

Y U T E B E S O R R Y



THE BEGINNING



December 13th, you had been planning to spend the holidays with your family, decorating the tree, opening presents. Instead you find yourself on the back of a rickety truck, heading to investigate reports of a missing child in a remote settlement. You'd never heard of the village they were sending you to, hell you didn't even know people lived this far out. As the truck crests the peak of the mountain pass, the only way in and out of the valley, you feel an overwhelming sense of isolation.

Walking through the streets you find the people hostile, often disappearing into their homes as you approach, bolting their doors and staring at you through wooden shutters. It takes you a while to find the inn, but eventually you cross the hearth into an ancient looking wooden building. Renting a room from a polite but reserved Innkeeper, a young man in a worn bellhop uniform carries your bags to the bed. You warm yourself by the fire for a brief spell, noting with frustration your phone has no signal.

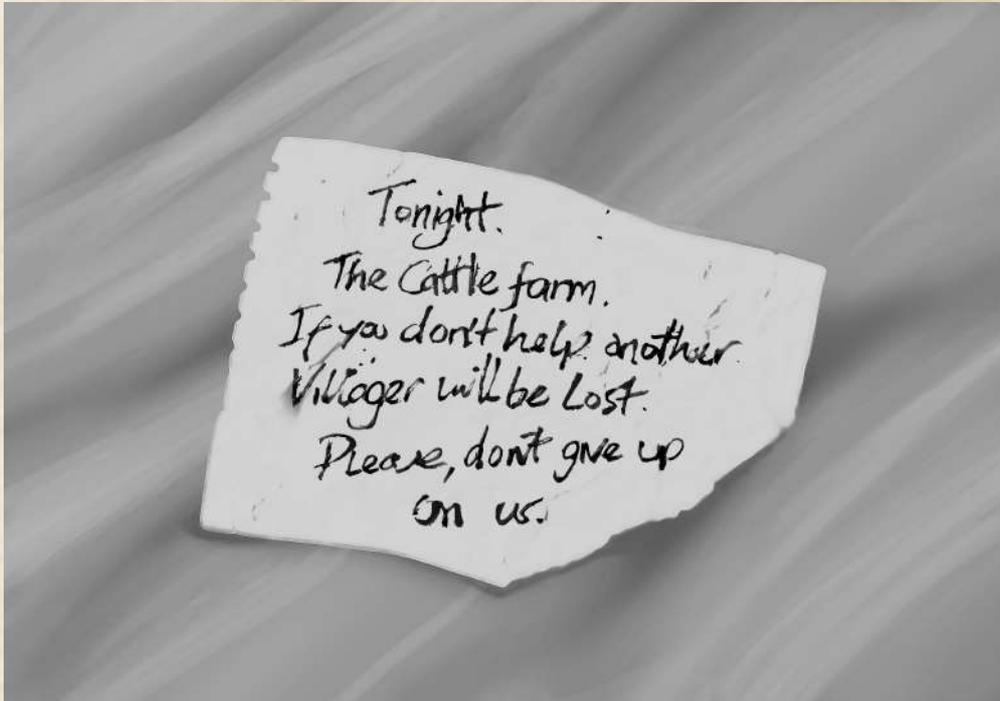
The sun begins to dip in the sky, and as the light wanes you make your way back into the village with directions from the Innkeeper, determined to reach the farm where the missing child had been reported before nightfall. You trudge through the snow towards the outskirts of the settlement, and hear the wailing of the grief stricken mother before you lay eyes on her. She sits on a low wall near a small house, weeping into her hands, a young boys woollen hat in her hands. The father works nearby, heaving the bodies of several dead sheep into the back of a pick-up truck, a solemn look on his face.

Decision 1:

[Investigate the dead animals?](#) (Turn to Page 3)

[Investigate the House?](#) (Turn to Page 4)

INVESTIGATE THE DEAD ANIMALS?



You approach the farmer, the unseasonably thick snow crunching beneath your feet. He looks up at you with empty eyes, and you can see grief has ravaged him. The farmer makes a half-hearted comment about wolves, and how that's just the way of things this far North, then turns to his wife, leading her by her frail, shaking shoulders into the house.

A cursory glance at the sheep is all you need to tell you this was no wolf. The bodies have no bite or scratch marks, no blood coating their white fleece. You'd almost think they were sleeping if it weren't for their emaciated features, skin clinging to bone like parchment. They look mummified, preserved, as if something had drained every last drop of liquid from the bodies.

Turning to follow the couple you see them shut the door to their home, and the sound of a bolt being drawn grates out from the small building. Although you knock forcefully they refuse to answer, and you leave with more questions than you arrived with.

You return to the inn as night falls, greeting the innkeeper warmly only to receive a muffled grunt in response. Entering your room you immediately spot a piece of paper laying on the pillow of your bed, held down by a discarded shoe.

"Tonight. The cattle farm. If you don't help another villager will be lost. Please, don't give up on us."

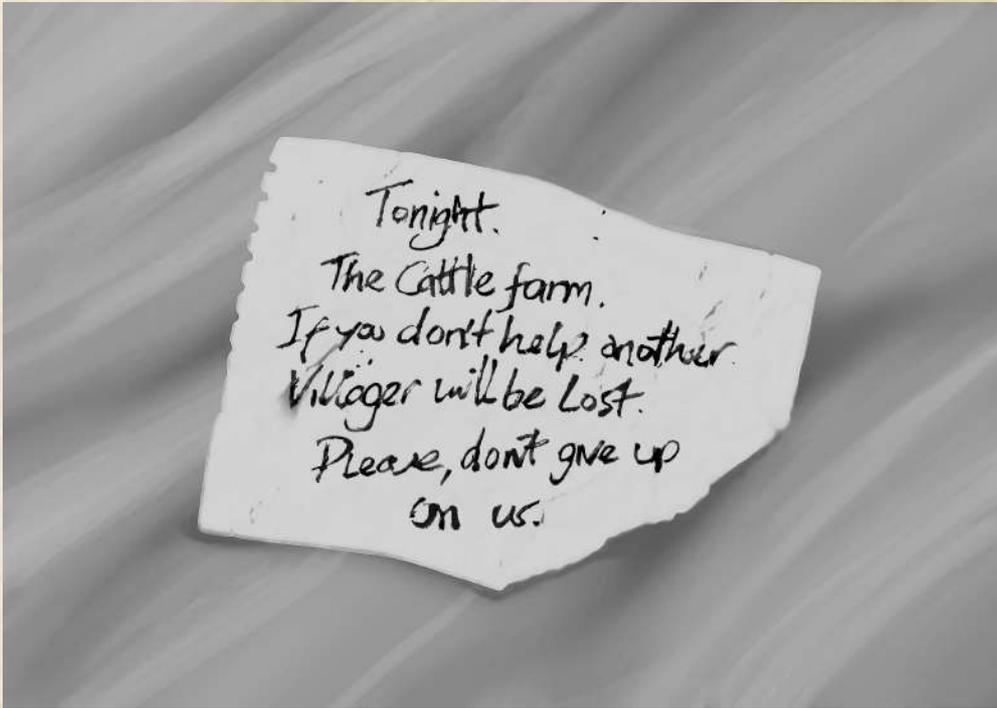
The message is not signed, and the handwriting borders on illegible. A small map drawn on the back indicates the cattle farms location.

Decision 2

[Head to the Cattle Farm](#) (Turn to Page 6)

[Explore the village](#) (Turn to Page 8)

INVESTIGATE THE HOUSE?



Leaving the grieving family behind to dispose of the ruined livestock, you make your way towards the house, the small wooden structure creaking ominously in the winter wind. As you enter the dwelling, you briefly smell a pungent odour, like rotting eggs, but this is quickly lost to the howling wind.

Entering the child's room, you almost slip on a spilled confection that coats the floor, liquorice. As you steady yourself, a cold gust of wind through the open window causes you to shiver, and reaching over you close the small opening. The latch clicks shut, and as you take a step back your heart beat increases. Smearred on the outside of the window, two hand-prints glisten in the fading light.

The rumble of an engine draws your attention, and you see the farmer and his wife drive disappear into the distance, their charnel laden truck bouncing on the rough road. You call out to them, but the roar of the pick-up truck drowns out your voice, and before you can exit the small building they are gone. Your questions will go unanswered.

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Decision 2

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[Explore the village](#) (Turn to Page 8)



HEAD TO THE CATTLE FARM



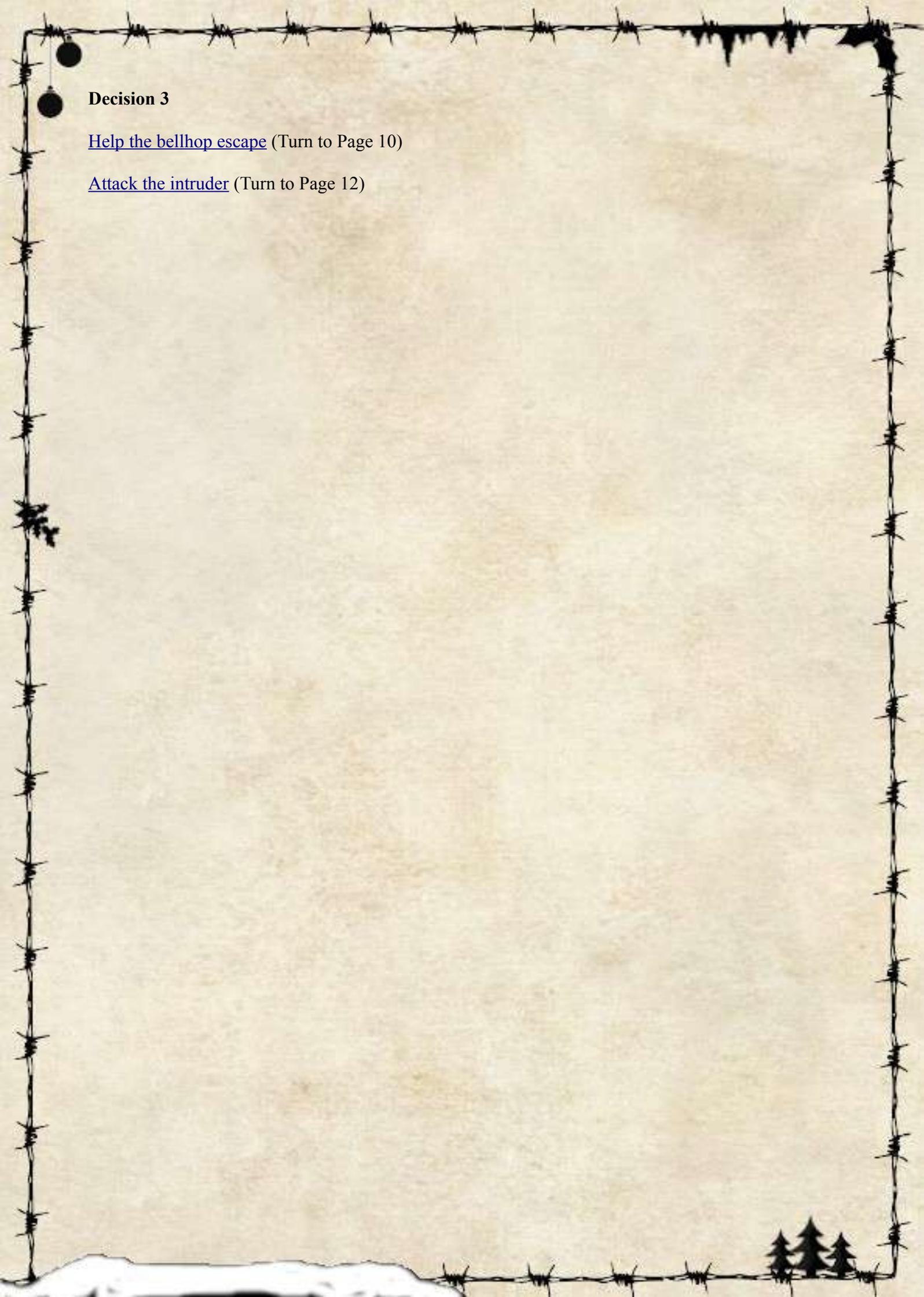
As you near the cattle ranch you hear shouting, and the sound of a gun discharging overwhelms the screams that follow. You round the corner to see several overturned pails of milk soiling the otherwise pristine snow. A trail of displaced topsoil leads away from the ranch, as if something, or someone had recently been dragged through it. Muffled cries draw you round the side of the barn just in time to see the cattle farmer reaching for help, his mouth covered by a misshapen hand that wrenches him back into a gully.

