

Dead Ringer



*A Cautionary Tale of Murder, Madness, and Mayhem
by Chuck Morrison*

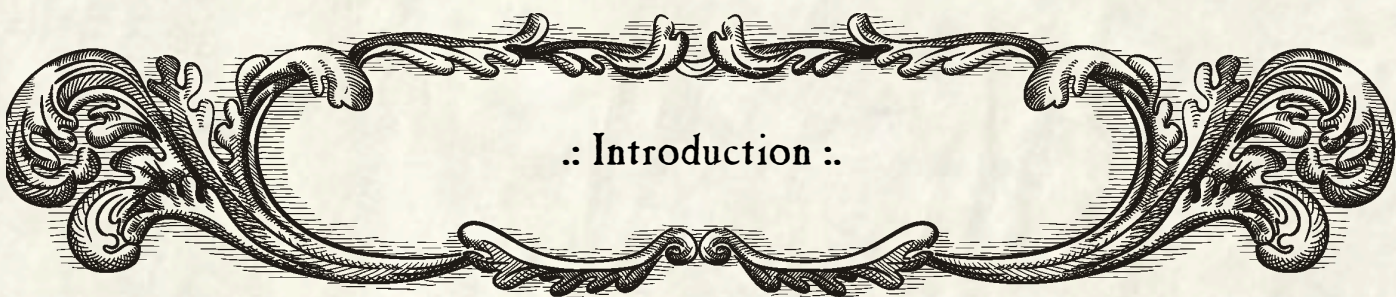
Dead Ringer

A Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay Scenario
by Chuck Morrison

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:: Introduction ::

Dead Ringer begins just outside the town of Ehrtzhofen, which for the purposes of this scenario is located in Talabecland and nestled against the Great Forest, but with a bit of effort can easily be relocated to any remote village in the Empire. It is a non-linear scenario that is best run for a party of 3 to 6 Player Characters of any experience level who have an investigative bent, strong stomachs, and twenty-four hours to spare.

A BIT OF HISTORY

Ehrtzhofen is a small village that can be found near the Talabecland-Ostermark border, at the northern edge of the Kölsa Hills and the southernmost reaches of the Great Forest, just northeast of Kappelburg. It has been a sleepy hamlet for most of its existence. Indeed, its villagers pride themselves on living in a town where nothing of consequence ever happens. That is, until five years ago, when a series of events was set into motion that would change the tranquil village of Ehrtzhofen forever.

Endris Pfluger was a poor merchant with lofty aspirations when he moved to Ehrtzhofen eight years ago. By taking out loans from a moneylender in Talabheim, he realized his lifelong dream of owning and managing his own bank. Unfortunately, the town of Ehrtzhofen did not grow as quickly as Pfluger had hoped, and his bank's investments in the Talabheim market were disastrous. He sank deeper and deeper into financial duress until threats of debtor's prison spurred him to an otherwise unthinkable action: he would murder the town's wealthiest inhabitant, one Bertholdt Halbgewachsen, and usurp his estate. He knew well that he could not carry his plans to fruition alone, and so sought out another inhabitant of Ehrtzhofen who was also in dire financial straits: the town miller Cristoff Bolstetter, who had approached Pfluger recently for a loan to repair his decrepit mill. Bolstetter agreed to help if he could claim a share of the profits. He knew of a physician in the nearby town of Freital named Paulin Wegener who was in need of a new job quickly, as he was in danger of losing his current job for incompetence. Pfluger decided he was the perfect person to carry out the poisoning of Halbgewachsen, since he could do it under the auspices of treating a vague malady, which Halbgewachsen was perpetually fearful of contracting. Once Halbgewachsen was dead, however, there would be the matter of dealing with his estate, which would be overseen by the town mayor, Eberlein Bartenbach. Fortunately Bartenbach was amenable to the transaction, not because of any arrears or financial necessity but simply out of greed.

Everything was in place now, and only a single obstacle remained: the current village physician, Augustin Vorster. Bartenbach promptly fired Vorster, telling him that his "term as village physician was up," and he would be replaced within the week. This devastated Vorster, who loved Ehrtzhofen and had served it well for the past dozen years. Bereft of his status in the community, his position on the Elder's Council, and the only occupation he was trained to do, he sank into a deep and public depression. Indeed, he would often be found at the town tavern bingeing on every drop of alcohol available until he passed out, only to begin the cycle anew the next day when he regained consciousness. People whispered he had gone mad.

During this time Paulin Wegener arrived from Freital (by way of Talabheim, where he stopped briefly to purchase medicinals) and took up his duties. He convinced Halbgewachsen that he was suffering from a rare but quite serious affliction that was only treatable with a special elixir, which was to be administered daily. Wegener hoped Halbgewachsen would die quickly, but the old man was too hale and hearty, and a week of "therapy" only served to weaken him enough to restrict him to his bed. At this point Pfluger and Bolstetter, under severe pressure from their creditors, told Wegener in no uncertain terms to finish the job he was hired to do. The next morning, Wegener dispensed five times his usual dose, which should have been more than enough to kill a normal man — but it only served to render Halbgewachsen comatose. Wegener quickly declared him dead and he was buried — alive — the next day.

Bartenbach announced shortly thereafter that Halbgewachsen had left no Last Will and Testament, and so his estate had to be turned over to the village of Ehrtzhofen for disposition. Another announcement came rapidly after the first: Halbgewachsen was not as wealthy as he appeared to be, but in reality was deeply in debt to Talabheim creditors. The money that was left over after all of the debts were satisfied would hardly even pay for a *Gründenfest* (a semi-regular feast celebrating the town's founding), but in light of Halbgewachsen's tragic death, Pfluger would donate the rest. Pfluger acted as host for that year's festivities.

With the *Gründenfest* behind them, the ever-tenacious town Bailiff Erschel Neunecker insisted on performing a routine investigation of Halbgewachsen's demise, despite the claims of the physician and over the explicit objections of the Elder's Council. For lack of anything else to do in the small town — indeed, this was the first "real work" he had in months — Neunecker threw himself into the investigation body and soul. He had the

body of Halbgewachsen exhumed, and made a horrifying discovery that would terrorize the town: desperate scratchmarks on the inside of the coffin lid meant that Halbgewachsen was buried alive. Certain now that he was hot on the trail of something big, Neunecker continued his investigative work. An obscure entry in one of Halbgewachsen's voluminous journals led to a safe-deposit box in Talabheim, which contained his missing Last Will and Testament. This document left everything Halbgewachsen owned to Fritz Trubin, the "town fool" with whom he struck up an unlikely but very close friendship. Neunecker returned to Ehrtzhofen intent on blackmailing Bartenbach.

Attempting to blackmail the good mayor was Neunecker's first — and last — mistake. He left the original will in its place in Talabheim and brought a copy with him to threaten the mayor. Neunecker believed he was safe because Bartenbach did not know where the original will was kept, but he hadn't counted on the Mayor's volcanic temper. Bartenbach crushed Neunecker's skull with his cane that night, and buried the body in a place where he thought no one else would ever find it — someone else's grave. The Bailiff's disappearance surprised the town, but he was not well-liked and had many enemies; Neunecker had a nasty habit of arresting townsfolk under false pretenses and then requiring a fee

to be released. The general consensus was that he left Ehrtzhofen to escape reprisal from one or more wronged citizens. Not long after he disappeared, angry townsfolk tore down the jail and gallows.

The death of Halbgewachsen and the disappearance of Neunecker snapped Vorster out of his melancholy. Realizing something was terribly amiss, he retraced Neunecker's investigation, discovered Halbgewachsen's will and unraveled all of the information implicating the Elder's Council in the death of Halbgewachsen. Vorster even discovered Neunecker's corpse when he noticed that the earth over a very old grave had been recently disturbed. When he exhumed the coffin, he found the corpse of a badly beaten Neunecker, struck about the head with imprints that matched the mayor's golden-tipped cane. He then proceeded to exhume the body of Halbgewachsen under cover of darkness and discovered the true cause of his death: poison.

At this point, the last vestiges of Vorster's melancholy vanished and were replaced by a single goal: revenge upon the Elder's Council for ruining his life for their own selfish gain. This thought consumed him day and night until he constructed a complex plan to expose the members of the Council for the murderous, avaricious reprobates they really were.



∴ Along a Lonely Road ∴

It is dusk as *Dead Ringer* opens; the PCs make their way along a nondescript dirt road flanked on each side with overgrown grass giving way to isolated copses of trees, which eventually thicken into a dark forest. A slight breeze rustles the leaves and the area is filled with a relaxing quiet. Smoke rises across the treetops some distance away, indicating the presence of a nearby town. In the distance, sharp-eyed PCs spot a cloaked man walking in the same direction they are headed. In the rapidly dwindling sunlight, on a successful *Average Perception Test*, a PC can make out the glint of a sword hilt and a pair of handcuffs.

If the PCs do not approach the man within a few rounds (and take no precautions against being heard), he hears them and turns, hand on his sword. He introduces himself as Albrecht Lutenschleger. He is to assume duties as Bailiff of the town of Ehrtzhofen immediately upon arrival, and claims he is protected by the town militia and traveling Road Wardens — if he is harmed in any way, the full might of Ehrtzhofen will fall upon those responsible (these are false boasts, since Ehrtzhofen has no militia and the Road Wardens are nowhere to be seen). Once it is determined that the PCs do not pose him any harm (if, indeed, they do not), he will offer to escort them to town and provide them with a place to stay free

of charge for their troubles. He appears to be wary of spending time outdoors alone at dusk. If the PCs offer to allow him to walk with them, he gratefully accepts, telling them that he has walked the entire distance from Talabheim alone, and would be greatly embarrassed should any ill befall him less than a mile from his destination.

WOLF BAIT

Suddenly, the forest behind them shudders. Branches snap and leaves fly as the PCs turn around just in time to view a robed woman crashing through the trees. Almost upon her is a pack of Giant Wolves (see *Old World Bestiary*, p. 96-97 or *Dramatis Personae* for an approximation) with at least one wolf per PC. The woman is bleeding from what looks to be a serious leg wound, and clutches a dirty leather bag close to her chest. She trips on a branch and falls to the ground at the feet of the PCs. With a look of terrified desperation, she cries, "Help me, please! By Sigmar's grace, save my life!"

The PCs have no choice but battle; the Giant Wolves are upon them in an instant. Lutenschleger draws his weapon and plunges in, acquitting himself in battle to the best of his ability. The wolfpack operates on a strategy of separating the PCs from each other and attacking

two wolves to one person. This will leave some of the PCs free to strike, and others caught in the middle of a torrent of snapping teeth and rending claws. If the battle goes badly (one wolf dies), the remaining wolves will attempt to back the PCs up against the forest edge, where two more Giant Wolves lie in wait. If the battle goes very badly (more than two wolves die), the remaining wolves will retreat into the forest and disappear to lick their wounds.

The battle with the Giant Wolves should be strenuous, but not life-threatening; ideally, at least one PC will have suffered wounds. The woman that they saved introduces herself as Madalena Precht and thanks them profusely. She explains that she was gathering medicinal herbs and pretty flowers to decorate the garden of her employer, Augustin Vorster, a retired physician and

part-time inventor in the town of Ehrtzhofen. She offers take any wounded PCs to Vorster, who is sure to be grateful, and may even reward them for their troubles in addition to attending their wounds. Should the PCs open Madalena's bag themselves, they will find a handful of flowers and herbs, just as she said.

It is important that Lutenschleger does not die in this battle, as he is integral in granting the PCs authority to carry out investigations in his name in the next section. He should be wounded, however — enough to be restricted to bed (perhaps a deep leg wound or abdominal wound would prevent him from being overly mobile). This incapacitation will result in having to direct the investigation from bed, which effectively makes the PCs his agents, as they are the only ones in town he knows or trusts.



