poor Swedish. The player characters must use **MANIPULATION** to make her talk. If they succeed, Aino reveals that she thinks something supernatural is to blame for what has happened. It is customary for people in the region to christen their children as soon as possible to protect them from evil. When Eduard's christening was delayed because of Hugo's dissertation, the wet nurse tried to convince Agnes to sew some protective runes into the pillowcase in the cradle. Agnes forbade Aino to resort to such superstition and sent for Father Cornelius instead. But that same night, Agnes seemed to go mad. Aino found her standing over a full wash tub in the sauna,

in the process of drowning her newborn son. Aino has not noticed anything strange about the child.

- ◆ If the player characters examine the child, they can roll for **MEDICINE** or **INVESTIGATION**. On success they note that the child seems perfectly healthy, though big for his age and already able to sit upright and grasp at things. Moreover, Eduard already has two bottom teeth, which is very unusual for a three-month-old baby.

THE SANATORIUM

The sanatorium is located in a wing of one of the many medicinal bathhouses constructed of wood along the shore after mud with healing properties was discovered a few decades ago. The house is light green and has large, beautiful mullioned windows, a glassed-in porch overlooking the sea, and many rooms in the main building as well as the two wings. The reception desk is manned by two nurses each dressed in a white uniform and cap, and people wearing the establishment's bathrobes are sitting in comfortable armchairs, talking to each other. Water decanters have been placed on tables all over the room. Doctor Normann, Chief City Physician, receives the player characters in his office on the second floor of the main building. He tells them that Agnes von Kaiserling is currently held in the closed section of the sanatorium, due to her repeated attempts to escape. She was brought to the sanatorium against her will after the wet nurse found her in the sauna trying to drown her son in a wash tub. The wet nurse arrived just in time and the child is alright.

Agnes has not given any reasonable explanation for her actions. Doctor Normann agrees with Hugo von Kaiserling that the stress of childbirth must have weakened Agnes' mind, and he is convinced that a regimen of mud baths will restore the poor woman to good mental health.

CHALLENGES

If the player characters ask to see Agnes, Doctor Normann initially says no, believing it would disrupt her frail mental state. However, they can **MANIPULATE** him

WET NURSE AINO RANDSALU

"Speak of the Devil and he is sure to appear."

Aino is 32 years old and has worked as a wet nurse for various families in town. She has long blonde hair which she hides under a bonnet. On Sundays she goes home to her children.

Aino was born on Oesel and is very familiar with the stories about the trolls of Kaali. She knows that one can trade with and seek help from the trolls, and that they will often help you if you treat them well. She also knows that they might seek revenge on those who break agreements with them.

Aino suspects that Hugo has made a deal with the trolls to further his research. She thinks the kantele has something to do with it, but in what way she does not know.

- ◆ Physique 3 Precision 3
- Logic 2 Empathy 4
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 3**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2

AGNES'S STORY

Agnes, quite pale, is standing by one of the windows, her long dark hair tangled and untidy. She is very thin and speaks calmly and quietly, but behind her politeness there is great pain.

"It was such a joy when little Eduard was born. I am so lonely here. Hugo's research requires that he travel all the time. I was looking forward to sharing my everyday life with the baby so the house would not feel so empty. Do not get me wrong, my husband's work is very important to me as well, but we have not gotten to know many of the other families living here. My only support has been Father Cornelius."

"I tried to convince Hugo that the child should be baptized immediately after his birth, but he was about to make a breakthrough with his dissertation and wanted to wait until his work was done before arranging the christening party. Again, I implored him – until he is baptized the baby will be defenseless against evil, I said, but Hugo would not budge."

A shadow falls over Agnes' face, and she unwittingly clenches her fists.

"After a few weeks I noticed that the child had changed. I swear to you, when I put Eduard in the cradle, I could see his face shift. His eyes turned dark and his beautiful features were twisted into something strange and wild. Hugo had just returned from one of his trips to Kaali Village and would not listen."

"The next night the baby was sitting in his cradle – can you imagine how unnatural it is for a two-week-old to be sitting upright? That is not my baby, but a monster! I do not know what came over me... The next thing I remember is the wet nurse pulling me away from the bathtub in the sauna. Oh God, what have I done? My baby is out there somewhere, I feel it in every fiber of my being. You must go to Father Cornelius, he is the only who might know what to do."

into giving in. Another option is to steal the key to Agnes' room (it is hanging on a hook in the doctor's office) and sneak inside – but it takes two successful **STEALTH** tests against the doctor's **VIGILANCE**.

CLUES

If the player characters manage to see Agnes, she is upset and determined to escape in order to "save her child," as she puts it. She is highly suspicious of the

DOCTOR NORMANN

"Health through mud."

