

FREE LEAGUE

VAESEN



SEASONS OF MYSTERY



Based on the book *Vaesen* by
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SEASONS OF MYSTERY

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PREFACE

Within these pages you will find four spine-tingling mysteries for *Vaesen* – *Nordic Horror Roleplaying*. These cases follow the turn of the seasons across one year in the Mythic North and can be played in order, or spread out as you, the GM, wish.

With *A Dance with Death*, we begin in spring. When flowers awake and trees rise from their slumber we go north, to the county of Dalarna and its rolling hills and mighty lakes. In a quaint and remote village, a terrible crime has been committed and somehow it seems to be connected to an other-worldly vaesen.

In *Fireheart*, religious fervor runs high in rural Smolandia as the hottest summer in living memory triggers massive forest fires, crop failure, widespread poverty, and a mass exodus to America. Will the player characters uncover what's behind it all – and live to tell the tale?

In *The Devil on the Moor*, we journey west to the windswept autumn moors of Grimsted Lyng on the Danish island of Jylland and investigate a tale of terror where modernity is pitted against the old ways.

And last, we move some way from the heartlands of the Mythic North. In *A Winter's Tale* the characters travel to the snow-covered forests of Ingria east of the Baltic Sea, where they are challenged by a mysterious adversary under the glittering winter stars.

So here they are. Four seasons of mystery for your perusal. It's time to pack your bags, dust off your books and light your lanterns. The adventure awaits.



A DANCE WITH DEATH

THIS MYSTERY FOR the roleplaying game *Vaesen* brings the player characters to the scenic province of Dalarna in springtime, with its green woods, brown cabins, and the blue waters of Lake Siljan. There they will be introduced to the Swedish dance and folk music tradition and see the darkness hiding behind the joy of the music. The mystery will test the player characters' deductive powers, social skills, and – if they are not careful – their fighting prowess.

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 Fudal, a summer farm in Mora Parish. 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

Fudal is a *fäbodvall* – a summer farmstead – located in Nusnäs, a village in Mora Parish. It is composed of a scattering of cabins, like a little village of its own near Fudal Cove in Lake Siljan. Through the village runs a stream called Fuån. Here the farm girls are tending

IN MYTHIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

If you want to run this mystery in Mythic Britain and Ireland instead of the Mythic North, a good area to choose would be the west coast of Lough Corrib near Oughterard, County Galway. Gavelkind – a system of partible inheritance enforced upon Catholics until 1878 – split farms into smaller and smaller landholdings. If there were no male heirs, the whole farm would be held collectively by the widow and daughters until marriage or death. One such farm might be the location for this mystery.

cows and goats that have recently been brought to Fudal for summer grazing.

In Lake Siljan lurks the Neck (page 144 of the core rulebook). With his music he has lured unfortunate individuals to drown in the lake, hoping that they will keep him company in his underwater realm. Listening to the humans singing and dancing in the villages has made him envy their sense of community.

One sleepless night the farm girl Lisbets Boel heard him play his fiddle and was so enchanted by the music that she fell in love with the Neck, and he with her. Instead of drowning like so many before her, she swore to help the Neck, who has promised her a place by his side if she provides him with human sacrifices. Now the two of them are plotting to drown the farm girls of Fudal. Thus, at last, the Neck hopes to have a partner with whom to share his realm. An old tapestry depicting the Neck was later stolen as well.

But the Neck is not the only one who desires Lisbets Boel – so does the fiddler Jons Gustav, who has tried to win her heart. But she has always spoken affectionately of another, unknown musician, who is the man she wants. In a desperate attempt to win her love he contacted the Neck. He stole the farm girl Mattias Freja's black cat and brought it to a remote part of the shore along Lake Siljan, where he sacrificed it to the Neck, hoping that he would teach him how to play his melodies. Finally, the Neck heard him and promised to teach him, on the condition that Jons Gustav would provide human sacrifices.

Jons Gustav knows how to enchant people with the melancholy tunes he learned from the Neck, having lured Pers Ida – one of the hired farm girls – to the water to be sacrificed, before realizing that

CHARACTERS IN THE MYSTERY

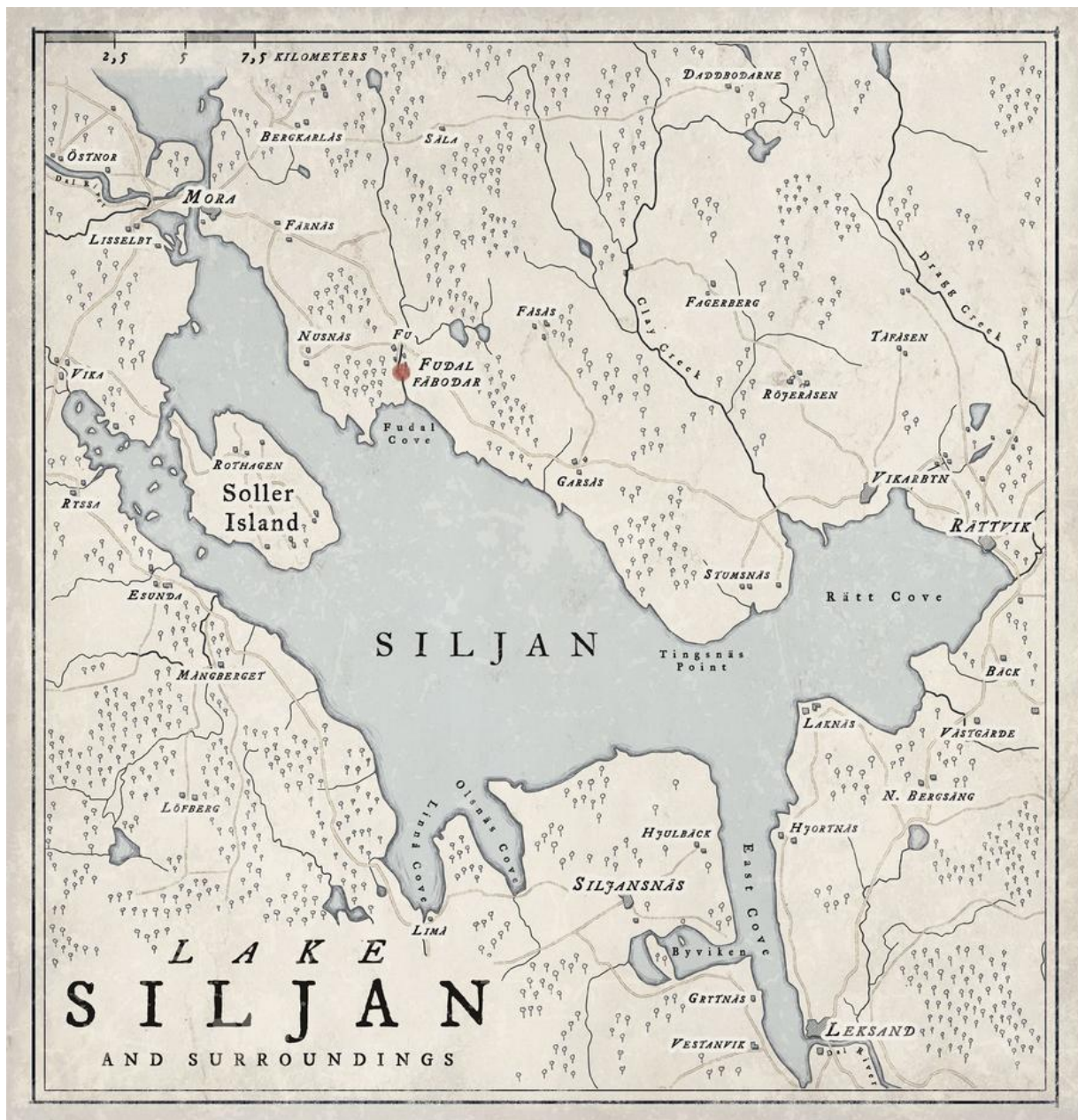
- ✦ **THE NECK:** The vaesen lurking in the depths of Lake Siljan, luring people to the water with his music. Is in love with Lisbets Boel and has taught Jons Gustav to play his music.
- ✦ **SWÄRDS JENNY:** The farm holder who owns the drowned animal, and the farm girls' employer. It is the drowning of her cows that kicks off the mystery.
- ✦ **LISBETS BOEL:** An outgoing and popular farm girl who is in love with the Neck, who later enchants her to help him drown the other farm girls.
- ✦ **MATTIAS FREJA:** A farm girl who acts as a leader for the other girls. Lisbets Boel's closest friend.
- ✦ **PERS IDA:** A young farm girl who is quiet and introverted. She recently involved in a strange incident where she woke up by the water without knowing how she got there. Is in love with Jons Gustav.
- ✦ **JONS GUSTAV:** A local fiddler who learned to play from the Neck, and who will now provide sacrifices in return. Brought Pers Ida to the water to be sacrificed, but could not go through with it. To buy some time he drowned Swärds Jenny's cows.

he did not have it in him. The next morning, she woke up by the edge of the lake with no memory of what happened. Now Jons Gustav fears the fate he has brought on himself, and to avoid that fate he plans to steal the Neck's fiddle. With it he intends to enchant Lisbets Boel and escape the Neck and his fate along with her.

But now the time has come for him to fulfill his promise, and the Neck is expecting Jons Gustav to bring company to his underwater realm. He desires human sacrifices and wants Jons Gustav to play his fiddle in order to lure the people of Fudal down to the water.

To stall for time Jons Gustav led some of farm owner Swärds Jenny's cattle to the water in an attempt to appease the Neck, if only temporarily. But it was not enough. Now the Neck is expecting a human sacrifice, and his patience is running out.

The Neck has told Boel that Gustav has made a bargain with him as well, to become a great musician. Now Boel and the Neck are planning to use Gustav and his love for Boel. Jons Gustav, on the other hand, has no idea that the other fiddler whom Boel claims to be in love with is in fact the Neck.



CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery pits the Neck and Lisbets Boel against the farm girls of Fudal. The Neck wants his human sacrifices and Lisbets Boel is determined to grant his wish. Together they are plotting to use Jons Gustav to carry out their plan.

The secondary conflict is between Jons Gustav and the Neck. Jons Gustav has made a Faustian bargain with the Neck in order to learn his tunes, but does not have it in him to lure people to their death. Growing increasingly desperate, especially once the player characters have arrived, he plans to steal the Neck's fiddle

and escape his pact with the Neck. He then hopes to seduce Lisbets Boel with its wondrous music.

INVITATION

This mystery takes place in late spring, when the livestock have recently been taken to the fäbodvall for grazing. It begins with the Society receiving a letter at their headquarters 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 Jenny and I turn to your Society, for I know not what else to do. I am but the humble owner of Swärd's Farm, situated in Nusnäs in Mora Parish.

It all started one morning when Pers Ida, a kulla working at the fäbodvall of Fudal, woke up on the shore of Lake Siljan with no recollection of how she got there. She had gone to bed with the other kullas as usual. The whole thing was very strange and several of the kullas have been worried ever since.

I write to you now in the wake of two of my cows drowning in the lake, despite the fence that was supposed to contain them. Someone, or something, led them there. I'd like to believe that none of the kullas would ever do something so callous, but I worry that someone might be hiding something from me.

The police would not listen, and so I turn to you. I am convinced that something unnatural is at work, and that it is coming for us.

Having no one else to help me, I sincerely hope that this letter reaches you and that you will find it in your hearts to offer your assistance and expertise.

Please reply with haste and I shall meet you in Mora.

Yours humbly,
Swärd's Jenny

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 relevant information in Upsala will only find basic information about Nusnäs being a village and Fudan a fäbodvall, both of them part of Mora Parish. However, the characters can learn a thing or two about the traditions and culture of Dalarna, including the naming customs and the importance of music. There is also information about transhumance and how it works. Use the information about the culture of Dalarna presented in the text box to the right.

If the player characters want to look up vaesen linked to water or watercourses, that requires a successful **LEARNING** test. The vaesen that come up are Brook Horse, Mermaid, the Kraken, Will o' the Wisp, the Neck, Sea Serpent, and Fairy.

THE CULTURE OF DALARNA

At this point in time Dalarna is mostly inhabited by farmers who have been exempted from the land reform. Instead, their farms are divided according to a system where each child receives an equal share of the land and the inheritance, although a mas would often inherit two shares. A man from Dalarna is called *mas* and an unmarried woman or girl is called *kulla*, and people from other parts of the country always add the epithet *dal-*, which makes it *dalmas* and *dalkulla*.

The farm is often the most important thing for families in Dalarna, where people's names normally consist of the farm name (usually the first name of the farm's owner) followed by the person's first name; for example, the brothers Tomas and Kosta from Per's Farm would have been called Pers Tomas and Pers Kosta. Farm names can also be feminine if the owner is a woman or derived from soldier names like Hane ("hammer" as in the firearm component), Blixt ("lightning"), Wårre ("worse"), or Spjut ("spear").

Agriculture in Dalarna is largely based on transhumance, where livestock is taken to graze in meadows and pastures near forests or mountains during the summer months, while the cultivated soil on the farm is used for growing crops or fodder for the winter. The wooden cabins in the pastures are called *fäbodar*. A cluster of *fäbodar* is called a *fäbodvall*. The people working there are usually young farm girls who spend their days milking cows and goats, making cheese and churning butter, which are then transported to the village.

Music is an essential part of the local culture. Herding music is often heard among the *fäbodar*, either sung (which is called *kulning*) or played on cow horns. It is a very beautiful and dreamy sort of music used by the farm girls to gather cows and goats. But the most important musical figures are the fiddlers who play at feasts or other social gatherings like christenings and weddings. Their performances are accompanied by partnered dancing such as the *polska* or the *schottische*. The music of the fiddlers is incredible in its ability to make people want to dance, and the best of them are said to have acquired their skills through magic. Folk costumes are often worn during these festivities.



SWÄRDS JENNY

"I look after my animals as much as I do my kullas."

Jenny is a middle-aged woman from a military family. As the only child she inherited the family farm in Nusnäs and runs it with pride. In the summer she spends most of her time at the fäbodvall. She cares deeply about the girls in her employ and treats them with great respect.

One can tell that Swärds Jenny comes from a family of soldiers, as she speaks bluntly and directly and makes demands of others. She is always fair, and despite her somewhat stern appearance she has a heart of gold and is very protective of people close to her. She speaks with authority and commands the respect of the farm girls.

Her appearance reflects her personality. She wears her brown hair up and dresses in practical clothing.

- ◆ Physique 4 Precision 2
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ◆ **FORCE 3 AGILITY 2 RANGED COMBAT 2**
OBSERVATION 1
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Rifle and knife

THE JOURNEY

The journey to Mora is a three-day carriage ride with overnight stops at inns in Avesta and Leksand, followed by a final leg to Mora. As usual the player characters can gain an Advantage during the journey (page 24 of the core rulebook). Their journey follows the Österdal River deeper into Dalarna, where the scenery starts to change from vast open fields to dense woods of pine and spruce.

On arriving in Leksand the characters reach the Österdal River's outlet to Lake Siljan and see the clear blue water stretching out before them. On the other side is their final destination in Mora, where they arrive in the late afternoon after an overnight stay in Leksand.

Getting off the carriage after a long journey, the characters' lungs are filled with air as clear as the water of Lake Siljan. They can see mountains looming on the horizon. Although it is springtime with summer on the way, the wintry cold still lingers in the night. In Mora they are greeted by Swärds Jenny, who is waiting with a simple horse and wagon, ready to take them to Fudal. Here the player characters can take care of any errands they may have.

They can tell that they have traveled north, as the sun rises early in the morning and sets late at night, where the spectacular and colorful sunset is reflected on the water of Lake Siljan. It does not get completely dark until midnight.

ARRIVAL

Fudal is one hour away from Mora, and the journey runs along the shiny water of Lake Siljan. The woods grow denser the closer they get. On the way there Swärds Jenny will talk about what has happened and the player characters are free to ask questions. She has the following to say:

- ◆ The kulla who mysteriously woke up on the shore of Lake Siljan was Pers Ida. She had no memory of what happened and there were shallow cuts on her body. She is a very well-behaved girl, albeit a bit quiet.
- ◆ The fence around the cow pasture had not been broken, which means that someone must have let them out. None of the kullas would have done

something as cruel as drown the cows, especially as they would be drowning their own livelihood.

- ✦ It has always been said that Lake Siljan and its waters are to be respected, and people have been known to drown there.

After one hour the player characters arrive in Fudal and are met with the sight of the log cabins and the pastures with grazing cows being tended by the kullas. Their ears are filled with the magical sound of Pers Ida's melodic herding calls.

Several of the farm girls gather around the wagon and greet the player characters politely on their arrival. Swårds Jenny says that she has prepared a cabin where the player characters can stay during their investigation. The kullas help carry their luggage to the wooden cabin. It is a simple affair, but it has beds for all of them, a wood stove, and common areas where they can work or socialize.

As evening approaches the kullas have prepared some supper and the player characters are served a meal of Falun sausage, crispbread, potatoes, raw milk and freshly made cheese. The girls setting out the food giggle and whisper amongst themselves. They explain that it is Lisbets Boel's birthday and that they will celebrate with music and dancing in the evening. The party will be held in the meadow after supper.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters' involvement will elicit reactions from Lisbets Boel and Jons Gustav, who will become increasingly desperate in their actions as the Neck grows more impatient. Unless the player characters steer the story in a different direction, it will eventually end in disaster. Use the following events to increase the pace of the game when necessary, and to push the players toward the final confrontation.

COUNTDOWN

1. Lisbets Boel convinces Jons Gustav that the player characters are dangerous and that he should scare them off by trying to kill one of

them. On the night of the birthday feast he lures one of them outside using the enchanting music of the Neck. He leads the player character out into the forest to kill her, but cannot bring himself to do it. Instead, he leaves her there and runs. In the morning the player character wakes up confused, with a number of stinging scrapes and scratches on her body from having walked through the woods, but neither she nor the other player characters know what happened. The character who experiences this must make a Fear test against Fear value 1. The enchanted player character does not notice anything but feels as if immersed in a deep sleep. Any other PCs who are awake and happen to see this will find that it is impossible to reach through to the enchanted character, while at the same time hearing sad but beautiful fiddle music being played a bit further away. The enchanted character will do anything to follow the tune and might even resort to violence if that is what it takes. If the player characters make noise, Jons Gustav will stop playing and the enchanted character regains control as if nothing ever happened. Each player character present must make a Fear test against Fear value 1.

2. Pers Ida sees Lisbets Boel meet with a mysterious man by the lake, and then watches as the Neck assumes his true form. Ida tries to escape but is discovered. The Neck plays his music and lures her down into the water, where she drowns. In the morning she is found on the shore by a devastated Mattias Freja or by the player characters.
3. Lisbets Boel asks Jons Gustav to meet her at Fudal Cove, but there the Neck appears and Jons Gustav realizes he has walked into a trap. The Neck enchants Jons Gustav so that he cannot stop playing his fiddle – he is forced to play until his fingers bleed and to obey the Neck's every command. Then Jons Gustav plays the music of the Neck, and all who hear it are enchanted, brought to the water, and drowned. If something has happened to Jons Gustav, the Neck plays the fiddle himself. You can read more about this under *Confrontation*.

CATASTROPHE

If the player characters fail to intervene, Jons Gustav will bring victims to the shore of Lake Siljan and drown them. Jons Gustav is now doomed to play until his knuckles are completely worn down. If something has happened to Jons Gustav, the Neck fetches his victims himself. Lisbets Boel will finally take her place by the Neck's side, but sadly she drowns as well. It is said that a plaintive melody can be heard from Lake Siljan at night, as from someone looking for company, and anyone who visits Fudal will find only death.

LOCATIONS

The following paragraphs summarize the most important locations the player characters may visit in this mystery: the Meadow, the Cabin Village, the Forest, and Fudal Cove. 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 MEADOW

The meadow surrounding the cabins is where the cows graze during the day, before being taken to the fenced pasture for the night. On the evening of the player characters' arrival a party is held to celebrate Lisbets Boel's birthday. Everyone at the fäbodvall joins in and Jons Gustav will be there to provide music.

The girls have dressed up in folk costumes and invited the fiddler Jons Gustav to perform at the feast. As the music begins to play, the party soon livens up and all the girls start to dance, especially once the aquavit is brought out. It is virtually impossible not to get caught up in the music, which is almost magical. The tunes of the fiddle blend with laughter and joyous shouting. For a moment the party makes everyone forget about the strange and mysterious incidents.

At night the animals are kept in pasture surrounded by a roundpole fence, but during the day

they are grazing here. There are several cows as well as goats, owned by the farmers of Nusnäs.

CHALLENGES

Below are some suggestions on events and challenges that may arise during the feast in the meadow:

- ✦ The player characters are free to join in the dancing. Lisbets Boel will then ask one of them to dance. The dancing characters can use **AGILITY** to follow along. Success means that people are impressed with the player character's moves, which can be used later on as the equivalent of a successful **OBSERVATION** or **MANIPULATION** test in conversation with one of the girls. If they push the roll, a failed test means that they stumble and fall while everyone laughs at them.
- ✦ Jons Gustav is concerned by the player characters' presence and worries that they will ruin his plans. After a few drinks he may decide to challenge one of them to an arm-wrestling contest. Defeating him requires a successful **FORCE** test against his **FORCE**. If the player character wins, Jons Gustav will leave the meadow in anger and consider them an even greater threat, which means that he will be more careful around them from now on. On failure the player character suffers a physical condition and Jons Gustav will consider himself superior to them.
- ✦ Pers Ida is there but does not say much and does not want to talk about what happened with all these people around. The player characters can get her to open up with a successful **MANIPULATION** test, in which case she takes them aside and tells them about it. On failure she asks them to come and see her tomorrow.
- ✦ Player characters who approach too close or enter the pasture at night risk frightening the animals and may find themselves butted and chased by goats or cows. The player characters must pass a **STEALTH** test not to startle any of them. If they fail or do not even bother sneaking, they must make an **AGILITY** test to avoid being butted by an animal. On failure they suffer a physical condition. After the incident one of the girls will show up and sing her herding song to calm the animals down.

50 100 150 METERS

THE ROLAND
CABINS

TORSKARD

Fu Creek

THE CABIN
VILLAGE

Fu Creek

The
Meadow

THE VILLAGE OF
FUDAL
AND SURROUNDINGS

Fudal
Forest

JON'S
GUSTAV'S
CABIN

FUDAL COVE



PARANOIA

Part of the mystery is about creating paranoia and making the player characters unsure whom to trust. The mystery contains clues that someone is consorting with the Neck, and some that point to Lisbets Boel, but below are some suggestions on events that may occur during different parts of the adventure.

- ✦ Someone spies on the player characters from outside their window. A successful **VIGILANCE** test allows them to notice this, but the person runs away before they can see who it is.
- ✦ The player characters find a note on one of their beds, with a message telling them to leave. The note is presented as *Handout 1B*. It is written by Lisbets Boel.
- ✦ The player characters are being watched at Fudal Cove, where someone is spying on them from the woods. When they realize this, the person runs away before they can see who it is. Should they catch the spying person, it turns out to be Lisbets Boel.
- ✦ If the player characters try to ask any of the girls (Pers Ida, Mattias Freja, or an unnamed character) whether there have been any mysterious incidents, they will be reluctant to talk. A successful **OBSERVATION** test will get them to admit that strange things have occurred, but they will not say anything more for fear that someone is listening.
- ✦ Lisbets Boel has the Neck put his spell on either Mattias Freja or Swärds Jenny, who comes to the player characters at night to deliver his message. The enchanted person speaks in a monotone voice and says that the player characters must leave, or blood will be spilled – blood that will be on their hands. With a successful **OBSERVATION** or **MEDICINE** test the player characters realize that the person has been hypnotized and is speaking for someone else. They must make a Fear test against Fear 1 after experiencing this.
- ✦ The player characters are followed by enchantments and curses related to water or music. They find tadpoles in their drinking water or water lilies blooming in the beer keg, or choke on a ruby ring that has somehow ended up inside a fish's belly. The music follows them too – perhaps the creak of a wagon wheel reminds them of the fiddle's wistful tunes, or maybe people out walking start taking dance steps. This may require a Fear test against Fear value 1.
- ✦ On the night before step #2 of the countdown, Pers Ida approaches the player characters and asks them to come to her cabin tomorrow. She thinks she has seen something that could help them but does not want to say anything until she knows for sure. She could also deliver this message in the form of a note.

CLUES

Despite the festive atmosphere the player characters can gain a lot of information, much of it gossip, just by asking the girls working here. They can answer as a group, but if you want a specific individual to answer their questions, that person could be Mattias Freja.

- ✦ Swärds Jenny wants the player characters to feel welcome and will introduce them to various non-player characters. She says that most people will be careful not to trust them, no matter how polite they are.

THE NOTE ON THE BED

Meddlesome people like you would be wise to leave. Let us handle this ourselves.

- ✦ If the player characters get Pers Ida to open up, she explains that she recently woke up all alone down by the cove, wearing nothing but her night-shirt. She tells them where to find the place. She

THE NECK IN HUMAN GUISE

The Neck can take human form to move among the people of Fudal. He calls himself Nicklas and looks like a tall man in his late 20s with long black hair and a beard. He wears a hat that conceals a third eye in his forehead and does whatever he can to keep it hidden. He is fairly quiet but has a certain mysterious charm. He introduces himself as a drifter without a family, which is why he lacks a surname.

was not hurt, except that she had light scratches on her feet from walking barefoot. She does not remember anything strange happening on the night she disappeared – she went to bed as usual and is not a drinker, so she could not have been drunk when it happened. She lives alone in one of the cabins, so unfortunately nobody saw or heard anything. She ends by saying that she had a very unpleasant feeling in her body after what happened, as if she had been subjected to something unnatural. She also mentions keeping a diary but has not seen anything else that might be of help to the player characters.

- ✦ If the player characters ask about the drowned cows, all the girls will say that it was very sad. They take good care of the animals and would certainly not let anything like that happen to them. When asked about who saw the cows last, the girls explain that it was Lisbets Boel who closed up that night. But the player characters will probably not get a chance to speak with her during the festivities, as she is too busy being celebrated. If they do get a moment with her, Lisbets Boel says she would be happy to talk tomorrow, but right now she wants to enjoy the feast and suggests that the player characters do the same.
- ✦ Several of the girls are impressed with the fiddler, Jons Gustav. His playing used to be a bit basic and unemotional, but now he seems to have become quite the virtuoso. They wonder if he has been taking lessons, and if so, from whom. They add

that he also should have taken a few courtesy lessons while he was at it.

- ✦ When asked about other fiddlers or who might have taught Jons Gustav, the girls mention that they have been hearing music coming from the lake late at night. The melodies are sublime, but no one knows who is playing them. Lisbets Boel is often awake at night and may know more.
- ✦ This evening Jons Gustav will secretly leave Lisbets Boel a love letter describing his plans to her. With a successful **VIGILANCE** test the player characters can notice him handing over the letter. Lisbets Boel will refuse to show it to them, but the player character can try to steal it with a successful **STEALTH** test against her **OBSERVATION**. The letter is presented as *Handout 1C*.
- ✦ Player characters investigating the pasture will see that its fence has not been damaged and that there is no lock on the gate, which means anyone could have let out Swårds Jenny's two cows. A successful **INVESTIGATION** test reveals footprints leading into the forest.

JONS GUSTAV'S LOVE LETTER

My darling Boel,

Your hair is as beautiful as freshly spun strings, and your voice is like the most exquisite music. You are the fairest woman I know. You make my heart beat like a drum inside my chest. It beats for you, and for you alone.

But I know that your heart beats for another. I know that he, too, is a fiddler.

But I promise, my love, that the time will soon come when I will be the greatest fiddler Fudal has ever seen, and then you will not be able to resist me. Together we shall make very sweet music indeed.

Your loving Jons Gustav



LISBETS BOEL

"Listen to the sweet music of life!"

Lisbets Boel is a kind and outgoing girl in her twenties. She has flowing dark-blonde hair that goes well with her tanned skin.

Her extroverted nature has made her one of the most popular farm girls in Fudal. Whenever there is a party or dancing occasion, she is usually at the center of attention. Nobody knows that she is planning to sacrifice them to the Neck.

Her closest friend is Mattias Freja who shares her cabin, and Lisbets Boel knows that she can tell her anything.

All the energy bubbling inside often keeps her awake at night. Then she usually walks down to look over Lake Siljan. That is how she first met the Neck and was seduced by his tunes. Now she wants to do whatever she can to be at his side, and is prepared to let everyone else die to please him. She does not realize that she is merely a puppet under his spell.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 MANIPULATION 2 VIGILANCE 1**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1



PERS IDA

"Nature should be revered."

Pers Ida is in her early twenties and one of the youngest girls in Fudal. She is a dreamer with blonde hair that is almost white, milky white skin, and big blue eyes—like something out of a fairy tale.

Pers Ida has a deep love and respect for nature. She takes good care of the animals in Fudal and often sings to them in her silky-smooth voice. Unfortunately, she is not as good at interacting with other people, as she is often quiet and prefers to watch others socialize rather than joining in herself.

She has also heard quite a few stories about various vaesen and is willing to share her knowledge with the player characters.

She desires Jon Gustav, though she would never admit it. But Lisbets Boel has realized this and may use it to her advantage if necessary.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 4 Empathy 1
- ✦ **AGILITY 1 MEDICINE 2 LEARNING 2
VIGILANCE 2**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Cow horn



JONS GUSTAV

"I will be the best fiddler Dalarna has ever seen, no matter the cost!"

Jons Gustav is a short man in his thirties, with curly red hair and a small beard. He has a very cold personality and does not show a lot of emotion.