Ehrtzhofen is only a half-hour's travel from the site of the battle with the wolf-pack, tucked away within the confines of the Great Forest. Inside the thick, cloying branches that comprise the town's boundary can be found a single tavern, a forked river, a bank, a farm, various hovels and even a few manors for the wealthy or noble inhabitants. A gentle hill swells to the northeast of the entry road, on top of which lay a group of marble seats clustered beneath a large pavilion. Ruins of an abandoned jailhouse lay to the west, windows broken and door askew, creaking noisily from a single functioning hinge. It is dark now, but the town is a bustle of activity — crowds of people move to and fro, carrying lanterns and fussing around large tables as if in preparation for a festival. A few villagers can be seen lighting torches on tall stakes to ward off the gathering darkness.

Madalena limps in first, shouting out details of the PCs glorious victory over the Giant Wolves of the Great Forest. The raucous noise draws a sizable crowd about the PCs, curious for more tidbits about the battle. Soon, the crowd makes its way west of the jail to Vorster's manor, and Augustin emerges with a look of concern as he sizes up Precht's wound, but he quickly determines that the extent of the wound is minor. Precht hands the leather bag over to Vorster.

Vorster accepts the bag and says, "You must be more careful Madalena, or these flowers shall be the death of you." At this point, Vorster notices that Lutenschleger has lost a lot of blood and requires assistance. "Bring that man into my home, and we'll take care of him. You can introduce yourselves inside. I owe each of you valiant people a great debt, one which I can begin to repay now."

Lutenschleger is carried by Vorster's servants to a nearby bed. While Vorster examines him, Maurice asks the PCs to introduce themselves. Lutenschleger weakly hands over papers identifying himself and his position.

"Town Bailiff, eh?" Vorster asks. "Haven't had one of those since our old one disappeared. What was it, Madalena? Five years past?"

When the group has finished their introductions, Vorster announces that he was planning a feast in honor of the founding of the town (whose actual date has been lost to the mists of time, and now acts as a convenient excuse for whenever someone wants to host a large party) — a "Gründenfest" — and he would be remiss if he did not invite the PCs to be guests of honor. Indeed, the feast is about to commence. He asks Madalena to escort the PCs to the main table and seat them alongside prominent members of the Elder's Council underneath the hilltop pavilion. Vorster will join them as soon as he is finished attending to the wounded Lutenschleger.

THE GRÜNDEFEST

As Madalena guides the PCs to their places, she relays a brief history of the Gründenfest. It is a semi-regular celebration of Ehrtzhofen's founding, whose actual date has been lost to history. She explains that the Elder's Council hosts the festival once a year, but prominent members of the community (in other words, anyone who can afford it) may announce a Gründenfest at any time. As a matter of fact, this is the third Gründenfest this year, and some years have seen up to eight. It is a time of great celebration, where everyone in town is invited to eat and drink to their heart's delight. She

hopes the PCs are hungry, she says, because there will be plenty of food and drink for everyone tonight.

Shortly after the PCs are seated at the table of honor, Vorster arrives. He is in high spirits; he makes an elaborate bow to the PCs and then hoists his tankard to the sky. "A toast to my newest friends, who saved my servant Madalena from a terrible end at the jaws of giant wolves. May you stay in Ehrtzhofen long enough for me to repay my debt. To your continued glories and may your strength never falter. To the Wolf-slayers, and to Ehrtzhofen!"

Following the toast, Vorster introduces those present around the table, who make up every prominent citizen in Ehrtzhofen, to the PCs one by one: Eberlein Bartenbach, the town mayor, salutes the PCs with his cane whose golden tip has been fashioned into a lion's head ("I think he loved that cane more than his dear departed wife," Vorster whispers. "In any case he is never seen without it"); Endris Pfluger, the town banker and his wife Beatrix; Cristoff Bolstetter, the town miller and his wife Clara; and finally Elspeth Wegener, wife of the town physician — "the only member of the fairer sex to ever serve on our Elder's Council," he says, and then offers his condolences on her missing husband. He whispers to the PCs not to broach the subject with her, for she is frail and her husband has been missing for several days now. "Best not to upset her," he says with a wink. Together, Vorster explains, these four make up the town's Elder's Council, a group that decides upon appropriate courses of action and generally determines the future direction of Ehrtzhofen.

After the introductions, Vorster mutters a short prayer of thanks to Sigmar, then commands everyone to begin the feast. Vorster himself reaches across the table and spears a slab of beef from the large central serving dish, scoops up a few potatoes, and then pours a healthy amount of gravy over his entire plate. Madalena, back on her feet, scrambles around with a wine flask in a vain attempt to keep everyone's glasses filled. As the feast begins, Vorster asks the PCs to regale the townsfolk of Ehrtzhofen with tales of their adventures. Humble PCs are pressed to give at least one story of valor or triumph of good over the forces of evil.

The PCs should be famished after a long day's travel and the battle with the wolf-pack, and are encouraged to eat heartily, for they have earned it. At the very least they should drink the wine or ale offered to them; it would be an insult to the host to refuse it. If for any reason the PCs are suspicious of the food or drink, they can be reassured by glancing around the many tables: everyone in town is filling their bellies with the same food and drink being offered to them, Vorster included.

It is important to use the Gründenfest to impart two key pieces of information: 1) Elspeth Wegener's husband Paulin, the town physician, has been missing for three days, and 2) that Bertholdt Halbgewachsen had been buried alive. The first was accomplished upon the PCs' introduction to Elspeth, and the second can be done with the following conversation:

Vorster turns to Pfluger and asks him how he is enjoying Halbgewachsen's mansion. Pfluger, unruffled,

simply says, "More than the old man ever did," and downs a glass of wine. When he looks up to discover the discomfort apparent around the table from speaking ill of the dead, he adds, "Sigmar rest his soul."

"Terrible way to die," Bartenbach says from across the table.

"Indeed," Vorster says, and turns to the PCs. "Old Halb, in whose manor Herr Pfluger currently resides, had the misfortune of contracting a frightful disease. He was treated by Doktor Wegener —"

"Sigmar preserve him," Elspeth interjects.

"Unfortunately," Vorster continues, "despite the best efforts of the doktor, Halbgewachsen succumbed and was pronounced dead."

"Would that the tale ended there," Bolstetter says.

"Indeed. Instead, our tale ends when the coffin was exhumed a month later during the tenacious investigation by our previous Bailiff, Herr Neunecker. The coffin lid was riddled with scratchmarks," Vorster says, raising an eyebrow. "The poor soul was buried alive."

Pfluger leans forward. "That won't happen now, friends. We have a system in Ehrtzhofen that prevents such an occurrence. A length of string tied to a bell leads down into each coffin. Should you find yourself inside, simply ring, and we will recover you."

Vorster nods. "Yes, medicine is not a perfect science, and until it is, such strange preparations will have to continue."

Elspeth clears her throat quietly. "Please, the Gründenfest is a time of celebration, is it not? Why all the sulle faces? Let us direct our conversations to more cheerful topics to reflect this happy time."

Vorster smiles. "Of course, we will change the subject immediately. Please forgive an old man his social lapses."

In addition to the crucial pieces of information outlined above, the PCs will find the Gründenfest an ideal place to gather rumors about the town and current events. You'll find plenty of them in the box entitled *Ehrtzhofen Rumor Mill* on page 6. Since the gathering is meant to be friendly, all *Gossip Tests* are *Easy* (+20%).

SO MANY QUESTIONS

The PCs may take the opportunity provided by the Gründenfest to ask a few questions. The most common can be found following.

• On Elspeth's husband

Everyone cautions the PCs not to bring the subject of Paulin Wegener up around Elspeth, because she has taken his absence quite to heart. He has been gone for three days, and left without notice. The only time Paulin ever leaves town is when he travels to Talabheim to purchase medicines for the town. But he always takes a servant and some horses, and this time he brought no supplies with him, nor did he tell his wife he was leav-

ing. He simply did not return from his daily rounds, visiting the villagers and treating their various ailments. He was last seen by the cripple, Hermann Schlegel. Hermann doesn't know where Paulin went after he left his hovel. Augustin Vorster has seen to his duties over the past two days — without pay — providing medicines and herbs to the townsfolk. Some folk think Paulin ran off with a lover to start a new life, others that something terrible has befallen him.

If the PCs do broach the subject of her husband with the good lady, she promptly bursts into tears and excuses herself from the festivities. The mood of the people for the rest of the dinner is subdued, and the townsfolk will be far less cooperative in spreading gossip and rumors to the PCs.

• *On the current state of the jail*

If the PCs question why the jail is in such a state of disarray, or why there is no lawman or bailiff present in the council, the table goes quiet for a moment:

Bartenbach finally gives a long sigh. "Truth be told, the Bailiff probably abused his position to shake down the townsfolk, but we couldn't ever prove it. He disappeared, maybe the victim of his own excesses. Wouldn't surprise me if some angry villager did him in."

Bolstetter nods. "Certainly the jail was nearly destroyed by the a village mob after he disappeared. It's taken this long to save up the funds to rebuild it."

"And now that we have," Pfluger adds, "I understand our new Bailiff is seriously wounded. Recuperating at your estate, so I'm told."

Vorster nods. "He'll pull through."

Bartenbach shakes his head sorrowfully. "I wonder if the town has somehow incurred Sigmar's disfavor. Perhaps we aren't meant to have a Bailiff in Ehrtzhofen."

"Don't be silly," Elspeth says. "Law and order must prevail, and we've been without it long enough."

Other guests, clearly uncomfortable at having their town's sordid past aired in front of strangers, quickly move on to other subjects. The only other piece of information to be gained is this: some believe that Neunecker came to a violent end, and his spirit still haunts the ruins of the town jail.

• *On Vorster's state of mind after he was fired*

If the PCs ask Vorster about this, he maintains his good humor. "I'll never forget it. They fired me on the 13th of Vorgeheim, 2517," he says, and adds that it was a dark time for him. He sank into a melancholy that lasted a few months, but eventually he came out of it. He adds no further details, but others have more to say: Vorster took being replaced quite hard. He was often found drowning his sorrows at the *Regal Lager*, engaged in bouts of public drunkenness, and was once caught dancing on the Elder Hilltop with no music to be heard. He eventually came out of his melancholy (no one knows quite when or how other than "time heals all wounds"), and now spends his time tinkering around and inventing things.

If asked why he was replaced, Bartenbach says that the Elder's Council embarked on a program to invigorate Ehrtzhofen's economy, and this included getting fresh blood into town. The program didn't work, he admits, and was abandoned soon after. But they had to honor their commitment to the new physician regardless.

• *On the Garden of Morr*

Some townsfolk strongly believe the Garden is haunted. They warn the PCs not to spend a moment lingering

there, especially at night. Strange sounds have been heard near the Way Temple, and Clara Bolstetter swears on her mother's grave that she heard a deep and woeful moaning not two nights past. The traveling Priest of Morr is due back in less than a month, and not a moment too soon. His arrival is eagerly awaited by the townsfolk and their Elders, because he is to calm the restless spirits of the local Garden of Morr and exorcise the jailhouse of demons.

