

Shadows in the woods

a WFRP Living Campaign mod

by

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This is the fourth mod in the living campaign. By now your players should feel comfortable with the rules of the and what their characters are capable of. Hopefully, you are as well.

Thematically this mod delves into the sort of physical and spiritual corruption that occur commonly throughout the empire. You will be introducing someone who has been seduced by Chaos but it does not show immediately. There are hints and clues scattered throughout to give your players a chance prior to the final reveal. This mod also explores the culture of the more rural portions of the empire's territories and most importantly, the isolation that one finds in these communities. There will be an automatic distrust that the PCs are confronted with which makes their lives far more complicated than they might be used to.

The characters are going to be pushed to their limits and you face several situations where your players may find themselves needing to make a new one. The fights, while not brutal are nonetheless challenging and require the group to act as a team in order to survive.

Italicized text is to be read to the players as descriptions or responses from NPCs. Feel free to edit and alter as your situation calls for. The non-initialized text is for you. Add it as part of the descriptions as warranted.

Part I: The incident in the tavern

To start this mod read the following: *Early autumn in the Empire, the days are getting shorter and the air is getting cooler. You have found some shelter for the night while on the road to Middenheim, north out of Altdorf and a few days south of the Dark Forest. As you sit down at a table you find familiar faces around. It has been a few weeks since you last saw one another. The coaching inn is busy tonight. Three fights have already been broken up, resulting in beer flowing to make up for it. A troubadour is trying to get an audience going over by the fire but is being upstaged by the gambling in the opposite. The world is tense for outside, the light of Mórrslieb shines down brightly in the night.*

Just as the troubadour has a few peoples' attention the door flies open and four large Norse stumble in. They look around for a second, a bit of panic in their large pale faces, before advancing to your table. As they cross the room one lets out a strangled noise and falls to the ground. His comrades pause, shocked expressions painting their face, and they slowly back away from the body.

A black, withering mass explodes in the middle of the room throwing tables, chairs, and people chaotically. Wild tentacles blossom from the former Norse. Screaming erupts from every direction and the remaining three companions look in your direction, an obvious pleading painted in their faces. What do you do?

[Your players have three choices, talking to the remaining Norse, fighting the black tentacled thing, or turning and running. The last choice ends the mod. They get their 25xp for playing and the world goes on without them.

Stats for Black Tentacle Monster:

BS	WS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
0	45	30	30	40	0	20	0
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	F
5	17	3	3	--	--	--	--

It employs a grab-and-strangle strategy. Each of the five tentacles will attack a different person. It is anchored where the Norseman fell and can't move. The reach of the tentacle is fifteen feet. The grab has a 25% of pinning an arm and making it useless. The first few grabs can be made against the other tavern goers or against the Norsemen if you feel the characters need some time to get on their feet or are doing badly. It has no intelligence and acts randomly. The body of the creature is not completely solid and blunt weapons will have a tougher time damaging it. Blunt = 2xTB on soak calculations.

Read the following: *The body of the fallen Norseman has been completely subsumed by the black mass. The tentacles are glossy but not slick, picking up random bits of debris on their surface as they search about for victims. One of the Norsemen pulls out his sword and takes a swipe at the creature, cutting it and sending a bit of black ichor splattering across his face.*

After the fight: *The remaining Norsemen come up to you. They all begin to shout in their own language, each of them trying to get you to pay attention.*

Give the players a chance to figure out how to calm them down or employ language skills appropriate to the situation. Drinks will definitely help and the tavern owner is more than happy to supply a few for those who just took care of that monster.]

The Norsemen introduce themselves as Reidar, Sijur, and Hagen. They go on to reveal part of their story:

"It was those peasants," Reidar pants. His friend's eyes catch fire.

"Ja. There is a village, three or four days from here," Sijur states. "Follow path from main road, where sign is. They did this to Jorgen. He was fine until tonight when the cursed moon rose. Name of village is Smitzberg."

Hagen nods at the first two. "I dunno what they did to us. There was always darkness and strange sounds. Bestial sounds. There was this foul smoke that made us sleep and when we wake, Jorgen was gone. A day or two later he would be back just as before. No memories."

They look bashful if asked how long they were held. *"Weeks or months, we do not know. No good way to mark the days besides sleep."*

"When we escaped, we left behind gifts to Wolf God. They are not important to the villagers but are to us. If you go and bring them back, we will give you coins. Many coins. Or something else. You want something else?"

[If the players are unable or unwilling to see the groundwork being laid, have the door suddenly fly open and Ilsa standing there. She will question the Norsemen and clearly intimidate them. She will then convey that these gifts are relics and should

be recovered. If anything would happen to them, well, let's not talk of that.

It is likely that the PCs will want to get some information about this village they're going to.