Coming from a peasant family with lots of children, he only inherited a small piece of land which his siblings then bought from him. In the hope of making a living he started working as a fiddler. Although he is technically gifted, his playing was fairly basic and unemotional.

He has grown obsessed with becoming a masterful fiddler and therefore sought teaching from the Neck. But he is a coward and is facing great difficulties now that the time has come to fulfill his end of the bargain.

He knows the Trollcraft spell **DANCE (OBSERVATION)** and can use it in combat. See page 120 of the core rulebook.

- ❖ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 1
- ❖ **FORCE 2 CLOSE COMBAT 1 STEALTH 2**
VIGILANCE 1 MANIPULATION 2 MAGIC 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Fiddle and knife



MATTIAS FREJA

"It's important that we all work together"

Mattias Freja is in her late twenties. She has dark brown hair tied back in a ponytail, in sharp contrast to her fair skin. She is a highly empathetic and diplomatic person who believes harmony is the key to an efficient work environment. She usually directs several girls in their work when the farmers are not around.

At the same time her strong empathy has made her sensitive and prone to react emotionally, especially to adversity.

She is very close to Lisbets Boel and would die for her if it came to that. The truth of the matter is that Freja is in love with Boel, but knows that she could never admit it. But one can dream...

She used to have a black cat, Nisse, but he disappeared one month ago. She still misses him.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 2 Empathy 4
- ❖ **FORCE 1 VIGILANCE 2 OBSERVATION 1**
INSPIRATION 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1

FARM GIRLS

"Did you taste this cheese? I made it myself!"

The farm girls are relatively young, most of them in their twenties, some in their early thirties. They are paid by farmers to look after their livestock in Fudal. Hired girls are almost exclusively unmarried kullas—the married ones are usually at home taking care of the farm, but will occasionally spend some time tending their animals at the fäbodvall. Most of the farm girls are kind and cheerful, and everyone loves having a good time partying and dancing.

- ✦ **Physique 2 Precision 2**
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ✦ **FORCE 2 STEALTH 2 VIGILANCE 1**
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Cow horn and tools, such as a knife or an axe

THE CABIN VILLAGE

Most of Fudal is made up of the cabin village, which consists of several log cabins of different sizes. Some are larger with room for entire families (the player characters are staying in one of them), while many of the farm girls live in smaller and simpler cabins for one to four people. The large cabins have their own kitchens and outhouses, while the small ones share a larger kitchen and outhouse.

Swärds Jenny lives alone in one of the larger cabins as her family is currently at home on the farm, and she is happy to offer the player characters a cup of coffee if they want to talk. Lisbets Boel and Mattias Freja share a smaller cabin. When the player characters visit them, Lisbets Boel is brushing her hair with Mattias Freja crocheting beside her, both of them chatting cheerfully about the recent festivities. Pers Ida lives alone in one of the smaller cabins and is resting when the player characters come to see her.

CHALLENGES

Below are some suggestions on events and challenges the player characters may encounter in the cabin village:

- ✦ If the player characters have not yet gained the farm girls' trust, they will have to pass **MANIPULATION** tests in order to question them, particularly Lisbets Boel and Mattias Freja.
- ✦ If the player characters view any of the girls as suspects and want to enter their cabins without being seen, that will require successful **STEALTH** tests.
- ✦ Once phase 2 of the countdown has occurred, the Neck (in human guise) will visit the fäbodvall and plays sad and somber music in honor of the late Pers Ida. If he thinks the player characters suspect him, he will make tables and stools dance mysteriously and escape in the commotion that follows. The furniture stops moving when he has left. Those who witness this must make a Fear test against Fear 1.

CLUES

The player characters can gain a lot of information at the cabin village, mainly from the farm girls. If they are stuck and unable to get a hold of any of the non-player characters they want to talk to, Swärds Jenny can offer to help them and come with them to whoever they wish to see, where they can get the information they need. If the player characters failed to speak with any farm girls in the Meadow, they can talk to them in their cabins and uncover the information presented under *Clues* on page 12. Here are the clues in the cabin village:

- ✦ If the player characters ask Lisbets Boel about the night when the cows were drowned, she replies that she herded them into the pasture and made sure the gate was closed and locked. She did not see anyone else when she left and went back to the cabin, where she and Mattias Freja slept soundly until morning. None of them would ever harm the animals, as Mattias Freja will also tell them.
- ✦ Lisbets Boel often has trouble sleeping at night, and everyone in Fudal knows it. If the player characters ask whether she has seen or heard anything

strange at night, she only talks about the sounds of the forest and the lake and never mentions the music. However, she was asleep when the cows disappeared, which Mattias Freja can verify. They can try to see through her lie with a successful **OBSERVATION** test against her **MANIPULATION**. In that case she admits to having heard music being played by Lake Siljan at night, but does not know who, or what, is responsible for it.

- ✦ If the player characters ask any farm girl whether other animals have gone missing, she sadly informs them that Mattias Freja's black cat Nisse disappeared about a month ago.
- ✦ Mattias Freja can also tell them that she thinks Jons Gustav is in love with Lisbets Boel, but when she asked about it Boel seemed completely uninterested. Perhaps her heart belongs to someone else? She also suspects that Pers Ida in turn is in love with him.
- ✦ The player characters could look for the love letter Jons Gustav handed to Lisbets Boel. She keeps it hidden under her mattress and they must pass a Challenging **INVESTIGATION** test to find it. If they have gained her trust, Mattias Freja can help them look for it, which lowers the difficulty to Normal. The letter is presented as *Handout 1C*. Lisbets Boel may also have hidden the old tapestry here.
- ✦ If the player characters have read the love letter and ask her who the other man is, Lisbets Boel says that it does not matter since it was only a one-time thing. A successful **MANIPULATION** test can make her

admit that his name is Nicklas – the other fiddler who visits Fudal from time to time.

- ✦ When asked about the footprints, Swärds Jenny says that everybody stays clear of the forest, especially at night, and that no one ventures beneath its shadowy boughs alone.
- ✦ After phase 2 of the countdown, the player characters can find what Pers Ida has written in her diary, which is resting on her bedside table. The entry was written the night before she died and is presented as *Handout 1D*. The old tapestry might be here as well, where Pers Ida found it before she died. Mattias Freja can reveal that Pers Ida appeared to have seen something on the night of her death, if the player characters need to be nudged toward her cabin.
- ✦ If the player characters ask where Jons Gustav lives, the farm girls tell them that he has a small cottage in the woods where he spends the nights.
- ✦ If the Neck is visiting the cabin village in human guise, the player characters can expose his unholy form by yanking the hat off his head and revealing the third eye in his forehead. The player characters can also attempt a Challenging **OBSERVATION** test; on success the Neck will try to escape.
- ✦ In the large dining cabin, there used to be an old tapestry of the Neck, which went missing a while back. One of the farm girls can provide a basic description of its motif: a strange figure being banished by a priest. See separate text box on next page.

EXCERPT FROM PERS IDA'S DIARY

Since the cow disappeared, I've tried to keep a lookout at night. Yesterday I saw something by the cove. I thought I saw someone in the water. But the thing that surprised me most was a woman speaking to the strange figure. I could not see who it was before she ran away. She must have seen me. I have to find out who this was. Perhaps that is the key to what is going on?

THE TAPESTRY

An old tapestry, no more than 40 × 30 cm, earlier hung in the dining cabin. It was made in the late 17th century and its style is simple. It depicts a horrifying humanoid figure fleeing towards a lake, pursued by a priest with a crucifix in hand. The creature has three eyes and a black cat perched on its shoulder. The motif depicts the Neck being banished by a priest.

The tapestry was stolen a while ago, either by Lisbets Boel or by Jons Gustav, depending on where the player characters find it, so that no one will figure out how to banish the Neck. The mystery contains many suggestions on places where it might be hidden, but the thieves may also be carrying it on their persons. If they are caught with the tapestry, they will claim to have found it and that they were just about to return it. Lisbets Boel is an excellent liar, and the characters must pass a Challenging **OBSERVATION** test to see through her deception.

The tapestry's motif is not unique – there are plenty of similar tapestries depicting dark forces being banished by Christian symbols or portraying the dangers of succumbing to temptation. Consequently, none of the farm girls can describe the tapestry in detail, but simply as "another devil being banished". Most of them can even talk about it in a humorous way.

A player character who finds and studies the tapestry can make a **LEARNING** test to realize that the figure represents the Neck, who is being driven back into the deep by Christian symbols.

THE FOREST

The forest surrounding the cabin village mainly consists of tall pine and spruce trees. It is thick and tangled and people ought to be careful walking through it, as there are bears in the area. All the farm girls avoid the forest at night. In late summer and fall, they usually go there to pick berries or mushrooms.

Deep into the thickets of the forest is a small wooden cottage where Jons Gustav spends the nights during his visits. It is a very humble cottage, with a bed and a nightstand, a simple kitchen, and a dinner table.

CHALLENGES

Below are some suggestions on challenges the player characters may face in the forest:

- ✦ If the player characters follow the footprints they found by the pasture it will take a successful **VIGILANCE** test to track them through the thickets. If it succeeds the footprints lead them to Jons Gustav's cottage. But on failure they get lost and risk running into a bear. For the bear's stats, see page 168 of the core rulebook.
- ✦ Player characters exploring the forests can see a figure by the lake walking deeper into the woods. This is Jons Gustav. They can follow him undetected with successful **STEALTH** tests. On failure Jons Gustav starts running and the player characters will need to make a successful **AGILITY** test to catch up to him. If that fails Jons Gustav gets away; if it succeeds they catch up to him when he reaches his cottage, without him noticing. After a while he will leave the cottage, which allows the characters to enter undetected.
- ✦ Jons Gustav has placed a steel trap near his cottage to protect it from bears, and the player characters must pass a **VIGILANCE** test not to step into it. A character who fails (chosen at random) suffers a physical condition as well as physical critical injury *Foot injury* (the core rulebook, page 65).

- ◆ Jons Gustav's cottage is locked. The player characters must pass a **STEALTH** test to pick the door lock, an **INVESTIGATION** test to find the key hidden inside a crack in the wall, or a **FORCE** test to break the door open.
- ◆ If Jons Gustav feels threatened by the player characters he may decide to attack, especially if he can ambush them. In that case he will warn them and ask them to leave, but claim that he does not wish them any harm. He attacks by playing his fiddle and runs away if the situation turns dire.
- ◆ The player character who wakes up in the forest after Phase 1 of the countdown may be unlucky enough to encounter a bear. The character can try to hide from the bear with a **STEALTH** test or escape with **AGILITY**. On failure the bear may attack.

CLUES

The player characters can gain a great deal of information in the forest, mainly from Jons Gustav's cottage:

- ◆ The cottage is small and spartan, which makes it easy to search. By looking on the nightstand or passing an **INVESTIGATION** test the characters can find a letter, unfinished and crumpled, penned by Jons Gustav (see *Handout 1E*). It tells them that a knife that has cut the strings of a fiddle can stop the Neck from using his magic.
- ◆ If the player characters did not see Jons Gustav give the letter to Lisbets Boel, the letter can be found here in the cottage, folded on the kitchen table, ready to be handed to her. See *Handout 1C* for the letter.
- ◆ Player characters who overpower or make contact with Jons Gustav can try to question him and see where his loyalties lie (for instance if they suspect that it was he who lured the player character into the forest). Initially he will deny it, but if confronted with evidence he will take all the blame, saying that he only did it to prove the power of his music. But a successful **OBSERVATION** test sees

through his lies, in which case he admits that he tried to hurt one of them, but did not have it in him. Jons Gustav does not want to direct suspicion towards Lisbets Boel, and if desperate he might try to convince them that Mattias Freja is responsible, or blame it all on the Neck if the player characters have figured out that he is the vaesen they are dealing with.

- ◆ If the player characters get into combat with Jons Gustav and manage to overpower him, or if he escapes, he will drop his knife. It has been used to cut fiddle strings and can therefore be useful against the Neck.
- ◆ If asked about the other fiddler, Jons Gustav says that he does not know his name, but provides a description that matches Nicklas.
- ◆ The old tapestry can be found here. It might be hidden under a floorboard in Jons Gustav's cottage or buried in a grove of trees. In both cases it takes a successful **INVESTIGATION** test to find it. For more information, see the boxed text on the previous page.

JONS GUSTAV'S UNFINISHED LETTER

My beloved,

Run away with me and be mine. With his fiddle I shall be free from the pact that keeps me here, and you will hear the sweetest of music. But if he comes after you, use this knife, for it has cut the strings of fiddles. Stick it in the ground and it will protect you.

I'm sorry about the poor cat and the fate it suffered. I hope you will forg...

FUDAL COVE

Fudal Cove is a cove in Lake Siljan and its beautiful blue water. It is a rocky beach that starts shallow but deepens quickly, as Lake Siljan is 120 meters deep. The Neck has his dwelling a bit further out, deep down on the bottom of the lake, but moves closer to the shore to lure people into the water.

The glassy surface of the lake is strewn with water lilies, and at night the place is swarming with mosquitoes. Although it is springtime the water is still quite cold.

CHALLENGES

Below are some challenges the player characters may face at Fudal Cove:

- ✦ Player characters who walk in the water at night risk slipping on a slippery rock unless they exercise **VIGILANCE**. Such an accident results in a physical condition.
- ✦ The neck could be lying in wait for the player characters. His primary intention is not to drown them, and if he is worried about being discovered or exposed he will have taken human form. But he can use his magic and play music to lead a player character into the water, so that the others must help her. The Neck will soon escape deep into the water where the characters cannot see him.
- ✦ After Pers Ida is found drowned, Mattias Freja is utterly devastated and sobs uncontrollably. A player character can comfort her with a successful **INSPIRATION** test. She will then trust the player characters and do everything she can to help them, particularly during the Confrontation.

CLUES

The player characters can uncover a great deal of information at Fudal Cove:

- ✦ A character watching the lake will note that there are lots of water lilies in Fudal Cove.
- ✦ A successful **INVESTIGATION** test reveals footprints leading to the water. They were left by a barefoot human who walked here and back more than once.

Judging by the size of the feet it must have been a woman, but it is impossible to establish an exact identity. Lisbets Boel left these footprints as she walked back and forth to the lake.

- ✦ At night the player characters can pass a **VIGILANCE** test to notice the shape of a fiddler walking along the shoreline a short distance away. This is the Neck in human guise. He will not say much if they try to talk to him. The player characters can reveal his inhuman third eye by snatching the hat that conceals it or by passing an **OBSERVATION** test.
- ✦ If the player characters have not yet found Jon Gustav's love letter, they can find it floating in the water, under a bunch of water lilies, by passing an **INVESTIGATION** test. Lisbets Boel tried to get rid of it by throwing it into the lake. The letter is presented as *Handout 1C*.
- ✦ The old tapestry of the Neck may have been thrown into the water, in which case the player characters

PERS IDA'S BODY

As they discover Pers Ida's body, the player characters are met by a tragic sight. Read the following text aloud or paraphrase it to create atmosphere.

Floating face down among the water lilies is the body of young woman. Her arms are stretched out and her large white nightshirt and blonde hair almost makes her look like a macabre painting of an angel in the water. Her pale skin has assumed the same color as the nightshirt. Turning the body over you see that it is Pers Ida. Her eyes are closed, and her face would look almost peaceful, had it not been all blue and bloated. She is freezing to the touch. This innocent girl now lies dead before you. Who would do something so cruel as to take her young life?

can find it with a successful **INVESTIGATION** test. Pers Ida may also have it on her if phase 2 of the countdown has occurred. For more information, see the separate boxed text on page 18.

- ♦ If phase 2 of the countdown has been triggered, Pers Ida's lifeless body can be found by Fudal Cove. Player characters who have explicitly stated that they will investigate Fudal Cove early in the morning after Phase 2 has occurred will find her corpse; otherwise Mattias Freja will come and get them. A player character who is awake at night could also hear sounds coming from the lake with a successful **VIGILANCE** test, but will not get there in time to save Pers Ida from drowning.

CONFRONTATION

Lisbets Boel worries that the player characters are on to her. It is time for her and the Neck to carry out their plan. After nightfall she meets with Jons Gustav at Fudal Cove, where she hints that she loves him in return. Soon the Neck rises from the water, and Jons Gustav realizes he has walked into a trap. In desperation he tries to steal the Neck's fiddle, and as punishment the Neck curses him to play enchanting music until he no longer has any fingers left. If something has happened to Jons Gustav, the Neck plays the fiddle himself.

The music reaches Fudal and the first person to hear it is Swärds Jenny, who follows the music along the stream to be drowned in the lake. The player characters can see this if they are present and awake; otherwise, a panicked Mattias Freja will come to the player characters for help. Anyone enchanted by the tune walks the same way as a player character who was enchanted during phase 1 of the countdown.

Time is of the essence if they are to save Swärds Jenny from being drowned. The player characters can hear music coming from Fudal Cove, where the Neck awaits. Mattias Freja is also worried about Lisbets Boel, as she was not in their cabin tonight.

If the player characters harm, capture, or threaten Lisbets Boel, the Neck will summon Jons Gustav and force him to play music in order to lure Swärds Jenny there. Lisbets Boel could try to escape when the showdown begins but may also laugh with joy as her plan is about to succeed. The showdown can unfold largely as written, albeit without her participation. Alternatively, Lisbets Boel can escape and serve as a threat when the player characters return to Fudal, if they try to lead the Neck there, for example by taking Mattias Freja or some other girl prisoner and threatening to slit her throat.

SHOWDOWN

When the player characters arrive at Fudal Cove, the Neck in his true form is sitting on a rock out in the water, playing his fiddle to lure his next victim. Swärds Jenny is completely entranced and controlled by the Neck. Jons Gustav takes over the playing and moves according to the Neck's will. His eyes glitter with tears. Lisbets Boel is standing on the beach screaming for help, but is actually planning to drown whoever comes near, starting with Mattias Freja.

The Neck has deliberately waited for the player characters to arrive so that they will witness his power. If this is the first time they see the Neck in his true form, the player characters must make a Fear test against Fear 1.

The Neck will order Jons Gustav to drown Swärds Jenny within D6 turns. If the Gamemaster wants the Neck to seem particularly cruel, he could also have Jons Gustav drown himself if the situation goes sideways. Meanwhile, Lisbets Boel will do everything in her power for the plan to succeed and will personally bring more people to be drowned and stop anyone who attacks the Neck or Jons Gustav. The Neck will mainly use his spell **MAGIC INSTRUMENT** on the player characters (works as the Trollcraft spell **DANCE**, see page 120 in the core rulebook) to stop them from interfering. If a

player character becomes Broken, the Neck will lure her into the water as well. Player characters in possession of a knife that has cut the string of a fiddle (for example by cutting those of Jons Gustav's fiddle) can stick it into the ground and speak with the Neck, which prevents him from using his magic as long as the knife remains in the ground. This information is found in an unfinished letter Jons Gustav was carrying (see *Handout 1E*). If the player characters have not found the note, Jons Gustav will drop it during the showdown, for instance if he is hit or if someone steals it from him.

BREAKING THE SPELL

Jons Gustav is the person whose music has enchanted Swärds Jenny, and the moment he stops playing she (and everyone else who has been lured there) will be free. The player characters can accomplish this by overpowering him with a successful **CLOSE COMBAT** test against his **AGILITY**. On success they manage to hold him while another player character is free to act (or act on the next round, but then Jons Gustav will try to break free). They can either cut the fiddle's strings (which succeeds automatically) or tear it from his hands by passing a Difficult **FORCE** test. Player characters who do not have a knife can grab Jons Gustav's knife with a successful **STEALTH** test and then cut the strings during the same round.

As soon as Jons Gustav stops playing, the spell is lifted. Those enchanted by his music are no longer at risk of being drowned and rush out of the water. They may also be willing to help the player characters stop the Neck.

Once he is freed from the spell, Jons Gustav will feel tremendous guilt over what happened and may sacrifice himself to distract the Neck if necessary.

They can also try to break the spell that puts Lisbets Boel under the Neck's control. By passing a Difficult **INSPIRATION** test they can get through to her and make her see that the Neck enchanted her. The assistance of Mattias Freja adds +1 to their roll. She will then

do whatever she can to help the character stop him and call out any information they may need. If they fail to get through to Lisbets Boel, the Neck may try to drown her instead.

BANISHING THE NECK

In order to banish the Neck, the player characters must break his spell over Jons Gustav and Lisbets Boel, either by passing the skill tests described in the section above or by convincing the Neck to release those under his spell, by sticking a knife that has cut the strings of a fiddle into the ground. To convince the Neck they must make him see that the person he has fallen in love with, Lisbets Boel, will not survive in his realm. The Neck's loneliness is great, but his love for Lisbets Boel is greater still, and he will lift the enchantment if the player characters can get him to listen.

Once the spell has been broken, either by the Neck himself or by rescuing both Jons Gustav and Lisbets Boel, the Neck dives into Lake Siljan and vanishes into the deep, never to be seen again.

It is possible to attack the Neck, for example by shooting him. If the Neck takes 2 points of damage he will enchant the person who attacked him. He mainly uses Dance (see page 120 of the core rulebook) against all player characters. While the player characters are bewitched, one of the NPCs lured to the lake can be drowned.

The Neck will also be banished if he is surrounded with Christian symbols or steel, for example if the player characters form a circle around him while holding crucifixes. In that case the Neck will turn into a toad, disappear into the water, and leave Lake Siljan forever.

Player characters who go looking for Christian symbols or steel to banish the Neck can find it in the cabin village with a successful **INVESTIGATION** test, where each success means that they find one Christian symbol (such as a crucifix in a cabin) or piece of steel (for example among the tools).

AFTERMATH

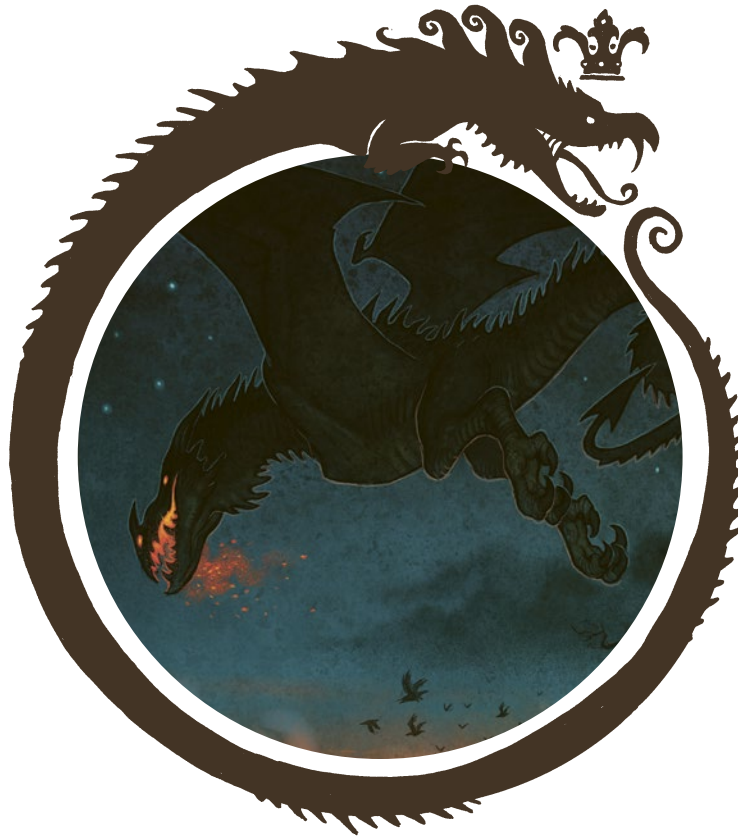
If the player characters succeed in banishing the Neck and saving Fudal from drowning, everyone at the fäbodvall will be forever grateful. If Lisbets Boel and Jons Gustav survived they are both free from the Neck's spell and will show deep remorse over everything that happened, even though they had no control over it. The next day they will all celebrate with a great feast in the player characters' honor and offer them plenty of food and drink. Dancing ensues and the air is filled with the lovely singing of the farm

girls – but no one plays the fiddle that day. The player characters will also leave with gifts from the girls of Fudal: milk and cheese from the cows, as well as a carved cow horn. If the Neck lives but was banished from Lake Siljan, it will be many years before anyone hears his music again, but eventually he will find a new waters somewhere far away, where he plays his melancholy tunes, knowing that he will be alone for the rest of his days.

At this point the player characters can do little but return to their headquarters in Upsala, where they are awarded experience points.



Also note that though some of the characters and locations in this mystery are historical, the story told here is of course completely fictional.



FIREHEART

THIS MYSTERY BRINGS the player characters to the deep southern woods of Smolandia. These lands are ravaged by heatwaves and wildfires, triggering poverty, hunger, and mass emigration to America. The player characters are drawn into the situation by two brothers who run an ironworks by the shore of Lake Hären. Can they uncover the cause of the fires and save the area from ruin?

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 action, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to the parish of

Häryd in Smolandia. 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

A thousand years ago, a mighty dragon plagued the pagan woods of what is today known as Smolandia. After many years of torment, the local clans assembled a great warband to slay the beast, whom they called Fireheart. They marched on the dragon's lair, located in a deep valley in the darkest heart of the

forest. The creature faced them in combat, and the battle was terrible.

The army was slaughtered to the last man, but the dragon was badly wounded and retreated into its lair. Then, a powerful shaman called down a fierce storm. The rain fell in torrents so great the entire valley was flooded and turned into a large lake, which was named Hären (meaning “The Army” in the local tongue) in memory of the warriors who fell there. Centuries passed, and the story was eventually forgotten. Only the name remained.

A millennium later, in the mid-19th century, a yeoman farmer named Johan Andersson and his wife Karolina lived with their sons Alfred and August in Häryd parish by the shore of Lake Hären. Life as a forest farmer was meager and hard. Alfred and August helped out on the farm, but they also had a thirst for adventure and often went on long hikes in the deep woods.

One day, they got lost and wandered deeper into the forest than they had ever gone before. Suddenly, August fell into a deep crevice in the rock face and injured his foot. Alfred climbed down to help his brother, and at the bottom they realized it was a large cave. Strangely, it was hotter down in the cave than it was outside. They carved their names into the rock wall to mark their find.

Despite August’s sprained ankle, the brothers sneaked deeper into the mountain, lighting their way with a lantern. The farther they went, the hotter it became. In a hollow deep in the mountain, they saw something gleaming. It looked like glittering gold coins – not just a few, but large heaps of them, a treasure beyond imagining! The brothers could hardly believe their own eyes.

The next moment they saw a large shadow – a huge, monstrous reptile resting on the gold, greedily guarding its riches. It seemed to be sleeping, but started to stir. The brothers ran for their lives and fled the cave, their hearts racing in terror. When they made it home and told their story, Johan and Karolina did not believe them, and scolded their sons for being gone so long. Despite many attempts over the years that followed, the brothers never found the cave again.

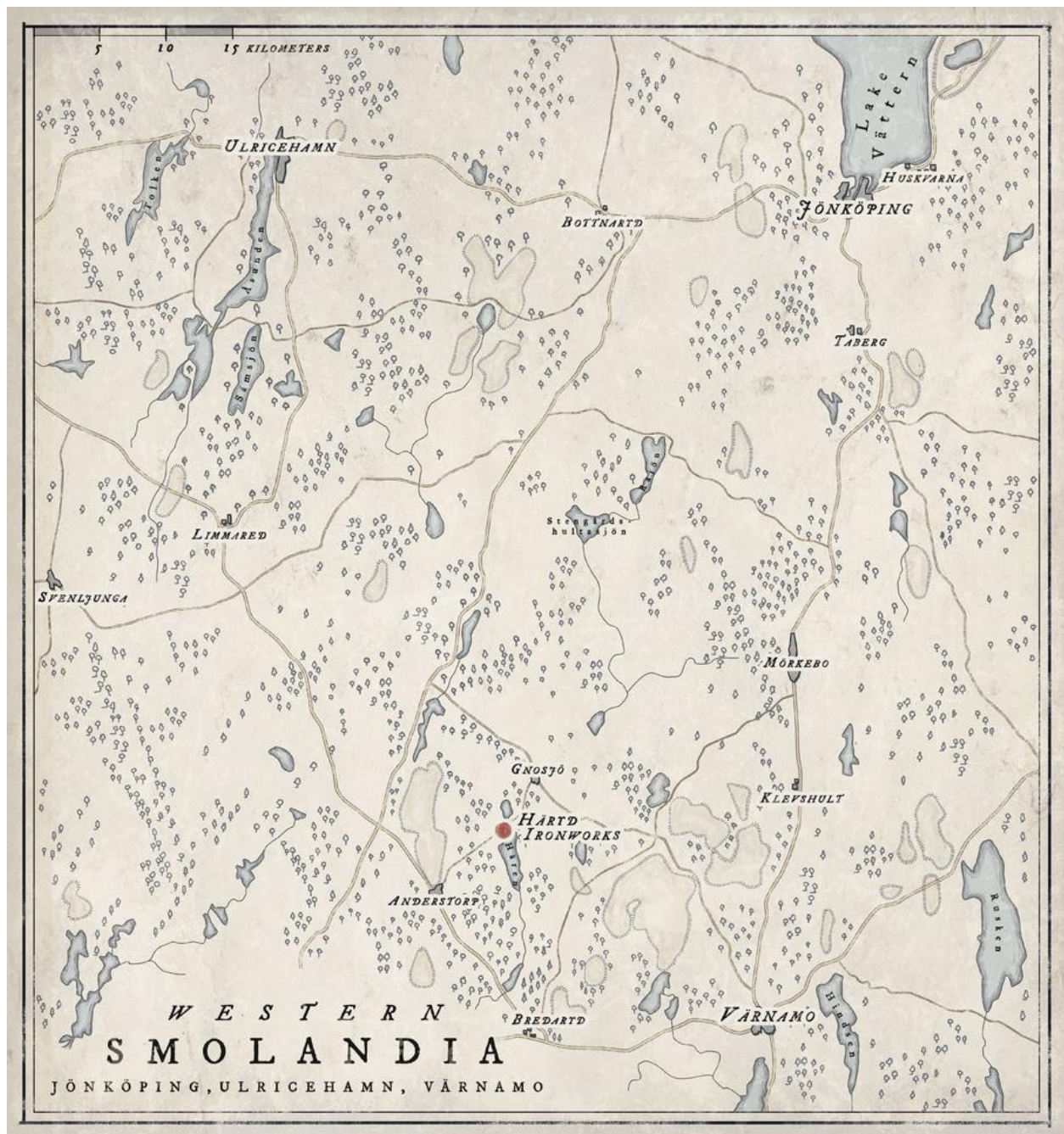
Ten years later, the brothers had grown up. They still worked on the farm, but years of drought and crop failure had left the family on the brink of ruin. Johan was ill and Karolina devastated with sorrow. At this time there were several ironworks in the area, which used ore from the bottom of lakes to produce the iron and steel that the growing industrialization demanded. The brothers August and Alfred dreamed of opening an ironworks on the shore of Lake Hären but lacked the capital to do so.