EHRTZHOFEN RUMOR MILL

- Foul spirits dwell within the ruins of the jailhouse. The Town Elders plan to ask the Priest of Morr to exorcise the spirits at his next visit.
- There are an awful lot of well-to-do folk for such a small town.
- Augustin Vorster says he has put the past behind him, but he has never forgiven Eberlein Bartenbach for firing him from the position of village physician five years past. No reason was ever made public for the firing, though most believe it had to do with political infighting with the Elders Council. After he lost his job, Vorster went quite out of his mind for a time. Strangely enough, he snapped out of his melancholy at about the same time as the bailiff disappeared.
- The tavernkeep Hensel Rosenstock waters down his beer, but his mead is worth every shilling.
- Lots of people have been getting away with lots of things since the Bailiff disappeared.
- The working conditions at the Öler farm are little better than slavery. This would not be a problem normally, except the crop is not even that good this year.
- The local Garden of Morr is haunted. The groundskeep swears that he has heard a soft moaning for the past several nights as well as the ringing of many bells. It is likely just the wind, but coincident as it is with the disappearance of the town physician, this occurrence has the entire town on edge. Some believe it is the spirit of the old Bailiff, Erschel Neunecker, come to have his revenge.
- There is a necromancer in town. A dark figure has been seen unearthing dead bodies under cover of night.
- Elspeth Wegener hates Ehrtzhofen and wishes to return to to her home city of Talabheim. Her husband Paulin agrees, but is waiting for a position to open up so that he may continue to ply his trade.
- Don't borrow money from Endris Pfluger. He charges usurious interest.
- Paulin Wegener ran off with another woman three days ago and no one has seen him since. Now what is the town supposed to do for a doctor?
- The Öler farm has a serious rat problem.

• *On Augustin's inventions*

Most of Vorster's inventions are a complete flop. The townsfolk humor him on this score because he hasn't caused any (major) explosions and it seems to keep him sane. Augustin will readily admit this as well, though he does seem to be proud of the sundial he donated to the Elder's Council and the water-clock he keeps time with at his mansion.

• *On Bertholdt Halbgewachsen*

Answers to queries about "Old Halb" will vary depending on who is asked. Most of the townsfolk remember him as a generous sort, routinely footing the bill for some of the best Gründenfests in memory. He made sure that medicines for those who lived in the hovels were paid for and they were made as comfortable as possible. He even paid wages for those working on Öler's farm when a freak storm decimated his crop. Many people suspect him of leaving random presents in people's doorways, but whenever he was asked, he just blamed "forest faeries." Curiously, he struck up a strange but lasting relationship with the town fool, Fritz Trubin. The two spent quite some time together in the last few years of Halbgewachsen's life.

It is common knowledge that Halbgewachsen passed away five years ago after a brief illness and this is not surprising; he was, after all, an old man. He was mourned, but it came to light after his death that he was not as wealthy as he liked to make people think. In fact,

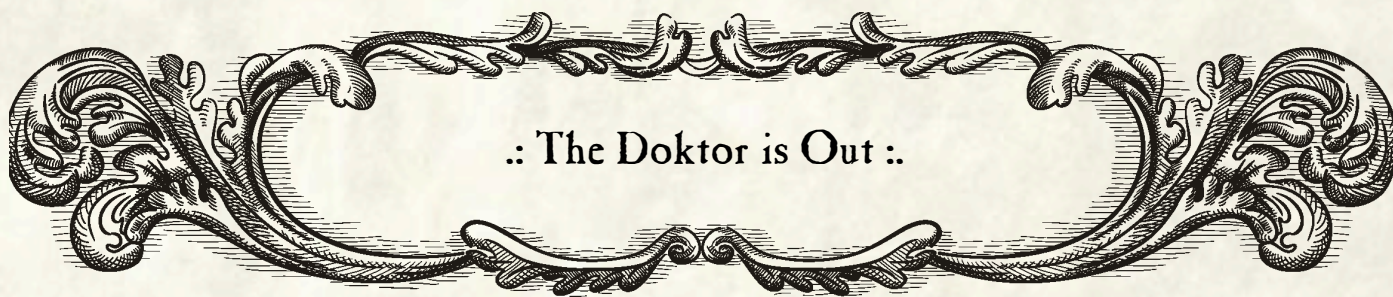
when the Elder's Council was forced to sort out his effects because he left no will for the disposition of his estate, all that was left over after his debts were paid was a sum not even sufficient to cover a single Gründenfest. The banker, Endris Pfluger, made up the shortfall as a gesture to the town since he allowed by the Council to purchase the Halbgewachsen manor.

WINDING DOWN

In addition to a nearly limitless supply of excellent food and drink, there will of course be singing and dancing and music and all sorts of fun to be had. When the celebrations die down, Vorster offers to put the PCs up for the night in his guest house. If they decline, he insists that he should at least pay for a room or two at the *Regal Lager* for everything they have done. "It is not a night to be out beneath the stars, my friends. The Great Forest shelters great beasts, which you already know — please do not tempt any more to come out."

Regardless of where the PCs decide to stay, the night passes uneventfully. No ghosts haunt the abandoned jailhouse, and the bells of the Garden of Morr are unusually calm. Sharp-eared PCs may make out a barely audible moaning on a *Hard (-20%) Listen Test*, whose location is impossible to determine; in any case the moaning will disappear after a few minutes and the grounds will return to a state of serene silence.

It will be the last peace and quiet the PCs experience for some time.



In the early morning, the town is shaken by a blood-curdling scream, which emanates from the Vorster household. If the PCs are in the guest house, the shriek should awaken them from sleep. If they chose to pass the night elsewhere, news rapidly reaches them of terrible goings-on at the Vorster abode. When the PCs arrive, they find the door obstructed by a press of people trying to get a look inside. One terrified young lady is vomiting by an old oak tree, tears streaming down her cheeks. "It's awful in there. Simply awful!" It is Vorster's cleaning woman, Agelte Nydecker; she is the one who discovered his body. Agelte is too traumatized to be of any help answering questions from the PCs. The most she says is, "I'll never step foot in that cottage again" — and then promptly returns to vomiting.

Several large men bar the entrance. Should the PCs wish to gain entry, these men will stop them as well, but then Lutenschleger will limp out to see what is transpiring. Upon seeing the PCs, he gives a weak but pained smile and says, "What's this, then? Step aside, boys, and let the Wolf-slayers by. I need all the help I can get."

A TERRIBLE SCENE

The PCs are led inside Vorster's manor. It is dark; heavy curtains block any outside light from illuminating the scene. The air is close and smells sweet and sickly. All of the Town Elders are present (or soon will be, depending on how rapidly the PCs arrived and where they spent the previous night). The PCs eventually reach a large room, and as their eyes adjust to the thin light they find they can make out shapes — vague, round, metallic shapes as well as flasks and beakers. Lutenschleger slumps into a nearby chair and sighs heavily.

In the center of the room is the cause of the scream: the corpse of Augustin Vorster, seated on a heavy wooden chair, head cocked at a lazy angle with dried blood emanating from his mouth and nose. His shirt has been unbuttoned and pulled apart to reveal a bare chest filled with all manner of strange tattoos. Located prominently in the center of his unmoving chest is a map of Ehrtzhofen, surrounded by words, letters, and shapes (*Handout 2*); above which can be found a strange triplet poem

(Handout 1) and below, a curious block of text (Handout 3).

Conversation between Elder's Council members is already proceeding when the PCs enter the room. Should they stop a moment to eavesdrop, they hear the following:

"Ghastly," says Pfluger, perhaps a bit too loud. "Always thought he trucked with demons." He turns to Lutenschleger and says, "Off his rocker, he was."

Bolstetter leans close to Vorster's corpse and reads the text from Handout 1:

*Woes betide those who spurn their own succor.
Twin ills beset, the water falls,
All hope rests with a fool.*

Like the other clues, this passage is cryptic; its interpretation follows.

Woes betide those who spurn their own succor: sorrows will befall the people of Ehrtzhofen, who fired their physician.

Twin ills beset: two problems face the village, both of which will be determined later (the ills refer to the poisoning of the Gründenfest and the kidnapping of the town's physician).

The water falls: refers to the water clock behind Vorster, which is slowly draining to count out twelve hours, the time when the poison becomes lethal.

All hope rests with a fool: the solution to their problems somehow lies with Fritz Trubin.

The passage sparks no immediate flashes of insight from the members of the Elder's Council, who continue their conversation.

"Twin ills?" Elspeth breathes. "What does that mean?"

"All hope rests with a fool' — do you suppose he means Fritz? Didn't Fritz spend some time assisting Vorster last year?" Bartenbach turns and says to no one in particular, "Summon that Trubin boy right away."

"What does Madalena know of this?" asks Bartenbach.

Pfluger sighs. "When we find her, we'll let you know. No one's seen her since the feast last night."

"What of the servants?" Bartenbach bellows.

"All asleep in their quarters out back," Pfluger replies. "Augustin gave them the night off after the Gründenfest."

"What does our new Bailiff wish to do?" says Bolstetter.

Lutenschleger shrugs. "We need to find out why he killed himself."

If the PCs spent the night in the guest house, they will be questioned as well. Of course, none of them heard

anything untoward throughout the night. To their knowledge, the house was perfectly silent until the scream.

At this point the Town Elders discuss various options, which gives the PCs some time to look around a bit. The room is filled with gears and levers, flasks and beakers. Behind Vorster's corpse is a round cylinder about 18 inches in height, with a bit of glass molded into the side marked by lines at each inch labeled "hours". The water level can be seen through the glass and a slow dripping noise can be heard. Currently, the water level resides at the 12 inch mark — at the rate the water is draining, the PCs have twelve hours to decipher Vorster's series of clues.

At some point, a servant appears with a young man in tow. The youth has ruffled hair and an unkempt appearance; buttons on his jacket have been fastened to the wrong holes, and his shirt while tucked in the front is loose in the rear. The servant clears his throat and presents the young man to the Elders.

"Fritz Trubin, as ordered," the servant says with a slight bow, and then removes himself from the room.

Bartenbach explains that "Fritz is, now how shall I put this delicately, not the sharpest spade in the shed."

"He's an idiot," Bolstetter growls, his patience clearly exhausted. "Hasn't the sense of a mule."

Bartenbach shoots him an angry glare. Fritz is oblivious. Bartenbach clears his throat and continues. "Well in any case, when Vorster's letter mentioned a fool, my first thought was Fritz here. Perhaps you know something of these events, Fritz?"

Fritz shakes his head sadly. "Do you know who else died today? Ernst Hiltner and Simon Schenckel. Otilia Schultess was born today."

"Do you see what I'm talking about?" Bolstetter shouts. "Think, boy! This is important!"

"A Gründenfest was held on this day seven seasons past."

Bolstetter curses under his breath. "He's useless."

Elspeth raises her hand and steps forward. "Enough, Cristoff." She takes Fritz by the hand and walks him over to the PCs. "Fritz may not have many social graces, but he does have one talent: he is able to memorize a great many things. I'm not sure if he understands the things he memorizes, but he can recall them. Fritz spent some time with Doktor Vorster last year, but I'm not sure what he was doing."

If questioned, Fritz simply says that Augustin was curious about him, and wanted to know how much he could memorize. Vorster had him memorize a book on human anatomy, Imperial history, and finally the entire birth and death records of Ehrtzhofen before he tired of him and gave up.

Fritz really does not know anything about Vorster's suicide or the whereabouts of the antidote. He ate at the Gründenfest just like everyone else did. Questioning

Fritz on any of these points yields no useful information at this time.

The cryptic block of text found in *Handout 3* is a crucial clue. It can be read beginning from the lower right hand corner and continuing vertically until the top of the column is reached. The text continues downward in the next column, and upon reaching that column's bottom, the text continues upward in an undulating fashion. It reads thus:

I reject the town of Ehrtzhofen as it has rejected me. The Grundenfest was poisoned, but I am not without compassion. I have hidden the antidote somewhere in town. Simply solve the clues I have left behind and I will admit you were right to replace me. Fail, and the people of Ehrtzhofen will suffer for your mistake.