Gossip Results

Make: You get some basic information. Smitzberg is real and a few day's travel up the road towards Middenheim. **+1 Margin:** They've heard of it, but not visited it in the last year, but even then the village was in some straights. Their lord had not visited in some time and the mayor there was starting to get a little desperate for defense. Mercenaries had taken off with the money and goods without providing protection.

+2 Margins: That is not a good place to go anymore. Something's wrong with that village. I think they've succumbed to the taint.

+3 Margins: Beastmen. I've heard that they're actually negotiating with the damned things to keep them from attacking anymore. Can you believe it? Actually associating like that? Should go find a witchhunter and let them wipe the place off the map.]

Traveling, day one: Nothing major happens. The day is mild not too cold, not too hot. The chaos moon does not shine that night, despite its full splendor being on display the previous one. That's just the way chaos moons go. The night is equally uneventful. Nothing happens during watch.

Travel, day two. Starts off nicely, but mid-morning the skies turn slate gray. The clouds descend in the afternoon and open up right as evening hit. There aren't any coaching inns to be found along the way so you are forced to spend the night in the rain. You do have tents or tarps don't you? During the day you find yourselves having crossed into the Dark Forest. That night, the sounds from the surrounding forest give you a sense of unease. WP checks to ignore them and sleep normally. Otherwise, all checks the next day are at -10% due to the lack of rest.

Travel, day three. The rain continued through the night and into the following morning. The road has turned to mud, making it harder to walk or ride your horse. Ride checks for those on horseback, Toughness checks for those on foot. Any failure results in a delay as you struggle with the mud. More than three failures mean that the characters do not reach the Smitzberg sign indicated by the Norsemen a few days back. In the evening, the rain begins to relent, turning into a very wet mist concealing much around the characters. Again, no inn is found and the characters are forced to sleep outdoors and on the ground. More noises from the woods that night. Second and third watch characters make perception checks. Those that make hear distinctive walking sounds around the camp. The horses are spooked as well (if there are any). More margins mean better detail. The count of creatures is three or four. You hear snorting as if from a goat or ram. As dawn breaks (third watch) a very loud bray can be heard in the woods.

Day four/late day three (if less than three delays). The sign pointing towards Smitzberg is found and the trek into the trees starts. Read the following description for an arrival at night: *It takes most of the rest of day three to reach it, getting you there after nightfall. A lone guard, bearing a lamp stands atop of the palisades over the semi-broken gates.* Read the following for an arrival during the day: *It takes about half of the day to reach the village. Surrounding it is a tattered wooden stockade. Breached*

in some places, patched in others, it offers some protection if nothing else, from the surrounding forest. Two guards stand on opposite sides of a semi-broken gate, looking down on the path you travel.

Either way, append this: *"What business you have coming here?"*

Have the players do their best to talk their way into Smitzberg. Worst comes to worst, have the players make a CK: Empire check. If successful, read the following: *Isolated villages like this one are different from cities or roadside town in many aspects. For one, they exist mainly as way to stay alive. Even the most prosperous ones are strictly concerned about their survival. They may or may not have a sheriff appointed by their Lord. What passes for tradition is often the only law available. Trust is hard for these people. They have often weathered the worst nature and the forces of chaos can send at them. It is not uncommon for places like these to disappear.*

Charm is the easiest way to get in, give those players using it a +10% to their check.

Bluff and Blather get to check straight.

Intimidate and straight fellowship checks are at a -10% penalty.

Assuming the players are able to simply pass the check:

"Well, I best let you in then. Stand back a bit. The gate's not working so well."

You hear ropes begin to creak under a heavy strain. In a few moments a door opens up in the gate a head pops out.

"Follow me and step where I step. We've traps inside just in case."

If you are feeling particularly cruel you can have the players make agility tests to see if they are able, otherwise just let the players to move on and into the village.

The guards, after letting the PCs in say the following: *"So, you'll be needing a place to stay. Can't say we get many visitors, but I think the old Chamsky barn will do you well enough for now. It's at the end of that row of houses. Can't miss it."*

Description of the village: *Smitzberg is typical of the isolated forest village. Built from rough, uncured timbers two dozen ramshackle buildings form two concentric rings around a well. Some are sturdier than others, sporting a second floor. Glass windows stand out in a few buildings where most others have burlap and shutters to keep the weather out. The ground is muddy and a stagnant, a swampy stench rising from it.*

Description of the barn they're staying in: *The Chamsky barn could barely pass for that anywhere else. An open structure, its support poles stand on sinking stones. Part of the back is already touching the ground in several places. A few stalls have half-rotten straw covering them but the ground is mostly dry. The rafters offer up an alternate area to stay dry but a quick inspection has you staring back into several sets of glassy black eyes.*

In case anyone shines a light up there, 50/50 being gigantic owls or a nest of bats, your choice or flip a coin. Either way the point is that no one is sleeping up in the rafters.

If night, wait till next day to meet mayor. Otherwise the characters are invited to meet the mayor for dinner that night.