August, the elder brother, felt a great responsibility to save the family from destitution. One dark night he left without a word, to once again seek the cave and its treasure. And after many hours, he found it. He climbed down and sneaked into the dragon’s lair. It was now unbearably hot in there. The beast still seemed to be slumbering, but moved uneasily in its sleep. Sweat pouring and heart pounding, August gathered as many coins as he could and filled his satchel to the brim.

Just as he was leaving, he noticed that with each breath of the beast, a hot flame spurted from its nostrils. Filled with courage or madness, August crept up to the dragon and lit his lantern with its fire, which burned bright and strong, before leaving the cave. The quiet August never told Alfred what he had done.

With August’s newfound gold, the brothers were able to realize their dream, and the Häryd Ironworks became a reality. The blast furnace was lit with dragon fire from August’s lantern, and it burned with a heat that no other ironworks could match. The brothers changed their surname to Härenstam – meaning “stemming from Lake Hären” – as they felt it had a more distinguished ring to it, but also so that the dragon would not find them if it woke up. After all, they had carved their names into the cave wall. Their enterprise took off and the brothers became familiar names in the parish.

Another decade passed, and business was booming for the Härenstam brothers and their ironworks. Others in the area were not so lucky. The constant scraping of ore from the bottom of the lake disturbed the dragon in his slumber, and he started to wake up. The waking of the fiery beast unleashed immense heat waves that triggered crop failure and poverty unlike



anything Smolandia had ever seen. Begging, thievery and famine followed, and the poorhouses were overcrowded, even though the brothers hired many local boys for their prospecting rafts. Many families saw no other option than to leave Smolandia and seek their fortune in America.

Despite their success, the Härenstam brothers fell out with one another. August, who had hidden the stolen treasure in a strongbox in his bedroom, was slowly enchanted by the dragon's greed and came to value wealth above all else. He pushed his employees harder

and harder, with the help of his brutal foreman—a man known only as “Swine”—and a fire-and-brimstone evangelist named Beata Gideonsdotter who threatened the workers with the holy fire of God. Faced with the prospect of poverty and starvation, the staff stayed on at the ironworks, yet many worked themselves to death.

Not realizing that August was under the spell of the dragon's gold, Alfred objected to his brutal methods. The conflict escalated and ended with August kicking his brother out and threatening to kill him if he ever showed his face at the ironworks again. Alfred

IN MYTHIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

If you want to run this mystery in Mythic Britain and Ireland instead of the Mythic North, a good site to choose would be the falls of Pistyll Rhaeadr on the river Rhaeadr, near the border between Wales and England where the dragon Gwyby of Llanrhaeadr is long reputed to have lived. Despite the success of the iron industry in South Wales and across the border in Shropshire, ironworks in this part of North Wales struggled. Perhaps it was the dragon? To run the mystery in Wales you'll need to change the names of the NPCs, but apart from that the mystery will work as written.

returned to the family farm, only to find his parents dead, victims of drought and famine.

Alfred decided to leave Smolandia for good and emigrate to America—but first he wanted to make one last attempt to reconcile with his brother and make him see reason. Besides, Alfred needs his brother's money to make the journey to America and settle down there.

Alfred needs the Society's help, as he thinks it is the idolatry of Beata Gideonsdotter that has clouded August's mind. Little does he realize that he is dragging the player characters into something much bigger—something that may decide the fate of all Smolandia. Fireheart is about to wake up, and when he does he will seek revenge for the theft of his treasure. If the player characters fail to unravel the mystery and stop the dragon, all of Smolandia risks being reduced to ashes.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery is between August Härenstam and the dragon Fireheart. August is enchanted by gold and riches and refuses to part with a single coin, blind to the risk of the dragon burning down all of Smolandia. The dragon, on the other hand, is enraged by the theft of his treasure and will take revenge on the people in the area, guilty or not.

The secondary conflict is between the brothers August and Alfred Härenstam. Alfred wants August to come to his senses, leave the ironworks, take the money, and join him in seeking their fortune in America. August refuses to listen and sees Alfred as a threat to his power and wealth.

INVITATION

This mystery begins at Castle Gyllencreutz, the Society's headquarters in Upsala. It is late summer and the deep velvet nights are hot. The kingdom is in crisis. Severe heat waves, especially in the south, have triggered droughts and crop failures, followed by misery and hunger. Begging and thievery is on the rise, and thousands upon thousands emigrate to America hoping for a better life there.

Suddenly, someone knocks heavily on the door. A bearded postman in a strict uniform hands over an envelope sealed by wax before he turns on his heel and leaves. In the light of kerosene lamps, the player characters can read the letter (*Handout 2A*, also downloadable and found at the end of this book):

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alfred Härenstam, from Häryd parish in Smolandia. I turn to your esteemed Society as I see no other solution to my current predicament. It concerns my dear brother and best friend, August. All my life he has been very close to me, and together we founded the Häryd Ironworks by the shore of Lake Hären. Our workers scraped up the iron ore from the bottom of the lake, and in the blast furnace we smelted it into ingots.

As you have no doubt heard, Smolandia is these days ravaged by drought, crop failure, and poverty. Our beloved parents could not cope with this ordeal and they both expired a week ago. I buried them yesterday and I write these lines in the light of a single candle on our family farm. My dear late mother was interested in the supernatural, and she is the one from whom I learned of your Society.

I see no alternative but to leave these godforsaken lands and seek my fortune in America, like so many before me. But I cannot do so without my brother August, who still runs the ironworks. He has cast me out and threatened to kill me if I ever return.

August is in the grip of madness. A she-devil in the guise of a preacher has twisted his mind. This woman, Beata Gideonsdotter, presents herself as a proclaimer of God's word, but I suspect that she is in fact a servant of Lucifer himself.

I ask that you come to our family farm in Häryd at the earliest opportunity, to smoke out this Evil and save my brother's soul.

*Most respectfully,
Alfred Härenstam*

PREPARATIONS

As usual, the player characters can prepare for the journey at their headquarters and thereby gain an Advantage. Player characters who go looking for information about the situation in Smolandia can find plenty of news articles about the drought, crop failure, and emigration to America. If they search in the castle library or some other collection of books and pass a **LEARNING** test, the characters find a short passage on Lake Hären in an old book titled *Myths and Folk Tales of Smolandia* (Handout 2B):

As for the Häryd Ironworks, the player characters can pass a **LEARNING** test to find out that it was founded ten years ago by the Härenstam brothers, whose last name used to be Andersson.

THE JOURNEY

The journey from Upsala is long and goes by stagecoach through the darkness of the Kolmården forest and across the windswept East Gothland Plains, before the player characters reach the forests and mountains of Smolandia. See the map on page 26

EXCERPT FROM MYTHS AND FOLK TALES OF SMOLANDIA

In the woods south of the town of Gnosjö lies *Lake Hären*. Local elders speak of this black lake with reverence. Legend has it that a ferocious beast roamed these parts hundreds of years ago, and that the villagers banded together to slay the monster. In the terrible battle that followed, the army drove the beast back into its cave and a mighty sorceress called down a rainstorm of such magnitude that it flooded the entire valley and submerged the cave. The lake that formed was named Hären – meaning 'The Army' in the local tongue – in honor of the brave warriors who died fighting the beast.

and show it to the players. As usual, the characters can gain an Advantage during the journey.

The farther south they get, the hotter it becomes. As they leave the cool air of Lake Vättern behind and continue into the depths of Smolandia, the temperature rises to unbearable levels. The effects of the heat wave are evident along the road – the trees are brown and shriveled, the fields are burnt to a crisp, flies are buzzing around carcasses on the fields, farms are empty and abandoned since their owners left for the hope of a better life in America. The exhausted stagecoach horses are panting and snorting their way up the hill, driven on by the coachman's whip.

After several days of tiring travel, the player characters finally reach Häryd Parish, an unremarkable group of farms in the middle of nowhere. See the map on page 30 and show it to the players. The heat is scorching, even though the sun has gone down behind the trees. There is not a soul in sight. A signpost shows the way to the Härenstam family farm.

AMBUSH!

If you want the adventure to open with an action scene, a band of robbers could attack the stagecoach before it reaches Häryd. The growing poverty in Smolandia has made some people turn to crime in order to survive.

The robbers, as many as the player characters, have felled a tree across the road. When the characters' stagecoach stops, the attackers emerge from the forest with muskets and pitchforks in hand. They force the passengers to step out and hand over their belongings. They are only interested in weapons and valuables. The robbers do not hesitate to use violence, but run away as soon as any of them becomes Broken.

No matter how the encounter with the robbers ends, they urge the characters to turn back: "In Smolandia there is only death and ash!"

BRIGANDS

"Your coin or your lives!"

The brigands in the woods of Smolandia are often farmhands or day laborers who cannot find work and are attacking travelers out of sheer desperation. They are thin, dirty, and desperate. They may use violence, but run away when faced with tough opposition.

- ✦ **Physique 3 Precision 3**
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT 2 RANGED COMBAT 2**
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Musket or pitchfork

ARRIVAL

A thin, dark-haired man with a lantern in hand shows up in the doorway as the player characters knock on the door of the farm residence. It is Alfred Härenstam, who lets them in right away and thanks them for getting here so quickly. Kerosene lamps cast a dim light over the spartan furnishings. No fire burns in the fireplace, for the heat outside is too great.

Alfred offers them a glass of brandy, the last drops from a dusty bottle, and tells his story. He also answers their questions as best he can. Alfred can provide the following information. Play out the conversation and let the players ask questions. If they do not get all this information from the first encounter with Alfred, they can always seek him out later to ask further questions.

- ✦ **The Häryd Ironworks**, where his brother August lives, is situated only a few kilometers away, near the shore of Lake Hären. The iron ore is scraped up from the bottom of the lake by the ironworks' "Ore Boys" and then smelted into ingots in the blast furnace.
- ✦ **Alfred's brother August** runs the ironworks. He was always a good-natured soul but has lately become obsessed with wealth and drives his workers very hard.
- ✦ **The foreman of the ironworks, known only as "Swine"** is a dangerous and brutal man.
- ✦ At the ironworks there is also an **evangelist named Beata Gideonsdotter**. Alfred suspects that it is she who has twisted his brother's mind.

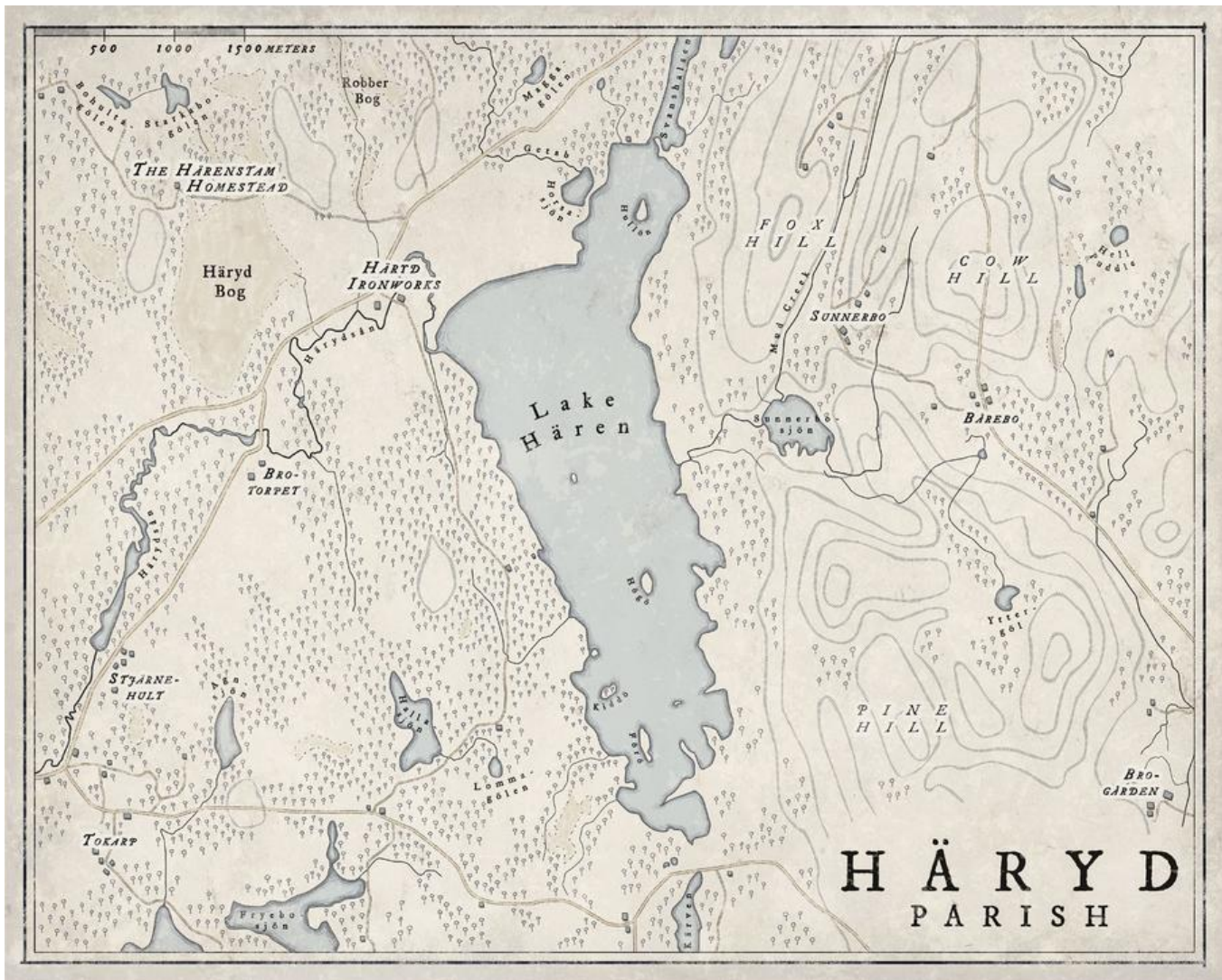
- ✦ Alfred wants the player characters to **visit the ironworks** and find out what is going on and do whatever they can to make August see reason. Perhaps they can find some answers in the **diary** August has always kept?
- ✦ Alfred warns the player characters that August is a very suspicious person and does not gladly let strangers onto the premises. Whether they should **bluff, sneak, or fight their way inside** is up to them.
- ✦ The preacher Beata Gideonsdotter holds a **revival meeting** in the workers' quarters in the evening after the player characters' arrival. These meetings often attract outsiders and Alfred thinks it is a good opportunity for the player characters to visit the ironworks without attracting attention.
- ✦ If the player characters have not yet come across the legend of Lake Hären presented under *Preparations* (page 28), Alfred can tell it now, although it is not strictly necessary.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

During the mystery the conflicts will escalate step by step. Unless the player characters steer the development in a different direction, the whole region will be plunged into disaster. The following events can be used to keep up the pace of the game when necessary, and to push the players toward the final confrontation.

COUNTDOWN

1. **The dragon Fireheart wakes up** and flies out over Lake Hären, and **blasts one of the ironwork's rafts with fire**. If the player characters are at the ironworks, they can hear the screams and see the light of the flames. August sends his workers to save the Ore Boys on the raft. The player characters can also help out, making August see them in a more benevolent light. Few on the raft survive the attack, and those who do cannot give a coherent testimony.



2. **Alfred Härenstam arrives at the ironworks,** torn with anguish and waving his old musket around. But August mocks his brother and has the Swine disarm him and throw him out. The situation may turn violent unless the player characters intervene. Alfred may also recklessly reveal the player characters' cover story, if they have one.
3. **The dragon sweeps over the Häryd Ironworks and sets the entire facility ablaze.** The Ore Boys flee in panic, but many are burned to death. The player characters can witness the calamity and might also be targeted themselves by the dragon's attacks. After this event, August breaks down and can be pressured into telling

the player characters how he stole the dragon's treasure (page 25).

CATASTROPHE

Fireheart has had enough and burns down the entire region. People flee in terror as the beast comes flying over the forests, burning everything in its path. The player characters are also targeted by the dragon's attacks, no matter where they are. Devastating fires are soon raging all over Smolandia and hundreds of farms are consumed by the flames. Dozens are burned to death and numerous more are robbed of their homes and livelihoods, which drives even more people to emigrate. Smolandia turns into a charred and depopulated wasteland.



ALFRED HÄRENSTAM

"My life in Smolandia is over."

Alfred Härenstam is barely thirty years old but looks older. He used to be a handsome man and sports an elegant mustache, but his face is marked by grief and anguish, with pale gray skin and sunken eyes circled in black. He wears a once fine suit with an ascot, now yellowed and frayed.

Since the death of his parents, Alfred has given up all hope of a life in Smolandia and dreams of traveling to the land of opportunity: America. But he will not go without his older brother August, from whom he has been inseparable since childhood – nor can he, since all the money is at the ironworks. Alfred himself is virtually penniless.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 RANGED COMBAT 2**
INSPIRATION 2
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Musket

DRAGON SICKNESS

The enchantment that has affected both August Härenstam and Beata Gideonsdotter is known as "dragon sickness." Other NPCs and player characters who come into contact with the dragon's gold can be affected. Player characters must make an **OBSERVATION** roll to avoid the effect, while you can decide the effect on NPCs. A person afflicted by dragon sickness can exhibit the following symptoms:

- ✦ Pupils glimmering like gold.
- ✦ A strong urge to physically touch the dragon's gold.
- ✦ A strong desire for more gold and money, regardless of the consequences for others.
- ✦ A total immunity to damage from fire and heat, and a strong fascination for these.
- ✦ A fascination for snakes and lizards.

If a player character is affected, you can introduce the symptoms step by step and require **OBSERVATION** rolls to resist the impulses. The enchantment can only be broken by physical distance between all gold and the afflicted for at least a few hours. During this period, the victim suffers strong withdrawal symptoms which inflict one mental and one physical Condition.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

During the player characters' voyage to Häryd and the visit there, they can be afflicted by visions and nightmares triggered by the strong energies exuded by the dragon. These dreams can be images of fire and murderous heat, preferably with horrible monsters mixed in. Don't describe the image of a dragon too clearly in the visions though! To make it more personal, you can even weave a character's Trauma or persons relating to their Dark Secret into the dreams. A typical nightmare has a Fear value of 1.

LOCATIONS

The Häryd ironworks is situated by the Häryd Creek a few hundred meters from the shore of Lake Hären. The roar of the works and its water-powered ore crusher can be heard from far away, and the area is always covered in thick charcoal smoke. The site has been deforested for charcoal and the ground is black with soot, as are the buildings and the twenty or so laborers working here. The blast furnace at the center of the ironworks runs hot day and night, and the heat from it hits anyone who comes near like a great wave.

You can find a map of the area on page 33. Show it to the players when their characters arrive. The following passages summarize the most important locations the player characters may visit at the ironworks and its surrounding area. 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 BLAST FURNACE

The blast furnace at the Häryd Ironworks is a massive cube of rock and mortar. It runs hot day and night, and getting close to it is like walking into a wall of sweltering heat. A jet of blue flame shoots out from the top of the furnace, where sooty workers are

shoveling crushed iron ore into the hearth, mixed with charcoal and limestone. Bellows powered by the waterwheel in the stream blow air into the hearth through an opening in the base of the furnace. On the other side of the base, molten iron and slag are tapped into the casthouse and cast into ingots in open molds.

CHALLENGES

- ◆ Several Ore Boys are working the blast furnace around the clock – one or two up by the charging hole, which is reached by a ladder, and one or two at the base to monitor the bellows and make sure that the flame is the right color. Swine often comes by and yells at the workers.
- ◆ For people unused to the intense heat, moving up on or near the blast furnace requires a **FORCE** test. Those who fail cannot stand it and must leave. Falling (or being pushed) into the throat of the furnace means instant death.

CLUES

- ◆ A player character who examines the blast furnace and makes a **LEARNING** test notices that the color of the flame is unnatural, almost blue, which suggests that it burns hotter than should be possible. There is something unnatural about this hearth. The explanation is that it burns with dragon fire, which August might admit if pressed.

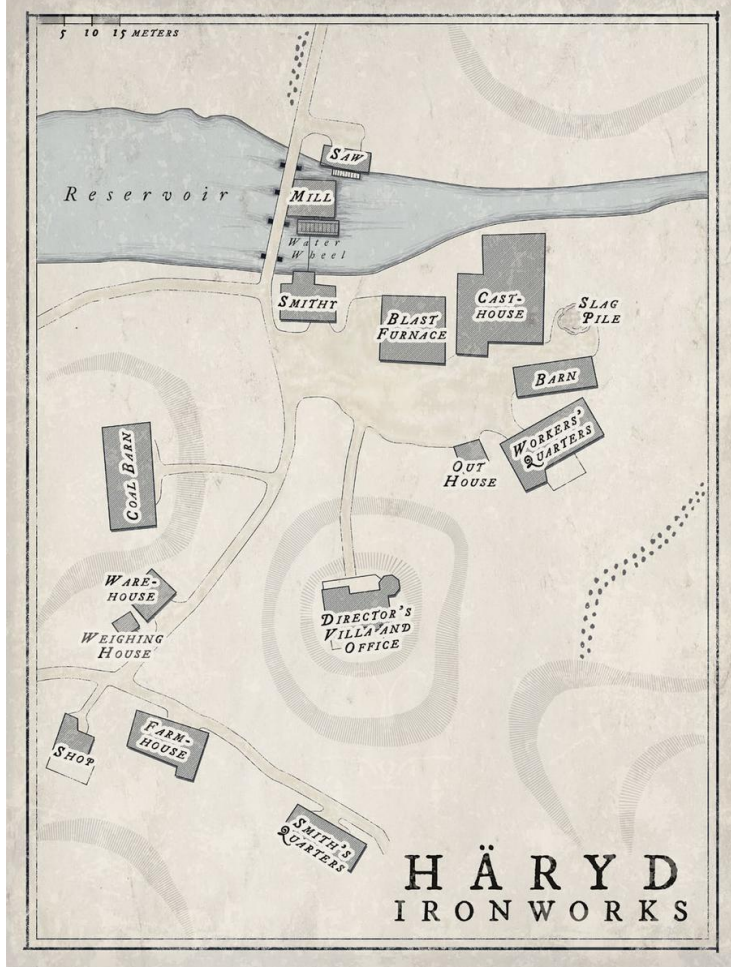
GETTING INSIDE

August Härenstam is suspicious of strangers. If the player characters show up unannounced, Swine will stop them and kick them out, unless they have a good reason for being here. If they refuse to leave, Swine will not hesitate to use violence – with the help of other workers if need be. Clever players will come up with a plan for their visit to the ironworks.

BLUFFING: One option is to claim to have business at the ironworks, such as attending the revival meeting (page 35) or representing some government agency or newspaper. If they wish to see August or inspect the ironworks, they are referred to Swine and will have to **MANIPULATE** him. If successful, they will be taken to the Director's Villa where August will meet them in the dining hall. On a failure, they are thrown out.

SNEAKING: The player characters can also try to sneak onto the site. The workers are not very vigilant, but the characters must still pass a **STEALTH** test for every place they want to visit in order to not attract attention (except for the workers' quarters during the revival meeting, see page 35). A suitable disguise can give them a bonus. If the player characters are discovered, Swine will come after them and try to catch them. See the boxed text *Captured!* on page 34.

FIGHTING: The player characters can also resort to violence and simply fight their way in. But this is a very dangerous approach, as they will have to deal with Swine as well as dozens of Ore Boys. This will also make August very hostile.



ORE BOYS

"Toil and moil, day and night, that's our lot in life."

There are about twenty laborers at the ironworks, and another twenty on large rafts out on Lake Hären where they can live for days at a time. The "Ore Boys" are all young men from the area whose only options are this hard work or to starve back home on the farm. That is why they are loyal to August and obey Swine despite being grossly mistreated and often beaten.

Many Ore Boys are also deeply influenced by Beata's fiery sermons and believe her when she says they are doing the Lord's work. Nevertheless, player characters who play their cards right can **MANIPULATE** Ore Boys into helping them.

The Ore Boys are dressed in rags and covered in soot from top to bottom.

- ◆ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ◆ **FORCE 3 CLOSE COMBAT 2**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Sledgehammer



SWINE

"Hurry up, worm, or you'll taste the flames!"

The foreman of the works is called Swine. His got this nickname because it was said that the entire ironworks smelled like fried pork after he was badly burned in the blast furnace ten years ago. The burns were severe and left his face and upper body disfigured.

Swine, whose real name nobody remembers or cares about, is brutal, sadistic, and unswervingly loyal to August. He is hated and feared in equal measure by the Ore Boys, whom he has no qualms about beating or showering with verbal abuse. Swine is usually at August's side, when he is not out supervising the workers.

Unlike August and Beata, Swine is not affected by the dragon's enchantment. He's just vicious and cruel by nature. His only weakness is a burning desire for Beata, something he has never confessed to her. In her presence, Swine is quiet and clumsy, something the Ore Boys have noticed and laugh at when he can't hear.

- ◆ Physique 5 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 1
- ◆ **CLOSE COMBAT 5 RANGED COMBAT 3**
VIGILANCE 2 OBSERVATION 3
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Knuckledusters, revolver

CAPTURED!

There is a high risk that one or more player characters will be caught by Swine and the Ore Boys during their visit at the ironworks. Let it happen – it could turn into an exciting scene! Captured player characters are brought to the casthouse where it is extremely hot. They are placed on stools next to the place where the liquid iron is tapped from the furnace into large open molds and solidifies into ingots. The Swine is accompanied by as many Ore Boys as there are captives.

Swine threatens to push the player characters into the molten iron unless they tell him who they are and what they are up to. If you want to – and you think your group will be okay with it – he can burn the captives with a red-hot iron which he first dips into the molten metal. This treatment causes the victim to suffer both a physical and a mental condition. If a character is Broken by the torture, you may choose an appropriate physical critical injury from the table on page 65 instead of rolling for it. Any mental critical injuries are rolled as usual.

Any player character or NPC that falls into the molten iron immediately becomes Broken and must pass an **AGILITY** test to get out of there (slow action). Each failed attempt results in a critical injury.

During the interrogation, August shows up to have a look at the intruders, his lantern in hand. He uses **MANIPULATION** to make the prisoners reveal the purpose of their visit, and he gets a +2 bonus if Swine used torture. If he succeeds, the player characters cannot resist any longer and must tell him why they are here. However, this is also an opportunity for the player characters to speak with August, if they have not already. With a successful **MANIPULATION** test, they can extract information from him or improve his opinion of them.

Captured player characters should be given a good chance to escape. They can **MANIPULATE** August into releasing them, although it is difficult (–2 to the test). They can also hurl themselves at Swine – and maybe push him into the molten iron – or slip away when no one is looking, for example when the dragon attacks (see phase 1 and 2 of the countdown on page 29). Lastly, other player characters (or even Alfred) can help free the captives.

THE CASTHOUSE

The casthouse is integrated with the blast furnace. It is an open room where molten iron from the furnace is tapped into large open molds and formed into ingots. The interior of the casthouse is extremely hot and smoky.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ There are several Ore Boys working in the casthouse around the clock.
- ✦ If the player characters are captured during their visit, they are brought here for questioning and torture. See the boxed text to the left.

CLUES

- ✦ A player character who examines the iron ingots and passes a **LEARNING** test notes that they are of very high quality. There are almost no impurities at all. This is odd, since that requires much higher temperatures than what is usually possible.

THE SMITHY

In the smithy, the iron ore from Lake Hären is crushed into pieces small enough to be fed into the blast furnace. This is done by a large stamper powered by the waterwheel in the stream. This place is not as hot as the casthouse, but the noise is deafening.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ There is always at least one Ore Boy in the smithy, day and night.

CLUES

- ✦ None.

THE SLAG PILE

This pile of black rocks, as high as the blast furnace itself, is where all the slag from the furnace is dumped.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ Ore Boys come here regularly to drop off slag. Otherwise, there is no one here.

CLUES

- ✦ A player character who examines the slag and passes a **LEARNING** test notes that it looks strange, almost ornate. This is an effect of the dragon fire in the blast furnace.

THE WORKERS' QUARTERS

This simple barn contains twenty beds for the ironworks' Ore Boys, who rarely go back to their farms but live at the works for weeks at a time. In one part of the barn there are bunks lined up, in the other is a common space with tables and chairs. Many empty bottles of schnapps are lying in the dirt on the floor.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ Ten or so Ore Boys are usually sleeping or resting in the workers' quarters between shifts.
- ✦ In the evening after the player characters' arrival at Häryd, the evangelist Beata Gideonsdotter holds a revival meeting here. See the text box to the right.

