

# NEVER GOING HOME

A dark, snowy forest scene. In the foreground, a body lies face down in the snow, surrounded by a pool of red blood. A rifle is stuck upright in the snow next to the body. The ground is covered in snow, with a path of blood leading away from the body. Several trees are visible in the background, some with red marks on their trunks. The overall atmosphere is grim and unsettling.

BLOOD ON  
THE SNOW

# NEVER GOING HOME

## BLOOD ON THE SNOW CAMPAIGN DOSSIER

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Never Going Home: Blood on the Snow Campaign Dossier  
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First published in 2020.

First printing.

Published by Wet Ink Games, LLC

Louisville, KY

WetInkGames@gmail.com

ISBN: 978-1-952885-04-4 (Softcover)

ISBN: 978-1-952885-05-1 (Digital)

WIG-209

Printed in U.S.A. by [Jostens].

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This project was made possible by the  
352 people who pledged their support.



Reasonably intelligent individuals are never hoodwinked individually. But they possess another, equally harmful form of this human frailty: they are subject to mass delusion. A swindler will never be able to lead a single individual by the nose; but as for a large group taken together, their noses are always ready and willing! Meanwhile, the swindlers, weak as individuals and each led by his own nose, when taken together can never be led by their noses. That's the whole secret of world history.

**- Nikolay Chernyshevsky, What Is to Be Done?**

To Etienne Kult, Editor-in-Chief,  
Zücher Post, Zurich, Switzerland

15 August 1916

Etienne—

My sources have led me down a winding trail here in Petrograd. I was told to look for a woman named Taya Orlov and a man named Mikel Elin. Taya is said to be from the far east, near the Sea of Okhotsk, though where exactly it is not known. Mikel is a native of Petrograd. Aside from Rasputin himself, they are said to be the most powerful of the healers here in the city. They are not easy to find though, so my source says. The society is one of secrets and whispers; from what I can tell, they are akin to the group who has been helping the German military. Some even say they are one and the same. I have a suspicion that they are of the same persuasion as the Wizards the Germans were using in their army; at least, it has been said that they are studying the same book. It might take me weeks to find anyone who knows how to contact Taya or Mikel, and weeks more to earn their trust. I don't assume they would meet openly with me, and they might only agree if I make assurances that I won't publish their story.

The question that seems to be on everyone's mind is 'do you see anything like what we saw in France this past summer?' The short answer is no. There is nothing like we saw on the Somme and the surrounding plains. But that doesn't mean there is a shortage of oddities, curiosities, and honestly quite frightening happenings. I will write again once I've contacted either Taya or Mikel, or there is a development to report.

Raul Muhleman, Russian War Correspondent,  
Zücher Post

## Drifting Snow

“Violence, death, and darkness have been built into the very foundations of the Russian state, the only real constant of two millennia of history.”

- Michael Kerrigan, *A Dark History of Russia*

The Empire of Russia is vast and unforgiving, and for centuries those that ruled over it were the same. It was the third-largest empire in history and sprawled over three continents. It was controlled by the Mongolian empire for over 200 years until the Russian princes could expel the Mongolian Tatars and put into power Tsar Ivan the Great, who was able to gather the powers of several princes and strengthen his rule. When power passed on to Tsar Ivan the Terrible, he brought wealth, power, and opulence to the ruling family through marriages, war, and trade. Many of Russia's cities were trading posts for merchants, creating a rich culture infused with influences from all over the world. This trade made Russia a very valuable empire and many sought to conquer it. Ivan the Terrible sought out absolute rule and held no reservations on executing anyone who stood in his way. Stories of contact with dark powers have always followed his reign and many questioned his motivations.

Many of the common people of Russia held onto their deep-seated beliefs in magic and superstition, and with good cause. The Russian wilderness has long been home to many different monsters who are the center of myth. Though accounts may differ from town to town, the stories hold a terribly similar tone to them. Many of the myths talk about beings that will eat any who happen to cross its path, and that these monstrosities can be found outside of the large cities. While many of these myths were just that, myths, sometimes the myths ended up being real. These monstrosities are also known as Others, though they have grown more powerful and grotesque.

With the rise in power of these Others, so came the rise of cults built up around them. Some of the people living in these areas secretly started worshiping these beings. Most people were happily unaware of this worship, as it was either individuals or very small, secretive groups. Whether it is a solitary individual who leaves devotions, or a small group of clandestine worshipers who meet late at night, these people have found purpose and power in their actions. This worship would feed power into these folk tales and they grew in strength and ability. There are rumors of Others growing powerful enough to have a name and speak, though this could just be folklore being mixed in. Nobody knows for certain if this worship truly did give power to the Others; and most people never want to find out.

The reality is superstition, years of folk tales, and the lack of knowledge in the supernatural has created the perfect storm. Many tales of monsters in the countryside, such as the vodyanoi along the riverbanks, were Others which were able to adapt to living in that environment. The harsh weather throughout the countryside, large amounts of snow, and subzero temperatures much of the year is tough for any creature. The ability of the Others to survive and gain power in these conditions appears seemingly impossible.

## Waiting Blood

The rise of Tsar Nicholas II began with blood, an omen some believed was the signal of his greatness, others believing it was a sign of ill fate for the ruler and his family. When Tsar Alexander III died, the rulership of the country passed on to his son, Nicholas. During a celebration for his coronation, thousands of peasants were trampled when the celebration fields became overcrowded. The ground had been a training area for the

military and had minimal accommodations made to support that amount of people. The tragedy would be a mark on his reign and perceived as an omen. But the deaths of that many innocents allowed the Veil to weaken and seek out those who were willing to spread the corruption of the Others. Russia held many dark secrets in its history. The soil of Russia had long been tainted by the blood of sacrifices for many generations, an act which gave rise to corrupted creatures, nightmares to haunt children's dreams for many ages. These corrupted nightmares roamed the forests and countryside of the Russian Empire, terrorizing rural farming communities, distant towns, or lone travelers. With the unintentional sacrifice of thousands of people, this dark magic released into the land and called out to any who listened. Those who answered these whispers were already leading cults or worship of the Others in the wilderness.

From that moment, Russia was destined to become one of the most socially and politically charged nations. Tsar Nicholas floundered; making decisions that placed his country into chaos. His army had outdated equipment that was quickly becoming a problem on the front lines. The army alone stood at over one million soldiers for the entire country and its sheer size made updating any of the supplies it used almost impossible to accomplish. Anyone in the military who spoke out or talked of the revolution was executed, a command issued by several Generals who outwardly spoke of the dangers of free speech and democracy. The people of Russia were already at unease, and those who were corrupted used their influences to fan the flames of revolution. When Russia lost the Russo-Japanese War, this ignited the revolutionaries to spring into action and cause civil unrest. Worker strikes, turmoil, and continued military upheaval were enough to push Nicholas to create the Duma, an advisory body of legislators who were elected by the people. The Duma would give a voice to the people of Russia for the Tsar and offered the appearance of some control within the rulership.

The soldiers within the army started to seek out help wherever they could find it. With the Others roaming the countryside and whispers sweeping across the lands, desperation was a motivating factor. Some soldiers simply walked away, going AWOL and roaming the countryside to get as much distance as they could from their former posts. Some soldiers listened to the whispers and answered their call, gaining help but corrupting themselves along the way. This corruption slowly filtered through the army unnoticed.

Tsar Nicholas was very out of touch with the people of Russia since the ruling families often kept themselves away in their



palaces. Tsar Nicholas was obsessed with making sure he had an heir to the throne, a desire that called out to the mad monk known as Grigori Rasputin. The Tsar's only son was very sick, born with hemophilia, so everyone in the palaces made sure to watch him carefully. When the child was injured while playing, the Tsar reached out for help, and the Others brought Rasputin to his door. The monk helped to heal the boy's injuries, forever corrupting him. The Tsar and Tsarina Alexandra were instantly taken with the monk and kept him in their services as an advisor.

In her desperation to protect her son and her husband's legacy, Alexandra became obsessed with Rasputin and the power he wielded. Her dependence on him and the security he brought her family gave Rasputin an unprecedented amount of power for a member of the clergy. Rasputin was like a drug for Alexandra and she was hesitant to make any decisions without consulting him for fear of making some mistake. Rasputin used this as an opportunity to enact the will of the whispers he heard when coming into his power.

Alexandra continued to press Nicholas to make decisions based on the advice of the mad monk which resulted in several missteps, costing the Empire dearly in power and wartime gains. When Nicholas pushed back against Alexandra, she made it clear to him she was looking out for the best interest of her family and his power. Nicholas continued to follow her advice, though begrudgingly, making his generals, most of whom were also part of the Romanov royal family, question whether he was fit to continue rulership. He quickly found himself between both sides, scrambling to make the best decisions and quickly backed himself into a corner.

## Gathering Darkness

With his army deserting across the Empire, Nicholas soon found even his generals were discussing his rulership and how to deal with these problems. From civil unrest throughout the Empire to problems the army continually faced, the generals were left with little they could do to restore order. The problems the army faced on the ground weighed heavily on their minds and they were faced with a decision on whether they continued to support a Tsar who would not listen to experience and reason, or appease the masses who were protesting the rulership in an effort to restore peace to the Empire.

Throughout the Empire, many villages were refusing aid to soldiers moving through those areas. This created animosity between the army and the villagers and the two found themselves at odds more often than not. Many of these villages offered sanctuary and aid to any of those who decided to leave the army and work with them in growing crops or repairing items. Even whole details would abandon the army and offer their services to defend the town against the Others or root out any who might have been corrupted.

The beginning of the World War marked a bloody and violent time for the citizens of Russia. With the army being vastly under-supplied, and soldiers leaving, conscription for troops became more popular. These untrained personnel quickly found themselves right in the middle of chaos on the front lines or being forced to turn upon their own villages wherever dissenters begin to rise. With the Tsar out of the capital, the ones left in control are being manipulated by the Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin. The monk continually advises the Tsarina in what he feels the army should do, what political decisions need to be made, and how any sort of political relations need to fall. The country has fallen into chaos, and its Tsar seemingly is blind to it.

In the far northern hinterlands of Russia, several uprisings have gone unchecked by the army for some time. Multiple efforts to gather information have either gone unanswered, or the information gathered has been unreliable. Due to the distance away from the capital, and the confusion surrounding the royal family, nobody is sure what is happening there. Communication is sporadic at best, and questions are arising about the community and its leaders. To gain control over the country, this town is one of the priority places to be investigated. There are many eyes watching on both sides.

**To Sasha Litvin, Petrograd  
From Valeri Litvin, Russian Front, Czernowitz, Bukovina,  
Austrian Empire**

20 August 1916

Dearest Sasha,

It's been a long slog, but we continue to press the enemy further into their own territory. At last, we see some light! Sasha, I know our victory is far from secure, but this feels like a triumph. Yes, we're hungry and our boots aren't good enough to keep out the rain, and there is never enough ammunition to go round. But darling, if we could secure the territory we've gained, and keep pressing the advance, then it would go a long way towards an Austrian defeat. Can you imagine it, my dear? Maybe the war would be over before the end of the year!

What's this I hear of riots back home? Don't the people know of Brusilov's commitment to the country? Pietr's wife sent in her letter that there are protests in the capital, that the Tsar faces scrutiny for his actions. After he took command at the front? Even after he appointed Brusilov to replace the Grand Duke? Sasha, if you could only feel the excitement here now that the war is turning. Tell everyone back home, dear one, tell them they don't need to complain.

But maybe they aren't only complaining of the Tsar and the war. Pietr whispered to me last night that there are monsters in the woods. He thought he saw one of the creatures the night before last. He went on and on about dark beings and witches pretending to be healers. He said the Prince's healer is one himself! Can you imagine that? The Tsarina employing a dark wizard? What would she need him for? Don't listen to such talk, Sasha; even if it is true, what could any of us do about it? Though, it makes me wonder—why had we heard not a word about any of this until after the disaster in France? It's idle talk, I say; men imagining monsters because of the stories that have filled their heads. Don't listen to any of it, Sasha! I'll write again soon.

Love,  
Valeri

## Soldiers' Dossier

### Morale Pool

Russian troops on the front lines of the war are infamous for their poor morale. Some generals consider it a success for their soldiers not to break and run from the first shots of the enemy. Part of the reason morale is so low was lack of supplies. Unsurprisingly, soldiers say fighting with no bullets, marching without coats, or retreating without food is death. They prefer to stay in camp and not get involved in the fighting if they can.

If fighting becomes unavoidable, what can keep soldiers going? The Morale Pool represents the ability of soldiers to draw on each other for support and encouragement when the dangers press close. Sometimes, a shared memory from the days before the war or a small kindness in the present can restore the spirit of a shattered comrade.

The Morale Pool is a set of cards, arranged face down near the draw deck so the number of cards in the Pool can be seen, but not their value. If playing with a Morale Pool, it should contain a number of cards equal to the number of soldiers at the beginning of the mission, minus one. The maximum number of cards in the Pool is equal to twice the number of soldiers in the Unit. Rewards and Decorations are still drawn from the deck, as normal.

Additional cards come into the Morale pool in one of the following ways:

- Any Reward which gives a card to all players also adds one to the Morale Pool. Any time a Reward lets the players choose who receives cards, they may choose to put the Reward in the Morale Pool.
- During play a player may specifically try to add a card to the Morale Pool from the deck by making any skill roll. The TN is the number of cards currently in the Pool +2. The player announces what skill they want to use and describes how their character attempts to raise the Unit's spirits. Perhaps they roll Athletics to perform a dance, Communications to tell a story, or Ranged to make an impressive shot. Then they make the roll. If successful, one card is added to the Morale Pool from the deck. If the roll fails, one card is discarded from the Morale Pool, or from the deck if the Morale Pool is empty.
- Players may also be rewarded by the Narrator with a card added to the Morale Pool for great role playing.
- Some Mission Incidents may add cards to or remove cards from the Morale Pool.

Any time a player can spend a card, but has no more in their hand, they may instead take any card from the Morale Pool and play it as if they had just played it from their hand. Morale Pool cards are discarded as normal.

The character who draws the last card from the Morale Pool draws for Corruption twice and everyone else in the Unit must take a chance for Corruption as well.

If the Narrator is using the Corruption Pool (*Book of Whispers*, page 31), they may spend 1 point to remove a card from the Morale Pool. The Narrator may not remove the last card from the Morale Pool.

21 Aug 1916

Offensive is at a halt STOP Creatures in Carpathians  
STOP Disappearances among the enlisted and odd  
powers among the officers STOP Sending scouts into  
the woods STOP

## **Whisper Path**

### **Stone Soup Recipes (Smarts)**

Stone Soup is an old folktale in which strangers in need come to town with an empty pot, drop a stone or, in other traditions, some other inedible object, and convince each of the townspeople to give a little food to make this stone soup taste even better. By the end of the tale, the stone is removed, leaving a nourishing meal which is shared around. It's a heartwarming tale of sharing. But these are not heartwarming times.

The Russian frontier is cold, barren, and heartless. In this time of seemingly endless war with both the world and with other Russians, even the cities feel like the wilds where one must fight for survival. Supplies are running low and prices are soaring high, making even bare necessities sometimes impossible to come by. Impossible, that is, unless you are willing to make the proper sacrifice.

#### **Using the Power for Good**

Everywhere the Unit goes, the people are hungry, wounded, homeless, in danger of being captured, or otherwise suffering. It's hard for a kindhearted person to resist using tools at their disposal to help these people. If the Unit uses a stone soup to help people outside the Unit, both player characters and non-player characters, if they can be persuaded to do it, can give up little things of value for the pot. Value is subjective. Money is just paper to some. Well-worn boots hold memories of many paths trod for one. A handkerchief might have belonged to another's mother who passed away. The resulting soup—made of little more than junk and kindness—can feed a whole town for days, or heal an illness, or offer them some level of protection.