Doctor Henrik Normann is 53 years old, average height, and usually wears a shirt, vest, and pants under his white lab coat. His gray-blue eyes have an intense but warm look behind the round glasses.

For the past 15 years he has served as the city physician of Arensburg and head of the sanatorium, which offers treatments for both physical and mental ailments. The doctor moved to Arensburg after reading about the discovery of a mud deposit well-suited for medical baths.

Doctor Normann has done his homework and believes firmly in the healing properties of the baths and mud. He shares Hugo von Kaiserling's view that Agnes' mind has been weakened, and is convinced that a regimen of mud baths will restore her to good mental health.

In case Agnes does not recover, the doctor has contacts at the mental hospital in Riga.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 4
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ◆ **MEDICINE 3 LEARNING 2 VIGILANCE 2**
OBSERVATION 3
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Medical bag

visitors, fearing they might be experts called in by Doctor Normann to have her declared insane. The player characters must **MANIPULATE** Agnes to gain her trust. If successful they gain the following clues:

- ✦ Agnes is convinced that her child is endowed with supernatural properties.
- ✦ Hugo has spent a lot of time in Kaali Village for research purposes.
- ✦ Agnes has gained much comfort from Father Cornelius.

The text box on page 84 can provide inspiration for how Agnes tells her story.

THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS

In the heart of Arensburg, only a stone's throw from the castle, lies the Church of Saint Nicholas. The church is surrounded by a stone wall, inside which is a small garden with a paved pathway. Made of stone with two onion domes, the church was built in the 18th century and is known for its collection of icons.

The church is where the player characters can usually find Father Cornelius, who is happy to talk about his relationship with Agnes von Kaiserling. The priest is a dedicated painter of icons – when he paints, he loses himself and becomes one with God. He can spend hours in the studio and often forgets to eat.

One day Agnes found Father Cornelius passed out in the church park after many hours of icon painting. She helped him to his feet and gave him some water. That was the start of their friendship. Agnes is very interested in religious matters, and the two had long conversations during their walks in the church park. Three months ago, Agnes was accepted into the congregation.

CHALLENGES

If the player characters ask Cornelius about Agnes' baby, he will only give evasive answers. They must pass an **OBSERVATION** test to get him to talk.

If Cornelius learns that the player characters will be going to Kaali Village, he insists that they bring him along. It takes a **MANIPULATION** test for him to take no for an answer.

LEARNING TEST

When the PCs have met both Agnes and her child in Arensburg, they can at any time make a **LEARNING** test to gain the information below. Only one PC can make the test and only one roll can be made. If the test fails, the PCs will need to find the information elsewhere, primarily by talking to NPCs.

- ✦ **ONE SUCCESS:** Meeting Agnes and her child reminds you of old folk tales about trolls and changelings. Trolls live in communities where they brew beer, keep livestock, get married, and have their own traditions. Although they hate everything about the Christian religion, the trolls can sometimes exchange favors and tools with humans. There have been cases where the trolls have snatched a baby from its cradle and left a changeling in its stead.
- ✦ **TWO SUCCESSES:** Trolls can look a lot like humans – sometimes even beautiful – but there is always some detail that gives them away. Christian symbols cannot be brought into the dwelling of a troll unless the bearer first turns their clothes inside out and walks backwards through the entrance while also speaking backwards. Trolls can be driven off through Christian rituals, for example by placing a cross in their dwellings. Children can be protected from trolls by baptizing them.
- ✦ **THREE SUCCESSES:** To get a stolen human baby back from the trolls, they must be appeased in some way. Another method is to threaten to harm the troll changeling left by the trolls.



FATHER CORNELIUS

“I shall cleanse this land in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Father Cornelius is a 48-year-old priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. He is originally from the Russian capital of St. Petersburg. The church means everything to Cornelius, as it saved him from poverty and delinquency in his youth, back when he made his livelihood as a fighter on the streets of St. Petersburg.

Lately, his congregation in Arensburg has grown, as peace has boosted trade in the area and Arensburg has seen a growing Russian population. Father Cornelius has also traveled around the region and is appalled that folklore and nature religion have been allowed to co-exist with the Christian faith in Kaali Village. He has sent a letter to the patriarch in Constantinople and explained that the region needs to be brought into the one true faith.

- ✦ Physique 4 Precision 3 Logic 2 Empathy 4
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 4 STEALTH 2**
- VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 3 MANIPULATION 4**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 3 Physical Toughness 3
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Torch (counts as a weapon but sets the victim on fire), cassock, crucifix

CLUES

The player characters can gain some information from their visit to the church.