It is important that the PCs figure out how to read this note themselves, since it will grant them credibility in the eyes of the Elder's Council as well as Lutenschleger. However, it is not worth spending too much time on — that time would better spend hunting for the actual clues. Hints may be given toward this end if it seems like the process is taking too long (one such hint may be to try to find familiar words in the text, and work from there), but try not to give the “secret” away.

Eventually, the PCs will figure out how to read the text in the note. This should be the first clue to be solved as it lays out the central problem in the scenario, that the town is poisoned and someone must find the antidote. None of the rest of the clues will make sense until this is discovered.

When the PCs are able to read *Handout 3*, Lutenschleger stands unsteadily and raises his hand to speak:

“If Vorster poisoned you all last night, he may have poisoned me as well. I mean to carry out my duties to protect the people of Ehrtzhofen, but I cannot investigate this terrible occurrence in my current state. The Wolf-slayers have proven themselves capable fighters in the battle last night, and capable problem-solvers just now. I appoint them my deputies in this matter. They are to be given free reign of the town, to question whom they will, to search where they will, and are not to be obstructed in this matter. Anyone contravening this order is answerable to me.”

Furthermore, Lutenschleger wishes the PCs to report directly to him when any progress is made, and only to him. He does not know anyone in town, and so trusts no one — which is the only reason the PCs are involved in the investigation in the first place. He urges the PCs to keep quiet about their mission and progress so as not to cause a widespread panic in town or tip the hat of an unknown enemy. Vorster may not have been alone in this plot, after all; co-conspirators may still be lurking about, watching and listening.

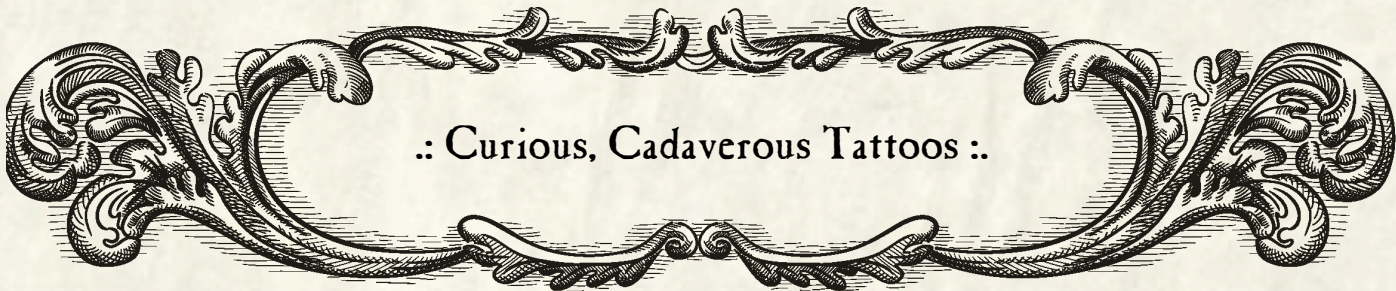
The Elder's Council does not object to the PCs' intervention. Not only do the townsfolk respect the PCs for saving Madalena from the Giant Wolves, but most of the Council respected Vorster for his intelligence as well as his ability as a physician. A few of them continued to see him even after Wegener became the town's doctor, because Vorster was clearly more competent than his replacement. None of the Council members relish the idea of matching wits with him, and a few feel a nagging sense of disquiet as to Vorster's intentions behind this series of riddles. Pfluger in particular is wary, and can't shake the feeling that Vorster is exacting some type of revenge from beyond the grave.

If the PCs refuse to help, Lutenschleger makes it plain that they are just as poisoned as well as the rest of the town. They should, therefore, be equally invested in finding the antidote, as their lives are equally on the line. In reality, this is not true, because Vorster concocted a two-part poison. The first part was given to all the people he deemed responsible for his replacement, the murder of Halbgewachsen, and the murder of Neunecker: the four male members of the Elder's Council. The second part of the poison was given to everyone; by itself it will certainly cause discomfort, but it requires the first part to kill. Despite Vorster's threats that the entire town would suffer, he was quite selective as to who would actually be in lethal danger — and this does not include the PCs (see *Strange Rumbings* in the “Investigative Complications” section for effects of the poison on PCs). Still, for all the PCs know, they are poisoned like the rest of Ehrtzhofen — and if they do not unravel the clues Vorster left behind to find the antidote, they will die as well.

If the PCs still refuse, start having them roll on the *Ailment Table* on page 12 a little earlier than usual. Perhaps a splitting headache or bout of uncontrollable flatulence will spur them to action.

For their safety and the well-being of the town of Ehrtzhofen, the clues tattooed on Vorster's chest must be deciphered. Time is running out.





.. Curious, Cadaverous Tattoos ..

The PCs should feel free to begin wherever they'd like with the tattoo clues. A word of caution: PCs have a notorious habit of doing the unexpected and the inexplicable, so the GM should be thoroughly familiar with the information in this section — if for no other reason than to get the PCs back on track should they wind up stuck, or find themselves on a wild goose chase.

After a brief period of examination, the PCs should realize that the tattoo clues fall into three general categories: words, letters, and shapes. This section details the presentation of each category. During playtesting, *Dead Ringer* seemed to proceed most smoothly if the words were solved first, followed by the shapes, and finally the letters, but the clues were designed to be open enough to allow PCs to tackle them in any order.

WORDS

Amongst the strange symbols littering Vorster's corpse are seven words: *deed*, *level*, *madam*, *reviver*, *deified*, *tenet*, and *noon*. A bit of thought and close examination reveal that they have only one characteristic in common: they are all spelled the same forwards as backwards, a type of word known as a "palindrome."

Once the PCs have realized the relationship between the words, they may still be at a loss as to exactly what to do with that information. Each of the clues refer to a location on the map, tattooed prominently in the center of Vorster's chest. In this case, the PCs may already be familiar with the location that the palindromes refer to, itself a palindrome (but in any case can be found on the map): the *Regal Lager*. Once this information is discovered, a trip to Ehrtzhofen's only tavern is in order — but the PCs would be well-advised to skip the watered-down beer.

Hensel Rosenstock is the proprietor of the *Regal Lager*, and he will be the main contact for the PCs during their investigation of it. The tavern is a typical small village affair, with a single floor and three bedrooms which are empty nearly year-round. When the PCs enter, they spot a few villagers seated at the bar who sip slowly from their tankards, blissfully unaware of their impending doom.

Searching the tavern is fruitless and time-consuming. The only thing of interest in the whole place is a set of wooden recesses carved out behind the bar. Rosenstock explains that he runs a message service on the side, so that folks passing through town can leave letters and such to other folks coming up behind them. It doesn't get much business, but he is quite proud that he has

filled 17 of the 60 slots: numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 26, 27, 33, 35, 41, 44, 47, 51, and 58. So far, he admits, not many people have claimed their messages.

Rosenstock takes requests for people who prefer one number over another, so that the slots are not filled in numerical order. For the purposes of the game, the only slots that matter are 11, 33, and 44 — all numerical palindromes. Vorster sent his servants in disguise at different times over a period of several months to stay over at the *Regal Lager* and arrange for papers to be placed in each of those slots. The contents of each slot are as follows:

Slot 11: *Handout 4*

Slot 33: *Handout 5*

Slot 44: *Handout 6*

Handout 4 is a receipt for repairs to Cristoff Bolstetter's mill, made out shortly after the date in *Handout 9*.

Handout 5 is a death certificate for Bertholdt Halbgewachsen, signed by Wegener, including the cause and date of death. *Handout 6* is a listing from a medical text about the effects of the common garden plant Azalea.

Tucked into the far right corner of slot 11 is *Handout 7*, which requires a *Challenging (-10%) Search Test* to spot.

If the PCs do not understand which slots are important and ask to see all of them, simply tell them none of the contents stand out, particularly. Slots include: recipes, poems, purchase orders, receipts, birth certificates, death certificates, letters about the weather, etc. If they want to know which of these are important, they need to solve the riddle and tell you.

LETTERS

The letters may be a bit easier to sort out. The vital piece of information relating the letters is that only two of them refer to the map on Vorster's chest, which is laid out in grid coordinates. The letters refer to a grid coordinate that houses only a single dwelling: that of the Wegeners.

Elspeth acts as the PCs' guide and escort through her manor. Upon entering, read the following text to the PCs:

As Elspeth escorts you through a quick tour of the Wegener Estate, you are struck by the opulence within compared to the relative squalor of Ehrtzhofen without. You pass by an anteroom, tastefully appointed with an oak coatrack, bench, and footrest; the common

room seats up to six guests on imported Bretonnian furniture, overseen by a portrait of Paulin Wegener standing over the crest of the Wegener family, a giant stylized “W” in front of crossed hammers; off to the east is a large room with a cherry wood grand piano, which is closed, locked, and coated with a fine layer of dust; the only other feature in the room is a painting of a storm-tossed ship with the Wegener crest on its sails that graces the far wall; the kitchen has a walk-in pantry and large oak table for food preparation; the master bedroom is nearly filled with an enormous bed and canopy, a large mirror, and a cedar armoire filled with clothes, boots, and shoes; a smaller bedroom at the end of the hall has been recently re-painted, and what looks to be a partially-built rocking chair lies on the floor surrounded by various tools; opposite from this room is an office filled with medical supplies, elixirs, and books; finally, down a small flight of stairs lies an enormous, well-stocked wine cellar, kept dark and cool at all times by virtue of its location.

The PCs may have some initial questions about the tour. A list of the most common ones follows.

- *Why is the piano dusty? Who plays?*

“No one plays, unfortunately. The piano was a wedding gift from Paulin’s parents; it is merely for show. But the servants will be reprimanded for not cleaning it properly.”

- *What about the room with the rocking chair?*

At this, Elspeth will sigh and choke back tears. “Paulin and I were hoping to have a child soon. He was building that chair for me before he disappeared.”

- *Why is the wine cellar so large?*

“Paulin’s family are wine merchants. They hail originally from Averland, where they still work one of the largest vineyards in the Empire. The wine bottles in that cellar were my husband’s most prized possessions. Are,” she says, her voice catching. “They *are* my husband’s most prized possessions.”

- *Has Augustin visited lately?*

“As a matter of fact, he has. He saw me not two days past for nausea brought on by the disappearance of my husband. I was indisposed in the bedroom, and he had quite some time to himself. He told me he was mixing a tonic and did not want the vapors to disturb me. I wonder now what he was really doing.”

Questioning the servants is fruitless, they have no useful information. Wegener’s servants, like the servants of most merchant families, have been taught to keep to themselves and avoid eavesdropping — any knowledge gained may well cost them their jobs, and in some cases, their lives.

- *Have you noticed anything unusual in the house?*

“Not in the least.”

The investigation, much like the *Regal Lager*, involves multiple variations on a single theme — in this case, letters. If they have gotten this far, the PCs should be

alert for any letters that stand out anywhere, but most especially a “W” or an “M,” which are the two remaining letters on the tattoo. In the Wegener household, two things should leap to mind after the brief tour: the painting in the common room and the one in the piano room, both of which bear the letter “W” (the “M” on the map is simply an upside-down “W”). Clearly, the paintings bear closer examination.

Behind the portrait in the common room, tucked into the frame, is *Handout 8*. It should not be immediately legible; the clue to reading it is the other painting (the text needs to be held up to a mirror to be read — it is also upside-down, like the “M” on the tattoo, in order to make it more difficult to read). It may turn out, however, that the PCs figure out the text is reversed on their own, without the additional clue from the ship painting. If so, award them extra XP, they’ve earned it.

