

Session/Game: Eldritch Earth: 5 Hacks Deep
Episode 11: Shepherd's Hollow Rampage

Date: November 22nd, 2020

Campaign Date: April 17th - April 22nd 1130 AD

Characters

Angus McNasty, Scottish Barbarian - 1 (Bob)
Wulfric of Ascalon, English Knight - 2 (Dave N.)
Neil O'Hainle, Irish Druid - 1 (Dave H.)
Father Siegfried the Small, Frankish Cleric - 1 (Jason)
Father Calen Kildare, Irish Cleric - 1 (Quinton)

Judge: Andrew Smith

April 17th, 1130

Right before dusk, an older woman rushes into Worm's Ferry. Matron Jeffrey is the matriarch of the Jeffrey family, a godly clan that lives in a farm just West of Worm's Ferry. In a frantic scream she relays that her family has been attacked and that they commanded her to run and fetch the Reeve. Angus picks four of his best men, and rides off to the West toward the Jeffrey farm.

There, three hooded bandits stand over a number of what appears to be prone or dead villagers. The remains of the Jeffrey family. As the heroes charge, they realize that there is more to these three bandits than meets the eye. They are undead monstrosities, and they command the bodies of the newly slain Jeffrey family to jerk back to life to kill the Reeve and his men.

Luckily, the honorable Angus McNasty is up to the task. He dismounts and engages the fiends head on. He loses his new warhorse in the exchange, but he makes the villains pay and lays out the restless dead. Wulfric runs several of the villains down from horseback. Neil and Father Kildare support with bowfire. Neil is beat up badly by the unholy terrors, and his wooden hand is snapped off as he is knocked unconscious. Father Siegfried heals Neil and any others harmed by the undead monsters.

Following the battle, the corpses of the slain villagers are identified. June Jeffrey, Matron Jeffrey's youngest daughter, is not among the corpses. There is a note pinned to the corpse of the oldest Jeffrey boy. It tells Reeve McNasty that the bandits expect a thousand gold in exchange for the life of Archdeacon Festus to be paid at the Shepherd's Hollow gallows on midnight of the next full moon - April 25th, 1130. The villagers are buried with the proper rituals and the bandits corpses burned to ash.

April 18th - April 20th, 1130

The crew rest up from the ambush at the Jeffrey's farm. Reeve McNasty decides to take Matron Jeffrey on as a scullery maid in the residence and offers the deserted Jeffrey farm to Neil O'Hainle. Neil now has some sort of hemp weed growing from the stump of wood where his left

hand once was. Neil decides that the farm would produce crops of hemp in the future, and makes plans to become a ropemaker and tobacconist. Father Kildare starts the process for making holy water.

April 21st, 1130

In anticipation of the midnight rendez-vous, and knowing full well that it is a deadly ambush, the Reeve and his men decide that they need to “rampage across the countryside” in search of the bandits for advance information about where Archdeacon Festus is hidden. They stage an attack on the bandit “treehouse” located to the south along the road to Jorviksburg where the Archdeacon was last seen.

The two clerics and the Irish druid take some time to sneak toward the ruined stockade. They take stock of the five bandits there and send the signal. Reeve McNasty and his housecarl Wulfric of Ascalon ride in and slaughter the bandits lured away from cover. The hidden churchmen and the Irishmen finish off those bandits who try to use the forest for cover.

The fight is over before it begins, and any remaining bandits who witness the shocking attack have fled. The Reeve’s men question the remaining living bandits. They tell the heroes that the Archdeacon left the “treehouse” for Shepherd’s Hollow about a week ago, soon after he was unceremoniously “dropped off” by some idiots who didn’t know he was fancy and worth ransoming. The heroes clear out the treehouse, boil the bandits to death, and immediately make for Shepherd’s Hollow to the West.



As they crest the hills to the hollow just before dusk, the Reeve and his men encounter a young snaggle-toothed shepherd with a small flock who calls himself Chonk. For a coin, Chonk will do just about anything the party says. He knows everything about sheep and he is scooped up by Wulfric on his horse and ridden with the party to the center of the settlement which is built up around a dilapidated church.

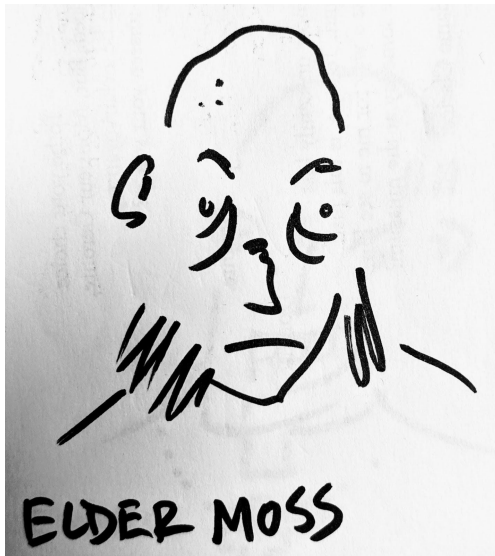
Immediately, Neil begins calling all the citizenry of the village together to introduce their new Reeve - His Honor Angus McNasty. For the most part, the people of the muddy paddock that is the village stand stupefied, but they seem to listen intently. The heroes then enter the church.

