

# INTRODUCTION

**F**ear the Worst is a self-contained adventure for **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay**, set in and around the village of Heidedorf. It is intended for characters in their first careers. A simple mercenary assignment turns deadly as a horrific plot unfolds at a famous sausage festival.

The material in this book breaks down into the following chapters:

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction (this chapter) gives an overview of the plot and some notes on running the adventure. It also suggests some possible locations for Heidedorf, and offers some ideas for integrating **Fear the Worst** into the **Enemy Within** and **Doomstones** campaigns.

## Chapter 2: Heidedorf

This chapter describes the village of Heidedorf and its inhabitants, as well as its immediate surroundings. Assuming the village survives the events of information in this section can also be used as a model for small villages across the Empire.

## Chapter 3: The Wurstfest

This chapter covers the events of Heidedorf's renowned sausage festival, and the unfolding of not one hideous and insane plot, but two.

## Chapter 4: Black Rock Keep

This chapter describes the ruins of Black Rock Keep, and details the tactics of the mutant band that is camped there.

## Chapter 5: Return from the Keep

This chapter covers the PCs' options upon returning from Black Rock Keep (assuming they survived!), and offers suggestions for how the plot might unfold from here.

## Chapter 6: The Day of Vengeance

In this chapter, the adventurers must deal with a series of horrific events, and save the village from an unspeakable fate.

## Chapter 7: Experience Points

This chapter covers suggested Experience Point awards for each stage of the adventure.

## Chapter 8: NPCs and Monsters

This chapter gives profiles, rules and descriptions for all the major NPCs and creatures appearing in the adventure.

## ⇒ THE PLOT ⇐

Located deep within the relatively secure lands of the Empire, the village of Heidedorf is celebrated for its spiced sausages. Merchants and gourmets make an annual pilgrimage to the town for its Wurstfest, or sausage festival, devouring huge quantities of Heidedorf's finest products and making deals to export sausage across the Empire.

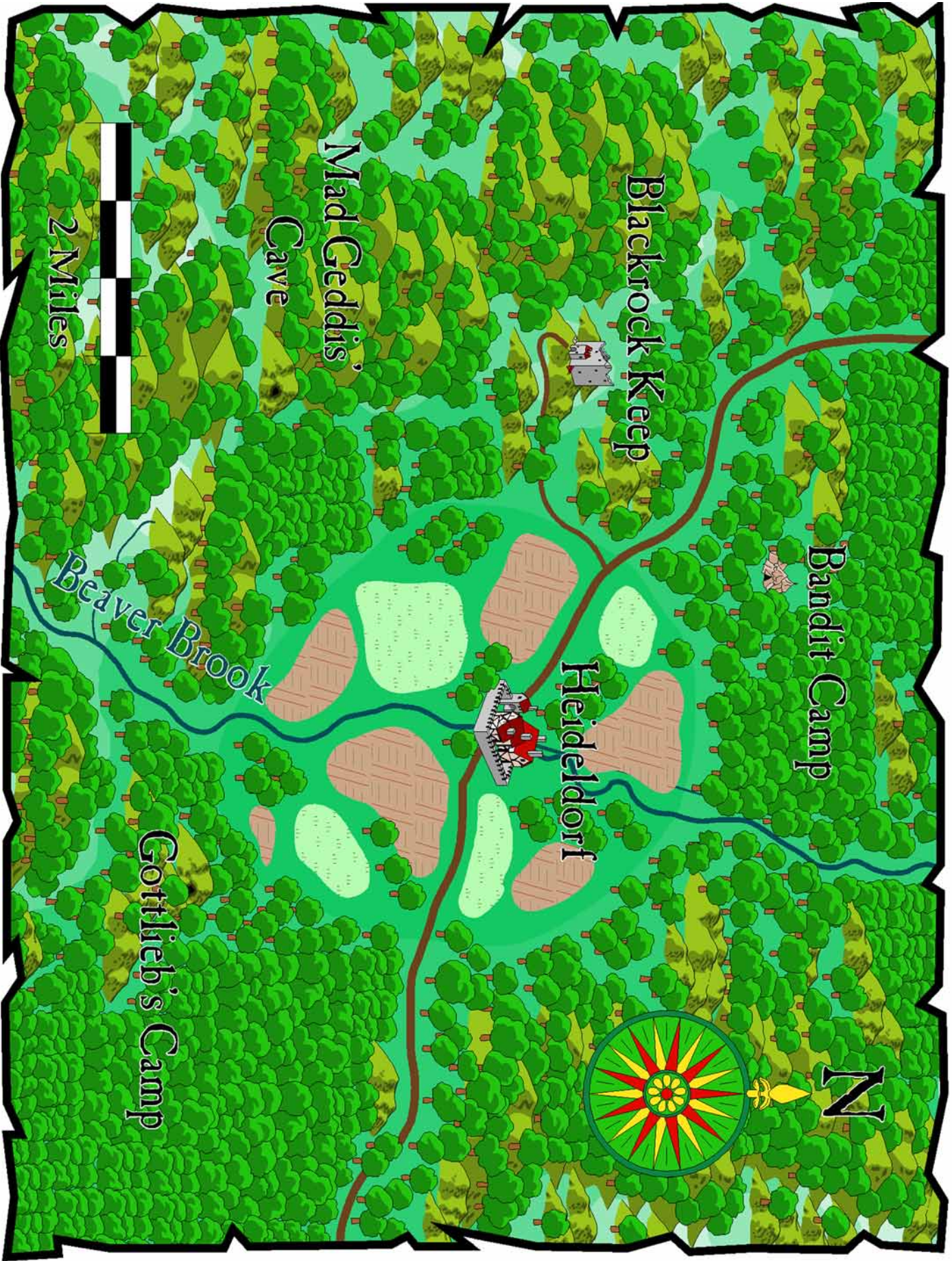
The awful truth is that some of Heidedorf's best sausage is made of human flesh. This terrible secret is known only to the members of a small conspiracy within the village, who lure mercenaries with their handbills. Obviously tough and experienced individuals are sent on a variety of fools' errands until they tire of wasting their time and leave; inexperienced characters are sent into the nearby ruins of Black Rock Keep, which is rigged with deadly traps and is home to a small but vicious group of mutants. In return for keeping their presence at the keep a secret, the mutants hand over the bodies and possessions of those who die in the keep to the conspirators, who sell the equipment and dispose of the bodies by grinding them into sausage meat.