Description of the Mayor: *The mayor of Smitzberg is Mistress Henrietta. She is about 40 years old. Her hair is a salt and*

pepper mix. When you meet her she wears a nice peasant dress, clean for the most part and holds herself with confidence. She greets you with a cool formality.

“Welcome her Smitzberg. May I inquire as to the nature of your visit?”

[If players did not get the CK: Empire this would be nice time for another shot at it. Otherwise, fellowship and charm would be appropriate here once conversation has been had between the group and the mayor. As for her, she is formal and straightforward. She is not a politician, but the most strategic thinker in the village. But she is guarded in her responses making her seem deceitful and dodging. This should come across in her questions and responses. She probes and sets verbal traps for the characters to fall into. See below for some sample questions to ask and feel free to make up some others if it feels right. The thrust here is that the characters are still trying to find a way to seek out the relics. This might not be easy to bring up in front of the rest of the village, so they may opt for a private meeting, which may or may not happen depending on how well they roll.

You can read some of the following to the players or use it as a guide for your own roleplaying:

“How did you come upon our humble village? It is not exactly on the traveled road.”

“These Norsemen you mention, they are wanted men. They took several days worth of food before disappearing into the woods once again. – No they left nothing behind. If they said they did, they are liars. However, I do find it interesting that you ask. Is there something here that catches your eye? Perhaps our remaining children? Or the amazing walls that protect our homes? Do either of those seem like something you want to take with you?”

“As you can see our walls are not perfect. I suspect there was a hole we had not yet patched and they were able to affect an escape that way.”

OR you can take the lying approach. None of the other villagers will mention them at this time nor will they even try to look like they know what you are talking about here. They are cowed and tired and don't want to deal with Henrietta's wrath.

“We saw no such men as you describe. We've not had any visitors in several months. Not that anyone would have noticed around here.”

“Lord? You ask in seriousness? No. As far as I am concerned, we have no lord. This land is ours and we are protecting our homes on it. If you think that someone else owns it you may want to go tell them that. We could certainly use the help in keeping the hands of chaos off of it.”

Henrietta finishes the meal with the following statement. Your tone should be dismissive and irritated: *“Well thank you for your time. I hope that your stay is a good and quick one,”* much emphasis is placed on the second to last word.

With that the characters are free to wander about this tiny village. If that night, they are asked to find their beds and can start wandering the next morning. Sneaking around at night won't reveal too much if anyone wants to try and do that. In that instance read the following: *The night is as dark as can be. The forest canopy above blocks out any light from the moon and stars, and there are no lamps marking the corners of buildings. It is almost as bad as living in a cave. What little light you can see are a pair of torches set atop the gates you just came through. A couple of shadows up there mark the standing watch.*

A butcher located next door to the blacksmith. They're brothers. Gossip with them (success only, no margins needed) reveals that the butcher hasn't much business for a while and has been relying on his brother's good graces to not kick him out. He has been busy trying to repair everything but could use some new iron to work with. Town's running out of stock and the patch work isn't holding up. Half of the weapons the guards are using need to be melted down and remade but we don't have the time. Or the mayor doesn't think we do. She's in here once a day telling me to get back to work on repairing tools that have no business being repaired. And on top of that she's ask me to make a sword for her? If she wasn't the mayor I'd have her ran out of town. Yeah, I got the blasted thing done last week and gave it to her. Took up my entire reserve of steel to get it made. If one more weapon breaks I don't know what I'll do. Probably start pulling nails out of some of these abandoned houses.

Some small children playing in an alleyway. They appear to be torturing a dog for fun. Something happens if the characters intervene...two things. First, they talk about how hungry they are and how much food there is in the storage house but they're not being given any. That one, just over there, being guarded by those two guys. Second, they want to know what happened to their friends. There were a lot of kids here not too long ago. But not that many now. Our parents are dead. We sleep and watch out for each other. Never sleep in the same place two nights in a row. Plenty of empty houses to hide in or up in the trees.

Perception check reveals the lack of a church or any sort of alter to known gods of the empire. Something's not quite right on that account and talking with the locals is a bit tricky. They don't like you and ganging up on someone is not going to help. There must be an easier way, like bribery or something. [Perception – that alcove over there between those two buildings might have been a shrine but it's been stripped of everything. A man smelling of moonshine goes walking by before falling to his knees in front of it and staring to pray. Anyone approaching him will get curses and swears thrown at them, unless they have a bottle of something better to offer up. If they do try the bribery with a bit of gin, he really gets to talking.

It be about a year ago, I say. Those Beastmen first attacked in force. Threw the village into chaos. We din't have no walls, the forest was enough protection. Lost good men that night including the mayor's husband. He was our mayor at the time. Well it din't take no time to get ourselves thinking all protection-y but the attacks kept coming. People kept praying and was on their knees all the time. The mayor, she lost it one time right after an attack. She came over, slapped people around a bit and tore down the shrine. Just couldn't take it anymore. We've not had any more gods in town since then.

