

# BLACK ROCK KEEP

The events below are designed to enliven the journey to Black Rock Keep, but are not vital to the adventure. Either or both can be ignored if they are not applicable (for instance, if their main protagonist was killed or disabled earlier in the day) or if the players and GM prefer to go straight to the action at the keep.

### ➤ JOURNEY TO THE KEEP ➤

#### ‡ THE TROLL SLAYER

If the adventurers follow Manfred's directions, they come across Mad Geddi (if he was not killed in an earlier encounter) standing in the middle of the road a little way from the village, watching the gates. Geddi watches the gate in the hope that Heinz will, for whatever reason, wander out on to the road with a light guard or, even better, on his own.

On the other hand, if he hears travellers approaching from the other direction, he ducks under into the bushes. Geddi is a little paranoid, and has decided that it is better to lie low than risk a run-in with bandits, an Imperial patrol, or any other trouble that might interfere with his revenge on Heinz Schiller. Once Schiller is disposed of, Geddi can finally do the proper thing and die a glorious death in battle.

As the PCs approach, Geddi introduces himself with a long, rolling barrage of oaths. He takes care to insult each character in turn, paying special attention to Elves and any foppish-looking characters such as nobles or bawds. Then he demands to know whether Heinz Schiller is still in the village, and if he has any plans to leave. Geddi, like any self-respecting Dwarf, is not about to trust a bunch of strangers with his quest, and while he makes no secret of his intention to kill Schiller, he will not say why. However, he is quite happy to rant for several minutes on such topics as Heinz's sexual preference for barnyard animals, his many diseases, and other elaborate, rambling insults.

Refer to the optional encounter *Mad Geddi* on p. 48, if it did not take place earlier.

This first encounter with Mad Geddi sets his general attitude towards the characters for the rest of the adventure. If they leap to protect Heinz's character he marks them as the sausage maker's servants and keeps a careful eye on them. He may even shadow the characters on their trip to the keep, but he only attacks them if attacked himself or seriously provoked.

If the characters make it clear they hate Heinz, the Dwarf warns them to keep walking up the road and never return to

Heideldorf. While he refuses to give them any exact information, he warns them that many who venture to the keep never return. Working for Heinz, he makes it quite clear, is a dangerous business. Geddi recalls little of the keep and has yet to return there, so he cannot give specific information about the mutants and their traps.

#### ‡ AN UNEXPECTED LETTER

Despite Heinz's efforts to keep the adventurers' expedition secret, Ernst Gottlieb has heard that they are setting out for Black Rock Keep. As mentioned earlier, Gottlieb plans that they will wipe out the mutants, while he takes advantage of their absence to move against Heinz Schiller.

When he first arrived in the area some weeks ago, Gottlieb ordered his Halfling assassin Jeb Longnose to infiltrate the keep and find out what was going on there. Disguising himself as a hapless mutant, Jeb managed to join up with the mutant gang for a few weeks, making a thorough reconnaissance of the keep and observing the mutants' tactics. At Gottlieb's orders, he now gives the adventurers the benefit of his knowledge.

As the adventurers approach the keep, and once they are all within the walls, a single crossbow bolt whizzes close by their heads and embeds itself in one of the doors leading into the keep's main structure. Wrapped around the shaft is Handout 3 (p. 56). Jeb has used his ability to walk along the treetops to shadow the adventurers to the keep, and he uses the same ability to move off after firing the bolt from the cover of the trees. If the adventurers spot him and try to pursue, they will have to clamber over the rubble and the ruined walls, making it very unlikely that they can catch him.

Jeb heads back to the forest just outside the village and keeps watch on the north road. He waits until dawn for the adventurers to return from the keep. If he spots them, he returns to the gang's camp and sends word to Gottlieb that the characters survived the keep. Otherwise, he assumes they were killed by the mutants.

Carved from the black rock that gave this ruin its name, Black Rock Keep was once a fortified mansion belonging to a petty warlord who ruled this area centuries ago. After it was besieged and ransacked by during the years of violence and internal fighting that marked the Age of Three Emperors 400 years ago, the ruin stood undisturbed. The people of Heideldorf consider it to be haunted, and avoid the place. Various outlaw bands have used the place as a base of operations, preying upon the few travellers that pass through this area. However, the pickings here are too slim and too poor to attract bandits for any length of time.