You cross the soiled ground quickly, but by the time you reach the small ravine the screams sound distant, and there is no sign of the farmer. Running a hand across your face you stumble back, tripping and falling to the ground. As you go to stand your hand brushes against a series of small stones, out of place in the overturned soil. Picking them up you recoil in horror as the light better illuminates several teeth, knocked free from their owner. Dropping them you call out for the rancher, and spend the rest of the night searching the area futilely.

As dawn breaks with its brief but welcome glow, you yawn, exhausted. Arriving back at the Inn you collapse into your bed, and quickly drift off into a fitful sleep, your dreams disturbing, terrifying, yet indescribable.

Drenched with a cold sweat, you awaken to a loud bang from downstairs, the sound of clattering pans echoing through the Inn like thunder. A muffled shout rumbles through the floor boards, and a strange chattering noise punctuates the silence that follows. You glance out the window, and see night has fallen once more.

Making your way down the rough wooden stairs of the Inn the chattering intensifies, and sounds of movement seep out from a nearby room. You brace yourself against a wall, and peer around the corner into the darkened kitchen, your eyes taking a moment to adjust to the inky blackness. A blur of movement makes you start, as something small and lithe shoots across a counter-top, stopping at a pile of dirty pans. Whimpers from the corner of the room draw your gaze, and you see the bellhop huddled in the darkness.

A decorative border of barbed wire surrounds the page. In the top-left corner, two black Christmas ornaments hang from the wire. In the bottom-right corner, there are silhouettes of three evergreen trees. The background is a light, textured beige color.

Decision 3

[Help the bellhop escape](#) (Turn to Page 10)

[Attack the intruder](#) (Turn to Page 12)

EXPLORE THE VILLAGE



In all your years as an investigator, mysterious notes have never led to anything good. You crumple the paper into a ball, and toss it to the ground with a sigh. Something strange was happening in this village, and you're not sure you want to be a part of it. Heading back out into the darkness, you draw your coat against the icy wind and walk through the labyrinthine streets. Most windows are sealed behind heavy wooden shutters, but in those that are not you notice carefully placed shoes.

An old woman shuffles by, withered and haggard, an empty sack under her arm. She appears blind, and gropes for you as you pass, begging for food on this cold night. You grimace as she runs a deformed tongue over sharp, fragmented teeth, and apologise before walking on. The village is quiet, the light snowfall the only movement you see on the streets, and you walk till the early hours of the dawn lost in contemplation.

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HELP THE BELLHOP ESCAPE



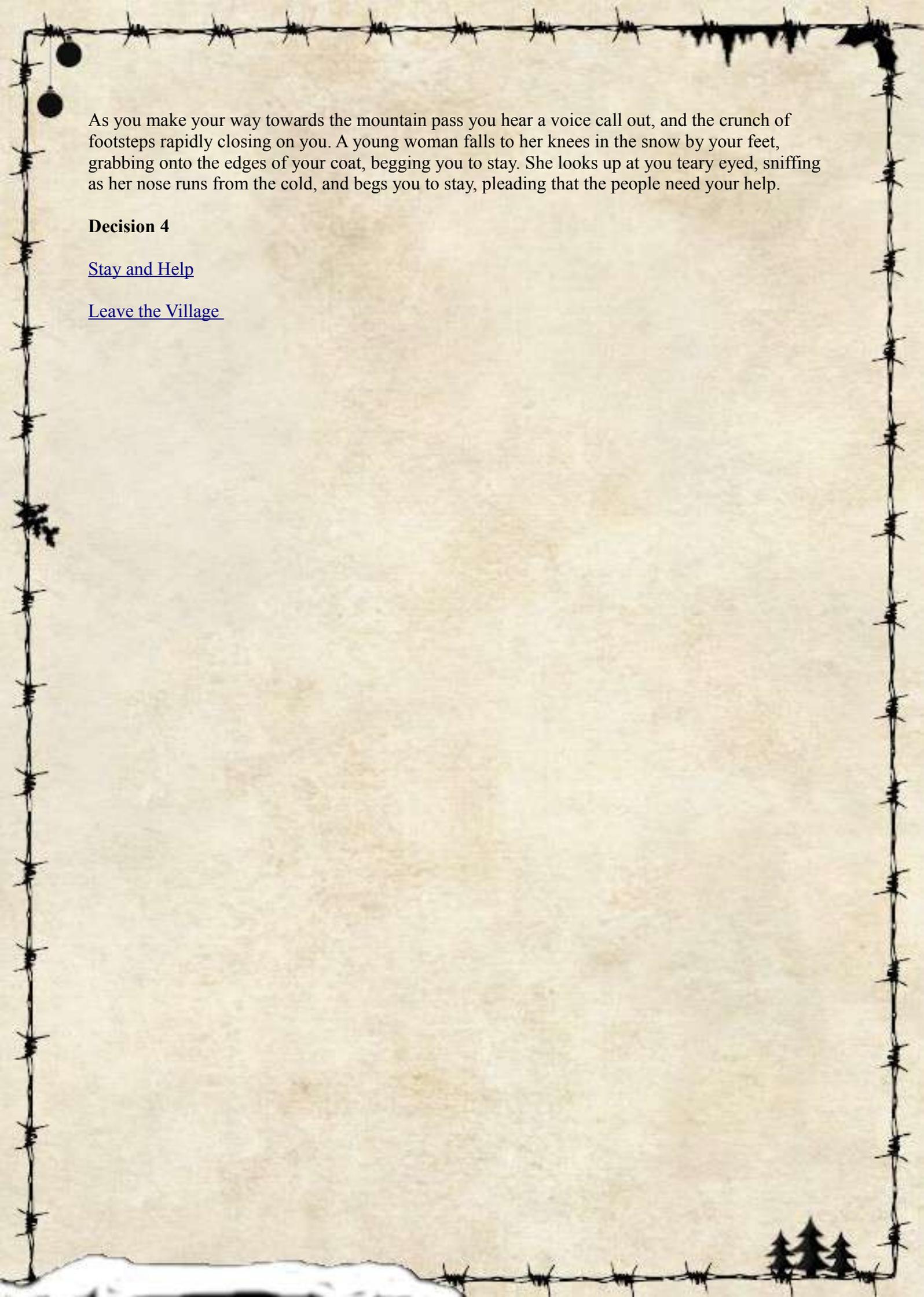
The small figure darts between the kitchenette and the dirty sink, pulling various pans out of the soapy water, the greasy liquid dripping down onto the floor. A scraping noise, like nails on a chalkboard, pierces the air causing you to wince as the figure runs what looks like a large nail across the pan. It opens a jagged maw to tease the ill-gotten scrapings onto its tongue.

Sliding down the coarse wooden wall, splinters piercing the palms of your hand, you attempt to draw the bellhops attention but he is transfixed by the figure atop the counters. Grabbing an apple that has fallen to the floor you roll it across to the bellhop as the scraping noise continues, causing him to jump and look in your direction. His eyes meet yours, and you see the terror in his face.

You motion for him to crawl over, and after some persuasion he draws a low, shaky breath before starting to make his way across the hardwood floor. Your breath hitches in your throat with each step he takes, and your eyes constantly dart to the figure by the sink. As the bellhop raises his hand to move forward once again, you both freeze. It's quiet. With a clatter several pans fall from the counter above the bellhop, and he stifles a cry as the figure sniffs the air, looking out over the kitchen. After what seems like an eternity it returns to the sink, and you both let out a sigh of relief.

The bellhop takes a step forward, and a creak from the floorboard rattles through the inn. You catch a brief glimpse of his face, his eyes trembling with fear, before he disappears in a blur as the figure leaps upon him. His screams barely have time to register before the bellhop is dragged with a sickening crunch through the window, disappearing into the night.

You stand back and survey the destruction wrought upon the inn. It's clear this place is no longer safe, and you quickly gather your things heading out into the night, the first rays of dawn glancing over the valley walls. This wasn't what you signed up for, you should be at home with your family for Christmas, not alone in this god forsaken village.



As you make your way towards the mountain pass you hear a voice call out, and the crunch of footsteps rapidly closing on you. A young woman falls to her knees in the snow by your feet, grabbing onto the edges of your coat, begging you to stay. She looks up at you teary eyed, sniffing as her nose runs from the cold, and begs you to stay, pleading that the people need your help.

Decision 4

[Stay and Help](#)

[Leave the Village](#)

ATTACK THE INTRUDER



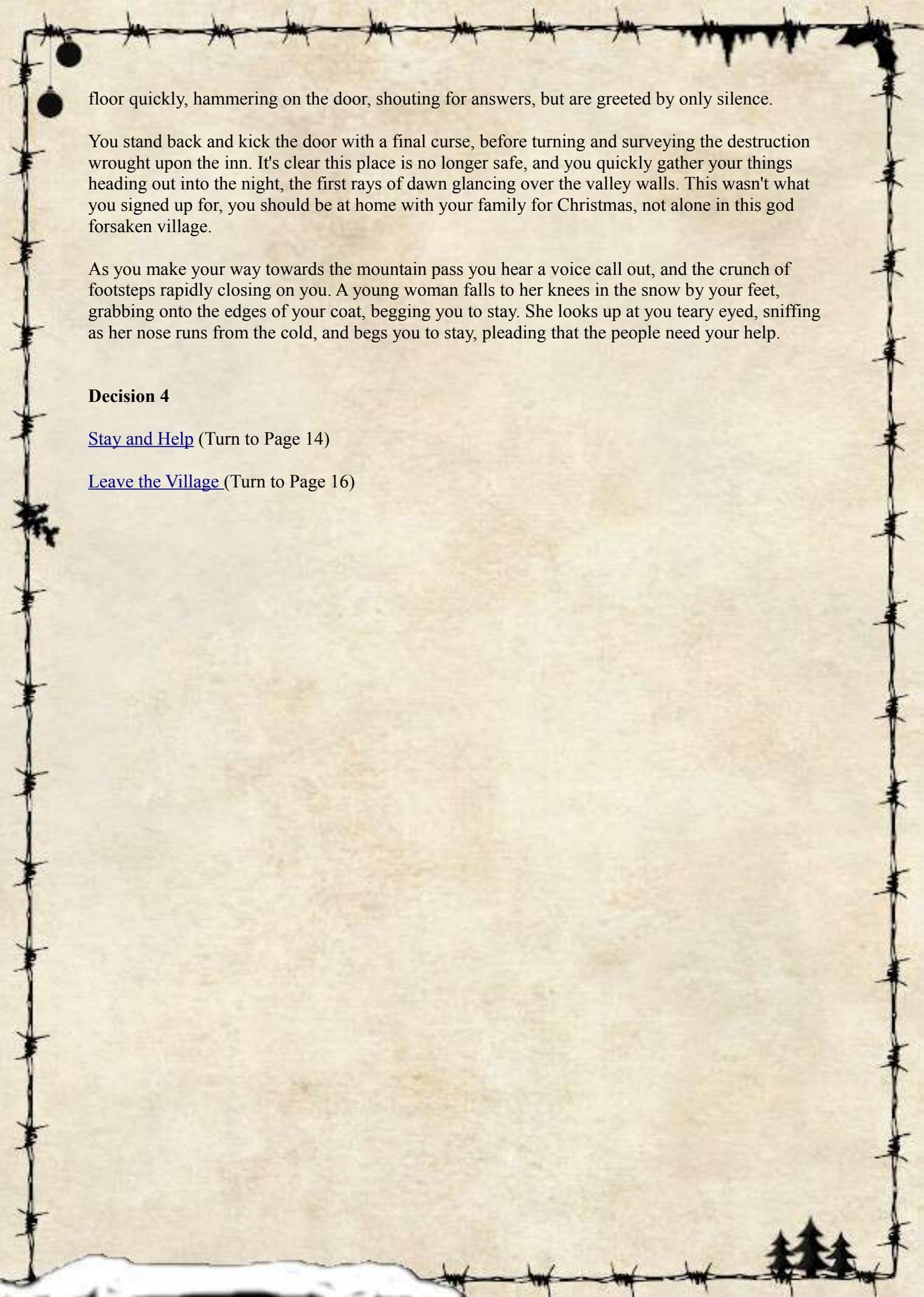
The small figure darts between a basic kitchenette and the dirty sink, pulling various pans out of the soapy water, the greasy liquid dripping down onto the floor. A scraping noise, like nails on a chalkboard, pierces the air causing you to wince as the figure runs what looks like a large nail across the pan. It opens a jagged maw to tease the ill-gotten scrapings onto its tongue.