#### **Using the Power for Ill**

The magic still works, but the items taken carry with them negative associations. Situations may arise where, to accomplish their mission, characters will need to take a chance at Corruption. Things like disguising oneself to look like another might involve needing to take a part of that person against their will. Players can make Communications rolls to see if they can convince that person to give up some hair to the cause. They can make a Stealth roll to see if they can sneak something from the person. Or they can attack the person outright and take a finger or whatever would suit their needs. If it wasn't given, the flavor will come through in the final soup.

## How to Use Stone Soup Magic

Unlike most Whisper Paths, Recipes require physical items to be cooked in some kind of pot. The magic happens while the ingredients cook down and change form. This Path is not well-suited for use in the heat of battle. Because they are different, and sometimes unpredictable, the steps to cast a Recipe are unique. Once players agree there is an opportunity to use Stone Soup magic, the caster sets up their pot and declares which Recipe they will prepare. The player must also add at least one card, face down, to the "pot." This stack of cards will determine the degree of success and possible side effects of the soup. Players willing to assist in the ritual add any number of cards to the pot, face down, according to their characters' personality, motivation, Corruption, and what they have at their disposal. It may be appropriate for players to describe what their characters are contributing and why, similar to The Journey. If there are NPCs present, the Narrator may add up to 3 face down cards from the deck, to represent their contributions to the Stone Soup.

Once all cards have been added to the pot, it is time to see what they have cooked up. The caster shuffles and then reveals all the cards in the pot. Each Recipe has a required card to get the magic started called the "stone." If the pot contains the stone and at least one other card, the Recipe is a success! Now, check the "volume" of the soup, that is, the total number of all pips on all cards in the pot. Face cards and aces count as 10. Jokers have a special function in Stone Soup Recipes and are ignored for now. If the volume of the soup is less than 10, it is only a minimal success and the Recipe's normal effect is dampened in some way. Perhaps the weapons created only last a few hours, or the healing is not as much as expected. Between 10 and 29 pips means eating the soup provides the normal effect. If the volume is 30 or more, the brew has unexpected potency! Perhaps it provides additional benefits, or the effects are permanent in some way. If the caster does not like the results of the pot, they do have a final chance to change the result by either sacrificing ranks of Brawn or Guts, or by rolling their Whisper skill. The caster may adjust the soup with one method or the other, but not both. Each sacrificed rank or rolled success adds one pip to the pot—caster chooses either red or black. The color of the pips the caster adds is important.

Next, check the energy balance of the soup. Red pips are beneficial energy or intention, while black pips are potentially corrupting. If the pot is more than half black, any character who drinks the soup must also draw for Corruption. If the pot is all black pips, whoever drinks it must draw for Corruption twice. The presence of the red joker makes all the cards in the pot red, while the black joker means all the cards are black. If both jokers are in the same pot, they cancel each other out, but something else very weird is bound to happen.

Finally, each character present may decide to eat the Stone Soup or not. This is a separate choice from contributing cards. If they eat, they willingly become the victim of the spell and suffer any impact from possible corruption. If they choose to abstain, nothing happens.



### Steps of Casting a Stone Soup Recipe:

- Choose Recipe.
- Caster starts the pot with a card.
- All Characters (and the Narrator) may contribute to the pot.
- Shuffle, then reveal pot.
- Check for the stone: the stone and any other card means the Recipe succeeded.
- Check volume of soup: <10 effect is minimal, 10-29 effect is normal, 30+ unexpected potency.
- Caster may roll or take damage to add volume.
- Check color of soup: if more than half black, everyone will take a chance of Corruption.
- Characters choose to eat and apply effects if they do.

**Nourishing Minestrone:** (Stone - Heart) A filling mix of seasonal meats and vegetables. At least one item in each spoonful has an unpleasant texture. Those who finish a bowl heal all their attributes to full and cleanse their body of disease. Potent effects may include attributes increases, regrowth of severed limbs, and other healthful benefits.

**Fortifying Broth:** (Stone - Diamond) A thick, meaty broth with only a slight aftertaste of motor oil. Those who drink the broth gain 4 Armor for one day. Potent effects may include immunity to specific types of damage, protection from the environment, and other sorts of shielding.

**Weapons Stock:** (Stone - Spade) The result is thin, virtually tasteless, and full of greasy flecks. Anyone who looks through the sickly liquid can see weapons resting on the bottom of the pot but nothing is really there until they consume the stock. Then, whomever helped finish the stock will be able to draw a fully functional Melee or Firearm type weapon from the pot (see *Never Going Home*, page 11). Potent effects may include more powerful weapons, explosives or other needed matériel.

**Withering Gruel:** (Stone - Club) A gloppy mess with a faint bitter smell. This poisonous concoction is served with or mixed into other foods to sap strength and break will. Those who consume the Gruel have all their attributes reduced by one rank (to a minimum of 1) until they eat an uncontaminated meal. Since this pot is generally prepared for someone other than a player character, if the pot is more than half black, anyone who takes the Gruel intending to use it must draw for Corruption. Potent effects may include greater attribute reduction, a death-like coma, or other weakening.

**Prismatic Borscht:** (Stone - face card) A soup so deeply and oddly colored, it seems to contain visions of strange faces in every bubble. Those who consume it are physically changed to resemble another person for up to one day. If already transformed in some way, their true form is revealed. Potent effects may include permanent appearance alterations, invisibility, or other strange physical changes.

**Sacred Nectar:** (Stone - Ace) The scent of flowers rolls from the pot and thick sweetness hangs in the air above this golden liquid. Finishing a cup of the too-sweet Nectar heals 1 point of Corruption. Potent effects may include glimpses of the future, temporary protection from monsters, or other surprising good fortune.

**To Mikel Elin, Petrograd  
From Taya Orlov, Petrograd**

22 August 1916

Mikel-

The Tsarina grows frightened. Grigori tells her to trust in him, but his power is weakening. If he falls, we will need to make other arrangements. Have you seen one of the Others? Grigori swears they will appear to us when the time is right. He's been wrong before, but since they came-Mikel, he's been right about everything. Doesn't it scare you? It scares me.

Meet me at our safe location as discussed. I have the documents you seek.

Taya

## Whisper Path: Bone Chills (Brawn)

Bone Chills is a Whisper Path of entropy, of energy dissipating, of the long and unending dark. Casters drain the energy and life force of themselves and everyone around them, letting it flow into the realm of the Others where it is consumed utterly. It is one of cold and of ice, first learned on the Russian steppes but, with each winter and cold snap, knowledge spreads further and faster.

Use of this Whisper Path lowers the temperature and the light of the surrounding area for a moment. For each Bone Chill, a caster must take 1 damage to Brawn or draw for Corruption. This sacrifice counts as one automatic success. Most chills succeed automatically and do not require a skill roll. However, the caster may want additional success to activate augments. To get these additional successes, they may roll or take additional Brawn damage themselves, or allies may take the damage (one point of damage per success). Additional damage may be taken before or after rolling the dice.

**Treat with Father Winter:** Those on the front lines have already learned how to deal with the shifting weather that has long hindered them. By necessity, they have learned how to use the whispers to shift the winds around them, tweaking them and otherwise guiding them to cover an advance, or to spare them from the worst of the brunt that the weather throws at them.

The caster makes a Whisper skill roll with a TN equal to the current level of weather. On a success, they move the weather up or down a level. On a failure, they draw for Corruption.

**Frigid Unlife:** The flow of blood is cooled and frozen, sealing wounds and forcing bones and organs back into their proper place. Target heals 3 Brawn damage but cannot be healed beyond their maximum. If more than 3 damage is healed, the target also draws for Corruption.

+1 healing (1), +1 target (1)

**Darkened Tempest:** By sacrificing a measure of their own heat to serve as an appetizer, the caster can cause a localized storm of ice and cold. The caster may maintain Tempest by forfeiting their action to concentrate and taking 1 damage to any Attribute of their choice. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster wishes. As long as the storm exists, it counts as a weapon with the following stats: 2 Damage - +1 Damage (1), Fragmentation (1) and the caster may attack anyone in the combat with a Whisper skill roll.

**Wizened Hoarfrost:** The caster covers themselves or an ally in thick frost and ice, giving temporary armor. Their flesh appears cold and dead, frozen solid to the touch despite the fact it still moves. The target takes 1 Brawn damage and gains 4 Armor which lasts until destroyed or until end of combat.

+2 Armor (2)

**Frozen Iron:** The caster lowers the temperature around them, focusing on weapons, vehicles, and other instruments. This whisper targets Guts. Equipment held by the victim becomes increasingly cold and difficult to wield, reducing any damage dealt by the victim by 1 for as many consecutive rounds as the caster's current Guts.

-1 damage (2), Fragmentation (3)

**Polar Vortex:** The caster opens themselves to the torrential forces of the Others and energy is sucked through a hole in reality which intersects with the caster themselves. Wind howls and roars, leaving only the caster unharmed. This Whisper targets everyone involved in combat except the caster. The caster makes one Whispers skill roll that is compared to each

target's Brawn Defense and deals 1 damage to each target which becomes a victim. The caster may maintain Polar Vortex by forfeiting their action to concentrate and taking 1 damage to any Attribute of their choice. This may be done for as many consecutive rounds as the caster wishes.

+1 Damage (2)

**To Valeri Litvin, Russian Front, Czernowitz, Bukovina  
From Sasha Litvin, Petrograd**

5 September 1916

Valeri,

I know what Pietr's wife wrote to be true. We have seen unrest like never before here in the city. You may lack supplies at the front, but it's not because we are keeping them here at home. Times are hard, and all the government seems to say about it is that war brings hard times for everyone. You had better be right about your victory over Austria. I don't think we can afford to wait for good news. We need to find a way out. Valeri, I'm scared of what will happen to me, and to little Olga. My cousin has offered for us to stay with her in the country, but how I will get to her, I don't know.

There is another woman I know, another soldier's wife, who says her husband has also written to her of the creatures in the woods of Rumania. I know you find it silly, but there are dark forces in the world that create such dark creatures. How do you explain witches, and vampyres, and werewolves? The woods where you are now are known to house such creatures. Be careful, Valeri. If Pietr has seen these things, heed his warnings. I would hate to think of anything happening to you.

However, it occurs to me that maybe what Pietr has seen are not the creatures out of our legends and nightmares, but something else entirely. The woman I mentioned before—Marinka—she claims her brother Mikel has mixed himself up with some sort of Wizards. They say Rasputin is one of them too, and that they are here in the city, on a dark errand. Is any of this tied to the news from France? Could the creatures in the Carpathians be the same creatures we read about in the papers? Marinka says so. Her husband, Feodor, he says he's seen them too; other beings from somewhere else who make promises they don't intend to keep. Marinka says one of them is in the palace, but others say he's only a man, a wizard, or a mystic. Who really knows?

Don't laugh at these things, husband. I know what you would say if you were here. Just be careful, Valeri. Stay out of the woods, for my sake. For Olga's sake.

Love,  
Sasha

## Narrator's Dossier

### **The Breath of Father Winter**

Long has the Russian strategy included General Winter in their planning. Few places have winters as brutal as the Russian lands. Soldiers on the front-line wake during the winter to find that they can barely move as their long coats have all but turned to wood. They are frozen stiff from the freezing cold.

Both the Russian soldiers and those who would face them have to battle Father Winter as often as they face the enemy soldiers. Countless whispers and others find their way through the blustering snows and the unrelenting cold. Ice forms in beards and eyebrows, any food or drink is inevitably consumed nearly frozen. Soldiers taking solace in the warm embrace of liquor must be careful lest the not yet frozen liquid prove to be colder than they can handle and give them frostbite inside their mouth and throat.

Weather ebbs and flows, and the reality is that the best way to deal with weather is most often to avoid it, securing oneself in the safety of buildings from the gale that thrashes the battlefield. Few have this option, however, and must instead deal with the weather head-on.

### **The Coming Storm**

In game terms, there are four levels of weather that can affect the soldiers who find themselves fighting against it and their enemies. They can be interacted with by both the Narrator, and by soldiers who can use Whispers to treat with Father Winter. Whenever they are raised or fallen, they move up or down a level, based upon the numbers in parentheses below.

**On a new day, the Narrator can choose to change the weather level by one without spending a card.**

#### **Moderate Weather (0)**

The weather is cold, but bearable. The soldiers can bear with it, even if they are not thrilled with the situation. Complaining and challenges still abound, but they are not forced to deal with the weather conspiring against them.

**No change to the rules.**

#### **Bad Weather (1)**

The weather has turned foul, cold, and threatening to hinder the actions of all who feel cold. All those who can feel cold, that is they are human and lack appropriate warm-weather clothing, act after those who have some sort of protection from the cold.

**The Narrator draws an additional card for Journeys.**

#### **Brutal Weather (2)**

Snow falls and whirls about you, and visibility has dropped precipitously. The weather has turned cold and all are freezing. Extremities turn numb, skin catches and freezes to exposed metal.

As above, and all figures with armor count as having an additional armor from the lack of visibility against all ranged attacks. In addition, any rolls for detecting sneaking or other factors that the Narrator feels would be otherwise impeded by the lack of visibility and the swirling snow at +1 TN.

#### **Horrendous Weather (3)**

The weather is amongst the worst that it has ever been. Exposed skin threatens to freeze in mere moments, pure ethanol separates from liquor and oil freezes solid. It seems as though the winds themselves scream in pain. Soldiers can see barely any distance in front of them and are sure to become lost without some form of guidance.

As above, and any who can feel cold and lack appropriate clothing take 1 damage on each of their turns to an attribute of their choice. In addition, staying

out in the cold when there is any way of avoiding it requires the character in question to make a special Athletics roll modified by Guts instead of Brawn TN equal to the current weather level. Failure means they must also draw for Corruption to stay out in the cold when they could retreat. This applies to any situation wherein there is an option to head to safety or another way to avoid the worst of the weather.

### **Weather Options**

There are a few other mechanical effects that further interact with and change how weather works. These options largely change the current weather, making it worse or better to seem to conspire against the players and their efforts.

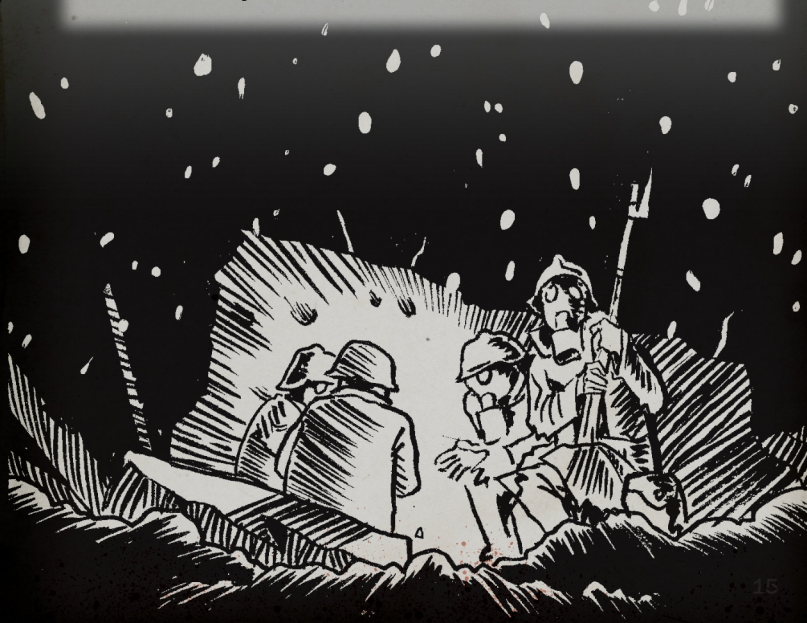
### **Additional Corruption Effect**

**Change in the Weather:** The weather can be raised or lowered a level.

**Cost:** 1

### **Independent Whisper**

**Listening to the Wind:** Any soldier who has served their time in Russia knows that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Any character who has experienced Brutal Weather (2) or worse may spend any card to gain this "pathless" Whisper with one point of training. *Listening to the Wind* allows the caster to know what the weather will be like the day in advance. They may roll this Whisper, modified by Smarts: TN 1. On a success, they find out what the weather will be like the following day. The Narrator may still make Corruption spends or adjust the weather during the current day, but changes will be wiped away and the weather will come to match the weather this Whisper reveals.