Inside the church, they meet Father Percival the parish priest just as he wrapped up his evening prayers. Father Siegfried vaguely remembers Percival's call to travel North to set up his own parish. Percival dismisses some of the churchgoers giving their confession. He asks Chonk to "notify Brunhilda about the visit" and asks how he can help the Reeve and his men.



Angus explains the predicament. Archdeacon Festus has been kidnapped by the Dill's gang, and they've traced the churchman's travel back to Shepherd's Hollow. Angus is immediately concerned. He warns the heroes not to trust anyone in the town because it is filled with bandit agents. He offers room in his "catacombs" below the rickety church for one or two as a hiding place. He says that the worst of them is the leader of the "wealthiest family" in all the village - Elder Moss. He says that Moss is in charge of all those who worship loot and not the Lord. If anyone knows where the Archdeacon is, Moss would know.

The Reeve and his men prepare to ride out. At first they are confused. "Where is the biggest flock of sheep?" they ask. Luckily, Chonk easily points out the Moss' flock for a coin. "It is so simple! They have the biggest flock. Can't you see it?"



The heroes follow Chonk's directions, riding out toward one of the larger flocks on the hillsides. There, they meet the Elder Moss flanked by his two heavily armed "sons." They stand amongst scores of sheep along with about a half-dozen shepherds and herding dogs. As the Reeve approaches, the two sons reach for their weapons, but are waved away by their elder.

Elder Moss croaks, "Who are you and what do you want?" To their credit, Reeve McNasty actually takes a moment to accuse Elder Moss of being in league with the bandits. The strange and slow moss instead explains that it is a group of adventurers led by Father Percival who have taken over control of Shepherd's Hollow in support of the Dill's gang. Father Percival's personal

bodyguard Brunhilda is a mighty warrior and the largest Danish woman anyone has ever seen. Odo the Murderer is a famous backstabber. Wade Hughes, sharpshooter is an extremely competent and professional killer who uses a warbow from hiding to kill anyone Father Percival

sees is a threat. Moss worries that the new Reeve and his men will be outclassed by Percival and his adventurers, but they wheel their horses and return to the main village.

As they approach, they hear the bells of the church ring and then stop just as the heroes close into the area. The muddy center of town is packed with sheep and goats, along with a few shepherds. The doors to the church are just ajar.