CLUES

- ✦ The Ore Boys are suspicious of strangers, but if the player characters manage to gain their trust (**MANIPULATION**) they can share rumors about "a deadly flying beast" in the area who is said to have caused the many fires that have occurred lately. The Ore Boys think it is the Devil himself who is at work.

THE REVIVAL MEETING

The night after the player characters' arrival in Häryd, Beata Gideonsdotter holds a revival meeting in the workers' quarters. Most of the Ore Boys and two dozen visitors from the area come to listen to Beata's fiery sermon. August and Swine also stop by for a while.

The revival meeting is a good opportunity for the player characters to snoop around at the ironworks, as there are fewer people out and about at that time. However, some Ore Boys have stayed at their posts by the blast furnace, and August and Swine can leave the meeting at any time and show up whenever it seems appropriate, to maximize the suspense.

The meeting mainly consists of a long sermon by Beata, who is perched on a small stage. Burning braziers cast a dramatic glow on the preacher. She speaks about the hateful Church that places itself between Man and God, and the fact that no churches or priests are required in order to meet the Lord. Towards the end she also recounts a version of the legend of Lake Hären which may be of interest to the player characters. But the story has been revised and given a Christian context:

"Did you know that this, the place where we're all standing, is holy ground? In the days of old, hundreds of years ago, this was the scene of a dreadful battle between the God-fearing people living here and the Devil himself. The battle raged for days, just a stone's throw from here. Filled with the courage of God the people drove the fire-breathing beast back into its lair, and a holy woman, a saint, prayed to the Lord for rain. And rain it did. For seven days, God opened the heavens in a divine downpour, and when the sun shone anew, the valley had turned into a lake. This lake was named Hären, "The Army" in the old tongue, in memory of the warriors who were felled in battle by the Devil's own wicked hand. You are descended from these warriors, and now it falls on you to do God's work in this place. To toil by the sweat of your brow in the heat of the furnace. Make money for the Director, heaps of it, for the Lord will judge the sluggards and the slothful – do your duty, or you shall be consumed by the heat of God."

Describe to the players how Beata's gaze glimmers like gold, and that she constantly fondles the golden amulet around her neck.



BEATA GIDEONSDOTTER

“Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

When an itinerant evangelist came to the farm where Beata Gideonsdotter grew up, her life changed forever. She found the preacher’s impassioned speeches about a personal relationship with God and his condemnation of the ossified Church utterly irresistible. As soon as she was old enough, she ran away from home and traveled to Smolandia to spread the word of God.

A few years ago, Beata came to the Häryd Ironworks to convert the workers. She had also heard the stories about a terrible monster in the area (page 24), which she believed to be the Devil himself, and wanted to know more. The Härenstam brothers indulged her, as her sermons were highly popular and attracted more laborers to the ironworks.

August, affected by dragon sickness, saw a potential ally in Beata. He offered her one gold piece from his dragon treasure in the form of an amulet. Soon, Beata was in the throes of the enchantment as well. Her sermons have since become increasingly severe, filled with threats of death and damnation for those who do not work hard enough. The workers who once admired her are now afraid of her and dare not defy her for fear of God’s fiery punishment.

Beata is now fully in the grip of the enchantment, along with August. She has moved into Alfred’s old

room in the Director’s Villa and spends all the time she can spare fondling the gold in the strongbox.

If the dragon gold is removed from the ironworks, the enchantment will lose its grip on Beata. She then realizes that the beast – whom she thinks is the Devil himself – has put a spell on her. She decides to track down and kill the monster or die trying. See *Confrontation* on page 40.

- ✦ **Physique 3 Precision 4**
Logic 3 Empathy 5
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT 4 VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 4**
MANIPULATION 5 MAGIC 5
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 3 Physical Toughness 2**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife with a blade of black obsidian. The knife has Damage 3 against dragons and sea serpents and ignores their natural defense. At the start of the mystery, the knife is hidden in a trunk under Beata’s bed in the director’s villa. Once freed from the dragon sickness, she will go fetch it – unless the player characters have already done so.
- ✦ **MAGIC:** Beata can cast the curses **ENTHRALL**, **FEAR**, **FEAST**, **FIRE**, and **TWIST VISION** (page 119 of the core rulebook).

AUGUST HÄRENSTAM

“Profit at any cost.”

August Härenstam looks a lot like his brother but is more heavily built and boasts a splendid full beard. His forehead is constantly covered in a sheen of sweat and his eyes possess a greedy, golden glitter. He wears a fine suit, although it is a bit charred along the edges. He always carries a burning lantern.

August was a kind soul, but Fireheart’s thirst for gold has enchanted him. Now he is obsessed with profit and does not care about anything or anyone else. Blind to the fact that Smolandia is burning around him, he is willing to sacrifice everything – even his own brother – to accumulate more wealth.

If the player characters meet August using some kind of cover story, he is suspicious but interested – especially if they offer a lucrative deal.

Deep in his soul, August is still the man he once was. After a shocking event such as the dragon’s attack on the ironworks (see phase 3 of the countdown) the player characters can get through to his better self with a successful **MANIPULATION** test. He can then reveal that he stole the dragon’s treasure and be convinced to return it – read more under *Confrontation*.

- ❖ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 2
- ❖ **CLOSE COMBAT 1 RANGED COMBAT 2**
VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 3 INSPIRATION 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol, lantern with dragon fire
(see boxed text to the right)



THE LANTERN

August constantly carries a lantern that is always burning. Even when he sleeps it is standing on his bedside table. The lantern burns with magical dragon fire that August stole from Fireheart and which therefore never needs refueling. August used the lantern to light the blast furnace, and it has never burned out since.

August defends the lantern with his life, at least while he remains under the dragon’s spell. If he loses the lantern, or if it is destroyed, the dragon’s enchantment is temporarily weakened, and the characters have a chance to reach his true self with a **MANIPULATION** roll.

DIRECTOR'S VILLA AND OFFICE

This red, wooden two-story building with a large white veranda serves as both office and residence for August Härenstam. On the ground floor there is a drawing room, dining room, library, and kitchen, while the second floor has an office, two large bedrooms, a maid's chamber, and a guest room with four beds. August sleeps in the eastern bedroom, Beata in the western (Alfred's old room), and Swine in the

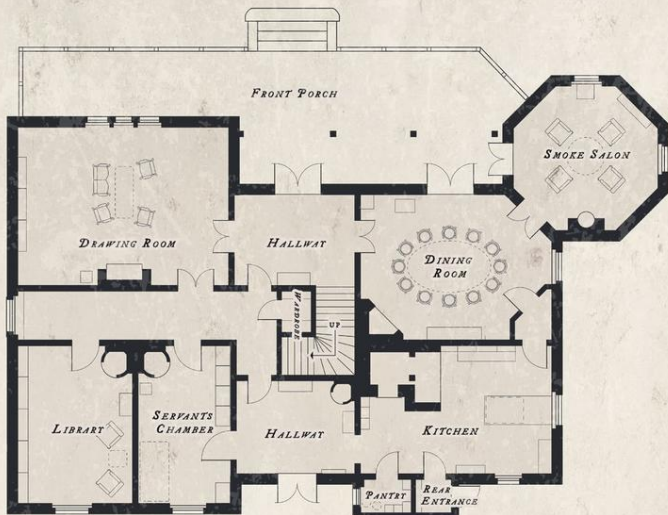
servants' quarters on the ground floor. See the map below. You can also show it to the players.

The furnishings are neat and elegant, but not overly extravagant. August spends most of his time in this house, with Swine seldom far away.

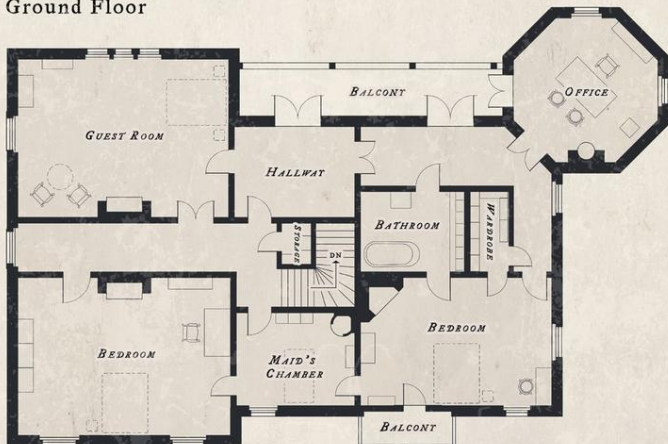
CHALLENGES

- ✦ If the player characters come here undercover, August receives them in the dining room. He is suspicious but interested if the characters have a lucrative offer and make a **MANIPULATION** roll. He offers to let them stay one night in the upstairs guest room but asks Swine to keep an eye on them. This can lead to interesting nighttime shenanigans.
- ✦ Sneaking into the director's villa undetected requires a successful **STEALTH** test. On failure the Swine or one of the Ore Boys spots the intruders and goes after them. Attempting this during the revival meeting adds +2 to the test, as most people's attention is directed elsewhere.
- ✦ Once inside, the player characters must make a **STEALTH** test for each room they wish to explore if August, Beata or Swine is in the house. Failure means that someone hears or sees them.
- ✦ Hidden in August's bedroom, under his king-sized bed, is a locked strongbox weighing over 50 kilos. Moving it requires a successful **FORCE** test per zone, and whoever is in the house will automatically hear this. Picking the strongbox's lock requires a **STEALTH** test with -2. The player characters can also break it open with a sledgehammer and a successful **FORCE** test, or using explosives. The box contains thousands of ancient gold coins of a kind the characters have never seen before. This is the treasure that August stole from the dragon.
- ✦ August, Beata or both may be fondling the dragon's gold just as the player characters sneak around inside the Director's Villa. The person greedily digs into the gold coins and lets them clatter down in the strongbox,

HÄRTD IRONWORKS DIRECTOR'S VILLA AND OFFICE



Ground Floor



Second Floor

1 2 3 4 5 METERS

mesmerized by the shine of the gold and oblivious to everything else. The person cannot spot sneaking characters, but will be enraged if disturbed.

- ◆ If the player characters are sneaking around the house, you should let August and Swine or some Ore Boys show up at an appropriate time, forcing the player characters to flee or hide. Use this situation to crank up the suspense to a fever pitch. Let the players make **STEALTH** tests to avoid detection. If one or more player characters are captured, see the boxed text on page 34.

CLUES

- ◆ In the library there is a copy of *Myths and Folk Tales of Smolandia*, which contains the passage about Lake Hären (page 28). The player characters can find it by looking around among the books and passing a **LEARNING** test, or automatically if they are explicitly looking for books about the parish.
- ◆ August's diary can be found in a nightstand drawer next to his bed. The entry of interest was written a decade ago and describes how August returned to the dragon's cave to steal its treasure – see *Handout 2C*.
- ◆ A successful **LEARNING** test reveals that the gold coins in August's strongbox are hundreds of years old, if not older. They bear symbols and inscriptions in strange and ancient languages.
- ◆ In Beata's bedroom there is a Bible on the nightstand, and under the bed a small trunk can be found. Inside, there is a dagger with a blade of black glass, and a very old book entitled "Lexicanum Draconicum".
- ◆ The book is medieval, in Latin and very hard to read, but it seems to be about dragons. To learn more from it, the characters must make a **LEARNING** test. Each success gives one piece of information, you can choose which one:
 - Dragons are among the most horrible creatures in existence, but fortunately they sleep for hundreds of years at a time. When a dragon wakes up, its energies can affect an entire region.
 - Dragons are very greedy and cannot tolerate anyone stealing their treasure. A human who

comes into contact with a dragon's gold can be afflicted by "dragon sickness" and become as greedy as the dragon itself. The curse can be broken by separating the person from the treasure for at least a few hours.

- Dragons can breathe fire, read minds, change shape, and twist the vision of their victims. They can, however, be appeased with the appropriate gift or sacrifice. They are also sensitive to obsidian.
- ◆ The dagger's blade is made from obsidian (black volcanic glass), a fact that the characters can realize with a **LEARNING** roll.

AUGUST'S DIARY

June 23rd

I've done it at last. I made it. I never thought I'd find the cave again, but now my knapsack is bursting with glittering gold. More than enough to realize our dream of an ironworks by the shore of Lake Hären. The ore is right there, waiting for us. Our dream. Mine and Alfred's. My dear brother.

How many times over the years have we sought the hidden crevice, hoping to find our way back to the cave in the woods on the other side of Hären, where we as boys found the resting Beast? Why did I find it this time? It must have been God's providence – the Lord showed me the way when I needed it the most.

The Merciful also saved me from the Beast's wrath. The foul Serpent writhed in his sleep, but it did not wake. It didn't see me steal his coins. It didn't even notice me lighting my lantern from his fiery breath.

I have stolen the beast's gold and taken his fire. I may be a thief, but stealing from a Demon of Hell is surely a service to the Lord. Everything will be different now, all of Smolandia shall know the name Härenstam. But Alfred must never know what I have done.

LAKE HÄREN

A few hundred meters from the ironworks, the Häryd Creek flows into Lake Hären, by a vast and sandy beach lined with pine trees. On the beach there are some rowing boats, a couple of large rafts, and piles of brown rocks – residues from the prospecting that goes on throughout the year.

Lake Hären is oblong-shaped, roughly four kilometers long and one kilometer wide, and surrounded by woods. On its west side the ground is flat and marshy, while high wooded mountains rise in the east.

The dark water of the lake is brown, and at its bottom rests the so-called lake ore the Ore Boys are gathering on their rafts with long scrapes. There are always several rafts out on the lake, sometimes for days at a time, during which time the Ore Boys live in tents set up on the rafts.

CHALLENGES

- ♦ The water at the beach is so shallow that a person can wade hundreds of meters out into the lake. Player characters who need to run or swim fast, perhaps towards a raft (see phase 1 of the countdown), must make an **AGILITY** test.

CLUES

- ♦ Player characters moving around on the lake might catch a glimpse of the dragon sweeping by. Each player character makes a **VIGILANCE** test – those who succeed notice something large moving fast in the sky, but it is gone before they can see what it is.

CONFRONTATION

The player characters' investigation and their visit to the Häryd Ironworks can pan out in many different ways. Some possibilities are listed below:

- ♦ **The player characters steal August's treasure** and remove it from the ironworks. August is mad with rage and pursues the thieves with Swine and some Ore Boys in tow. August suspects that Alfred is behind it and looks for him at the family farm, where a confrontation may take place.

- ♦ **The player characters capture August** and take him away from the ironworks, most likely to the family farm where Alfred is waiting. However, this is going to be difficult without confronting Swine.
- ♦ **The player characters are captured by Swine and August.** If only some of the player characters are caught, the others can try to free them – otherwise they will have to escape on their own, possibly with the help of Alfred. If this succeeds, they can then try to steal the treasure or take August away as described above.

If the dragon's enchantment over August has not yet been broken when phase 3 of the countdown occurs (page 30), it will be after the dragon's attack on the ironworks. When that happens, August regains his senses and breaks down. Even if the player characters are his captives, they now have a chance to speak with August.

AUGUST CONFESSES

When the dragon's spell over August is broken, regardless of how it is done, he starts to have doubts, which allows the characters to reason with him and make him tell them about the dragon and the cave. Make a **MANIPULATION** test. If the player characters fail, Alfred can get his brother to talk. The conflict with August can be resolved peacefully or violently – especially if Swine is still in the picture.

Once August's resistance has broken down, the brothers are reunited, and August asks Alfred's forgiveness for what he has done. August tells them how as children he and Alfred found a treasure in a cave guarded by a terrible serpentine monster. Alfred nods in agreement. If the player characters ask why Alfred never mentioned this, he replies truthfully that he never realized this story had anything to do with August's change of mental state.

August explains that he found his way back to the cave many years later, to take the gold and save his family from destitution by setting up the ironworks. Player characters who have found his diary (*Handout 2C*) will already know all this.

BEATA SHOWS UP

At an appropriate time during (or immediately after) the conversation with August, the evangelist Beata Gideonsdotter shows up. If the player characters are at the Härenstam family farm, she finds them there instead. Now that the dragon's enchantment is broken, she too has regained her senses. She is full of remorse and anger towards the creature that twisted her mind.

Beata explains that she has heard stories of the beast in the woods since she was a child, and she is sure that the Devil himself is lurking out there. She desperately wants to help the player characters slay the beast, one way or the other. She suspects that the dragon's lair is situated somewhere in the wilderness east of Lake Hären, but does not know its exact location.

PLANNING

Player characters who did well with their **LEARNING** test (page 39) know that the dragon must be driven away, or the entire area will be wiped out. If they do not realize this, August, Alfred, or Beata can enlighten them. If the player characters nevertheless think their work here is done and wish to leave Smolandia, let them do so. The Catastrophe (page 30) will then occur and large parts of Smolandia will be reduced to ashes.

More likely, however, the player characters will decide to track down the dragon's lair and face the beast with violence or trickery. If they hesitate, August or Beata urges them on – they must get rid of the dragon! There are several ways of achieving this:

- ♦ **Appeasing the dragon with a suitable offering or gift.** August's treasure is an obvious choice.
- ♦ **Tricking the dragon into leaving Smolandia.** It will not be easy but might work if the player characters are silver-tongued and clever.
- ♦ **Fighting the dragon with violence.** This will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, but let the players give it a try if they want to.
- ♦ **Fighting the dragon indirectly,** for example by blowing up the entrance to its cave. At the iron-works there are several barrels of black powder that the player characters can take with them.

Whatever they decide to do, August brings the treasure and his lantern with him. Alfred stuffs a small barrel of black powder into his satchel without telling anyone.

TO THE DRAGONS LAIR

August knows the way to the dragon's lair and leads the group there. Alfred comes with them as well, as does Beata.

The quickest way to reach the cave is to row across the lake, then walk a few hundred meters into the woods on Pine Hill. There are rowing boats on the beach. If the player characters choose to walk through the forest all the way around the lake, it will take much longer, which means another phase of the countdown may occur.

Set the atmosphere during the player characters' journey to the cave. If they row across the lake, you can describe the mirror-like water and the heat that makes the air throb around them. Smoke from several forest fires rises from the woods around the lake.

Finally, they arrive. On the east side of the lake, on the slopes of Pine Hill, the terrain is steep and rugged. August shows them the entrance, a small crevice hidden behind a large boulder in the forest. It is time to descend into the darkness.

INTO THE DARKNESS

After a short climb the player characters find themselves in a deep natural cave. It is pitch-black down here, even during the day, so August leads the way with his lantern. See the map on the next page, but do not show it to the players.

Describe how the heat rises the farther into the cave they go. The sharp stench of sulfur invades their nostrils, and there is something that sounds like... breathing. Some distance into the cave, someone has carved the letters "A&A Andersson" into the stone – traces of the brothers' first visit here, many years ago. If the characters press on into the mountain, they finally reach the dragon's lair – a large cave fifty meters across with twenty meters to the ceiling.

Resting on a large heap of glittering gold is a giant reptile with huge wings. Even NPCs without the Sight

can see the dragon here, as it makes no attempt to hide inside its own cave. Its breathing is so heavy it makes the walls quiver, and flames shoot from its nostrils with every exhalation. Beyond the dragon is a dark flooded tunnel which Fireheart uses to get in and out of the cave. Over the centuries the water has receded enough for the dragon to fly out that way. The tunnel leads to a cave entrance by the rocky shore of the lake.

The sight of the dragon is terrifying – all player characters must immediately make a Fear test, but only against Fear value 1, since the dragon is still asleep. As they move through the cave where the dragon is resting, the characters must make **STEALTH** tests not to awaken the beast. Let the players decide what to do. You can now also let the characters roll **OBSERVATION** to resist the dragon sickness (page 31).

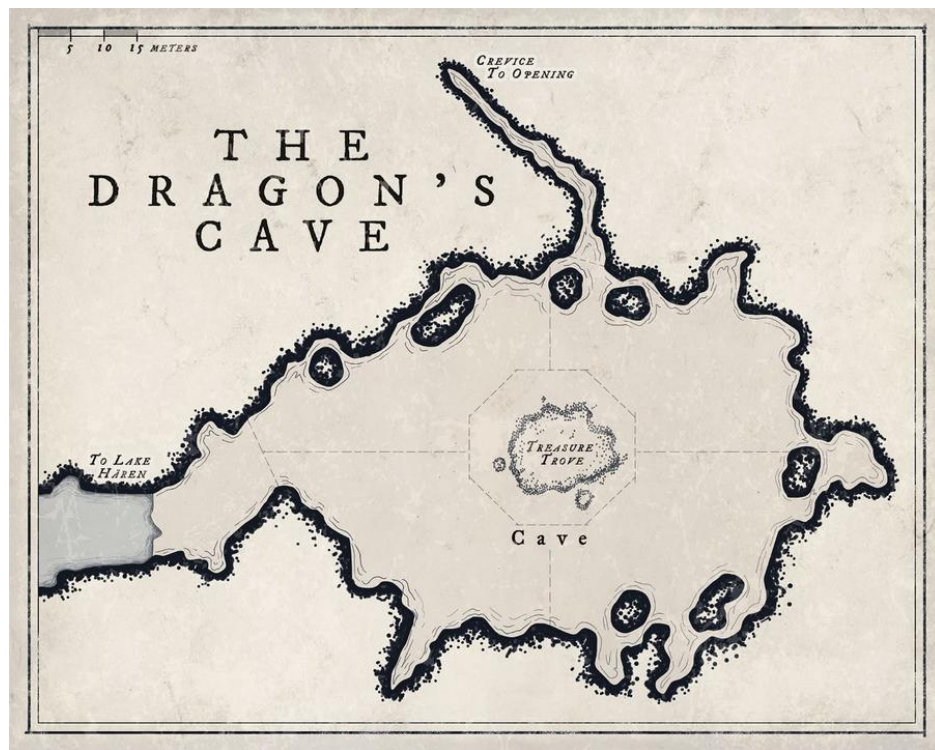
Sooner or later the dragon wakes up, no matter how stealthy the characters are. Fireheart rises, towering with his wings over the player characters, who suddenly feel very small. In a thunderous voice he asks who intrudes upon his dwelling. Now the player characters must make another **FEAR** test against the dragon's full Fear value, which is 2.

FINAL SHOWDOWN

The time has come for the mystery's crescendo: the final showdown with the dragon. It can play out in many different ways depending on the player characters' actions. The NPCs present can make a difference as well, but let the players take the lead.

COMBAT

Player characters who engage the dragon in combat will have a tremendous fight on their hands (see page 45 for stats). Let the dragon use its magic to make the fight as exciting as possible – in addition to breathing fire and slashing with its claws, it can shapeshift, distort the player characters' vision, and hypnotize them with its gaze. Meanwhile, the player characters can benefit greatly from Beata's obsidian



dagger. If the fight is going badly for the characters, you should give them a chance to switch tactics and negotiate with the dragon.

NEGOTIATION

Player characters trying to bargain with Fireheart must first explain who they are. Make this a tense conversation where the players must choose their words with great care. The dragon speaks in a booming voice and uses its magic in a negotiation as well, reading the characters' minds or twisting their senses. Perhaps a player character is struck by visions of an important NPC from their past?

If the dragon realizes that the person who stole his treasure and his fire is among them, his wrath will be terrible. The player characters can make a **MANIPULATION** test to placate the dragon. But even if it succeeds, Fireheart demands that the gold be returned to him, in exchange for him sparing the area and resuming his slumber. If the roll fails, the dragon will require some additional sacrifice, such as August's life.

CUNNING

The players might find some clever way of tricking the dragon, blowing up the cave's entrance with gunpowder, flooding it with water, or something else that would force the dragon to leave. Do not make it easy, but if the players come up with a smart and creative plan you should give it a chance to succeed.

BEATA

Beata sees the fight against the dragon as a sacred act. Since she believes Fireheart to be an incarnation of the Devil, a negotiation is out of the question – the dragon must die. If the player characters start bargaining with beast, she will attack the dragon suddenly and without warning. She uses magic and her obsidian dagger, which is a real threat to the dragon. The player characters can fight alongside her or try to stop her with violence or **MANIPULATION**.

ALFRED

Having learned of August's treasure, the dragon sickness has taken root in Alfred as well. He sees the dragon's treasure and fire as the key to success and happiness across the Atlantic, in America. When Alfred sees the dragon's huge treasure in the cave, he becomes fully enchanted. If the player characters and August offer to return the dragon's gold, Alfred takes action. He takes out a small powder keg from his satchel and lights the fuse, ready to throw the charge at Fireheart.

The player characters can try to stop him with violence or **MANIPULATION**, but they must act quickly. The charge has Blast Power 10 against everyone in the same zone as the dragon and Blast Power 3 against anyone in adjacent zones (the entire cave). The explosion is deafening and may also cause the cave to collapse, with unforeseeable consequences.

If Alfred no longer has the powder keg, he can try to stop the return of the treasure some other way, for example by convincing or even attacking August and/or the player characters.

AUGUST

During the climax, August is the most amenable of the NPCs. He feels profound guilt over everything that has happened and is ready to give up his gold and even his life if that is what it takes for the dragon to spare the others – particularly his brother Alfred.

DRAGON SICK CHARACTERS

Player characters can also be afflicted by the dragon sickness in the cave, and act accordingly (see boxed text on page 31). They can resist the effect by rolling **OBSERVATION**, but if it fails they might need to be stopped by force.

THE DRAGON DEPARTS

If Fireheart is placated by getting its gold back, or if it's defeated in combat, the entire cave starts to shudder violently. Rocks fall from the ceiling and the ground starts to collapse. The dragon (and the gold, if he got it back), slides down into the depths with a thundering roar. The player characters need to run for their lives toward the entrance to survive. If you're feeling mean, you can have them roll **AGILITY** to make it. Back on the surface, they can finally relax – the dragon's cave is gone and the beast with it. For the first time since they came to Smolandia, the characters feel a breeze of cool air.

AFTERMATH

The outcome of this mystery can have huge consequences for both Smolandia and the NPCs involved.

- ✦ **If Fireheart is defeated** or agrees to go back to sleep – probably on the condition that the gold be returned to him – the threat to Smolandia is averted for now. The temperature drops to normal, the rain returns, and the land recovers.
- ✦ **If the player characters fail to appease or defeat Fireheart**, the Catastrophe occurs. The dragon ravages all of Smolandia and hundreds of farms go up in flames. Dozens of people are killed in the fires and many more are robbed of their homes and livelihoods, causing even more people to emigrate. Smolandia turns into a charred and depopulated wasteland.
- ✦ **If the Härenstam brothers manage to keep either the dragon's treasure or its fire** – or both – they leave Smolandia to seek their fortune in America. They establish a new ironworks in Pennsylvania, which becomes a huge success.
- ✦ **If the brothers lose both the treasure and the dragon fire**, they remain in Smolandia and live a simple but happy life as furniture makers.

For the player characters there is little left to do but return to their headquarters in Upsala, where they are awarded experience points.



DRAGON

Of all fearsome vaesen lurking in the wilderness, the dragon is the most dangerous and notorious. They are monstrous beasts with writhing reptilian bodies, huge leathery wings, and razor-sharp claws and fangs. They have sharp and malevolent minds, voracious appetites, and the ability to breathe fire. Many dragons can hypnotize victims with their gaze and often have other strange abilities, including mindreading, shapeshifting, and the power to distort people's vision.

When the dragon is not out making mischief, it spends its time resting on its treasure in a lair under some burial mound or ancient family tomb. Some dragons also like to gather new riches and can have more than one treasure hoard. Resourceful individuals may try to steal the dragon's treasure, but should exercise supreme caution, as the dragon will undoubtedly be nearby and attack any thieves with terrible fury. Moreover, one must not be easily scared, for the dragon can assume the most terrifying forms to scare off the intruder.

As darkness falls, especially on clear autumn nights, dragons can be seen soaring over the tree-tops on the way from one treasure horde to another, trailed by showers of sparks and flames.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 14 **BODY CONTROL 8** **MAGIC 9**
MANIPULATION 10 Fear 2/1

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Draws two initiative cards and acts twice per round
- ◆ **SCALES:** Protection 8
- ◆ Takes no damage from fire
- ◆ Can fly at great speed

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Irritated (-2)
- ☐ Angry (+1)
- ☐ Crazy (-1)
- ☐ Panicking (-2) – immediately breathes fire at enemies (free action).
- ☐ Plays dead and then attacks (+1)
- ☐ Wounded and willing to bargain (-2)
- ☐ Wounded and furious (+1)
- ☐ Broken – the dragon retreats into the sky or into the ground, but may return one day.

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Bite and claw	3	0
Dragon fire	1*	1–2

* Can be aimed at multiple targets in the same zone. Roll for the dragon's **BODY CONTROL** for each victim. For every six rolled the attack deals one point of damage per turn until the fire is extinguished (see the core rulebook, page 70).

RITUAL

A steel knife thrown over the dragon's treasure robs the beast of its power and renders it harmless.

SECRET

Dragons are vulnerable to obsidian, volcanic glass. Obsidian weapons deal increased damage and the dragon's scales do not protect against the attack.



THE DEVIL ON THE MOOR

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS travel to a godforsaken moor on the west coast of Jutland, where ambitious engineers have awakened dark forces in their quest to tame and modernize the landscape.

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based, including the scenario's vaesen – a myling called the Nameless One. There is an invitation to kick off the session, after which the text proceeds to describe the

journey to Grimsted Lyng on the Danish peninsula of Jutland. This section also includes a countdown of events which you as the Gamemaster will use to build momentum in the story. The second part of the text presents the various places the player characters may visit. The mystery concludes with a confrontation and a rundown of important non-player characters.