This is an affront to any good citizen of the empire. Everyone

knows that the gods protect and guide them. A few brave souls acknowledge that the gods even test them. But to tear down a shrine is more than a simple affront. It is a desecration. Any priest would be hard pressed to not react angrily at this. Small shrines such as these are polytheistic; all of the recognized gods have a place in it so that any worshiper could make use of it. Anyone with strong beliefs need to make a Willpower check to keep from losing it right then and there. Roleplay as best as possible.

What looks to have been once the town hall has been converted into grain and good storage. The building is two stories tall and fairly sturdy. The front of it is boarded up looking to have been somewhat fortified. It has a couple of peasants guarding it. They give the you a hard time as if you've come snooping. Choice statements: *"By order of the mayor, all food is being rationed. In fact, only the mayor herself is allowed to go in the basement or the rafters to store food. That way we don't get tempted to squirrel away some for ourselves."* And: *"We don't know if there is enough to last through the winter what with the fields being torn up by the Beastmen. How much? Why ain't you being a nosy-nob. Get going, you. Stop nosing around or I'll get the garrison to string you up."*

[Sneaking in isn't that hard. In looking around the rest of the building, the characters find that the back has a couple of windows on the ground floor which are open. They also notice that these windows aren't being watched all that often, as the two guards are lazy and mostly hang out on the front porch. You can have them make Perception checks, but if they are actively looking to get inside, then allow them to notice these things. All the players need to do is stick around and watch for a short time, waiting for an opportunity to jump in one of the open windows. Of course, they still need to keep quiet or else the guards might hear them inside. Do not remind the players if they don't think of it. Make a note of their character's Ag stat and if they have the Silent Move skill. Check every once in a while behind your screen to see if they are able to keep fairly quiet. They need to beat a 25 on the roll. The first floor is empty. **Basement:** *In the basement there are a couple dozen barrels. The closer ones aren't filled up all the way and contain only grain. The older ones in the back have maggots squirming around in them.* **Perception check:** *The floor has strange markings on it. It looks like some sort of ritual was performed here.* **2nd Floor:** *Upstairs on the second floor meat is hanging from the rafters. These are carcasses of deer, stag, and other animals from the surrounding forest. They are decidedly rotten, as you can see maggots squirming and hear flies buzzing around. There are also odd white pustules pulsating on the carcasses. Beneath them, catching the dripping ooze, are sacks of wild fruits and nuts from the forest. If the player opens them: You're unsure what you've just seen. Instead of berries or nuts, there are jade colored pustules throbbing inside the sacks. Pressing on them causes you to find they are hard, yet have a warmth found only in living things.*

The general goods, apothecary, and livery stores are boarded up and closed. A quick perusal reveals that they've been that way for some time.

General goods store: *The windows are mostly intact, although several have been broken. The doors are unlocked but there aren't any signs of people wandering in from the street. A thick layer of dusts covers everything. The most unsettling part is all*

of the goods still lying around untouched. Searching around you can find some dried and salted pork, a few good bolts of wool, lamp oil and so forth. The unscrupulous will even find a handful of coins in the box under the counter.

Apothecary: *Located in a small stall next to the general store, the apothecary looks as if it could be opened up for business. All of the tools are here, albeit under a thick layer of dust. Row after row of small glass vials filled with unusual hues sit untouched on the shelves. A handful of coins sit unmolested in a box under the counter. Dried herbs and jars of preserved ingredients sit ready to be used. Perception/Search – simple make: find a box of five health pots sitting semi-hidden under the floor boards behind the counter.*

Livery: *At first glance, the livery house appears to be completely empty. Further inspection shows that this is not the case. A few skeletons of horses are strung from the ceiling in the back and from the look of it, they were butchered.* If the characters are curious enough and cut the skeletons down for further inspection, they will come across a few interesting tidbits. First, they were badly sick. The horses suffered from a rare disease, not something seen in a long time. Second, this disease doesn't have any visible symptoms signs until just before death. If these horses had been slaughtered before the disease had started showing, then it is likely that whoever did this was not aware of how sick the horses were. Further searching about will reveal a strongbox that has a few sealed scrolls and a small sack of coins. The scrolls have the twin-tail mark of the church of Sigmar. Their contents are in Classical and seem plain. Read/Write check. *It is Classical, but there is a code being employed here.* Beyond that the characters are not able to make head or tails of the text.

There is a sort of bar/inn that most of the peasants-guards spend their time when not on duty. Once inside they see: *There is only one wench working when the character move in for a closer look. She has one eye and several missing teeth. Her clothes are torn and very dirty. "Surlly" is not a strong enough word to describe her attitude. She doesn't just smell of her own particular brand of odor, but that of several of people.* A perception check will spot the three or four under tens children poking their heads from behind a curtain located at the end of the bar. Gossiping around here is not successful no matter how many margins. If the players have not yet heard it, CK: Empire as to why that might be. In addition, if they ask for some food, they will be asked if they would like to have the gruel or the horse stew.