A steady stream of adventurers brings money to Heidedorf's few businesses, while the sausage trade is immensely profitable and the annual Wurstfest, or sausage festival, brings wealthy gourmets and eager merchants flocking to the village. In the conspirators' minds, all this is well worth the deaths of a few landless, bumbling city-born mercenaries.

This, year, however, things are about to go hideously, catastrophically wrong.

During an exceptionally lean stretch two years ago, the mutants took to waylaying travellers on the road to supplement the dwindling supply of mercenaries. Among these victims were a pair of wandering mutated Chaos cultists, whose tainted meat caused mutations in many who ate the sausages made from it. The widespread distribution of Heidedorf sausage made it difficult to make any connection with the sudden eruption of mutations widely scattered throughout the Empire, but one victim, the crime lord Ernst Gottlieb of Nuln, used his considerable resources to investigate the source of his unwelcome physical condition.

His sanity slowly slipping away in the face of his progressive mutation, Gottlieb abruptly abandoned his criminal empire, tracing rumours of spontaneous mutations and gathering a small retinue of fellow victims of the tainted sausage. Now, Gottlieb and his followers plan to destroy the town and everyone in it, at the height of the sausage festival.



Blackrock Keep

Mad Geddis' Cave

Bandit Camp

Heideldorf

Gottlieb's Camp

2 Miles

N

Beaver Brook

Calling in a favour from one of Nuln's foremost alchemists, Gottlieb has obtained an appalling poison – a mixture of powerful deliriants and stimulants, laced with enough powdered Warpstone to cause almost instant mutation. They plan to introduce this into the sausage meat on the last day of the festival, sending everyone who eats it into a frenzied, hallucinating, mutating hysteria. Many of the festival-goers will tear themselves and each other apart, and amid the ensuing confusion, Gottlieb and his band plan to the survivors and raze Heidedorf to the ground.

Into this situation step the adventurers.

### ‡ THE CONSPIRATORS

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The three villagers responsible for this scheme are Heinz Schiller, the most prominent local sausage maker, Karl Taunen-baum, owner of the Dancing Dragon Inn, and Wilf Schwarze-haus, a local guide, and proprietor of the town's general store. They are described on pp. 42-43. Working with a band of mutants led by an Estalian Chaos sorcerer named Pedro Difelice (pp. 49-51), they lure mercenaries to their doom, sell their belongings, and use their meat in Heinz's prize-winning Heidedorfer Sonderwurst sausage.

Karl is responsible for recruiting adventurers and directing them to the keep, where Wilf works with the mutants to set up the traps designed to kill or injure explorers. Heinz is the mastermind of the scheme. He handles the sale of equipment through his connections to the black market, though occasionally some items end up in Wilf's store. To help deflect suspicion away from their activities, the conspirators brought in Manfred Harwitt, an over-the-hill, alcoholic witch-hunter who spends his days drinking himself senseless in the Dancing Dragon. The witch-hunter's presence is intended to reassure visitors that nothing untoward is going on. While Manfred means well, Karl keeps him too drunk to summon the courage and motivation to look into the keep or poke around the surrounding forest.