BACKGROUND

Grimsted Lyng is a windswept moorland stretching to the sea west of the old military road between the trade town of Viborg on Jutland in Denmark and the

Free City of Hamburg in northern Germany. This was once a lush area populated by proud and prosperous farmers, but slash-and-burn agriculture and overgrazing took a heavy toll on its soil. The people's greed, combined with plague epidemics and marauding soldiers, slowly degraded the farmland. Windblown sand mixed with the depleted soil and the fields were overtaken by heather. The people who nevertheless stayed behind could not stop the ecological changes, and adapted to a life on the barren moor. They became moor farmers and made their living rearing sheep and gathering peat, which they extracted from bogs on the desolate moor.

For hundreds of years the people of the moor were largely isolated from the outside world. Moor farmers led hard and meager lives, but neither the crown nor the clergy bothered them with taxes or demands of assimilation. However, in the beginning of the 19th century this started to change. Great numbers of land surveyors were sent from Copenhagen to rebuild the country from the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars. They were soon joined by engineers with belching machines and dreams of turning the moors of Jutland into modern agricultural areas. Denmark would prosper once more – and the path to this blissful future was through large-scale industrial farming.

Ten years before the start of the mystery the *Danish Society for Moorland Reclamation* is founded, colloquially known as the *Moorland Society*. This company is infused with the spirit of innovation and progress that marked this period. Using steam power and other technological advancements, the engineers of the Moorland Society work to restore fertility to the barren moors through artificial fertilizer, tree planting, and drainage canals. But now the Moorland Society has encountered unexpected problems during a drainage project on Grimsted Lyng. Something out there scares the workers and has caused several of them to leave without explanation – without even collecting their outstanding wages. Furthermore, there is something wrong with the drainage system. Pipes are bursting, tubes are

perforated, and the great steam pump driving the machinery has come close to exploding due to sudden overheating.

The Moorland Society's chief engineer, Preben Rasmussen, suspects that some of the locals are actively trying to sabotage the project, possibly through black magic. Their company has been met with hostility from people on the moor, and Rasmussen has heard stories of demonic creatures the farmers interact with in various ways. Most of all he has heard of "the Devil on the Moor": a winged phantom with glowing eyes, which according to the priest and folklorist Gabriel Sandemann is regarded as a guardian angel on Grimsted Lyng. In a handwritten journal from the early 19th century that Rasmussen picked up on his inspection tours in the area, Sandemann describes how the people of the moor for centuries have sought this vaesen's help in various practical matters. Local legend has it that the Devil on the Moor helped chase off pillaging soldiers and kept plague rats away from the moor farmers' settlements. These stories have led Rasmussen – who is a practical and open-minded engineer – to the following hypothesis: perhaps the root of the problem is that someone has enlisted this vaesen to stop the Moorland Society and bring human progress to a halt?

Rasmussen has sent a telegram to Linnea Elfeklint, having learned about the Society as a young student and made several contacts among the so-called Rosenbergers at the Polytechnical University of Denmark. Heavily influenced by the latter, Rasmussen takes a rather simplistic view of the situation. Ideally, he would like the Society to kill whatever haunts the moor and wipe out every trace of local devil worship and anything else that obstructs the Moorland Society's activities.

But the ambitious chief engineer has completely misunderstood the root cause of the problem. It is true that a vaesen is involved, but it was Rasmussen himself who awakened it. The entire mystery revolves around Sandemann's journal of myths and folklore. Sandemann was not just a priest and folklorist, but a womanizer as well, and during

his travels in the region he formed a relationship with a local farm girl named Signe Andersdotter. But Sandemann abandoned her in her moment of need, as the child growing in Signe's belly made it impossible to keep their scandalous relationship secret. Signe soon went out on the moor, shunned, and alone, and secretly gave birth to the baby. In desperation she drowned her offspring in a pond before continuing her walk cross the moor, where the young mother was found frozen to death a few days later.

This tragedy, which was typical for the time, occurred some fifty years before the mystery takes place and has been largely forgotten by the moor farmers. The only exception is Signe's old mother – Granny Thea – who is still alive but keeps to herself in a small cottage at the outskirt of the cluster

of houses that the moor farmers call Grimsted Hus. Everything changed when Rasmussen showed up on behalf of the Moorland Society. He brought not only modern technology and strong workmen, but Sandemann's journal. Unaware of the tragic story, he took the journal to the wetland where Signe once gave birth to, and drowned, her child. As he did so the dead child awoke as a myling, consumed by a single purpose: to avenge its own death and that of its mother by killing Sandemann. The fact that Sandemann is long dead and buried makes no difference – the myling, who calls itself the Nameless One, directs all its hatred towards the journal and the person who carries it. It was this myling who scared away Rasmussen's seasonal workers and through its pent-up hatred caused the steam pump to overheat in several critical situations.

THE NAMELESS ONE

Roughly six months before the start of the mystery, the dead child of Signe Andersdotter and Gabriel Sandemann came back to life as a myling. The only thing it remembers from its short life is Signe's embrace and heartrending sobs before she lowered its little body into the icy waters of the bog. The myling knows that it has no name and thinks of itself as "the Nameless One": a lonesome and forever displaced soul doomed to haunt the godforsaken moor.

The Nameless One's objective is simply to return to its mother's warm embrace, but first it must have revenge. Aware that it has been subjected to a heinous crime, it focuses its wrath on Sandemann's journal. It does not know that Sandemann is long dead but feels his presence through the journal – and this presence fills the Nameless One with unquenchable murderous hatred. The only way to stop the Nameless One is to destroy the journal and bury the vaesen's remains with its mother, who rests in an unmarked grave in an old plague cemetery. Its bones are found shortly before the player characters' arrival, when they are sucked up

from the bog by the Moorland Society's steam engine. This discovery makes Rasmussen even more upset, and he is convinced that they are the remains of a pagan child sacrificed to the dark gods of the moor.

During the mystery the Nameless One will be watching the player characters from the moment they arrive at the Grimsted Tavern. They will sometimes sense its presence, but until the final confrontation it only appears in the form of a bird: a huge heron with black feathers and eyes glimmering with unholy green light. In ghost form it manifests as a newborn child, albeit bloated and over-sized, with chalk-white skin against which its blackened veins resemble a spider's web. A green light glows in the depths of its empty sockets. The horrifying creature is dripping wet and attacks by spewing out a jet of ice-cold bog water, which technically works as the Curse **DEATHLY COLD** (see page 119 of the core rulebook). For other stats, see the description of the myling on page 142–143 of the core rulebook.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery is the Nameless One's urge to take revenge on Gabriel Sandemann, who so cowardly abandoned the child's mother and forced her to commit the desperate act that would also be her own undoing. But all that remains of Sandemann is the handwritten journal Rasmussen has brought, which is why this physical artifact – or rather its owner – is the target of the Nameless One's hatred. The natural endpoint of this conflict is that the myling kills the person carrying the journal, whether it be Rasmussen or one of the player characters.

The secondary conflict is about the tense relations between the Moorland Society and the local population. Many in the area see the Moorland Society as a threat to their community and traditions, which is why two of the more violent farmers in the settlement of Grimsted Hus – with the others' approval – have been sabotaging the drainage equipment. The punctured tubes are not the myling's doing, and the player characters can find clear marks from knives and other human tools.

INVITATION

This mystery takes place in the autumn and begins with the player characters receiving a message from Linnea Elfeklint, who asks them to visit her at Upsala Asylum (see text box and *Handout 3A*).

Dear friends,

I have received an urgent message from our Danish comrades, and I fear that dark forces are at work. If there is any truth to the references to Sandemann, the situation is extremely serious. Kindly visit me at the asylum as soon as possible, and prepare to leave the country.

*Yours sincerely,
Linnea*

A howling autumn wind blows through the city and the cobblestones are covered with yellow leaves. The beggars huddle together in narrow alleys, and all over the city there are students scurrying about with fluttering scarves and thick books tucked under their arms.

The mental asylum seems even gloomier and more ominous than usual. The bare trees inside the black iron gates make the place look like a courtyard of the dead, as do the screams and anguished whimpers heard from the barred windows. The player characters are received by an orderly who lights up when he realizes that they have come to see Linnea. "About time", he says. "She's been unusually distraught lately; mumbling incoherently about the Dark One and some strange man called Sandemann. Is it someone you know?"

He leads the player characters into a cell-like room where Linnea is lying on a simple wooden bench, restrained with thick leather straps. As they step inside, she snaps awake and seems remarkably cheerful and rested. "Don't mind these straps", she says as the orderly helps her to her feet. "I've been having troubled dreams of late." Having sent the orderly away – and ordered a pot of tea for her and her guests – she takes out the telegram from Preben Rasmussen (see text box and *Handout 3B*) and explains that the player characters must make haste to Grimsted Lyng on the Danish peninsula of Jutland. Something terrible is about to happen there: "I fear the worst," mutters Linnea. "The Danish moors have long been home to powerful vaesen – and royal engineers with modern machinery often have little respect for the unseen."

Before long the orderly returns with a pot of freshly brewed tea, along with biscuits and an appropriate number of porcelain cups. Happily slurping her tea, Linnea explains that the service has improved considerably since she helped Chief Physician Frejd clear up a minor mystery: "One of the chimneys was haunted by a cranky old Carolean, but when I explained to the wretched thing that King Charles XII has been dead and buried for more than one and a half centuries – and is absolutely peppered with silver buttons, by the

way – he gave up and finally left his post.” She tells them that Preben Rasmussen is a respected engineer from Copenhagen with some kind of connection to the Society. They have corresponded for years about “matters of importance,” as Linnea calls them, but never actually met. Linnea suspects that Rasmussen may be a Rosenberger, as this more militant version of the old Order of Artemis has many sympathizers among Thursday’s Children in the Danish capital. She also mentions Gabriel Sandemann; a priest and collector of folklore who at the beginning of the century collected thousands of legends about vaesen and magic in the old Danish peasant society. He is regarded as one of the great pioneers of Nordic folkloristics, but according to Linnea he was actually a Rosenberger gathering information about “the hordes of Satan” in order to banish them from God’s creation.

Linnea sighs, suddenly looking awfully tired. She repeats that the player characters must go to Grimsted Lyng. She is certain that Preben Rasmussen with his “modern horrors” has disturbed a powerful vaesen on the moor. She fears that Rasmussen – as an engineer and presumed Rosenberger – will do something stupid that will escalate the conflict and further upset the careful balance between vaesen and humans. “If Sandemann was right, it is very serious indeed. Out on the Danish moors there are vaesen who for thousands of years have been worshiped as gods and murderous guardians.”

Then she goes quiet and lies down on the bench. She is too tired to continue, she says. The nightmares are too grim – the ones about the moor and what awaits out there. After pointing out that she would personally have taken the train to Gothenburg and then a steamboat to Frederikshavn on Jutland, Linnea turns her face to the wall and makes it clear that she wants to be alone. If the player characters do not respect her wishes she will soon suffer a nervous breakdown and start screaming hysterically. Half a dozen orderlies burst into the room and take Linnea to a closed section of the asylum, where she will be held for the remainder of the mystery.

PREBEN RASMUSSEN'S TELEGRAM

From the Viborg Post Office to Upsala Telegraph Station

Esteemed mistress

Require immediate assistance STOP Clear demonic presence on Grimsted Lyng STOP Attacks on the Moorland Society's work camp STOP Unnatural damages on equipment STOP The men frightened out of their wits STOP Anger and foolery from the locals STOP Afraid it is G Sandemann's devil STOP Awaiting your arrival at the Grimsted Tavern STOP

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 in Upsala automatically find the following:

- ♦ A newspaper article about the Moorland Society’s modernization of the Danish moors (see text box and *Handout 3C*).
- ♦ A passage in an old tome titled *Underground Vaesen and Their Worshipers in the North*, which mentions Gabriel Sandemann and his tireless search for legends, magic, and occult traditions rooted in the Danish peasant society (see text box and *Handout 3D*).

THE JOURNEY

The player characters set out from Upsala on a cold and rainy October morning. If they follow Linnea Elfeklint’s advice, the journey takes exactly five days – first by train via the Western Main Line to Gothenburg, then by steamboat across the Skagerrak to the fishing village of Skagen at the

PROGRESS IS COMING TO DARKEST JUTLAND

Using the very latest in technology and science, industrious engineers from the royal capital of Copenhagen have taken upon themselves to civilize the barren moors of the Jutland peninsula. It is the Danish Society for Moorland Reclamation, which many of our readers will already be familiar with, that is launching this manful initiative. The bogs shall be drained, the heather weeded out, and Germanic trees with virile roots shall be planted to keep the soil firm and shelter crops from the windblown sand. Furthermore, they shall use the latest marvels of artificial fertilizer, developed by the hardworking and ingenious research engineers at the Polytechnical University of Denmark. One of these fearless torchbearers of civilization is the renowned steam engineer Preben Rasmussen, who will be leading the Moorland Society's expedition to the vast moor of Grimsted Lyng: a primitive and godforsaken part of Denmark which according to Rasmussen might as well be in darkest Africa. "I have humbly accepted the noble task of ensuring civilization and human progress", said Mr. Rasmussen to our reporter. He adds that his only worry is how the local population will react to his steam engine: "One hears of the Luddite lunatics in England."

northernmost point of Jutland. From there the journey continues by train to Viborg in the middle of the peninsula, where the player characters will take the postal stagecoach to the Grimsted Tavern at the eastern edge of Grimsted Lyng. As usual, each player character can gain an Advantage during the journey (see the core rulebook, page 24).

FRAGMENT FROM UNDERGROUND VAESEN AND THEIR WORSHIPPERS IN THE NORTH

Although studies of the chthonic forces are always difficult to conduct and hazardous to life and limb, the history of Nordic science contains numerous examples that even rival international luminaries such as the fearless brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm in Germany and the grandmaster alchemist Isaac Newton. One important pioneer in our own corner of the world is the Danish Gabriel Sandemann, who in the decades between Bonaparte's wars and the advent of the railroad travelled among peasants and commoners to document their relationship to the subterrestrial. Sandemann was an imposing man – tall and strong in body and soul – who during his many travels through the Danish peasant society, in its final bloom, collected thousands of legends and eyewitness accounts of underground vaesen and their relationship to mankind. Perhaps most remarkable of all is his documentation of the wondrous yet fearsome vaesen haunting the famous Danish moors.

ARRIVAL

The stagecoach arrives at the Grimsted Tavern in the late afternoon. Apart from feeling tired after their long journey, the player characters are sore from having spent the better part of the day in a packed stagecoach bouncing along roads of questionable quality.

Dusk has already started to fall, and icy gales are blowing in from the gloomy moor – vast, barren, and desolate – stretching out on the other side of the tavern. The Grimsted Tavern is the local watering hole and is described in detail under Locations. It consists of three connected half-timbered buildings in the traditional Danish rustic style with



thatched roofs and a spacious yard. Several large carriages and wagons are parked outside. A wooden sign beautifully painted with the royal monogram and a stylized post horn shows that the tavern also serves as a post station and a hub for the organized stagecoach service. This is also where the road ends. There are several paths leading out onto the moor,

but from here the player characters will have to continue on foot.

As the player characters step out of the stagecoach a serious young man in a coarse suit emerges from the tavern. He walks up to them with a determined stride. After asking whether they might be the “experts” from Upsala, he introduces himself

as Jens Ludvigsen, first assistant to Chief Engineer Rasmussen and science secretary at the Moorland Society. He appears to be in a hurry and explains that he has waited several days for them to arrive, so there is no time to lose. Engineer Rasmussen has made a terrible discovery that shows how serious the situation has become. Ludvigsen does not want to go into detail, as he thinks it is beyond his understanding – and because it scares the wits out of him. But if the player characters pass a **MANIPULATION** test, the frightened man whispers that it concerns “a dead body, a tiny infant!”

Since it is too late to head out onto the moor, Ludvigsen has arranged for the whole group to spend the night at the Grimsted Tavern. The Moorland Society will cover the expenses, including a meal and a drink. However, he suggests that the player character sleep in their work camp from now on. A tent has been set up and the player characters will be fed at the company’s expense.

While the characters are talking to Ludvigsen, the coachman takes down their suitcases from the stagecoach. A player character who passes a **VIGILANCE** test suddenly notices a large black bird in the twilight, perched in a lone tree. It is almost as if the bird is watching them, and for a moment its eyes seem to glimmer with a ghostly green light. The next time the player character looks that way the bird is gone.

Ludvigsen follow the characters into the common room and introduces them to Kromutter Pedersen, the imposing proprietor of the tavern. He soon makes his excuses and retires to the sleeping alcoves upstairs, since they have an early morning ahead of them.

Now, the player characters have an opportunity to mingle with the locals and ask questions about people and places in the area. In the morning they are woken at dawn by Ludvigsen, who after a simple breakfast prepared by Kromutter accompanies them out onto the windswept moor. In the autumn rain he leads them along winding paths to the Moorland Society’s camp.



JENS LUDVIGSEN

“The Chief Engineer would not be pleased with this.”

Jens Ludvigsen is a newly graduated engineer from the Polytechnical University of Denmark. He is specialized in artificial fertilizer, and the long-term plan is that Jensen will assume responsibility for modernizing the moor when Rasmussen completes the drainage project.

Ludvigsen is an elegantly dressed and well-groomed man in his mid 20s. He has deep respect for Rasmussen’s authority, but has difficulty understanding his rants about “darkness and barbarism” and the constant references to Sandemann’s journal. Ludvigsen is a practical man at heart, devoted to empirical science and filled with dreams of enriching the earth with the very latest in artificial fertilizer.

- ✦ **Physique 2 Precision 2**
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 FORCE 2 LEARNING 3**
VIGILANCE 3 INSPIRATION 2
OBSERVATION 3 INVESTIGATION 3
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Thick walking stick, jar of artificial fertilizer samples

GRIMSTED LYG

Grimsted Lyng is a vast heather moorland covering an area hundreds of square kilometers in size between the city of Viborg and the North Sea coast of Jutland. It is a desolate landscape covered with grass and low heather that blooms purple in summer. But the mystery takes place in autumn, and the colors of the moor are somber and bleak. In some places the ground is soggy and gradually turns into marshes and treacherous bogs. There are a few streams and smaller lakes as well. Sheep graze here and there, under the supervision of young shepherd boys. The people of the moor live in small villages and settlements, often near water courses. They are simple folk, wary of outsiders and the changing times, whose primary livelihood is sheep farming and peat extraction.

IN MYTHIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The Devil on the Moor can easily be transferred to a British context, without any adjustments to the story itself. You can add additional depth to the conflict between the locals and the Moorland Society through references to the Luddites: outraged workers who in the early 19th century sabotaged steam engines and other innovations they thought threatened their traditional sources of income. Instead of the fictional Grimsted Lyng, the mystery could take place in Dartmoor in southeast England. This mythical moor is an almost archetypal horror setting, full of mysteries and local legends about headless horsemen, haunted burial grounds, and howling hellhounds. Inspiration can be drawn from the classic Sherlock Holmes story *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901–1902) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which is set on Dartmoor.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters' arrival at the Grimsted Tavern does not go unnoticed by the Nameless One, who is vengefully watching everything going on in and around the Moorland Society's camp. Anything related to Rasmussen and Sandemann's journal is of interest and potentially worth killing. 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. The Nameless One uses magic to create chaos in the work camp and scare off as many as possible of the people around the object of its hatred – Gabriel Sandemann's journal. First, it uses the Enchantment **FOG** to shroud the camp in thick veils of fog that slither between the tents like ravenous serpents. Second, it uses **MAREEL** to create a shimmering green light that flares up in various places around the camp. Player characters who have seen the Nameless One in bird form will recognize the ghostly glow from the myling's eyeless sockets. All player characters must make a Fear test against Fear value 1. Three of the Moorland Society's workers vanish into the fog with a shriek and are never seen again.
2. Hans and Ejnar Jensen, two drunken deadbeats from Grimsted Hus, are caught red-handed by Preben Rasmussen as they try to sabotage the Moorland Society's steam pump. Rasmussen is livid and drags the saboteurs back to Grimsted Hus along with his entire crew. He insists that the player characters join them as well. Upon reaching the settlement Rasmussen announces that he has caught the saboteurs and intends to alert the authorities. He pulls out Sandemann's journal – if the player characters have it (see below), he asks them to give it back – and holds it up for all to see: "The time has come to break with the old traditions – the Devil has no place in the age of steam!" Everyone in the

village comes to see what is going on, including old Granny Thea. When she sees the journal, she points at Rasmussen and shouts: “You mark my words, the only devil on the moor was Sandemann himself!” The next moment everyone sees a huge black bird launching itself from a rooftop and flying off across the moor. The Nameless One has been watching the whole time. Stirred by Granny Thea’s reaction, it casts an Enchantment that turns the ground around Rasmussen into a one-meter-deep pool of wet mud, full of bones and crawling with white maggots. Everyone panics and rushes screaming onto the moor. Three of the Moorland Society’s workers are never seen again. The player characters must make a Fear test against Fear value 1.

3. The Nameless One once again uses the Enchantment **FOG** to shroud the camp in thick fog. This time it does not just want to frighten the workers, but enters the camp with murderous intent. It is drawn to the journal, but the first person it encounters is Rasmussen’s assistant, Jens Ludvigsen. The myling appears before him in all its horror and kills him with the Curse **DEATHLY COLD** in the form of a violent cascade of ice-cold bog water. The player characters hear Ludvigsen’s dying screams, but cannot get there in time to save him. They also hear the wingbeats of a massive bird as a dark shape flies off in the fog. Ludvigsen’s body is found in the middle of the camp, stiff and twisted by the Nameless One’s cold and dripping with stinking bog water. The player characters must make a Fear test against Fear value 1.

CATASTROPHE

The Myling uses the Enchantment **OVERHEATING** to blow up the steam pump while Preben Rasmussen (or the player character carrying Sandemann’s journal) is at the Moorland Society’s camp. The explosion has Blast Power 12 and lays waste to the entire camp, killing every NPC in the area.

LOCATIONS

Grimsted Lyng is a bleak and in many ways terrifying landscape: vast, desolate, and battered by howling winds from the western sea. A freezing autumn rain is constantly whipping the player character’s faces as they move between the locations marked on the map on page 56. Feel free to use the Nameless One in bird form to stress the player characters out during their walks. For example, they could notice it as an ominous shadow on the moor or an all-seeing presence hovering high above.

THE GRIMSTED TAVERN

The Grimsted Tavern, whose exterior is described in the Arrival section, is basically the Danish equivalent of a coaching inn. It is first and foremost a place where travelers on the road can find food and accommodation, but also serves as a maintenance station for the postal service where horses can be replaced and wheels repaired. As such, it also constitutes a kind of local post office and a link to the outside world for people of the moor. That includes the employees of the Moorland Society, who come to “Kromutter” Pedersen several times a week to pick up letters and other deliveries from Viborg. In the evenings the tavern’s rather large common room – which does in fact cover the entire ground floor – also serves as a gathering place where the locals come to enjoy Kromutter’s famous rabbit stew. The food is simple but well prepared and washed down with locally produced beverages such as peated beer and heather-spiced schnapps. The sleeping areas are found on the second floor: small alcoves with extremely low ceilings furnished with little more than a simple bed and a chamber pot.

The person running the tavern is Kromutter Pedersen. Her husband died in the war with the Prussians, in which she also lost her right leg and much of the hearing in her right ear. She is a plump lady in her late middle age who loves her guests, particularly those from far away. She will happily tell the player characters everything she knows about the area

and its people, including gossip and old legends. The Gamemaster can use Kromutter to dole out pieces of important information that the player characters may have missed in other locations. In the common room the player characters can also encounter people from Grimsted Hus, including the notorious brothers Hans and Ejnar Jensen. Coachman Julius is here as well, and he has interesting things to say about the widely acclaimed Gabriel Sandeman.

CHALLENGES

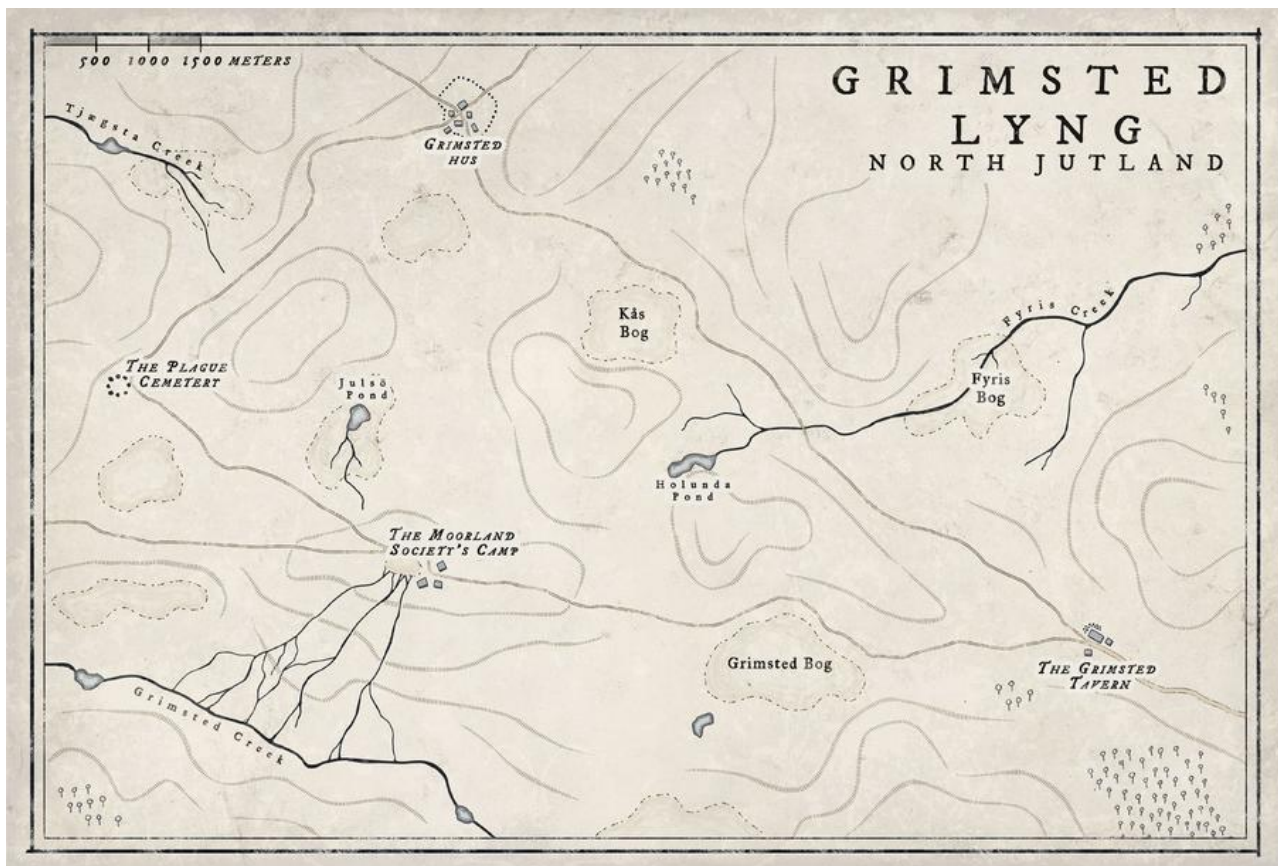
With the exception of Kromutter and the postal coachman, the people at the Grimsted Tavern are reluctant to talk to the player characters. They can gain the locals' trust temporarily through **MANIPULATION** or by buying them schnapps, but will still anger them if they keep asking questions about "extraordinary matters" such as devil worship and the strange events surrounding the Moorland Society's steam engine. Eventually Hans and Ejnar will leave the tavern with a sullen expression on their faces and head out onto the moor. With a successful **VIGILANCE** test the player

characters can follow them all the way to Grimsted Hus, where the brothers inform their older sister Jensine about the snooping outsiders. This may result in an ambush on the moor—for more details, see the description of Grimsted Hus. If the Gamemaster thinks the time is right, Hans and Ejnar can instead hurry across the moor to the Moorland Society's camp, where phase 2 of the countdown occurs.

CLUES

The player characters can learn a great deal at the Grimsted Tavern, both about the people of Grimsted Hus and the old plague cemetery.

- ♦ Kromutter is a veritable treasure trove of information and absolutely delighted to share what she knows—and what she does not. For example, she has never heard of anyone called Sandemann and scoffs at the stories about devil worshippers. She admits that people from Grimsted Hus are generally quite peculiar, but she has never heard anything about black magic or sacrificed children—and certainly not about some Devil on the Moor.



- ◆ If it is dark forces they are worried about, Kromutter recommends that they take a closer look at the old plague cemetery on Grimsted Lyng. Buried there are not only plague victims, but suicides, unbaptized children, unmarried mothers, and others who were deemed unworthy of the regular cemetery on the highway to Viborg.
- ◆ If the player characters ask her about the strange bird, Kromutter explains that mylings and other revenants of murdered children may well be haunting the moor in bird form. She adds that there are lots of old tales about mylings in the area. She describes them as lonely lost souls who merely want to cross over – and to be reunited with their mothers.
- ◆ In the evenings Hans and Ejnar Jensen are always sitting alone in a corner of the common room, howling with mischievous laughter. They are always slightly drunk and glare skeptically at the player characters. The brothers are reluctant to answer questions, but if the player characters pass a **MANIPULATION** test, they cryptically mutter something about Rasmussen and his fancy machine not belonging on the moor – and that they will be gone before long. That is what usually happens to outsiders.
- ◆ The elderly stagecoach driver Julius, who rests at the tavern in between runs, can tell the characters a great deal about Sandemann if they buy him some schnapps. Julius's late father drove a postal stagecoach as well and had the great honor of transporting "the renowned Sandemann" on several occasions during his frequent travels in the area. Julius himself never got to meet Sandemann, but his father described him as a dashing man who had the gift of speech and a strange influence on the people around him – especially "womenfolk," says Julius. His father claimed that Sandemann had a sweetheart in every rural village in Denmark. There must also have been "a small army of illegitimate children," chuckles the old coachman.