Examining the painting of the storm-tossed ship is a bit more difficult, gaining the clue requires a successful *Challenging (-10%) Perception Test*, which becomes *Routine (+10%)* if any PC has expertise in art or possesses the *Evaluation* skill. Upon succeeding, the PC notes that the name of the ship (visible on its hull) has been carefully painted over with a new name, “Spiegel.” Anyone who speaks Reikspiel will immediately note the translation: “mirror.” The paper from *Handout 8* must be taken to the mirror in the master bedroom, and only its reflection will be legible. It says, “play dead.” This clue is tricky, but again it is important to remember that the theme here is letters. The clue actually reads “play D-E-A-D,” which can be done on the piano down the hall.

Playing the notes D-E-A-D on the piano results in sounds on the Ds and the A, but no sound on the E. Apparently Vorster has attached small rolled-up pieces of parchment on the striking-point of the E string, interfering with the vibrations. Removing these pieces of paper reveals the information found in *Handouts 9, 10, 11, and 12*.

SHAPES

The key principle relating the shapes is that they interconnect to form the shape of a building on the map. Each shape that is irregular forms part of the initial puzzle. Piecing these shapes together yields a shape that is the same as only one building on the map: the Pfluger estate. The remaining shape comprises a second puzzle, also to be solved at the Pfluger estate.

For those who have just solved the letter-based clues at the Wegener estate, a brief tour of the inside of the manor is unrevealing; no clear shapes stand out and no clues are found on a search. Outside the manor things are different. Cristoff Pfluger tells them he maintains a small sanctuary dedicated to his hallowed ancestors south of his house, and his servants had complained of strange rustlings in the forest at night. Various false jewels (in reality, cut pieces of stained glass) are embedded in the shield, sword hilts, and necklaces of these statues. One of the jewels bears a shape that is exactly the same as the remaining shape on Vorster’s tattoo — something Pfluger may reveal if the PCs are having too much trouble, or can be found on a successful *Challeng-*

ing (-10%) *Perception Test*. Indeed, on close inspection, it is apparent that the jewel has been pried from its fastenings and a note tucked behind it before being replaced. The jewel is easily removed to reveal the note, the contents of which can be found in *Handout 13*.

The text of the clue is this: *Gestank will eat anything*. Cryptic, but Pfluger tells the PCs that Gestank is the name of one of his horses — so named because she emits a foul odor that is quite resistant to dietary changes and vigorous bathing. An examination of Gestank is unrevealing. However, what goes in must come out, and the clue now resides in the manure pile. Gestank's manure is so malodorous she is kept in her own personal, private enclosed stable. Unfortunately the enclosed space makes matters worse, and the manure has piled up waist-high in the corners (Gestank suffers from an equine version of the galloping trots, and the stable-hands are unable to keep up with her output). The stench is truly indescribable.

Wise PCs will attempt to get Pfluger to order his servants to dig through the manure. Pfluger initially agrees, but the first two servants succumb to fits of vomiting and the third passes out straight away. Pfluger

returns to the PCs, pleading that they seem to be “made of sterner stuff.” There really is no choice but to roll up their sleeves and dig in.

Searching through the manure is an arduous process and not for the faint of heart. Each round spent within the shed requires a successful *Very Hard* (-30%) *Toughness Test* (PCs with *Animal Care* or *Animal Training* get a +10% bonus) in order to avoid vomiting (though generous GMs may wish to modify the difficulty of the test for especially clever PC precautions). If the test is failed, the next two rounds must be spent expelling the contents of the PC's stomach upon the ground. If the test is failed two times in a row, the PC passes out for 1d10 rounds. If the test is passed, the PC may attempt a *Routine* (+10%) *Search Test*. Two successful Search Tests by the same PC yields a true success: a worn leather pouch containing a few folded-up pieces of parchment comprising *Handouts 14, 15, 16, and 17*.

Unfortunately, this stench will not wash off the PCs, who suffer from a -20% *Fellowship* penalty for the rest of the scenario.

∴ Investigative Complications ∴

Listed following are several difficulties the PCs may encounter during the course of their investigations.

STRANGE RUMBLINGS

The PCs imbibed a portion of Vorster's poison during the Gründenfest last evening. Even though their lives are quite safe, it doesn't mean they will be comfortable. The poison inflames and irritates their digestive tracts, causing progressively worsening abdominal cramping that soon spreads to the rest of the body.

Once an hour during their investigations, have each PC roll a *Toughness Test*. At first, this is *Very Easy* (+30%), but each hour that passes without drinking the antidote causes the test to drop one rank. The next hour's *Toughness Test* is merely *Easy* (+20%), and then *Routine* (+10%), and so on all the way to *Very Hard* (-30%) 6 hours later. In addition, times of stress (such as combat or digging through manure) require another roll, modified by how much stress the PC is experiencing and how many hours have passed since the first test. Each test caused by stress can never be easier than that hour's modified *Toughness Test*.

Failing the test ensures the PC will spend at least the next round bent over with severe muscle cramps. The cramping will not stop until the *Toughness Test* is passed (PCs may attempt the test once per round). A

generous GM may make these “per round” tests progressively easier to pass — but whoever heard of a generous GM?

After 6 hours without an antidote, PCs failing their *Toughness Test* have to roll 1d10 on the following table:

AILMENT TABLE

- 1 Muscle Aches: -10% to Strength
- 2 Joint Aches: -10% to Weapon Skill
- 3 Throat Spasm: voice can be no louder than a whisper; -10% to Fellowship
- 4 High Fever: -10% to Toughness
- 5 Uncontrollable Flatulence: -20% to Fellowship
- 6 Ringing in Ears: -20% on all Listen Tests
- 7 Blurry Vision: -10% to all Search and Perception Tests
- 8 Back Spasms: -10% to Weapon Skill and Agility
- 9 Overwhelming Nausea: -10% to Strength and Toughness
- 10 Splitting Headache: -10% to all Characteristics; Mag Score reduced by 1

Penalties incurred last a minimum of 1 hour, or until the next *Toughness Test* is passed. Passing a *Toughness*

Test clears the results of any prior ailments — at least until the next hour. Penalties are cumulative.

THE ELDER'S COUNCIL

During the course of their search, the PCs will gather a lot of evidence implicating the members of the Elder's Council in the death of Bertholdt Halbgewachsen (this was Vorster's intent from the start). Lutenschleger will discourage the PCs from confronting any of the four Elders, both for political reasons (it is not wise to irritate the most politically powerful people in town) and because the issues raised by the parchments the PCs gather during the course of their search are not relevant to finding the antidote. Time is pressing, and the PCs really have no time to waste — any questions of foul play that arise during the course of their search can be addressed by a later investigation, assuming anyone survives.

The wisest course for the PCs is to keep their findings close to the vest until the antidote is found. However, the PCs may decide to confront the Elder's Council regardless of such considerations, especially when it becomes clear that they have been involved in foul play. Interrogating the Elder's Council is fruitless. Elspeth is innocent of any wrongdoing, and has no knowledge of the plot against Halbgewachsen. The rest of the Council will deny any wrongdoing; ready responses to the PCs' questions can be culled from the following:

- *That is a clear forgery.*
- *Why would I, a prominent member in the Elder's Council, do such a terrible thing?*
- *You are dredging up ancient history that is quite irrelevant to the situation at hand.*
- *Aren't you supposed to be finding the antidote to the poison that's killing us?*
- *Vorster is deranged. He killed himself! If a man can do that to himself, there is nothing he wouldn't do to others.*
- *That is not my signature.*
- *That is not the correct date.*
- *Why are you bothering me with this? Aren't you supposed to report to the Bailiff?*
- *All I ask is that you do not rush to judgment. We can deal with these false allegations at a later date.*
- *That doesn't prove anything.*
- *Consider the source: Vorster clearly has a grudge against us because we replaced him. Why are you taking a madman's last gasps seriously?*
- *Of course there is an explanation for that, but I am cramping too badly to think right now.*

Confronting the Elder's Council with evidence of their malfeasance only serves to tip them off as to Vorster's true intention: to expose them as murderers and thieves. The Elder's Council has been fearful of Vorster since the beginning, which is why they had him replaced with someone less competent. Many of them argued that Vorster should have been killed or exiled, but cooler heads won the day. Bartenbach overruled any idea to harm Vorster, because he considered Vorster a drunken sot caught in the throes of melancholy. How could such a man harm anyone?

But now Vorster's suicide has raised those questions anew: should they have killed or exiled him? Did he discover their plot? Is he reaching out to strike at them from beyond the grave?

While the PCs are busy solving the clues, the Elder's Council prepares for the worst. Bartenbach has quietly gathered his personal force of bodyguards (whose general stats can be found under "Sell-swords" in *Dramatis Personae*), and sequestered them in his manor. These mercenaries will not be used to obstruct the PCs in any way until the antidote is found; the Council members are not stupid men, and they all wish to be rid of the poison that runs through their veins.

However, they will send a single individual to shadow the PCs and take note of what they find. When possible, this will be one of the Council — even Elspeth has been instructed to report to the Council with such information "for the good of Ehrtzhofen." To find shadowers who are not Council members, for example while searching around the *Regal Lager*, it is necessary to make a *Hard (-20%) Perception Test* specifically to spot someone trailing them. Such a *Perception Test* is made more difficult because the shadower knows the lay of the land and the PCs do not.

If the PCs do find and catch a shadower, he tells them he is merely working on orders from the Elder's Council. If questioned, the Council members tell the PCs it is their job to keep tabs on their progress for the safety of Ehrtzhofen. Once the PCs return to their business, a different shadower is dispatched. Should 2 shadowers be discovered, the Elder's Council calls off the chase, believing that sending more people will only result in raising suspicions of the PCs even further.

During the course of the day, unless the PCs are very careful to avoid letting any of the information get out, it becomes clear to the Council that their worst fears have been realized: Vorster has gathered evidence implicating them in Halbgewachsen's murder and is tying that evidence to the search for the antidote. Two things are certain: 1) the antidote must be found, and 2) the PCs cannot be allowed to live. The Council is not worried about Lutenschleger as he is wounded and bedridden, but the PCs are armed and capable and pose a significant threat — especially with the information they gather.

In short, questioning members of the Elder's Council is a waste of time and only serves to alert the Council that the PCs are a significant threat that will have to be dealt with, sooner or later. More information can be found in the section called *South Averland Red*.

VILLAGERS

The PCs are not left to their own devices during the search. Word has gotten out that the town is in trouble, and while the villagers may not know exactly what the trouble is, they do know that the PCs are endeavoring to save them. Random villagers pester the PCs throughout the adventure with well wishes, and every once in a while — just often enough to irritate the PCs — they offer a stale piece of bread or a cup of rancid stew to “keep their strength up.” A good rule of thumb is to have a random villager pop up with a different type of foul-tasting food or drink every time the PCs seem stuck on a clue or puzzle, and offer a few quite unhelpful suggestions.

These villagers inevitably smell bad, as hygiene doesn't seem to cross the mind of the average townsfolk. This doesn't become an issue until after the PCs wade through Gestank's manure, when even the rank townsfolk will start avoiding the PCs: “Beg pardon, sir, but you smell *awful*.”

Take careful note of how the PCs treat the townsfolk, as they are giving the PCs the best of their food and drink and many of the families are going hungry to do so. Angry rejections, insults, or poor behavior will have consequences in the final battle, as detailed in *South Aveland Red*.

The PCs may turn to Lutenschleger to help them solve various clues, since he is skilled in investigating crimes and piecing together puzzles. Lutenschleger is certainly

willing to assist, but he is heavily wounded and fighting off pain and fatigue, so he is not operating at full capacity. Also, he is unable to move about, and carrying him causes him great pain. Within these restrictions, Lutenschleger may at most help the PCs solve one of the clues. The strain from anything more than this causes him to pass out for a time. The message should be clear: Lutenschleger is incapable of doing the PCs' work for them.

