

RETURN TO THE KEEP

If the adventurers survive the keep, they undoubtedly have at least an inkling that something rotten is afoot in Heideldorf. Depending on how they handled the mutants and if they are willing to trust a talking face in a mutant's torso, they have a more or less clear idea of what they are up against. At this point, the adventure will shift gears, as the players decide how to deal with Heinz.

Sharp or thorough players will be able to piece together the clues they gathered during their day working at the festival, and deduce that Ernst Gottlieb's mutation and disappearance had something to do with the sausage. If they interrogate Jules, they may be able to draw the connection between the tainted sausage and the crime lord.

‡ HEALING

After the battle in the keep, the adventurers might need some healing, especially if they lack a character with healing skills or magic. Karl Taunenbaum gladly uses his medical skills to help the characters recover from their wounds, even if they have been arrested by Heinz's mercenaries (see below). In addition, Heinz purchased a small supply of medicinal herbs – conveniently divided into twelve single-dose packets – and left them behind the bar in the Dancing Dragon in case of any mishap at the festival. Steeped in boiling water, these packets of herbs create an infusion that heals 1D4 Wounds when drunk.

Heinz actively encourages the characters to use the healing herbs, and find whatever other help they can for their wounds. If the adventurers have accused Heinz of complicity in the plot, the villagers see this as an uncharacteristic and magnanimous lack of spite; in fact, Heinz simply wants to keep their meat in good condition, intending to “harvest” them later.

The GM should err on the side of generosity with regards to healing at this point in the adventure; having survived one hard fight, the PCs need to be up to dealing with the chaos that will erupt on the festival's last day (p. 34).

‡ A MINOR INCONVENIENCE

Heinz, Wilf and Karl have a contingency plan in place to deal with anyone who manages to survive the keep. Their plan functions partly in response to the characters' actions.

‡ WHAT MUTANTS?

If the adventurers return to Heideldorf and lie about events at the keep (not mentioning the traps and mutants), Wilf sets out immediately to determine what happened. In the

past, mercenaries have been known to wander into the forest, return after a few hours, and demand payment for clearing out the keep. One band even ambushed and killed a group of mercenaries travelling to Heideldorf and turned their bodies over to Heinz, claiming they were the bandits.

While Heinz is normally reluctant to hand over money to a gang of liars (especially liars who have disrupted his sausage production by not being killed), he considers it an occasional necessity. He curses under his breath, and agrees to pay them the next day.

That night, Wilf heads out to the keep to determine if they truly visited the place, and find out what happened.

‡ THE WAITING GAME

If the adventurers hide out in the forest and plot their next move, Heinz and Wilf assume they fell victim to the traps. That evening, Heinz and Wilf wait in the sausage shop for the adventurers' bodies to be delivered. When midnight passes with no delivery, Wilf sets out to the keep to investigate the delay.

‡ CRYING FOUL

If the PCs confront Heinz and accuse him or Wilf of murder, he proclaims his innocence loudly, and demands to see their evidence. The remains of mutants and traps do nothing to prove a connection with Heinz and his fellow conspirators.

Even if Jules can somehow be kept alive long enough to tell what he knows and identify Heinz's voice from his dealings with Franz, the word of a mutant – especially a partial one with only a few hours to live – does not stand up against such a pillar of the community as Heinz Schiller. He will respond by accusing the adventurers themselves of being minions of Chaos, ordering his mercenaries to arrest them, and handing them over to Manfred for interrogation.

The Cleansing Flame

Mutants are a dark secret best in the Empire. If the PCs openly parade a captured mutant around the village, they strike horror into the festival-goers, and deeply disturb the locals. Everyone in town, even those inclined to sympathise with the characters, is quite horrified by the appearance of the mutants and would much rather have the things killed and burned, regardless of what they may claim to know.

The sight of a mutant will rouse Manfred Harwitt from his normal alcoholic haze; remembering the glories of his younger days, he is galvanised into action, establishing an *ad hoc* panel of enquiry from the leading villagers and passing

summary judgement on the mutants. Everyone in the village supports his demands that the mutants must be burned immediately and their ashes scattered outside the village. They want this matter dealt with quickly and decisively, so that disruption to the festival is kept to a minimum and the visitors are reassured that Heideldorf is looking after their safety.

Manfred brooks no protest; if necessary, he invokes his authority as a witch-hunter and threatens dissenters with arrest. Frustrating as this will be for the PCs, this is Manfred's finest hour in a long time, and he enjoys it to the full.

Vile Slanders

Furious at the adventurers' slight on his character, Heinz has his mercenaries arrest them and demands they be kept under guard at the Dancing Dragon until the festival is over, promising a full enquiry at that time. While others in Heideldorf might be happy to see Heinz charged with murder and worse, the festival is too important to the village for them to allow its leading light to participate in an immediate trial. With the adventurers securely under lock and key, Wilf heads to the keep by night to investigate and cover up any evidence.