You see a cast-iron pan laying on the floor nearby, scratch marks littering its surface, and carefully pick it up as the scraping noise masks your efforts. The figure has its back turned to you, and slowly but surely you creep across the kitchen, pan raised in preparation to defend yourself.

From the corner of your eye you see the bellhop catches sight of you, and begins frantically gesturing as if telling you to stop, his face twisted by a mixture of fear and what looks like anger. This distraction is enough for you to lose focus, and your foot finds a loose board in the floor, a loud creak shattering the silence. The small figure lets out an unearthly wail, leaping for you from the sink, and you barely bring the pan up in time to block its attack. The cast iron hits flesh with a sickening crunch, and the figure flies through the window, disappearing into the night with a chattering howl.

For a moment you stand frozen in shock, thoughts rushing through your head, but a shove from the Innkeeper knocks you to your senses. You turn to see him irate, screaming at the bellhop in a dialect you don't understand and gesturing to the window. You've seen shock before, and give it a moment to pass, the Innkeeper gradually calming until he runs a worn hand over his tired face. He pats you on the shoulder and walks past, muttering to himself.

As the adrenaline high begins to fade the room spins, so many thoughts rushing through your mind you struggle to formulate a sentence. A question takes shape in your throat, but the Innkeeper guides the Bellhop into another room, a solid wooden door slamming behind them. You cross the



floor quickly, hammering on the door, shouting for answers, but are greeted by only silence.

You stand back and kick the door with a final curse, before turning and surveying the destruction wrought upon the inn. It's clear this place is no longer safe, and you quickly gather your things heading out into the night, the first rays of dawn glancing over the valley walls. This wasn't what you signed up for, you should be at home with your family for Christmas, not alone in this god forsaken village.

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Decision 4

[Stay and Help](#) (Turn to Page 14)

[Leave the Village](#) (Turn to Page 16)

STAY AND HELP THE WOMAN

You grimace and glance towards the road ahead, but sigh heavily as you realise you can't leave, you never could say no to a pretty face. Helping the woman to her feet she thanks you, introducing herself as Guðrún, and leads you back to her home offering you shelter. The small thatch hut isn't much to look at, but you welcome the warmth it exudes against the biting winter cold. She quickly crosses the room and pours two cups of what look like herbal tea from an iron pot on the fire, offering one to you which you gratefully accept.

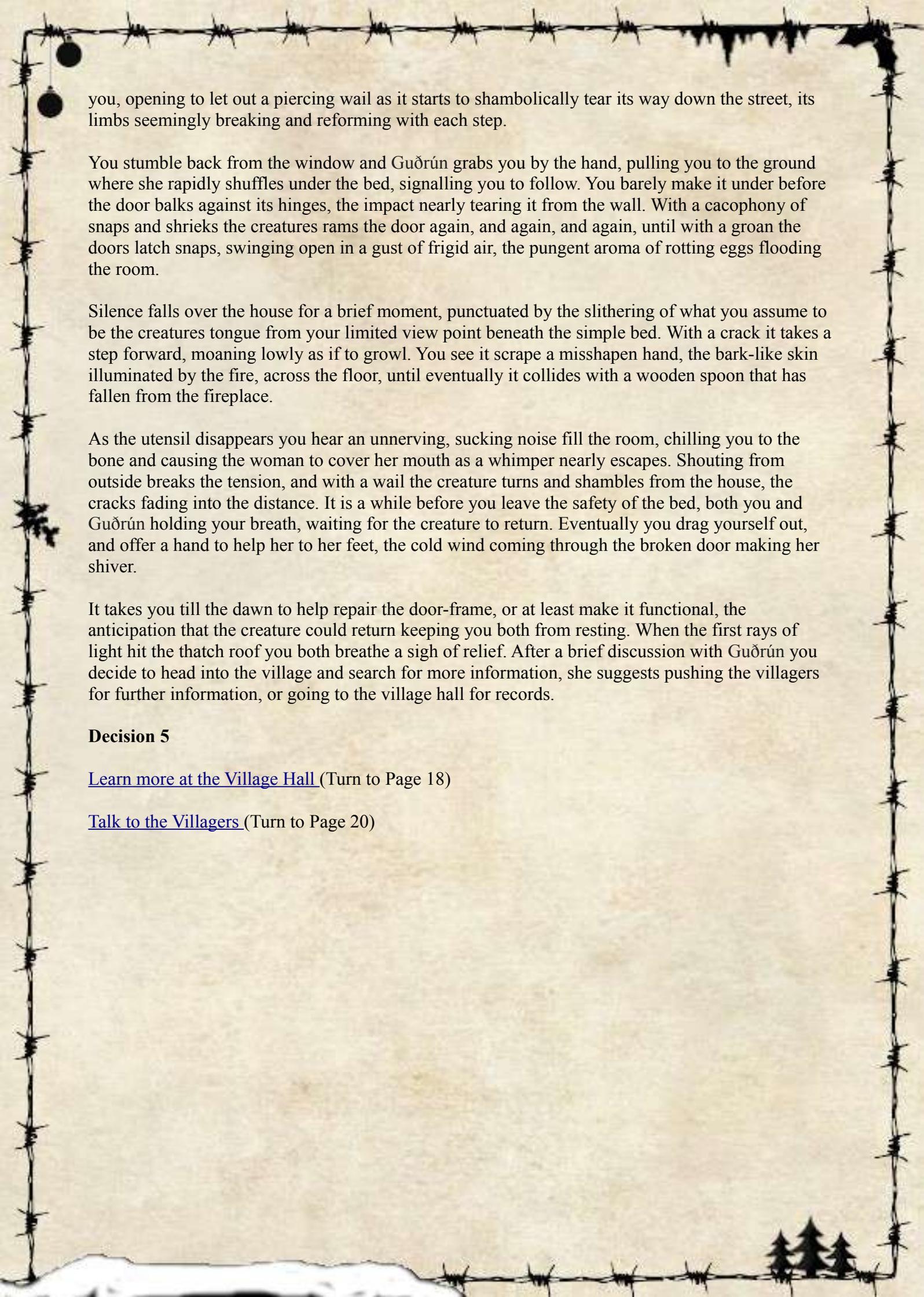
Sitting near the flames, she stirs the ashes wistfully, and starts to talk quietly. Guðrún tells you of long nights struggling against unseasonal weather, and fear of the creatures that prowl the darkened forest. You push her for more information, wolves? Bears? What creatures?

Guðrún hesitates, glancing out of the window as if afraid of being watched, and turns to you speaking in a hushed tone. You gaze into the fire as she tells you a story, of creatures living in the mountains, of ancient entities that roam the land when the veil between our world and theirs is thinnest, and of their hunt.

You scoff at the story, standing and pacing the room. It sounds like a children's tale, it is a children's tale, you've heard versions of it before. People are going missing, this isn't some game! She stands to reply, frustration lining her face, when a low moaning noise rumbles through the house. You glance toward the window, and see to your surprise that night has fallen once again.

A horrific cracking noise comes from the road, like sticks snapping under pressure, and moaning that undulates between a mournful rumble and a piercing wail shrieks through the house. Guðrún pales, and as you move to gaze out the window she tries to stop you. Silhouetted against the slivers of light leaking from the nearby homes, an inhuman figure stands swaying in the darkness. Its distorted, deformed body resembles a tree due to its angular construction, and a long, thin protrusion slides from what you assume is the creature's mouth, licking the air as if searching for something. As you gaze in horror it stops, and the mass you assume to be its head turns towards





you, opening to let out a piercing wail as it starts to shambolically tear its way down the street, its limbs seemingly breaking and reforming with each step.

You stumble back from the window and Guðrún grabs you by the hand, pulling you to the ground where she rapidly shuffles under the bed, signalling you to follow. You barely make it under before the door bunks against its hinges, the impact nearly tearing it from the wall. With a cacophony of snaps and shrieks the creature rams the door again, and again, and again, until with a groan the door latches snaps, swinging open in a gust of frigid air, the pungent aroma of rotting eggs flooding the room.

Silence falls over the house for a brief moment, punctuated by the slithering of what you assume to be the creature's tongue from your limited view point beneath the simple bed. With a crack it takes a step forward, moaning lowly as if to growl. You see it scrape a misshapen hand, the bark-like skin illuminated by the fire, across the floor, until eventually it collides with a wooden spoon that has fallen from the fireplace.

As the utensil disappears you hear an unnerving, sucking noise fill the room, chilling you to the bone and causing the woman to cover her mouth as a whimper nearly escapes. Shouting from outside breaks the tension, and with a wail the creature turns and shambles from the house, the cracks fading into the distance. It is a while before you leave the safety of the bed, both you and Guðrún holding your breath, waiting for the creature to return. Eventually you drag yourself out, and offer a hand to help her to her feet, the cold wind coming through the broken door making her shiver.

It takes you till the dawn to help repair the door-frame, or at least make it functional, the anticipation that the creature could return keeping you both from resting. When the first rays of light hit the thatch roof you both breathe a sigh of relief. After a brief discussion with Guðrún you decide to head into the village and search for more information, she suggests pushing the villagers for further information, or going to the village hall for records.

Decision 5

[Learn more at the Village Hall](#) (Turn to Page 18)

[Talk to the Villagers](#) (Turn to Page 20)

LEAVE THE VILLAGE



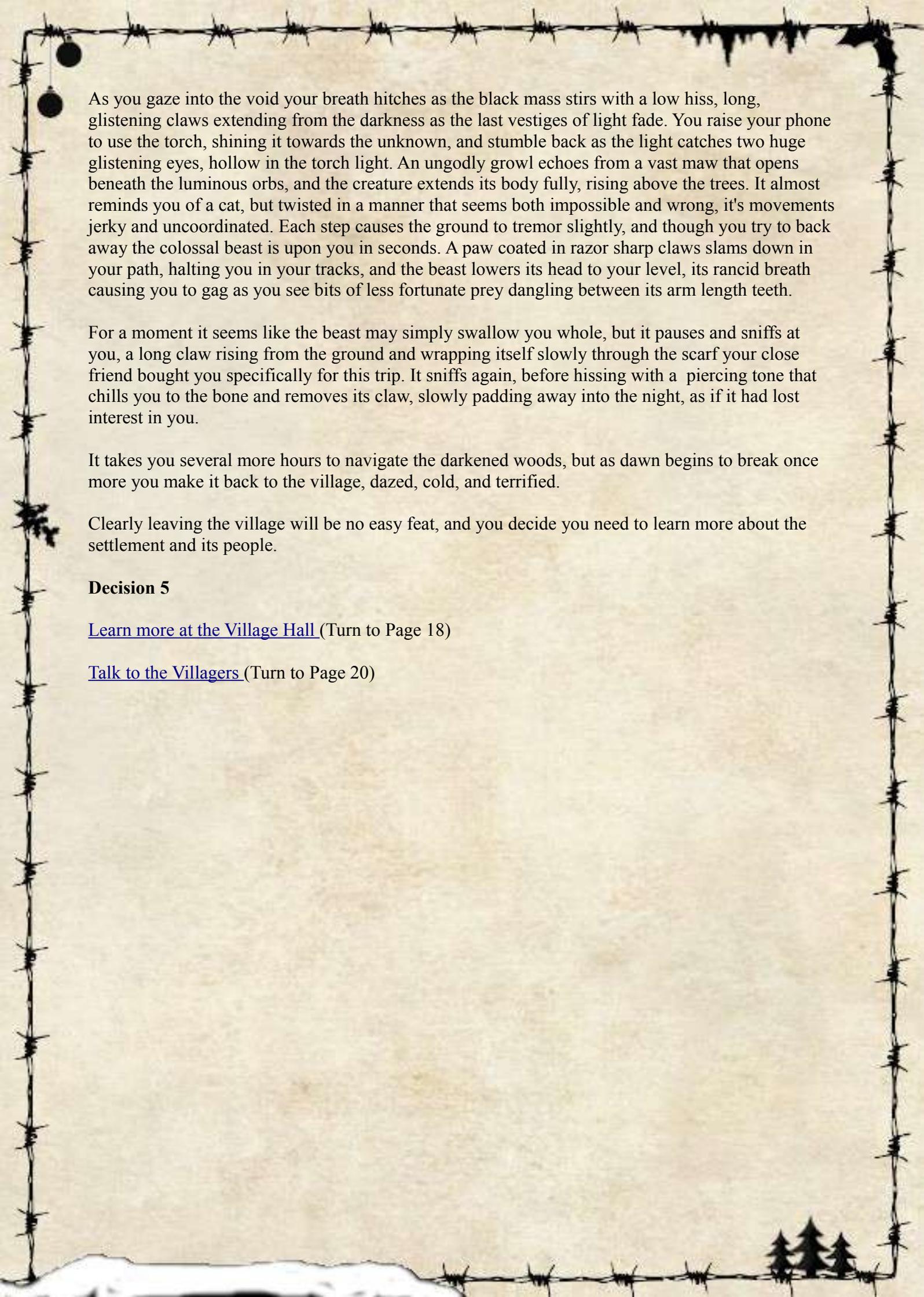
You gently remove the woman's hands from your coat, staring at the village behind you. Part of you knows you should stay, something is clearly wrong here and these people need help, but it's too much. Ignoring her desperate cries you begin the ascent towards the mountain pass, quickly losing sight of the village through the skeletal birch forest, white barked trunks twisted in the unseasonal snow.