- ✦ If the characters visit Father Cornelius in his study, they may roll a **LEARNING** test. On success they notice a bound copy of *Rituale Romanum* – a book traditionally used for exorcisms.
- ✦ If the characters get Cornelius to talk (see above) he tells them that he is convinced that the von Kaiserling child is bewitched or possessed. He sees only one explanation for how evil found its way to the young couple: Hugo’s unhealthy interest in pagan legends and songs, and the excessive amount of time he spent with the infidels of Kaali Village. The demon must be expelled for the child to be saved and for Agnes to be herself again. Cornelius intends to perform an exorcism on the von Kaiserlings’ baby.
- ✦ Father Cornelius can also inform them of his suspicions regarding the ungodly villagers of Kaali. He thinks they are practicing black magic, and claims that people have been seen disappearing into the rock face of the Kaali crater.

CONGREGANTS

A motley flock of members of Father Cornelius’ congregation. They are fanatically loyal to the priest and obey his every command.

- ✦ **Physique 4 Precision 3**
- Logic 2 Empathy 2**
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT 2**
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife or axe

KAALI VILLAGE

Kaali is a group of nine craters in the area surrounding Kaali village on Oesel. There have long been different theories regarding the origin of these craters. The place has often been considered sacred, and archaeological excavations have shown that it may once have been a place of ritual sacrifice.

The player characters can be enticed to visit Kaali after picking up clues from Hugo and Agnes, or Father Cornelius. If they do not take the bait, the wet nurse Aino can suggest that the characters pay a visit to Kaali. The easiest way to get there is by stagecoach, which takes roughly two hours on narrow, bumpy roads.

Kaali village is located on the edge of the crater area. It is a troll village, but looks quite ordinary on the surface, with a dozen houses lining a single road. There are cattle everywhere, grazing between the houses, and on the outskirts of the village is a smithy.

CHALLENGES

As they approach Kaali, the player characters' coach suddenly hits a rock, veers off the road, and flips over. Each player character makes an **AGILITY** test – those who fail suffer a physical Condition.

Once back on their feet the characters notice that the coach has a damaged wheel and that one of the horses needs re-shoeing. A bit further away there is a smithy with warm light gushing from the cracks around the door.

If they seek help at the smithy, the player characters will meet the blacksmith Indrek. It is hot inside and Indrek is hard at work, but does not seem the least bit tired. On the contrary, he is in a brilliant mood. Indrek is a troll. With a successful **VIGILANCE** test during the conversation, the player characters note that Indrek is exceptionally strong – he fixes the horseshoe with only a few strikes at the anvil.

CLUES

The player characters can gain several clues from their visit with Indrek.

- ◆ Indrek has met Hugo von Kaiserling on several occasions. *“The young man’s mind may be full of worldly*



INDREK LÖÖTSMANN

“Touch one hair on the kid’s head and I’ll kill you.”

Indrek’s smithy is located near the highroad outside Kaali Village. He is tall and broad-shouldered with wavy, rye blond hair that curls against his shoulders. His hands are strong and marked by many years of hard work at the smithy. The only thing that mars his beauty is an ugly scar across his cheek.

People in the area, both humans and trolls, come to Indrek to purchase equipment or have their old gear repaired. His knives and tools are well-known among the locals as they maintain their sharpness for a long time and rarely break.

Indrek was himself a changeling as a child and did not return to the trolls until he was a teenager. When the human couple he was living with tried to get their real son back from the trolls, they hurt Indrek with a knife, and he still has physical and psychological scars from the incident. If Hugo or the player characters threaten to harm von Kaiserling’s troll child, Indrek will react with rage – you can read more about this under *Confrontation*.

Indrek is a troll according to the rules on page 156 in the core rulebook, but has the following stats:

- ◆ **MIGHT 12 BODY CONTROL 9 MAGIC 5**
- MANIPULATION 6**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Hammer

ambitions, but he sure can sing and play. His renditions of the old songs bring tears to the eyes of even the toughest of trolls.”

- ◆ Indrek says they can find overnight accommodation at the converted windmill that is now the Tuljak Inn.
- ◆ Indrek also makes figurines, bowls, and candlesticks from the dolomite rock found in the area. The objects are displayed on shelves all over the smithy. With a successful **INVESTIGATION** test the player characters note that the figurines have coarse features and (in many cases) tails.
- ◆ If the player characters mention that they were sent to find out what happened to the von Kaiserlings’ child, Indrek tells them about changelings and explains that they can get the real baby back by threatening to hurt the troll child. That is how he was returned to his family, after being used as a changeling when he was little.
- ◆ If the player characters ask straight out if Indrek is a troll, he admits that it is true – if they manage to **MANIPULATE** him, that is.

THE TULJAK INN

The Tuljak inn is located in the old windmill by a small stream on the edge of the village, near the nine craters. The player characters could come here on Indrek’s advice, or by chance – it is the only inn in Kaali Village.

