

# HEROIC WORKS



A Goblin More  
or Less



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### Author

Gudrun Schürer

### Edited by

Eevie Demirtel, Daniel Simon Richter, Alex Spohr

### Copy-Editing

Carolina Möbis

### Cover Art

Tristan Denecke

### Layout

Thomas Michalski

## Interior Art & Maps

Luisa Preißler, Diana Rahfoth, Tristan Denecke, Anna Steinbauer, Verena Biskup

With special thanks to Marie Mönkemeyer, Martin John, and the test detectives (Ada, Christian, Jan, and Matthias)

## ENGLISH VERSION

### Translation

Benjamin Plaga

### Editor

Kevin MacGregor

### Layout

Ben Acevedo



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NPCs with this symbol play an important role in future official adventures.



*Increased Difficulty:* To make a scene more difficult for the heroes, use the suggestions given in this section.

*Rumors:* When heroes try to obtain information, they occasionally hear gossip and hearsay. Rumors are marked by a + (true), a - (false) or a +/- (partly true, partly false).

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# A Goblin More or Less



"By Festo's dragon, move your hairy bottom out of there, you lice-ridden ragbag! What are you doing here? How did you get in? Just you wait, you wretched red pelt, I'll give you what for! Here, have at you! And another one! Stop sniveling, or I will [REDACTED] your [REDACTED] until you [REDACTED]! Don't you ever come back! If I ever catch one of your bunch in here again, I'll flay all of you alive!"

—overheard recently in Festum

## The Adventure at a Glance

Someone is murdering goblins in Festum. The City Guard is out of its league, and the heroes must step in to investigate before the killer strikes again.

**Genre:** Urban Adventure, Detective Story

**Prerequisites:** Characters who are willing to help and who are not prejudiced against goblins

**Location:** Festum

**Date:** Modern (around 1038 FB)

**Complexity (Players/GM):** Low to Medium / Medium

**Suggested Hero Experience Level:** Ordinary to Competent

### Useful Skills

Social skills



Combat



*Living History*



## Background

### Introduction

*A Goblin More or Less* introduces the heroes to an exotic social milieu: that of the goblin citizens of Festum. Elsewhere in Aventuria, goblins are considered nuisances with bad reputations, and as such are often labeled "red pelts." In contrast, goblins enjoy citizenship in Festum, the capital of Bornland. Around 3,000 goblins live peacefully among the more than 33,000 residents of this trading metropolis. Most reside in the Tanners' Quarter where they earn their livings as tanners and dyers, although goblins can be found in any part of the city working as rat catchers and street sweepers. In fact, these two occupations are worked by goblins exclusively, and Festum would not be the same without them.

This adventure explores issues of social justice. The City Guard routinely denies goblins the protections that it grants to human citizens. Goblin victims of crimes sometimes receive justice, but only if it doesn't cause too much fuss.

Goblins (*suulak*, as they call themselves) have adapted their way of life to their urban surroundings. Goblin shamans now practice their faith in secret. Goblin clothing hardly differs from that worn by their human neighbors. Goblins even discarded their old clan structure in favor of the human concept of families, though females are still the backbone of goblin society. Usually, the eldest woman is the head of the family and the one who makes most of the decisions. Even the street sweepers are led by a *bluuga-paala*, a forewoman.

If one goblin stands out, it is *Mantka Riiba*, the leader of the city's goblin population. If not for her dedication, the goblins of Festum would be unable to earn a living in the city.

### The Set-Up

The Festum City Guard hires the heroes to solve the murder of a human named *Albin Sewerski*. In the course of their investigations, the heroes learn that a serial killer is stalking goblins who work in the vicinity of the crime scene. The goblins are desperate. Since they can't count on the city guards to protect them, they turn to one of their shamans, *Mantka Riiba*, for help. *Mantka*, in turn, may not be able to solve all the murders, but she *can* solve *Sewerski*'s murder, so she makes the heroes an offer. While they search for the serial killer, she will find *Albin*'s murderer.

The heroes follow the serial killer's trail, uncovering clues both useful and misleading. The truth is this: a goblin rat catcher named *Urmeg Earthpelt* accidentally discovered that *Stanko Ilmeroff* (40; 6'4" tall; thick black hair) is actually a smuggler. *Stanko* tried to seize the unwelcome witness, but *Urmeg* fled. Since *Stanko* didn't get a good look at *Urmeg*, he has been killing every goblin he can find who resembles *Urmeg*.

### The Story Thus Far

Festum's street sweepers and rat catchers, some of whom have reputations as pilferers, know many ways to gain access to middle-class houses—entry points of which even the residents themselves are unaware. *Urmeg Earthpelt* is one such rat catcher. By way of the sewers, he sneaked into the house of *Stanko Ilmeroff* and accidentally learned that *Stanko* belongs to a band of smugglers and fences. *Urmeg* was discovered but was able to flee. *Ilmeroff* wants to eliminate the witness, since exposure would draw the attention of both the City Guard and his competitors.

*Stanko* did not get a good look at *Urmeg*. He knows only that the witness is a male goblin with a dark colored pelt. Unfortunately, many of *Urmeg*'s relatives work in the vicinity of *Stanko*'s home, and all of them

have dark pelts. To simplify matters, Ilmeroff decided to kill them all.

Stanko and his right-hand woman *Malwina Prahnakis* (35; 5'7" tall; brown chin-length hair) set out to kill every goblin they can catch unawares, and afterwards they try to disguise their crimes as accidents. Their cover-ups were extremely transparent, but the commander of the City Guard (which is stretched too thin at the best of times) settled for the *accidents* theory. Festum's goblins know that these so-called accidents are deliberate murders. Out of fear, they stay within their own neighborhood and stop going to work. The terrified Urmeg hides even from his own family.

Along the way, the series of murders claimed a human victim. Many goblins had been paying protection money to *Vadim Grumperow* (26; fox-faced; rubs his hands when excited), a member of the Moon Children (a notorious Festum gang of criminals). As a pickpocket, Vadim worked for his own profit and only pretended to collect protection money on behalf of the gang. When the murders started, desperate goblins began demanding the protection for which they had been paying all these years.

Vadim feared that his deception was about to be revealed to the Moon Children, so he made some inquiries of his own and came to believe that the murderer was Albin Sewerski, an irascible old man who lived in Ilmeroff's neighborhood. Sewerski had recently caught a young goblin stealing from him and beat him black and blue, and by happenstance, that goblin was one of Stanko's first victims. In a token show of duty, Vadim hired two thugs who slew the old man and then left town immediately afterwards.

The City Guard is stymied. Sewerski was known for his quick temper, but he was also a charitable man who was held in high esteem. The only real clue is the testimony of an eye witness who saw two people sneaking out of Sewerski's house on the night he was murdered.