As you walk you ponder everything that happened in your short stay in the village, the dead livestock, the disappearance of the cattle rancher, and the seemingly impossible creature at the inn. You become so lost in your thoughts that it takes nearly tripping over a dip in the snow to realise you've been walking far longer than it should have taken to reach the pass, and that the forest now surrounds you on all sides. You climb to your feet, brushing snow from your trousers, and take a step back to get a better view of the dip into which you fell. Is it a trick of the light you ask yourself? Coincidence? Your mind races to find a logical answer to what could have created the huge paw-print that lays in front of you, big enough for you to stand in.

Already unnerved by your time in the village this proves too much, and you quickly make your way towards the lip of the valley, using the peaks peeking over the treetops to guide your journey. Every so often you stare behind you through the scattered tree trunks, sure you catch sight of something moving just out of your eyeline, but never able to get more than a glimpse. The further you walk, the more concerned you become as the sun begins to dip below the valley, and dying light elongates the shadows of the trees making it harder to see.

You've walked for hours, but the edge of the valley never seems to draw closer, and as you stop to gaze around you for an answer you hear a second set of footsteps stop some way off. Frozen in fear, you stare into the darkening twilight for the source of the noise, and eventually your eyes are drawn to one patch of trees that seems darker than the others.





As you gaze into the void your breath hitches as the black mass stirs with a low hiss, long, glistening claws extending from the darkness as the last vestiges of light fade. You raise your phone to use the torch, shining it towards the unknown, and stumble back as the light catches two huge glistening eyes, hollow in the torch light. An ungodly growl echoes from a vast maw that opens beneath the luminous orbs, and the creature extends its body fully, rising above the trees. It almost reminds you of a cat, but twisted in a manner that seems both impossible and wrong, its movements jerky and uncoordinated. Each step causes the ground to tremor slightly, and though you try to back away the colossal beast is upon you in seconds. A paw coated in razor sharp claws slams down in your path, halting you in your tracks, and the beast lowers its head to your level, its rancid breath causing you to gag as you see bits of less fortunate prey dangling between its arm length teeth.

For a moment it seems like the beast may simply swallow you whole, but it pauses and sniffs at you, a long claw rising from the ground and wrapping itself slowly through the scarf your close friend bought you specifically for this trip. It sniffs again, before hissing with a piercing tone that chills you to the bone and removes its claw, slowly padding away into the night, as if it had lost interest in you.

It takes you several more hours to navigate the darkened woods, but as dawn begins to break once more you make it back to the village, dazed, cold, and terrified.

Clearly leaving the village will be no easy feat, and you decide you need to learn more about the settlement and its people.

Decision 5

[Learn more at the Village Hall](#) (Turn to Page 18)

[Talk to the Villagers](#) (Turn to Page 20)

LEARN MORE AT THE VILLAGE HALL

The lack of a good nights sleep is catching up with you, and you blink your eyes blearily as you make your way through the snow encrusted streets towards the village hall. The building blends in with the surrounding homes, indistinguishable were it not for a small plaque in front of the wooden stairs that lead up to its porch.

The birch planks groan with each step you take, swollen and warped with age, and before you reach the top of the stairs the door pops open, a wizened man poking his head out cautiously. Spectacles dangle from a chain around his neck.

He asks you your business, narrowing his eyes as you tell him of your investigation, and seems reluctant to let you in. When you flash your badge at him he mutters to himself and disappears behind the door, rattling a small chain loose and then letting the door swing open as he retreats into the musty building.

As you step into the village hall, the dust laden air makes your nose itch, and you can see the building does not receive regular visitors. Discarded books lay scattered across several small desks, and a few key moments of village history hang framed upon the wall. The old man watches you with a grimace on his face, asking exactly what you're looking for. When you explain your interest in the village's history, he guides you over to a small corner of the room where several pictures and newspaper clippings hang from rusty hooks.

The village has had very few moments of note, but a series of newspaper clippings focused around the closure of a nearby sulphur mine stand out to you. It seems that the village was founded to support mining infrastructure in the area when an old mine shaft from the 1700's was re-opened, and was fairly successful until a series of incidents caused the closure of the mine. The details are



vague, referencing a cave in and 13 missing miners but not going into specifics. One thing does stand out in several of the images, a symbol you've seen etched into several of the buildings around village. You turn to ask the old man about it, only to catch a glimpse of a heavy iron fire-poker swinging towards you head, a flash of stars quickly fading into darkness.

You wake not knowing how much time has passed, only that the splitting headache can't be a good sign, and that the intense cold likely means you're outside. As you strain against the ropes binding your wrists and legs you can hear several voices chanting in an odd dialect you're not familiar with, their voices muffled by a sack that covers your head.

The sound of unnatural, heavy breathing emanates from the direction of the voices, and you can make out muffled screams over the thrum of the chanting. Suddenly the chorus increases with unbridled fervour, and a nauseating gurgling sound fills the area accompanied by what sounds like the splitting of skin and the twisting of bone. One final scream from whatever victim has met this terrible fate rings across the clearing, before a sickening crunching noise overwhelms all other sounds. The crunching continues for several minutes, belches and snorts mixing with the vile sounds of chewing, before the chanting begins once more, the stomping of feet implying the gourmand is still not satisfied.

Rough hands grab you from where you rest and haul you to your feet, ripping the sack off of your head. For a moment the light from a small fire at the centre of the clearing blinds you, but your eyes soon adjust to see several members of the village, including the elderly man from the village hall, stood chanting around a simmering pot of what looks like stew.

An excited snort draws your eyes to the tree line, and you see a voluminous shape squeezing between the tree trunks, too far from the fire to make out details, but close enough to recognise that it cannot be human. The figure makes excited squealing noises, champing a large mouth in anticipation as the villagers haul you towards the pot. Drawing closer you can see the remains of whatever victim stood here before you floating on the stews surface, left-overs saved for later.

Struggling against your bindings you manage to slip a hand free, pushing one of your captors away as you strain against the coarse rope binding your other hand. As the other villager grapples with you, you realise your next decision could mean life of death.

Decision 6

[Knock over the stew pot](#) (Turn to Page 22)

[Try to tackle the cultist and run into the woods](#) (Turn to page 24)

TALK TO THE VILLAGERS

As the brief period of daylight shines across the village, activity within the settlement begins to increase as people start their daily routines. Clearly the village folk must know more than they let on about the strange occurrences of the past few nights, and you set out determined to get some answers.

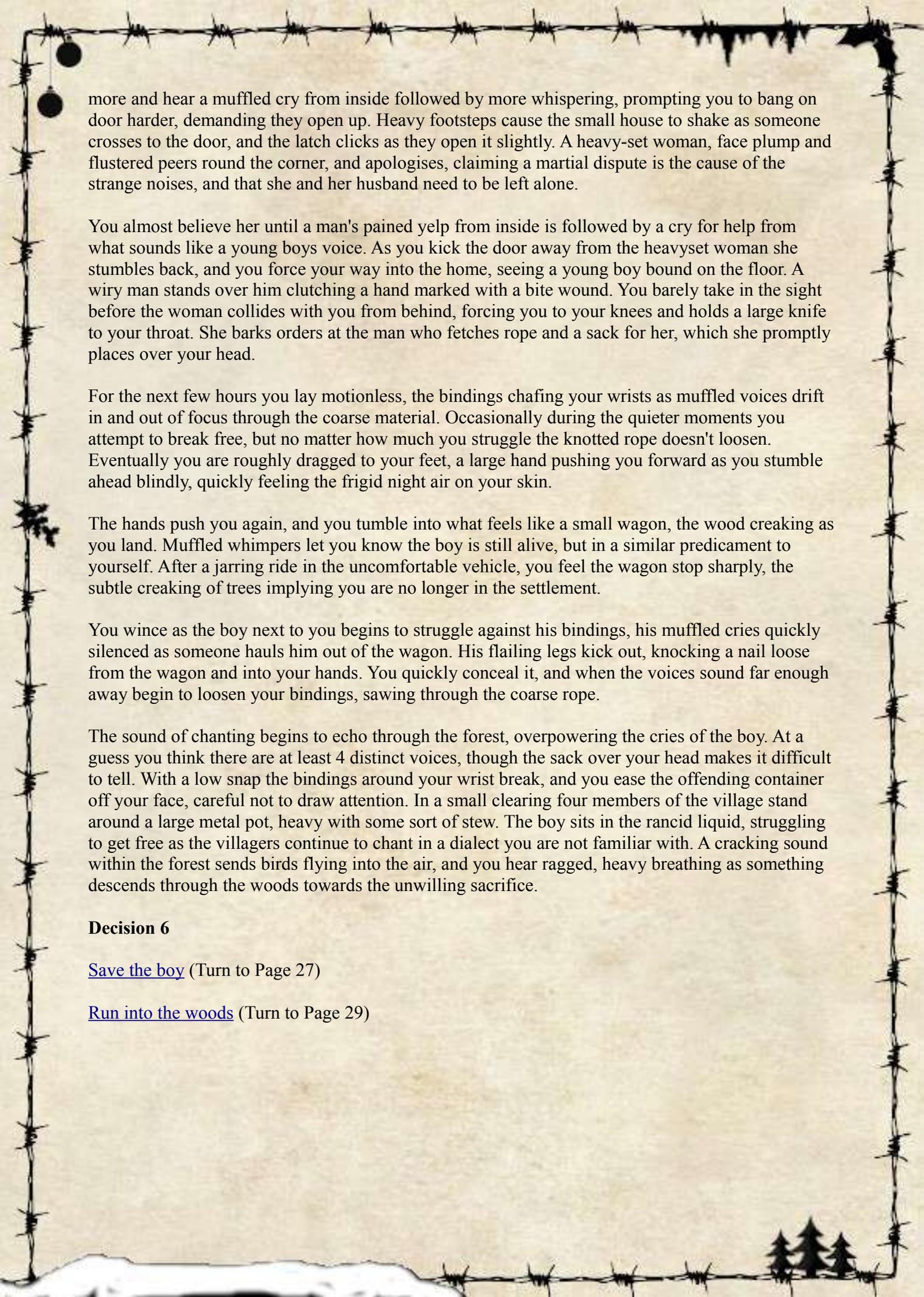
You approach a young woman who stands near her home loading wood onto a small wagon. A baby sleeps in a pram nearby, cocooned in an abundance of blankets. As she sees you approaching you can see her eyes dart about looking for an escape, but finding none she reluctantly stands and greets you half-heartedly. You begin by asking her a standardised set of interview questions.