Members of the Elder's Council will be quite helpful at first, and then become less so as the details incriminating them emerge. By the end of the day, they will offer the bare minimum assistance necessary — they still want to find the antidote and live through this ordeal, but every bit of help they give the PCs tightens the noose around their collective necks.

Other villagers may assist with general locations and village history, but very few of them are even semi-literate and none are privy to the details of Halbgewachsen's demise or the politics of Ehortzhofen. They have enough to do simply to survive.

In general, try not to give the PCs too much free assistance. The point of *Dead Ringer* is to exercise their minds more than their muscles, to replace clashing blades with flashes of insight. However, it can be understandably infuriating to stare at a single puzzle without reaching that necessary insight, so encourage them to move onto other puzzles or take a break if they get stumped. Sometimes, all a tricky puzzle requires is a fresh perspective.



:: Putting the Pieces Together ::

If the PCs have correctly solved all of the clues, they should realize that the members of the Elder's Council are all implicated in the conspiracy to murder Bertholdt Halbgewachsen. *Handouts 4, 11, and 16* establish the debts of Cristoff Bolstetter and Endris Pfluger, and the fact that they were paid in one lump sum instead of over time. *Handout 9* establishes that the Elder's Council all received 2,000 gold crowns (the deposits of Bolstetter and Pfluger have to be added to the debts that they paid off) on the same day, shortly after the death of Bertholdt Halbgewachsen. The death certificates (*Handouts 5 and 10*) show that Wegener falsified his entry, and combined with *Handouts 6 and 15* it is clear that Halbgewachsen died of Azalea extract poisoning at Wegener's hand. Finally, Halbgewachsen's Last Will and Testament (*Handout 14*) establishes that Fritz Trubin should have inherited the fortune, not the Elder's Council.

Handouts 7, 12, and 17 comprise another clue. By putting together these three sets of text, the PCs now have the following cryptic passage, written in Augustin Vor-

ster's own hand:

*You seek the grave of one
Whose soul is twined with mine
She began the day I ended
And ended the day this began*

The translation is not easy, and may require some help from the villagers. The PCs are looking for the burial site of a woman who was born on the day Vorster killed himself (“she began the day I ended”), which is the current day — the 18th of Sommerzeit (but this can be changed to whatever day the GM chooses to fit in with the current campaign) — and who died when Vorster lost his job 5 years ago (“and ended the day this began”): the 13th of Vorgeheim. The final line is probably the most difficult to decipher, but any member of the Elder's Council, when questioned, point to that as the

day Vorster considered “this” to begin. It is what prompted his spiral into melancholy and motivated his desire for revenge. If the PCs have gotten this far and are stuck on the final line, give them a break and have Elspeth Wegener or Eberlein Bartenbach volunteer the information. Clearly Vorster pored through the death records of the town, found one that matched the day of his firing, and then planned his suicide to fall on the day of her birth.

It is a small cemetery, so finding a name attached to either the birth or the death date would likely yield the correct grave. Unfortunately none of the gravestones have dates on them because of a town suspicion that dates of death are unlucky for all — therefore, the town chooses not to memorialize them. Birth and death records are kept in only one place — the physician’s office.

Hastening to the Wegener estate, the PCs find that the records are gone. On a successful *Routine (+10%) Perception Test* a PC notices that the small fireplace that warms the medical office has a huge pile of ashes beneath it. Small pieces of remain legible, but just enough to confirm that Vorster burned the birth and death records recently, likely when Elspeth was indisposed.

This apparent dead end can only be resolved by resorting to the last line of Vorster’s first passage in *Handout 1: All hope rests with a fool* (or perhaps the PCs will recall Fritz quoting the death dates of two people earlier on in the scenario). Fritz, who the PCs should be aware is a savant, spent some time with Augustin a year ago, during which Augustin had him memorize every birth and death record in Ehrtzhofen. If the PCs approach Fritz with either a birthdate or a deathdate, Fritz will be able to give them a name to go along with it; in this case the name is Otilia Schultess.

IN MORR’S GARDEN

Exhuming the coffin of Frau Schultess is an arduous task that requires at least 3 hours for two strong people. This can be shortened to 2 hours for three people and 1 hour for four or more — one reason to take the Elder’s Councils “volunteers” (in reality some of the sell-swords sent to tail them) on their offer to help dig. A *Hard (-20%) Perception Test* is required to spot a curious thing: on this grave and this grave only, the little bell’s rope, which is supposed to lead down into the coffin for the purposes of rescue, has been cut.

After an appropriate time spent digging, sharp-eared PCs will hear a soft moaning emanating from below their feet on a *Routine (+10%) Listen Test*. Only a few minutes later, multiple shovels hit wood instead of earth and clearing away the loose dirt reveals a coffin’s lid.

If lifted, the coffin is surprisingly heavy. When the PCs open the lid, they find what appears to be a recently-deceased male corpse resting beside the comatose figure of Paulin Wegener (whose chest rises and falls in a ragged fashion as he moans woefully). Wegener is recognizable by the crest of his family that is imprinted on his left jacket breast. The lid itself is scratched from the inside, and Wegener’s fingernails — those which have not separated from the nailbed — have dried blood on

top of them, and strips of fabric beneath. Anyone with medical expertise will be able to determine that although Wegener is dehydrated, he will survive little worse for the wear if he is given some fluids. Physically he should be fine, but his mental status is another question entirely.

An examination of the corpse that lies with him is intriguing. He appears to be recently deceased, but has been expertly embalmed which makes it difficult to tell exactly when he died. An *Average Search Test* reveals that he was killed by several blows to the head; many of the marks are still imprinted with outlines of the murder weapon: a lion’s head. This should point to Bartenbach, as he has been walking around with a golden-tipped lion’s head cane during the entire scenario. Searching the person of the corpse yields a rotting pistol and some handcuffs, which should reveal his identity: Erschel Neunecker, murdered by Eberlein Bartenbach five years ago.

Finally, searching Wegener’s body yields a note in the jacket pocket beneath his family crest, the text of which can be found in *Handout 18*. It reads as follows:

South Averland Red, 2492

If the PCs do not immediately realize that the message refers to a type of wine (they should recall Elspeth Wegener recounting the Wegener family business in the *Letters* section of “Curious, Cadaverous Tattoos”), any villager can tell them that South Averland is the home of the Wegener family, and houses one of the largest vineyards in the Empire. The 2492 vintage of South Averland Red wine is among the most sought-after wines in the Provinces. A single bottle has sold for upwards of 50 gold crowns in Averland, and often two or three times that amount in Altdorf. Paulin Wegener has two racks full of the vintage in his wine cellar, just enough to cure the townsfolk of Ehrtzhofen.

SOUTH AVERLAND RED

The wine cellar encounter has two possible outcomes. If the PCs were very careful about keeping their findings to themselves, and discovered at least 2 of the Elder’s Council shadowers, they are free to do whatever they wish in Wegener’s cellar, at least until the villagers inevitably arrive.

If, however, those conditions were not met, the PCs will be ambushed by eight sell-swords sent from the Elder’s Council (whose stats can be found in *Dramatis Personae*). The sell-swords arrive shortly after the PCs, and attack them before they can reach the antidote.

During this battle the PCs will likely suffer from penalties inflicted by the *Ailment Table*, but so will the sell-swords. Because combat is particularly stressful, the poison is acutely felt: once per round, have each PC roll on the *Ailment Table* to see what penalties he or she will suffer that round. To simplify things, just roll once for the sell-swords to obtain a penalty they all will share.

This is the climactic battle of *Dead Ringer*, so feel free to pull out all the stops. Wounded PCs or sell-swords thrown into shelves; wine bottles crashing down and shattering against the floor; Elspeth screaming from the stairway not to harm her husband's prized possessions; wine bottles used as improvised weapons (thrown or used as clubs); corks flying and wine splashed into PC's eyes; anything goes.

The sell-swords have not been told what the antidote is or where to find it (which is why they arrived so quickly); they simply have orders to kill the PCs at all costs. Thus, the PCs may have two jobs to do: take care of the sell-swords and save the South Averland Red from destruction.

The sell-swords follow a general strategy of tackling the tougher-appearing members of the PC group two on one, and will attempt to separate them from each other so that stronger characters cannot assist weaker ones.

ARRIVAL OF THE DESPERATE

After a few rounds of general mayhem (or several rounds of peace and quiet, if the PCs are not engaged in battle with the sell-swords), the wine cellar is invaded by townsfolk who have heard the news: an antidote has been found in the Wegener wine cellar! The first to arrive are members of the Elder's Council — who broke the news to the villagers in an attempt to create a mob atmosphere to cover the deaths of the PCs. The Council members attempt to head straight for the 2492 vintage of South Averland Red, and are horrified if any has been destroyed.

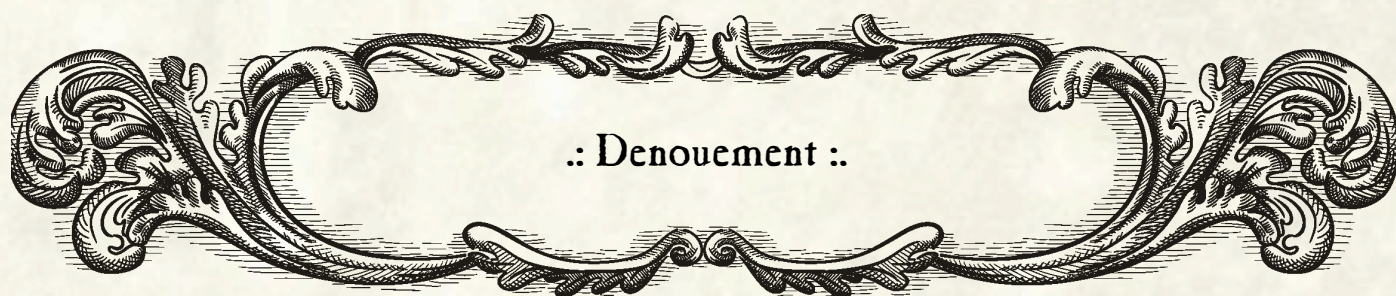
If the PCs have been rude to the townsfolk or behaved poorly during their stay in Ehrtzhofen, the townsfolk repay them in kind: they ignore the combat and start drinking from the nearest wine bottle (they are under the mistaken belief that *all* of the wine has the antidote in it). If, however, the PCs have been kind and courte-

ous, the villagers risk their own lives to assist them against the sell-swords. Should this occur, the battle will not last long.

Should the PCs be alone when the villagers arrive, their prior behavior toward the town of Ehrtzhofen still has consequences. If the PCs have been kind and behaved well, the villagers stop and await instructions from the PCs. There will be some pushing and shoving between people eager to get at the antidote, but no major problems erupt. The Elder's Council members are present and politely await their turn for the antidote (but they cannot avoid an abiding feeling of inevitable doom, as they are aware that at least some evidence that incriminates them is in the hands of the PCs). The mood soon turns cheery when the antidote is passed about, and the villagers spontaneously decide to celebrate by drinking the rest of the wine in the cellar.

If the PCs behaved poorly, however, the group of villagers swells into a mob and cannot be controlled. In a desperate attempt to drink the antidote and save themselves, the villagers indiscriminately smash wine bottles and slurp the spilt liquid from the floor, steal or hide them, turn over entire shelves, and generally cause widespread mayhem and destruction. The mob does not slow down until all the wine is gone, spilled, or destroyed. Hapless PCs may well be caught in the brunt of all this poison-induced madness.

Either way the adventure resolves itself, the Wegener wine cellar should be at best completely bereft of wine, and at worst completely destroyed. If Paulin Wegener revives, he lapses into a deep and thorough melancholy that rivals anything Augustin Vorster experienced. He is worried sick that if his family ever discovers his ineptitude at watching over the bottles entrusted to him, he may be disowned as well as destitute.