Since the goblin murders have not stopped, the Earthpelt family has turned to *Mantka Riiba*, the goblin shaman. It has not escaped her attention that a new band of smugglers is trying to establish a foothold in the city. This is not just bad for business—it also presents an incalculable threat to her people. Believing that the recent murders are connected, she shared her suspicions with the Moon Children, who are less than thrilled at the thought of new competition. The always well-informed gang knows that Vadim ordered Sewerski's murder, and they have placed the pickpocket at Mantka's disposal. She will offer to hand him over as enticement for the heroes' cooperation.

## Getting Started

The adventure begins at the garrison in the Wall Garden district in Festum, where the heroes receive their mission to solve Albin Severski's murder and find

### Adventure Timeline

- 1 Urmeg learns Ilmeroff's identity and goes into hiding
- 2 Albin Sewerski beats a young goblin and threatens several others
- 3 Five goblins are murdered
- 4 Sewerski is murdered
- 5 The heroes begin their investigation
- 6 Inquiries; another goblin is murdered; Ilmeroff becomes a suspect
- 7 Meeting with Mantka Riiba
- 8 Further inquiries
- 9 Confronting Ilmeroff
- 10 Ilmeroff's defeat and the capture of Severski's murderer

their first clue to Ilmeroff's machinations. The following are some suggestions to get the heroes involved in events.

- 1 The party arrives by land from the north, to deliver suspicious-looking merchandise (such as a crate holding a wild beast for the Festum Zoo) to a recipient in Festum. The gate guards are unwilling to take responsibility for the dubious cargo and ask the heroes politely to follow them to the nearby garrison.
- 2 The heroes arrive in Festum by ship. The ship's captain asks for a favor delivering a (personal) letter to the garrison's sergeant, *Maatsen* (40; Warhome "flat top" haircut).
- 3 Due to a pickpocket or perhaps a tavern brawl, the heroes are already in the garrison (just not entirely by their own choice).

### Festum at a Glance

*Region:* Bornland

*Population:* 33,000 humans (including 3,000 Maraskani exiles); 3,000 goblins

*Governance:* governed by the Grand Council, which consists of 300 councilmen, and by the Close Council, which consists of 12 councilmen

*Temples:* all of the Twelve gods, plus Rur and Gror, Swafnir, Rastullah, Mokosha, Ifirn, and other demigods

*Trade Goods:* important trade port; seat of great merchant houses; shipbuilding; leather and leather products; meskinnes (a sweet liquor made from honey)

*Major Pubs and Taverns:* the Market Hotel, the Old Lighthouse, the Two Masks, The Moose Antler, the Reef of the Withering Throats

*Special Features:* Seat of the Noble Marshal, zoo, dragon museum, Mercury Hall (academy of the Gray Guild, main properties are Influence and Object), Grand Festum Cavaliers' Academy (warrior academy), convent of the Hesinden Draconites, main workshop of the alchemists of the Red Salamander Society, Hospital of the Therbünites,

The Noble Marshal's School for Officers and Warriors, Admiral Seweritz Naval Academy, main office of the Northland Bank, Maraskani district (New Jergan), goblin ghetto

*Mood in the City:* metropolitan feel; citizens are very proud of their city and the freedoms they enjoy

*Read aloud or paraphrase:*

While waiting in one of the garrison's hallways, you observe a squalid man with a red nose haranguing a guard while dangling a sheet of paper in front of him. You hear the words "seen clearly" and "20 batzes." The guard, a sergeant according to his uniform, grows increasingly impatient. When the speaker directs his attention to you by pointing at you, the sergeant rips the sheet of paper out of his hand and cuts him off, saying, "This is the third group you have identified today, Peddar. Go home!"

A few moments later, you notice a nobleman in his fifties leaving the commander's office. The commander follows him, apparently trying to placate him. "Your grace," he says, "we are doing everything in our power. A large number of our guards have been assigned to this issue, but nothing points to a connection with the Moon Children."

"Spare me your excuses!" the nobleman retorts. "Attend to your duty, or your days as commander are numbered!" With a flourish of his brocaded cloak, he strides toward the exit. The sergeant does his best to blend into the wall, but to no avail.

"SERGEANT MAATSEN!" yells the commander, "In my office!" The conversation that follows occurs behind closed doors. Judging from the volume, it is not very pleasant. Soon a purple-faced sergeant exits the room. The commander follows hard on his heels, yelling "No excuses! Attend to your duty, or your days as a sergeant are numbered!"

Peddar, he of the red nose who never could tell when to keep his mouth shut, immediately tries to get Maatsen's attention again. Maatsen, however, simply seizes him by the collar and throws him out. As he turns, he glances in your direction and you almost think you can see a plan forming before his eyes. The sheet of paper still in his hand, he beckons you to follow him into his office, where he slumps into a chair, exhausted. With a gloomy expression, he looks at <insert name of the most respectable-looking of the heroes> and says, "You look like capable people."

The matter that brings the heroes before Maatsen is dealt with quickly and to their benefit. The reason for Maatsen's unexpectedly helpful behavior is that he needs the heroes' help. He asks them to act as special



investigators and solve Albin Sewerski's murder.

If the heroes agree, he hands them the sheet of paper, which turns out to be a wanted poster. It mentions two suspects who were seen leaving Sewerski's house two nights ago. Their descriptions are vague and could apply to almost anybody. Incidentally, the eyewitness (Peddar) is bound and determined to claim the reward of 20 batzes, and he has been naming every stranger he sees as one of the culprits. To secure the heroes' assistance, Maatsen is willing to increase the reward by 10 batzes, for a total of 30 batzes.

Regarding the incident in the hallway, the dutiful sergeant remains silent. However, any other guard from the garrison gladly reveals that the man with the brocaded cloak is a nobleman named Ilmar Persanzig.

## Board, Lodging, and a Constant Companion

Maatsen offers to secure lodging for the heroes in a Norbardic tavern called *The Moose Antler*. Their rooms are free while they conduct their investigations, although the sergeant isn't footing the bill (he occasionally turns a blind eye to goings-on at the tavern, and the landlord still owes him some favors).

Maatsen asks a goblin boy named Groink to show the heroes the way to the tavern. Groink often loiters in front of the garrison hoping to get paid for small errands. He is captivated by the heroes immediately and sticks to them like glue from now on.

# Investigative Work

## The Murder of Albin Sewerski

A hole in the brickwork in the basement of the Sewerski house leads to the sewers. This access is concealed by some old planks leaning against the wall. Vadim Grumperow purchased this information from an enterprising goblin and gave it to the two killers he hired.