After they get through a meal, read the following: *At midday, a blating horn is heard atop the mostly broken stockade surrounding the village. Shortly peasants come trudging in from outside the wall. They're covered in mud and a few are carrying packs of grains, mushrooms, and wild fruit. A few bear crude weapons that look to be doubling as farming implements. They're obviously tired and stressed. More than a few cast warding signs at the outsiders while struggling under their load. Those with food take it to the guarded house, while the others head for the bar: An hour or so later, another blat happens and the same group looks up wearily, and gather themselves to head out again. But not before the village is attacked.*

A raiding party of Beastmen attack the village. 3 for a group of four or fewer players. 4 for five players and 6 for six or more. Read the following: *You hear shouts from the top of the gate. A*

warning is quickly raised, but not quickly enough to get people out of the way and the gates closed. Beastmen burst inside and rumble towards your position. A few villagers take up weapons and head into the fray.

These are standard Beastmen from the player's guide, pg 228 no alterations for this fight. Use the Beggars from page 233 of the player's guide for villagers.

After the fight, read the following: *In the aftermath of the fight several villagers are found lying on the ground, dead. You find yourselves surrounded by the whole of the village. Some thirty or forty people all told. Most of which are armed with the same tools which just took care of the Beastmen. Everyone looks angry and upset. Henrietta pushes her way through the crowd and addresses you.*

"I don't care why you are here, but you will help us. I'm not giving you a choice. I can't have any more of my people die because of these raids."

"I offer you your lives. I have more than enough people here to overwhelm you and your friends. I can have you tied up to the gates so the next time, all they have to do is cut the ropes and carry you off."

"It may satisfy them for a week or two, but believe me, that's more than enough time for us to recover a little bit. Will you help or will you hang?"

Assuming the characters decide to cooperate:

"The main camp is about a day's travel to the west of here. I don't have any guide to spare to take you there, but Robert," she points to a young man, "can give you directions and help you map out way to get there."

Robert explains to you, "The beastmen's camp is down in a valley about day's travel to the west. They've been there for a while now, a couple of years. At first they didn't ever bother us. We'd see them in the forest but they'd be timid like deer. They'd jump and run away if they hears so much a twig snap. Then the shaman showed up. Got them all organized and whatnot. Then the raids started. Not just the food, but the women and children, too."

There is obviously more of the story to be told but he is holding it back. Players may attempt to bribe, intimidate, or charm to get him to open up. It takes a total of 3 margins or more of any one type of interaction, 4 if the characters choose to use straight Fellowship. Combining different types such as charm and bribery do not work together and only end up confusing Robert.

Once sufficiently brought over the character's side, he tells them the following: *"The shaman came one night and gave us a deal. Let them take the children and they'd stop the raiding. Once every time the cursed moon came out. They'd send a messenger to let us know a day ahead. No more raids, no more dying. 'Course we didn't budge. Tho some wanted to. The mayor seems to regret not giving in. It's taken her husband and more from her."*

If questioned about the Norsemen and their belongings, he is silent and no amount of good will or intimidation will get him to open up.

As for his directions: *"Follow the path west past the fields and keep going until you get to old roundtop. Follow the lip of the valley north. You'll see another roundtop and around there is a path leading down into the valley itself. Take it down and keep going west once you reach bottom. The stench should lead you to their campsite. Haven't been there myself, so I hopes you can find it alright. The last feller who went to rescue his daughter never returned."*

The players are told, if they can't see it for themselves, that there is no way that you can take their horses through these woods. If the characters arrived the night before, it is early afternoon and have time to reach the beastmen's camp before nightfall. If they only arrived that morning it is evening and they would not be able to reach the camp before dark. Should this be pointed out by the players, they are able to talk to Henrietta and stay overnight, starting out at first light. The timing triggers an optional encounter while on the way there. Feel free to roleplay some of the exchange with Henrietta as she will negotiate to not kick them out that night although someone may have to stand watch or give up their horse as a form of collateral.

Read the following description of the woods: *The path is roughly hued out of the earth. Progress is slow, tree roots make tripping easy and the bare soil is still half mud. You find the field, just as Robert said you would. Carved from the forest, it covers several acres. All manner of grain and vegetables are growing here. However, half of the fields are trampled. Whatever had been growing there has been torn up and destroyed quite maliciously.*

Perception check @Normal. The characters are being followed. However they chose to respond to this, it quickly becomes apparent that it is Henrietta stomping down the path behind them. She has a sword and is wearing a chain shirt over the dress she was wearing back in the village. If approached, she says tells the characters the following: *"I didn't have any faith in your abilities. Personally, this is the only way to make sure the job is done. I'm tired of being attacked."*

Any further questions are deflected and her patience quickly runs out and she will turn away and continue her march in the middle of a question or statement from a character.