KROMUTTER PEDERSEN

"Those underground are a natural part of the moor's history. The same cannot be said of the Prussians."

Kromutter Pedersen is an imposing soldier's widow in her fifties. She lumbers her sturdy frame around on an old wooden leg that is constantly clunking against the tavern's creaky floorboards. History has been tough on Kromutter and her family, which she lost in the last war with the Prussians. Today it is the Grimsted Tavern that gives her life meaning. She is extremely sociable and will gladly share all the stories, legends, and rumors about Grimsted Lyng and its people that she has come across over the years. The one thing Kromutter cannot stand is Prussians and German culture in general. If any player character speaks with a German accent or has a German-sounding name, Kromutter will be very reserved towards that person.

- ◆ **Physique 4 Precision 2**
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 FORCE 2 VIGILANCE 4**
OBSERVATION 3 INVESTIGATION 3
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Fireplace poker, clay pipe, tobacco pouch

THE MOORLAND SOCIETY'S CAMP

Preben Rasmussen and his crew have set up camp roughly ten kilometers west of the Grimsted Tavern. The place is relatively easy to find, as the once narrow and obscure game trail has been expanded into a small road by the Moorland Society's employees, who for the past year have hauled equipment back and forth on heavy carts. The camp is located in a hollow on a strip of land protruding into a bog. It is a dismal place with tall reeds and black pools shrouded in autumn mist.

The camp consists of ten large tents of wood and canvas, as well as an impressive wagon park with carts and wagons of various shapes and sizes. At the heart of the camp is a huge peat-fired steam engine constantly pumping water from the bog through an intricate system of cast iron pipes and thick tubes of vulcanized rubber. The chuff and hiss of the steam engine can be heard from several kilometers away, and in the camp the constant gurgling and slurping of the pump is also part of the soundscape. The water is sucked out of the bog and transferred to Grimsted via a system of freshly dug canals and existing streams. But the system is not yet perfect and much of Preben

Rasmussen's work revolves around the outlet issue – what to do with the excess drainage water?

Aside from Preben Rasmussen and First Assistant Jens Ludvigsen, the team consists of fourteen strong workmen. There are also a cook and two kitchen boys who run the canteen tent, serving three simple but massive meals a day. The player characters are fed on the Moorland Society's expense and housed in their own tent where they may spend the nights throughout the mystery. The tents are stove heated and equipped with simple wooden bunks with sheepskins and specially designed sleeping bags made of padded fabric. Most of the tents are also furnished with drop-leaf tables and folding stools, and some are also supplied with filing cabinets and other office furniture.

CHALLENGES

The challenges at the camp mostly have to do with the tension among the workmen, but the bog itself is hazardous as well.

- ♦ Preben Rasmussen has waited several days for the player characters to show up. As soon as they arrive, he will direct them to one of the storage tents, chattering eagerly about a “satanic find”. He is extremely insistent and more than a little pushy and will not let the player characters conduct their own investigations until he has laid out his theories and observations (see Clues).
- ♦ There is always a risk of a fight breaking out as the player characters interact with the workmen. They are tired and traumatized by the strange events of late. A successful **MANIPULATION** or **INSPIRATION** test can make them talk, but if you think the characters' questions are too intrusive, it takes another **MANIPULATION** test to avoid violence. The workers fight with their fists, and on failure a hard right hook comes flying at one of the player characters. The fight attracts the rest of the workers, and unless the player characters pass a third **MANIPULATION** test, the situation will degenerate into a mass brawl. It is interrupted D6 rounds later when Preben Rasmussen comes running and starts pointing with his whole hand.

A TREACHEROUS BOG

The bog is a treacherous place, and player characters who venture out into the fog might take a bad step and end up underwater. A successful **AGILITY** test is required if the player characters stray from the path and go into the bog. On failure they fall into a pool and must pass another **AGILITY** test to get back up (slow action). Other player characters can help them with a successful **FORCE** test. After three turns in the water the characters sink below the surface and must pass a **FORCE** test each turn to hold their breath. Failure means that the characters start to drown and suffer one physical condition for each turn spent underwater.

CLUES

The camp holds several clues about both the murdered child and the conflict between the Moorland Society and the locals. The most important clue is Sandemann's journal, which contains important passages and a photo of Signe Andersdotter.

- ✦ The remains of the Nameless One are lying on a crude work bench in a storage tent where Rasmussen takes the player characters. There is not much left: a few bone fragments and the partially crushed skull of an infant. A player character who passes an **INVESTIGATION** or **MEDICINE** test can tell that it belonged to a very small child, probably a newborn. The character also realizes that the skeleton must be quite old, a few decades at least.
- ✦ Rasmussen is absolutely certain that the people of the moor have summoned a demonic guardian to hold back human progress. The Moorland Society was received with hostility from the very beginning and the "oafs" of Grimsted Hus have made several attempts to destroy Rasmussen's steam engine.
- ✦ As evidence for his hypothesis, he presents an old leatherbound notebook – Sandemann's journal. He shows the characters the two entries about "the Devil on the Moor" and "the Devil Worshippers at Grimsted Hus" (see *Handouts 3E* and *3F*) and reads them aloud in a pompous voice.
- ✦ The journal contains a number of vital clues, including a blurry daguerreotype of Signe Andersdotter (see *Handout 3G* and separate boxed text).

SANDEMANN'S JOURNAL

It is important for the mystery that the player characters not only take a closer look at the journal, but bring it to the Plague Cemetery. If the player characters do not realize this, Rasmussen can insist that they take it with them during their investigations as a kind of "occult atlas" of Grimsted Lyng.

- ✦ Reading the old-fashioned handwriting requires a successful **LEARNING** test. The journal has no title, but the first page begins with the words "Notations from Grimsted Lyng by G Sandemann". Its contents are dominated by long and rather boring accounts of old "superstition" and "devil worship", with references to various underground vaesen which Sandemann claims to be spawns of Hell. One interesting thing about the journal is its many references to the young peasant woman at Grimsted Hus who clearly became Sandemann's confidant.
- ✦ A player character learned in magic or blessed with the talent Sixth Sense can sense that there is something disturbing about the book itself. The character cannot put her finger on it, but it seems to be linked to bad memories.
- ✦ Player characters who take a closer look at the steam engine and pass an **INVESTIGATION** test will find signs of external attack. Several tubes show gouge marks from a knife, and someone has clearly tried to pry the pipes and pistons loose. In the grass a bit further away from the steam engine lies a worn knife with a name on it: Jens Erik Jensen, G H.

THE DEVIL ON THE MOOR

I shall refer to this winged vaesen as "the Devil on the Moor", as there is no doubt whatever about its infernal origins. It is venerated as a guardian angel by the moorland folk, and so it has been since time immemorial. These poor blinded people – it is scarcely an exaggeration to call them fools or the savages of Danevang – are paying a terrible price for this demonic protection. Blood and souls are what I speak of. Blood and souls. They have always sacrificed children to the powers of the moor, forever branding their immortal souls for the Dark One and the realm of everlasting torment.

- ◆ With a successful **VIGILANCE** test the player characters can hear a faint whimper from the bog. It could be the call of an unknown wading bird, but it sounds more like a crying baby.
- ◆ The workmen can tell them that there is some devilry lurking in the bog. The unmistakable sound of a crying child is sometimes heard from there, mixed with screams and ungodly curses. Many have also seen a large black bird that seems to be watching the camp. Some even claim to have heard it laugh – in fact, did it not sound like a chortling baby?
- ◆ The cook and her kitchen boys are happy to share their experiences. Like the workmen they are convinced that something is “wrong” but suspect that the locals are behind it.
- ◆ The kitchen boys often visit the Grimsted Tavern to pick up mail and groceries, and with their own ears they have heard ruffians in the area boast about sabotaging the Moorland Society. Two young men from Grimsted Hus strike them as particularly threatening: Hans and Ejnar, who are often heard ranting about “the devil machine from Copenhagen”.

DEVIL WORSHIP AT GRIMSTED HUS

Grimsted Hus is a savage place of folly and ungodly barbarism, but even here our Lord has planted a solitary seed of Christian decency. She is a girl of peasant stock, named Signe Andersdotter, but she has a good head on her shoulders and even seems to be literate. Through this pure, innocent creature I have gained access to the inner secrets of the moorland peasantry, and at times I feel that the truth – the glimpse of reality that my campaign for enlightenment has uncovered – is too heavy for one man to bear. But there is no longer any doubt on the matter: devil worship has been practiced here for millennia, and the beating heart of this ancient cult is Grimsted Hus.

- ◆ One of the kitchen boys, young Severin, can tell them about a creepy old cemetery some five kilometers west of here. He has traveled the area on supply errands and describes the cemetery as an eerie place with mossy tombstones – many of them nameless, but all of them ancient and badly weathered.
- ◆ Young Severin also recalls seeing an old woman in the cemetery (Granny Thea). As a matter of fact, he has seen her several times and is sure that he heard her cry.



A YELLOWED PHOTOGRAPH

As the player characters flick through Sandemann's journal a yellowed daguerreotype slips out. It is a grainy portrait of a young peasant woman with round cheeks and thick pigtails. Her grave eyes are staring into the camera, almost accusingly. The photo appears to have been tucked into the pages of the journal, but if the characters ask Rasmussen about it, he seems quite uninterested. "Probably just some silly local girl," he says, adding that they should focus on the satanic cult instead.

PREBEN RASMUSSEN

"No one can argue against human progress."

Preben Rasmussen is an authoritative man in his 40s. Trained as a steam engineer at the Polytechnical University of Denmark, he has worked for the Moorland Society for the last ten years. The post on Grimsted Lyng is his first assignment as chief engineer, and he takes it extremely seriously. To Rasmussen it is much more than a job. The modernization of the moor is a civilizing crusade against the forces of darkness and barbarism.

Rasmussen does not have the Sight, but through his studies of ancient texts he has become convinced that non-human vaesen with supernatural powers are an empirical reality. Rasmussen was in contact with several Rosenbergers during his student days in Copenhagen and allowed himself to be influenced by their negative view of the non-human. He sees vaesen as unfortunate remnants from the age of darkness and barbarism – the antithesis of everything the Moorland Society and the engineering profession stands for. It is therefore clear that the non-human must be eradicated to make way for human progress.

- ❖ **Physique 3 Precision 3**
Logic 4 Empathy 1
- ❖ **AGILITY 2 FORCE 2 STEALTH 2**
RANGED COMBAT 3 LEARNING 4
VIGILANCE 3 INSPIRATION 4
OBSERVATION 3
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol, Sandemann's journal



THE MOORLAND SOCIETY'S WORKMEN

"It's honest work for honest pay – but God knows if it's worth it."

Most of Rasmussen's workforce are seasonal laborers from far and wide, including a handful of Swedes who have fled destitution in their impoverished homeland. These are burly, bearded men between the ages of 20 and 40, most of them bitter and taciturn – and deeply shaken by the strange things happening in the area. When they are not working they spend their evenings in the tents, writing letters to their families back home, playing cards, making music, or telling stories from the big wide world. As drinking is not allowed in the camp, some of the workers slip away to the Grimsted Tavern on a regular basis for a shot or two.

- ❖ **Physique 3 Precision 2**
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ❖ **CLOSE COMBAT 3 FORCE 3**
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 2**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Hammer and knife

GRIMSTED HUS

Grimsted Hus is a small settlement consisting of roughly a dozen stone houses with heather roofs clustered around an old shepherd's trail. Most of them are residential buildings, interspersed with various types of outhouses, storage sheds, and fenced-in stables.

The people of Grimsted Hus are mostly shepherds and peat diggers – stern, unsmiling types who live hard and simple lives with the windswept moor as both their livelihood and their curse. Sheep and the occasional scrawny cow are roaming freely among the buildings. There are elderly people sitting against the house walls, whittling wood or making baskets out of heather. A couple of grown men are sharpening their scythes next to a shed, and a sturdy peasant woman with bulging forearms is shoveling dung outside one of the stables. A bunch of dirty children come running towards the player characters as they approach the settlement.

With the exception of Granny Thea, every adult in Grimsted Hus is aware that the Jensen Brothers have made repeated attempts to destroy the Moorland Society's steam engine. But no one wants to tell the player characters that. Hans and Ejnar are generally thought of as drunken scoundrels, but the neighbors tolerate them out of respect for their departed parents and their strong and widely feared older sister Jensine.

CHALLENGES

The people of Grimsted Hus are suspicious of strangers, but the only ones who might be dangerous and prone to violence are the Jensen siblings.

- ◆ If player characters ask intrusive questions, or reveal that they have found the lost knife, Hans and Ejnar will fetch Jensine and prepare an ambush somewhere on the moor to “scare some sense” into them. Player characters who pass a **VIGILANCE** test against the siblings' **STEALTH** notice three shadowy figures hiding behind a rock further down the trail. The siblings are not out to kill the player characters – their plan is simply

to scare and humiliate the meddling strangers. The attack begins with Hans and Ejnar firing their ranged weapons over the player characters' heads, after which Jensine throws the head of a newly slaughtered sheep their way. She comes charging down the trail, swinging her giant axe in the air while her brothers warn the player characters that they should “go home” right now, or things will end badly for them. The siblings defend themselves if the player characters fight back, but otherwise they will not engage in further violence.

- ◆ If the player characters ask questions about Sandemann or anything related to local history, they are referred to Granny Thea – the only person old enough to remember the olden days. Thea lives in a ramshackle old cottage situated slightly apart from the other buildings. She is far more accommodating than the others and offers the player characters some delicious dandelion wine. Unfortunately, her mind is clearly addled with age, and she asks if the player characters have come to join the war effort against the Prussians.

CLUES

- ◆ The worn knife that can be found in the Moorland Society's camp is a family heirloom belonging to the Jensens. Everyone in Grimsted Hus recognizes the knife and knows that the name carved into it refers to their late father, Jens Erik. No one will want to tell the truth if the player characters show them the knife, but the sight of it stirs powerful feelings inside them. With a successful **OBSERVATION** test the player characters realize that the person in question is lying about the knife. If they show it to the Jensens, they will follow the player characters onto the moor as described under *Challenges*.
- ◆ Player characters who search the area and pass an **INVESTIGATION** test will find what looks like a number of small pagan idols tied together with heather and various herbs. Several of them can be found in the stables, as well as in some of the



residences. A successful **LEARNING** test reveals that these are peasant talismans meant to ward off evil.

- ◆ There are autumn peonies and forget-me-nots growing wild outside Granny Thea's cottage. Player characters who have visited the Plague Cemetery will recall that the bouquets left at the well-attended grave – the final resting place of Signe Andersdotter – consisted of precisely these kinds of flowers.
- ◆ Granny Thea seems cheerful and confused, but any mention of Sandemann will suddenly make her cry. If the player characters handle this with decency – for example by trying to comfort her – she will start talking about her daughter Signe who fell in love with the handsome Sandemann. She tells them about the pregnancy, Sandemann's betrayal, and how Signe was found frozen to death on the moor. But the child was never found, she concludes: "I think it's still out there – looking for my little Signe."
- ◆ If the player characters show her Sandemann's journal, Granny Thea gets upset and starts mumbling about a black heart and "the memories of an evil man". She asks them to get rid of the journal, preferably by destroying it – that might bring peace to her grandchild.

HANS AND EJNAR JENSEN

"Damn the Copenhageners and their machines!"

"Yeah, damn all the outsiders!"

Hans and Ejnar are two drunken, violent young men from the settlement of Grimsted Hus. They grew up in a home without parents, as their mother and father both went missing during the war with the Prussians. Instead, it was their older sister – the physically strong but slow-witted Jensine – who cared for the family to the best of her ability.

Life has been hard on the brothers and made them jealous of other people, whom they consider rivals in the daily struggle for survival. At the same time, they are exceptionally work-shy and spend most of their time at the Grimsted Tavern, drinking away what little remains of their inheritance. The fight against the Moorland Company has given their lives a higher purpose: to defend the moor and the old ways against outside attacks.

Both brothers are unwashed men with dirty clothes and non-existent dental hygiene. They are crude and uneducated, but sly and cowardly. They do not shy away from a fight, but when things get serious, they prefer to fetch Jensine who always has their back.

- ◆ **Physique 4 Precision 3**
Logic 3 Empathy 1
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 3 FORCE 3**
STEALTH 4 RANGED COMBAT 4
VIGILANCE 3
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Musket (Hans), crossbow (Ejnar)



JENSINE JENSEN

"Any bastard who messes with the little ones will eat axe!"

Jensine is a large and unusually muscular farm woman in her 30s. She is strong as an ox and as dutiful as they come, but has a feeble mind and a hot temper. The latter is often taken advantage of by her younger brothers, Hans and Ejnar, who tend to use Jensine as muscle whenever they get into a fight.

Jensine adored their father, Jens Erik, who treated her as his chosen heir. She thinks it is her bitter duty to defend what is left of the shattered family against all evil. She will therefore do anything to protect her brothers, despite the painful insight that neither of them are living up to the late Jens Erik's expectations.

- ◆ Physique 5 Precision 2
Logic 1 Empathy 3
- ◆ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 5 FORCE 5**
STEALTH 2 VIGILANCE 2
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 4
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Giant woodcutter's axe (technically handled as a halberd)



GRANNY THEA

"You mark my words, the only devil on the moor was Sandemann himself!"

Granny Thea is a sweet but confused old farm woman in her 80s. She is plagued by constant grief over the death of her daughter, Signe Andersdotter. Signe was her only child and the very purpose of her existence. Thea visits her daughter's grave as often as she can and entertains her with songs and little stories from the olden days.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ◆ **AGILITY 1 MEDICINE 5 LEARNING 2**
VIGILANCE 3 INSPIRATION 3
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Knapsack with medicinal herbs, pipe and tobacco, flask of dandelion wine

THE PLAGUE CEMETERY

Roughly five kilometers west of the Moorland Society's camp is the ancient and remarkable graveyard the locals call "the Plague Cemetery". It is surrounded by a mossy stone wall and hosts about a hundred tombstones as well as the occasional wooden cross, wrapped in chilly autumn mist. Almost all the graves are unmarked. One exception is a somber standing stone engraved with a simple epitaph: "Here lie our dead from the terrible pestilence that swept the land in the year of our Lord 1710 during the Great War with Sweden."

Many of the tombstones are crumbling with age. The graveyard looks not only desolate and abandoned, but forsaken – and deliberately forgotten. It is a place where the unclean and unwanted were laid to rest. In addition to plague victims, the buried include suicides, executed thieves, illegitimate children, and several unwed mothers. One of the latter is the Nameless One's mother, Signe Andersdotter, whose remains rest under an unmarked tombstone in the shadow of the wall on the west side of the cemetery.

CHALLENGES

The player character carrying Sandemann's journal is struck by extremely vivid and unpleasant visions the moment he or she sets foot inside the wall of the cemetery. Four disturbing scenes flash by in a cavalcade of horror.

- ◆ A huge man in a wide-brimmed priest's hat pushes away a younger peasant woman with the words "It is not my child, unclean wench!" It is the round-cheeked woman from the photo in Sandemann's journal – no skill test is required to recognize her.
- ◆ In the next vision the same peasant woman kisses a newborn child on the forehead. The baby gurgles lovingly, but the woman weeps.
- ◆ Then the vision transitions into an inhospitable wetland of sprawling reeds and swirling wisps of mist – a place the player character recognizes as the bog by the Moorland Society's camp.
- ◆ The last thing the character sees is the weeping child slowly being lowered into the black bog,

where it suddenly falls silent after a momentary gurgle. The player character must make a Fear test against Fear value 2.

CLUES

- ◆ A player character who passes an **INVESTIGATION** test notices that one of the graves is wider and more frequently visited than the others. This is of course the grave of Signe Andersdotter, which Granny Thea visits at least once a week. There are footprints around the grave and the soil in front of the stone is healthy and well-raked. And unlike all the other graves in the Plague Cemetery, there are several half-wilted bouquets lying around Signe Andersdotter's tombstone.
- ◆ Player characters who take a closer look at the bouquets will see that they consist of autumn peonies and forget-me-nots – the same kinds of flowers that grow outside Granny Thea's cottage.
- ◆ Player characters who pass a **VIGILANCE** test notice that the black bird is perched on one of the tombstones, watching them.

CONFRONTATION

The confrontation will most likely take place in the Plague Cemetery. The player characters can end up here for a variety of reasons. If they have missed all the other clues, they could follow Granny Thea during one of her walks from Grimsted Hus to her daughter's tombstone.

If the player characters visit the grave before stage 3 of the countdown, nothing much happens other than what it says in the location description of the Plague Cemetery. However, if they arrive after stage 3, the characters can make the Nameless One reveal itself. This can be achieved by calling out to the myling – e.g., "Come out little child!" – or simply taking a few determined steps toward the bird that is following them. If the player characters are passive and indecisive, you can use Rasmussen (or possibly Granny Thea) to force a reaction from the myling.



For example, Rasmussen could catch up with the player characters at the Plague Cemetery and warn them that the place is haunted by demonic forces, excitedly referring to Sandemann's journal. If they have not yet gotten hold of the journal, you can have Rasmussen practically shove it into the hands of one of the player characters, who is immediately struck by the visions described under Challenges in the Plague Cemetery.

The Nameless One appears to the player characters in spectral form if phase 3 of the countdown has occurred. As long as Sandemann's journal exists, the myling will act as a murderous avenger and attack Rasmussen or the player character carrying the journal with full frenzy—primarily using the Curse **DEATHLY COLD** (spewed-out cascades of freezing bog water). The attacks cease once the journal is destroyed, preferably with fire, although any method that leads to total destruction will have the same effect. In other words, throwing it away on the moor or burying it in the ground is not enough. If this is too hard to figure out, you can let one of the player characters recall Granny Thea words that the journal must be destroyed to bring peace to her grandchild. Thea could even show up among the tombstones and shout at them to destroy the journal “for heaven's sake”.

In order to banish the myling, the player characters must bury its remains in Signe Andersdotter's grave in the Plague Cemetery. The most important thing for the Nameless One is to be reunited with its mother. Naming it is also welcome, but not decisive in this particular case. Player characters digging in

front of Signe Andersdotter's tombstone will find her skeleton roughly one and a half meters below ground. As soon as the skeleton is unearthed, the sky is darkened by black clouds and a howling autumn wind sweeps over the cemetery. The myling emerges from the shadows, peering wistfully into the grave with tears in its shimmering green eyes.

For the ritual to work the player characters must place the Nameless One's remains next to its mother, preferably in physical contact with her skeleton. The spirit of Signe Andersdotter will then appear in the form of a flickering, vaguely human-like apparition that rises shining out of the grave like a pillar of light. “My child,” she says, embracing the Nameless One who vanishes into the light. Everything goes dark and quiet. The autumn storms have stopped howling and all is peaceful. The ritual is completed by filling the grave with dirt and setting the tombstone back in its place.

AFTERMATH

When the myling's remains are buried with its mother, the Nameless One finds peace and vanishes from Grimsted Lyng. Rasmussen is deeply grateful and explains that the player characters can always count on him and “the powerful Moorland Society” if they ever need help in the future. However, if the player characters failed to solve the mystery, the Nameless One will keep haunting the moor and cause untold problems for everyone living and working in the area.





A WINTER'S TALE

Wherein the characters suffer an accident, get stuck in the dark cold, and are challenged by a mysterious adversary under the glittering winter stars.

Still are the forests large and small,
wrapped in the frosty white,
only the distant waterfall
murmurs and hums in the night.
The nisse listens and, half in dream,
thinks it is time's ceaseless stream,
wonders which way it is going,
And from what source it is flowing.

—VIKTOR RYDBERG

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, followed by a description of the characters' journey from Saint Petersburg into the deep forests at the heart of Ingria, where the mystery is set. This section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Gamemaster will initiate at some appropriate point during the mystery – and a catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in their efforts.

This mystery is different than most in that the player characters never reach the goal of the invitation

– a secret gathering of people with knowledge about supernatural phenomena at the manor of Count Constantine Constantinovich in Ingria. Traveling through the winter storm in the deep forests of Ingria, the characters suffer an accident and find themselves at the Tammsalu Inn, far from the nearest village. It is there that this mystery takes place.

BACKGROUND

The Tammsalu Inn has been in the Trygg family since the Swedish period (see the boxed text on page 70). The family left their little cottage outside Falun two hundred years ago and headed for Ingria to seek their fortune in the “Wild East.” In a birchbark shoe they brought with them an acorn from the cottage, which they planted by the small pond behind the inn. Now the mighty branches of the oak tree provide welcome shade during the summer months. Unlike other Swedes who fled Ingria to escape the wars between Sweden and Russia, the Tryggs have chosen to stay. During the war their inn served as a field hospital.

The people at the Tammsalu Inn are known in the forest for their hospitality towards humans and animals alike. Despite the bitter winters, their establishment has always been able to provide warm beds, food, and drink, and many a traveler has come to seek shelter from the blizzards. The inn is well positioned on a desolate stretch of the road between Saint Petersburg and Narva, and the family has housed many travelers. Their business thrived. When Mr. and Mrs. Trygg passed away, Axel and his sister Ester took over management of the inn. Axel dreamed of developing their business and allowing gambling in the evenings to entertain the guests. Ester, on the other hand, was determined to preserve the inn and its traditions.

At the heart of this mystery is a conflict between the relentless forces of nature and the safety of hearth and home. During the winter months life here is marked by cold, snow, and darkness. Heavy blizzards plague the region, and the bitter cold is a swift and ruthless killer. Children are warned not to go out into the forest alone. The villagers tell

stories about an incarnation of winter itself, called Morozko – or Father Frost. Morozko is a winter demon in the guise of a man who will sometimes be generous and show people the way home, but who can also twist their minds and lead them deep into the cold to freeze and die.

Legends also tell of guardian spirits protecting people and farms from the ruthless wilds. These powerful *vaesen*, who guard their hearth and sometimes bring good fortune, are called *domovoi* in the local tradition. *Domovoi* are little old men and women dressed in light or dark clothes and hats who watch over the household and its livestock. But they are capricious creatures and may cause problems if angered or neglected, which is why people often leave them food by the fireplace. *Domovoi* are shapeshifters capable of turning into cats or stoats. They stick to their family and can come with them to a new home in a small birchbark shoe.

The player characters from the Society in Upsala know this *vaesen* by another name – *nisse* (page 148 of the core rulebook). The inn and the family's farm are under the protection of a *nisse* named Grayfoot, who has followed the Trygg family for many generations and came with them to Ingria in the birchbark shoe. It is his protection that has allowed the inn to prosper even during the harsh winter months.

In the spring one year before the start of this mystery, Ester was found dead at the edge of the pond behind the inn. She suffered a stroke, fell unconscious into the water, and drowned. Strangely, she was found up on the bank, as if someone had pulled her out of the water. There were rumors that she had been murdered. Shortly thereafter strange things started happening on the farm. Objects disappeared and turned up in weird places, people were injured in strange accidents. At night one could hear strange sounds inside the house – sighs and clicks in the floorboards, as if someone or something was moving in there. The residents have different theories about what is going on, but it is really the *nisse* who is behind the strange events and accidents at the farm.

The nisse Grayfoot is ancient. Human generations are like the seasons to him – children are born, grow up, have children of their own, grow old, and die. To him the stream of people who come and go is like a river. He rarely concerns himself with anyone

INGRIA AND THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLES

The Tammsalu Inn is located the historical region of Ingria, part of the Saint Petersburg Governorate between Lake Ladoga and Lake Peipus in western Russia. Ingria, sometimes referred to as the "Wild East," was a Swedish dominion until the 18th century when it was ceded to Russia and renamed. The wars and the construction of Saint Petersburg drove part of the population away from the area, while others moved there to avoid religious persecution, serfdom, or taxes. Immigration and deportation of criminals to the region led to a mix of different cultures, languages, and religions. Ingria's indigenous inhabitants were Finno-Ugrians who spoke the Finno-Ugric languages of Ingrian and Votic, now all but extinct. These ethnic groups have been called "the forgotten peoples."

else. But Ester was different. She noticed and spoke with Grayfoot when she was a girl, and growing up she never forgot her friend. Every morning she would leave small chunks of bread, milk, or porridge by the stove. For the first time in centuries, Grayfoot grew fond of a human being, and his love for Ester ran deep. He feared that she would one day be married off and leave the farm.

One morning Grayfoot saw Ester collapse and fall into the pond, struck down by a stroke as many in her family before her. He managed to pull her up on the bank, but could not bring her back to life. Ester's death hit him hard. For the first time in his life, it felt like a curse that a human life was a mere blink compared to his own, and Grayfoot was overcome with grief.

The nisse is also concerned that so few humans still follow the old ways. Domovoi are being forgotten as the younger generations grow up and the old traditions are replaced by new ones. Now there is no one at the farm who believes in the nisse, and no one is leaving him gifts or showing him appreciation. Grayfoot's grief turned into anger, which he acts upon by causing trouble and accidents and withdrawing his protecting hand from the farm. Guests are complaining about objects falling down on them, and there is talk of the farm being haunted. Axel is miserable, but has kept the inn open.



CONFLICTS

The primary conflict of this mystery is between the nisse Grayfoot and Axel Trygg – who does not realize what is going on, as he does not believe in nissar and such “old superstitions.” Axel has neglected the nisse ever since Ester died, and in his grief and anger, Grayfoot has started to cause trouble. His anger is growing, and when guests arrive, he moves into the sauna. If Axel continues to neglect him, he will start to cause accidents and eventually leave the farm. Without him, the people there are defenseless against Father Frost and everyone at the Tammsalu Inn risks freezing to death in the bitter cold.