On the night of the murder, the house's other residents were either already asleep or hadn't yet returned for the night. Around 11 o'clock that night, the killers entered through the basement, covered up the hole again, went directly to Albin's bedroom, and made short work of him. They pressed a pillow on his face to prevent him screaming, and then slit his throat. Afterward, they were forced to leave the house by the back door in the kitchen because somebody was using the privy at that moment. They left the kitchen door closed but not locked to creating the impression that the murderers entered the house this same way.

### The Scene of the Murder

The party should probably start their investigations at the **scene of the murder (1)**. If the heroes request help, some guards named *Stane Bogoris* and *Uriel of Barelysevencucumbers* (30 and 39, respectively; bored; unmotivated; lazy) answer the summons (Sergeant Maatsen is not happy about sending them, as they are not exactly blessed by Hesinde's gifts, but they are the only guards available at the moment).

The crime occurred in a neat, two-story house that stands in the middle of a small herb and vegetable garden. In order to keep it neat, workers come by to tidy up and clean every day. Thus, the heroes can find no incriminating tracks, and even the victim's blood-soaked mattress has been discarded.

The family's bedrooms are on the second floor. The first floor consists of a large kitchen, a seldom used parlor, the servant's bedroom, and the privy. A door in the kitchen leads to the basement, which consists of a coal cellar and a storeroom. The access from the sewers connects to the storeroom (to notice it, make a *Perception (Spot)* check with a bonus of 3). If someone moves the planks concealing the hole, a frightened rat jumps into their face.

The house's other residents are Albin's sister **Tineke Tulsteen** (65; short gray hair; never laughs), her hearing-impaired husband **Fredejan** (68; gray fringe of hair), and Albin's son **Nikol** (25; brown ponytail; quick-tempered). All of them willingly provide information to the heroes. On the night of the murder, Tineke and Nikol attended a reading given by the Order of the Draconites. They returned around midnight and went immediately to bed. Fredejan and the servant **Selscha** (50; ponderous; boozy breath) were both asleep. None of them heard anything, due to Fredejan's hearing loss and to Selscha's customary bedtime drink. Tineke discovered the body the following morning.

In the course of the investigation, the family members lock horns with each other. Tineke and Nikol blame each other for leaving the back door unlocked. As their quarrel heats up, Tineke accuses Nikol of neglecting his father to spend time with his new lover. Meanwhile, Fredejan tries to make sense of the argument by interrupting loudly with questions. The heroes get the impression that the family often argues in this manner.



**The Red Herring:** Albin was angry with his son, who had begun seeing a dancer named **Deshda** (22; strawberry blonde curls; cheerful soul). Six months ago, the young Tobrien woman arrived with a Norbard caravan. Since then, she has been earning her living in various pubs and taverns, including *The Moose Antler* (the heroes might have already met her, or may yet get to know her, there). In Albin's view, she was a wanton girl, and dirt-poor, besides. Hence, father and son had frequent, heated arguments. Albin threatened to disinherit Nikol upon learning that the couple is now blessed by Tsa and expecting a child. If the heroes mention this to Nikol, he declares angrily that whom he chooses to marry is none of their bloody business.

The heroes can gain further information from the servant, Selscha. They find him in the garden, burning out a rat's nest and clubbing the fleeing animals to death with a large shovel.

**Albin** was notorious for his fits of rage, but his rage subsided as quickly as it flared up (+).

**Ten years ago**, Albin and Tineke inherited a modest sum from Albin's Great Uncle. It was enough for both of them to live on for the rest of their lives (+).

**Albin** lost his first wife and his three older daughters at the disastrous Battle of the Vallusan Meadows. His second wife died giving birth to Nikol. Nikol has been his world ever since, but this manifested itself in loud scoldings and reprimands. After all, Albin did not want to spoil the boy (+).

**Nikol** works as a scribe for a newspaper called *The Festumers' Flag* (+).

**Deshda** is a nice girl but indeed as poor as dirt. She and Nikol wish to marry (+).

### The Neighborhood

This city borough feels more like a small country village; hence, the residents always know what their neighbors are up to.

The Tsa-blessed **Ouveranski Family (2)**: According to **Matushka Ouveranski** (45; dirty blonde hair in a bun; plump), one simply cannot pay attention to the neighborhood while caring for a dozen children. Never-ending complaints about her "brats" trampling herb beds are more than enough to keep her busy. In this regard, old Ilmeroff is especially vociferous, although his garden is utterly untended.

**Granny Salwa's home (3):** When the heroes knock, the window curtain moves a bit, but nobody answers the door. Since the murder, **Granny Salwa** (80; thin

braid; very frail) has not dared to leave her house, much less open the door for strangers. She speaks with the heroes only if they are accompanied by Haneke (11) or the Stipensen Sisters (6). However, when she speaks, all she does is complain about the Ouvranski children and that unfriendly Ilmeroff who never acknowledges her even though he lives right next door...

**Ilmeroff's home (4):** This merchant does not open his door and goes out of his way to avoid meeting the heroes on the street.

**The miser (5):** 1 *Ilja Gerski* (40; half-bald head; smug) greets the heroes with, "I have nothing to give away! Go to Travia's Temple if you need something!" When asked about the murder, he states that it is the Council's duty to keep citizens from being assassinated in their own beds. Anyway, everything was better in the olden days.

**Gudwinja and Selwine Stipensen (6):** The 1 sisters (63 and 65, respectively; gray curls; motherly) can be seen openly watching the heroes through their window, the sill of which is equipped with a soft pillow for this very purpose. As the heroes approach their door, they warn of the many horse apples in front of their house. The sisters are delighted with their unexpected visitors, and Gudwinja ushers the heroes into the parlor while Selwine serves them herb tea and cake, followed with fish soup and kwassetz. The questioning proves to be time-consuming, but on the other hand, the sisters provide a wealth of gossip.

- ➲ The neighborhood has become noticeably dilapidated. Citizen responsibility aside, the goblins are just quite an unreliable folk (+/-).
- ➲ On the night of the murder, both Nikol and his aunt were out of the house (+).
- ➲ Fredejan is hard of hearing, which is a real blessing when the Sewerskis yell at each other (+).
- ➲ Albin was very irascible. Recently he caught a goblin named Dreggi Earthpelt trying to sneak into his house through the basement. The old man beat him so badly that Dreggi's pals had to carry him home. "I'll flay you all alive!" he yelled (+).
- ➲ And speaking of Dreggi: A few days ago, Dreggi drowned in the Gargel Creek (+).
- ➲ Nikol is every bit as irascible as his father. By the way, it is said that he has a sweetheart, and she is already with child! (+/-).
- ➲ Gertje will not be happy to learn about Nikol's new lover. After all, she has been after him for years. Before Nikol, she was in love with Ilmeroff, but he snubbed her. Pity. They were made for each other; both are terribly unkind (+/-).