Meanwhile, if they want to investigate the trampled field, the group loses an hour doing so and lets Henrietta get that much further ahead of them. Perception @Hard. Make: Yes, beastmen went through here, but it wasn't them that tore things apart unless they have started using farm tools. Fail: Yeah, it sure does look like the work of beastmen. But it's a bit confused. Maybe there was a fight here or maybe beastmen grabbed some of the peasant's tools for weapons.

Read the following to the players: *After a few more miles through the woods, you arrive at the lip of the valley. It offers an incredible scene of beauty. Deep green forest for as far as the eye can see. Only the very tops of the trees seem to be turning gold and red, giving the whole a fiery tinge. Far off in the you hear the sound of a waterfall. Below the gray granite cliffs slide gracefully into the depths of the valley floor.*

Perception check: Make: Hey, that looks like a campfire down there. +1: That's a bonfire, not a campfire. +2: Um. Make that several bonfires. I think I can see the campsite even.

After the check read the following: *The path continues to the north from here. Just as Robert told you, it follows the lip of the*

valley, at times going up to the edge with sheer drops off to the side.

Fight time with some more beastmen. Same as before, use stats for the beastmen from player's guide, pg 228. Three if there is only 4 players. Four if there are 5 or 6 players. Five if there are 7 players and six beastmen if there are 8 players. The beastmen are not that stupid. They will attempt to push the characters off the edge of the cliff instead of actually fighting them. To do this, they will charge the characters. Anyone successfully uses Dodge Blows send the beastman over instead. Parry will stop the beastman in its tracks, while a straight Agility test will allow for a character to sidestep falling off the cliff, although they will still take damage as if they were hit. If the beastman does contact, make opposed strength tests and give all possible benefits of the doubt to the player as if they are losing, they're done for the session and there is oh, so much more fun to go.

Before the fight read the following: *Braying rises from the nearby trees. Snapping branches follows and beastmen erupt from the tree line. Stomping the ground and snorting loudly, one wielding a crude mace thrusts the weapon towards you. Stepping back you find there is only a sheer drop. This is an ambush.* Alternatively, if Henrietta got ahead of you, add the following: *You can see where one of their number running down the path, an limp Henrietta in its arms.* Otherwise, as the fight is finishing up, read this: *One of the remaining beastmen breaks away and starts running down the path leading to the floor below. Henrietta gives a screech of vile hatred and gives chase. Before you can stop her, the two have disappeared down the path.*

The climb down is not nearly as easy as first thought. The path is more vertical than horizontal in places. Climb checks (need to check to see if that is actually a skill) otherwise it is a strength check. Modifiers: Just rope gives a +10% to the check. Rope and pinions (a climbing kit of some sort) gives +15%. Describing it will give a final +5% for an overall +20%.

Consequences: Without the rope, anyone failing will get exactly one check to catch themselves from falling. This can be strength or agility depending on which one favors the character in question. Failing that, they plunge to the floor below. Alternate characters will be needed to continue to play. These characters will show up as hostages being held in the beastman camp, which is coming up shortly. If they are tied off, then they need not worry about falling as each person on the rope will get a chance to try and save them. Of course each one that fails also slips and starts to fall, causing a bit of a chain reaction.

There really is nothing stopping a complete wiping of the table with a series of bad rolls. Be aware of this and have a backup plan just in case it happens.

You can repeat the same check two or three times as it is a tall cliff they're traversing but I would only do the once. This is mainly here to help keep up the tension and doing it too much can really break the players out of the feel for the story.

Once the floor has been reached, read the following: *At the bottom of the valley, the forest is a strange place. Parts have been stripped to bare soil and bubbling black pits releasing sulfurous vapors. The surrounding trees lean in close, the bark is stretched, looking like snarling faces. A greasy green substance oozes from around the roots. There are no birds singing and no insects biting but you can hear a faint buzzing as if there was an*

angry hive somewhere close by. There are two paths out of the area. One path goes straight, deeper into the forest. The second follows the desiccated ground around to the right.

There are two paths here both lead to the conclusion of this module. In both cases, they lead to the characters being confronted by a group of beastmen numbering in the hundreds. Fighting against those odds is useless and suicidal. Of course, you may still have a few players lose their head and try doing so anyway. If you are feeling inclined to give your players a break, you can have these characters held and knocked out giving them a chance to participate in the end. Both paths have a brief combat encounter to soften them up before the final encounter.

[FOREST PATH] Read the following: *The forest path wanders in circles, sometimes you can see the trail is close to the camps. Here and there you see large briar patches that might have borne fruit at some point but are now stripped as bare as the ground was under the cliff. A tug on a pant leg grabs your attention as a crack from a whip sounds. Around your ankle is a long tendril of thorns. The ground rumbles and something rips at your feet, sending you tumbling to the ground.*

Briar Patch monster:

Standard attack: As per a whip (does the book even cover a bullwhip?) but does an extra 2 Wounds in damage due to the thorns on the vines used.

