

HOLLERIN' PINES



A ONE SHEET ADVENTURE FOR THE DAY AFTER RAGNAROK BY H. M. 'DAIN' LYBARGER

The heroes visit a quiet town—where something nasty is brewing below the surface...

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

—Mark 16:17-18

The heroes find themselves in Butler's Mill; maybe they've come as traders, or mercenaries looking for work, or maybe they're drifters just passing through on their way to a place they hope will be better.

Coming up the old paved road, the pine-wood covered hills around Butler's Mill are lush and green under threatening skies—apart from a scattering of single trees that are shriveled and dead. The whole area is ST 3.

QUIET DESPERATION

Butler's Mill is a small town, a lot like any other in the Mayoralties; hard-scrabble farm families just trying to get by. They have one working grist mill, run by a waterwheel in mostly-clear Butler Crick. 'Tax collectors' from the remnants of the nearest large city (Charleston or Frankfort, perhaps) show up at harvest-time to take the lion's share of everything. There are bandits and barbarians out in the hills too, but faith keeps folks 'round here strong.

Butler's Mill has clearly seen better times. The buildings are dilapidated and most houses are empty. Casen's Drugstore is the local meeting place and market, though old man Casen is long gone. Gemma Driskill runs the place now. She's a hard-faced woman with just enough knowledge of hexes and legends to know when things aren't right. Time was, the Driskills were moonshiners, but the past couple of years a growing religious sentiment in town has killed that trade. There's no moonshine on sale here, and precious little else. Gemma encourages strangers to lodge in one of the empty houses on Main Street, across from Casen's.

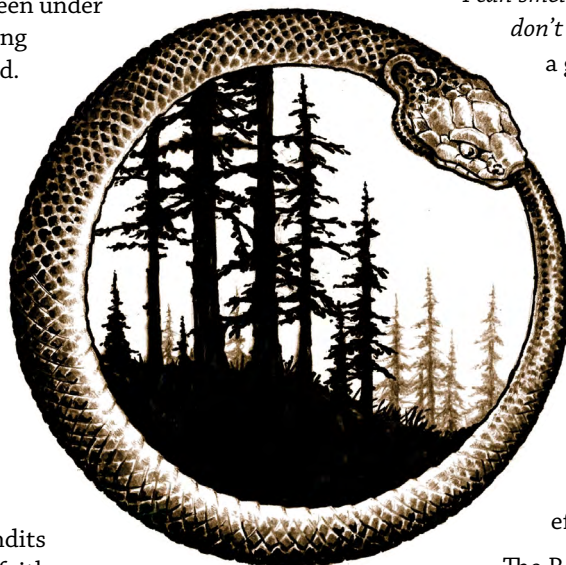
ONE VISION

The New Visionary Church on the Rock, presided over by Reverend Micah Woolard, is the least run-down building in town. Most townsfolk adhere to Reverend Woolard's teachings. The women wear ankle-length dresses and long hair; the men wear long sleeved shirts and keep their hair short.

TROUBLE BREWING

Gemma Driskill corners the heroes in Casen's one evening. As strangers, she figures they're outside the Reverend's influence. She offers them a little incentive to do her a favor. "My daddy and his daddy were 'shiners. We had a still up the hollow a-ways. Now, Reverend Woolard, he don't hold with drinkin' so I got no customers 'round here anymore, and that busybody don't approve of me cooking 'shine even for my own use. But t'ain't right him keepin' me from even goin' up there!" Members of the Reverend's church have twice turned Gemma back when she's tried to check the old still.

"Thing is, past couple of weeks when the wind's been right, I can smell moonshine cookin'. That's a smell you don't forget." Gemma offers the heroes each a gallon of her 'private stock', if they'll sneak up the hollow and find out what's going on with her family's still...



UP IN PINE HOLLOW

The New Visionary Church is a snake-handling sect of Christianity. Most snake-handlers have nothing to do with Serpent Cults; they draw their inspiration from one particular Bible verse (quoted above). Most of them are even, thanks to their faith, immune to some of the effects of the Serpent Taint.

The Reverend Woolard led his flock down a different path. When Jörmungandr's venomous rain stirred the legendary hill serpents into life, he, as a believer, took them up. He survived, but their venom inspired corrupt visions. *"The scales fell from my eyes, brothers and sisters! I saw the truth! We are not made pure by the blood of the Lamb—we are made **strong** by the blood of the Serpent! His holy venom is in the very Earth, and in the grain we grow. Through that grain we will spread His dominion across the world!"* He plans to use moonshine brewed from the tainted grain to poison folk up in the big city and spread Serpent worship far and wide.