## Valeri Litvin's Diary

6 September 1916

We halt. There is something in the forest that disturbs the officers to the point of paralysis. They've sent scouts ahead of us, but they never return. I've been chosen to lead another patrol in the morning. I do not like my odds.

### Grigori Rasputin

Grigori Rasputin was born in a small town in Western Siberia. He lived in relative poverty in his village until he was banished for several crimes. Rasputin had been accused multiple times over the past few years by several different people. He drowned himself in alcohol for many years. Rasputin was brought before trial and his accusers spoke of his actions against them which included theft, rape, and fighting. No longer able to ignore his actions or make further excuses for him, his town told him to leave or be jailed.

He went off to travel the land and tried to discover where his place was within the world. He had always been a religious man but had never felt the presence of his God. Rasputin sought out his god through many different underground cults within the Empire. He submerged himself in sex, drugs, and prayer to try to awaken his spirituality and power. Rasputin started to hear the Whispers while in drug-induced prayer and their call for him to start acting on their behest. He believed the Whispers were from God and he used them to start learning dark magic. These magical powers are seemingly gifts, and Rasputin believes it is his duty to use them to enact God's will. He was gifted with the ability to heal the body, which actually slowly corrupted those he helped.

Rasputin continued his travels around Russia, seeking any enlightenment he could through various acts of depravity. As he traveled, the Whispers grew louder and louder, pushing him to travel to the capital. The calling was so intense it nearly drove him mad. He walked on foot through the wilderness to the capital in hopes of finding his greater purpose.

His greater purpose came in the form of a young prince who suffered from hemophilia, a condition where his body was unable to stop any bleeding. It was painful and every bump or bruise would cause him agony for weeks. The child was not just a prince, but Tsesarevich, heir to the Russian throne. The doctors offered little in the way of easing his pain, and Tsarina Alexandra was desperate to help her child. Her prayers were answered when Rasputin traveled to the palace, and his mere presence around the child stopped his crying. This small miracle in the eyes of the Tsarina was enough to earn her trust implicitly.

With his influence secured with the royal family, Rasputin continued to make his mark upon the ruling class in this new city. Aside from his correspondences and private sessions with the Tsarina, he would also offer guidance to the wealthy and ruling classes. He convinced them it was better to act in depravity and ask for forgiveness, then never to have anything to atone for in life.

Rasputin is an imposing individual with piercing blue eyes. He seems to stare off at things unseen, claiming to be listening to god. He wears the robes of a clergyman but is rarely seen in the church. The people he surrounds himself with seem oblivious to the general aura of unease when people get too close. While he first believed his visions came from God, he eventually discovered the truth that the Whispers come from powerful Others beyond the Veil. Rasputin believes these beings are the inspiration behind all religion.

Rasputin enjoys being the center of attention and will try to manipulate social gatherings so the focus stays on him. He uses this attention to gather power for himself and has manipulated so many royal court members to be under his influence in multiple ways. He uses this to keep everyone's focus away from what he is really doing.

Rasputin has embraced his abilities to listen to the Whispers and calls of the Others throughout Russia. He is hoping to continue to learn more about these abilities and to explore his connections to the Others.

Rasputin has a very intense demeanor when he is speaking, though will appear friendlier with those he trusts or controls. Since he can sense if someone is Corrupted, he will focus harder on those he does not yet hold influence over, trying to gain that advantage over everyone around him.

### Grigori Rasputin

Type: Solo                      Initiative Value: J    Armor: 4

Brawn: 4                      Smarts: 7                      Guts: 6

Weapons: None

#### Skills/Abilities:

- Melee [X] [X] [X] [X] [ ]
- Communication [X] [X] [X] [X] [X] [X]
- Knowledge [X] [X] [X] [X] [X]
- Investigation [X] [X] [X] [X] [ ]
- Whispers [X] [X] [X] [X] [X] [X]

Knows all Whispers from the Old Ways and Healing Words Paths.

- Pull of Corruption (Smarts) [X] [X] [X] : Rasputin can use an individual's Corruption to influence their actions. A targeted NPC with at least 1 Corruption will automatically follow his directions. For targeted PCs, if they have no Corruption, the attack automatically fails. If they have at least 1 Corruption, this attack targets Smarts and the TN is reduced by 1 for each Corruption the character has. If successful, Rasputin can influence the victim to feel favorable toward him and may force the victim to immediately make an action of his choice (the victim still makes their own action on their turn).

- Voices of the Mad (Smarts) [X] [X] [X] [X] : By reaching out toward the Veil, Rasputin can listen to the Whispers of Others, understand their drive, and locate all supernatural Antagonists within 1 mile (1.6 km). Additionally, he may call them to assist or defend him. This Whisper targets Guts and gives Rasputin a certain amount of control over the creature for a number of rounds equal to the number of successes beyond the victim's Guts. The allies enter combat the next round.

+1 target (2)

- Unravel (Guts) [X] [X] [X] : This ability allows the caster to place a curse upon the target by utilizing the Corruption that an individual has. If the target is an NPC, the caster succeeds as long as they have at least 1 Corruption. If the target is an PC, this attack targets Guts. If successful, the target must reroll (just once) all successes on the next 3 rolls they make.

- Aura of Corruption: This ability is always active. Rasputin's power has slowly become corrupted and is spreading very quickly. Any individual that Rasputin has used a Whisper on must draw for Corruption. Any individual that has interacted with Rasputin must take a chance at Corruption. He is also able to tell if an individual has Corruption and if it was from him.

- Invulnerable: Rasputin ignores all Brawn damage dealt to him.

Weakness: If Rasputin is standing in water, he loses the Invulnerable ability and instead takes double damage from all Brawn damage.

Reward: Everyone involved in the combat draws 2 cards and keeps 1. Out of the cards discarded, choose half and distribute them to the group.



**To Aleksei Brusilov, Russian Front, Bukovina  
From Dmitry Shuvayev, Petrograd**

7 September 1916

Brusilov,

Your last report was not promising. Press your advance where you can but keep your soldiers safe. We don't need any more negative perception of the war. Your victories over the summer have done nothing to stifle the dissent against the war and the Tsar. Don't waste your soldiers on whatever it is that's hiding in the Carpathians. Go around if need be. We must continue to push back the Austrians to their own borders. If, as you claim, you can't advance through the forest, surely the Austrians will have found another way round as well.

Shuvayev

### **Blood on the Snow Campaign Dossier**

The six missions of *Blood on the Snow* form a single story centered on Russian soldiers escaping the immediate threats of the Eastern Front, only to find the ancient dangers of the Russian countryside are just as dangerous. As the missions progress the characters learn more than the average soldier about what is happening behind the scenes of the war effort. Some of the missions could be dropped, or skipped, or replaced with others, and others may be added, but these missions should be played in the order presented as they progressively draw the characters into deeper contact with the darkness at the heart of Russian power.

Since the events of this Dossier take place after the Veil between worlds was torn open during the Battle of the Somme in summer 1916, the Whispers of the Others and the magic they provide are a common part of the setting. Given the strong folkloric traditions of Russia, Whispers are more common among the general population than elsewhere in Europe and perhaps the characters will be more willing to learn Whispers than other soldiers. The political tensions between Tsarist loyalists, liberal reformers and socialist revolutionaries (including the Bolsheviks) form part of the background of several missions but are rarely the focus of events. Instead, the Unit's connection to Grigori Rasputin and his connection to the Others form the central thread throughout the missions. After "Visions and Monsters" the characters are assumed to be on speaking terms with Rasputin. They may or may not like him, but they know each other.

Throughout the campaign, the players will be shifted from military post to post as they continue to encounter living folklore in far-flung corners of the Russian Empire and as they move closer to the center of power in the capital. These transfers are described in the Conclusion and Mission Briefing sections of each mission. If not playing through all the missions, accelerate the Unit's promotions to move them to the center of events even faster.



#### When is That on the Calendar?

Unlike most of Europe, the Russian Empire had not yet adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1916. They used the older, less accurate, Julian calendar and Russian dates were therefore 13 days behind the rest of Europe. For example, the February Revolution of 1917, which forced the Tsar from power, began on International Women's Day which was February 23 according to Old Style, but which was March 8 in the New Style. All the dates used in this Dossier are Old Style dates.

To Taya Orlov, Petrograd  
From Mikel Elin, Petrograd

7 September 1916

Taya,

I have studied the documents. There is nothing more here than what was in the Book. I hope the price you paid was not too high, as it has bought us nothing.

Grigori came to see me last night. He was agitated. If we don't find an answer soon, I'm afraid all our work will be undone. Neither you nor I has power equal to his, and I wouldn't want it, if it made me more like he has become. There must be a way to fight the corruption that overtakes us. Keep searching, as will I.

Mikel

## Mission 1: Honorable Retreat?

### Crystal Mazur

#### Mission Briefing

When the Brusilov Offensive began in June 1916, it was a well-planned attempt to regain control over the Eastern front. On the surface, it ended as a victory for those in charge because it used tactics not previously used effectively. Other generals did not support this offensive even if they supported the Tsar. Tsar Nicholas made the decision to allow Brusilov to execute his plan. Even with the approval of the plan, there were portions that were not supported, and therefore were not able to be carried out.

Archduke Josef Ferdinand was almost caught in the city of Lutsk because of the offensive. The swift movement of troops and the early seeming victory was all it took to convince the Russian Empire to continue to push their military. All the pieces started to fall into place as the offensive carried on.

On the front lines, there were major losses in the Russian Empire. The Brusilov Offensive was a deadly one on both sides and by late August, many of the Russian troops resorted to retreating against orders.

#### Part 1

#### Mission Objective

Orders have been given to press onward with the offensive. With many casualties, the soldiers around you are questioning whether they should keep going or retreat. After seeing one of your friends be shot down, you question whether to stay and fight or retreat.

#### The Journey

You must make your way through the cold fields to the city of Lutsk and out of the front lines.

**Requirement:** 2 Spades (for overcoming obstacles) and 1 Diamond (hope)

**Question:** Do you wish to stay and fight or retreat against orders?

**Failure:** Before you can decide, you are ordered to go off to the front lines and fight. You will have to fight 4 **Common Soldiers**.

## Incidents

**Retreat Through the Woods:** There is a cluster of woods off in the distance. If you are careful, you will be able to make it to that cluster and retreat easily. Roll Athletics: TN 3 to get there quickly.

**Avoid Patrols:** Even if the trees allow you to escape the battlefield, it does not shield you from the patrols going around behind the lines. Roll Stealth: TN 2 to get around any patrols moving in the area. If you fail, one of the Russian patrols catches you. If you wish to talk your way out, make a Communications: TN 2 roll. If unsuccessful, the group is either detained or attacked.

**Sounds in the Dark:** The night comes quickly as you move through the forest and finding shelter doesn't seem like an easy task. You start to hear howling in the distance and realize there are wolves coming at you. You have 5 wolves tracking you through the forest. You can try to outrun them, or you can stand your ground and fight (use **War Dogs**).

**Lost:** The forest turns out to be much more confusing than you realize after the fight with the wolves, and you get turned around. With the light of the morning shining through the tree branches, you realize you cannot figure out which direction you need to travel. Roll Investigation: TN 2 as you wander around trying to figure out which direction leads to Lutsk. If successful, the group makes their way to the city of Lutsk. If the roll is unsuccessful, go to **Hut in the Woods**.

**Hut in the Woods:** After wandering through the woods for most of the morning, you come across an old hut in the woods. Walking up the path, you see the dismembered parts of chickens strewn about the walkway. Upon closer inspection inside, you see the hut has been ransacked and there is blood splattered across the floor. You see no bodies inside. An Investigation: TN 3 will give you some other contents within the hut. You find a satchel filled with pungent herbs, a small notebook filled with what looks like prayers, a map of the local area which you can use to get to the city. The prayer book looks like a bunch of handwritten prayers to a folktale figure you knew from stories growing up called a Baba Yaga, the old woman in the woods. You also find claw marks leading up to a rug on the floor. After lifting the rug, you see there is a trap door. When opening it, you smell the rot and hear a noise. When you look down inside you see what first appears like an old woman living down there. As she screams and lunges at you, you realize quickly it is anything but. You have found a **Baba Yaga**. An inhuman scream escapes its lips as it lunges to attack you.

### Decoration

If everyone survives, draw a card. If the **Hut in the Woods** incident took place, every player gets the card back they played for the Journey.

## Part 2

### Mission Briefing

The city of Lutsk is filled with other Russian units either traveling through to the front lines or staying at the city helping to keep it secured. As you wander into the city, weary from your travels through the forest, you get stopped by one of the patrols who question your orders. They take you in to speak with the commanding officer in the area, doubtful of your intentions. The officer and armed guards escort you to a small house in the city. It looks like it has been furnished to be a headquarters for the officers and has several individuals having various conversations in the entry room. You are taken to a back room and made to wait for several hours with armed guards outside the door. The door swings open and the same officer who detained you walks in and sits down. You convince the officer that you are supposed to be in the city. They are hesitant to accept this at first, but soon give you

tasks to complete. You've made the first steps toward earning the trust of the officers around you. There is plenty of work around the city to prove yourself useful. Or you can always try to lie your way to the top.

### **Mission Objective**

Trust is hard-earned, especially in the military. Earn the trust of your new commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Nickolay, to get transferred to a better assignment. Collect information to pass on to your officers.

### **The Journey**

There is lots of work to be done in the jumble of incoming and outgoing troops in this city. Supplies are moving, wounded are being tended to, and talk is loose everywhere. Many here are just like you, technically deserters, looking to make themselves as useful as possible.

**Requirement:** 1 of each suit or 1 Joker

**Question:** What lies are you willing to tell to get your way? What task are you willing to perform to get reassigned?

**Success:** A total of 5 tasks need to be completed to get reassigned. For each suit played, consider 1 task completed. If all 4 suits are played, that just leaves 1 task to be completed. If the Joker is played, consider all tasks completed and the group gets lucky and is pulled in to be reassigned. The Narrator gets to pick the incidents. You will either succeed or die trying.

**Failure:** The group must complete all 6 tasks.

### **Incidents**

**A Spy in the City:** You go on out in patrol and to help secure the city from any possible incursions that may break through the front lines. The Lieutenant Colonel informs you there is the possibility of a spy and tells you to go investigate.

You wander throughout the city looking for individuals who look like they might be out of place. If you are successful in an Investigation: TN 3, you notice there are four other individuals in town who look out of place. When you approach them, they start to run. An Athletics: TN 2 roll for each one will let you keep up with them. Each success allows you to catch one of the culprits. If you catch them, you find out they are with the Ottoman Empire. You can either take them into custody and take them back to headquarters or fight them. You will need to speak to each of them and determine who is the spy. You are given a room at central headquarters to do your questioning and each individual is brought to you.

(Narrator: They must roll either Investigation: TN 2 or Communications: TN 3 to determine if the suspect is guilty or not. Upon a failed roll, it will either be unclear, or they will come to the wrong conclusions.)

**Field Usher Jan:** Field Usher Jan, a non-commissioned officer, informs you he has been in the city for only 2 days. He is unable to account for his whereabouts the few days beforehand and informs you he woke up in the forest outside of the Lutsk. He hasn't seen much active duty and has been on escort duty lately, which he enjoys. (Narrator: Officer Jan is innocent. Any further investigation in his missing time in the forest would reveal he was in Baba Yaga's hut for several days, but nothing further. He appears very traumatized by the event.)

**Private Karosef:** Private Karosef has a tough time focusing during the interview and shifts in their seat a lot. They seem to have their mind on the front line battles currently going on and want to get back to the action as quickly as possible. They were sent here for supplies and got waylaid by the weather. They can provide surprisingly accurate details about their time on the battlefield, the travel to Lutsk, and their time in the city. (Narrator: Private Karosef is innocent. They are young and enjoy the battlefield, which comes across as anxious and unfocused.)