Tuljak is run by Leelo Sisalik and known among the locals for its excellent beer. Leelo is in fact a troll, and her establishment is a place where freethinking, broadminded humans can mingle with her kind. The player characters can spend the night here.

When the characters arrive at the inn and step through the door, they are met by a warm and boisterous atmosphere. It smells pleasantly of freshly baked bread, beer, and sauerkraut. In booths with wooden benches and tables along the walls, the locals are enjoying good food and the award-winning beer. Indrek comes here a lot. Piglets, chickens, and baby goats walk freely between the tables. A group of musicians are just finishing their performance and sitting down to have some “Tuhlipuder ja Nott”



LEELO SISALIK

“You reap what you sow.”

Troll and proprietor of the Tuljak Inn. Leelo is taller than many men in the area, and conducts herself in a courteous manner. Her features are beautiful and human, except for the tip of her tail which an attentive observer may notice from time to time under her long, colorful skirt. Leelo is a troll according to the rules on page 156, but has the following stats:

◆ **MIGHT 7 BODY CONTROL 6 MAGIC 8**
MANIPULATION 9

– mashed potatoes with a sauce of smoked pork, milk, and flour.

The player characters may sit down in one of the booths. Soon Leelo shows up and welcomes them to her inn, while putting dark rye bread and fresh butter on their table.

“What can I get you? The bread is on us – no one goes hungry in this house.”

CHALLENGES

Tuljak is a troll inn. This leads to several challenges.

Player characters who are priests cannot enter the inn – it is as though there is an invisible wall blocking the entrance. However, if they turn their clothes inside out and walk backwards into the building, while talking backwards as well, they too can cross the threshold of the inn. The player characters can figure this out with a successful **LEARNING** test.

If the characters are accompanied by Father Cornelius, the latter will express his contempt for the “simple folk” in the village and offend everyone he meets. This might lead to trouble.

To convince the trolls at Tuljak that their intentions are pure, the player characters must pass a **MANIPULATION** test. On failure the trolls at the inn will be suspicious and terse.

Let the player characters make a **VIGILANCE** test during their visit to Tuljak. On success they glimpse a trail as Leelo moves between the tables to speak with her guests and serve food and beer.

To gain Leelo’s trust and make her tell them her story, the characters must be honest about why they have come, and then pass an **INSPIRATION** test. If it fails, they can make another attempt the next evening.

CLUES

The player characters can learn a great deal at Tuljak:

- ◆ By speaking with other guests they can learn that Hugo von Kaiserling performed there many times.
- ◆ Indrek can tell them that Hugo most likely made an agreement with Leelo to get his hands on the kantele.
- ◆ If the player characters manage to gain her trust, Leelo reveals that she, like many other residents of Kaali Village, is a troll. She tells them the trolls’ side of the story, including the fact that Hugo must return the kantele at Kaali Lake in order to get his baby back. It must happen at midnight on the summer solstice, which luckily is only a few days away. See the text box on the right.

LEELO'S STORY

When the last of the guests have gone home in the light of dawn, Leelo takes a seat at your table.

"It was I who gave Hugo the kantele. I really wanted him to record the songs and stories of our people. I saw in him an artist beyond the ambitious academic, and initially it all went very well. Hugo's performances at the inn attracted lots of visitors. But once he had finished his dissertation, it became clear that he had forgotten his promise to return the kantele."

Suddenly there is fire in Leelo's eyes. She rises from her chair and turns her back on you.

"How dare he break our agreement? If he intends to rob our people of our songs as well as the kantele, we will take his dearest possession, his flesh and blood, in return."

Leelo presents the rest of the story in song. Suddenly you see before you a garden and a house, which you recognize as von Kaiserling's home. It is night, and Leelo sneaks up to the nursery window. She waits in the garden, concealed by the lilacs outside the window, with a bundle of blankets in her arms.

Leelo hums quietly to the troll child, and in the moonlight her words turn into song and the song into magic. The baby troll's features shift into a human face. She climbs in through the open window and places the little troll in the cradle next to the sleeping son of Hugo and Agnes von Kaiserling.

Suddenly a floorboard creaks out in the corridor, as the wet nurse moves towards the nursery with a lit candle in her hand. Leelo wraps the human baby in a blanket and hurries out through the window. Outside, the early morning light already glitters across the sea.

Leelo pauses and turns to you.

"You see, I cannot give them their child back until he returns the kantele. And it must happen at the same place where the agreement was made – Kaali Lake, at midnight on the summer solstice."



CONFRONTATION

The final confrontation of the mystery takes place at Kaali Lake, the largest of the nine craters outside Kaali Village. Here the player characters can see to it that Hugo and Agnes get their son back. There are two ways to pull this off.