Battered by attackers, squatters, and the ravages of time, Black Rock Keep is little more than a tottering pile of rubble. The trail leading up to the keep is choked with weeds, ferns, and other undergrowth. The keep's outer walls are mostly fallen into ruin, and the few wooden structures that stood here have long since burnt to the ground.

It is now laced with traps, and home to a group of mutants in the employ of the conspirators. On the few recent occasions when bandits or other scum have moved into the place, the mutants stay hidden and alert Heinz, who dispatches a group of adventurers to deal with the criminals. This serves to lend some legitimacy to Heinz's pretext for hiring adventurers.

## ✧ AT THE KEEP ✧

Action in Black Rock Keep focuses on the combat between the adventurers and the mutant gang. Careful investigation of the ruins draws some connections between the Heideidorfers and the mutant gang, particularly if the adventurers take a mutant alive or discover Wilf's pipe. However, the adventurers could exterminate the mutants without taking any prisoners or uncovering any evidence of their connection to Heinz and Wilf.

Nonetheless, the map and its instructions should inspire some measure of suspicion.

## ‡ MUTANT TACTICS

### The Ambush

The gang's plan is simple. Heinz warns them in advance of when to expect explorers. With the help of the trapper Wilf, they set up traps throughout the cellars. Bizz, Bub, Franz, and Puddles lurk in the hidden room (see area 12 on p. 28) and await intruders. Pedro uses a *Magic Alarm* spell on the stairs leading down to the cellars, which lets him know when his followers encounter fresh meat. The gang waits for the traps to take their toll, then prepares an ambush in area 11. Bizz and Bub wait on the stairs, while the rest of the gang rushes through the hidden door to help finish off the intruders. Puddles leads the way, followed closely by Stilts. Franz and Pedro stand near the doorway, using their ranged attacks to support the rest of the gang. The corpses are then dragged to room 12 and moved by wheelbarrow to the gang's cave, to await transport that night to Heinz's shop.

### Attacking the Mutants

If confronted, the mutants put up a determined resistance. Bizz, Bub, and Puddles attack in earnest, while Franz picks off targets with his crossbow. However, if Pedro has not yet made the short trip from the cave, Franz flees there to warn him. Once the rest of the mutants are engaged, Stilts stands back and uses his long arms to attack the nearest engaged foe while staying clear of attackers himself. Pedro prefers to stand back and avoid any trouble, but he uses his spells (particularly *Fire Ball*) if the mutants fare poorly. Xovart clings to Pedro and unleashes its powers on anyone who approaches its master.

If things go badly for the mutants (for example, as if Bizz and Bub fall) Pedro offers to surrender, making it quite clear of his disdain for his followers. In response, any mutant aside from Xovart attacks him if possible. Franz in particular attempts to murder the wizard, enraged that his beloved master would turn his back on him. Once Pedro is dead, the remaining mutants fight to the death.

If the PCs somehow avoid triggering Pedro's *Magic Alarm* spell, the wizard, Stilts, and Xovart are still back in room 18. They do not move forward fight unless somehow alerted to the situation. If Pedro is not present for a fight, Franz runs to warn him if possible.

If the PCs make a beeline for the secret door in room 11, the mutants panic. Bizz, Bub, and Puddles move to attack, while Franz flees to fetch the rest of the gang. It takes him 1 combat round to run back to the cave, 3 rounds of panicked blubbling to warn Pedro, and another 2 rounds for the two of them to advance down the tunnel to area 12.

### Aftermath

Once the mutants are defeated, the adventurers should uncover a few facts and may have a chance to interrogate captives. Physical evidence is described in the Black Rock Keep map key (pp. 26-30). In addition, the adventurers may uncover the link between Franz and Heinz if they describe the mutant to people in town.

If Franz's mutated second face Jules survives the battle, it eagerly tells what it knows of Heinz's operation. Obviously, it was present for all dealings between Heinz and Franz, so it knows the basic elements of their arrangement. However, since Franz always wears a heavy shirt it never saw anything, and can base its knowledge solely on what it heard. If the PCs offer to hack off Franz's limbs (poor Jules believes it can grow a new body) it tells the PCs the following:

- *Franz and the mutants lived for a time in the nearby forest before moving into the keep with Pedro.*
- *Franz often went into town to meet someone. The mutants agreed to murder anyone who entered the keep in return for protection against witch-hunters.*
- *Franz carted the corpses into the forest at night and delivered them to someone, presumably from town.*
- *The mutants usually killed travellers and mercenaries, but once two years ago Pedro ordered them to attack and kill a pair of Chaos mutants he recognized as old enemies of his. They cut off and ate the more obviously mutated parts of their victims before delivering the rest as usual, and noticed that when they did so, the Lord of Change blessed them with more mutations. Xovart, for example, had once been much more human-like in appearance. Pedro wanted to kill more mutants and deliver them to the village, but they never came across more. Jules remember this because the mutants always hoped that their victims would turn out to be mutants, giving them the chance to spread Tzeentch's blessings across the Empire.*

- *Jules never saw whom Franz spoke or dealt with, but it would recognise their voice. The thing begs the characters to take it with them until it grows legs, and it eagerly agrees to aid their investigation. In truth, Jules sickens and dies 1D6+4 days after Franz's death.*

Jules and Franz never got along well. Though Franz tried several times to forcibly remove Jules via several mundane means, such as cutting and burning, the face always grew back. If the PCs hack up Jules, he regrows and begins talking again in 1D6 minutes.

Pedro provides much more useful information: if he survives the encounter he eagerly tells the PCs what he knows. Pedro believes Heinz Schiller and Wilf Schwarzehaus are involved in a conspiracy to murder and steal from travellers. He has no idea they collect the corpses to process them, thinking instead that they claim their possessions and keep any gold they find. The two were quite clear that Pedro had to hand over anything the explorers carried in addition to their corpses. They sometimes institute a quota, particularly if times are lean for travellers. Though they normally can subsist off the dozen or so mercenaries who fall victim to the traps, sometimes they waylay people on the road. Two years ago, they attacked and killed a pair of Slaanesh cultists Pedro had previously encountered. Other than that, they rarely have had to resort to non-standard killings, as Pedro calls them. After the wizard tells his tale, he pleads for his life. If the characters allow him to go free, he flees the area but immediately makes plans to have his revenge against the characters.

The rest of the mutants refuse to talk if captured. Obviously, some of them are incapable of meaningful speech. If tortured, the rest reveal the same basic information available to Pedro.

## ➤ THE KEEP ◀

### 1. Outer Walls

The gatehouse is nothing more than a few piles of collapsed stonework overgrown with weeds. In addition, the western wall and the northern portions of the keep have all fallen into ruins. Any character attempting to move across the piles of rubble must make a **Dexterity** test at double their **Dex** score or suffer a sprained ankle, reducing their **M** stat by 1 for 1D3 hours. Characters with *scale sheer surface* skill automatically pass this test. The keep's southern towers appear intact from the outside, but their interiors are choked with rubble from the collapsed upper floors. Hidden among the rubble of the south-east tower, just out of sight from the entrance door, is a small cache of weapons wrapped in canvas: two swords, a spear, a shortbow, and 20 arrows. Wilf planted the weapons here to help enforce the facade of the keep as a bandit hideout.

### 2. Courtyard and Mansion

The area within the keep's walls is overgrown with grass that reaches up to three feet in height. The central building of the keep is crafted from the same black rock as the outer

walls. The upper story has long since collapsed, but the ground floor still stands. The doors leading into the keep are battered but still standing, except for the one leading to area 10. The double doors at the mansion's south-east corner are relatively new, having been installed in the past 2 years. Any character making an **Int** test at twice their score will notice this detail; characters with *carpentry* skill pass the test automatically.

### 3. Northern Courtyard

The foundations of two buildings are visible here, though both are partially buried in rubble. Once, two wooden buildings stood here, a stable and a barracks. Searching this area turns up nothing of note.

### 4. Feasting Hall

Once, this long, wide room served as a feasting hall and dining room for the lord of the keep and his followers. The western fireplace is choked with cobwebs, but the eastern one shows sign that someone recently built a fire here. In addition, the space in front of that fireplace has been cleared of debris and dust. Wilf lights a fire here once a month or so, to help maintain the illusion that bandits regularly camp here.

### 5. Foyer

Once a cloakroom and entrance area, this room is part of Wilf's elaborate deception. Three black cloaks hang from pegs on the southern wall, while someone has obviously taken the time to clean the floor of dust and debris.