If the adventurers have been drawn to Heidedorf by the handbills, the conspirators will treat them as just another supply of fresh meat. They will be employed by Heinz Schiller, who will have them guard the sausage festival until he sends them off to the keep for "processing".

### ‡ THE AVENGERS

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Gottlieb has different plans for the adventurers. Surreptitiously feeding them hints and information about the true nature of Black Rock Keep, he hopes they evade the traps and kill the mutants who live there. This both defeats (or at least weakens) the mutants and keeps the adventurers from interfering with his attack on the village.

### ‡ THE BEST LAID PLANS

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However, as is so often the case, this plan goes awry. Heinz Schiller, the village's chief sausage maker and the primary target of Ernst's scheme, cancels the debut of his newest sausage in the hope of including the PCs in his latest batch.

Heinz delays the tasting of this year's Sonderwurst, the high point of the festival, from the event's second to its seventh and final day. If the PCs survive Black Rock Keep, he announces a sudden change of plans and watches the characters like a hawk, hoping to determine how much, if anything, they have learned about his operation.

For his part, Ernst Gottlieb changes his plans to poison the sausage the night before the tasting. The adventurers are caught between two equally despicable factions, while many of the seemingly neutral parties in Heidedorf are tied to one side or the other, often in ways that are less than obvious. The characters must walk a social tightrope as they unravel the full extent of the plot and work to prevent Gottlieb from causing a disaster.

## ➤ BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE ➤

**Fear the Worst** is designed for beginning characters, preferably with no more than one or two short adventures behind them. Newly created characters are ideal.

While most travellers come to Heidedorf for the sausage, a few arrive in response to handbills advertising job opportunities for mercenaries. The notices (see Player Handout 1 on p. 54) circulate through the Empire's larger cities. Though they only seem to crop up once every few years in a given city, an eagle-eyed traveller might notice that the handbills seem to be present in some city or another, year in and year out. One year they might be posted in Nuln, on the Deutz Elm and in other prominent locations, while the next they might be found in Middenheim, pasted to the walls of the Wolf Runner and Castle Rock coach offices, and in other areas where travellers are likely to see them.

Resourceful characters might make some enquiries before responding to the handbills. A successful *gossip* test (Warrior +10) in a tavern or other location where mercenaries and adventurers are known to spend their time will turn up a grizzled old veteran who has heard of someone who went to Heidedorf in response to one of the handbills:

*"Complete waste of time, from what I've heard. When I was serving in the Border Princes the year before last I ran into a feller who'd been to Heidedorf, and he didn't even cover his expenses. They talk about bandits in the forest, but he never saw hide nor hair of 'em. There's some kind of ruin outside the village that's supposed to be full of treasure and horrible monsters, but all he found were bats and spiders – not even big ones, at that. He said the sausage was good, though, if you don't mind mixing with a crowd of toffee-nosed nobles and pushy merchants."*

If the *gossip* test is made by 30 points or more, the adventurers have found an informant who has actually been to Heidedorf. In addition to a first-hand account similar to the one above, they will have the opportunity to ask some questions about the village and its inhabitants.

Some characters – especially non-Warrior types – might decide to go to Heidedorf purely for the sausage festival, and might not even be aware of the handbills. In this case, the GM will have to adjust some of the earlier parts of the adventure accordingly.

### The Enemy Within Campaign

If you plan to run this epic campaign, **Fear the Worst** is best played before *Mistaken Identity*. The characters could pass through Heidedorf on their way to Altdorf in search of employment with Hergard von Tasseninck, spending a night at the Dancing Dragon and stumbling on to the adventure when Heinz asks them to explore the keep.

Alternatively, this adventure might be inserted between *Mistaken Identity* and **Shadows Over Bögenhafen**, with Heidedorf as a stopping point on the way to the Schaffenfest. Later in the campaign, the adventurers may be too powerful for this adventure, though its emphasis on roleplaying and thinking make most of the battles secondary to the story.

### The Doomstones Campaign

As the **Doomstones** campaign is meant for characters who have completed two or three careers, this adventure might be used to give characters a little experience before tackling that campaign. In that case, Heidedorf might be located a few days' journey to the south of Nuln, in the foothills of the Black Mountains.