‡ A SIMPLE PRECAUTION

If Heinz is aware that the adventurers survived the keep, he orders two of his mercenaries to stand guard over his home at night and is accompanied by at least one at all times during the day. When Heinz works in his shop, he keeps a guard posted outside.

‡ THE COVER-UP

Whenever Wilf reaches the keep, he gathers the supplies, weapons, and other red herrings he left on the ground floor. After he finds that the mutants are dead, his next move is dictated by the adventurers' recent actions.

If they accused Heinz of working with the mutants, Wilf hides the bodies in the woods nearby and cleans up as much of the carnage as possible. While Wilf does not have enough time to bury the bodies, he simply picks an out-of-the way spot and covers them with leaves, branches, and other debris. A search of the area around the keep will eventually turn them up.

If the adventurers either failed to return from the keep or kept quiet about their encounter with the mutants, Wilf covers up any evidence connecting the mutants to Heinz – destroying Pedro's notes, hiding the cart, and recovering his pipe – and returns to the village.

‡ AN IMPARTIAL ENQUIRY

Heinz and Wilf are too confident in their plans to view the adventurers as a threat, and write off the destruction of the mutants as mere bad luck; something that was bound to happen sooner or later. In a court of law or under the scrutiny of the community, Heinz and Wilf are both proof against most accusations. After all, who are the villagers going to believe:

a rag-tag bunch of mercenaries who only arrived a couple of days ago, a Chaos-tainted mutant with no right to exist, or two leading members of the community backed up by a loyal (if infirm) witch-hunter?

The adventurers face a daunting task. They must somehow topple a fiendish cannibal who hides behind the veneer of a respected merchant. He has at least one ally that the PCs know of, if they deduce Wilf's involvement, and they do not know how many others are in on the plot. This is when their initial dealings with influential villagers pay dividends – or come back to haunt them. The miller Dirk Moser and the retired sausage maker Alfred Fochs are the adventurers' best potential allies, since both dislike Heinz and both are respected in the community. If the adventurers did a fair, even-handed job of handling the boys who sought to disrupt the festival, they will also be able to convince the more influential local farmers that they at least deserve to be heard.

⇒ WHAT NOW? ⇐

The next phase of the adventure is determined almost exclusively by the PCs' actions. As GM, you must pay particular attention to the leading NPCs – especially Heinz and Wilf – and make sure that they react appropriately, both in terms of the plot and according to their characters (see p. 42)

What follows is a list of the adventurers' most likely actions, and the responses they will elicit from key NPCs. If the players take the adventure in an unexpected direction, use the NPC descriptions and the guidelines presented here to improvise further developments.

‡ HE'S GOT TO GO

Sometimes, the direct approach is the best – but this is not such a time. Though Heinz is not the most popular individual in the village, the locals aren't about to let a murderer walk free. In addition, the visiting nobles and merchants are quite enamoured of Heinz, and will use their influence and wealth to see to it that anyone who harms him comes to a bad end. Attacking Heinz in public will lead to the adventurers being charged with murder, chained up in the Dancing Dragon (if they are not imprisoned there already!), summarily tried by Manfred and strung up outside the village.

If you are feeling generous, Manfred can decide that this case lies outside his jurisdiction, being common assault (or murder, depending on how successful the attack was), and orders that the adventurers be held until after the festival, when they will go to the nearest town for trial. This buys them a few days to come up with a better plan.

Heinz spends the mornings working on his final batch of sausage. Shortly before noon, he makes his way to the festival area and spends the next several hours mingling with the visitors and ensuring that the festivities run smoothly. Shortly after sunset he returns to his workshop, and works until midnight. After that, he heads home to sleep. The adventurers' best chance is to sneak into the workshop using the secret passage through the outer wall, and confront Heinz

in the morning or at night. If Heinz turns up murdered, the festival grinds to a halt as Wilf organizes a search for the killers. Of course, he immediately suspects the PCs if he is aware that they survived the keep and are still in the area.

At this point, the adventure becomes a rather freeform cat-and-mouse game. Wilf does his best to uncover evidence against the adventurers, manufacturing it if necessary. However, he does not have enough influence to persuade any of the other villagers to act as false witnesses.

If the adventurers assassinate Heinz and then flee the area, let them believe they have escaped. A few days or weeks later, they will hear of the horror that came to Heildorf as a result of Ernst Gottlieb's revenge plot.

‡ HE'S GOT TO GO TOO

The PCs could potentially pin the blame for the entire conspiracy on Wilf. Based on the evidence they found at the keep, it is possible that they may fail to see Heinz's involvement in the plan, or they may simply wish to avenge themselves against everyone who conspired to arrange their deaths.

Wilf takes far fewer precautions than Heinz. He spends daylight hours in his shop, evenings in the Dancing Dragon, and nights at home. As mentioned earlier, he will head out to the keep to investigate the delay in the delivery of Heinz's latest batch of meat or to see how the adventurers survived. It would be fairly easy to waylay and kill him then.