### 6. Kitchen

Wilf and the mutants avoid coming here, as the upper half of the room is choked with webs. A nest of spiders lives here, venturing out by night to hunt in the nearby forest. The spiders are only slightly larger than a human hand, and their poison is too weak to affect a creature larger than a small dog. However, as the adventurers open the door to this room a sudden draft of air causes the web to sway gently, creating the illusion that something large is walking upon it. If anyone pokes around the room they disturb the spiders, causing them to scuttle up the chimney. Slashing the webs open causes a bundle contained a desiccated dog to tumble to the floor. The character hacking at the web must pass an **Initiative** test or be covered in dried canine guts, causing a -10% penalty to all **Fellowship** tests until cleaned up.

### 7. Empty Rooms

These rooms have long since been stripped clean of anything of value.

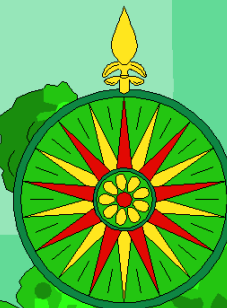
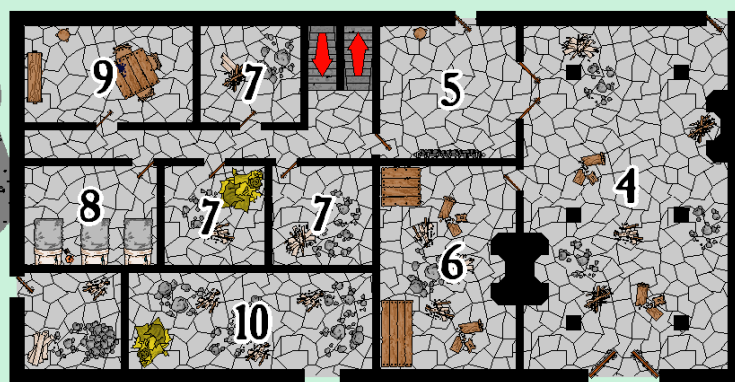
### 8. Sleeping Quarters

Another part of Wilf's deception, this room contains three bedrolls neatly laid out in a row. Next to the bedding stands a lantern filled with oil, with flint and steel beside it. Anyone holding the lantern who makes an **Initiative** test notices several dents and a faint bloodstain on the lamp, legacies of past victims who used it to light their way.

### 9. Meeting Room

This small, bare room is normally used by Wilf and Pedro to discuss their plans and arrangement. A battered table and

# Blackrock Keep



three wooden chairs stand in the middle of the room. Anyone searching this room automatically notices a wooden pipe at the foot of one chair, and fresh ink stains on the table. Wilf and Pedro's last meeting was broken up by the sounds of a small group of bandits opening the double doors to room 4. In their haste to make it to the cellars, Pedro spilled the inkwell he was using to write a list of supplies he needed, and Wilf dropped his pipe. In the process of luring the bandits to the cellar to kill them, Wilf forgot his pipe was here, and has not been back since. Anyone who has met Wilf will recognize the pipe as similar to the one he always carries. It is handmade from wood, much like the hunter's own, and is carved with leering dragons.

#### 10. Bunkhouse

Once the sleeping quarters for the soldiers who defended this place, this area has served as a wolf's den, a hiding place for fugitives, and living space for other creatures. The place stinks of rot and urine, but is otherwise empty.

### ‡ THE CELLARS

The cellars beneath the mansion are rigged with a series of traps to immobilize or kill intruders. Before running this portion of the adventure, be sure to read the *Tactics* section under the description of the Black Rock Keep gang (p. 24). The mutants who lurk here follow a fairly standard plan to ambush and murder their victims.

#### 11. Storeroom

Three picks, a shovel, and a wheelbarrow are piled in the south-eastern corner of the room. The hidden door set into the east wall can be discovered by any character who makes a successful *search* test. This room is kept fairly clean, though anyone searching the floor notices a few bloodstains near the bottom of the stairs, the legacy of past ambushes in this room.

#### 12. Secret Room

Once used as a strong room for the greatest treasures of the keep's owner, this room is now a hiding place for the Black Rock Keep gang. They keep watch through a small peephole set into the western wall. Four stools are arranged around a small brazier in the centre of this chamber. The passage to the east runs south for 30 feet before heading east for 100 feet to the gang's caves. A large wheeled cart is kept here to aid in carrying fresh kills away from the cellars.

#### 13. Pit Trap

The first trap designed to catch intruders who sought to gain access to the crypts here, a pit trap opens in front of the doorway. Anyone attempting to open the door triggers a trapdoor in the floor, which opens to a ten-foot pit with spikes at the bottom. Anyone caught on the trap must make an *Int* test or drop into the pit, taking 2D6 damage from the fall.