Convince Hugo to come to Kaali Lake and return the kantele to the trolls. This requires no less than two **MANIPULATION** tests – one to convince Hugo that supernatural beings exist and that his son is a changeling, and another to persuade him to head back to Kaali and return the kantele, which he treasures very much. The process can be roleplayed in detail or handled summarily. Failed tests mean time wasted – in other words, the mystery’s countdown progresses (see p 80).

If the player characters fail to convince Hugo to come with them, or if they do not even try, they can

seek other ways of retrieving a human child stolen by trolls. If they pass their **LEARNING** test (page 85), they realize that threatening to hurt the changeling left in the baby’s stead will make the trolls hand over the human child. If the **LEARNING** test fails, they can get this information from Aino. Note that the latter strategy is not possible if Father Cornelius has completed his exorcism, in which case the troll child is no longer there.

KAALI LAKE

The player characters come to Kaali Lake at dusk, along with Hugo von Kaiserling. The moon lights their way as they walk through the woods. The night air is damp with fog and smells of flowers and junipers. Kaali Lake is located in a deep depression. It is small, only thirty meters across, circular, and full of shiny green water. Its bank is barren, but the area is surrounded by trees, which keeps the lake in perpetual shade.

The remains of a defensive wall can still be seen around the crater, albeit overgrown with moss. Being the trolls' most sacred place, it is protected by powerful magic. Tonight the trolls celebrate the summer solstice, and beautiful music echoes from the crater, which is lit by several fires. The surface of Kaali Lake is like a watery mirror.

Suddenly Leelo is standing at the edge of the water with the child in her arms. Trolls in various forms are seen around the crater, first a few, then more and more – some more human in appearance, others small with gnarled bodies and wild features. Indrek is here as well.

"Tonight we celebrate the memory of the falling star that brought fire back to us. We will sing from dusk 'til dawn on this shortest of nights," says Leelo. She turns to the player characters and Hugo (if he is with them). The child is sleeping soundly in her arms. *"You are welcome here. Hugo, have you come to honor the agreement we made?"*

What happens next depends on the player characters' actions.

If they ask Hugo to return the kantele, he suddenly changes his mind and refuses. He is obsessed with the instrument and cannot bear to part with it. Instead he pulls a knife and threatens to hurt the changeling in his arms – Hugo has been reading about old legends and learned that this is one way of getting trolls to return a human child. The player characters can either try to **MANIPULATE** him into letting go of the instrument or overwhelm him by force. If this does not succeed within a few turns, Indrek intervenes as described below.

If the player characters or Hugo threaten to harm the changeling, Leelo goes pale with fear and backs off. She begs the person holding the changeling not to hurt the troll child and prepares to hand over the human baby. But before she does, a furious Indrek pounces on Hugo or the player characters. Indrek was himself hurt by humans back when he was a changeling, and he has the physical and mental scars to prove it. Indrek tries to snatch the changeling from the player characters or Hugo and take vengeance on them. The situation may deteriorate into violence.

FATHER CORNELIUS

If you want to increase the drama even more during the confrontation at the crater, have Father Cornelius show up shortly after the player characters and Hugo. Depending on how far the countdown has progressed, this could happen before or after Cornelius and his followers burn down Kaali Village (see *Countdown*).

Cornelius is convinced that the trolls are the Devil's cohorts and must be destroyed. The priest has brought a number of fanatical members of his congregation (as many as the number of player characters) and when he sees the trolls in their true form, he walks into the crater to confront the player characters. Cornelius tries to convince the PCs to join him in his fight against the trolls, which he believes are demons. If they do, the trolls flee into the woods and the Catastrophe is triggered (see page 80).

If the player characters refuse to join Cornelius, he will consider them enemies and attack. The characters have no choice but to stop the priest by force, while assuring the trolls that they do not see them the way he does (**MANIPULATION** test).

If the player characters manage to convince the trolls of their good intentions, Indrek will help them fight Cornelius and his men. If the priest is defeated he will try to flee Kaali, never to return.

AFTERMATH

Agnes von Kaiserling quickly recovers once she gets her son back. The family leaves Arensburg and moves back to Upsala. Eduard grows up, tall for his age and stronger than other children after having eaten troll food as a baby.

Hugo resumes his academic career as a lecturer at the Department of Social and Economic Geography. He buys many different string instruments and keeps playing music, but there is often sadness in his eyes as he tries to recreate the songs from Kaali.

The trolls around Kaali Village continue to live side by side with the people of Oesel as they have for thousands of years.

On their return to headquarters the player characters are awarded Experience Points.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Oscar Uddgren, priest in the fishing village of Fjällbacka. It is with a heavy heart that I write these lines. I am at wits end with my current predicament, and so I turn to you. I met with members of your exalted order during my studies in Upsala a few years ago, and now I place my hope in your particular talents and expertise.