Her name is Sigrun Olafsdotter, her occupation, Baker. Gradually you begin to enquire about the strange goings on in the village. At this point she becomes nervous, fidgeting where she stands, denying any knowledge of such strangeness. She claims she was up all night with the baby and couldn't hear anything over its cries. As if on cue the baby lets out a wail as it wakes, and she apologises saying she has to get him inside, quickly wheeling the pram into the house and shutting the door leaving the trolley of wood behind.

Each conversation ends in a similar manner, people are compliant enough until the conversation leans towards the bizarre happenings of the village, and then they respond with either fear or anger, quickly finding a way to excuse themselves. None the less, you do pick up on a few key bits of information about the village, how it was once a mining community before the sulphur mine shut, how many still haven't recovered from losing their job, and how close-nit the community has become in its isolation.

As the daylight begins to draw to an end once more you sigh, knocking on one final door. Something inside clatters to the floor with a bang, and you hear hushed whispers. You knock once





more and hear a muffled cry from inside followed by more whispering, prompting you to bang on door harder, demanding they open up. Heavy footsteps cause the small house to shake as someone crosses to the door, and the latch clicks as they open it slightly. A heavy-set woman, face plump and flustered peers round the corner, and apologises, claiming a martial dispute is the cause of the strange noises, and that she and her husband need to be left alone.

You almost believe her until a man's pained yelp from inside is followed by a cry for help from what sounds like a young boys voice. As you kick the door away from the heavyset woman she stumbles back, and you force your way into the home, seeing a young boy bound on the floor. A wiry man stands over him clutching a hand marked with a bite wound. You barely take in the sight before the woman collides with you from behind, forcing you to your knees and holds a large knife to your throat. She barks orders at the man who fetches rope and a sack for her, which she promptly places over your head.

For the next few hours you lay motionless, the bindings chafing your wrists as muffled voices drift in and out of focus through the coarse material. Occasionally during the quieter moments you attempt to break free, but no matter how much you struggle the knotted rope doesn't loosen. Eventually you are roughly dragged to your feet, a large hand pushing you forward as you stumble ahead blindly, quickly feeling the frigid night air on your skin.

The hands push you again, and you tumble into what feels like a small wagon, the wood creaking as you land. Muffled whimpers let you know the boy is still alive, but in a similar predicament to yourself. After a jarring ride in the uncomfortable vehicle, you feel the wagon stop sharply, the subtle creaking of trees implying you are no longer in the settlement.

You wince as the boy next to you begins to struggle against his bindings, his muffled cries quickly silenced as someone hauls him out of the wagon. His flailing legs kick out, knocking a nail loose from the wagon and into your hands. You quickly conceal it, and when the voices sound far enough away begin to loosen your bindings, sawing through the coarse rope.

The sound of chanting begins to echo through the forest, overpowering the cries of the boy. At a guess you think there are at least 4 distinct voices, though the sack over your head makes it difficult to tell. With a low snap the bindings around your wrist break, and you ease the offending container off your face, careful not to draw attention. In a small clearing four members of the village stand around a large metal pot, heavy with some sort of stew. The boy sits in the rancid liquid, struggling to get free as the villagers continue to chant in a dialect you are not familiar with. A cracking sound within the forest sends birds flying into the air, and you hear ragged, heavy breathing as something descends through the woods towards the unwilling sacrifice.

Decision 6

[Save the boy](#) (Turn to Page 27)

[Run into the woods](#) (Turn to Page 29)

KNOCK OVER THE STEW POT



The villagers begin to close around you, their chanting increasing in fervour at the unexpected interruption, and you see your exits quickly blocked. In a last ditch effort you shove the villager grappling you as hard as you can, sending him tumbling into the stew pot which rocks back and forth over the fire before upending. Fetid, bubbling liquid pours out over the villager and across the floor.

The villagers chanting ceases as they wail in a mixture of anger and fear, a loud, distraught below from the treeline intermingling with their cries. The now stew soaked villager sits trembling on the ground, frozen in fear as the thud of large footsteps in the woods increase in rapidity, the enraged entity approaching fast. A tree falling snaps him from his terrified fugue state, and he struggles to his feet amongst the lumpy broth, attempting to flee into the woods as the others clamber past to right the pot once more. Suddenly, as if hitting an invisible barrier, the stew soaked villager is thrown backwards off his feet to the ground with a startled gasp. He tries to scream but it is cut short as you see what you can only describe as a tongue wrapped around his neck, tightening its grip. In a last desperate bid for freedom he reaches out for the villagers, and disappears as the tongue is retracted by the creature in the woods, the air soon filling with the sickening crunch of bone and sinew.

At this point the villagers scatter, their devotion to the ritual abandoned in favour of self preservation, and you join them in fleeing towards the darkened forest, stripping the last of your bindings as you run. The elderly gentleman from the village hall struggles to keep up as you hit the



treeline, his frailty preventing him from hurdling obstructions like the rest of you, and with a snap like thunder he is flung back into the darkness as the tongue once again finds purchase.

You steel yourself against the grotesque sounds of digestion and continue steadfast into the darkness, gritting your teeth as one by one you hear the screams and cries of the villagers silenced, praying that you won't be next.

Whether by good fortune, or divine intervention, you soon see the light of the village and make a bee line for the inn. Barrelling through the door with little care for decorum, you slam it behind you, gathering as many things as you can to barricade the small wooden doorway. The Innkeeper rises from behind his desk, startled by your entrance, and for a moment you stand at odds to each other, unsure of who you can trust. With a nod he quickly joins you in barricading the door, and you breathe a small sigh of relief.

You sit until dawn in silence, guarding the door with bleary, sleep deprived eyes, the Innkeeper keeping watch next to you. Occasionally something bellows hauntingly from deep within the woods, but it never draws closer to the village, perhaps satisfied by its meal.

As the days first light begins to breach the windows, the Innkeeper rises, and begins to prepare a simple breakfast as you slowly dismantle the barricade. He places the small selection of oatmeal, cold meat and a steel pot of Skyr yoghurt in front of you, and your stomach growls fiercely. You realise how little time you've taken to care for yourself since arriving, thanking him for his kindness, to which he grunts and walks away, disappearing into the back-room. The meal is simple, yet hearty, and soon you feel your stomach swell comfortably.

You begin to hear movement outside the house as the villagers start their daily routines, and feel your pulse raise. Who can you trust? Is the entire village a part of what you saw last night? You run a hand across your tired face, determination to gain answers fading as you yawn from exhaustion. A quick nap is what you need, you think, just to keep you sharp. You make your way to your room, and take a few moments to drag a wooden chest of drawers across the door, barricading it against any unwelcome guests. Collapsing into your bed you quickly fall into another disturbing sleep, horrific creatures haunting your dreams.

When you finally wake darkness has fallen again, and you resolve to simply wait until day breaks once more before investigating further, not keen to encounter another nightmare in the streets. You sigh loudly, running your hands across your face, and stop sharply as you hear breathing beneath you. Slowly lowering your hands, you slow your own breathing, trying to be as quiet as possible. In between each of your breaths, a ragged, wheezing exhale occurs from underneath the bed, a rattling noise accompanying each discharge like coins in a can.

Decision 7

[Stay in Bed and wait](#) (Turn to Page 32)

[Attempt to scare away whatever lurks beneath the bed](#) (Turn to Page 34)

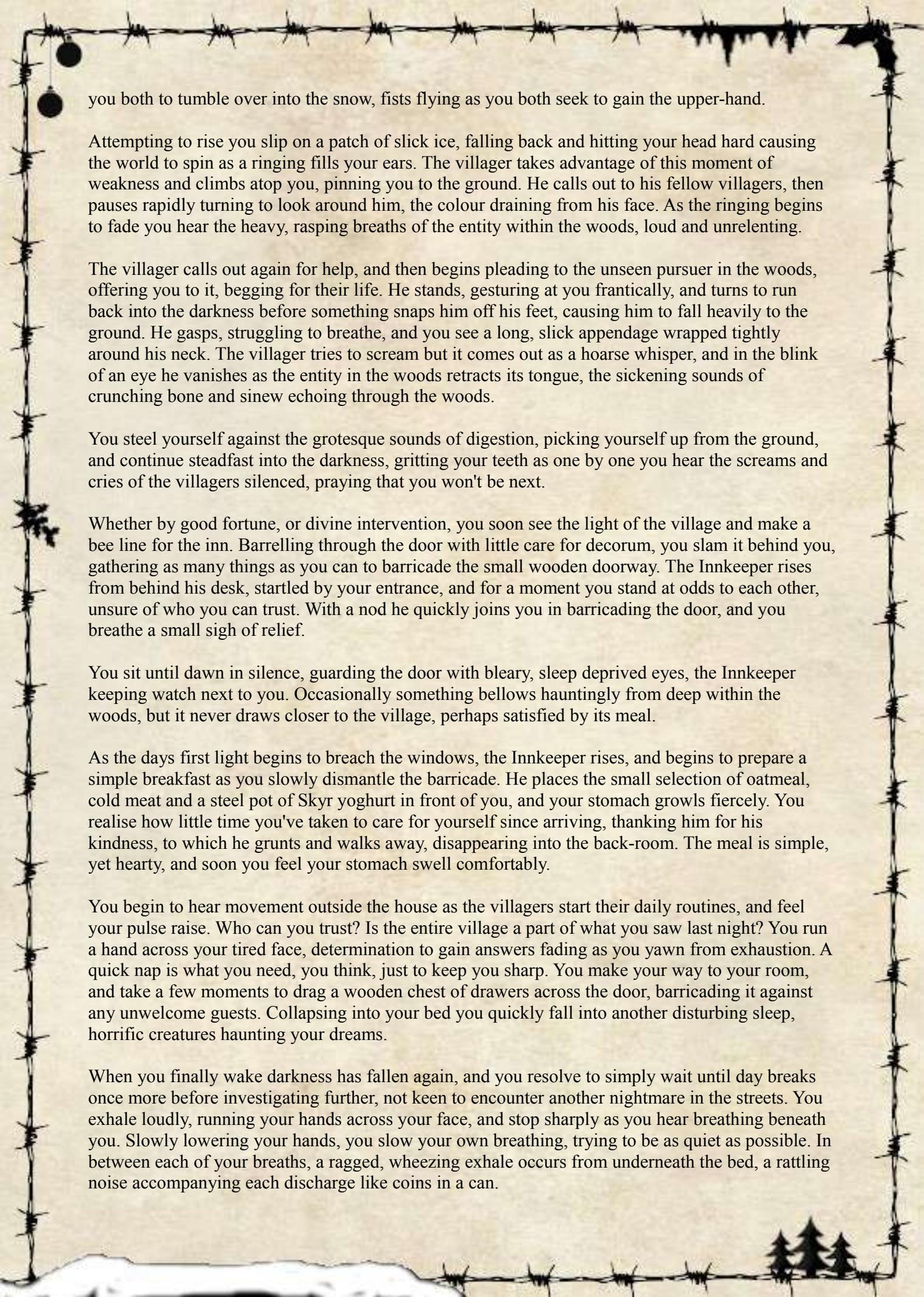
TRY TO TACKLE THE CULTIST AND RUN INTO THE WOODS



The villagers begin to close around you, their chanting increasing in fervour at the unexpected interruption, and you see your exits quickly blocked. Seeing little chance of escape you grab the villager attempting to grapple you and spin him, wrapping the loosened ropes around his neck as a form of human shield. The other villagers hesitate, their chanting faltering as they seem unsure how to proceed. Struggling to breathe, your hostage claws at your arm, begging you to stop, to just accept your fate and let this happen, that the village needs it.

Grim determination sets in, you won't be a part of these peoples twisted plans, and as they draw closer you throw your hostage at the elderly man from the village hall, sending both tumbling to the ground as you bolt past into the dark woods. A piercing howl shatters the quiet of the woods from somewhere in the darkness, and as you bolt blindly through the spindly birch trees, stumbling through the snow, you hear heavy footsteps giving chase and a guttural, rasping breathing closing on you.

Picking a direction at random you change your bearing, hoping to throw off your pursuer, and a tree nearby explodes as something impacts it with enough velocity to shatter the frail trunk. A squeal of frustration pierces through the cold air, the high pitched whine making you shudder as you run. The dim moonlight does little to guide your path, and before long you are completely lost within the forest. You glance around as you run hoping to find something to orientate yourself with, and completely miss the villager closing in from your left. They tackle you hard to the ground, causing



you both to tumble over into the snow, fists flying as you both seek to gain the upper-hand.