**Private Rassmussen:** Private Rassmussen has been in town for about a week and traveled from behind the battle lines to get here. She is on her way to another assignment further west and needed to stop for a few days. She has not received any new orders from her commanding officer and seems to be disinterested in answering questions, stating she has better things to do with her time. (Narrator: Private Rassmussen is innocent.)

**Under Lieutenant Massorski:** Massorski seems to have no trouble detailing his exact whereabouts and what times he was in areas. He can tell exactly what orders he has and who gave them to him, however, you do not recognize the name. He does have trouble with the names of other officers in the city. (Narrator: Under Lieutenant Massorski is the spy sent from the Ottoman Empire to the city to try to uncover the battle plans for the Brusilov Offensive.)

Once the questioning is done, the characters must decide who is the spy. Anyone they determine to be the spy is taken immediately and executed. If they correctly identified the spy, their officer will inform them of how impressed he is with them.

**Rumors Abound:** While walking around the city, you overhear a conversation about the need for a military detail for the palace in the Russian capital. A successful Investigation: TN 3 also lets you overhear that the military detail will get a bump in pay as well as not have to fight in the front lines of the war.

**Snitches Get Stitches:** You decide you are going to lie to Lieutenant Colonel Nickolay about other soldiers outside of your detail. You report the smallest infractions to him to gain some sort of leverage or lie about other soldiers. Each character will make some sort of accusation against another soldier (it can be against another character or not). (Narrator: For each accusation, roll 1 D6. On a 4-6 another lie is believed)

**Forgery:** You decide your best course of action is to forge documents agreeing to your transfer out of Lutsk. You must first obtain an official letterhead from Nickolay to make it look official. You remember seeing these papers on his desk and must break into his office to get them. They may also want to take something handwritten to follow his penmanship for the forgery. This may be done using any set of skills the group wishes to use to get in. Once the letterhead is obtained, someone must forge the orders. This may also be done in a variety of ways. To forge a believable document, they may attempt any skill roll (TN 2).

**Malfunction:** Your commanding officer is curious about the state of the equipment being used by the soldiers. He asks you to visit the armory and do an inspection of the weaponry as well as any safety equipment they have on hand. He gives you an official inspection document to hand over once you get there.

You travel for a day by vehicle to the armory and are granted access because of the written order provided by your officer. You begin your inspection and quickly realize the equipment being used is in extremely poor condition. Asking around the armory informs you that many of the soldiers are unhappy with what they are forced to use in the field. Several ask for upgraded weapons.

There is no sugarcoating what your inspection yielded. You must make your report to your officer shortly after you return.

(Narrator: there are no required rolls for this scenario unless they choose to lie to their officer. You may have them make rolls at your discretion. You may use any of their skills to help them gain additional insight for their report. When the report is given, the officer is not happy and may even try to ignore suggestions, stating the equipment is fantastic and they are being unreasonable. While the officer does not like the report, it does not reflect poorly on them unless they lie. If they choose to lie, the officer will seem pleasantly surprised and generally agreeable unless the officer catches them in a lie. If he does, they fail this and must complete another Incident.)

**Blackmail:** The option of blackmailing your officer does come into your head. You can try to follow your officer with a Stealth: TN 3 around town. On a failed roll, you do not notice anything out of the ordinary with their journey. On a success, you watch as he meets up with someone in a cafe to talk. An Investigation: TN 2 informs you there is an exchange of money and an envelope that the other person takes. If you get more successes than the required target number, you also hear them speaking Hungarian to each other.

If you decide to take this information back to your officer to bribe him with, make a special Communications roll modified by Guts instead of Smarts: TN 3 in order to intimidate your officer into providing a transfer for you.

### **Conclusion**

With the required number of incidents complete, Lieutenant Colonel Nickolay will allow them to transfer out of the city. He tells them he is sending them to a Major-General Zverkov, who is looking for some loyal soldiers just like them. Nickolay seems pleased, but it is impossible to say if the joke is on Zverkov or the Unit. They may move onto the next mission.

### **Decoration**

- Everyone draws 1 card.
- Anyone who entered The Hut in the Woods draws an additional card.
- If the Unit uncovered the Ottoman spy during “A Spy in the City,” they may draw and split 2 additional cards.

## **Antagonists**

### **Baba Yaga**

Nobody really knows how it happens, but sometimes one of the Others rises above the level of a ravaging monster. This power comes from humans worshipping them, which varies depending on the region; and the Other will reflect the vision shared by the worshipers in what it will personify. This worship gives the Other the ability to conspire, it grows in power, and can command certain Others.

Baba Yaga is one of the first to accomplish this. The stories of Baba Yaga have terrified Russian children for centuries, and there are plenty who see Baba Yaga as an entity worthy of worship or at least rituals invoking that name. Baba Yaga’s skin looks similar to bark; cracked, and misshapen with thin wisps of hair on her head. Her face is elongated, her mouth opens in a perpetual scream, sharp teeth protruding over dried and cracked lips. Her limbs are stretched thin, her hands ending in long, pointed fingers. Her typical minions include Leshen, Skin Thieves, Ravens, and Hive Rats.

Baba Yaga is rumored to lure anyone wandering through her woods to her cabin with the smell of her cooking. From there, she usually keeps them under her floorboards, before using them as part of her magic. She can use them for divination, where she is able to predict the future. She also enjoys eating those she captures, even cooking elaborate meals for any who happen to visit her hut.

There are rumors of multiple Baba Yaga out in the vast wilderness. Caution is advised.

### **Valeri Litvin’s diary**

3 October 1916

Sasha’s monsters are real. I don’t know if she would be pleased to know this or not.

I’m wounded, but I’m alive. At least I am alive.

## Baba Yaga

Type: Solo

Initiative: 10

Armor: Varies (see below)

Brawn: 4

Smarts: 4

Guts: 5

Weapons: Claws: 1 damage - +1 damage (1), Flurry (2)

### Skills/Abilities:

- Athletics
- Stealth
- Communications
- Old Ways

Knows all Whispers from the Old Ways Path.

- Criticism (Smarts)  : Shouting a piercingly insightful insult, Baba Yaga cuts into a character's will to live. This attack targets Guts. Victims suffer 1 Guts damage and the Stun effect.

- Worshiped: This ability is always active. For each group who regularly make offerings to Baba Yaga, she gains +1 Armor. This is typically 1D3+1.

- Divination: This ability is always active. At the beginning of each combat, the Narrator draws three cards from the deck for Baba Yaga. During combat, each card may be discarded any time to either 1) cancel a character's action (including any dice rolled) and force the character to choose a new action (they may choose the same action again), or 2) automatically escape from the fight in her flying mortar, or 3) use one of the Corruption Effects without spending Corruption (from Book of Whispers, page 32).

Weakness: Baba Yaga can be bargained with. She is willing to make deals and work her magic in exchange for chores, supplies, and food. She feels bound to keep her word once given, though she may try to twist the intention of any words agreed upon.

Reward: The Unit draws and shares 4 cards.

## **Telegram to Dmitry Shuvayev, Petrograd From Aleksei Brusilov, Russian Front, Bukovina**

5 October 1916

Final reconnaissance complete STOP Lost all but one soldier STOP Talks nonsense of evil spirits and werewolves STOP He is mad STOP Hate to lose another man but he is not fit to even stand STOP Can't move west STOP Could march south but will take weeks STOP Better to stay here and secure Czernowitz STOP I will await orders STOP

## Mission 2: Long and Cold Road

**Tyler Omichinski**

### **Mission Briefing**

*"Between the rumblings of the impossible from the Front Lines and the Western Front and the efforts of the Bolsheviks to overthrow the government, the Motherland is in grave trouble. Even now agents of their cause hide in Finland, continuing to spread the seeds of that foul ideology. Protests and mutinies abound, and good supporters of the Tsar can only do so much to retain the reins of power.*

*This, Soldiers, is where you come in. For Mother Russia you must make an example of what may be the worst of these mutinies. Our soldiers have been bombarding and preparing to attack Sortavala, on the border with Finland. They have ceased making regular reports. The land is part of Karelia and, thus, rightfully belongs to Mother Russia. The Finns have too long served to be a thorn in our side.*

*To make matters worse, the perfidious Germans have seeded Finland with revolutionaries to continue to weaken the resolve of the Russian people. The border must be secured lest more of the revolutionaries make their way into the country and further support the efforts of the Bolsheviks."*

- Major-General Maxim Zverkov

### **Mission Objective**

Head to the Sortavala crossing, an otherwise unnamed town that has sprung up around the Finnish border. Determine what has happened to the soldiers posted there and secure the crossing.

### **The Journey**

You are loaded up into a cold and unpleasant train car and sent north for a couple of days. It is September, but winter seems to have arrived already. The way is slow going and the train must stop with regularity to clear the track. Things go well enough as you travel, leaving you primarily to drink vodka and smoke in the train car.

As you near, things take a turn for the worst when the train stops and the train crew appear visibly shaken. They haul you out to deal with whatever has caused the latest stop. You're brought outside where you see over two dozen figures frozen solid on and around the train tracks. Each is naked and it looks as though they were running from something.

No matter what thoughts haunt you, there's little to do but to get to work cutting them down and removing them from the train tracks.

**Requirement:** One of each card suite.

**Question:** What do you think of the politics in Russia?

**Success:** The weather stays Moderate (0).

**Failure:** The weather rises two levels to Brutal (2).

### **Incidents**

**Arrival:** Arriving in town is without any of the fanfare that was expected. Whether it was arriving under a hail of gunfire or as saviors to the besieged, neither one is the result. Instead it's quiet. Eerily quiet. There are more of the frozen bodies here and there throughout the town. Looking as though they have frozen in differing stages of undress, freezing before they even managed to fall. The town of Sortavala is visible in the distance, over the Finnish border. It bristles with enemy weapons, but they are currently silent.

From here the group can investigate in any order they want. Remember the effects of the weather during this adventure (page 14).

**The Bar:** One of the few buildings that is still standing in the town center is the local drinking house. Most around it have already bowed to the unrelenting cold and storms. As soon as the group goes to investigate the Bar, the weather raises one level. The inside is filled with piles upon piles of carefully folded clothing, the clothes that were worn by all the deceased that they have passed on the way, and from the Leshen (though the Players will not know that yet).

It requires an Investigation: TN 4 to search the place or they will find themselves put off by the abandoned nature of it all.

Managing to check through the entire Bar reveals that the entire belongings of everyone in the village are here, carefully organized and cataloged. This includes numerous diaries and military reports about the increasing cold, the diminishing food, the desperation, and the whispers on the wind.

Successfully searching the Bar allows each player to draw a card. Whether they successfully investigate or not, it is easy to find a ring of keys near the doorway on the inside of the bar.

**The Mine:** The Mine is a small affair that digs into a nearby hill. It is primarily for accessing coal and has been unused since the location was cut off from Sortavala. On approach it looks utterly abandoned and barely maintained.

There's a pile of detritus in front of the entryway that requires an Athletics: TN 5 roll to move all the pieces out of the way to make a pathway inside. Clearing the way and heading deeper inside reveals that the survivors of the village have hidden themselves inside and gaunt from starvation and ravaged by frostbite. They are primarily Bolsheviks, but they claim they are not the ones who turned on the soldiers. There are a couple of soldiers with the to bolster this claim, but the canny will note that they could have just as easily turned on the others.

Successfully speaking with them and at least treating the Bolsheviks as humans worthy of respect recovers one Corruption for one soldier or gives them access to the Treat With Father Winter Whisper and they gain 1 Corruption. Only one soldier can gain the Treat With Father Winter Whisper from this encounter.

**The Border:** The border is silent with a line of artillery pointed towards Sortavala. The city has only the slightest flickering of lights but there's no sign that anyone has mounted an invasion through this crossing. In fact, Sortavala looks to be almost abandoned. There are abandoned lines of defenses on both sides, far further apart than you've seen anywhere on the front lines.

Investigating the Artillery reveals that it is long frozen to the point of uselessness. Metal has twisted and broken from changing weather and lack of maintenance. It's been a long time since it has been used.

**The Warehouse:** Having investigated everywhere else, they can see the Warehouse from the Border. If they do not have the key from the Bar, it takes a roll of Athletics: TN 6 to force the door open, or for them to use some explosives or other tools that may help. They cannot find the Warehouse without heading to the Border as it is hidden by snow, a line of trees, camouflage.

Not far off from the border is a large warehouse that seems to squat against the cold. As they go to investigate, the wind raises in a howl. **The weather raises one level.**



In the warehouse they find the remains of the soldiers huddled together in a grand mass in the center of the room. They're all naked, their skin black from frostbite, and glittering with a covering of ice and frost. Opening the door wakes it/ them and they all look towards those who have entered. Their limbs and flesh are frozen together and ice seems to flow off them. As they start to move it is apparent that the ice itself seems to flow and shift, and they all move as a single, gargantuan creature. The sound of their gibbering whispers. The **Leshen** moves towards them, begging them to share their warmth.

### **Conclusion**

Upon your return to HQ, your report of what happened at Sortavala crossing is accepted without much comment by your officers. They

don't question what you've said, not with reports of similar strange happenings coming in from soldiers in all theaters. However, they do tell you it's best for the morale of all the Russian armies for you not to repeat the story to anyone else. Major-General Zverkov, in particular, is pleased with your important work. He is fascinated by every detail of the story. He says he will make sure your names are known "at the very top."

### **Decoration**

- All survivors draw 1 card each.
- If the Unit explored both the Bar and the Mine, they may draw and split 2 additional cards.
- Fighting the Leshen and surviving (even if the Leshen is not defeated) grants each soldier involved in the combat *Wintertouched*: Once per scene, (or combat) the player may make a special Athletics roll modified by Guts instead of Brawn: TN 4. If successful, the soldier can act as though the weather is one level lower than it is.

## Antagonist

### Leshen

The Leshen were forest deities in Slavic mythology. The name was given to this creature due to the appearance of gaunt and frozen arms appearing, while running away, to be a lot like antlers growing from its head. The creature is made of dozens of former bodies, and each of them whispers and pleads for food and warmth.

### Leshen

Type: Solo

Initiative Value: 2

Armor: 4

Brawn: 6

Smarts: 4

Guts: 6

Weapons: Smash: 4 damage

Skill/Abilities:

- Melee

- Whispers

Blood Rites: Armor

Veil Calls: Blood Heist (Book of Whispers, page 12) Alternately Healing Words (Guts): Body Heal

Bone Chills: Treat With Father Winter

Elemental Rituals; Create Raggedy Doll—using one of the bodies from its larger form as the supplies required. (Book of Whispers, page 19) Alternately, the Whisper creates a Disfigured, except for Weapons it has "Scratch: 2 damage" instead of Pistol and it does not have the Vile Host ability.

- We are One (Guts)   : This attack targets Smarts. The Leshen seems to whisper directly to its victim and promises greatness and an end to pain. No damage, but the victim suffers the Stun effect.

- Join Us (Brawn)   : If there's a body that is dead nearby, the Leshen may roll Join Us: TN 4 to add the corpse to its mass.

Weakness: Takes an additional 2 damage per turn from fire.

Reward: Everyone involved in the combat draws 1 card.

### Valeri Litvin's diary

22 October 1916

There is nothing to do here in the hospital. The days are long and the pain in my leg is bad. Sasha comes to see me. I am not far from the house. She brings Olga, which is a joy, and she brightens my day, as well as the faces of the nurses and the other patients. Sometimes I have to remind her not to squeal, but she is a good girl, and knows that hospitals are for the sick and that she shouldn't be too loud.

I don't remember what happened to me in the woods, not really. I remember seeing creatures—I was sure they were wolves, but then I realized they were men. Not men, not exactly. I don't have words for what I saw. Whatever they were, they took hold of me by the leg as I fled. The doctors said I was lucky not to lose it. I don't feel lucky though. I feel crazed. Nothing makes sense. There is a fog that won't leave me, and I can't think straight. Sasha says it's the medicine and the pain.