**Gertje (7):** 1 *Gertje* (25; short blonde hair; sullen) did not notice anything because she must care for her bedridden grandfather day and night. However, she knew that something bad would happen when Nikol began seeing that dancing girl...

**The empty house (8):** This ramshackle building is uninhabited, and its door is unlocked. Upon entering, the heroes encounter a disgusting stench. Holes in the floor grant a direct view into the basement, where a dead rat catcher named Bluurz is stuck head first in the wall and serving as dinner for his former prey. It is not a pretty sight (make a Willpower check or suffer 1 level of *Fear* for half an hour).

The heroes can climb down into the basement from here (*Climbing* check with a bonus of 2, failure means a 3' fall) or use a broken window to gain access to the kitchen, where a trap door opens onto the basement stairs. Bluurz' head is caught in a common snare set in a cavity in the basement's rather unsound brickwork.

Groink identifies the rat catcher and immediately runs to fetch a guard from the garrison. The Law, as personified by Stane and Uriel, arrive quickly. They tell the heroes to stand back and observe while they work. Standing in the front door, Stane and Uriel glance around the room and peer down into the basement for a few moments. They then pronounce that Bluurz inadvertently got caught in one of his own traps and was nibbled to death by rats.

If the heroes examine the corpse (make a *Willpower* check or suffer 1 level of *Fear* for half an hour), they discover a stab wound in his chest. It should now be obvious that the guards' conclusions about other deaths like this are just a tad questionable. Groink can inform the heroes about the other accidents (as can Stane and Uriel, if the heroes think to ask them).

**The Spinola home (9):** 1 *Sulje* (14; tangerine-colored pelt; big eyes), the goblin maid, answers the



door. Her clothes—an apron and bonnet made of starched linen—conform more to Vinsalt conventions and are rarely seen in the Bornland. The man of the house, **▀ Yalderico Spinola** (35; beaked nose; arrogant) explains at length about how Festum in general, and the neighborhood in particular, have amply crossed a line into barbarism. “Just look at the mountains of horse dung in the streets!” he says. “Almost every night, old Peddar relieves himself on my garden fence, and the Sewerskis’ yelling can be heard even in my basement, which, by the way, is full of hordes of rats running about. They probably came through the sewers. I complain to the rat catcher every day, but where is he? So much for entrusting city maintenance to the red pelts. And that’s another thing. My maid’s social graces leave much to be desired...” He rambles on and on, if the heroes let him. Sulje can tell the heroes that Bluurz the rat catcher has disappeared.

**The Saddlery (10):** Master crafter **▀ Egor** (40; stocky; taciturn) buys his leather directly from the tanners’ quarters, and thus he has more contact with the goblins. He refers the heroes to *Jolmelle Earthpelt* and a bluuga-paala named *Kiisa*, both of whom are responsible for cleaning streets in the neighborhood.

**Haneke’s home (11):** **▀ Haneke** the washerwoman (35; dirty blonde hair; careworn) has many customers in the neighborhood. She does not want to be thought a gossip and only answers direct questions. Ultimately, she knows only as much as the Stipensen sisters. If asked, she describes Ilmeroff as a friendly and suave gentleman.

#### Ilmeroff’s Secret Informant

Haneke is Ilmeroff’s unknowing informant. The merchant had only to invest a glass of wine and a bit of his time to gain her confidence. The guileless washerwoman is flattered by his courtesy and freely keeps him informed about goings-on in the neighborhood. This is how he first learns of the heroes’ investigations.

**Kolja’s tailor shop (12):** Old **▀ Kolja** (68; gray goatee; shortsighted) was friends with Sewerski. He tells the heroes that Sewerski always grumbled about his son. And about everyone else, too.

**Peddar (13):** Strictly speaking, **▀ Peddar** (60; gaunt; unkempt), an aficionado of strong liquors, cannot contribute any useful information. On the night of the murder, he left the *Reef of the Withering Throats* at about 11 o’clock, after having just one or two small glasses of meskinnes. As always, he stopped to relieve himself on Yalderico Spinola’s garden fence, and thus caught a glimpse of the culprits (it was a moonlit night) as they left the house by the back door and headed in the direction of Firun. He didn’t hear about the murder until the next day.

## Unfortunate Accidents

The Earthpelts mourn six deaths so far. All the accidents share some things in common—all of the victims were goblins, there were no eyewitnesses, and the victims were (usually) found at dawn. Also, the two guards assigned to that neighborhood are Stane and Uriel.

**▀ Bluurz:** see (8)

**▀ Ertzel:** The unfortunate street sweeper was hit by a heavy ox cart, resulting in a broken neck. Apparently, the cart—which nobody has seen since the accident—had to turn around repeatedly in the narrow alley. Every time it moved, the goblin was somehow caught under its wheels without anyone noticing (an inspection of the alley reveals that it is too narrow to allow an ox cart to turn around).

**▀ Juchi:** While intoxicated, this goblin took his own life by repeatedly running head first into the wall of a house. Apparently, he had suddenly become overwhelmed by melancholia. Juchi still had the tankard in his hands when his body was discovered (unlike his skull, the tankard survived undamaged).

**▀ Dreggi:** This goblin boy drowned while trying to retrieve his cap from the Gargel Creek. While standing on the bank and trying to reach the cap with a stick, he slipped, impaled one eye on this very stick, and then fell into the water.

**▀ Groben:** This unfortunate goblin suffocated in his handcart, which was full of horse dung. A liquor bottle found by his side led to the conclusion that he had crawled into his cart to go to sleep and sank into the dung.

**▀ Sviini:** This goblin rat catcher fought over a rat with a stray dog, until he died from exhaustion. His cause of death was deduced from a rat tail that was found in his hand (the rest of the rat was found around the corner near a slumbering, three-legged mongrel).

**▀ Sulrik, the latest victim:** This goblin, a known glutton, died of suffocation after stealing a chicken from the garrison’s kitchen. Apparently, to dispose of the tasty evidence as quickly as possible, he tried to swallow it whole. Heroes examining his corpse must make a *Willpower* check or suffer 1 level of *Fear* for half an hour. A successful *Perception (Search)* check with a bonus of 3 reveals strangulation marks on his red-furred throat.

Sulrik should not die before the heroes find Bluurz. If necessary, Groink informs them of the murder and leads them to the scene, where Stane and Uriel are currently at work. At this time, the goblin boy can convey Mantka’s invitation to the heroes to meet her at the Earthpelts’ house.

## Suspicions

Ilmeroff had nothing to do with Sewerski's murder, but he still doesn't want anyone snooping around in the vicinity of his home, so he plans to kill two birds with one stone by discrediting the heroes and harming his potential competitors, the Moon Children. He orders Malwina Praehnakis to hire a Norbardic thug. The thug ambushes Peddar during his nightly pub crawl, beats him up, whispers greetings from the Moon Children and <insert name of one of the heroes> in his ear, and then disappears into the dockyards where he cannot be found. Of course, Peddar suspects a connection to his testimony and seeks the aid of Sergeant Maatzen.