Thorn attack: Each thorn is a one inch long sharp wooden spike. The attack throws 1d10 + SB thorns in an area based attack. Roll BS for each person in the target area to see if they are hit and then a second time for each thorn to see where the character is struck. They may use the Dodge Blow skill to cut the number of thorns hitting them in half. Each thorn does 2 Wounds in damage. **This is a time consuming attack. You may want to limit its use to once or twice depending on how fast the rest of the combat is going.**

Grappling attack damage is 1d10+SB. It counts as both crushing and piercing due to the thorns.

BS	WS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
35	30	25	30	30	0	10	0
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	F
4	18	2	3	0	1	-	-

After the fight read the following: *Despite the loud noises of the fight, it doesn't seem to have attracted any attention. The path leads on, still on the edge of the camp. Here and there you can see strange effigies and unreadable banners hanging from bone masts. This is when you start hearing the forest fill with the snapping of branch and the blat of horn. It comes from everywhere.*

Allow for player reaction. They can run. They can try to hide. But it makes no difference. Let them have a minute or two of tension. Then read them this: *Emerging from around the warped, weeping trees an overwhelming number of beastmen step. They surround you cutting off all directions. They part and one even taller than the rest steps through. Easily over eight feet tall, it carries in one hand a sword and a staff in the other. It is covered in strange writing some of which glows with sickly green light. Strange bulbous lumps cover its hide, some of which move*

around as he stands staring at you. After several moments, it nods as if in agreement. The beastmen rush forward and the world goes dark.

Skip the next part, going straight to the final encounter text located after the alternate fight.

[OTHER PATH] Read the following: *The bare dirt slides randomly under your feet as you follow the trail of hoof prints deeper into the camp. The beastmen have stripped the forest down to bare soil. The odd bubbling black pools gurgle slickly sending fumes of sulfurous smoke. Ahead the earth has been formed into mounds the tops covered in crude effigies. Behind which large fires roar with a heat that can be felt a good twenty feet away.* Perception Check: What's burning? Good question. As far as you can tell, those fires have absolutely no fuel but they are hot! *A gurgling grunt can be heard as a large black mass hauls itself to the top of one of the mounds. Black clusters of eyes form on the side, blinking at you.*

Mother Goop Monster:

BS	WS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
35	30	25	30	30	0	10	0
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	F
4	18	2	3	0	1	–	1

Standard attack: Fires a blob of black goop at a character. The goop landing does not actually harm the character. It is the next turn when the dissolving action begins.

Tendril attack: Grabs target character via grapple and drags them back into its body in an attempt to drown/suffocate them to death. Crushing damage is equal to 1d10 + SB.

Other: Much like the previous goop monster, this one is most susceptible to cutting attacks while blunt attacks deal much less damage. Fire does nothing special to this creature.

After the fight, read the players the same aftermath passage as from the forest path. Then move on to the final encounter. The text is long so make sure everyone is ready for it.

You find yourselves hanging from the stinking arms of beastmen bruised but not broken. They've dragged you to the top of a mound that has been scorched free of any living plants. You look up to see Henrietta standing there, slowly stripping off her clothes. Her smile is wicked enough to cut. Allowing her dress to drop to the ground she steps confidently towards you. Now completely naked, you see from her shoulders down Henrietta's skin is covered in jade green pustules and weeping sores oozing black fetid juices.

“You were the last piece I needed to complete my bargain with Gr'Ugl.”

The goat headed shaman steps on to the mound, standing next to Henrietta. He draws her closer, placing his arm around her hips and drawing her in. She leans her head to one side as his long, black tongue licks her face from jowl to pate. You watch her shudder in pleasure as a soft moan escapes her lips. Greenish smoke rises from her skin and new sores break its surface.

“All the pieces are here. Yourselves. The artifacts from those so very compliant Norse. Oh, they wanted to help me, to please me. So they gave me their treasures and then promised to bring more people back. Of course, we had to make sure they kept their

promises, didn't we Gr'Ugl?” She looks at the shaman with an amorous glance before turning back to you.

“Why? I see no reason not to tell you. Gr'Ugl wants his own Plaguesword. And it's so very hard to make one without sacrifices to the Great Unclean One. That's where you come in. You have good souls. Fresh souls. Strong souls. That village just doesn't have any worthwhile souls left in it. And once he has what he wants, he is going to be leaving the valley. We will be troubled no more.”

You are tied to stakes around a large stone slab set in a fetid, black pool. Henrietta is standing next to a child strapped to the stone an ominous sword in her hands. Behind her, Gr'Ugl chants and dances wildly. All around this scene is the army of beastman witnessing the ceremony. Suddenly arrows fly into the area cutting the ropes keeping you bound and on your knees. There are a few shouts and Gr'Ugl pauses long enough in his ritual to send his minions off into the woods in search of the attackers. Your gear is close by, giving you just enough time to grab weapons and shields before choosing your next action.