She thinks to take me to a special healer once I'm out of here. She has mentioned this only when the nurses are not around, and only in hushed tones so that no one else can hear her. She mentioned her friend Marinka, but I'm not sure if she is who does the healing, or if Marinka knows someone who does. I won't be going anyway. I'm sure they can't heal me any more than the doctors here. If I know Sasha though, she won't let the idea die so easily. Poor Sasha; she's always seeing monsters where there are none.

## Mission 3: Visions and Monsters

**Crystal Mazur**

### **Mission Briefing**

After your assignment in Sortavala, your company of soldiers has spent time traveling to the city of Yakutsk, a city adapted to subzero temperatures most of the year. The journey here was long and arduous but what is discovered quickly becomes worrisome. Extreme weather is a central part of the life of the Russian people, but October feels like full winter here. When out in the wilderness, the cold can be worse than any monster you may come across unwillingly. With villages revolting against the monarchy and demanding representation, attempts are being made to bring about order within the chaos. Between the Others roaming the wilderness, soldiers deserting their stations, and rumors of cults have caught the notice of several military leaders. Major-General Zverkov expects you to repeat your success.

### **Part 1**

#### **Mission Objective**

Investigate the town and try to figure out if there are any organized groups planning rebellion. Keep an eye out for any soldiers who abandoned their assignments and left the service to hide in the remote town.

#### **The Journey**

The group has finished its travel to the remote town of Yakutsk with the instructions to stop any signs of rebellion against the Tsar and investigate information that at least one soldier who abandoned the army is living in secret there.

**Requirements:** 3 Clubs

**Question:** What are your feelings about the rebellion in the town? What are your feelings about the weather in the area and how it affects your mission?

**Success:** The group can gather some investigation threads to follow and can start their questioning in earnest. They meet an elderly woman in the street who offers them some food and to follow her for something warm to drink. She introduces herself as Olga Kuerroskov, a kindly woman who seems pleasant enough.

#### **Incidents**

**Questioning the Townsfolk:** As you walk through the town, you quickly notice not many individuals stand outside, and travelers quickly move from one building to another. There are several restaurants, meeting halls, and shops large enough for people to linger in are scattered around, allowing for the frozen town to socialize. There are a couple of individuals willing to talk with the soldiers, but many of the townsfolk ignore them. Any sort of intimidation is met with the person walking away immediately, even if it succeeds. If the soldiers try to intimidate or use force, add +1 TN to whatever they have when speaking with townsfolk. These people do not want anything to do with the soldiers and only tolerate their presence because they have to.

**Olga Kuerroskov:** Olga is an older woman with a frostbitten and weathered face. She is wrapped tightly in furs and hobbles around as she walks. The characters may roll any skill (TN 2) to have Olga answer their questions. On a success, she will answer only the questions asked, so information may not all get shared. Olga is aware of at least 2 soldiers hiding in town, but with an influx of some travelers, she is unsure of who it could be. She also is aware of some grumblings around the Tsar and his decisions lately. She admits she heard of Rasputin through reputation and that they should stay away from him.

**Tatyana Kyiv:** A younger woman who runs the tavern currently filled with people from around the town, Tatyana is willing to speak with the soldiers begrudgingly. If they bribe her or purchase food and drink, she is more willing to open up to them. Intimidation will not work on her, and any attempts will be met with either her or her bartender asking them to leave the restaurant. If they bribe her or buy food, she will tell them of one soldier named Boris, who rents a room in one of her buildings down the street. She knows he's been here for a few weeks but has spent much of his time helping around town, so many of the townsfolk like having him around.

**Ksina Chernyshevsky:** Ksina is also a soldier in the Russian army and has been on patrol up here by themselves. They are grateful for the help and update on any political activities recently they have missed due to the slow travel of news to the town. Ksina knows where Boris lives, but admits the town will be upset if something happens to him since Boris has proven to be a hard worker. Ksina does admit to needing assistance with another investigation when they have time.

**Boris:** Yakutsk started as a settlement and has started to grow slowly, becoming a small town in the last few years. Boris Smirnov's flat is several blocks through town, so the group needs to travel quickly through the frozen tundra to reach it. They find that Boris is not currently at his flat but has gone out to gather wood. Should the group try to get into the flat to look around, they can roll Stealth: TN 4 to lockpick the door. If they wish to smash it, then Athletics: TN 2 is sufficient. Inside, they find a soldier's uniform, official orders to report to the naval base for deployment 3 months previous, and a diary. The diary details Boris's decision to leave the service, his travel to Yakutsk. Once he came to Yakutsk, he started helping to gather supplies such as wood for building supplies or stoves of homes and businesses for the town, and do guard duty with Ksina when needed so they could take some time off, even helping to pass food to those who are sick. Boris found a place for himself in the town. Boris also talks about uncovering some sort of cult in the town but was not able to find out any more information. He has quickly proven himself an asset to the town far more than he was as a soldier.

**Gathering Wood:** The group can ask around about where the town gets their wood for their fireplaces rather easily. It is well known about the location, about a 20-minute walk through the tundra. With the temperatures far below zero, the group will face a lot of trouble even walking 20 minutes in this Bad Weather (1). Traveling in the right direction, the group can hear Boris far longer than they can see him, the *thump, thump* of an ax chopping away at wood echoing. Once they reach the edge of the woods, they hear Boris call out "Who goes there?" When he sees their uniforms, he shifts from relaxed to very nervous. He does not run or attack them, rather sets his ax down and waits for the soldiers to come closer. He calmly explains, "I know why you are here. I do not wish to return to service. I have found more fulfillment in this town than I ever found as a soldier. There are *things* out here that are a greater threat. If you are willing, we can investigate it. I will gladly help." The soldiers must now decide what they wish to do with Boris. Boris will only fight if he is attacked (use **Commando**). If he is arrested, he will not fight back.

**Rise Up:** The soldiers can overhear talks about the distrust of towards them in the town, how much they dislike the Tsar and the fact that his wife is so easily manipulated by Rasputin, and how they want to have a voice in the government. They do not want to talk with the soldiers about it and tend to get very quiet when they are around. Tension is high when the group gets near anyone. Any intimidation efforts end poorly with other townsfolk stepping in to help. This is an ongoing issue throughout the rest of this Mission.

## Decoration

Draw 3 cards and disperse among the group

**Mission Note:** Should the group decide to let Boris live and not arrest him, he will offer to accompany them as long as they remain in the Yakutsk area. If they do not want his help, Boris will continue his work around the town.

## Part 2

### Mission Objective

There are things in the dark. Scary things. Things that have grown more powerful recently. Discover what is making these things grow in power.

### The Journey

Ksina has asked for assistance in discovering the cult within the town and what it is doing. Boris has also noticed this activity and will assist if he is not arrested. Ksina explains to the group there have been attacks on townsfolk who have wandered on their own. The description of the monster given from those that survived sounds very much like a fairy tale everyone has heard of since they were a child. Anyone with a Knowledge score over 3 can recall the tale of Morozko and that children were left outside with jewels and other items of wealth as an offering to him. The children are never seen again.

**Requirement:** 2 Diamonds, 1 Club, 1 Spade

**Question:** What do you think the supernatural creature is?

**Success:** The characters can recall different fairy tales they were told as children that fit the descriptions of some of the attacks. These attacks seem to feature the same monster, a thin, pale creature that looks covered in ice.

## Incidents

**Gathering Information:** Ksina is fairly certain there is a group of townspeople who meet in the dead of night secretly, though it has been hard to prove it. With the extreme cold, it is hard for them to stand outside patrolling for very long, so something looking to remain unseen can move easily at night. Ksina proposes to post guards around town and shift to keep from freezing. They create a plan which seemingly would cover the whole town for most of the night if followed properly. Each character will need to make a special Investigation roll modified by Brawn instead of Guts: TN 3 to follow the plan correctly and keep watch over the town. Anyone successful will notice there is one house several people were seen going into. There are also many people who are staying at Tatyana's tavern past the closing time, though they are not being subtle about their presence there. One of the people they see traveling to the house is Olga Kuerroskov, the older lady they interviewed earlier. Whoever rolled the most successes discovers there is a common thread between all the people traveling to the house. Each person is carrying a leather-bound book and by a stroke of luck, one of the travelers drops it in their hurry to get to a warm home.

**The Book of Others:** The diary uncovered during the night of **Gathering Information** is filled with a lot of secretive information about the group, the Others it references several times, and some rituals they perform. There are several Russian folk tales also told in the pages, one of Baba Yaga, the Firebird, Vasilisa, and Morozko. The pages around Morozko are what the book opens to first, indicating it is used the most often.

**Baba Yaga:** The diary speaks of Baba Yaga as a powerful old witch who lives in the woods in a hut on chicken legs. She is always an older woman and can be very hospitable if treated right, though she turns nasty if her interactions ever turn sour. She is known to cast powerful curses on those who wrong her.

**Vasilisa:** Vasilisa is written as a beautiful young woman who is very wise for her years. She was said to have brought the sunlight to the Russian people and fought very hard to become a strong, knowledgeable woman.

**Morozko:** The section on Morozko describes him as being a patron to any who show him kindness and mercy, while freezing those who are unkind. The diary also holds verses and psalms naming him Father of Frosts. There are many additional notes scribbled into the margins, some illegible with age. The most readable says he can freeze others to save them from death, but nothing further on it.

**Spy of Glass:** The group is fairly certain the activity they witnessed is tied with the observations Ksina and Boris both had, but they need to be certain. If the characters wish to try to infiltrate the group, it will require some work, but is doable. If they can convince Olga they are curious about the fairy tales they have heard and if there is any connection to real creatures, they may be able to get her to trust them. The characters may attempt any Skill + Attribute combination: TN 3 to convince Olga they are serious about their questions. If they are successful, she invites them to come to the house they were watching the next night for a service and to see what their group is about.

Whoever convinces Olga to invite them to the meeting will be the only one allowed entrance, and Olga will personally escort them with her. As they get to the house, Olga does inform the group of the newcomers and their questions. They are welcomed to the group and asked to observe for the evening. The group begins a strange ritual where they pray to Morozko and each place a small token into a chest. They then talk about needing someone to take the chest into the wilderness to Morozko. The character may volunteer to do it easily, as nobody seems keen on doing it themselves. If the character does not volunteer, Olga says she will choose. She goes through a small ritual and lands on the character. It feels as if she knows their intentions but isn't saying anything.

**Father of Frosts:** Once the group finds out the location of where to take the chest, they can head out into the wilderness. Nobody is certain exactly what they will find, but they are instructed to take the chest out in the middle of the night and give it to Morozko. They will need to say his incantation to summon him to receive the chest. The air is bitterly cold and freezes their breath, making the 30-minute hike almost impossible. By the time they reach the location they need to summon Morozko, the weather is Horrendous (3) and any uncovered skin is starting to show signs of frostbite.

When they complete the incantation, they can hear a *thud* coming closer as a gigantic humanoid about 9 feet (3 m) tall, thin as a rail, and covered in ice walks up to them. They now know this to be an Other; a supernatural monster. Any character with a Whisper Path will be able to sense there is a power radiating from this creature, something other monsters do not have. It has worshipers that have strengthened its power. It speaks to them, its voice a thin whisper above the wind "You are not my normal worshipers. Who are you?" As it waits for a response, it starts to look through the chest at the offerings. Any questions directed to it are ignored until it is finished looking in the chest. All it says is "They did not include the child this time. You must be my sacrifice." The characters now realize too late they were set up by the group and must fight Morozko.

**Rise Up:** When the soldiers return from their encounter with Morozko, Olga sees them and immediately turns to walk away, moving faster than she

previously let on. They will need to make an Athletics: TN 3 roll to keep up with her, since they are exhausted. While they are chasing her, the townspeople start to get angry that the soldiers are attacking them, unaware of Olga's true intentions. They start to turn on the soldiers and attack them, driving them from the town. All the townspeople come from their homes to do this, and the soldiers can either fight or flee. Even Ksina and Boris are all driven from town.

Should the group wish to attack, they may use whatever skill the wish: TN 3 to attack the crowd. This starts a full-blown riot, and the townsfolk start using whatever weapons they can find against the soldiers. Eventually, it gets so bad they must leave the town or risk being killed by the townspeople.

### **Conclusion**

After making the long journey back to base the Unit reports to Zverkov, now a Lieutenant-General. He is again fascinated by every tiny detail they share and nods along to their report. He seems particularly pleased there was no evidence of socialist agitation in Siberia. Monsters and magic do not seem to trouble him in the slightest.

A few days later, after the Unit it fully rested and recovered from their efforts, they again meet with Zverkov and he tells them Grigori Rasputin himself has taken an interest in them and requested they be transferred to the Interior Ministry for a special assignment in the capital. He wishes them well.

### **Decoration**

- All Survivors draw 2 cards and keep 1.
- If the Unit allowed Boris Smirnov to go about his business, they may each draw another card.
- If anyone attempted to make peace with Morozko, they may draw an additional card.

### **Sasha Litvin's diary**

*2 November 1916*

*They released Valeri, though he'll still have to see the doctors once a week. He can't walk yet, but they say it will come in time. He's different somehow. I dare to say it's as if he's tainted. He doesn't talk about what happened to him. I only know that he was attacked in the mountains. I'm taking him to Marinka's brother whether he likes it or not.*

## Antagonists

### **Morozko**

Wandering in the frozen lands of northern Siberia, Morozko is an Other who rose to great power. Local townsfolk started by offering it well wishes and prayers to protect them from the cold. Eventually, it turned to giving him material things, and eventually sacrifice. Should he be pleased with these offerings to him, he will leave local towns alone. If they fail to offer him something he wants, he will wander through the town at night, taking random people he comes across while walking at night.

Morozko is a lumbering hulk of a being, standing 9 feet (3 m) tall, ragged clothing draping off him. He has long white hair and his skin is tinted blue, with frost forming at the corners of his eyes and lips. He looks as if he was frozen in water for months before being freed. He eats the people who are sacrificed to him and takes the objects.

In the frozen tundra, any individuals he comes across he follows for miles until they are paranoid. Once they show their fear, he attacks them and knocks them out. Dragging them to openings in the various lakes of the area, he weighs them down with the objects given to him by the locals, then drops them in the water to drown.

Type: Solo

Initiative: 6

Armor: Varies (see below)

Brawn: 5

Smarts: 3

Guts: 4

Weapons: Fists: 2 damage - +1 damage (2), Stun (2)

#### Skills/Abilities:

- Melee
- Mechanics
- Investigation
- Bone Chills

Darkened Tempest, Treat With Father Winter

- Stalking (Guts)   : A favorite amusement to frighten lone travelers. This attack targets Smarts. If successful, he stays out of sight of the victim, but close enough to let the victim know he is there. If Morozko succeeds with Stalking against the same target twice in one day, fear grips the victim, imposing a +1 TN penalty to all skill rolls. This penalty disappears at the next dawn or if Morozko is discovered or reveals himself.
- Flesh Eater - May spend a round to eat a human corpse if one is available. He may either heal 1D3 Brawn or gain 1 level of Armor.

- Worshipped: This ability is always active. For each group who regularly make offerings to Morozko, he gains +1 Armor. This is typically 1D3+3.

Weakness: Collector: Morozko is captivated by finely crafted items, especially works of art. He can easily be bribed with these items—even after a battle has started.

Fire Burns: Morozko loses the benefit of his Worshipped ability if he is damaged by fire or explosives.

Reward: Everyone involved in the combat draws 1 card.

## Mission 4: Beating the Hedgerows

**Matthew Orr**

### **Mission Briefing**

Whatever their personal feelings on the matter, the Unit has been officially congratulated for a job well done in Yakutsk and assigned to a special detail inside the Interior Ministry responsible for maintaining order in the capital, Petrograd. This puts them essentially under the command of Rasputin himself. They have met the man once or twice and he seems pleasant enough in person. The rough manners others complain about do not really bother them as soldiers. He seems a plain-speaking and earnest person. He is doing his best to keep the armies fighting but is stopped at every turn by generals of noble blood who are jealous of his favored position. If there is anything off-putting about the man, it is only the intensity of his stare and the fact he so often talks about healing sins as a means of restoring physical health.