The secondary conflict is the one between different views on the unnatural events taking place at Tammsalu. Investigations of the accidents at the inn create a conflict between the travelers who have sought shelter there. The guests have different explanations of what happened, and these can either help the player characters or lead them astray. Unless the player characters solve the mystery and convince the others about what is going on, the situation will grow increasingly heated. Innkeeper Axel does not know what to do or whom to believe. The player characters’ snooping around at the farm can make the nisse even angrier. If their investigation leads to the desecration of Ester’s grave, his mischievous behavior will escalate to outright violence.

IN MYTHIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

If you want to run this mystery in Mythic Britain and Ireland instead of the Mythic North, change the destination of the invitation to the village of Aviemore in the Cairngorms, nearly 100 miles north of Edinburgh. Travelling across the Cairngorm mountains and through the forests that surround Loch an Eilein leads them into wild and long detours, and here they find the Ben Macdui Inn. Remember to also change the names of the NPCs.

INVITATION

This mystery begins with the Society receiving a letter inviting them to attend the secretive meeting Conclavum Sub Rosa, arranged by Count Constantine Constantinovich. It is a gathering where carefully selected participants from all over Europe come to exchange experiences and knowledge about the study of supernatural phenomena. The meeting is held at Count Constantinovich’s manor in the woods southwest of Saint Petersburg. The letter (*Handout 4A*) is included as a handout at the end of this book and available for download on the Free League website, reads as follows:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Constantine Constantinovich, Count of Jamburg in Ingria, west of Saint Petersburg in the Russian Empire. Your Society’s reputation is known far and wide among those who seek to observe the unseen and understand the inexplicable. I have the utmost respect for your work, and like you, I seek answers to the mysteries of the cosmos.

At the midwinter blot I am hosting a gathering which I believe would be of interest to you – Conclavum Sub Rosa. The meeting brings together individuals of different backgrounds with a shared interest in the supernatural, who seek a deeper understanding through the process of alchemy.

It would be a great honor and pleasure to have the Society grace our gathering with its presence. I shall wait for you at my residence outside Jamburg on the twentieth of December, to discuss the secrets and mysteries of life.

Yours sincerely,

Count Constantine Constantinovich

P.S. All things are connected!

Note that the player characters will never make it to Count Constantinovich’s meeting, as they suffer an accident on the way there and instead end up at the Tammsalu Inn (more on that below).

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 *Conclavum Sub Rosa* and Count Constantine Constantinovich in Upsala will find that he is known for his imaginative fairy tales, poems, and his studies of the supernatural. No more information can be found.

THE JOURNEY

The boat trip to Saint Petersburg is uneventful (unless you want it otherwise). On board the ship the player characters can spend their time studying or preparing the speech they have been asked to give at Count Constantinovich's gathering.

ARRIVAL

As the player characters step ashore at the dock in Saint Petersburg, it begins to snow. The air is cool and they soon find the stagecoach that will take them to Narva and Constantinovich's manor. Standing by the carriage is Coachman Ilya Ermakov (page 73). Quiet but courteous, he loads the group's luggage onto the stagecoach roof while they take their seats inside. The first stop is in central Saint Petersburg. At the famous Talon restaurant down by the river Neva, a lone noblewoman enters the carriage. She is Swedish and introduces herself as Vilma af Zimt (page 74). The coachman loads her luggage before the journey continues away from the harbor and the palaces and churches of the city, and out into the countryside.

LANGUAGES

In this mystery, the player characters will meet NPCs who speak a different native language than themselves. To keep things simple, we recommend that you assume the player characters to be well versed in multiple languages and thus able to speak freely with everyone they meet.

WITHSTANDING COLD

A player character exposed to severe cold must make **FORCE** tests at regular intervals. It works as a fear test with Fear value 1 (page 68 in the core rulebook) except that the test is rolled with **FORCE** and that failure results in a physical condition in addition to the normal effect (one mental condition and temporary loss of control). Anyone Broken by the cold must continue to make **FORCE** tests, and freezes to death upon the next failure. The effects of the cold last until the victim gets back into the warmth. Player characters who fail to withstand the cold may also have a vision of Father Frost when appropriate – see example in the text box titled *A Midwinter Night's Dream* on page 74.

Vilma af Zimt is also on her way to see Count Constantinovich, which she will tell the player characters if asked. If they want to know more about her, she can tell them everything written in her character description. Time passes, darkness falls, and outside the temperature is dropping fast. Dim lights can be seen among the distant houses, fewer and fewer the farther they go. It is getting colder, and the player characters are grateful to be huddled together under the pelts in the carriage. The frost forms beautiful patterns on the small glass windows of the stagecoach. Hours go by. The carriage sways and rocks, and eventually there is nothing but endless fir trees outside the window. Some of the player characters doze off.

Suddenly, the characters hear the horses neighing and the coachman cursing loudly in Russian. The stagecoach rocks heavily and, without warning, the characters are violently thrown around as the carriage flips over and tumbles down a slope. Each player character must make an **AGILITY** test – anyone who fails is hurled out of the carriage. All player characters take damage from the fall – the attack is rolled with three dice for those who remain inside the carriage, and with six dice for those ejected from it. Vilma af Zimt is lucky and gets away with only a



bump on her head (a physical condition). Ilya is completely unharmed.

After the accident, caused by the carriage hitting a root, it will not budge. It is lying in a large snow drift on the side of the road with all the luggage scattered on the ground. As they regain their senses, the characters can see nothing but the mist of their breath and the starlight shining down from the dark winter sky. It is so cold it hurts to breathe. A wolf howls deep in the woods. Every breath freezes into clouds of ice crystals. The snow is falling heavier and heavier, and the wind is rising.

Ilya says he knows a place where the characters can find shelter for the night. "We need to get to the Tammsalu Inn not far from here, or we won't survive the night." Each player character can only bring one item of their choice – the rest is scattered in the snow. For each additional item they want to search for, they must pass a **FORCE** test to endure the severe cold (see the boxed text on page 72). Vilma af Zimt leaves several items behind in the stagecoach. One of the horses has an injured hind leg and is limping badly. If the characters linger too long by the carriage, the injured horse will freeze to death.

Ilya takes the lead, holding up his lantern to light the way along the snow-clad road. After a grueling walk (each player character makes another **FORCE** test to withstand the cold) they reach the inn, surrounded by a deep pine forest, many hours from the nearest village. The storm is hard and it is hard for the characters to even see the person in front of them. Tired and battered the group steps inside the Tammsalu Inn. The coachman heads to the stable to tend the horses. In the dining

COACHMAN ILYA ERMAKOV

"Stay on the road, no one survives the cold in the forest."

Ilya is a skinny man with steel in his eyes. He is of average height, with dark brown hair, a thick mustache, and a haggard face. He is bundled in thick animal pelts that he wears over his winter coat, and beads of ice have formed in his mustache. Ilya drives his stagecoach between Saint Petersburg and Narva and other towns in the region.

About a year ago Ilya asked Ester to marry him at the Tammsalu Inn, but was rejected. He does not like to talk about it, but will admit it if pressed. He is a man of few words, but explains that he was in love with the innkeeper's sister and has mourned her since the spring. He wanted to marry Ester and settle down with her in Saint Petersburg, but Axel objected on the grounds that the coachman was too poor for his sister. Ester was kind to Ilya, but his feelings were not reciprocated.

"One spring night I gave Ester a silver comb I'd bought with my hard-earned money from a goldsmith in Saint Petersburg. Ester smiled and said she didn't need such frills, that her friend helped braid and comb her hair. I let her keep the comb. I could not win her heart."

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

room the characters can meet Innkeeper Axel Trygg, his staff, and other guests (see the list on page 77). The storm is growing outside, and the road is snowbound. The player characters are stuck at the inn.



MS. VILMA AF ZIMT

"Our souls are connected through divine energy."

Vilma af Zimt is an artist and spiritist from Stockholm. She has light brown hair pulled back in a beautiful bun in the fashion of the time, inquisitive bright green eyes, and wears the fine dresses of a noblewoman. Vilma is the daughter of the broad-minded General Peter af Zimt. Her father paid for her to study painting in Paris, where she has become known for her abstract Symbolist paintings. Beside her art, Vilma has developed a keen interest in the occult and esoteric. Traveling through Europe she came into contact with the Rosicrucians as well as the founders of Theosophy, with whom she maintains active correspondence. With a personality as colorful as her artwork, Vilma has made a name for herself in the bohemian circles of Stockholm by organizing book clubs devoted to mystical texts, seances, and tarot readings. The af Zimt family are good friends of Count Constantinovich and, like the player characters, Vilma is on her way to his manor when the storm forces her to stop at the Tammsalu Inn.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ✦ **STEALTH 1 VIGILANCE 2 LEARNING 4**
OBSERVATION 3 MANIPULATION 3
- ✦ Mental Toughness 4 Physical Toughness 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Sketchbook, tarot deck

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

In this mystery the player characters must work together to find out who is causing the accidents. There are false leads, like the Campbell brothers (page 78) who think a revenant is behind it all. Suspicion may also fall on Coachman Ilya, whose courtship of Ester was rejected. If the player characters go down the wrong path in their investigation, they risk aggravating the nisse even further – eventually causing him to leave the farm and its people to their fate in the freezing winter. Then they will all be unprotected against the bitter cold, and stand helpless before Father Frost.

A MIDWINTER NIGHT'S DREAM

The snow falls ever faster. The cold is relentless, and your fingers and toes are already going numb. Where is everybody? Suddenly you see something moving a bit further ahead. You go after it. The only sound is that of your breath and your footsteps as you trudge through the snow. There is a clearing up ahead, and in the light you see a tall figure in an icy blue coat walking towards you. A voice speaks to you. You cannot make out the words, except "... crossed into my realm." You suddenly feel warmer and a lovely sensation spreads through your body. Unable to take another step, you sit down on a rock. You take off your hat and gloves. In your mind's eye you can see Christmases of your childhood, how you used to lie tucked up in warm pelts on the way to church. The sound of your parents' voices and the horses pulling the sleigh through the snow. The light of the lantern swaying back and forth on the sleigh. In your hand there is a piece of warm bread that your mother gave you before you left... Perhaps you should just stay here?

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

- ◆ On the first morning the player characters wake up to a freezing house. They must all make a **FORCE** test, and those who fail suffer a physical or mental condition of their choosing. The fire downstairs has gone out and Axel Trygg struggles to get it started again.
- ◆ Strange accidents keep happening at the inn. For example:
 - A player character trips and tumbles down the stairs. The character must make an **AGILITY** test – failure results in a physical condition.
 - The horses escape from the stable and run off into the snow. A player character can help catch one of them with a successful **AGILITY** test. After each attempt the player character must make a **FORCE** test to withstand the cold (page 72).
 - An oil lamp crashes to the floor and sets it on fire. A player character nearby can put it out with a successful **AGILITY** test. Three attempts can be made before the building is engulfed in flames.
- ◆ Axel Trygg or some other NPC points out that Ilya has been gone a long time, at least an hour. He went out to check on the horses. Axel asks the guests to help find the coachman. A player character or suitable NPC soon finds him in a snow-drift near the pond, his lips blue from hypothermia. Ilya has taken off all his clothes. He seems to have fallen or tripped on something and gashed his head. It makes no sense that he would get lost so close to the inn in this cold. “Something must have lured him” mutters Axel. Ilya’s life is beyond saving, but a character who passes a **MEDICINE** test can keep him alive long enough for him to mumble something about the cold speaking to him.
- ◆ The Campbell brothers suggest that a revenant may be causing the accidents. They claim to have seen a gray figure moving through the house, and

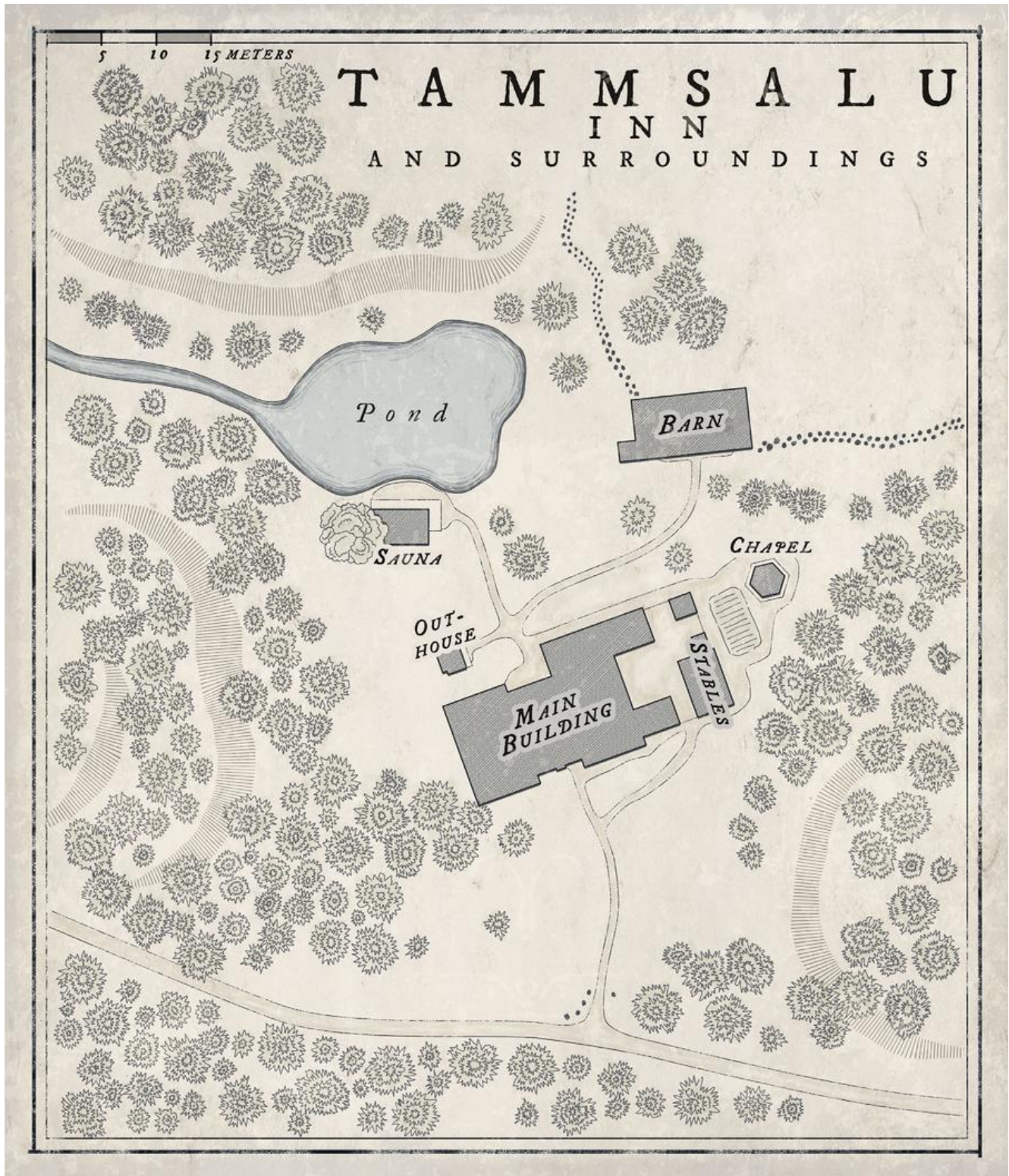
they have felt sudden chills. The brothers take this as further evidence that they are dealing with a restless spirit. If they find out that the coachman proposed to Ester (from the letter in Ester’s room), the Campbell brothers will become convinced that the revenant in question is in fact the innkeeper’s late sister, Ester, and that she is behind the coachman’s accident. The brothers want to know where Ester is buried.

- ◆ The fires at the inn and the sauna keep going out for no apparent reason, and the building is getting colder. Anyone who ventures outside risks freezing to death – the player characters must pass frequent **FORCE** test to withstand the cold, as described on page 72.
- ◆ Axel Trygg or some other suitable NPC proposes that the Campbells’ carriage be used as firewood. The brothers protest vehemently, and a scuffle might break out. The player characters can mediate between them or side with either party.
- ◆ It is getting so cold inside the inn that regular **FORCE** tests (page 72) must be made to survive indoors as well. The roads are still snowbound.

CATASTROPHE

The Campbell brothers finally convince Axel that his late sister’s revenant is behind it all, and that her remains must be salted and burned for her to find peace. As they go ahead with the plan, Grayfoot is outraged that Ester is being desecrated in this way, and a fight breaks out between the nisse and the brothers. Unless they are stopped, the Campbells kill Grayfoot. The desperation rises. The winter becomes the coldest in living memory. When spring arrives, Axel Trygg, the servants, and the guests at the inn are found frozen to death. There is talk among the locals that Father Frost exacted his tribute.

If the player characters are still at the inn when this happens, they get a chance to survive by a dramatic escape into the forest. After a few **FORCE** rolls to withstand the cold, a sleigh from Count Constantinovich’s manor arrives. The count has sent for the missing guests and the courier arrives just in time.



LOCATIONS

The following paragraphs summarizes the most important locations in and around the inn that the player characters may investigate. The Tammsalu Inn is a large stilt house with a thatched roof. Next to the main building is a stable for horses and livestock, and under a great oak tree by a small pond – now frozen – is a separate sauna. On one side of the inn is a small garden where berries and vegetables are grown in the summer, and in a corner of the garden are the family gravesite and a small chapel.

Until the blizzard subsides it is extremely dangerous to leave the inn. Characters who go outside must pass regular **FORCE** tests (see text box on page 72) to withstand the cold.



NPCS AT THE INN

- ❖ **AXEL TRYGG:** Innkeeper (this page).
- ❖ **THE WIDOW RIINA SOOVERE:** Cook at the inn. Brown hair with gray streaks under a bonnet. Warm and welcoming. Her nimble hands cook delicious food.
- ❖ **ILYA ERMAKOV:** Coachman (page 73).
- ❖ **IMRE SOOVERE:** Son of Riina, farmhand and waiter. Short, with short, curly brown hair and charming brown eyes. Imre is chatty and likes to play cards with the guests after supper.
- ❖ **KRÖÖT SOOVERE:** Daughter of Riina and waitress. Curly brown hair tied back in a messy bun, thin, scares easily, scrutinizing eyes. Loves fairy tales.
- ❖ **VILMA AF ZIMT:** Guest, artist, medium (page 74).
- ❖ **SAMUEL AND DANIEL CAMPBELL:** Guests, brothers, ghost hunters (page 78).
- ❖ **KARIN KARASKEVA:** Guest, runo singer (page 79).

INNKEEPER AXEL TRYGG

"The inn needs to change with the times."

Axel Trygg is a tall man with broad shoulders. He talks and smiles a lot, but there is sadness in his eyes. He dreams of building the inn into an even greater success and expanding its services to include gambling. The local religious community does not approve, but Axel is convinced that Tammsalu could reach new heights by offering card games. He wants to tear down the old stables and build a larger one with room for more wagons. But Ester's death hit him hard, and these plans are currently on hold. Axel is proud of his family history but does not believe the old stories about a nisse, and no one is leaving it gifts or food anymore.

- ❖ **Physique 4 Precision 3**
Logic 3 Empathy 2
- ❖ **FORCE 3 AGILITY 2 RANGED COMBAT 2**
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife, hunting rifle



SAMUEL CAMPBELL

"There's always a way forward."

The Campbell brothers are investigators of paranormal activities from Winchester, England. Daniel and Samuel travel around in a black carriage pulled by two black horses, seeking out places where unsolved homicides have occurred. They too were on their way to Constantinovich's manor to attend the conclave, but got caught in the storm and checked into the inn a few hours before the player characters. They are found in the dining room when the characters arrive.

Samuel is tall and strong, with shoulder-length dark brown hair and kind blue eyes. He has a talent for connecting with people. In his youth, Samuel dreamed of getting away from the rough life on the road and getting himself an education at Cambridge University. He brings with him a large collection of books on paranormal entities and phenomena, and is often seen with his nose buried in these tomes.

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



DANIEL CAMPBELL

"My carriage is my pride and joy."

Daniel is the older of the brothers. He was trained from childhood to hunt monsters and ghosts. He feels responsible for his brother Samuel, whom he has looked after since they were children, as their mother died young and their father was always traveling. Daniel is of average height, has light brown hair and almond shaped brown eyes, and is not an easy man to get to know. He has a soldier's body with scars from numerous battles. He wears a knee-length coat and an old revolver in a holster, and carries a leatherbound book where he collects stories from the brothers' adventures. He often sits around drinking by himself to silence the memories of all the horrors he has witnessed.

- ◆ Physique 5 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 4
- ◆ **FORCE 5 CLOSE COMBAT 4 AGILITY 2 STEALTH 3 RANGED COMBAT 2 VIGILANCE 2**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 3
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Revolver, combat knife with strange symbols



KARIN KARASKEVA

"The songs teach us about the forgotten peoples."

The runo singer Karin Karaskeva has wavy white hair and wears a traditional Votic costume from the area and a beautifully embroidered headdress. On her lap she has some knitting that always keeps her hands busy while she sings. She is knitting warm clothes for her newborn great-grandchild. Karin knows hundreds of stories about vaesen, powerful people and wizards, as well as local creation myths. Karin got caught in the blizzard on the way to her family farm, and is sitting in the dining room when the player characters arrive. She is very familiar with the domovoi, and can relate information about them to the player characters.

- ✦ **Physique 2 Precision 3**
Logic 4 Empathy 4
- ✦ **VIGILANCE 3 OBSERVATION 4**
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 3 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knitting

THE DINING HALL

The dining hall on the ground floor of the inn is spacious and open and has a brick stove with a fireplace. There is a huge bear skin in front of the fireplace, and a number of chairs and tables have been set up nearby. The room is warm and smells deliciously of food and ale. There are often guests sitting at the tables, eating food served by Krööt and Imre. An open wooden staircase leads to the second floor where the family's rooms and the guest rooms are located.

CHALLENGES

Below are a number of events and challenges that may arise at the dining hall on the player characters' first evening at the inn:

- ✦ A long-haired gray cat steps right in front of one of the player characters. The character trips and must pass an **AGILITY** test not to fall and get hurt (physical condition).
- ✦ Late at night the guests gather by the fireplace to share stories. Axel Trygg says that it is tradition at the inn, and invites the player characters to join in – they can tell stories about past mysteries or something else entirely, true or fictitious. Each participating player character makes an **INSPIRATION** test – on success another player character heals one mental condition. The other guests' stories are presented in text boxes on page 82. See the boxed text on page 81 for advice on how to manage the storytelling in your game.

CLUES

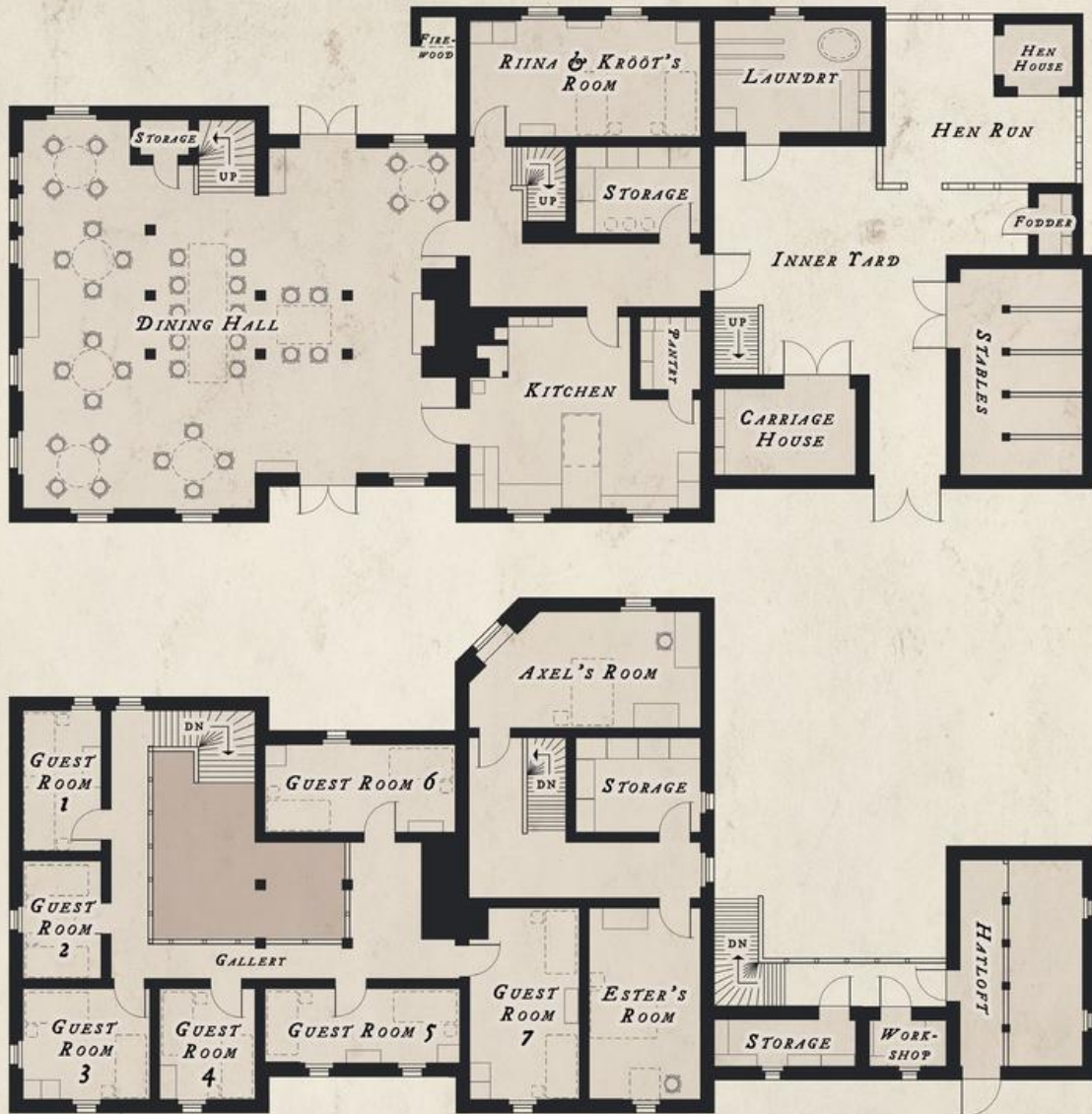
There is a great deal of information to collect in the dining room, mostly by talking to Axel Trygg and the other guests at the inn. As a rule, it takes a successful **MANIPULATION** test to get an NPC to open up, except during storytelling evenings (see above).

- ✦ Axel can tell them more about the history of his family and the inn (see *Background* on page 69).
- ✦ On the mantelpiece is a painted portrait of a fair-haired, middle-aged woman with green eyes and her hair worn in elaborate braids. If asked, Axel explains that the woman is his sister, Ester, who

T A M M S A L U

I N N

M A I N B U I L D I N G



1 2 3 4 5 METERS



passed away a few months earlier. “She was a dreamer, a sensitive soul, and ever since she was a child she would often speak to invisible friends. Now nothing can bring me my sister back.” Axel can also tell them that Ester was found dead in the pond last spring (see *Background* on page 69).

- ◆ If the player characters ask about her hairstyle, Axel replies: “Ester often woke up with her hair arranged in the most beautiful braids. I still don’t understand how it happened.” The memory brings a tear to his eye.
- ◆ The NPCs’ tales contain clues that may be helpful in solving the mystery – Axel recounts the history of the farm, Mrs. Karaskeva sings of domovoi, and Ilya tells the story of Father Frost. Other stories may contain false leads – Ms. afZimt speaks of restless spirits and departed relatives revealing the truth about their deaths. The Campbell brothers tell the story of the White Lady, a revenant who avenges her own death by arranging accidents.

- ◆ If the player characters ask Mrs. Karaskeva, she explains that her runo song was about the farm’s domovoi – a vaesen that protects people’s home and hearth, but that the characters recognize as a nisse. Domovoi are powerful creatures who protect their hearth and can sometimes bring good fortune, but they may also cause trouble if treated badly – which is why it is customary to leave them food. In Russia, domovoi are believed to live in the hearth of the house or the sauna, and to protect the household if they are well cared for. If the family moves to a different house, the domovoi come with them in a small birchbark shoe. If the players make a **MANIPULATION** roll, Mrs. Karaskeva can give more information about the domovoi/nisse. Give one piece of information for each success rolled:
 - The best way to appease a scorned nisse is to give him porridge, bread, or milk, and a bit of attention.
 - Nissar can be bound with spider silk. This robs them of their power and prevents them from breaking free.
 - A nisse can be killed with a nail from a dilapidated farmhouse. The nail must be driven through the nisse’s heart.

ROLEPLAYING THE STORYTELLING

The telling of tales in the Dining Hall can be played out in different ways, depending on the preferences of your gaming group. If the players want to tell stories this is a good opportunity to let them develop and describe their characters, perhaps by describing the Trauma of their first meeting with a vaesen (page 18 of the core rulebook). These stories can be told by the players or managed summarily with an **INSPIRE** roll. The player characters can also decline to tell stories, and just listen to the NPCs. The NPCs’ stories can be read by you as a GM, or you can ask players read them for variety.

VILMA AF ZIMT'S STORY

"I have been able to communicate with spirits since I was eleven years old. One and a half years ago I was at my family home in Sigtuna to attend the funeral of my niece Alva. She went missing on her way home from school. The police and volunteers organized a search party in the woods between the school and our family home, but Alva could not be found. My sister was inconsolable and told me that, since Alva's disappearance, she had been hearing a strange knocking inside the house and that items had suddenly fallen over or switched places. On the advice of our priest, the family finally arranged a funeral with an empty casket to honor the girl's memory. The night after the funeral I woke up freezing in my room, and when I looked up, I thought I saw Alva's face in a mirror. As I went to put the light on, a book suddenly fell from its shelf. The open page displayed a picture of an abandoned old cottage in the woods. In the morning I went over there. The house was empty and there was nothing but old junk in its dilapidated rooms. I was about to head back when I suddenly saw Alva standing by the old well. I walked over there. The rotten well cover was broken. "Help me, auntie" said a voice from the darkness. I ran for help and returned with my relatives. The remains of a girl were lifted out of the blackness of the well. It was our Alva who had showed me the way to her lifeless body. I could not save her, but I could give her peace."