My best friend and mentor, Vicar Carl Eric Hedqvist, is dead. His body was found a week ago, washed up on a beach in the Fjällbacka archipelago. The coroner has identified the cause of death as a self-inflicted gunshot to the head and written it off as a suicide. I refuse to accept this conclusion, certain that there is something unnatural afoot. And I know who is responsible. What I lack is proof and the means to do something about it.

I last saw Carl Eric alive one week before he was found dead. He was once again heading out to Wrecker Isle in the archipelago, to bring the word of God to the depraved seafarers frequenting the inn on the island. Wrecker Isle is a hub for maritime traffic and the site of the largest herring saltery in the archipelago. Some days the sea lane is so clogged with boats and ships that people can walk across them halfway to Fjällbacka. Wrecker Isle reeks with herring and sin, a godless stain on this Earth.

The proprietors of this den of thieves, herring baron Zacharias Amundsson and his mother Abela – whom the locals call “the Godmother” – are openly defying the teachings of our Lord and have thrown out the good vicar every time he visited Wrecker Isle.

I am convinced that the herring baron and the Godmother – along with Zacharias’ feeble-minded but dangerous older brothers Paul, Pete, and Pace – are doing the Devil’s bidding and are to blame for Carl Eric’s untimely death. I shall go to Wrecker Isle to find proof of their guilt and face these henchmen of Satan face-to-face. I require your assistance in this perilous endeavor. If you cherish your God and wish to help His humble servant in his time of greatest need, meet me in Fjällbacka at your earliest convenience.

With highest regards,
Oscar Uddgren

1A: Oscar Uddgren’s letter

To whom it may concern,

I urgently request your assistance. My name is August von Meijer. I am a forest owner and industrialist, and own one of the largest sawmills in northern Sweden, located here in Härnösand, where I am working to modernize this region. To this end, I am procuring heavily forested tracts of land and employing large parts of the local population in said areas.

Some time ago, two of my employees – Mr. Gottfrid Hammarström and his assistant, Nils Lindesköld – were sent to a small village called Färnsta north of Härnösand. It is located deep in the woods, and the land was said to be highly fertile and abundant with forests. Hammarström was therefore responsible for ensuring a transaction between the villagers and yours truly.

But now, alas, tragedy has struck. One night, poor Nils returned on horseback, wearing nothing but his nightshirt. He was in a frantic state, rambling about some evil beast he beheld in the village. Nils has not been the same since and can barely speak. Hammarström is missing, and I fear what may have befallen poor Gottfrid. I sense that something is amiss – there is more to this place than meets the eye.

That is why I am writing to you. I would like to enlist your services in uncovering the truth about what has happened to Hammarström, and stopping the beast mentioned by Mr. Lindesköld, at any cost! You come very highly recommended, and your expertise would be invaluable in our current predicament. Should you accept this task, you will of course be richly rewarded.

Please reply with utmost haste, for time is of the essence. I shall wait for you in Härnösand to explain more and arrange your trip to Färnsta.

Sincerely,
August von Meijer

2A: August von Meijer's letter

If you hear the sound of fleeing birds, snapping branches, and loud footsteps, you shall be its next victim. Pray then that your fate will be swift; for staring into its infernal gaze can plunge even the purest mind into madness. Those who threaten the place of God will suffer its wrath. This fell guardian is our Church Grim. Larger than a stag, stronger than a bear, and more agile than a lynx, it watches over God's acre. Running faster than a horse it hunts down anyone who endangers this place. It rests at the place where the Lord's eyes are watching.

2B: Medieval text

East of the third great stone to the north is the entrance. Deep in the bowels of Färnsta rests its fell guardian. The path twists and turns, but at the place where the Lord's faith is based lies its resting place, like a light in the dark.

2C: Medieval text

The cruel fate of the cat, baptized by fire in the name of the Lord, gave it life anew. Now it watches over this place, and it always will, sworn to be its protector. Only when its bones suffer the same fate that once brought it into existence will it perish.

2D: Medieval text

I am writing this in response to your previous letter regarding the developments in Färnsta.

In addition to purchasing its fertile forests, the discovery of an iron deposit has made securing Färnsta a top priority. It is my understanding that most of it is located under the village church, which will have to be demolished, but I shall naturally finance the construction of a new one. With the majority of landowners on my side this will not be a problem. Offer them whatever it takes. This deal must go through, for the most valuable one is at stake.

2E: August von Meijer's instructions to Hammarström and Lindesköld

Ms. Karlström recently came to visit for a cup of coffee. We had a conversation and she complimented me on how I unite Färnsta in our faith. Her praise warmed my heart and the woman was very sweet.