Their new position involves searching the capital for enemy spies, saboteurs and those trying to weaken the war effort. These patrol duties take them into all quarters of the city and force them into contact with all ranks of society. They have ample opportunity to hear all the opinions being circulated about politics, the war and Rasputin and make their minds up for themselves who is really sabotaging the nation.

### **Mission Objective**

Continue your duties, but form an opinion about your new commander, Grigori Rasputin.

### **The Journey**

You spend the first weeks of November posted outside of workers' meetings to make sure they know they are being watched, searching printing houses for banned material, arresting suspected foreign spies, and serving as bodyguards to Rasputin as he makes social visits to various noblewomen in Petrograd, attends meetings with the state administrators, and reports to the Tsarina.

**Requirements:** Six black cards.

**Narrative:** Describe one incident from your work for the Interior Ministry so far.

**Failure:** The Unit has drawn attention for "insufficient zeal" and is being watched by other forces within the Ministry. The TN of certain rolls on this mission will be higher and there will be different antagonists in some Incidents.

### **Incidents**

**The Printers Lie:** Informers have reported a reform-minded paper of the middle class called *The Intersection* is preparing to print some propaganda against the Tsar's family. The printing operation is located in an underground warehouse on a side street on the east side of town. Challenge Stealth: TN 7 to surprise the printing staff. If successful, the Unit captures the printers as well as the facility; if unsuccessful the printers have fled before the Unit arrives. The Unit may smash the printing equipment or simply lock the printing shop up. If anyone examines the pages *The Intersection* was preparing to print, everyone in the Unit receives one card. Then roll Communications: TN 3. If successful, they notice the letters between the Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin discussing the ongoing war effort, which the paper claims it intercepted, are obviously fabrications.

**The People March:** One morning, there is a march down Nevsky Prospekt by seamstresses, housewives, clergy, and some soldiers on leave. It is not a violent mob and no political banners are present, the people simply want their "Little Father" the Tsar to hear their demand for bread. Supplies have grown short with the arrival of winter. The Unit knows most of the available food is being sent to the soldiers on the front lines of the war. They also know the Tsar is not even in the capitol, he is also at the front. The crowd can be directed back to their homes with no consequences by speaking with the clergy leading the march and succeeding at Communications: TN 5 (TN 6 if the Unit failed the Journey). Instead, the Unit may disperse the marchers with gunfire. Challenge Ranged: TN 4, but two civilians will be killed for every success rolled. The Unit may also simply choose to let the marchers stand around outside the Winter Palace chanting for "Peace, Land, Bread". Their chanting will diminish throughout the day and the weather will get worse by one level. The crowd breaks up on its own just after midnight.



**The Ambassadors Laugh:** A few days later, the Unit is sent to provide an honor guard for a party at the British embassy. The party is attended by most of the diplomatic staff of the Entente Allies in the city. British men with Indian servants following behind and French ladies in the finest Paris fashions pass up the steps into the embassy with hardly a glance at the Unit.

The characters will have the opportunity to rotate between the cold and windy street and the warmth and light of the party inside. Outside, they may roll Athletics: TN 3 (TN 4 if they failed the Journey) to appear properly alert and respectful. The first soldier to fail this roll is approached by a French diplomat who asks for a light for his cigarette in passable Russian. No matter the response, he makes a joke about the Russians being useless.

While inside, anyone may eavesdrop or chat with the guests. Roll Communications: TN 4 to eavesdrop or Investigation: TN 3 (TN 4 if they failed the Journey) to chat. Either way, the Unit hears multiple people mention they don't care what happens to Russia. The general attitude is Russia is only good for keeping the German army occupied, especially now that strange things are happening on the front lines. No one will elaborate on what these "strange things" are.

**The Sailors Mutiny:** The Navy has requested help from the Interior Ministry in resolving a dispute aboard a ship anchored outside the Peter and Paul fortress north of the city. Sailors aboard battleship *Orlov* have declared themselves an anarchist commune and have refused their orders to make a patrol cruise of the Baltic. Rasputin has authorized any level of force needed to break the power of the mutinous soldiers. The guns of the Peter and Paul fortress included! The orders are signed with a sickly brown ink, which looks too much like dried blood.

Simply destroying the ship with the fortress guns will kill hundreds of sailors and force all members of the Unit to draw for Corruption but will resolve the dispute immediately. The Unit may instead Challenge Transport + Communications: TN 8 to talk the anarchists down from their position. Naval Lieutenant Mikhail Degaev, the anarchist leader agrees to return his crew to duty and the ship will leave port immediately. A third option is to attempt to attack the sailors in their ship. Challenge Stealth + Investigation: TN 6 to discover a method of attack. This Challenge may be attempted more than once, but the ship appears unassailable until the Challenge is met. To fight, the Unit will have to face three waves of 7 sailors (use 6 **Common Soldiers** and 1 **Commando** per wave), one at the top of the gangplank, one on the main deck and one guarding the pilot house. Each group is armed with three rifles and four clubs. The other sailors aboard *Orlov* offer no resistance.

If this Incident is resolved peacefully, one wave of Degaev's sailors can be called upon to assist the Unit during the Incident, "The Peasants Bleed."

**The Nobles Squabble:** Rasputin has been going out in public less and hasn't spoken to you face-to-face in days. A messenger comes from him with orders to investigate a certain Count Paul Chegodiev. The count has invited Rasputin to a social gathering at his apartment, but Rasputin doesn't exactly trust this nobleman. Chegodiev is part of the extended Romanov family, most of whom have been vocal in their disdain for Rasputin. They do not like him having such close contact with the Tsar's family and most assume he is to blame for the setbacks plaguing the war effort.

The Unit may roll Knowledge: TN 3 to recall Paul's wife, Natasha, has often been listed as attending Rasputin's gatherings with fashionable Petrograd society. If they go to her apartment in a fashionable neighborhood, Natasha will deny any suggestion she is having an affair with Rasputin but will admit Paul might believe rumors to that effect. Paul doesn't visit her much, preferring to live in the city center with his friends. Investigation: TN 3 turns up a picture frame with no picture in it. She seems surprised and says it used to have a photograph of Rasputin in it.

To learn about what Chegodiev and his friends have been up to recently, Challenge Stealth + Investigation. **The Unit uncovers information based on successes rolled:**

- 3) His best friends are a doctor named Remezov and a British diplomat named Harper.
- 4) No one has been invited to a party at Chegodiev's, but his friends hang out there most nights.
- 5) Just yesterday Remezov bought some toxic chemicals, "for his work."
- 6) Harper is rumored to be some kind of special forces soldier.
- 8) Chegodiev recently told a friend to expect "a dramatic change in the weather."

A trip to Chegodiev's apartment shows that he appreciates the finer things in life. The apartment is set for a small formal gathering, but the servants do not know where Chegodiev is currently. Investigation: TN 6 or Mechanics: TN 3 reveals the door to a hidden parlor. The room has been made into a mockery of an Orthodox chapel. A sideboard draped in black velvet serves as an altar. An autographed photo of Rasputin scattered with various powders rests between two half-spent candles. A popular memoir of a supposed mystic is nearby. Knowledge: TN 4 or Whispers: TN 2 makes it very clear this is a meaningless attempt at magic. The evidence of the count's animosity is clear enough to warn Rasputin to stay away, even without finding the secret room. Their job is complete, and the Unit may return to their office. If the Unit takes it upon themselves to track Chegodiev down, he and his friends have fled the city.

If the Unit waits at the count's apartment for him to return, they may each draw a card as they help themselves to his extremely fine food. At dusk, the trio of friends returns and are quite surprised to see a unit of soldiers in the house. The Unit can put the three men at ease with normal conversation (the proper form of address to a count is Your Serenity). Use **Officer** with a Specialty in Communications for all three conspirators. They and the Unit each Challenge Communications. If the Unit can beat the conspirators twice in three rounds, the count admits to their plot to curse Rasputin, such as it is. If the Unit fails the Challenge twice, they are convinced the count is not a threat. If the Unit tries to arrest the men, a fight breaks out with Harper acting on a King for Initiative. Dr. Remezov does not fight, but all three men ignore all damage from the first hit they take in this combat. They will attempt to escape from the house if possible or will fight to the death otherwise.

If the Unit never faces Chegodiev directly, and it becomes important to know his fate, draw a single card: red card: caught crossing the border, black card: he escapes, red joker: killed in capture attempt, black joker: escapes and the party loses one card from the Morale Pool.

**The Peasants Bleed:** New recruits from the countryside stopover in the capital on their way to the front. Morale is low among these new troops and the army fears they will run away if they have a chance. To prevent escape, they will be kept on the transport train overnight in a train yard south of the city. The Unit is assigned to guard the train. No one in the train makes any trouble. If the characters approach the train, they can hear the soldiers inside talking and sometimes crying. Any player willing to spend one card may relate a story their character hears from a soldier about their simple life in the country or their fears of dying at the front. A success on Mechanics: TN 2 shows the train cars are not locked but are instead sealed with iron bars which prevent the doors from opening. The weather gets one level better overnight as the Unit stands guard over the train. If the Unit failed the Journey, there are 5 **Common Soldiers** and 1 **Officer** also on watch at the train yard. If the Unit wishes to release the soldiers, they will have to

fight, convince or bribe the other party of guards. Getting a train car open takes either Transport: TN 4, Mechanics: TN 6 or Athletics: TN 8. Each attempt takes half an hour. Only eight attempts may be made before the train departs again at dawn. There are ten total train cars.

### **Conclusion**

Their loyalty to Rasputin has now been demonstrated beyond all doubt. The Unit meets with Rasputin in an office he has established within the Winter Palace, the traditional seat of Romanov power. He is more welcoming than ever and offers them food and drink from the best the palace has to offer. The room seems cold, but it doesn't seem to bother Rasputin. His voice sounds a little hoarse, but he says it is from all the praying he has been doing for Russia. He tells the Unit better times are just ahead. His smile is unsettling.

### **Decoration**

- All survivors draw 1 card.
- Draw 1 additional card if the Unit captured Count Chegodiev.
- Draw 1 additional card if any of the conscripts escaped the train during "The Peasants Bleed" and a second additional card if five or more cars of soldiers escaped.

**To Valeri Litvin, Petrograd**

**From Piotr Belenski, Russian Front, Czernowitz, Bukovina**

*5 November 1916*

*Valeri,*

*Everyone is wondering if you're well. Brusilov has halted the advance on the orders of Shuvayev. Everyone is glad not to cross into the woods, but that doesn't make the war effort any better. We're still hungry, and it's cold. There is constant rain—and dark things moving about the camp at night. Soldiers are disappearing now too. Deserters, some, surely, but others have disappeared who you would never have thought would run. We're all thinking of you Valeri. No one will say it aloud, but whatever you saw in the Synevyr is creeping out of the woods now. I know you'd laugh at that. Let us know if you're well.*

*Piotr*

## Mission 5: The Madness of a Monk

**Crystal Mazur**

### **Mission Briefing**

By December of 1916, many of the nobles in Tsar Nicholas' court had grown suspicious of Grigori Rasputin. Several among the nobility in Petrograd have started looking for ways to pull apart the threads Rasputin has woven around the royal family. The social circles within the capital gossip about Alexandra's relationship with him and political cartoons are being printed and passed around. With the Tsar and Tsarina staying at the Winter Palace once more, Rasputin is now within the sphere of influence of the other nobles. Opulence, excess, and political intrigue encircle the whole city. Proceed with caution.

Prince Felix Yusupov has grown tired of the influence Grigori Rasputin holds over the royal family and is concerned over the welfare of the empire. Several of the politicians and military leaders also agree, citing the recent fumbles of leadership from the Tsar as a concern. It is obvious to anyone paying attention that meetings are taking place of great importance without the presence of the Tsar. The royal family seems to be keeping their sights inward.

### **Part 1**

#### **Mission Objective**

Prince Felix Yusupov has asked you to investigate Rasputin and his dealings. He wants you to use your close contact with Rasputin to find whatever information you can against him.

#### **The Journey**

The Unit finds themselves assigned as guards in the palace, helping to keep the royal family safe. While making your rounds through the palace, you find Rasputin finishing up consulting with Tsarina Alexandra, a common occurrence as of late.

**Requirements:** 4 of the same suit

**Question:** What are your feelings about Rasputin?

**Success or Failure:** All players make a Corruption check as they remain near Rasputin.

**Narrator Note:** The following incidents may not apply to the group, depending on their decisions made in the previous missions. If the Unit is not allied with Rasputin, they should do **Follow Rasputin, Interview Court Members, and Interviewing Rasputin**. Should they ally with Rasputin, the Unit can start at **Reporting to Rasputin** instead.

### **Incidents**

**Reporting to Rasputin:** If the Unit has decided to work with Rasputin, they may wish to pass along information. If this is the case, the following Incidents still occur, with the intention of spying *for* Rasputin in these matters. They may then report back to Rasputin the information they gather.

**Following Rasputin:** Should the Unit wish to follow Rasputin, they will need to roll Stealth: TN 3 after each location to stay out of sight of the Mad Monk.

As you follow Rasputin from the palace, you see him travel through the streets and past the churches in the city. He makes his way to a small storefront and disappears behind a curtain into the back of the shop. If the detail stays outside and watches, they will see a steady stream of people going into the shop and leaving about 30 minutes later. They can roll Investigation: TN 4 to figure out if they recognize anyone going into the shop.

On a successful roll, they will notice there is a woman they recognized as the wife of one of the nobles from the palace. Should the group choose to try to enter the establishment and look around, they can. The shop is a small trinket shop, small figurines, decorative pottery, and other tourist items. An Investigation: TN 2 will allow the group to spot the door towards the back of the shop. If they try to walk towards it, the shop keeper will ask them to kindly stay in the shop, as that is a private area. If they stay in the shop long enough, they will notice a woman check-in at the front, then walk back through the door. The shopkeeper will only allow access to the back room if their name is on his list, so the group would have to resort to trickery to accomplish it. Whatever they choose to do will be TN 5, as the shopkeeper seems to be under some sort of influence from Rasputin.

The group will need to roll Investigation: TN 3 to notice when Rasputin leaves the shop and moves to his next destination. If they fail, Rasputin spots them and will return to his home for the rest of the day. If they make a successful Stealth roll, they easily follow Rasputin to his next destination.

Rasputin spends the next few hours wandering around town until early evening, where he enters an alleyway. The group watches a conversation happen with a shadowed individual and money being passed to Rasputin. As he accepts it, he gives the individual a sign of the cross and walks out. If the detail waits to see who walks out of the alley, they must roll

Investigation: TN 3 to recognize it is one of the Dukes lower in social rank. If the detail wishes to try to listen in on the conversation, they may try something with a TN 4 to get close enough. If successful, they overhear the following conversation:

*Rasputin: "Did you bring the money?"*

*Duke: "This was all I could find. We still have to eat."*

*Rasputin: "The Lord was specific in my vision. If you wish to garner the Tsar's favor, you'll need to bring what you can."*

*Duke: "I will see what we can sell off."*

*Rasputin: "Perhaps there are other things you could offer."*

The two then continue to converse in whispers, making it impossible to overhear the rest.

**Interview Court Members:** If the group decides to try and interview the court members, they will find a mix of reactions to the request. Most of the court members refuse on the grounds of rank and societal privilege and quickly place court mediators between themselves and the detail. The court members willing to speak to the detail are as follows:

*Duchess Tatiana* - The Duchess is willing to talk with the detail but insists they do so in private. Once they find a private location, she will reveal to them that Rasputin has been speaking to her about how God speaks through him and told him if she gave Rasputin money, he would be able to help her and her husband's position in court. If they wish to discover any other information, a Communication: TN 3 is needed. If successful, they learn that her husband is an Officer and she expresses concern about his current assignment. She wants him reassigned to a safer post, preferably closer to the palace.