This allegation leads to a lengthy conversation with the sergeant, who grows nervous upon hearing mention of the Moon Children. He is trying to obey the commander's orders and has the Moon Children in his sights, after all, but he fears being fooled by some clever scheme of the heroes' making. He asks directly if they are in league with the notorious gang. If the heroes don't have solid reputations, they must convince him of their innocence (*Fast-Talk* (*Subterfuge*, *Manipulation*, or *Sweet Talk*) check). If they fail, he makes it clear that he will only dismiss Peddar's allegations if the heroes solve Sewerski's murder. The heroes can learn more about the Moon Children with a successful *Streetwise* (*Asking Around*) check.

## Exchange of Murderers

If the heroes visit the Earthpelts' house before receiving Mantka Riiba's invitation, they encounter Alwiischa initially. She tells them of the series of accidents and the goblins' fears, and asks them to return the next day. She then arranges a meeting between the heroes and Mantka Riiba, whom she introduces as *Auntie Manriischa*.

### The Meeting

Mantka the shaman wears simple, well-worn clothes and a headscarf to hide her identity. Depending on her mood, she might even be using a *Harmless Shape* spell. If one of the heroes already knows her or feels obliged to expose her, she states that her identity does not really matter.

The shaman has known for some time that Vadim Grumperow is responsible for Sewerski's murder, but she does not mention him. Since these kinds of affairs are traditionally settled by the family head—in this case Alwiischa—even the other goblins do not know about the protection money racket.

The old goblin woman with the wrinkled face is treated with great respect. She seats herself in the armchair normally reserved for the matriarch, Alwiischa. The curious children are sent outside, but the youngest goblin children keep their noses pressed to the window pane.

Meanwhile, Mantka offers the heroes a deal. If they arrest the murderer of goblins, she will reveal the identity of the murderer from their case.

## The Earthpelt Family's House

Apart from the size of the furniture, the interior of this house does not differ at all from a human's house. Life takes place in the big living/kitchen area where it seems half of the neighborhood comes and goes freely. Alwiischa usually sits in her armchair in front of a huge table, coordinating family life and peeling potatoes.

### The Facts

- ⦿ Urmeg disappeared before the first murder was discovered. Kiisa fears that he has also been killed, even though his body has not turned up.
- ⦿ In rare instances, it sometimes happens that, purely by chance, a goblin gets lost while pursuing a rat and ends up in the basement of somebody's house. It also sometimes happens that said goblin accidentally takes something that does not belong to him.
- ⦿ Jolmelle does not believe that Sewerski was being serious when he threatened to "flay the whole pack alive." The old man used to grumble a lot, but he also occasionally gave her some sweets for the children.

## In the Neighborhood

- ⦿ The men do not dare go to work anymore, so Jolmelle asks the heroes to escort her cousins Aargal and Hobblefoot-Sviini as they go about their jobs. Before starting the day, however, both rat catchers visit the Temple of Firun (overseen by *Für-Uunla*, the goblin Blessed One of Firun) to ask for Firun's blessing.
- ⦿ A goblin named Juuksed Smuddelski scrupulously screens all strangers, including the heroes. Juuksed is one of the few goblins serving in the City Guard.
- ⦿ The goblin rogue Joraak, a well-known troublemaker, has long questioned matriarchal rule within goblin society. He seizes the opportunity



to incite the Earthpelt men to go on strike. Some Earthpelts are sympathetic to his arguments, while others bow to peer pressure in order to avoid appearing weak. Opposing them are Alwischa, who does not think well of such mischief, and Kiisa and Jolmelle, who worry about family cohesion and the childrens' future. The heroes are invited to act as intermediaries because the goblins view them as impartial. To bring about an acceptable resolution, the heroes must make a cumulative group check using *Persuasion*.

## On the Murderer's Trail

There are several ways to find evidence of Ilmeroff's activities.

⦿ *The search for Urmeg:* Groink knows that Urmeg is hiding in a decrepit shack at the edge of the Tanners' quarters, and has been supplying Urmeg with food and news. However, the little one won't betray his uncle as a matter of honor—at least not immediately. If the heroes treat Groink well and reward his efforts with kindness (GM's discretion), he leads them voluntarily to Urmeg's hideout. With just a little bit of persuasion (make a *Fast-Talk* (*Manipulation* or *Sweet-Talk*) check), the rat catcher tells the heroes that Ilmeroff is hiding people in his basement and is apparently planning a *big caper*. Urmeg is convinced that the merchant will kill him if he finds him.

⦿ *The trip through the sewers:* Kiisa agrees reluctantly to lead the heroes through the sewers, but she fears retribution if people learn that goblins are able to enter and exit some houses at will. Festum's sewers are extensive and hide many interesting secrets that don't have any connection with the murders. To avoid getting lost or wasting time, the heroes should not explore the sewers unescorted. Kiisa keeps to the main sewer, which runs under the street, and points out the access points to the houses of Sewerski (1), Ilmeroff (4), Spinola (9), and the empty house (8). The other houses do not have any connection to the sewers—except through their latrines, of course. Kiisa does not want strangers to gain detailed knowledge of the sewers, so she tries to limit their expeditions into the sewers by mentioning terrible sicknesses, krakennewts, and saber-tooth rats. A short glance into Ilmeroff's basement should be sufficient to rouse the heroes' suspicion, as the room has been furnished to accommodate guests. The vicious mantrap set just beyond the access point is described in *Ilmeroff's House* (see below).

⦿ *The listening post:* Since Ilmeroff is avoiding the heroes, they might want to spy on him. Granny Salwa's home (3) is ideally placed to observe any comings and goings from the smuggler's house. If the heroes ask politely, Salwa lets them watch through her laundry room windows. They soon observe Haneke entering Ilmeroff's house, apparently to make a laundry delivery, but

she doesn't leave until half an hour later. Soon afterwards, another woman leaves the house (it is Malwina, who has so far concealed herself from the heroes). The heroes can shadow Malwina to the harbor, but she manages to lose them after that (old habits die hard; she always expects to be tailed). With a successful *Intimidation* check, Haneke admits that Ilmeroff has been questioning her about the heroes' actions for several days now.

## Ilmeroff's House

This two-story building's ground floor is elevated one yard above the ground, and steps lead up to the front door. From the outside, the windows are placed too high to simply peer into. The house's second floor and basement both are accessible via stairs at the end of the main hallway (a). The privy is next to the stairs.