Attempting to rise you slip on a patch of slick ice, falling back and hitting your head hard causing the world to spin as a ringing fills your ears. The villager takes advantage of this moment of weakness and climbs atop you, pinning you to the ground. He calls out to his fellow villagers, then pauses rapidly turning to look around him, the colour draining from his face. As the ringing begins to fade you hear the heavy, rasping breaths of the entity within the woods, loud and unrelenting.

The villager calls out again for help, and then begins pleading to the unseen pursuer in the woods, offering you to it, begging for their life. He stands, gesturing at you frantically, and turns to run back into the darkness before something snaps him off his feet, causing him to fall heavily to the ground. He gasps, struggling to breathe, and you see a long, slick appendage wrapped tightly around his neck. The villager tries to scream but it comes out as a hoarse whisper, and in the blink of an eye he vanishes as the entity in the woods retracts its tongue, the sickening sounds of crunching bone and sinew echoing through the woods.

You steel yourself against the grotesque sounds of digestion, picking yourself up from the ground, and continue steadfast into the darkness, gritting your teeth as one by one you hear the screams and cries of the villagers silenced, praying that you won't be next.

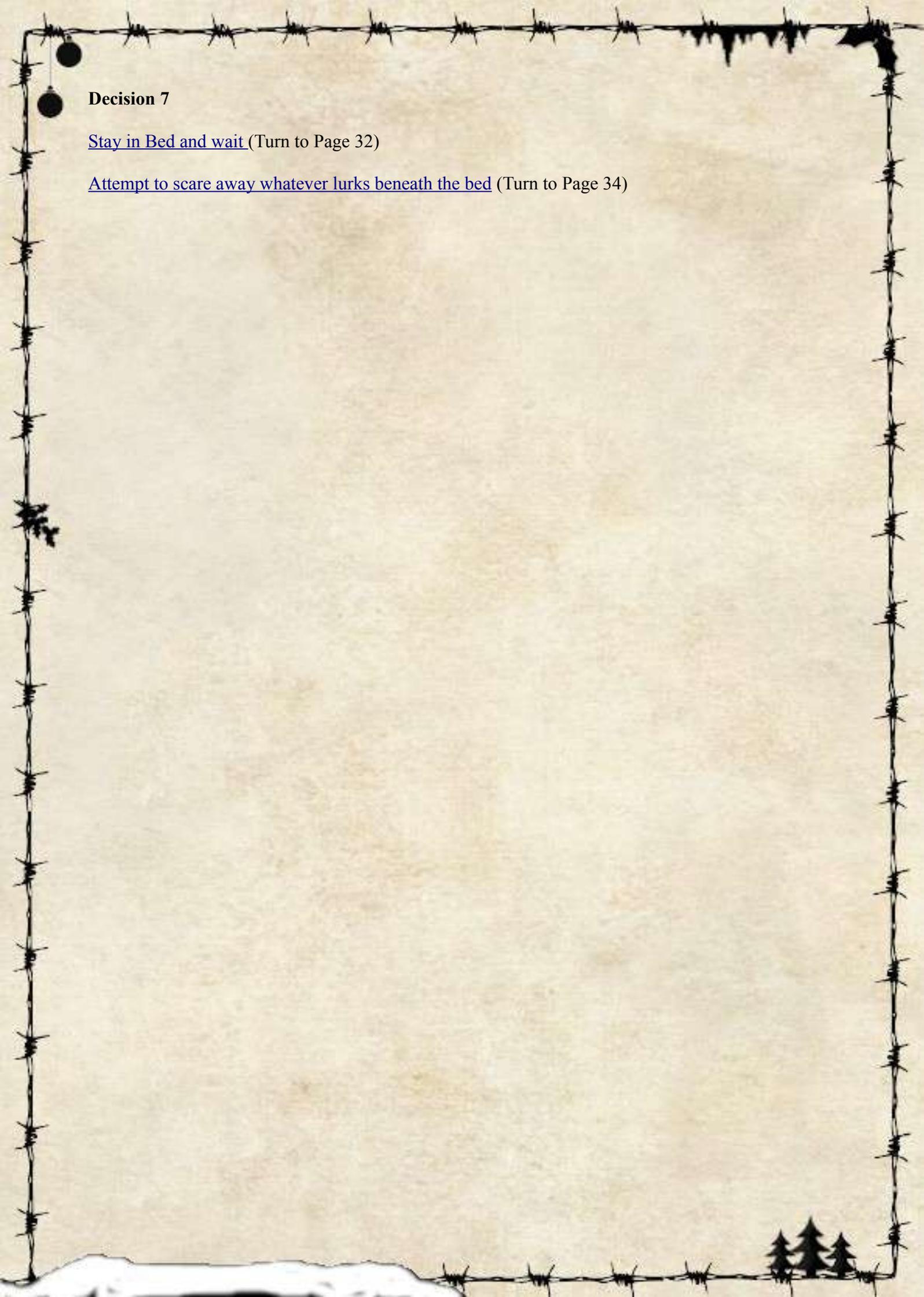
Whether by good fortune, or divine intervention, you soon see the light of the village and make a bee line for the inn. Barrelling through the door with little care for decorum, you slam it behind you, gathering as many things as you can to barricade the small wooden doorway. The Innkeeper rises from behind his desk, startled by your entrance, and for a moment you stand at odds to each other, unsure of who you can trust. With a nod he quickly joins you in barricading the door, and you breathe a small sigh of relief.

You sit until dawn in silence, guarding the door with bleary, sleep deprived eyes, the Innkeeper keeping watch next to you. Occasionally something bellows hauntingly from deep within the woods, but it never draws closer to the village, perhaps satisfied by its meal.

As the days first light begins to breach the windows, the Innkeeper rises, and begins to prepare a simple breakfast as you slowly dismantle the barricade. He places the small selection of oatmeal, cold meat and a steel pot of Skyr yoghurt in front of you, and your stomach growls fiercely. You realise how little time you've taken to care for yourself since arriving, thanking him for his kindness, to which he grunts and walks away, disappearing into the back-room. The meal is simple, yet hearty, and soon you feel your stomach swell comfortably.

You begin to hear movement outside the house as the villagers start their daily routines, and feel your pulse raise. Who can you trust? Is the entire village a part of what you saw last night? You run a hand across your tired face, determination to gain answers fading as you yawn from exhaustion. A quick nap is what you need, you think, just to keep you sharp. You make your way to your room, and take a few moments to drag a wooden chest of drawers across the door, barricading it against any unwelcome guests. Collapsing into your bed you quickly fall into another disturbing sleep, horrific creatures haunting your dreams.

When you finally wake darkness has fallen again, and you resolve to simply wait until day breaks once more before investigating further, not keen to encounter another nightmare in the streets. You exhale loudly, running your hands across your face, and stop sharply as you hear breathing beneath you. Slowly lowering your hands, you slow your own breathing, trying to be as quiet as possible. In between each of your breaths, a ragged, wheezing exhale occurs from underneath the bed, a rattling noise accompanying each discharge like coins in a can.

A decorative border made of black barbed wire surrounds the page. In the top-left corner, two black circular ornaments hang from the wire. In the bottom-right corner, there are silhouettes of three evergreen trees. At the bottom of the page, there is a white, snow-like area.

Decision 7

[Stay in Bed and wait](#) (Turn to Page 32)

[Attempt to scare away whatever lurks beneath the bed](#) (Turn to Page 34)

SAVE THE BOY



With little time to act you leap from the wagon and rush towards the clearing, ramming into one of the villagers from behind sending him tumbling into the stew pot which rocks back and forth over the fire before upending. The fetid, bubbling liquid pours over the villager and across the floor, and the boy rolls from the cauldron. You move quickly, grabbing him and dragging him clear of the pot.

The villagers chanting ceases as they wail in a mixture of anger and fear, a loud, distraught below from the treeline intermingling with their cries. The now stew soaked villager sits trembling on the ground, frozen in fear as the thud of large footsteps in the woods increase in rapidity as the enraged entity approaches. A tree falling snaps him from his terrified fugue state, and he struggles to his feet amongst the lumpy broth, attempting to flee into the woods as the others clamber past to right the pot once more. Suddenly, as if hitting an invisible barrier, the stew soaked villager is thrown backwards off his feet to the ground with a startled gasp. He tries to scream, but it is cut short as you see a deformed tongue wrapped around his neck, tightening its grip. In a last desperate bid for freedom he reaches out for the other villagers, and disappears as the tongue is retracted by the creature in the woods, the air soon filling with the sickening crunch of bone and sinew.

At this point the villagers scatter, their devotion to the ritual abandoned in favour of self preservation, and you join them in fleeing towards the darkened forest. As you run you untie the last of the boys bindings, keeping him ahead of you. An elderly gentleman from the villagers struggles to keep up as you hit the treeline, his frailty preventing him from hurdling obstructions like the rest of you, and with a snap like thunder he is flung back into the darkness as the tongue once again

finds purchase.

You steel yourself against the grotesque sounds of digestion and continue steadfast into the darkness, gritting your teeth as one by one you hear the screams and cries of the villagers silenced, praying that you or the boy won't be next.

Whether by good fortune, or divine intervention, you soon see the light of the village, and make a bee line for the inn. Barrelling through the door with the boy following closely, you slam the door behind you, gathering as many things as you can to barricade the small wooden doorway. The Innkeeper rises from behind his desk, startled by your entrance, and for a moment you stand at odds to each other, unsure of who you can trust. With a nod he quickly joins you in barricading the door, and you breathe a small sigh of relief.

You sit until dawn in silence, guarding the door with bleary, sleep deprived eyes, the Innkeeper comforting the boy by the fire, a blanket covering the shivering lad. Occasionally something bellows hauntingly from deep within the woods, but it never draws closer to the village, perhaps its meal satisfied it.

As the days first light begins to breach the windows, the Innkeeper walks over to you, gripping your hand tightly and thanking you for saving the boy. A million questions catch on the tip of your tongue, but he raises his hand giving you pause, there will be time later he says. As you clear the barricade a series of rapid knocks sound on the door. You feel your pulse raise. Who can you trust? Is the entire village a part of what you saw last night? These fears melt away somewhat though as the door opens revealing the tearful face of a distraught mother. With a wail she grips her boy tightly, thanking you over and over for saving him.

As they walk away the Innkeeper turns to you, and you run a hand across your tired face, determination to gain answers fading as you yawn from exhaustion. He promises to answer your questions after you rest, and you make your way to your room, taking a few moments to drag a wooden chest of drawers across the door, barricading it against any unwelcome guests. Collapsing into your bed you quickly fall into another disturbing sleep, horrific creatures haunting your dreams.

When you finally wake darkness has fallen again, and you resolve to simply wait until day breaks once more before investigating further, not keen to encounter another nightmare in the streets. You exhale loudly, running your hands across your face, and stop sharply as you hear breathing beneath you. Slowly lowering your hands, you slow your own breathing, trying to be as quiet as possible. In between each of your breaths, a ragged, wheezing exhale occurs from underneath the bed, a rattling noise accompanying each discharge like coins in a can.

Decision 7

[Stay in Bed and wait](#) (Turn to Page 32)

[Attempt to scare away whatever lurks beneath the bed](#) (Turn to Page 34)

RUN INTO THE WOODS



You raise yourself in the wagon, preparing to leap into the clearing and attempt to save the boy, but suddenly catch yourself, your legs turning to jelly. You want to help but this, this is all too much, and the sounds emanating from the darkness of the woods chill you to the bone.

Grimacing with guilt, you turn, slipping quietly off the back of the wagon, the intense chanting from the villagers covering your escape. As you make your way into the skeletal birch forest, the chanting reaching an oppressive fervour, and you cover your ears in an attempt to block out the horrific sounds that follow. It does not work....

Picking a direction at random you run into the woods and soon find yourself lost, the dim moonlight doing little to guide your journey. You glance around as you run hoping to find something to orientate yourself with, and completely miss the villager closing in from your left. They tackle you hard to the ground, causing you both to tumble over into the snow, fists flying as you both seek to gain the upper-hand. Attempting to rise you slip on a patch of slick ice, falling back and hitting your head hard causing the world to spin as a ringing fills your ears.