ILYA'S STORY

"Here in the woods, we are all exposed to the cruelty of nature that you people experienced. The cold has a name here – Morozko, or Father Frost. In one of the neighboring villages there was once a woman who had a daughter she adored and a stepdaughter she hated. One day the woman told her husband to take the stepdaughter out into the winter fields and leave her there to die. Blinded by love, he obeyed. Morozko found her there. She was polite and kind to him, so he gave her a chest full of beautiful things and fine

garments. A few days later the stepmother sent the girl's father to bring back her body to be buried. He found her alive by a tree, surrounded with precious gifts. When the stepmother saw what the girl had brought back, she told her husband to leave her own daughter out in the wintry cold. Unlike her stepsister, this child was rude to Morozko, and so he froze her to death. When her body was found, the mother bitterly regretted what she had done and that she had not taught her daughter kindness. Ester always used to say that human kindness is the one thing that can ward off the cold."



THE CAMPBELL BROTHERS' STORY

"We recently investigated several mysterious deaths between Jamburg and Narva. Multiple people had been killed in strange accidents where their carriages had run off the road. One poor soul survived long enough to tell us that he had seen a woman in white on the road just before he lost control of the horses. White ladies come in many forms. They are usually the revenant of a woman who was betrayed and murdered, or who died a violent death by her own hand because of unrequited love. Speaking with the locals, we realized that it could be the revenant of a woman who was murdered by her own groom on the way home from their wedding. She has haunted the roads around the village ever since, mad with grief and revenge. We searched the woods and found her body in a clearing. She was still wearing her wedding dress, with her head tilted at an unnatural angle. Suddenly we could see her in front of us. Restless spirits are violent, and she slammed Daniel into a tree with such force that it knocked him senseless. That was the last time she exacted her revenge, and her ghost turned to dust before our eyes."



KARIN KARASKEVA'S SONG

Axel walks up to the old woman sitting closest to the fire. "It's an honor to have you here, Mrs. Karaskeva." He turns to the other guests. "Karin Karaskeva is a runo singer with deep knowledge of local folklore and vaesen. She has a remarkable memory and knows thousands of runos – or songs – from the area, as well as hundreds of old proverbs. Would you please contribute to our evening with something from your vast repertoire?" Mrs. Karaskeva looks up, and for a moment the room feels a little warmer and the dying fire springs back to life. After finishing her song, she explains, in broken Swedish, that the song was about a domovoi who did not like the household's new horse. One morning the farmer found the horse all sweaty in its stall. The nisse had taken the form of a weasel and ridden and tickled the horse until it was utterly exhausted. Finally, the farmer bought some bells and tied them around the horses' neck, which made the nisse leave him alone. When the runo singer is done talking, she leaves a piece of bread and splash of ale on the mantelpiece. Axel laughs and gently says that his mother and grandmother would do that as well. "They were really superstitious."

RUNO SINGERS

A runo singer is a kind of living storybook through whom traditional songs, proverbs, and tales are preserved. The songs are written in a particular meter, known as runometer, which gives them a certain rhythm and through repetitions and alliterations help the runo singers remember the long poems and songs. Runo singers are found in several countries at the time of this adventure and were particularly important for unwritten languages like Votic and Ingrian. Runo singers would often travel to different villages and perform at family celebrations and festivities.

ESTER TRYGG'S ROOM

Even though it has been months since she died, Ester's room is still empty. It has been cleaned and smells pleasantly of fresh spruce. In the room is a wardrobe, a large bed with a beautifully crafted headboard of pine, and by the little window is a chair and a small table covered with books.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ Ester's bedroom door is locked, but the player characters can ask Axel to have a look at it or steal the key which is hanging on a hook in the inn's key cabinet. They can also pick the lock with **STEALTH** or kick the door in with **FORCE** (although Axel will quickly arrive on the scene and be far from happy if anyone tries the latter).

CLUES

- ✦ The player characters can find a leatherbound book on the table. This is Ester's diary, and it contains many thoughts on topics great and small and on daily life at the farm. But one particular entry, from last summer, catches the player characters' interest – see *Handout 4B*.

ESTER'S DIARY

June 17th. Two weeks ago, Ilya proposed to me. I had no choice but to turn him down. He wanted to take me away from the inn to a life in Saint Petersburg. He doesn't understand. I responded coldly, even though it broke my heart. Ilya had bought me a beautiful silver comb. It must have cost a fortune. I said that I already had another friend. In a way I do, always did. And Axel needs me here. The inn means everything to me, and I want to do everything in my power to manage our heritage. Ilya's expression darkened, like a thunderstorm over the forest in the summer, and he left the farm. He has not returned. At night, when the house goes quiet, I wonder if I made the right choice.

AXEL TRYGG'S ROOM

Opposite the door is a deep window niche overlooking the pond and the great oak tree. The room is simply furnished – there is a bed with a carved headboard, a nightstand with a bible, a wardrobe, and a rug woven in the style of the region with colorful runes in the pattern. In a corner stands a desk with books and paper on it. An old birchbark shoe hangs framed and glazed on the wall.

CLUES

- ◆ On the desk are financial documents, books on card games, and plans for the new stable with more room for carriages.
- ◆ The birchbark shoe is the one his family brought with them from Sweden, along with Grayfoot. It is a clue that there is a nisse at the inn.

GUEST ROOMS

There are seven guest rooms at the inn, all decorated with simple but well-crafted furniture. Each room has two beds and a nightstand. The Campbell brothers are staying in room 1, Ilya in room 2, Vilma af Zimt in room 4, and Karin Karaskeva in room 7. The other rooms are available for the player characters to use.

STABLE

The stable is old but well-kept. Inside the building it is warm and smells of hay and manure. The walls are lined with stalls where the Trygg family's horses are standing along with those from the stagecoach. There are beams and a hayloft overhead. Ilya spends much of his time tending the horses at the stables.

CHALLENGES

- ◆ As the player characters enter the stable, a heavy bucket suddenly drops from one of the beams in the ceiling. A random player character must pass an **AGILITY** test to leap out of the way and not get hit by the bucket (physical condition). If asked about the bucket, Ilya is surprised – he is sure that he put it on the floor just moments ago.

CLUES

- ◆ If the player characters wish to speak with Ilya, they will most likely find him here. After being successfully **MANIPULATED** he can tell them about his unrequited love for Ester (see character description on page 73).
- ◆ One of the stagecoach horses was injured in the accident. A player character who examines the horse will see that its leg has been neatly wrapped and bandaged. The horse's mane is plaited into elaborate braids, which as far as the player character remember were not there before.
- ◆ A player character can see a small gray figure disappear around the corner of the sauna. Characters who try to follow it will find no trace of the figure.

THE NISSE GRAYFOOT

The nisse Grayfoot has followed the Tryggs for generations and moved with them to Ingria from the family farm near Falun. Grayfoot has an intense look in his amber eyes and appears as a little old man in rough worker's clothes and a gray hat, with a long, braided beard. He speaks an old form of Swedish, as well as several other languages he has picked up over the years. He speaks tersely and has a grumpy demeanor, but his heart is in the right place. The nisse has a varied relationship with the family on the farm. As long as they stay on his good side, he is well behaved and loyal to the household. Grayfoot loved Ester who had talked to him since childhood and would always leave some bread, milk, or porridge by the stove. He was deeply distressed to see Ester collapse by the pond but knew that her life was beyond saving. Like Axel he has mourned her in his own way, and some of the trouble he is causing is his way of acting out. Axel's neglect and the fact that he is allowing card games at the inn have made the nisse angry and vengeful. Grayfoot can turn into a long-haired cat and will do so in order to move among the guests at the inn. Occasionally the cat knocks over someone's beer mug or steals a player character's seat when she goes to the outhouse. A player character may also feel a presence

in her room and suddenly notice the cat glaring back at her with contempt.

Grayfoot has the stats and characteristics of an ordinary nisse (see page 148 of the core rulebook).

THE STAGECOACH

About an hour's walk from the inn is the stagecoach in which the player characters arrived. They can return here to fetch Vilma af Zimt's tarot deck (see the boxed text to the right) or retrieve their own lost possessions.

As they return to the stagecoach, the characters find it covered by a thick layer of snow and surrounded by huge snow-laden spruce trees. The place looks peaceful now. The stagecoach is lying on its side with the group's possessions scattered in the snow around it.

CHALLENGES

The characters can encounter several challenges at the stagecoach.

- ◆ On their walk to and from the stagecoach, each player character must pass a **FORCE** test to withstand the cold (page 72). An additional test must be made after each attempt to find items in the snow, except after the first. This is a good time for one of the characters to have a vision of Father Frost (page 74).
- ◆ The player characters must pass an **INVESTIGATION** test to find Vilma af Zimt's tarot deck or any other item lost in the snow. Multiple attempts are allowed, but after each attempt (except the first) the character must make another **FORCE** test to endure the cold.

CLUES

The player characters can gain several clues from their visit to the stagecoach:

- ◆ On the driver's seat lies a portrait of Ester Trygg. It belonged to Ilya, which he admits if asked.
- ◆ A player character who stops and looks into the forest can see a figure in white moving silently across the snow. If the character tries to follow it, the figure vanishes without a trace.

THE TAROT READING

At some appropriate point during the player characters' investigations, the esoterist Vilma af Zimt (page 74) will use divination cards, known as tarot, to determine whether the inn is haunted by a revenant. But she needs someone to fetch her tarot deck which she left in the stagecoach after the accident. She asks the player characters to go and get it (possibly along with the coachman Ilya if he is still alive). For more information, see *The Stagecoach* to the left.

When she gets her cards back, Vilma can use them to find out what is going on in the house. She places her strange hand-painted cards on the dining room table. Anyone is welcome to join her. Her fingers move over the strange cards which she spreads like a fan. She slowly flips three cards, one at a time. She gives the group a long, curious look and explains that the cards reflect different aspects of the situation, but they don't provide an unequivocal truth.

"The cards are only a tool in our search and require interpretation. They can mean different things for different people. Today they seem to be raising more questions than they answer."

There are three cards on the table – see *Handout 4C*. The player characters can make a **LEARNING** test to access the following information about how these cards can be interpreted:

- ◆ **THE STAR:** Hope, openness, the unconscious, a flood of emotions, Venus.
- ◆ **THREE OF SWORDS:** Sorrow, heartbreak, pain.
- ◆ **THE HERMIT:** A quest for truth, withdrawal from others, solitude.

THE SAUNA

The sauna is located by the frozen pond behind the inn, under the sprawling branches of the oak tree. People come here to heat water and have a wash. There is a fire burning in an open hearth in the middle of the anteroom. Wooden benches have been placed around the fire, and on the walls there are iron hooks for hanging up clothes. Wooden buckets can be filled with water and placed in the sauna for heating. There are also bundles of birch twigs which can be used to gently whip one's body. A large long-haired cat is stretched out on a pelt by the hearth and its crackling fire.

This is a smoke sauna. When it is time to heat it up, a window is opened and a fire is lit under the sauna stones. The smoke then pours out of the window which is blackened around the edges. Once the firewood has burned down and the stones are hot, the window is closed and the sauna bath can begin. Inside the sauna there are stepped benches to sit on and a wooden bucket and a ladle for pouring water on the stones. It smells strongly of smoke, but the air is smooth and pleasant to breathe.

CLUES

- ♦ In a corner of the sauna is a silver comb, partially concealed under the firewood. The player characters can find it by searching around the firewood or passing an **INVESTIGATION** test.
- ♦ In the sauna there are several carved wooden figurines of animals, adorned with intricate patterns. They must have been carved and decorated by a master craftsman.

CONFRONTATION

The climax of this mystery could play out in many different ways. If the player characters figure out that the accidents at the farm are likely caused by a nisse, they would do well to leave him some food and attract his attention. Grayfoot will then reveal himself to the characters. Exactly when this happens and how hard

he is to please should depend on how quickly the players reach this conclusion. If the player characters cannot figure it out on their own, the runo singer Karin Karaskeva can nudge them in the right direction.

One place where Grayfoot is likely to show himself is by the inn's fireplace. First the player characters see the cat jump down from its spot by the stove and disappear behind the fireplace. The hearth gives off a dim glow that provides neither light nor warmth. Then the characters see him, first as a shadow in the corner, but then a little old man appears before them wearing light gray clothes and a knitted hat. He fixes his gaze on Axel, if he is present. "So, you finally see me, boy."

ATTACKING THE NISSE

The player characters can try to bind the nisse with spider silk, drive him away by force, or even try to kill him with a rusty nail – but this will bring disaster to the farm and likely end with everyone at the inn freezing to death (see *Catastrophe*). You can have the runo singer Karin Karaskeva or even Axel intervene if the player characters decide to use violence against the nisse.

APPEASING THE NISSE

The wisest solution is to speak with the nisse and make him see reason. That is the only way to gain protection from the dreadful cold outside. But the conversation with Grayfoot is a balancing act – the grief over Ester's death has left him sullen and easily offended (see character description on page 84). He can now also tell the player characters how Ester died from a stroke.

The player characters and Axel must convince the nisse that he will no longer be ignored and that he is important to the farm. The nisse fears that he will be forgotten. He wants Axel to promise that he will keep presenting him with gifts and possibly abandon his plans about arranging card games at the inn. Roleplay the conversation with Grayfoot and add a few **MANIPULATION** tests if you like. However, no

single failure should derail the characters' attempts to reason with the nisse, but simply make things a bit harder.

THE GHOST HUNTERS

At some appropriate time before Grayfoot lets himself be placated by the player characters, the situation is further complicated by the Campbell brothers' involvement. This can happen in a variety of ways.

Initially the brothers are convinced that Ester's spirit is causing the accidents in the form of a revenant (see page 150 of the core rulebook). They urge Axel to show them where she is buried, so that they can salt and burn her remains – a method they claim can banish revenants. At first Axel refuses, but as more accidents occur and the temperature keeps dropping, he finally gives in, and the brothers go through with their plan unless they are stopped by the player characters – see *Catastrophe* on page 75.

Even if the brothers are prevented (through force or persuasion) from burning Ester's remains, they may still cause trouble during the confrontation with Grayfoot. They have done their homework and know that nissar can be killed with a rusty nail through the heart. They attack Grayfoot when he appears, thinking it will save the inn. They do not realize that the nisse's protection is the only thing that can save the inn from the terrible cold of Father Frost.

The brothers might show up and cause trouble just as the player characters are on their way to talking some sense into Grayfoot. Samuel and Daniel try to convince the characters that they are right, but will not hesitate to use violence to get their way. This may lead to combat, but the player characters can also settle the situation by **MANIPULATING** the brothers – but it will not be easy, as they must be dealt with individually.

If Ester's grave is desecrated or if the player characters or the Campbell brothers harm the nisse, Grayfoot will abandon the inn for good, leaving the characters and the others to their fate (see the countdown).

RECONCILIATION

If the threat from the Campbell brothers is averted and Axel and the player characters succeed in appeasing Grayfoot, the nisse lights up and places his hand on the hearthstone. "I think we finally understand each other, master Axel." The nisse fades before the player characters' eyes, and they can feel a pulse – almost like a heartbeat – emanating from Grayfoot and spreading through the guests, the room, the house, and the garden. The fire flares up and a lovely warmth fills the room.

AFTERMATH

If Axel and the player characters convince Grayfoot to stay, the group will gain his protection, the fire at the inn will burn hot once again, and the people and animals will be safe from the ruthless cold. The blizzard subsides and outside the snow glitters in the winter sun. In the great hall of the inn one can hear the cozy sound of the fire spreading its pleasant warmth through the room. The cook Riina is making porridge, and before serving it to the guests she places a bowl of porridge and a jug of milk by the stove.

A man with a sleigh comes bearing a message from Count Constantinovich. The conclave has been postponed. The player characters can return to Saint Petersburg or continue their journey towards other destinations.



To whom it may concern,

My name is Jenny and I turn to your society, for I know not what else to do. I am but the humble owner of Swärd's Farm, situated in Nusnäs in Mora Parish.

It all started one morning when Pers Ida, a kulla working at the fäbodvall of Födal, woke up on the shore of Lake Siljan with no recollection of how she got there. She had gone to bed with the other kullas as usual. The whole thing was very strange and several of the kullas have been worried ever since.

I write to you now in the wake of two of my cows drowning in the lake, despite the fence that was supposed to contain them. Someone, or something, led them there. I'd like to believe that none of the kullas would ever do something so callous, but I worry that someone might be hiding something from me.

The police would not listen, and so I turn to you. I am convinced that something unnatural is at work, and that it is coming for us.

Having no one else to help me, I sincerely hope that this letter reaches you and that you will find it in your hearts to offer your assistance and expertise.

Please reply with haste and I shall meet you in Mora.

Yours humbly,
Swärd's Jenny

1A: Swärd's Jenny's letter

Meddlesome people
like you would be
wise to leave.
Let us handle this
ourselves.

1B: The note on the bed

My darling Boel,
Your hair is as beautiful as freshly
spun strings, and your voice is like
the most exquisite music. You are the
fairest woman I know. You make my
heart beat like a drum inside my
chest. It beats for you, and for you
alone.
But I know that your heart beats
for another. I know that he, too,
is a fiddler.
But I promise, my love, that the
time will soon come when I will be
the greatest fiddler Fudal has ever
seen, and then you will not be able
to resist me. Together we shall make
very sweet music indeed.
Your loving Jons Gustav

1C: Jons Gustav's love letter

Since the cow disappeared, I've tried
to keep a lookout at night. Yesterday
I saw something by the cove.
I thought I saw someone in the water.
But the thing that surprised me most
was a woman speaking to the strange
figure. I could not see who it was
before she ran away. She must have
seen me. I have to find out who this
was. Perhaps that is the key to what
is going on?

1D: Excerpt from Pers Ida's diary

My beloved,

Run away with me and be mine.
With his fiddle I shall be free
from the pact that keeps me here,
and you will hear the sweetest of
music. But if he comes after you,
use this knife, for it has cut the
strings of fiddles. Stick it in the
ground and it will protect you.

I'm sorry about the poor cat and
the fate it suffered. I hope you
will forg~~ive~~

1E: Jons Gustav's unfinished letter

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alfred Härenstam, from Häiryd parish in Smolandia. I turn to your esteemed Society as I see no other solution to my current predicament. It concerns my dear brother and best friend, August. All my life he has been very close to me, and together we founded the Häiryd Ironworks by the shore of Lake Hären. Our workers scraped up the iron ore from the bottom of the lake, and in the blast furnace we smelted it into ingots.

As you have no doubt heard, Smolandia is these days ravaged by drought, crop failure, and poverty. Our beloved parents could not cope with this ordeal and they both expired a week ago. I buried them yesterday and I write these lines in the light of a single candle on our family farm. My dear late mother was interested in the supernatural, and she is the one from whom I learned of your Society.

I see no alternative but to leave these godforsaken lands and seek my fortune in America, like so many before me. But I cannot do so without my brother August, who still runs the ironworks. He has cast me out and threatened to kill me if I ever return.

August is in the grip of madness. A she-devil in the guise of a preacher has twisted his mind. This woman, Beata Gideonsdotter, presents herself as a proclaimer of God's word, but I suspect that she is in fact a servant of Lucifer himself.

I ask that you come to our family farm in Häiryd at the earliest opportunity, to smoke out this Evil and save my brother's soul.

*Most respectfully,
Alfred Härenstam*

2A: Alfred Härenstam's letter

In the woods south of the town of Gnosjö lies *Lake Hären*. Local elders speak of this black lake with reverence. Legend has it that a ferocious beast roamed these parts hundreds of years ago, and that the villagers banded together to slay the monster. In the terrible battle that followed, the army drove the beast back into its cave and a mighty sorceress called down a rainstorm of such magnitude that it flooded the entire valley and submerged the cave. The lake that formed was named Hären—meaning ‘The Army’ in the local tongue—in honor of the brave warriors who died fighting the beast.

2B: Excerpt from Myths and Folk Tales of Smolandia

June 23rd

I've done it at last. I made it. I never thought I'd find the cave again, but now my knapsack is bursting with glittering gold. More than enough to realize our dream of an ironworks by the shore of Lake Hären. The ore is right there, waiting for us. Our dream. Mine and Alfred's. My dear brother!

How many times over the years have we sought the hidden crevice, hoping to find our way back to the cave in the woods on the other side of Hären, where we as boys found the resting Beast? Why did I find it this time? It must have been God's providence—the Lord showed me the way when I needed it the most.

The Merciful also saved me from the Beast's wrath. The foul Serpent writhed in his sleep, but it did not wake. It didn't see me steal his coins. It didn't even notice me lighting my lantern from his fiery breath.

I have stolen the beast's gold and taken his fire. I may be a thief, but stealing from a Demon of Hell is surely a service to the Lord. Everything will be different now, all of Smolandia shall know the name Härenstam. But Alfred must never know what I have done.

2C: August Härenstam's diary entry

Dear friends,

I have received an urgent message from our Danish comrades, and I fear that dark forces are at work. If there is any truth to the references to Sandemann, the situation is extremely serious. Kindly visit me at the asylum as soon as possible, and prepare to leave the country.

Yours sincerely,
Linnea

3A: Linnea's letter

From the Viborg Post Office to
Upsala Telegraph Station

Esteemed mistress

Require immediate assistance
STOP Clear demonic presence on
Grimsted Lyng STOP Attacks on
the Moorland Society's work
camp STOP Unnatural damages on
equipment STOP The men
frightened out of their wits
STOP Anger and foolery from the
locals STOP Afraid it is G
Sandemann's devil STOP Awaiting
your arrival at the Grimsted
Tavern STOP

3B: Preben Rasmussen's telegram

**PROGRESS IS COMING
TO DARKEST JUTLAND**

Using the very latest in technology and science, industrious engineers from the royal capital of Copenhagen have taken upon themselves to civilize the barren moors of the Jutland peninsula. It is the Danish Society for Moorland Reclamation, which many of our readers will already be familiar with, that is launching this manful initiative. The bogs shall be drained, the heather weeded out, and Germanic trees with virile roots shall be planted to keep the soil firm and shelter crops from the windblown sand. Furthermore, they shall use the latest marvels of artificial fertilizer, developed by the hardworking and ingenious research engineers at the Polytechnical University of Denmark. One of these fearless torchbearers of civilization is the renowned steam engineer Preben Rasmussen, who will be leading the Moorland Society's expedition to the vast moor of Grimsted Lyng: a primitive and godforsaken part of Denmark which according to Rasmussen might as well be in darkest Africa. "I have humbly accepted the noble task of ensuring civilization and human progress", said Mr. Rasmussen to our reporter. He adds that his only worry is how the local population will react to his steam engine: "One hears of the Luddite lunatics in England."

3C: Newspaper article about the Moorland Society

Although studies of the chthonic forces are always difficult to conduct and hazardous to life and limb, the history of Nordic science contains numerous examples that even rival international luminaries such as the fearless brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm in Germany and the grandmaster alchemist Isaac Newton. One important pioneer in our own corner of the world is the Danish Gabriel Sandemann, who in the decades between Bonaparte's wars and the advent of the railroad travelled among peasants and commoners to document their relationship to the subterrrestrial. Sandemann was an imposing man—tall and strong in body and soul—who during his many travels through the Danish peasant society, in its final bloom, collected thousands of legends and eyewitness accounts of underground vaesen and their relationship to mankind. Perhaps most remarkable of all is his documentation of the wondrous yet fearsome vaesen haunting the famous Danish moors.

3D: Fragment from Underground Vaesen and Their Worshipers in the North

I shall refer to this winged vaesen as "the Devil on the Moor", as there is no doubt whatever about its infernal origins. It is venerated as a guardian angel by the moorland folk, and so it has been since time immemorial. These poor blinded people — it is scarcely an exaggeration to call them fools or the savages of Danevang — are paying a terrible price for this demonic protection. Blood and souls are what I speak of. Blood and souls. They have always sacrificed children to the powers of the moor, forever branding their immortal souls for the Dark One and the realm of everlasting torment.

3E: Sandemann's journal: The Devil on the Moor

Grimsted Hus is a savage place of folly and ungodly barbarism, but even here our Lord has planted a solitary seed of Christian decency. She is a girl of peasant stock, named Signe Andersdotter, but she has a good head on her shoulders and even seems to be literate. Through this pure, innocent creature I have gained access to the inner secrets of the moorland peasantry, and at times I feel that the truth — the glimpse of reality that my campaign for enlightenment has uncovered — is too heavy for one man to bear. But there is no longer any doubt on the matter: devil worship has been practiced here for millennia, and the beating heart of this ancient cult is Grimsted Hus.

3F: Sandemann's journal: Devil Worship at Grimsted Hus



3G: Daguerreotype of Signe Andersdotter

To whom it may concern,

My name is Constantine Constantinovich, Count of Jamburg in Ingria, west of Saint Petersburg in the Russian Empire. Your Society's reputation is known far and wide among those who seek to observe the unseen and understand the inexplicable. I have the utmost respect for your work, and like you, I seek answers to the mysteries of the cosmos.

At the midwinter blot I am hosting a gathering which I believe would be of interest to you – Conclavum Sub Rosa. The meeting brings together individuals of different backgrounds with a shared interest in the supernatural, who seek a deeper understanding through the process of alchemy.

It would be a great honor and pleasure to have the Society grace our gathering with its presence. I shall wait for you at my residence outside Jamburg on the twentieth of December, to discuss the secrets and mysteries of life.

*Yours sincerely,
Count Constantine Constantinovich*

P.S. All things are connected!

4A: Count Constantine Constantinovich's letter

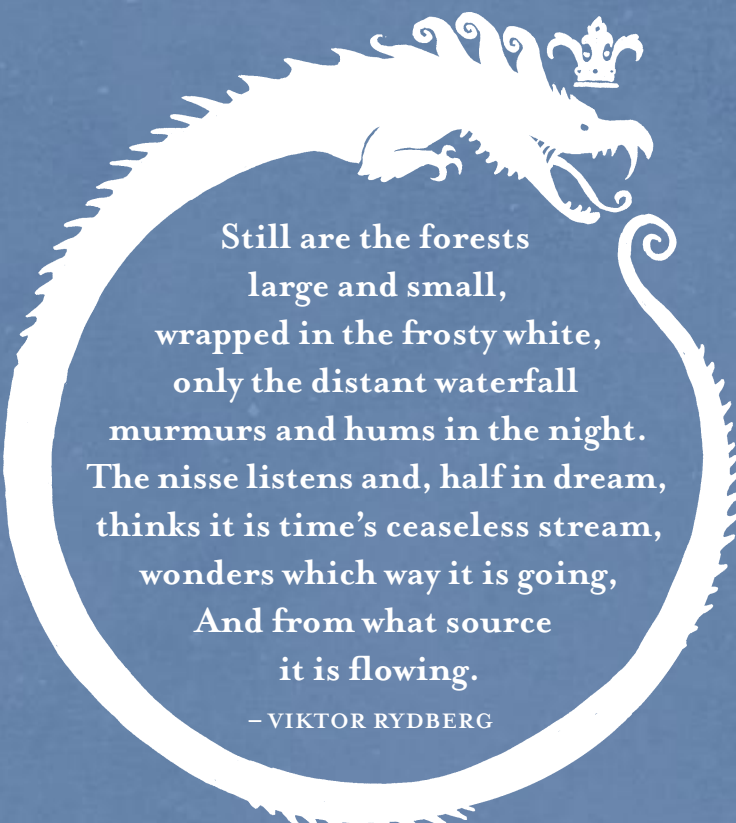
June 17th. Two weeks ago, Ilya proposed to me. I had no choice but to turn him down. He wanted to take me away from the inn to a life in Saint Petersburg. He doesn't understand. I responded coldly, even though it broke my heart. Ilya had bought me a beautiful silver comb. It must have cost a fortune. I said that I already had another friend. In a way I do, always did. And Axel needs me here. The inn means everything to me, and I want to do everything in my power to manage our heritage. Ilya's expression darkened, like a thunderstorm over the forest in the summer, and he left the farm. He has not returned. At night, when the house goes quiet, I wonder if I made the right choice.

4B: Ester's diary



4C: The tarot cards





Still are the forests
large and small,
wrapped in the frosty white,
only the distant waterfall
murmurs and hums in the night.
The nisse listens and, half in dream,
thinks it is time's ceaseless stream,
wonders which way it is going,
And from what source
it is flowing.

– VIKTOR RYDBERG

Within these pages you will find four spine-tingling cases for *Vaesen* – *Nordic Horror Roleplaying*. This book contains four standalone mysteries, one for each season of the year. In these pages you will find:

- ❖ *A Dance with Death* – Travel to the green vales of Dalarna in the springtime to investigate strange events in a remote village.
- ❖ *Fireheart* – During the summer heatwave of the century, journey south to the ironworks of Häryd and confront a fearsome adversary.
- ❖ *The Devil on the Moor* – On the autumnal moors of Denmark, find yourselves in a struggle between the ways of old and the designs of modernity.
- ❖ *A Winter's Tale* – Cross the Baltic Sea and brave the wintry forests of Ingria, where an unknown being stalks the night beneath glittering stars.



FREE LEAGUE

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CONTENT WARNING

The old folk tales often expressed dark and mature themes, and thus the *Vaesen RPG* explores such themes as well. This is a horror game and not suitable for children, at least not without the Game-master first modifying the content.

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