The kitchen (b), which apparently does see some use, faces the street. The second room (c) on this side of the house is empty. Its door is locked (make a *Pick Locks* (*Bit Locks*) check), and its window is covered by a curtain. In the room beside the stairs (d), two heavy wardrobes stand along the back wall, screening the only window as well as the back door. Ilmeroff uses this room as his bedroom. A straw mattress lies in one corner, and one of the wardrobes holds some garments.

The layout of the second floor is similar to that of the first floor, but all of the rooms are empty. A thick, undisturbed layer of dust indicates that these rooms have not seen any use for a long time. If the heroes enter the second floor, they inevitably leave tracks.

The basement consists of a coal cellar (e) with a nailed-up coal scuttle, and a room (f) lined with big barrels (the former owner of the house was a wine merchant). Ilmeroff's secret 'guest room' (g) is right next to the stairs. It contains a bed of straw, a washstand, a table with three chairs, and a chest. Currently, he has no guests. The locked chest (a *Pick Locks* (*Bit Locks*) check, with a bonus of 2) contains a sextant.

The hollow space under the stairs is paneled with wood planks. Two large barrels conceal the entrance to the sewers (h), a spot indicated by two loose wooden planks. Ilmeroff recently installed a mantrap (2D6+4 DP) in front of the small passage, to defend against unwanted guests. The trap is concealed by rags.

## Counterstrike

As soon as Ilmeroff realizes that the heroes are on his trail, Malwina and a killer team ambush the heroes at a suitable location. The thugs outnumber the heroes by two or three to one, depending on the heroes' combat prowess (adjust accordingly—the battle should be hard to win without help from the Moon Children).

The Moon Children made a deal with Mantka Riiba to keep an eye on the heroes and come to their rescue, if needed. However, of those that join the fray, the heroes see only Vidal Glitterjaws and Vadim Grumperow (the others stay at a distance and rely on their crossbows for thinning their opponents' ranks).

## Ilmeroff's End

In the end, the heroes do not find solid proof that Ilmeroff murdered the goblins or even that he is smuggling, though if they search his house, they do find enough circumstantial evidence to arouse the City Guard's suspicions. They should be feeling pressured after the attack by Malwina's thugs, at least enough to want to take action against Ilmeroff.

Ilmeroff is prepared for the heroes' arrival (he expected a break-in and has assigned someone to watch the heroes). If they tarry too long, he kidnaps Groink, cuts off one of his ears, and has someone deposit it in one of the heroes' rooms in the *Moose Antler*. He throws Groink into the coal cellar, bound and gagged. Whether Groink survives this ordeal is up to the GM.

Ilmeroff does not hesitate to fight the battle in his own house, and he plans to dispose of the heroes' corpses in the sewers where the rats can make short work of them. His plan relies on the heroes breaking into his house, either through the basement, the front door, or a window. If appropriate, he leaves the house to give the heroes the opportunity to break in undisturbed. Then he returns, accompanied by Malwina. He has posted enough thugs in the sewers (plenty of killers know the sewers of Festum and can conceal themselves there as skillfully as the goblins). After giving the heroes some time, he encircles them.

The heroes should plan their house search carefully. If desired, they can recruit helpers beforehand. Kiisa and Jolmelle are already on their side, and if the heroes are persuasive enough, Urmeg and three other goblins accompany them, too. If the heroes know Dravovo Kaiba (Headmaster of Festum's Goblin Quarter and officer in the City Guard) and ask him for help, he sends Juuksed Smuddelski and three goblin guards to assist. If the heroes can contact the criminal underworld [*Streetwise (Asking Around)* check with a penalty of 2], Vidal Glitterjaws brings three Moon Children to help.

Ilmeroff hires four thugs per hero. The heroes' helpers can keep some opponents occupied by attacking them in the sewers. The hole in the basement wall is easy to defend, as it allows access to only one thug at a time. If Ilmeroff flees or dies (and his thugs notice), they also flee.

## Vadim's Demise

The Moon Children keep their promise to Mantka by sending Vadim Grumperow to his doom. The day after Ilmeroff's defeat, Haneke introduces the heroes to her "cousin," Kolja. He is secretly a member of the Moon Children tasked with ensuring that Vadim is delivered into the hands of the City Guard. He will testify that Vadim Grumperow hired thugs to kill Sewerski. He also knows that the killers were sailors, but they boarded a ship soon after committing the murder and are now long gone. Kolja plans to meet the heroes at the guard post later that day to hand Vadim over to Sergeant Maatsen. But before he leaves, Kolje

hands the heroes a letter from Vidal. It reads simply, "For your efforts."

Later, as Kolja delivers Vadim into the hands of the City Guard, he explains to Maatsen that he is Haneke's cousin and "doesn't speak this language good," thus neatly excusing the sudden appearance of a surprise witness (the henchman warned Vadim to play along, if he knew what was good for him). Whether Vadim resists arrest is of no consequence. Either way, he is as good as dead.

## The Heroes' Reward

The heroes should receive 25–30 AP each, depending on the success of their investigation. They also receive the reward (30 ducats or Bornish batzes) for catching the murderer, a further 50 batzes paid by Ilmar Persanzig in gratitude, and a Deed of Commendation for exposing Ilmeroff, presented by the Council.

## Prominent NPCs

### ¶ Stanko Ilmeroff

This self-professed spice and cloth merchant is arrogant and imperious and avoids all contact, if possible. He grew up as serf in Seweria but fled during the turmoil of war surrounding the return of Borbarad and joined some mercenary companies. He last resided in Mendena, where he made his living as a fence and smuggler.

As a youth, Stanko witnessed numerous hunts for goblins. Consequently, he considers them vermin and views their citizen status in Festum as a travesty. Although he knows that goblins run the major smuggling operation in Festum, he does not take them seriously as competitors. In his mind, his true opponents are the harbor authorities and the Festum crime gangs.

Stanko's stats are generally the same as those of a henchman, but give him some bonus points on COU, SGC, and INT, as well as improved combat stats.

### ¶ Malwina Praehnakis

This former mercenary is Stanko's hatchet woman. She has been in his service for the past five years. Stanko appreciates good work, so he pays her generously. In exchange, she is utterly loyal to him.

Apart from her stammer, Malwina is an unobtrusive person. She is not accustomed to Festumian peculiarities because, like Stanko, she comes from Seweria. In particular, she shares Stanko's opinion about goblins.

Malwina's stats are the same as those of a henchman.

### ¶ Auntie Manriisha/Mantka Riiba

As leader of the Festumian goblins, this old shaman (auburn pelt streaked with gray, and red-violet eyes) is a person to be respected. She wields great influence and has far-reaching connections. Mantka's mysterious presence can have a downright hypnotic effect on

others. Rumors claim that she is the legendary *Kunga Suula*. Whether this is true or not is of no consequence to this adventure.