The villager takes advantage of this moment of weakness and climbs atop you, pinning you to the ground. He calls out to his fellow villagers, then pauses rapidly turning to look around him, the colour draining from his face. As the ringing begins to fade you hear the heavy, rasping breaths of something vast and terrible within the woods, loud and unrelenting. The villager calls out again for help, and then begins pleading to the unseen pursuer in the woods, offering you to it, begging for



their life. He stands, gesturing at you frantically, and turns to run back into the darkness before something snaps him off his feet, causing him to fall heavily to the ground. He gasps, struggling to breathe, and you see a long, slick appendage wrapped tightly around his neck. The villager tries to scream but it comes out as a hoarse whisper, and in the blink of an eye he vanishes as the entity in the woods retracts its tongue, the sickening sounds of crunching bone and sinew echoing through the woods.

You steel yourself against the grotesque sounds of digestion, picking yourself up from the ground, and continue steadfast into the darkness, gritting your teeth as one by one you hear the screams and cries of the villagers silenced, praying that you won't be next.

Whether by good fortune, or divine intervention, you soon see the light of the village, and make a bee line for the inn. Barrelling through the door with little care for decorum, you slam it behind you, gathering as many things as you can to barricade the small wooden doorway. The Innkeeper rises from behind his desk, startled by your entrance, and for a moment you stand at odds to each other, unsure of who you can trust. With a nod he quickly joins you in barricading the door, and you breathe a small sigh of relief.

You sit until dawn in silence, guarding the door with bleary, sleep deprived eyes, the Innkeeper keeping watch next to you. Occasionally something bellows hauntingly from deep within the woods, but it never draws closer to the village, perhaps its meal satisfied it.

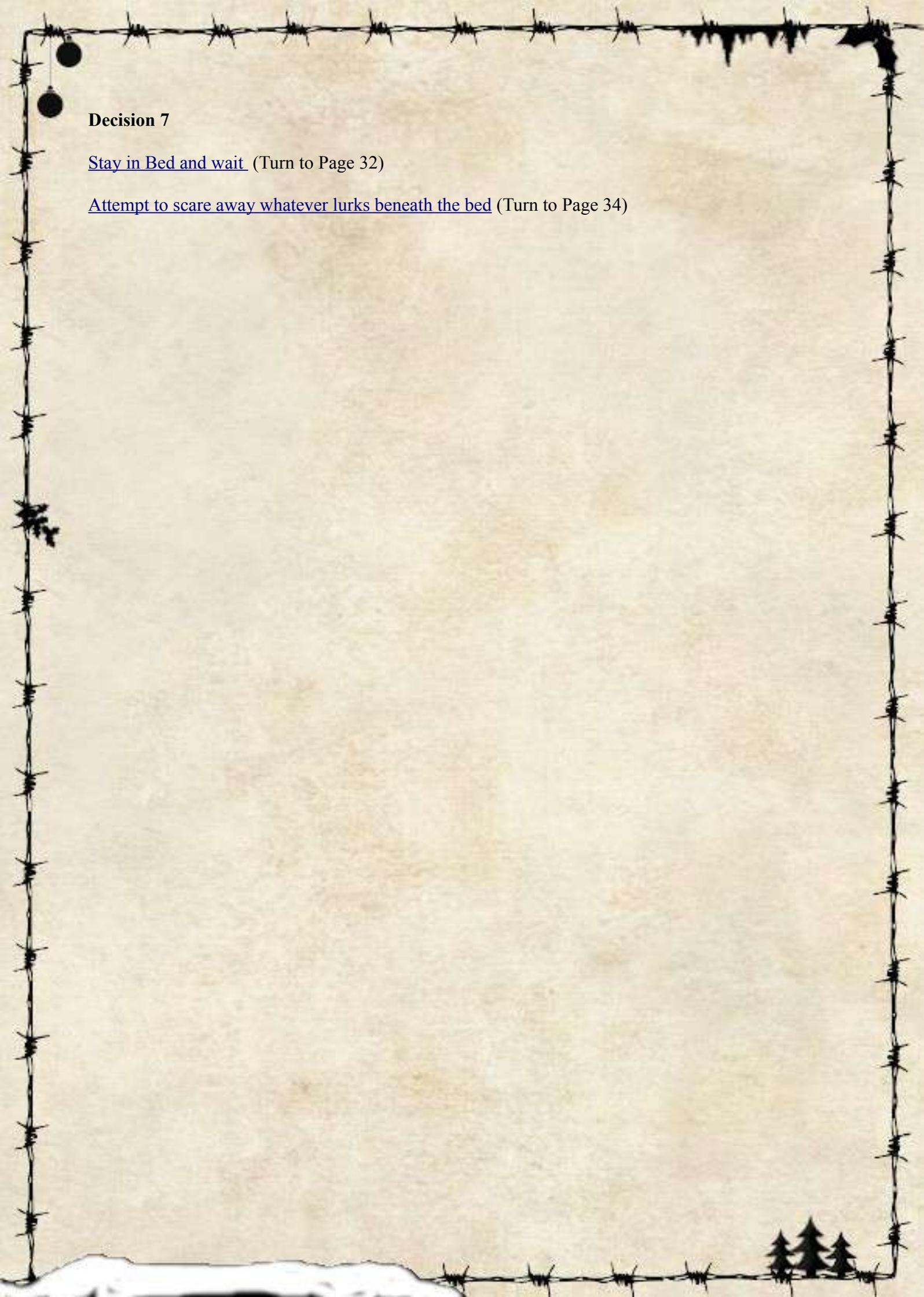
As the days first light begins to breach the windows, the Innkeeper rises, and begins to prepare a simple breakfast as you slowly dismantle the barricade. As he places the small selection of oatmeal, cold meat and a steel pot of Skyr yoghurt in front of you, your stomach growls fiercely, and you realise how little time you've taken to care for yourself since arriving. You thank him for his kindness, to which he grunts and walks away, disappearing into the backroom. The meal is simple, yet hearty, and soon you feel your stomach swell comfortably.

You begin to hear movement outside the house as the villagers start their daily routines, and feel your pulse raise. Who can you trust? Is the entire village a part of what you saw last night? A series of rapid, sharp knocks resonate from the entrance making you jump, and the innkeeper opens the door revealing a distraught looking woman, clutching a child's toy in her hands.

She clutches at the Innkeepers hands, talking softly, sobs punctuating her inaudible words. He looks to you, his face falling, then turns to her shaking his head. The woman breaks down, dropping the toy to the floor as she collapses into the Innkeepers arms wailing, and he walks her gently outside, closing the door behind them both.

You run a hand across your tired face, determination to gain answers fading as you yawn from exhaustion. A quick nap is what you need, you think, just to keep you sharp. You make your way to your room, and take a few moments to drag a wooden chest of drawers across the door, barricading it against any unwelcome guests. Collapsing into your bed you quickly fall into another disturbing sleep, horrific creatures haunting your dreams.

When you finally wake darkness has fallen again, and you resolve to simply wait until day breaks once more before investigating further, not keen to encounter another nightmare in the streets. You exhale loudly, running your hands across your face, and stop sharply as you hear breathing beneath you. Slowly lowering your hands, you slow your own breathing, trying to be as quiet as possible. In between each of your breaths, a ragged, wheezing exhale occurs from underneath the bed, a rattling noise accompanying each discharge like coins in a can.



Decision 7

[Stay in Bed and wait](#) (Turn to Page 32)

[Attempt to scare away whatever lurks beneath the bed](#) (Turn to Page 34)

STAY IN THE BED AND WAIT

You lay frozen in the darkness, a cold sweat running down onto the sheets as you struggle to listen for any new sounds coming from beneath the bed. The breathing is constant, unnaturally so, almost as if it were a sound clip being played on loop. The only deviation is a sickly mewling sound that occasionally scrapes against your ear drums, like someone pretending to imitate a cat or a small child poorly.

For hours this continues, and you alternate between staring at the ceiling, eyes darting to the edges of the bed, and pursing your eyes as tight as possible, hoping to avoid meeting the gaze of whatever horror lurks beneath the bed. A tug on the sheets makes you start, and you see them slowly but surely begin to inch towards the edge of the bed frame until the weight of the discarded sheet pulls it cleanly from the bed.

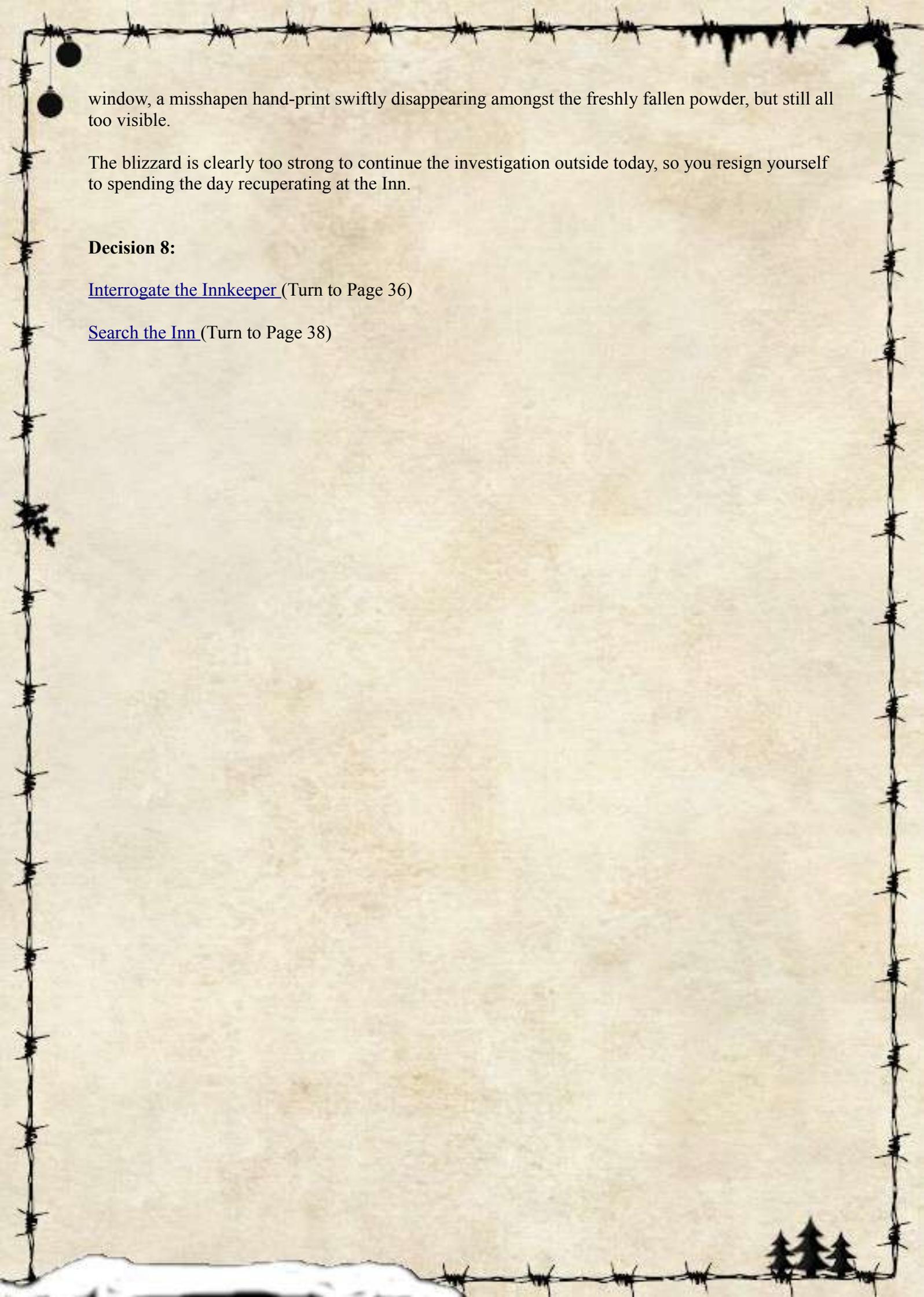
The mewling increases in intensity, as if trying to lure you to leave the bed, and a scratching noise pierces through the tense silence, the wooden frame of the bed quivering as something jostles beneath it.