#### 14. Chapel

This room was once a small shrine to Taal, but it has long since been stripped bare of all items. Wilf took a few whacks at the southern wall with a pick, to make it look as if someone had tried digging here.

#### 15. Hammer Trap

Whoever opens the door to this room must make an *I* test or suffer attacks from two hammers rigged to smash whoever opens the door. Dwarfs and Halflings gain a +20% bonus to this test, as the weapons are aimed to fire at Human-sized targets. The hammers each strike with a *S* 5 attack. The hammers are set on spring-loaded arms that trigger when the door is opened.

#### 16. Burial Chamber

Once a crypt for the noble line that owned this place, this chamber has long since been ransacked by tomb robbers. The door to this room is rigged with a crushing hammer trapped similar to one in area 15. A large pile of dirt dominates the centre of this room, while three holes have been dug in the floor. The hole marked A is a trap. Its bottom is actually nothing more than a thin sheet of wood, covered with dirt. Anyone stepping on to the sheet automatically falls through to a ten-foot deep pit studded with stakes, taking 2D6 damage. The pit marked B incorporates an ancient magical trap designed to defeat thieves. Anyone stepping into it takes 1D10 damage as lightning arcs from the walls. The third pit is harmless.

The hidden door to the east can be discovered by anyone passed a *search* test made at half their normal chance for success.

#### 17. Hidden Treasury

The final resting place for the eldest of the keep's rulers, this room has gone undisturbed for centuries. Two stone sarcophagi stand here, both sealed with heavy stone slabs. Multiply a character's *S* by 10 to determine his chance of removing a tomb's lid.

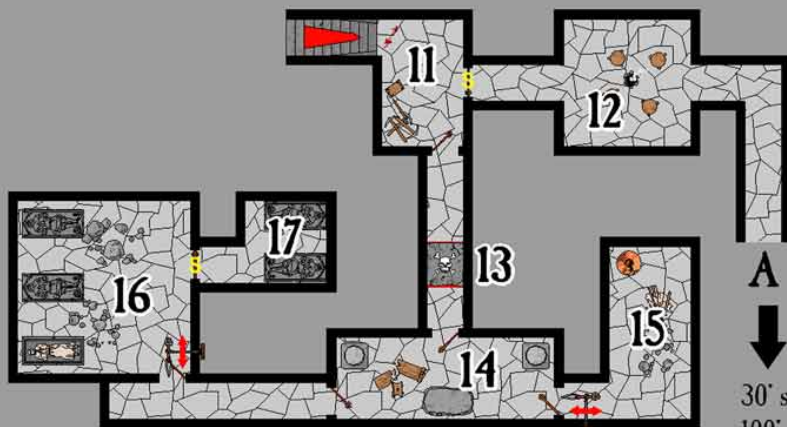
In the eastern tomb are a disintegrated cloak, bone dust, and a small golden bracelet worth 60 GC. The western tomb holds the crumbling remains of an elaborate robe, bone dust, three small jewels once worked into the robes worth 30 GC each, and a kite shield enchanted to deflect missiles, crossbow bolts, and other arrows. The shield's bearer is allowed one free parry per round with the shield against ranged attacks. A roaring lion is engraved on the shield's outer face. When used to parry a missile, the shield emits a brief pulse of magical force deflects the incoming projectile.

#### 18. Sleeping Cave

This area serves as living quarters for the gang. Several crates of rations are stacked along the southern wall, while each of the mutants has a bedroll for sleeping. Puddles's bed is caked in dried drool and wet to the touch. 2D4 Silver Shillings are stashed near each bedroll. Set apart from the others behind a wooden screen is Pedro's bed, along with a small wooden table and chair. The wizard's book containing his known spells is kept here, along with a treatise on Chaos titled *The Book of Everchanging Aspects*. A prism, parchment, and inkwell with quill sits on the table. Anyone who saw the ink upstairs in the meeting room (area 9) can make an *Int* test to recognize ink stains on the table here as matching those found upstairs. Any wizard who concentrates on the prism regains 1D4 magic points with 30 seconds of focused

# Blackrock Keep

## The Cellars



30' south, then  
100' east to B

B



50 feet





thought. The prism may be used in this manner once per day. However, each time it is used there is a cumulative 10% chance the user develops a random chaotic trait. Pedro's notes are obviously a ledger of some sort. They list deliveries and cash payments, but nothing in the parchment suggests what exactly was being bought or sold.