*Duke Misha* - The Duke is reluctant to give anything more than he has seen Rasputin taking drugs previously and has heard it is common for him to use hallucinogens regularly. If the detail wishes to bribe him, he will gladly accept an offer if each player gives him something from their inventory. If the players wish to try other methods, it will be at TN 4 Any successful bribe uncovers that the Duke has noticed Rasputin avoids walking over any of the rivers in the area unless absolutely necessary.

*Princess Anastasia* - The teenage princess happily speaks with the detail about Rasputin. She admits to watching Rasputin calm her brother when he was in pain due to his inflection. She didn't like the way he looked at her, but his magic helps her brother, so she doesn't complain about it.

If the detail wishes to interview any of the servants around the palace, they are more willing to talk with the group and will gladly take any coin they offer for information.

*Chief Maid Madeleine* - Madeleine oversees caring for the gowns and jewels of the Tsarina and takes her job very seriously. She is one of two maids that refuses to wear a cap or apron while she works. She informs the group that she has walked in on some of the Tsarina and Rasputin's prayer sessions, she refuses to describe what she saw but says it looked nothing like any prayer session she has ever seen. She fully believes he is evil and wants to help her Tsarina as best she can. She wants Rasputin gone, even if he helps Alexi.

*'Toodles'* - Toodles is a younger maid who talks barely above a whisper. She also refuses to wear the traditional cap and apron that the other house servants wear, but that doesn't seem to bother any of the residents. She helps take care of the children and tends to them when their parents are busy attending to matters of state. She's had many conversations with Alexi, who believes in the powers Rasputin has. She isn't sure, but Rasputin scares her. She says he feels dark like something is taking away all the light in the room when he is there. Toodles also believes Alexi enjoys being around Rasputin, seeming to admire him.

*Elizabeth Ersberg* - Elizabeth is the Tsarina's personal maid, serving her since she was wed to Nicholas. She is fairly certain Rasputin seduced the Tsarina and had her under a spell. She watched as the Tsarina knelt before Rasputin and prayed, but not to any god she was aware of. She remembers the name Vodyanoi, which she knows as a water spirit, not any Christian god. The prayer Rasputin recited sounded like it was for protection from the water spirit.

**Interviewing Rasputin:** The group may decide to try to interview Rasputin at some point during all this. While not the best idea, it is possible for them to arrange for this. Rasputin spends a lot of time at the storefront in the city, but also around the palace, so the detail could ask him questions or arrange for a meeting at this point. He seems to be fine with answering questions anywhere the detail stops him and is unconcerned about anyone overhearing.

Rasputin is steadfast in his belief of his god and feels he is a prophet and healer. No amount of convincing is going to change his mind on this matter. He believes his pathway to salvation is one of truth and being able to sin so the sinner may find absolution through prayer and tithing. Rasputin gives off a very sickening aura when the group gathers close, though he seems coolly pleasant.

### **Decoration**

Draw 5 cards, keep 3, and decide who gains the cards together.

## **Part 2**

### **Mission Objective**

You have collected the information Prince Felix wanted. He will likely ask even more of you now. The Unit must decide what their course of action will be, then act.

### **The Journey**

You travel to Prince Felix Yusupov to relay what you have discovered. It may not seem like much, but to Prince Felix, it is exactly what he was looking for. A meeting is called of several other high-ranking officials in the court and

held in secret at the home of Prince Felix. There, the Unit learns the reason behind their investigations. Prince Felix asks if you would help him take care of Rasputin once and for all. He will pay everyone well if they assist in the assassination.

**Requirements:** 2 Hearts, 2 Clubs

**Narrative:** Describe one other person at this meeting, what action they advocate, and how you feel about what they say.

**Success:** Whatever course of action the group agrees upon, they will gain the appreciation of a very powerful individual in the capital. Everyone in the Unit may remove a point of Corruption.

**Failure:** The group catches the attention of Rasputin and earns his ire. Everyone in the Unit must draw for Corruption.

## Incidents

**Turning Prince Felix Yusupov In:** Should the detail decide they wish to turn Prince Felix in, they will need to convince him they are not interested in his offer and that they will not turn him in. A successful Communications: TN 3 roll will persuade him they will keep his secret safe. A failure means Prince Felix does not believe them and will send another detail after them. They will need to fight **Common Soldiers** x 4.

If the Unit can successfully make it back to the palace, they will need to speak with the lead guard there. He is hesitant to believe them, but it is possible for the Unit to persuade him using a Communication: TN 2 to calm him down. If they can get him to listen, he sends them to arrest Prince Felix. Prince Felix and his allies will resist arrest. Use **Officer** with a Specialty in Stealth for Prince Felix, backed by Unit x 2 **Common Soldiers**. If the lead guard does not believe them, he will try to arrest the Unit with (**Common Soldiers** x 3) accompanying him. Everyone in the Unit must draw for Corruption.

**Helping Prince Felix:** The detail is told to get Rasputin from his office and escort him back to Yusupov's home immediately. Despite the late hour, he is in his office. The Unit could talk with Rasputin during this time. Any players who gained any Corruption from Rasputin can feel his influence around them, like a thick fog that is trying to choke them out. Rasputin barely responds to questions and seems like his thoughts are elsewhere. He willingly comes with the Unit.

However, as they approach the Prince's home, which borders the Neva River, Rasputin seems more aware of his surroundings and he will use his Pull of Corruption ability on the Unit. Any target of his ability can feel he suspects this is all a trick. If they are unable to resist (Rasputin succeeds), they will admit to Rasputin they are taking him into a trap. Rasputin seems visibly hurt by their betrayal and will fight them to escape. If he uses his Voices of the Mad ability, he can only summon **Unfallen** or **Disfigured** within the city. Yusupov and his soldiers will pour from the house and join the fight during the second round of combat. Unless forces into the water of the river, Rasputin automatically escapes during the fourth round of combat.

If the Unit can shake off Rasputin's probing questions, they carry on as planned and deliver Rasputin to Prince Felix in his parlor. If the Unit lets him into the room but does not follow, they will hear the voices of Prince Felix, Rasputin, and several others quickly turn to shouting, then gunfire, screaming, and finally silence. If they wait until the noise ends to enter the room, they find Yusupov and all his soldiers dead. Investigation: TN 2 shows the conspirators shot one another. Rasputin is gone and cannot be found. The Unit may also choose to join the fight; in which case they may be able to save some of the conspirators. Again, unless forced out the windows and into the water of the river, Rasputin automatically escapes during the fourth round of combat.

## Conclusion

If the Unit assisted Prince Felix, they have come out of this situation with the favor of those in high authority within the government. They spend the next few weeks doing similar work to what they did before, assisting the war effort. Though, they sometimes think they hear the Mad Monk's voice coming from just around the corner and at night they are haunted by dreams of Rasputin's lifeless body surging back to life.

If the Unit saved Rasputin, he is pleased and seems genuinely grateful. They spend the next few weeks doing similar work to what they did before, assisting the war effort. They are drawn closer into Rasputin's circle and frequently attend him while he visits with the royal family, often standing just out of sight as he recites strange prayers with them. He seems shaken by the conspiracy and is often distracted when not in the palace. Early in the year he announces he must make a trip back to Siberia and disappears from the capital.

No matter how Rasputin leaves Petrograd, he was not Russia's only problem. Without anyone else to take the blame, Tsar Nicholas himself is now revealed to be responsible for the incompetent mismanagement of the war effort. Tensions continue to mount as the war continues to go badly for Russia and political organizers continue to demand reforms. Then comes the revolution.

## Decoration

- Everyone may draw 1 card.
- Then draw and split 2 cards.
- Any characters who resisted their Corruption in the fight against Rasputin may heal 1 Corruption point.

## Valeri Litvin's Diary

21 November 1916

Sasha tricked me. She took me to her friend's healer; she said the hospital had called and needed to see me for an extra visit. I can't really blame her. I have been so distracted and my mood so dark lately. I know she was desperate to help me. This healer though—he was odd. He seemed half mad himself. The chants he used—I shudder!—I'd never heard such words. I think he honestly wants to help the sick, but whatever power he's using...listen to me. I sound like Sasha! Yet, my head is clearer. I wonder what he did to me? Thankfully, Olga was not with us. Sasha had her friend Marinka take our girl to a park across from the basement apartment where we met with Mikel. Olga does not need to see such things.

## To Taya Orlov, Petrograd From Mikel Elin, Petrograd

29 November 1916

Taya,  
Continue the work. Can't do any more healing. Madness is taking me.

Mikel

## Mission 6: Faces and Voices Passed

**Melanie R. Meadors**

### **Mission Briefing**

It's July 1917. Your unit has been through hell and back over the recent months as revolution has swept through Russia. In desperate need of a reprieve after your last mission, you set up camp in a wooded area in the Ural Mountains. You need to get a little ways away from political tumult and crazed fanatics, to find some peace so you can regroup and process what you've been through so far, and what it means for the future in this country torn apart by revolution and war into two sides, white and red. By now you know there are some other forces at work here, that go beyond the superficial reasons for this revolution. Something dark, sinister, and invasive. There isn't a member of your unit who hasn't been touched by this corruption somehow.

You've received word from travelers that the royal family, Tsar Nicholas II along with his wife and five children, is being held prisoner by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg, at the Ipatiev House, after Nicholas's forced abdication of the throne earlier in the year. The question of what is to become of them, and what will happen once it does, is on everyone's minds. Will the inevitable release of tension usher in a time of peace? Will it cause more war? Not knowing the answers and being in a state of constant flux is enough to make your unit wonder if you can take matters into your own hands. You've decided to begin the journey to Yekaterinburg to assess the situation.

The tension in the air, even in your location away from everyone, is too much to bear. Everyone seems to be at the cracking point, and no one really knows who to trust in these days where corruption oozes from the pores of the world like a festering disease. All you know is what is in your own heart; unless this pestilence has made its way there, as well.

*Can you even trust yourself?*

### **Mission Objective**

End the skirmish between the Imperialists (Whites) and the Bolsheviks (Reds) by either making sure the royal family is exterminated as the Bolshevik army has planned, or by helping them escape; depending on the outcome of previous missions and the loyalties of the company.

### **The Journey**

Whose side are you on? And what side is the rest of your company on? This will decide the course of your mission. As you travel through the Urals, on foot and vehicle when one is available, you notice the quiet of the surrounding land, almost like the very mountains themselves are holding their breaths, waiting to see what happens, waiting to see which side will prevail—or if another force entirely will rule victorious.

### **Requirements:** One card from each player. **Special Journey Resolution:**

First the Narrator reminds players what each suit represents (Spades - ideas, Clubs - objects, Hearts - others, Diamonds - self). For this Journey, color represents a character's sympathy for either the red: Bolshevik, or black: Imperial cause. Number (Ace high) represents their level of commitment, with lower numbers showing characters feel wishy-washy or conflicted. Each player picks one card from their hand for the Journey which best fits their character's current attitude and loyalty. They play this card face down in front of themselves. Then each player draws a second card from the deck. The players may then decide if they wish to keep their already-played card or replace it with the card drawn from the deck. The unused cards are discarded. Players keep and resolve their own chosen card rather than the Narrator shuffling the Journey cards. Answering the

Journey Question in character can take more than one minute. If the Narrator would add cards to this Journey, they may play their cards after a character speaks to remind them of previous actions which contradict what they just said.

**Question:** As you travel through the desolate and ravaged lands of the Urals, do you feel like the other members of the Unit are on your side? What will you do if they aren't? How strong are your loyalties, and are you yourself willing to be swayed?

**Success:** You may have all shared your feelings, but do you all agree? The character of the player with the highest numbered card, commands the loyalty of the Unit for now and sets the course of action for the mission. Once consensus has been reached, the Narrator can add a card to the Morale Pool.

**Failure:** If characters can't come to a consensus, a card is not added to the Morale Pool, and characters must rationalize why they must follow their leader into this mission, even if they don't agree with it.

### Incidents

**The Raven:** When the Unit gets close to Yekaterinburg, a large raven flies overhead, making gargling sounds. It is visibly falling apart, at this point, held together by sheer force of will and corruption. If the characters don't shoot it down, it falls to the ground on its own in a heap of broken feathers and heaving gore.

The first character who reaches the raven to examine it, or who happens to make eye contact with the raven another way, notices the raven's dull eyes become more red the longer they look, and the raven (even if it was shot down) casts Stare Them Down with no augments from the Chaos Songs Whisper Path and automatically succeeds against the soldier.

The rest of the soldiers hear the raven speak with the voice of Rasputin. "We will be magnificent. We will be unstoppable."

After it casts the spell and speaks, it falls still and silent.

**Entering the City:** There are a couple options for the Unit, depending on their loyalties, if their goal is to kill the royal family or to help them escape. But before they can take any steps, they are confronted by a woman on the street. She is wearing a kerchief, and she doesn't make eye contact with the soldiers.

*"I have been expecting you. Come. It's important that you follow me."*

If the soldiers question her, she refuses to speak in the street. If the Unit threatens her, she gestures around. There are hundreds of Bolshevik soldiers around. "Believe me when I say they will listen to me long before they listen to you. What I must tell you is important. Anything else you do will be wasting your time."

**The Den:** She leads them to a tea house, and they walk through the main room where people are talking, drinking, and smoking. A man grabs her skirt as she passes, and she turns to glare at him intently. Instead of any sort of expected reaction, the man turns white as a sheet and can't seem to breathe for a moment. As soon as it happens, it's over. The man looks fearful and unsettled, but his friends at the same table don't seem to notice. The woman leads them through a door at the back of the tea house, through the busy kitchen, and then to another door. When she opens it, the Unit sees it leads outside, into a garden with a high stockade style fence around it. They go out, and she turns to look at them. "I warn you; you are not to speak of this to anyone. He will know. He always knows. And you will be punished."

She bends over and pulls a chain that was buried in a bit of dirt. She pulls it, and a trap door opens.

She pulls a string and lights flicker on, revealing a ladder leading down to a room below. There is a table with dried herbs, bottles, and jars on it. It looks like someone was mixing something up on it a short while ago.

The woman introduces herself as simply Serafina. She explains a plan to use Stone Soup Magic to help Alexei, the son and heir of Tsar Nicholas, escape, to "use him for a higher calling." This magic will both allow the Unit to enter the house where the royal family is being held, disguised as maids from the village who clean the house, and will allow Alexei, disguised as Serafina, to leave with them. They will leave Serafina in his stead, after she has drunk a potion to be disguised as him. The Stone Soup Magic involves characters drinking a concoction made of simple ingredients that are symbolic of the thing they need the magic to do. An ingredient vital to the disguise in this mission is flesh of the person they want to be disguised as. As luck would have it, she happens to have the concoctions already mixed up and ready to go. Whoever drinks the potions must draw for Corruption. There is enough potion for all of them to drink. This might also be a way for characters to gain entry to the house to kill the Royal Family, if that is the Unit's goal. They don't have to tell Serafina their goals are different from hers.

If they drink, Serafina gives them the potion for Alexei. They now look like maids. She ushers them along, back the way they came.

**The House:** It might have been a lovely house once. A place where guests might have felt welcome. Built on the gentle slope of a hill, intricate stonework lines the edges and corners of the large building. There are many windows, framed with the same stonework, but no one can look out them now. They've all been painted over. There are signs of a large garden, but no one can see directly because a large fence blocks any view of it from the street. There is an oppressive air to the place, like a force pushing outsiders away, making the multitude of guards standing outside unnecessary, but there just the same.

The Unit hears a cawing sound from the roof, and when they look up, they can see ravens perched along the entire roofline, on the fences. Once they notice them, they see they are everywhere, and that their presence, more than anything else, is what's causing them to feel like they need to be far from that place. These birds can see through them, see into their very souls. The urge to run is almost insurmountable. Characters who succeed with a Stealth roll modified by Smarts instead of Brawn understand that there are dark powers at work here trying to keep them out, and they must stay true to their course to succeed. They must not let fear win.