The Dwarf corpse – and the note it carries – might be found in a corner of Schiller's secret workshop (p. 14), clearly older and more withered than the other around it, and labelled "Do Not Use". Or the mutants in Black Rock Keep might be gnawing on it, since it is not fit to send to the village. Alternatively, the adventurers might simply stumble across it in the forest around Heidedorf.

The adventurers might well decide to journey southward in the aftermath of this adventure, particularly if they find themselves on the wrong side of the Harwitt family or any nobles who did business with Heinz Schiller.

## ‡ FURTHER ENCOURAGEMENT

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The adventurers may initially be unwilling to go to Heidedorf, especially if they have heard from previous visitors that it is an unprofitable place. In that event, here are a couple of ideas for getting them on their way.

### The Grieving Wife

Matilda Haubel is in her mid-thirties, tall and thin as a broomstick. Her black hair streaked with grey. Her husband, Dieter, left three weeks ago with a few fellow warriors in response to the handbills. Normally employed as caravan guards, Dieter and his associates had a run of bad luck on their last few trips and have decided to strike out on their own. Matilda offers the characters 50 gold crowns – her life's savings, she claims – to make the trip to Heidedorf, learn what they can of Dieter, and report back to her.

Matilda puts on an act as a grieving, lonely wife, while in fact

she is a tyrannical harpy who suspects that Dieter has run off with some gutter slut to escape her nagging, leaving her to take care of their children. Once she locates Dieter, she plans on hiring a few thugs to track him down, beat him senseless, and drag him back home.

### The Treasure Map

If the characters are more mercenary in nature, they stumble across a supposed treasure map (Handout 2, p. 55) that pinpoints a large cache of treasure in the ruins of Black Rock Keep, and gives the locations of several traps that seem easy to avoid. This map is in fact another lure devised by Heinz Schiller, and following it will lead the adventurers directly to some of the keep's deadliest traps. The conspirators often hand these maps to their marks. In this case, a copy has somehow found its way out of Heidedorf, perhaps carried by a mercenary who had more pressing matters to attend to than searching through the ruins. A drunken old veteran could sell the map to the characters, or they may find it in the treasure cache of a gang of marauding Orcs or mutants.

## ⇒ RUNNING THE ADVENTURE ⇐

**Fear the Worst** relies heavily on roleplaying, negotiation, problem solving, and other non-combat options. While combat plays a major role in the final portions of the adventure, the battles the characters face are much easier to overcome if they have made allies of the people they meet and uncovered the hidden plans of this adventure's antagonists. There are a lot of NPCs detailed in this adventure, not all of whom are important to completing the adventure successfully.

The most important NPCs in this adventure are Heinz Schiller, the mutants of Black Rock Keep, and Ernst Gottlieb and his followers. Much of **Fear the Worst** is designed with the idea that seemingly trivial events can have major repercussions later on in the scenario. A poorly treated NPC reacts negatively to the adventurers later on, and may prove to be a source of trouble. On the other hand, allies and can return the favour several times over.

The adventure should ideally progress along the following lines:

## ‡ ARRIVAL

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The adventurers arrive in Heidedorf, get a glimpse of the festival, are hired by Heinz, and have a chance to talk with some of the locals in the Dancing Dragon. They may learn that Heinz is not exactly the most well-liked person in town. Depending on how the PCs interact with the locals, they have a chance to make some friends and learn more about Heinz's past. This portion of the adventure emphasizes the adventurers' initial relationships with the locals.

## ‡ THE FESTIVAL

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On their first day of employment, the adventurers must deal with those who have visited Heidedorf for its festival. The situations presented here all have the same general theme:

they are thrust into situations with obnoxious, stupid, and offensive people who must be treated with respect and courtesy. Fuelled by alcohol and their own sense of entitlement, the nobles and merchants who attend the festival are more than ready to put the adventurers' (and the players') patience and tempers to the test.

During the course of this day, the adventurers are establishing their relationships with the festival's participants. The nobles like their social inferiors to be quiet, passive, and eager to please. Characters who display such traits will have a much easier time dealing with the crowds when all hell breaks loose. In addition, Heinz shows his true personality. As befits his rampant arrogance and vanity, he pins the blame for any problems on the PCs. He is both eager to please his customers and to cast himself in the most positive light possible. Unless the adventurers are extremely forgiving, they should have a healthy dislike for Heinz by the end of their first day in his employ.

### ‡ **BLACK ROCK KEEP**

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The PCs' second full day in Heideldorf is a major turning point in the adventure. Using a bandit attack as an excuse to send them to their doom in Black Rock Keep, Heinz hopes to be rid of them in time to help stock his larder. However, Ernst Gottlieb's men have, through stealth and magic, determined the layout of the keep's cellars and the standard plan of attack its inhabitants use to overwhelm explorers, and they secretly supply the adventurers with this information.