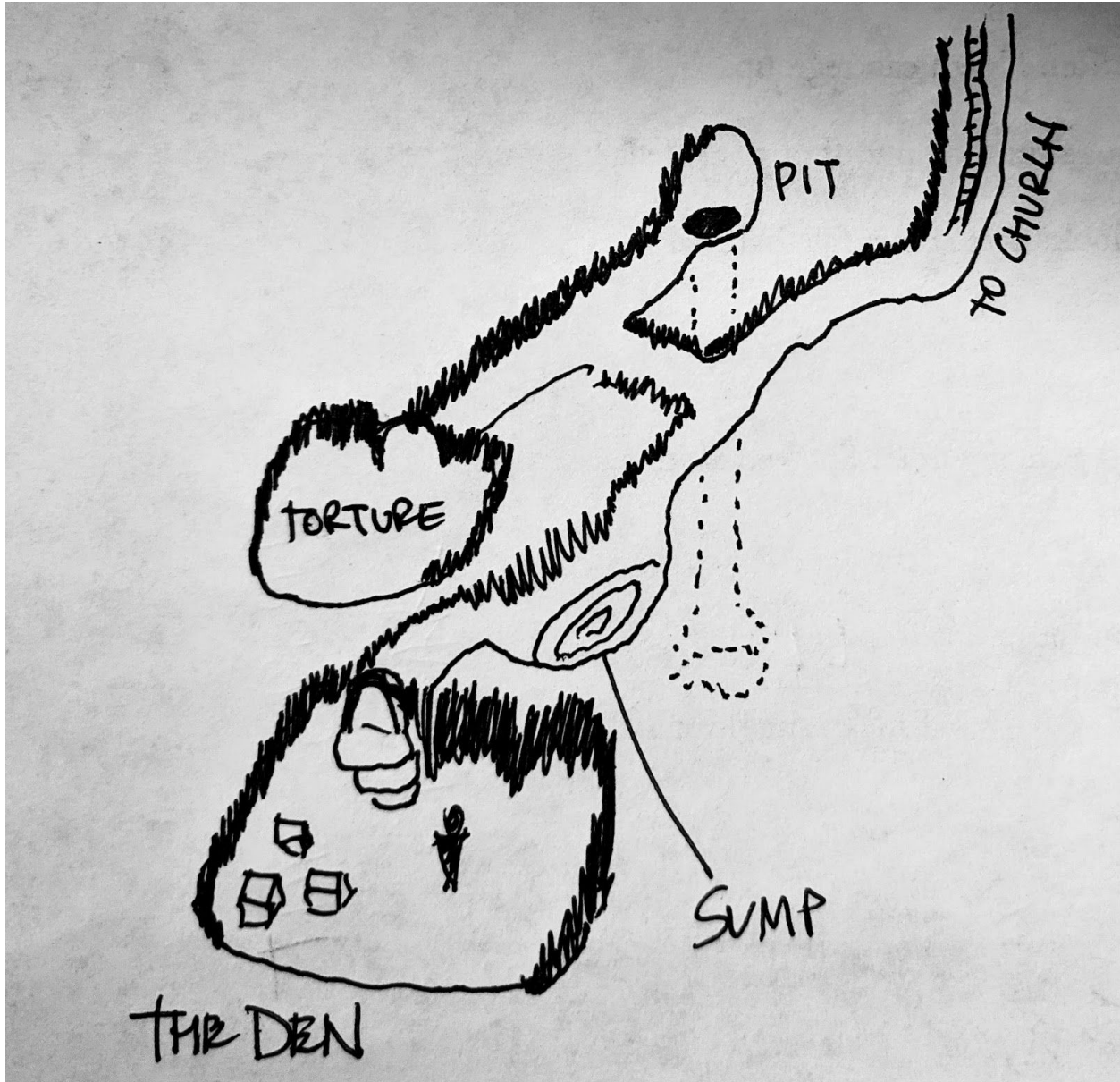


Father Kildare sends the child Chonk to make a disturbance riling all the sheep milling around. Reeve McNasty charges the church, but is cut down by sniper fire from the loft of the southern barn. Neil and Father Kildare sneak into the barn while Father Siegfried attends to the Reeve's wounds. Wulfric charges through the doors of the church to take on Brunhilda from horseback. Footsteps are heard heralding the approach of a new hidden threat.

The Reeve is revived just as Wulfric pushes back the giant Danish valkyrie. Father Percival tries to conjure accursed magic to strike Wulfric dead from the horse, but the magic fails him. Wulfric continues pushing into the broken church with his charger and slays Brunhilda. Reeve McNasty rushes in and stabs Father Percival dead as well. Neil and Father Kildare ambush Wade Hughes, sharpshooter and manage to get him to surrender. Finally, fearing more arrow fire, Wulfric rides from the church severely trampling the invisible assassin Odo the Murderer.

Wade Hughes is questioned and tortured. Four fingers on his right hand are removed, keeping him from ever using the longbow again. Neil rides back to Elder Moss with orders from Reeve McNasty to send a rider back to Worm's Ferry. Elder Moss seems very suspicious, and demands proof of Father Percival's death and that of his comrades. Neil balks at getting much closer, relays the message, and then returns.

Leaving Chonk behind to watch the church and their new prisoner Wade Hughes, the heroes push their way down beneath the loose flagstone beneath the baptismal font into the "catacombs" that Father Percival mentioned. Father Kildare creates a tiny mote of holy light to illuminate the way. The heroes leave Chonk behind and climb the twenty feet down the rope ladder into the tight catacombs.



They discover a sharp shale-walled rough passage barely big enough for them to walk single-file hunched over. They first discover a deep, dark pit full of human bodies and bones in various states of decay. Next, they discover a gruesome torture chamber left empty but for blood and gore left over from previous visits. After passing through a wet sump, the heroes discover a larger chamber where Percival attended to sinister rituals. A blasphemous statue carved into igneous rock depicts a cannibal mother eating her suckling child. Three chests full of the gold and valuables stolen from the citizens of Shepherd's Hollow sit to the right. A desk with orders from the notorious bandit leader Mac Dill instructing Percival and his cadre of four to be on the lookout for Reeve McNasty and his men. In a corner, some personal effects are found as well. The heroes strip the room of what is needed. The churchmen take hammers to the statue,

cracking it into unrecognizable chunks, and then they all return to the surface and spend the night holed up in the ruined church.

April 22nd, 1130

That next morning, the heroes pay one more visit to Elder Moss. The Reeve leaves the elder “in charge” and tells him that he and his men will return soon. Elder Moss takes Reeve McNasty aside and makes an odd suggestion that they create a “password” so that they can know if one of them isn’t who they say they are. “Haggis,” the Reeve blurts out, taking Elder Moss by surprise. “Very well, haggis it is,” the old shepherd replies.

After a quick goodbye to Chonk, the Reeve and his men return back to Worm’s Ferry from Shepherd’s Hollow, leaving Father Kildare to watch over the dilapidated sanctuary there.