If someone fails the roll, ravens will attack. Two ravens attack for every one person who fails. Whoever strikes the fatal blow to these crows hears a voice say, "My day is coming, sooner than you realize..." They aren't sure if others could hear the voice, or if it was just them.

Once the ravens are defeated and the Unit passes (still disguised as maids) to the gate, the guards comment on the noise, and crack jokes about little maids fighting ravens. "Such fearsome adversaries, those ravens! Especially against such scrawny things as yourselves."

As long as everything is in order with the Unit, the guards let them pass through the gate in the fence in peace. There is a walkway to the front door. Guards there nod and let them pass, but give them a warning:

*"You might want to come back later or stay in the kitchen. There are things afoot you might not want to see."*

Within the house, people are running and shouting. Footsteps pound on stairs and floorboards like chaotic gunfire. Then, as the Unit is trying to figure out what is happening, there is the unmistakable cacophony of actual gunfire from underfoot, and the smell of spent powder fills the house.

Between shots, there are groans and pleas. It feels like it lasts forever, but it is over before the Unit even finds the door to the basement where they can tell all this is coming from. All falls to silence, except for the calls of ravens outside. They are too late, both if they want to save Alexei, or if they wanted to kill him.

Soldiers come upstairs. One of them sees the Unit dressed as maids.

*"There's a mess for you to clean up downstairs,"* he says, laughing.

**The Basement:** The Royal Family is dead. Serafina's expression morphs quickly from horror to satisfaction to grief to fear. She has failed her mission. She is shaking with fear. "The Ravens. His eyes. He has seen my failure."

A Unit member who succeeds at both an Investigation roll and a Knowledge roll (can be assisted by other members) will see Alexei's small, frail body, and marvel that they would have thought he'd bleed more, being affected by the "royal disease" that plagued so many of his mother's line. Once Serafina hears that, she realizes that the boy had already been switched. "One of his other operatives must have gotten here first. Oh, the glory that one will see..."

The Unit must find Alexei—either to kill him, or to ensure his safety. They don't know who this "he" is exactly, but the fact that they hear Rasputin's voice coming from ravens suggests there is more to all of this than meets the eye.

**Finding the Boy:** Serafina explains that not even she knows the location of the real Alexei, or where he was supposed to be taken, but she can help the company by performing a spell to create a glowing path only visible to the Unit that traces the boy's Corruption.

The Unit follows the path, trying to avoid the attentions of both the White and Red Armies as they pass. Since there are so many people around, they pass unnoticed (unless they deliberately do something to attract negative attention to themselves).

They follow the glowing path down a rough road out of the city and through a wooded area. After the woods, they come to a stream which they must cross (roll Athletics). On the other side, the path leads across a rocky area.

**The Cave:** The path ends abruptly at the face of a cliff. Members of the Unit can do an Investigation roll to see where there is a bit of the cliff that doesn't quite seem to match. Upon further inspection, they can see if they approach at just the right angle, an entrance appears to a cave. Someone with high Smarts or an appropriate Whisper, can tell not only is the entrance hard to see physically, but there has been some sort of magic done here to help hide it.

If the Unit chooses to enter the cave, they will travel most comfortably with a source of light in order to see, unless a character has some other means of seeing in the dark. The magic path is still visible in the cave, so if all else fails, they can follow it in the dark. If they proceed without light, however, they must each roll Stealth or Athletics twice (TN 2) and take 1 Brawn damage for each failed roll from walking into the walls or cracking their heads on the low ceiling.

If they can see in the cave, they see a roughly hewn passageway with a low ceiling about six feet (2m) on all sides, but naturally varies a bit as rocks jut out. It's cool and damp in the cave, and the Unit can hear water dripping. After about 50 feet (15 m), the passageway begins to widen, and the ceiling gets taller. There is a light up ahead.

If the Unit has been approaching quietly, and any member of the Unit chooses to perform an Investigation roll, they see 4 **Cultists**, two on either side of the entrance to the lighted area. The Unit should roll Stealth to see if

the Cultists see them first. The Cultists order them to stop and ask them to state their business. Alexei's path leads straight past them.

The Unit can decide to attack the **Cultists** or state their business to them and roll Communications to see if they can be persuaded to leave them be. The Cultists are under orders to keep outsiders from entering the room beyond. It would be easy to convince them that the Unit is simply looking for shelter in the cave. They will fight to the death, however, if they are threatened or if the Unit tries to get past them.

**Alexei:** Once the Cultists are disabled or defeated, the Unit can move forward.

They enter a chamber that is nothing like what they'd expected to find in an old dripping cave. There is a throne, and tapestries with the royal family's crest on them. Sconces hung from the walls keep the room well-lit. With a rug on the floor and other decor, it looks like a regular chamber one might find in a noble's house.

On the throne sits a boy. Serafina gasps and says, "Alexei!"

"Alexei is no longer here," the boy says. "And neither, too, are you I think, yes?"

The boy lifts a hand, and Serafina gasps before her eyes grow dull. She pulls a skinning knife from her belt and plunges it into her own neck. Blood spurts forth and she falls to the floor dead.



"Her use was over. We have no more room for her." These words are no longer in Alexei's voice, but Rasputin's (either his ghost if he was killed in a past mission, or the real man if he is still alive. He is possessing Alexei.)

He greets the Unit, and explains his plan to lead Russian to glory and greatness, not by taking care of Alexei and putting him back on the throne, but by ruling through Alexei, as Alexei. Corruption will reign.

If the Unit is pro-Rasputin, nothing more needs to be done, unless any members of the Unit have a change of heart. Rasputin congratulates them and welcomes them to the next stage in Russian history, and perhaps, soon, the history of the world.

If the Unit's goal has been to kill the entire Romanov family, they can fight to kill both Rasputin and the boy at the same time. This would be a straightforward battle, and victory would be a true victory for the Bolsheviks, who want both Rasputin and the Romanovs dead. Use the **Grigori Rasputin** Antagonist information on page 17, except in Alexei's body he has neither his Invulnerability ability nor his Weakness to water. There is no water in this part of the cave, anyway. Here in the countryside Voices of the Mad can summon any ally, but **Skin Thieves, Night Fiends, Rag Bats** (*Tome of Corrupted Beasts*, page 37) or **Stalking Shadows** (*Tome of Corrupted Beasts*, page 47) are most likely. He cannot escape from this fight.

If the Unit's mission is to save Alexei from both the Bolsheviks and Rasputin's corruption, they can fight Rasputin alone and try to get through to Alexei, to convince him to fight and get the man out of his head and soul. This would involve trying not to hurt Alexei's body (remembering that he is cursed with the "royal ailment" and would bleed to death even from simple injuries), and trying to fight Rasputin via more psychic means. Players can use Whisper Paths (perhaps even a form of healing to remove Rasputin's Corruption from the boy) and Communications to convince Alexei to fight or to fight Rasputin himself, but anyone with 3 Corruption or more feels pulled toward Rasputin's side and might not work as hard to defeat him. Rasputin will certainly use his Corruption abilities to press his advantage.

If things go badly, the possibility exists that Alexei could sacrifice himself willingly, if he is convinced it is the best thing for Russia and the only way Rasputin will be defeated. In this case, players could take advantage of the fact that his body is weak, and perhaps surprise Rasputin by killing the boy he thought they would do anything to preserve, in order to get to the monster pulling his strings. If they take this path, a card must be removed from the Morale Pool.

Once Rasputin is defeated, forced from the Alexei's body, or if the boy is killed, the Unit catches of brief glimpse of Rasputin's spirit being pulled through the Veil by the Others.

If the Unit does indeed save Alexei, then they need to decide what to do with him. Do they put him in disguise, make him part of the Unit? Do they bring him to a friend or relative to care for, perhaps not revealing his identity? Or do they bring him to a political faction and let them decide how they can best use him or serve him?

### **Conclusion**

If the Unit chose to join Rasputin, it is the beginning of a new age. He has terrible new tasks for them to perform. Each member of the Unit must draw for Corruption.

If the Unit defeats Rasputin this time it is for good, a lightness fills the air. Everyone heals 1 Corruption. However, Romanov rule is at an end. There's nothing left but politics.

### **Decoration**

All survivors draw 3 cards and keep 2.

To Etienne Kult, Editor, Zücher Post, Zürich, Switzerland

31 December 1916

Etienne-

Such stunning news to report! Grigori Rasputin was reportedly assassinated last night. I doubt cutting off the head of the snake, as they say, will have any lasting impact on the goings-on here in Russia, however, with the most powerful and public leader now removed, perhaps it will further weaken the Wizards here.

I have tracked down one of the Wizards, Taya Orlov. She, like the other Wizards, went into hiding after the popular opinion turned against Rasputin and the Romanovs. It seems that unlike Germany, the Russian army was not willing to let Wizards and other conjurers into their ranks.

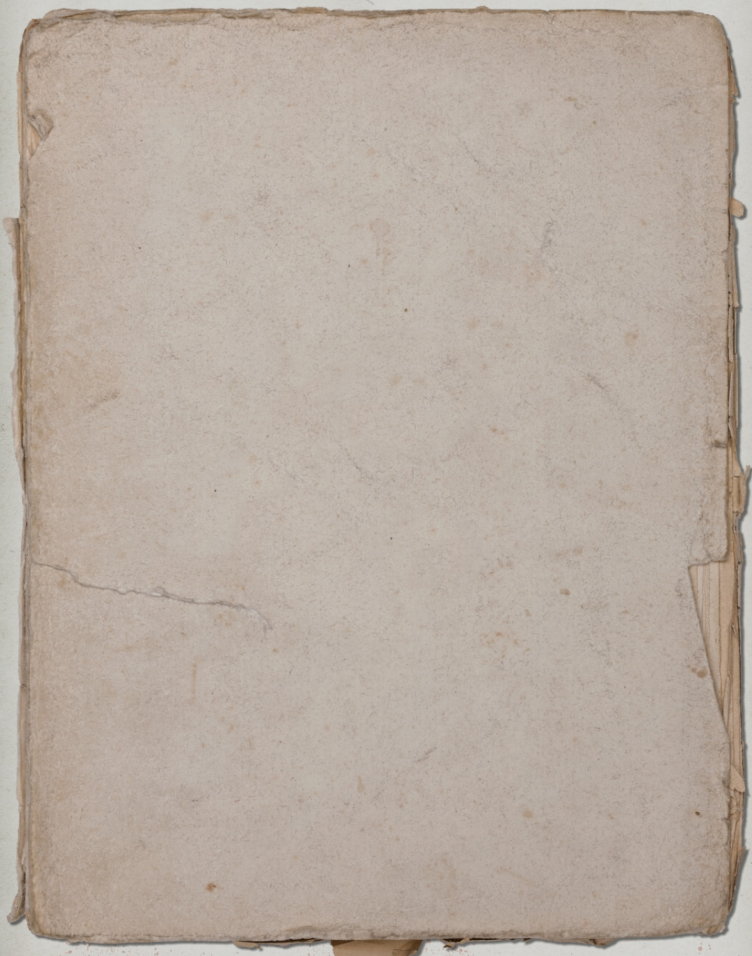
I've also contacted Valeri Litvin, a soldier who was wounded during Brusilov's advance against the Austro-Hungarians. He was one of the last people to see Mikel Elin before he disappeared. As the war marches on, so too do the Others it seems. They seem to be drawn to the conflict wherever it appears. Valeri described to me what he could remember of his encounter in the woods, and his healing with Mikel. I've included some of my notes with this report.

I will monitor the situation here in the capital as it unfolds and continue to send what information I can send. I'll admit to you now, Etienne, the situation here in Russia is becoming highly unstable. The people are restless and fatigued with war, among other things, and revolts and demonstrations occur daily it seems. You might want to see if you can call in any favors, should I need safe passage to Zurich.

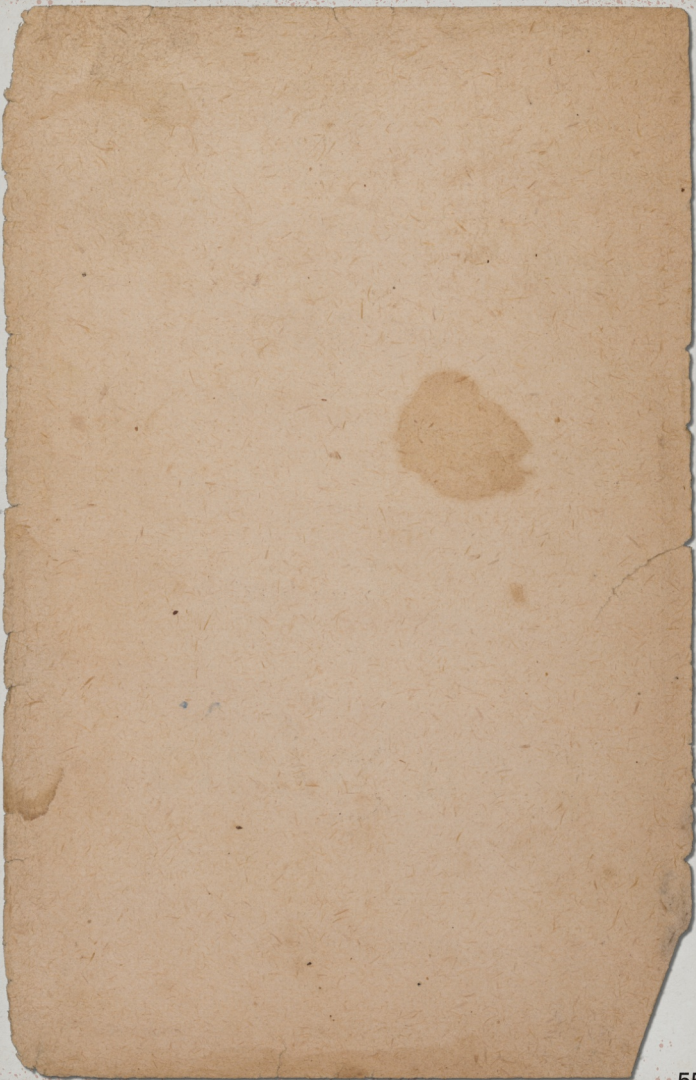
Raul Muhleman, Russian War Correspondent,  
Zücher Post

## **Continue the story...**

Use these blank pages and scraps to add your own details or introduce new mysteries for your own Missions.

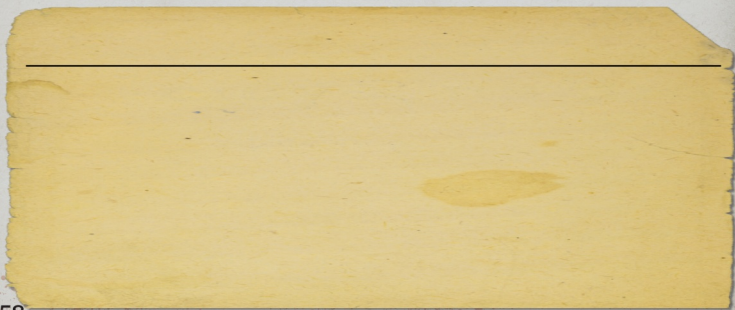


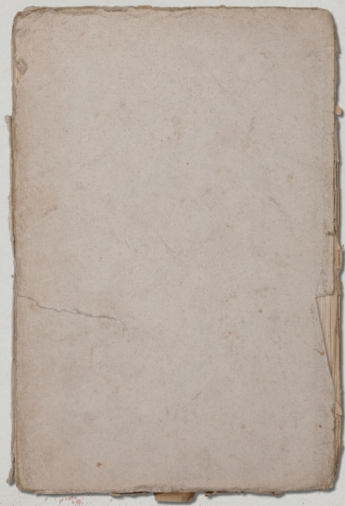














# NEVER GOING HOME

1916

*The Others have always been speaking to us.*

Join the Russian army as their advance west ends and a long series of retreats begins. You will find it is hardly any safer in the interior, where terrible fear walks the woods and political turmoil shakes the streets. What do you make of the madman running the palace?

Blood on the Snow

A Campaign Dossier for Never Going Home

The Morale Pool