If the PCs defeat the mutant gang lurking in the keep, they should be able to determine an outline of Heinz's plan. On returning to Heideldorf, they meet with an icy reception from Heinz, Karl, and anyone else who expected them to return in a wheelbarrow bound for Heinz's workshop.

### ‡ **THEY'RE NOT DEAD?**

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At this point in the adventure, the players' decisions and actions become much more difficult to predict. From here, it is important for the GM to keep in mind the NPCs' attitudes towards the adventurers, based on their previous interactions, and to assume the role of Heinz and consider his options and decisions. It should be patently obvious to the players that simply attacking and killing Heinz is a bad idea. Without sufficient evidence of the conspiracy, they can be tried for murder and put to death.

But pointing out Heinz's ghastly workshop, the remains of the mutants at the keep, and the other evidence of the conspiracy may do more harm than good. If the festival participants suspect they've eaten human meat, they may panic, riot, and destroy the village. Furthermore, as the people visiting Heideldorf are all nobles and merchants, anything bad that results from the adventurers' actions, such as a riot, is likely to land them in serious trouble.

Handling Heinz and his secret requires tact, diplomacy, and good roleplaying. The problem he poses is proof against swords, spells, and other direct approaches. Simply attack-

ing the man will land the adventurers in a sticky spot. Unless they are able to pull off a flawless assassination, they are likely to become fugitives from the law.

### ‡ **SWEET VENGEANCE**

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The second half of the adventure is marked by a sudden change in priorities. The adventurers must switch from dealing with Heinz and the other residents of Heideldorf to shielding them from Gottlieb's plans.

Ernst Gottlieb and his followers have sworn to destroy Heideldorf and everyone in it, and they are not at all averse to butchering a few fat merchants to further increase the horror and scandal that will surround the village in the aftermath of his scheme. While Gottlieb's main objective is revenge against Heinz Schiller, his plans by no means stop there. He wants to wipe Heideldorf from the Empire's maps, and reduce it to a name from horror stories.

Gottlieb may consider working with the adventurers, but he is too sharp to allow them to betray him. He already has enough muscle on his side, and believes that nothing short of a powerful witch-hunter or a regiment of Imperial halberdiers can stop him. The adventurers may find themselves forced to ally temporarily with Schiller in order to deal with the greater menace posed by Gottlieb.

The PCs could very well murder or imprison Schiller, leave the region, and hear later of the horrors unleashed on the town after their departure. Even worse, the PCs might assume that their problems end with Heinz and sit back to enjoy the festival – only to be caught up in the violence and terror of its final day.

However, it is unlikely that the adventurers will ignore the signs of Gottlieb's involvement. The crime lord assumes that they are ready to avenge themselves against Heinz and care little for the fate of the merchants, nobles, and residents of Heideldorf. The final portion of the adventure could range from a duel against Gottlieb's followers to a desperate attempt to save as many people from the terror he unleashes.

As always, the relationships they have built up with the NPCs in Heideldorf will go a long way. If the festival-goers and the villagers trust and like them, the PCs have a much easier time thwarting Gottlieb's plans. If not, they face an uphill battle. Remember, too, that relations between player characters and NPCs work both ways. Unless at least some of the NPCs come across as likeable, sympathetic characters, the adventurers could very well decide to leave Heideldorf to its fate.

### ‡ **NOISES OFF**

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Index cards are a useful way to keep track of each NPC's personality and his interactions with the adventurers. Over the course of the adventure, there are plenty of chances for the PCs to make allies or enemies of the people they meet. Index cards, or some other easily-organized method of taking notes, allows you to keep track of the story's development without disrupting the flow of the game.

Index cards also allow you to keep track of the NPCs' actions while the adventurers are absent. If the adventurers leave the village for a few hours, take a moment to shuffle through your NPC index cards and note what they might do while the adventurers are gone. If Schiller suspects that the adventurers have discovered his plan, for example, he will not simply sit and do nothing while they tramp about the forest. He may try to set Manfred Harwitt against them, or frame them for some minor crime in order to have them thrown into the stocks.

As an additional aid to keep things straight, organize the cards into factions. For example, the characters sympathetic to or working with Schiller may go in one pile, while those allied with Ernst Gottlieb go in another. NPC cards may be grouped according to how they relate to the PCs: one pile for NPCs who are sympathetic to the adventurers, another for those neutral to them, and a third for people who consider them enemies. This little trick can be invaluable as the adventure nears its climax, or if the PCs are caught in some major confrontation with the villagers and visitors.