When the last drop from Vorster's water clock drains near dusk, time has run out for the members of the Elder's Council. If no antidote has been found, the two poisons reach each other in the systems of the four male Elder's Council members, setting off a fatal reaction. Each member begins to froth at the mouth, then seizes, and finally expires. Thankfully, the PCs and the rest of the town are safe from death; they just experience a pretty nasty case of severe muscle cramps for the next 1d10 days.

Should the PCs find the antidote, the question remains: what is the fate of the Elder's Council?

TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

Assuming the Elder's Council is still alive at dusk, the PCs have many options: they may try to bribe them in exchange for the antidote, restrain them and turn them over to Albrecht Lutenschleger, torture them for a bit at Gestank's private stables, or simply turn them over to the hands of the villagers. None of them have any fight left; they played their final hand by sending the sell-swords to take care of the PCs and the village mob to provide cover.

Lutenschleger is healed well enough by dusk that he is mobile once again, though gingerly so. He approaches

the PCs and thanks them for their work: the town of Ehrtzhofen is saved, and the PCs are heroes. Lutenschleger says he would like to repay them from the seized assets of the Elder's Council, once it has been determined how much belongs to Fritz and how much to the town. Unfortunately, it will take months to sort out the how and where of the finances, so the PCs will have to return this way again if they desire payment of the great debt Ehrtzhofen has incurred in their favor. Lutenschleger does offer each of the PCs a place on the Elder's Council (since there are now four openings), if they would only stay. Should they decline, Lutenschleger understands — Ehrtzhofen is really no place for larger than life heroes, and truth be told, the townsfolk would rather get back to the drudgery of normal existence and keep the PCs alive in their memories.

Once the offer has been declined, one of the villagers steps forward and announces that he has a gift for the PCs.

"We know that nothing we can do can ever repay you, but we have taken up a collection amongst the grateful townsfolk and we hope this is a start." The villager hands over a small bag containing 7 schillings and 4 pence, which represents the entire amassed wealth of the non-noble inhabitants of Ehrtzhofen. "It is all we have, but we hope it will help you remember those who will never forget you."

A few other villagers stand and give the PCs other bags, filled with stale bread and rotting meat, and skins reeking of week-old rotgut. Should the PCs unwisely ingest any of this food or drink, they will indeed remember Ehrtzhofen, as they relive the severe abdominal cramping from which they so recently recovered.

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

If the puzzles are not solved and the antidote is not found before dusk falls, Fritz brings the PCs a stack of papers that Vorster ordered him to keep inside his mattress over a year ago — copies of all the documents the PCs should have found on their own. Vorster instructed Fritz to keep these documents buried until dusk on the day he planned to commit suicide. Fritz followed these instructions to the letter.

The documents establish the guilt of the male members of the Elder's Council, who die of Vorster's poisoning because the antidote was never found. They also direct the PCs to the grave of Otilia Schultess, where the corpses of Paulin Wegener and Erschel Neunecker lay, in addition to revealing that Bertholdt Halbgewachsen actually intended to bequeath his fortune to Fritz. One final document establishes that no one else in town was fatally poisoned (this includes the PCs) because they never ingested the first part of the two-part poison, which was necessary for the lethal poison to become active in their systems. However, even should the antidote be found now by tracing the clue in Wegener's breast pocket to his wine cellar, it is too late to stop the poison in the PCs' systems from causing a terrible bout

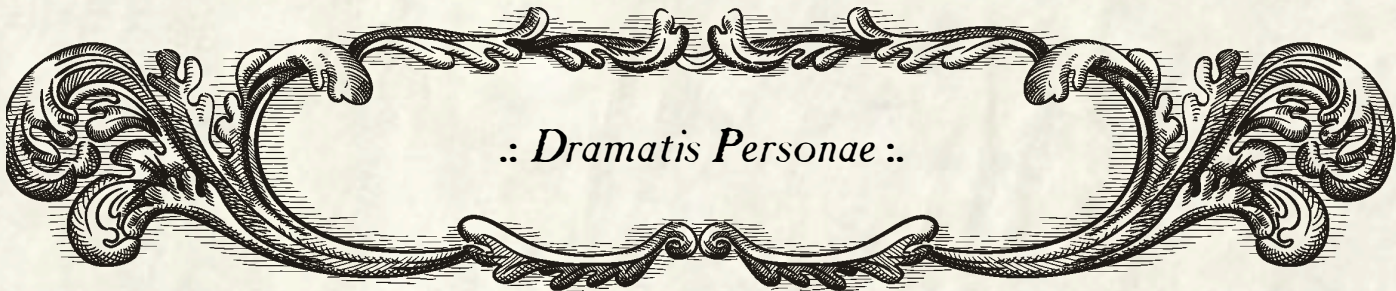
of the galloping trots that lasts for 1d10 days. Vorster suggests drinking plenty of fluids.

WHENCE AUGUSTIN VORSTER?

Augustin Vorster is in reality not dead at all. It seems he took a carefully calculated dose of Azalea extract — just enough to induce a comatose state rather indistinguishable from death. His Last Will specifically orders his body to be kept in his cellar for a period of three days before embalming and burial, as a hedge against an incompetent diagnosis by Paulin Wegener. When he revives two days later, Madelena removes him from the manor and together they travel to Talabheim, to start a new life in the city together in the shadow of the crater.

If the PCs discover this information, all they need to do is wait in Vorster's cellar until Madalena returns or Vorster revives. He congratulates them on their ingenuity, and is willing to answer any questions they have. Should they threaten to turn him in, he simply smiles and offers a bribe instead: "How about I pay each of you strong folk 10 gold crowns for your troubles?" He is willing to be bargained up to 15 gold crowns, if the PCs agree to simply leave him alone. If the PCs decline, he does not resist and is willing to be turned over to Lutenschleger for trial for all the troubles he caused, secure in the knowledge that he has brought down or destroyed all four members of the Elder's Council.

Experience Point Awards	
Battling the Giant Wolves	5 xp
Resolving <i>Handout 3</i>	5 xp
Resolving the Words clue	5 xp
Finding <i>Handouts 4-7</i>	5 xp
Resolving the Letters clue	5 xp
Finding and reading <i>Handout 8</i>	5 xp
Finding <i>Handouts 9-12</i>	5 xp
Resolving the Shapes clue	5 xp
Finding <i>Handout 13</i>	5 xp
Finding <i>Handouts 14-17</i>	5 xp
Finding <i>Handout 18</i>	5 xp
Finding the antidote	10 xp
Finding each shadower	5 xp
Avoiding battle with the sell-swords	10 xp
Engaging in battle with the sell-swords	5 xp
Treating the villagers with respect	5 xp
Finding Vorster alive	10 xp



:: Dramatis Personae ::

This section acts as a quick reference for the important people of Ehrtzhofen and how they relate with one another. Also included are sample stats for the Giant Wolves encountered in “Along a Lonely Road,” as well as the sell-swords who may or may not plague the PCs in *South Averland Red*.

Augustin Vorster

Fired from his position of town physician 5 years prior to the beginning of the adventure, Vorster has recovered from a deep melancholy and now bides his time as an inventor. He is gregarious and intelligent, but harbors a secret grudge against the Elder’s Council that sets the entire chain of events in *Dead Ringer* in motion. It is he who devised all of the clues and planted the notes leading to the antidote as well as the evidence that incriminates the Elder’s Council. His presence should be felt throughout the scenario, as during the “day of poison” he is never far from anyone’s mind.

Madalena Precht

Servant to Doktor Vorster and his secret lover, her main job is to gather the final herbs Vorster uses to commit suicide at the beginning of the adventure. It is her duty to ensure that he is revived after the events of *Dead Ringer* have played out, after which Precht and Vorster plan to move onto another village and start their lives anew.

Albrecht Lutenschleger

Incoming Bailiff, replacement for Erschel Neunecker after a complete lack of law enforcement in Ehrtzhofen for the past 5 years. He plans to settle there, and has visions of restoring law and order to the sleepy village, which seems to have gotten by just fine without it. He is honest and just, a rarity in any position of authority. Wounded in the initial battle with the Giant Wolves, Albrecht is relegated to a minor role in *Dead Ringer*.

Bertholdt Halbgewachsen

“Old Halb” was the wealthiest citizen of Ehrtzhofen, before he was murdered by a conspiracy between the members of the Elder’s Council led by a desperate and destitute Endris Pfluger. He was poisoned, then buried alive by the incompetent replacement physician Paulin Wegener. Halbgewachsen planned to leave his inheritance to the one person in town no one seemed to like, the town fool Fritz Trubin. Those plans were dashed when the Elder’s Council announced to the village that Halbgewachsen had left no will, and was in reality deep in debt. His riches were divided up between the corrupt

members of the Elder’s Council.

Erschel Neunecker

Neunecker was the town bailiff who abused his position by arresting townfolk under false pretenses and then gouging their relatives for bail money. Never one to let sleeping dogs lie, he insisted on starting an investigation concerning the suspicious circumstances that surrounded Halbgewachsen’s death. It was he who exhumed Halbgewachsen’s corpse and discovered he had been buried alive. Through tenacity and sharp detective work, he found a copy of Halbgewachsen’s will in a safe deposit box in Talabheim. Unfortunately, Bartenbach did not take kindly to his blackmail attempts and killed Neunecker in a murderous rage, then buried his body in an old gravesite. Neunecker was later found and embalmed by Augustin Vorster, who retraced the Bailiff’s steps and uncovered evidence implicating the entire Elder’s Council in the murder of Halbgewachsen and the theft of his fortune.

Eberlein Bartenbach

Town mayor and corrupt leader of the Elder’s Council, Bartenbach went along with Endris Pfluger’s plan to dispose of Bertholdt Halbgewachsen and strip his estate of his fortune. He always carries around a large cane with a golden-tipped handle carved into the shape of a lion’s head, which he used to cave in the skull of Erschel Neunecker 5 years ago.

Endris Pfluger

Mastermind of the plot to murder Bertholdt Halbgewachsen. Pfluger was in dire financial straits at the time, and faced threats of debtor’s prison from his moneylender in Talabheim. Using the influx of cash he gained from the murdered man’s fortune, he re-invigorated his bank and moved into Halbgewachsen’s manor. He is now quite well-to-do, and a respected member of the Elder’s Council.

Cristoff Bolstetter

Town miller. Bolstetter was in bad financial shape 5 years ago when he approached Pfluger for a loan to repair his aging and decrepit mill. Pfluger refused for lack of funds, but offered him a counter-proposal: help him murder Bertholdt Halbgewachsen and share in the spoils. It was Bolstetter who suggested they contact Paulin Wegener, an incompetent physician from the nearby town of Freital who was in need of a new job, fast.

Paulin Wegener

A younger son from a very successful wine family, Paulin could not share in the family business and decided to pursue medicine instead. Barely competent even in the best of times, Wegener was nearly run out of Freital after a debacle involving his misdiagnosis of a prominent nobleman. Fortunately, Cristoff Bolstetter offered him the job of physician in Ehtzhofen, and he had no ethical qualms over poisoning a patient to gain riches for himself. As *Dead Ringer* begins, Paulin finds himself drifting in and out of consciousness, sharing a coffin with the corpse of Erschel Neunecker in Vorster's bid for revenge against him and the rest of the Elder's Council.

Elspeth Wegener

Innocent wife of Paulin Wegener, Elspeth knows nothing of her husband's part in murdering Bertholdt Halbgewachsen. She is worried over the disappearance of Paulin, who suddenly went missing after his rounds three days before the start of the adventure. She helps the PCs as much as she can, but she is under orders from the Elder's Council to report any findings directly to them. Since her husband went missing, she has taken his place on the Council, the first woman in the history of Ehtzhofen to do so.