Heinz will react to Wilf's murder just as Wilf would react to that of Heinz. He also steps up security, ordering all the mercenaries to guard him rather than watch the gate or wall. If Heinz survives the festival, he immediately packs his things and heads out of town on a carriage accompanied by his guards, or travelling with some of the festival's attendees. He has decided to quit while he's ahead, and retire to Altdorf with his earnings.

‡ THE WITCH-HUNTER

Buried deep within his conscience, Manfred Harwitt has some suspicion that Heinz is up to no good. After all, so many mercenaries come to Heildorf in search of employment, that it is hard to believe that bandits still lurk in the area. If the adventurers approach Manfred with their evidence, they may be able to stir him into action. A lot depends on the approach they take.

If they openly accuse Heinz, they force Manfred to drag him into the situation. The case boils down to the adventurers' word against that of the respected (if not very well liked) sausage maker.

On the other hand, the characters have a good chance of setting Manfred against Heinz if they can lead him to draw his own conclusions about the evidence. If they simply present the mutants to Manfred, or take him up to the keep before Wilf clears out the clues to be found there, he comes

to the conclusion that perhaps Heinz is behind the mutants' activity. He publicly calls Heinz out, confronting him in the midst of the festival or hustling the characters to Heinz's home as appropriate to the time of day.

Unfortunately, Manfred has little influence with the locals. Many assume that he is drunk, and no one can believe he could possibly uncover a conspiracy. Most of the farmers laugh at his claims and dismiss them as a desperate bid for attention. On the other hand, if the characters have won over Dirk Moser and Alfred Fochs, the two will seize the opportunity to attack Heinz, quickly rallying support. While most of the villagers place little worth in Manfred's claims, there is enough simmering resentment against Heinz that his enemies can jail him and prepare for an official inquiry after the festival finishes up. Heinz is placed under house arrest, but a few hours after it is clear the game is up he hangs himself in his bedroom.

‡ DIVIDE AND CONQUER

The adventurers may try to turn the conspirators against one another. Of the three, Karl is the most likely to turn against his fellows. He honestly has little idea that Heinz has arranged for any deaths and believes the travellers spend their money in town and then head out on their way. As far as he is concerned, the entire scam exists to draw business to Heildorf throughout the year, since the sausage festival is such a seasonal source of income.

If Karl is presented with convincing evidence of Heinz's treachery, he will dissolve into a blubbering mess at the thought of the horrors of which he has been a part. The adventurers will have to calm him down somehow, but he will gladly use his influence to make sure that Heinz and Wilf are arrested and an enquiry is set in motion. Karl can confirm enough of the story, particularly the portions of the conspiracy dealing with attracting mercenaries to town, to put Heinz in chains, and is fundamentally very honest – he will take any consequences of his involvement in the plot to see the others punished.

Of course, the adventurers may not realize that Karl is part of Heinz's operation. Just as he has little knowledge of it, there is little evidence pointing to his involvement.

Wilf and Heinz, on the other hand, can be reasoned with. Either man is willing to provide evidence against the other if they see an opportunity to escape unharmed. Either of them would require time to gather their belongings, arrange for a place to flee to, and put their evidence in writing. Neither is willing to admit to involvement with mutants or murder, but either can provide enough evidence to implicate their partner. Both would plan on leaving the day after the end of the festival, making it likely that they will caught up in Ernst Gottlieb's revenge.

‡ HUSH MONEY

Greedy characters may choose to blackmail Heinz and/or Wilf. Initially, both men feign innocence, and try to draw the

blackmailers out to determine exactly how much they know and how troublesome they could be.

Depending on the strength of the evidence against them, they may offer the adventurers no more than 100 GC to leave town and never return, or they may delay negotiations until the end of the festival, intending to slip out of town before the adventurers can cause them any further problems. Again, staying until the end of the festival will leave them caught up in Ernst Gottlieb's plans.

‡ DAMNING EVIDENCE

In the course of deciding how best to deal with Heinz, the adventurers may decide to find further evidence against him. If they uncover Heinz's secret workshop, they can easily arrange for his arrest. Many of the farmers and sausage makers

dislike Heinz, and have made a point of never buying his wares. Thus, the revelation that his sausages contain human flesh, while horrifying, does not have the same level of personal torment it may have for the adventurers. If they work with Dirk or any of the other prominent people in the village, they try to keep the truth of Heinz's business as secret as possible. They'd much rather avoid ruining Heidedorf's reputation.

‡ BUSINESS AS USUAL

If the adventurers simply sit back and do nothing, Heinz watches them carefully while Wilf takes care to cover up the evidence at the keep. The sausage maker is willing to simply let the matter pass if that's possible. He plans on closing his business after the festival and retiring to Altdorf. Of course, Ernst Gottlieb may have something to say about that.