## 1 The Earthpelts

An inexperienced hero might find it practically impossible to keep track of this extended family. Most family members work as rat catchers, street sweepers, or rag merchants. All have brown fur. The Earthpelt household includes the following individuals (among others):

- **Alwiischa:** The family matriarch (gray-brown fur; constantly licks her lips) is a dignified old matron.
- **Kiisa and Jolmelle:** The two oldest daughters are both *bluuga-paala* (forewomen) who assign work to their relatives. Kiisa is recognizable by her ears (they are not the same size), while Jolmelle gestures broadly with her hands when talking.
- **Urmeg:** This rat catcher is a coward.
- **Numerous children:** Furkja, Gnatzej, Gribna, Kwörk, Siisikai, Traak, Yaanjescha (distribute names as needed). All of the kids are lively and cheeky.

## 2 Groink

From the very beginning, this enthusiastic goblin lad (adolescent; top half of left tusk is broken off) sticks by the heroes' side, whether they like it or not. At first, Groink merely hopes to earn some halers running errands, but he becomes enamored



of the hero with the highest CHA value (and showers that hero with presents in the form of flowers, stolen candies, or even a braided arm band made from his own hair). Groink is the heroes' source of information about the Earthpelt family, the "accidents," and Urmeg's hideout.

## 3 Olfridt Maatsen

The sergeant of the City Guard (40; Warhome "flat top" style haircut) employs the heroes directly. This pragmatic yet pleasant-natured man has a real interest in solving the murder. He can serve as a source of information and also support the heroes to a limited extent.

## 4 Stane Bogoris and Uriel of Barelysevencucumbers

Moderately eager city guards.  
For their stats, use the stats of a guard.

## 5 Juuksed Smuddelski

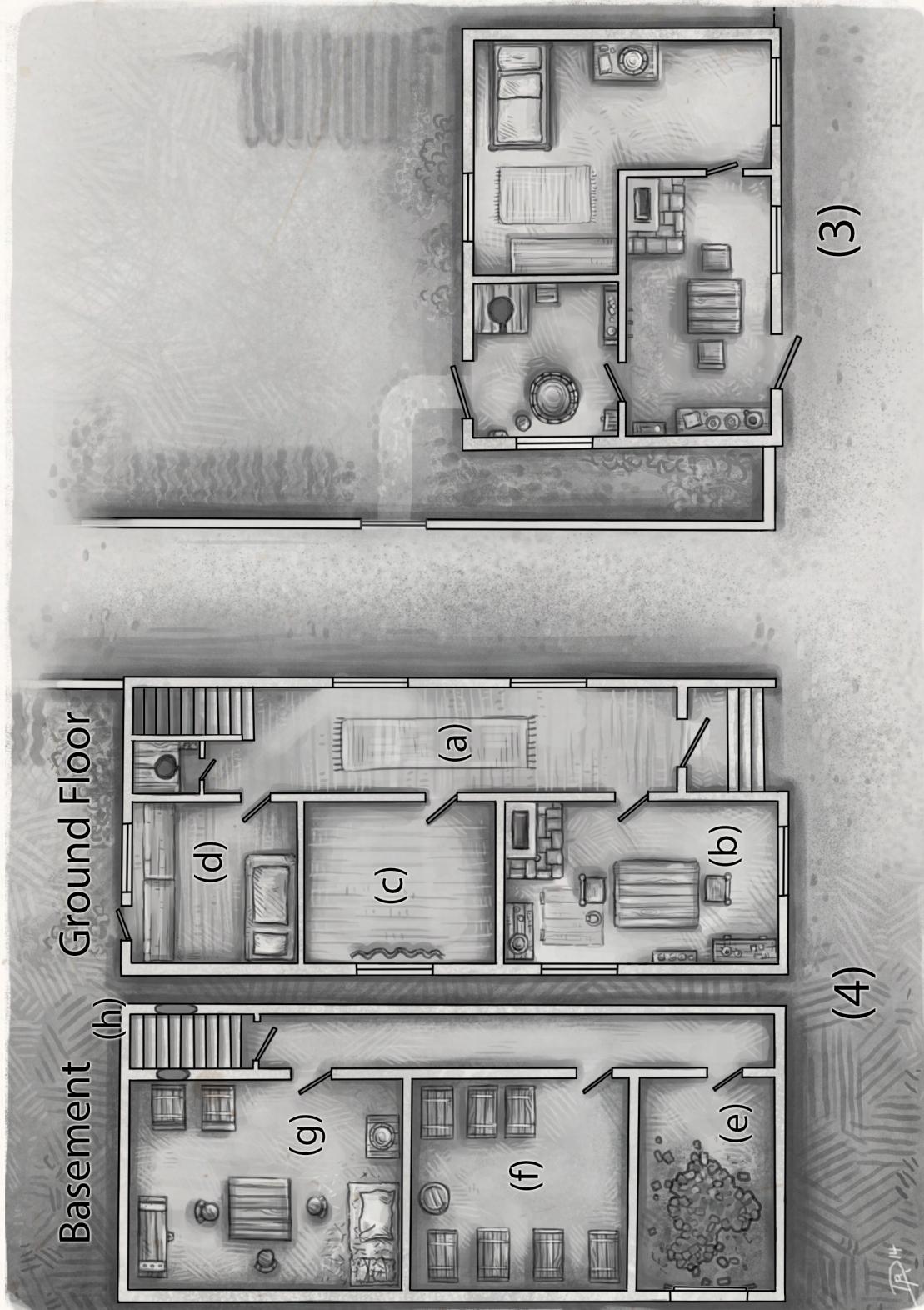
This young goblin, a member of the City Guard himself, is tasked with acting professionally so as to help raise peoples' opinions of his race. He takes this task very seriously. His stats should be slightly better than those of a guard, though modified to represent goblins.

6 Vidal Glitterjaws (30; 6'1" tall; dandyish appearance) is a Norbard who owes his nickname to several prominent gold teeth. He likes to play the role of the charming rogue but is every bit as ruthless as his fellow gangers. The very nervous and often trembling Vadim is never far away. Vidal's stats are generally the same as those of a henchman, except for a few increased attributes, skill ratings, and combat techniques (use your judgment).

7 For a pickpocket, Vadim Grumperow (28; 5'5" tall; dirty blonde hair; full but patchy beard) always seems very nervous—but with good reason. For Vadim's stats, use the stats of a henchman.