She then started asking questions about Mr. Hammarström, the man from the large sawmill in Härnösand. She wanted information about the business deals he was trying to negotiate, and there was something unsettling in her tone of voice. I see temptation in her eyes, temptation suggesting that she is not a godfearing woman. Perhaps she will tempt the others to sell their land?

2F: Ingvar Nyström's notes

To Mr. G. Hammarström

Meet me at the church after dark.
I have some words that may help you in your endeavor.

Regards,
I. Nyström

2G: The note found on Hammarström's body

Dear friends,

I would be very grateful if you would visit me at the hospital at the earliest convenience, where I have had to re-admit myself following a particularly difficult period. It is a matter of great urgency, and I must also ask that you prepare for a longer journey.

Yours truly,
Linnea

3A: Linnea's invitation

Little Lilli!

You barely remember me, do you? The years have fluttered by like butterflies and I shall soon turn seventy. But who is counting?

I wish the purpose of this letter was to renew our special connection, which I have missed dearly, and that I would like to see you to discuss the strange events that occurred at Gyllencreutz so many years ago - and though this is also true, I write to you regarding another matter.

Lilli, I need your help. The situation is very dire indeed, or I would not have had the nerve to contact you. I assume that you are still living in Upsala - surely you have not abandoned our beloved city? Anyway, I am currently located in Mölle, a small fishing village in the south. My friends and I are staying at the Mölle Seaside Hotel. You must come and help us Lilli - I can tell you no more than that, for fear that someone else might read this letter. That it must be you of all people has to do with our special secret, our way of seeing things, which brought us together all those years ago.

Bring all the weapons, tools, and strange items you can find. Anything might prove useful. Until then, my friends and I are stuck at the hotel. This is a mess of our own making, but nevertheless, despite everything, I ask for your help.

Love,
Your (hopefully?) dearest Ozgo

3B: Olga's letter

TODAY'S NEWS

TUESDAY JUNE 17th 5 ÖRE

"THE SIN IN MÖLLE"

For the past two years, the remote fishing village of Mölle in northwestern Skåne has been torn by conflict over the hotel that has opened in the area. Tourists, mainly Danish and German, are encouraged to engage in mixed-gender bathing at the beaches—something the locals are very much against.

Our reporter Elias Ragnér has visited the so-called heart of sin in northern Europe—a small community at the tip of the rocky area known as The Hill in the south of Sweden. Here in Mölle, Katarina Jönsson runs a successful seaside hotel frequented by tourists from far away. Katarina tells us: "Here on The Hill, Europe's cultural and intellectual elite meet for refreshing baths and relaxing walks in a spectacular landscape. My business is about to lead Mölle into the next century."

Many local representatives have less positive views of the hotel—especially Katarina's decision to let women and men frequent the same beaches—at the same time! Chaplain Algot Kransvik describes it as "a very unfortunate and ill-advised project that is causing strife and promoting sinful lifestyles," while the fisherman's wife Anna Svensson says she "is forced to see gentlemen in suspenders and ladies in corsets, which is a sad reminder of our mortality."

In any case, your dear reporter Elias is enjoying a cold bath in the crisp waters of the North Sea—and the view on The Hill is spectacular indeed!

THE OCCULT HERITAGE OF THE HILL

Comprehensive studies of the region have unearthed a folktale regarding the genesis of the mountain itself, where farmers and fishermen believe The Hill to be the creation of, and thoroughly imbued with, supernatural energies. Supposedly, these forces caused the ground to rise from the flat clay like a volcanic rock from the sea. It is said that there are caves and ravines where supernatural energies dwell, waiting for humans and animals to be used as vessels for their manifestation into the world. It is also said that a family blessed with the Sight has watched over The Hill for centuries, to prevent its energies from taking physical form and indulging in all sorts of destructive urges. My personal studies failed to locate the family in question, on which the myth of the so called "Hill Man" is based, or any form of vaesen, but did however identify strong tendencies toward the sublime and abstract, and a strange aptitude for seeing the unseen and creating the uncreated. It seems to me that this part of the south should be strictly monitored. Perhaps a smaller headquarters should be established in the area?

Brother Johan Trana

— member and First Ekvilator of the Society

3D: Johan Trana's note regarding The Hill

3C: Article from Today's News



3E: Olga's map

When my sister was found dead, with her abdomen slit open, I stopped being a child and became an adult. It was an early New Year's Day, and my sister Else led the rest of us around the church, having heard that one could see the future by peering through a keyhole. We were playing with forces we did not understand, and the unseen punishes the arrogant.