The characters can attempt to fight through the beastmen still hanging around, although there is no guarantee that it will go well for them. If they want to simply escape, they must face three waves of beastmen before being able to do so. First wave starts with one beastman, the second has 3, and the final has five. They are well organized and will group together to fight one character at a time. Obviously, the characters can attack Henrietta and Gr'Ugl. Random fact check/ CK: Empire or something like that. Beastmen tend to run away if a leader figure has been slain. Since you've not seen any champions or the like amongst their number, you're fairly certain that killing Gr'Ugl will send the rest running.

Final battle. If you have four or five players, it is Gr'Ugl and Henrietta and two standard beastmen. Six players, add two additional beastman. For seven players, add three additional beastmen and if you have eight players a total of five beastmen is needed. These are all standard beastmen, see page 228 for their stats.

Gr'Ugl's Stats:

BS	WS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
20	40	35	35	30	20	20	40
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	F
2	15	2	4	4	5	–	–

Talents: Dark Lore: Lore of Chaos, Dark Magic, Natural Weapons, Night Vision, Public Speaking, Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Unsettling

Gr'Ugl has three spells he uses. The first is Boon of Chaos which he has enough amulets for three casting of. He'll try to target one of his minions first, followed by Henrietta, and then himself if needed. The second is Word of Pain for which he has an unlimited supply of daemon's blood: his own. So when casting it, attempt to narrate how he cuts open his arm and starts chanting just before someone starts screaming in incredible pain. Finally, he can use Burning Blood. Again, he has essentially unlimited materials needed to help in the casting. Also, be aware that like many other chaos based casters, Gr'Ugl doesn't really care if he gets mutated more or not. These spells can be found on pages

160 and 161 of the player's guide.

Henrietta's Stats:

BS	WS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
25	30	25	40	30	20	10	40
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	F
2	15	2	4	4	2	15	1

Talents: Dark Lore: Lore of Chaos, Dark Magic, Public Speaking, Fearless

She has the spell Burning Blood for which she pops one of the jade pustules to substitute for Daemon's blood. She also has been trained to use Lure of the Flesh, a new spell described below.

Her skin functions as leather armor for purposes of soak. Unless they make a play immediately for the tied down child, Henrietta ignores it and concentrates on helping her consort in whatever way her powers and sword can. If they do, she will immediately shove the knife into the child, killing it.

New Spell: Lure of the Flesh

Casting Number: 14

Casting Time: Half Action

Ingredient: Perfume (+3)

Description: The caster creates the illusion of an incredibly beautiful person in their current position beckoning towards the target in an incredibly seductive manner. The character must make a successful Willpower roll to resist being lured by the caster into believing in the illusion. While under the influence of the illusion the character cannot take any actions. The character may be brought out the illusion by being struck in combat and damaged or by the caster of the illusion being attacked.

After the fight read the following: *The beastmen disperse into the woods around you as soon as the final roar from their shaman is heard echoing around the valley. (Should Henrietta still be standing:) Henrietta attempts to go through with the sacrifice of the child but stops as an arrow slices through her head. From the woods, several elves walk out. They first attempt to greet you in their native language, but then switch over to a badly spoken form of reikspeil. They inform you that they've been watching the valley for some time but could not act due to the army that Gr'Ugl had drawn here. They did not know about Henrietta's involvement since they have left the human settlements alone. We will repair the valley but it is going to take some time. And we will scatter the beastmen. You are free to go. Here are the corrupted artifacts. We want nothing to do with them. You should take them to Middenheim. You might be able to find someone there who knows how to cleanse them.*

A few questions that might come up should there be anyone able to speak Elvish:

Question: *How did Gr'Ugl get so many beastmen to join him here?* **A:** *It appears that not all were quite aligned with him so much as they were aligned against humanity and civilization. There were several tribes which were waiting to see if he was able to get the Plaguesword which would have transformed him into a champion or worse. Had he been able to do so it is likely that he would have united all of the tribes.*

Question: *How many tribes were there?* **A:** *All told, about thirty.*

A total of three or four thousand individuals. Mostly scattered throughout the valley, they came here to do their various rituals as well as gather to talk about things. Gr'Ugl apparently was quite the spokesman when it comes to beastmen matters.

Should the players decide to go back to the village, it is destroyed and still smoking. The gate has been torn down and only a few buildings remain standing. Most of it was put to the torch. It seems the retreating beastmen decided to take their fear out on it as they ran from the doomed fight in the valley. There are few intact bodies. Five or six people emerge from one of the burnt husks that happened to be the food stores. They seem to be okay with the idea of abandonment of the village quickly gathering up enough food and a few weapons to help them survive while on the road.