To that end, he's got men operating the Driskills' old still, and stockpiling liquor until the 'tax collectors' come for it. It's hot, sweaty work, and the men doing it roll up their sleeves. Any heroes nosing around immediately spot the bites and scars on their arms—relics of years of handling venomous snakes.

Heroes are likely to be spotted in return. One failed Stealth roll and a half-dozen members of Reverend Woolard's flock start chasing them through the darkened woods with shotguns!

TENT REVIVAL

If the heroes escape pursuit, or avoid notice, the following evening members of the flock drop by their lodgings with an invitation from Reverend Woolard to a tent revival at the edge of town; a *friendly* invitation if the heroes weren't noticed, an invitation at gunpoint if they were. Gemma Driskill gets the same invitation.

For a notionally-Christian ceremony, the revival is extremely primal: ecstatic dancing to screeching banjo and fiddle music, loud chanting and speaking in tongues, and at the climax of the ceremony the passing of venomous snakes hand to hand.

The surrounded heroes (and Gemma) face forcible induction into the cult via snakebite and tainted moonshine! They must fight or flee; the Reverend won't listen to reason. When the heroes fight their way out of the tent, Reverend Woolard uses his connection to the Serpent to call forth Hoop-snakes from the surrounding pine woods to chase down escapees.

If the Reverend is killed, the cultists disperse. In time, Gemma Driskill can get the town back to normal—perhaps with the heroes' continued help.

Reverend Woolard

(Cult Leader, page 80 of **DAR**.)

Members of the Congregation

(Cultists, page 79 of **DAR**.)

Lemuel and Sherry Lynn Broadbent, Titus Garron, Matthew Post, Ida Mae and Pearlina Thompson, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Clayton Card, Roxanne Hentley, Anselm Hentley, and Fred Warren.

Use two cultists for each hero; half of them armed with shotguns, the rest with daggers, garrotes, and venomous snakes (from the **SW** core book).

Chosen

Four cultists, Samuel Tyson, Walter Tomlins and his oldest boy David, and David's girl Sarah Mueller, have strayed a bit and got drunk on the tainted moonshine. It changed them. During the ceremony, they remove their shirts with all the rest, (Sarah retains her chemise, for modesty) and bare their snakebite-scarred arms as badges of honor. But in their case, their arms and bodies are corded with distorted muscles and bulging, serpentine veins!

ATTRIBUTES: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

SKILLS: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

PACE: 4 **PARRY:** 6 **TOUGHNESS:** 5

GEAR: Knife (Str+d4)

Special Abilities

- **FANATICAL:** Chosen go berserk, as per the Edge, if they see Reverend Woolard take a wound.
- **BITE:** Str damage

- **POISON:** Anyone bitten must make a Vigor roll at -2 or gain a Fatigue level. Physical activity (such as combat) brings on another Vigor roll (also at -2) in 2d6 rounds. Once Incapacitated, the victim dies in 1d4 hours.
- **SNAKEBITE:** As the Major Hindrance, page 19 of **DAR**.

Appalachian Hoop-snake

Hoop-snakes are between ten and twenty feet long, and green in color. The scales at the tip of a hoop-snake's tail grow together into a serrated barb even darker green than the rest of the serpent. Hoop-snakes get their name from their unique attack. The snake curls forward, gripping the base of its own tail in its mouth, and rolls along the ground at great speed! It approaches its target from behind at full tilt. When less than its own length away, it straightens using every muscle in its body—driving the poisoned barb on its tail deep into its victim! After the initial attack, or when escaping after a failed strike, the hoop-snake slithers like any other snake. The venom of a hoop-snake is so toxic that it withers plant life—even full-size trees—on contact. Legend says that the best method of avoiding a hoop-snake's strike is to duck behind a tree.

ATTRIBUTES: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

SKILLS: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d10

PACE: 8 **PARRY:** 6 **TOUGHNESS:** 6

Special Abilities

- **BITE:** Str+d4
- **TAIL-BARB:** Str+d6
- **FEAR:** Seeing a hoop-snake requires a Guts roll.
- **QUICK:** Discard action cards of 5 or lower when the hoop-snake is rolling.
- **REACH 1:** A hoop-snake's spearing attack counts as Reach 1.
- **POISON:** Anyone struck by a hoop-snake's barb must make a Vigor roll at -2 or become Exhausted until healed. Physical activity (such as combat) brings on another Vigor roll (also at -2) in 2d6 rounds. Once incapacitated, the victim must make another Vigor roll (also at -2) or die in 1d4 hours.
- **WEAKNESS (HEAT AND COLD):** Giant snakes are cold-blooded; they make Vigor rolls to withstand temperature extremes at -1.

Credits

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