As we approached the church door, our path was blocked by the biggest bear I have ever seen. Its eyes glowed in the dark, its back was covered with sharp bristles, and its mouth was equipped with massive tusks. Else grabbed an apple from her pocket and threw it on the ground, which made the beast forget about us for a moment, and we were able to escape. But soon we heard its hooves thunder against the ground behind us. Suddenly,

Else, who had been running next to me, was no longer there. I stopped and saw her walk toward the great quine, and then I ran as fast as I could. She sacrificed herself so that we might live.

For many years I have collected rumors and tales about this creature, whose name is the glosom. It is said to suck out witches and those with the sight, devouring their innards to absorb their power. But I have heard of people who escaped that fate by distracting it with apples or nuts. Some say the creature can be controlled by a witch using a staff of lindern wood. After what happened to my sister, I never go outside on a winter's night, nor do I let my children leave the house.

Chef Niklas Jonsson in Åstorp

3F: Excerpt from Chef Jonsson's diary

Dear Cousin,

I am writing to request your assistance in your capacity as a member of the Society.

Something strange is afoot, and I cannot for the life of me make sense of it all. My wife Agnes and I recently had our first child, Eduard. Suddenly, just a few weeks after his birth, Agnes was like a different woman. She wanted nothing to do with the child, and is now locked up at the Arensburg Sanatorium after going to the sauna in the middle of the night to, in her own words, "drown the monster."

Agnes has always been a wise and sensible person. I do not understand what has gotten into her. Perhaps it is my fault. I left her alone a lot as my dissertation took up much of my time. In addition, Eduard's christening was postponed because I was invited to give a lecture on my dissertation at Lund University. I am at my wits' end. She will not talk to me anymore, and the only person she has been in contact with is her priest, Father Cornelius.

Father Cornelius is convinced that Agnes is right, that the child has fallen victim to evil powers. He has proposed an exorcism. If he has his way, I fear for the child's safety. As a scientist I cannot accept the ludicrous idea that supernatural forces could be at work! I need your expertise to navigate the situation. Perhaps someone with your experience could convince Agnes and the priest?

I am desperate, dear cousin! Your help would be most welcome.

Yours sincerely,
Hugo von Kaiserling

4A: Hugo von Kaiserling's letter

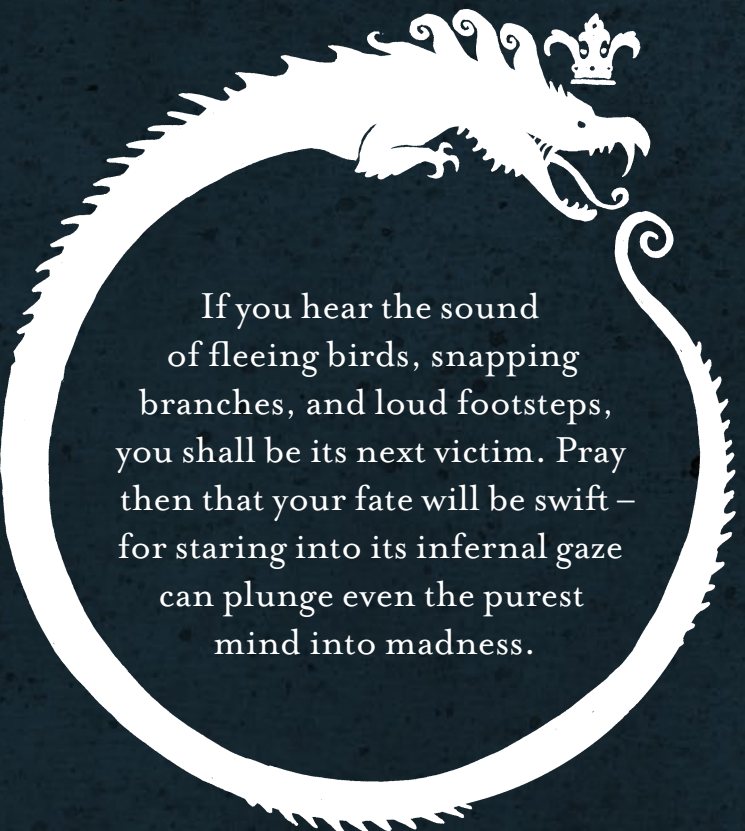












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- ♦ *The Silver of the Sea* – The death of a preacher leads the characters to the rocky western archipelago, where something strange is afoot on Wrecker Isle.
- ♦ *A Wicked Secret* – Travel to the deep forests of northern Sweden and investigate rumors of a murderous beast in a remote village. What ancient evil lurks there?
- ♦ *The Night Sow* – Welcome to beautiful Mölle, a city by the sea, known to many as “the heart of sin” – and now also for cold-blooded murder.
- ♦ *The Song of the Falling Star* – A cursed child, a strange instrument and a desperate aristocrat. Travel to Arensburg on the island of Oesel and discover the horrible truth about what has happened there.



FREE LEAGUE

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