Fritz Trubin

Fritz Trubin is considered by most villagers to be the town fool, but in reality is something of a savant. Augustin Vorster used him to memorize the birth and death records of the people of Ehtzhofen in order to allow those attempting to resolve his clues to find the resting place of Erschel Neunecker and Paulin Wegener — which leads to the whereabouts of the antidote. Fritz is the true beneficiary of Bertholdt Halbgewachsen's estate.

Giant Wolves

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
39%	0%	32%	40%	33%	22%	37%	8%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	14	3	4	8	0	0	0

Skills: Concealment, Silent Move

Armor: None

Weapons: Claws, Teeth

Equipment: None

Sell-swords

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
42%	31%	36%	38%	42%	33%	37%	33%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	13	3	4	4	0	0	0

Description: These 8 sell-swords are under the employ of the Elder's Council, who direct them to shadow the PCs during their investigations. If not stopped, they

ambush the PCs in a desperate battle beneath the Wegener manor, surrounded by expensive wine bottles of varying vintage.

Skills: Perception +10%, Shadowing

Talents: Coolheaded, Disarm

Armor: Full Leather Armor, Mail Shirt

Armor Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 2, Legs 1

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword), and Shield

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, [TJ Adamowicz](#) and [Freddy Lopez, Jr](#) turn in amazing work under tight deadlines. If *Dead Ringer* looks professional, it's because of their time, talent, and effort. I owe them both a huge debt of gratitude.

Thanks again to my playtesting group consisting of my wife Camilyn Morrison and my good friends Leighton and Troy Allred. Their advice and support are invaluable; it was their input that led to the Ailment Table as well as other nice touches.

Special thanks to [Alfred Nunez](#) and [Andreas Blicher](#) for their cartography and beautiful maps (used as reference for siting my own town of Ehtzhofen), and [Nate Piekos](#) for his amazing fonts. [Blambot](#) fonts featured in *Dead Ringer* include "Jack Lantern" for the title logo, and "Whitechapel" and "Yankee Ghosts" for handout text. And if you love a good fantasy comic, check out Nate's consistently great [Atland](#).

GAMEMASTER NOTES

.: Handouts .:

Handout #1

*Woes betide those who spurn their own succor,
Twin ills beset, the water drains,
All hope rests with a fool.*

Handout #4

Talabheim Construction & Repair



*Ehrtzhofen Mill Repair Invoice
... 1600 crowns*

*Repairs to commence upon receipt
of payment*

*Payment received
33rd Vorgeheim, 2517*

Handout #9

First Bank of Ehrtzhofen



Ledger for 33rd Vorgeheim, 2517

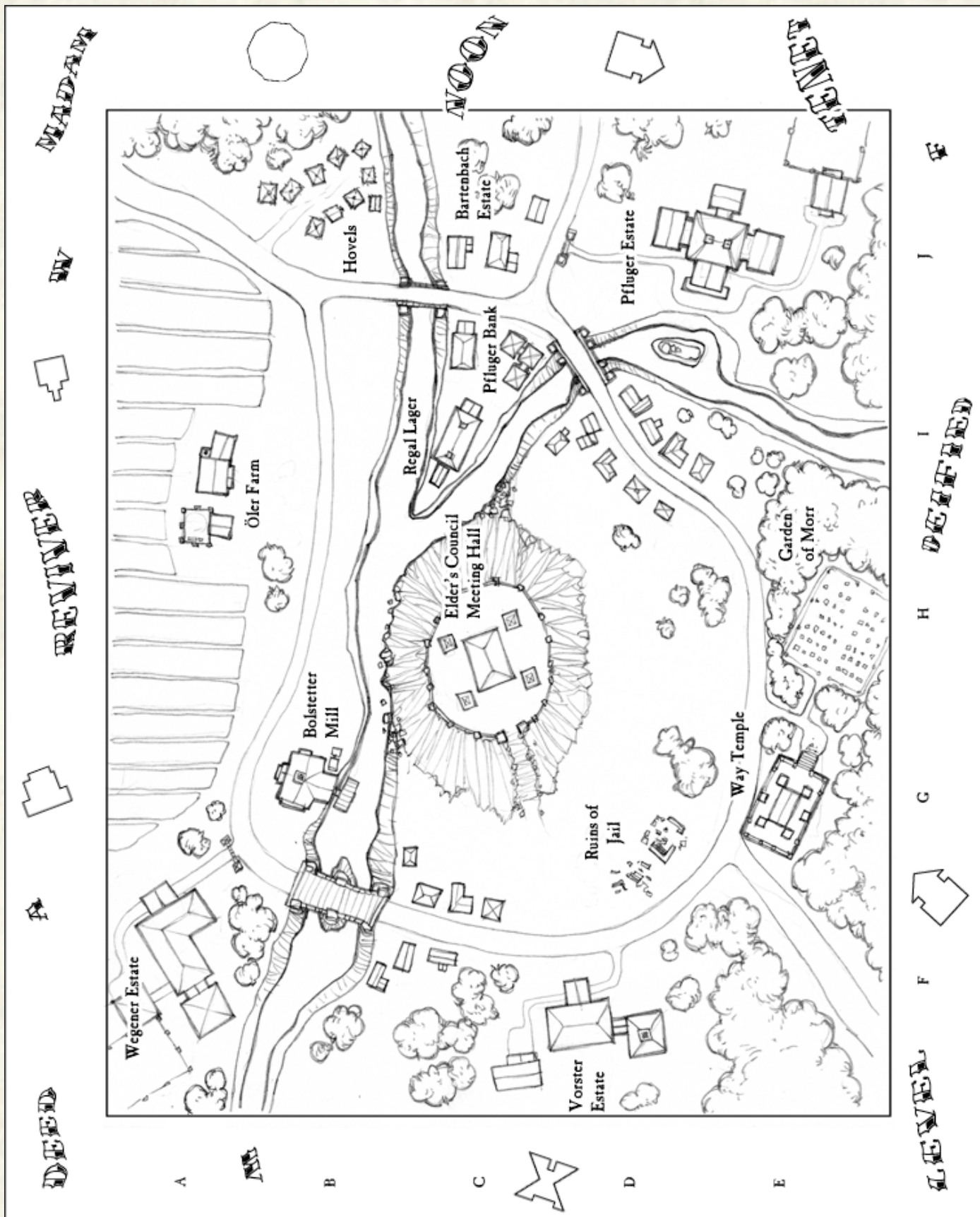
*Eberlein Bartenbach
Deposit 2,000 gold crowns
Paulin Wegener
Deposit 2,000 gold crowns
Cristoff Bolstetter
Deposit 400 gold crowns
Endris Pfluger
Deposit 710 gold crowns*

Handout #6

WITZPURGER'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF HERBS AND REMEDIES

page 26

AZALEA *A popular flower with gardeners, even though all parts of the azalea plant are poisonous. It is a common medicinal, used in small doses as a purgative to induce vomiting and diarrhoea -- take care to avoid dehydration. In moderate doses, the azalea plant can cause salivation, weakness, dizziness, difficulty breathing, and loss of balance. Ingesting large amounts of the azalea plant leads to paralysis, coma, and death. Dispense with caution.*



Handout #3

E Z T E R N I M I E D M A T E N W
 K H R P O D H P S N D N I H M O O
 A O H L T A E L N T I O T E D F T
 T F E A T N B Y W H H T U G E E E
 S E F C H D T S O E E W B R T H H
 I N O E G I F O T A V I D U C R T
 M W E M I W E L N N A T E N E T T
 R I L E R I L V I T H H N D J Z C
 U L P F E L E E E I I O O E E H E
 O L O A R L V T R D N U S N R O J
 Y S E I E A A H E O O T I F S F E
 R U P L W D H E H T I C O E A E R
 O F E A U M I C W E S O P S H N I
 F F H N O I S L E S S M S T T A
 R E T D Y T E U M O A P A W I S

Handout #18

South Cleveland Red, 2492

Handout #7

*you seek
whose soul
she began
and ended*

Handout #12

*the grave
is twined
the day
the day*

Handout #17

*of one
with mine
I ended
this began*

Handout #13

Gestank will eat anything

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Decedent's Name	<u>Bertholdt Halbgewachsen</u>
Immediate Cause	<u>Acute Dysentery</u>
Proximate Cause	<u>None</u>
Date of Death	<u>26th Vorgeheim, 2517</u>
Physician	<u>Paulin Wegener</u>
Date Signed	<u>27th Vorgeheim, 2517</u>

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Decedent's Name	<u>Bertholdt Halbgewachsen</u>
Immediate Cause	<u>Asphyxiation</u>
Proximate Cause	<u>Dehydration, Paralysis, and Coma</u>
Date of Death	<u>26th Vorgeheim, 2517</u>
Physician	<u>Augustin Vorster</u>
Date Signed	<u>14th Nachexen, 2522</u>

Sawbones Medicinals

Weeping Salve, 30 bags ... 4 crowns
 Azalea extract, 24 vials ... 6 crowns
 Foxglove, 12 pouches ... 12 crowns

Date of sale: 6th Vorgeheim, 2517

Receipt of product: Paulin Wegener

Handout #11

3rd Sommerzeit, 2517

Herr Pflüger,

We are quite disappointed in your failure to pay your obligations. Our most recent accounts suggest a current debt of 1,290 gold crowns, which includes interest accrued for the past three years as a result of non-payment. If this continues, we shall have no recourse but to seize your assets and send you to debtor's prison.

Ludwig von Zerzetten

President of Tatabheim Savings & Loan

Handout #16

33rd Vorzeheim, 2517

Herr Pflüger,

Thank you for your recent payment of 1,290 crowns which satisfies your debt in full.

Ludwig von Zerzetten

President of Tatabheim Savings & Loan

Handout #14

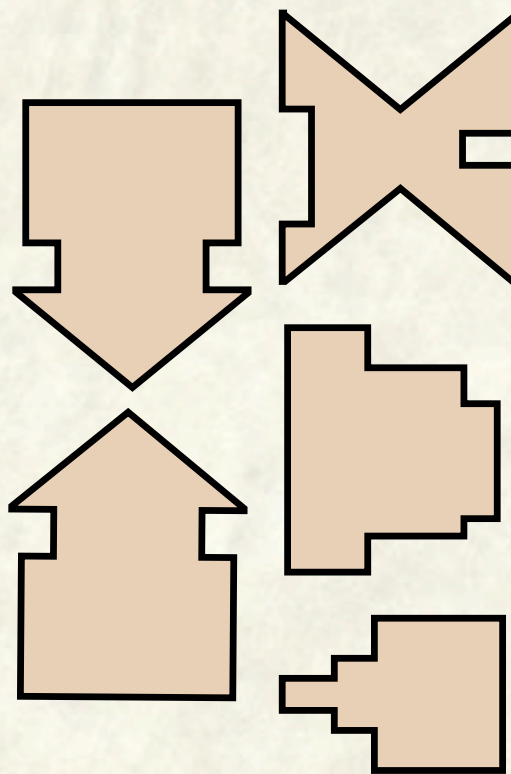
Last Will & Testament

I, *Bertholdt Halbgewachsen*, being of sound mind and body, do hereby bequeath, in the event of my death, my entire estate, which totals eight thousand crowns, to *Fritz Frubin*, for the time he has spent with an old man during his final years in *Ertzphoten*.

B. Halbgewachsen

witnessed by Hans Meckler, Esquire
this 19th Day of Pfingst, 2516

Blown-up Shapes from Map for Cutout



Handout #8

Hand gna