**Guard****COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12****DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 12 STR 13****LP 32 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6.****DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 1 MOV 7****Unarmed: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6****RE short****Dagger: AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6+1****RE short****Halberd: AT 13 PA 4 DP 1D6+6 RE long****Sword: AT 13 PA 6 DP 1D6+4 RE medium****Light Crossbow: RC 12 RT 8 DP 1D6+6 RA 10/50/80****PRO/ENC: 4 / 1 (chainmail) (includes armor modifiers)****Advantages: none****Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Believes in Authority)****Special Abilities: Feint I (Unarmed, Daggers, Halberd, Swords), Forceful Blow I (Unarmed, Daggers, Halberds, Swords), Inured to Encumbrance I****Skills: Body Control 5, Feat of Strength 5, Intimidation 6, Perception 8, Self-Control 6, Stealth 6, Willpower 5****Combat Behavior:** Guards encourage opponents to surrender by pointing their crossbows at them. If this is not successful, they shoot first and then enter melee with their halberds, using *Feints* and *Forceful Blows*. In close quarters, they use swords instead. If the opportunity arises, the guards will fight together against one opponent at a time.**Escape:** individual; guards try to flee after suffering 2 levels of *Pain*.**Equipment:** Depending on the guard; chance of finding 2D6+2 halers**LP Loss****Pain****24 LP (1/4) +1 Pain****16 LP (1/2) +1 Pain****8 LP (3/4) +1 Pain****5 LP and less +1 Pain****Henchman****COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 10****DEX 13 AGI 12 CON 12 STR 13****LP 30 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6****DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 1 MOV 8****Unarmed: AT 13 PA 7 DP 1D6****RE short****Saber: AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+3 RE****medium****Battleaxe: AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE medium****Short Bow: RC 12 RT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80****Light Crossbow: RC 12 RT 8 DP 1D6+6 RA 10/50/80****PRO/ENC: 0/0****Advantages: none****Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Greed)****Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I (Unarmed, Battleaxe)****Skills: Body Control 3, Feat of Strength 5, Intimidation 4, Perception 4, Self-Control 4, Stealth 6, Willpower 3****Combat Behavior:** Henchmen obey their leaders and prefer to *ambush* their opponents. In melee combat, they use *Forceful Blows*.**Escape:** per individual; henchmen flee after suffering 2 levels of *Pain*.**Equipment:** per individual; chance of finding 2D6 halers**LP Loss****Pain****23 LP (1/4) +1 Pain****15 LP (1/2) +1 Pain****8 LP (3/4) +1 Pain****5 LP or less +1 Pain**

# Ilmeroff's House



## Neighborhood Map





## A Goblin More or Less

by Gudrun Schürer

Festum, the prosperous merchant city and capital of the Bornland, is home to more than 30,000 humans. For many years, the city has also been home to a growing population of goblins. Called “red pelts” in other parts of Aventuria, goblins were granted citizenship in Festum a number of years ago when they saved the city from a serious plague of rats. Festum goblins now work as day laborers, street sweepers, and rat catchers, and perform their jobs with pride even if many human residents find these occupations disgusting.

To some, a goblin more or less makes little difference, but even red pelts have families who worry about them. When a goblin is found murdered and the City Guard fails to find any leads, an upstanding but overworked sergeant recruits the heroes to help with the investigation. Soon, more bodies turn up, and the heroes find themselves racing against time to save Festum’s goblins from a fiendish serial killer!



**Genre:** Urban Adventure, Detective Story

**Prerequisites:** Characters who are willing to help and who are not prejudiced against goblins

**Place:** Festum

**Date:** Modern (around 1038 FB)

**Complexity (Players/Gamemaster):**

Low to Medium/Medium

**Suggested Hero Experience Level:**

Ordinary to Competent

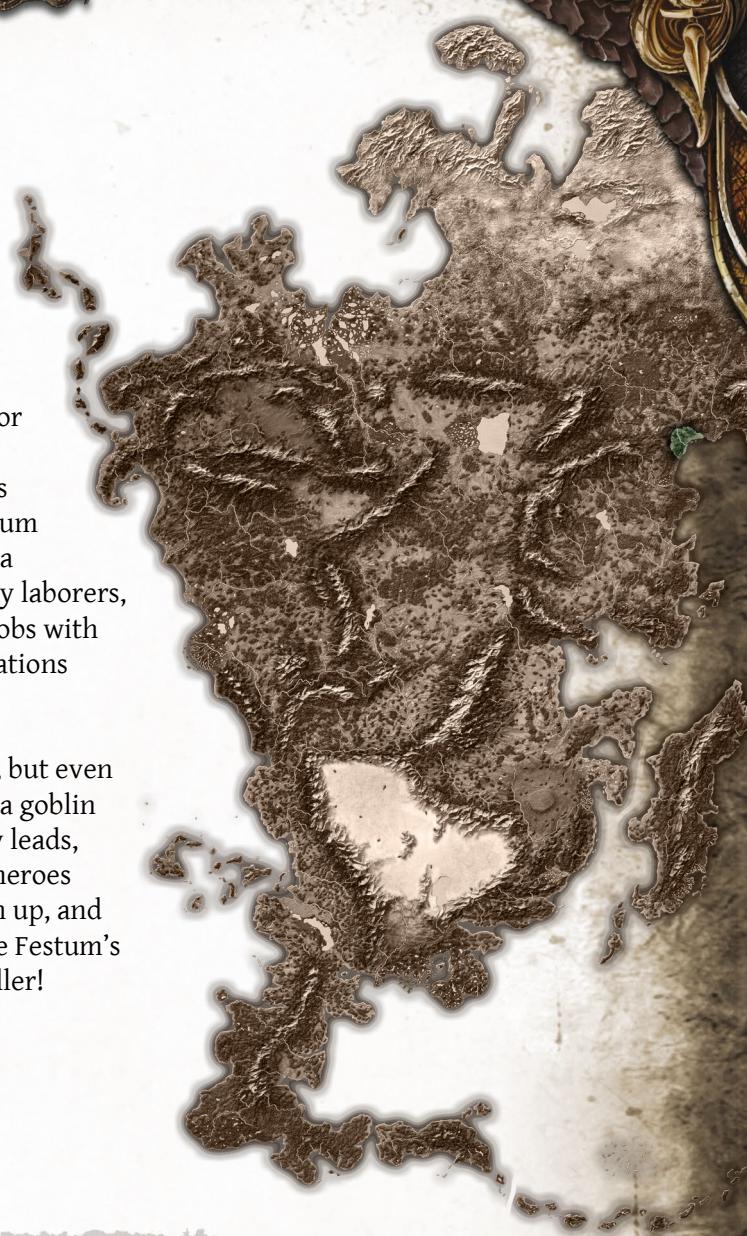
### Useful Skills

Social skills      ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Combat      ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

**Living History**      ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

To play, you need *The Dark Eye Core Rules*. For a deeper understanding of the history behind the events and locations mentioned in this adventure, we recommend the *Aventurian Almanac*, although it is not strictly necessary for running and enjoying this adventure.



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