### 19. Entrance Area

A fire pit has been dug in the middle of this area, and the mutants normally rest and dine here. Six small wooden stools are arranged around the pit, along with several large knives and a spit used to prepare deer and other game.

## ➤ I'VE EATEN WHAT?! ➤

So the adventurers may have eaten human flesh. The players may attempt to gloss over this fact. They probably don't want to think too hard about the idea of their beloved PCs becoming cannibals or, even worse, transforming into mutants as a result of eating tainted meat. Even if they escape mutation, might they turn into ghouls when they die?

### ‡ OH, THE HORROR!

If a character believes he may have unwittingly committed cannibalism, have him make a **Cool** test. On a failure, the character gains an insanity point. In addition, the emotional stress of coming to this conclusion can tear at anyone's nerves. If a character is worried about mutation, describe to a player the strange itches and tremors he feels. While in reality these are nothing more than normal aches, spasms, and itches, the players don't know that.

Ask for random **Willpower**, tests and note the results. On a particularly bad roll, click your tongue, shake your head, and mumble to yourself, "That's not good." Ask for a test, write down the result, shuffle through your notes as if looking up a result on a table, then ask for another test. Continue this process intermittently throughout the adventure. Chuckle or grin when the characters miss their tests. When they succeed, smile and congratulate the players.

This may seem a little extreme, but the characters have violated what is probably one of the most ironclad taboos of the Old World. Their characters would undoubtedly panic and endure some emotionally draining tension. If the players don't seem willing to roleplay such reactions, draw them out as described above. Even if they do react in-character to this development, the techniques described above can help enforce the mood.

In one of the play-tests of this adventure, one player character developed an irrational fear that a second face was going to grow from his stomach just as it did with poor Franz. Of course, Jules did all he could to help prop up that belief. Remember that the Chaos mutant is an ardent supporter of Tzeentch. If the characters are worried they may become mutants, Jules congratulates them on becoming just like him and expounds on the joys of serving Chaos. He does mention that he has heard of mutations arising simply from eating human flesh, though this is not actually true.

As with anything in gaming, be sure to consider your players' feelings and preferences when running this portion of the adventure. You don't want to needlessly stir up traumatic memories. In all seriousness, some players may be annoyed that their characters were tricked into cannibalism.

### ‡ WHAT HAPPENS?

As for the characters, the reality behind their culinary fate is up to you. If the players are mature or obviously having some fun with the idea of roleplaying a bunch of inadvertent cannibals, then Heinz's sausage was made at least partially from human meat. Otherwise, perhaps the batch the characters have been eating was the cheap stuff, made from such unrefined animals as pigs or cows. There's no need to tell the characters that until later on in the adventure, but there's little point in causing any hard feelings, particularly if the players are attached to their characters.

As to the question of mutation, there is no chance of that happening due to the sausage, even if it did contain human flesh. The mutants haven't found any Chaos-afflicted prey in the two years since they killed the cultists, and the sausage the adventurers ate was free of taint.

There is another question to be considered, if the adventurers did unwittingly eat human flesh. Will they become ghouls? And if so, when and how will that happen? There are a few ways to deal with this.

As noted in the **WFRP** rulebook, "ghouls are humans who have acquired Undead status whilst living by the insane practice of feeding on corpses". While the final decision is up to the individual GM, this could be interpreted to mean that only human characters can become ghouls: Elves, Dwarfs and Halflings are immune – at least, to becoming ghouls from eating human flesh; cannibalizing their own race might put them at risk, or it might not.

As to when and how the unfortunate characters might turn into ghouls, this too is up to the GM. While an instant transformation lacks drama, a character might find his reason slowly slipping while his hair falls out, his teeth and nails grow longer, and he likes his meat more and more rare. Perhaps within a month, perhaps longer, the transition will be complete.

While this is a horrific fate to inflict upon a player character, it does offer the possibility of a spin-off adventure where the party has to find a necromancer (who will hardly advertise his services) or a high-ranking cleric of Mórr (who might regard destruction as the only acceptable cure) to try and reverse the unfortunate character's deteriorating condition. Perhaps if the PC can do some great service for the cult of Mórr, this earning a blessing to have the condition removed.

Of course, if you don't want to venture into such grisly territory, a simple answer is to rule that there simply wasn't enough human flesh in the sausage the adventurers ate to have an effect. Most ghouls, after all, have been feasting on human flesh for a long, long time.