Suddenly the sounds stop, a deathly silence falling across the room. Your eyes dart towards the edge of the bed, scanning for any change, and you whimper as an elongated, deformed hand raises itself from the dark depths below you. Each of the four fingers is crooked, angular, as if they've been broken and reset, ending in a long hooked nail that curls yellowed against the finger tip. The hand gently grazes the top of the bed, searching, probing for you, and you shuffle over to the other side in a desperate attempt to avoid contact.

For what seems like hours the hand probes and caresses the bed, before finally sinking back beneath the bed frame, the mewling beginning once more. You don't know when it happened, but at some point exhaustion overcame you, and you must have drifted off, awaking with a start to daylight flooding the room. Slowly you peer over the edge of bed, ready to leap to safety should an attack come, but thankfully find the underside of the bed vacant. A cold gust of wind causes you to shiver, and you see the bedroom window hanging open, creaking back and forth in the strong wind.

A blizzard rages outside, the white snow obscuring everything beyond a few feet. You grab the window, heaving against the blustering wind to shut it, hoping that perhaps the events of the past night were a terrible dream. Your stomach sinks as you catch sight of the divot in the snow by your





window, a misshapen hand-print swiftly disappearing amongst the freshly fallen powder, but still all too visible.

The blizzard is clearly too strong to continue the investigation outside today, so you resign yourself to spending the day recuperating at the Inn.

Decision 8:

[Interrogate the Innkeeper](#) (Turn to Page 36)

[Search the Inn](#) (Turn to Page 38)

ATTEMPT TO SCARE AWAY WHATEVER LURKS BENEATH THE BED

You lay frozen in the darkness, a cold sweat running down onto the sheets as you struggle to listen for any new sounds coming from beneath the bed. The breathing is constant, unnaturally so, almost as if it were a sound clip being played on loop, the only deviation being a sickly mewling sound that occasionally scrapes against your ear drums, like someone pretending to imitate a cat or a small child poorly.

Bracing yourself against the bed frame, you reach across to the nearby night-stand, grabbing hold of a small metal crucifix that adorns the table, your eyes never leaving the edge of the bed. Gripping the makeshift weapon you take a few deep breaths, steeling yourself, and leap from the edge of the bed landing heavily on the wooden floor, spinning to raise the crucifix.

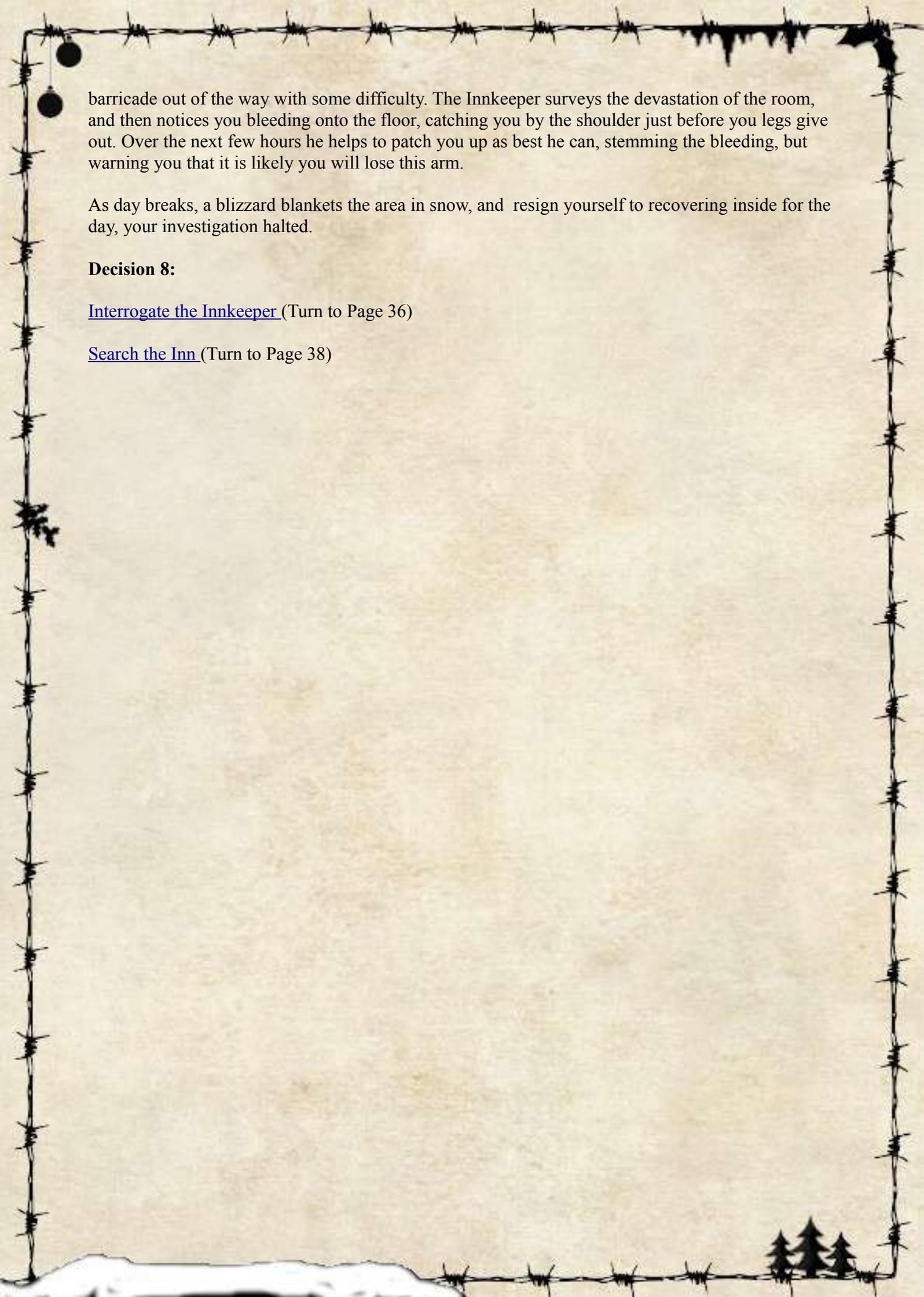
The underside of the bed is devoid of any light, unnaturally so, and as you gaze into that abyss a long distorted mewling cry emanates from the shadows. As the cry gets louder and more unnerving you shout for

whoever is under the bed to reveal themselves, and the frame begins to shake with a disconcerting fervour, its pace matching the increasing ferocity of the cry. Suddenly it stops, and a tense silence falls across the room. You stand breathing heavily, the cold sweat of fear chilling you to the bone.

You barely have time to react as the creature beneath the bed launches itself at you in a blur, and you become embroiled in flurry of teeth and claws. You stab wildly at the entity with the crucifix, hoping to find some purchase, each impact producing a wailing screech from the creature, causing it to bare down harder on you. Razor sharp teeth grip your arm, tearing deeply into the flesh and pulling muscle away from bone. Your pained cries only seem to drive the creature on, and it clamps down harder, shaking its head in a frenzy. The crucifix cuts into your hand as you grimace against the pain, and raising it you drive the symbol down into the creatures eye eliciting an ear-splitting scream. As it staggers away you glimpse its full form, misshapen, bloated and twisted against all natural laws. With a final cry it leaps through the window of your room, glass falling to the ground with a crash.

Limping to the window you clutch your arm and stare out into the darkness, but the creature has already vanished. The door behind you rattles as the Innkeeper pounds on it, the wood bulging as he attempts to push past the barricade you erected. Making a tourniquet from the discarded bed sheets you manage to stem the flow of blood from your arm, and head over to the doorway, pushing the





barricade out of the way with some difficulty. The Innkeeper surveys the devastation of the room, and then notices you bleeding onto the floor, catching you by the shoulder just before you legs give out. Over the next few hours he helps to patch you up as best he can, stemming the bleeding, but warning you that it is likely you will lose this arm.

As day breaks, a blizzard blankets the area in snow, and resign yourself to recovering inside for the day, your investigation halted.

Decision 8:

[Interrogate the Innkeeper](#) (Turn to Page 36)

[Search the Inn](#) (Turn to Page 38)

INTERROGATE THE INNKEEPER



As the wind howls outside, snow blasting against the thick glass of the Inn, you retreat further into the warmth of the armchair you find yourself in. The fireplace crackles a few feet in front of you, and as you try to collect your thoughts about the last few days you find yourself thankful for this brief respite. It occurs to you that you've never seen another patron at the Inn, but for now that suits you fine, you're not really up for socialising.

The Innkeeper enters the room with two mugs of steaming liquid, one of which he places carefully on a small stool next to you. You gingerly pick it up, sniffing the contents before recoiling, the strong alcoholic after-tones burning your nostrils. The Innkeeper raises his mug to you. "Drink", he says, and takes a large gulp, his face creasing from the spirits strength. The last few days have been hard, and you need something to help take the edge off, even for a moment. The drink is bitter and strong even before the additional elements hit, and as you swallow the first gulp your throat is lit ablaze with a burning you fear may never end. You cough, and the Innkeeper laughs, reaching over to pat you on the back.

For a while you both sit in front of the fire, sipping at your drinks, before you eventually break the silence. You ask him about the village, about the people here, and about the things that come at night. For a moment he remains stoically silent as he stares into the flames, then sets down his cup and clasps his hands together. "It wasn't always like this" he says, his voice dipping low in thought. He tells you of a time the village was prosperous, the sulphur mine providing both job security and wealth to the local area, plenty of travellers stopping by at his inn. "Life was good" he murmurs.

When things changed it happened gradually, strange lights in the woods followed people at night, possessions and equipment went missing, and livestock would vanish without a trace. It wasn't until the first villagers went missing that people began to accept that something was wrong, and by then it was too late. Whether the miners dug too deep, or the bustling village disturbed something they are unsure, but something had awoken in the mountains, and it was hungry. The creatures would only appear seasonally, as if compelled by the time of year to hunt, and at first the village rallied

valiantly against their ingress, fighting back desperately. Casualties grew though, and more people went missing in-between.

Many wanted to leave but this was their home, they had no-where else to go, so they struck a deal with something living in the mine, something that could control the others. They wouldn't fight back, they wouldn't try to stop the creatures, and in exchange only the minimum tithe each year would be taken, acceptable losses they called it. As long as the village was obedient, they'd survive. He expresses his distaste at the deal, spitting into the fire with a hiss, and curses the creatures. Their greed has grown for the last few years and this time he fears no-one will be left by the time they're finished. Maybe it is time for the village to leave.

With his story complete he coughs and rises to his feet, composing himself as he collects both of your cups. He apologises to you, for not saying anything before, but visitors tend to ease the loss of other villagers, and those in charge wouldn't have liked him mentioning it.

As the Innkeeper leaves the room you stare into the flames, digesting the information you've been given. It all seems preposterous, like something out of a fairy tale or folk legend, but after everything you've seen you concede that it's the best answer you have.

Hours pass as you stare into the flame uneventfully, and as the light begins to fade you wait with apprehension for the encroaching night, fearful of what is to come.

The sound of a door slamming starts you awake in the armchair, the dying embers of the fire glowing in front of you. You moan groggily, annoyed at yourself for falling asleep again and glance around for the Innkeeper. He stands by the Inn window, a frown creasing his face as he stares into the street. The wind continues to howl outside, snow driven in piles against the Inn which creaks under the strain, punctuated every few seconds by the sound of the same door slamming somewhere outside.

You ask the Innkeeper if he can see anything, but he responds with a coarse grunt and tells you to stay away from the windows. Not swayed by his warning you walk up to another window and gaze out into the storm, the flurrying blizzard concealing the street almost entirely. The slamming noise continues from somewhere deep inside the blizzard, the sound resonating off the walls of the buildings so that the echo continues seemingly endlessly.

A sudden scream pierces the howling storm, quickly snuffed out by the roaring winds. You make your way to door, intending to open it and see if you can help, but the innkeeper grabs your hand shaking his head. "Do not go out there, you can do nothing". A second scream echoes through the streets...

Decision 9

[Go into the streets](#) (If your arm is undamaged)

[Go into the streets](#) (If your arm is damaged)

[Stay Inside](#)

SEARCH THE INN



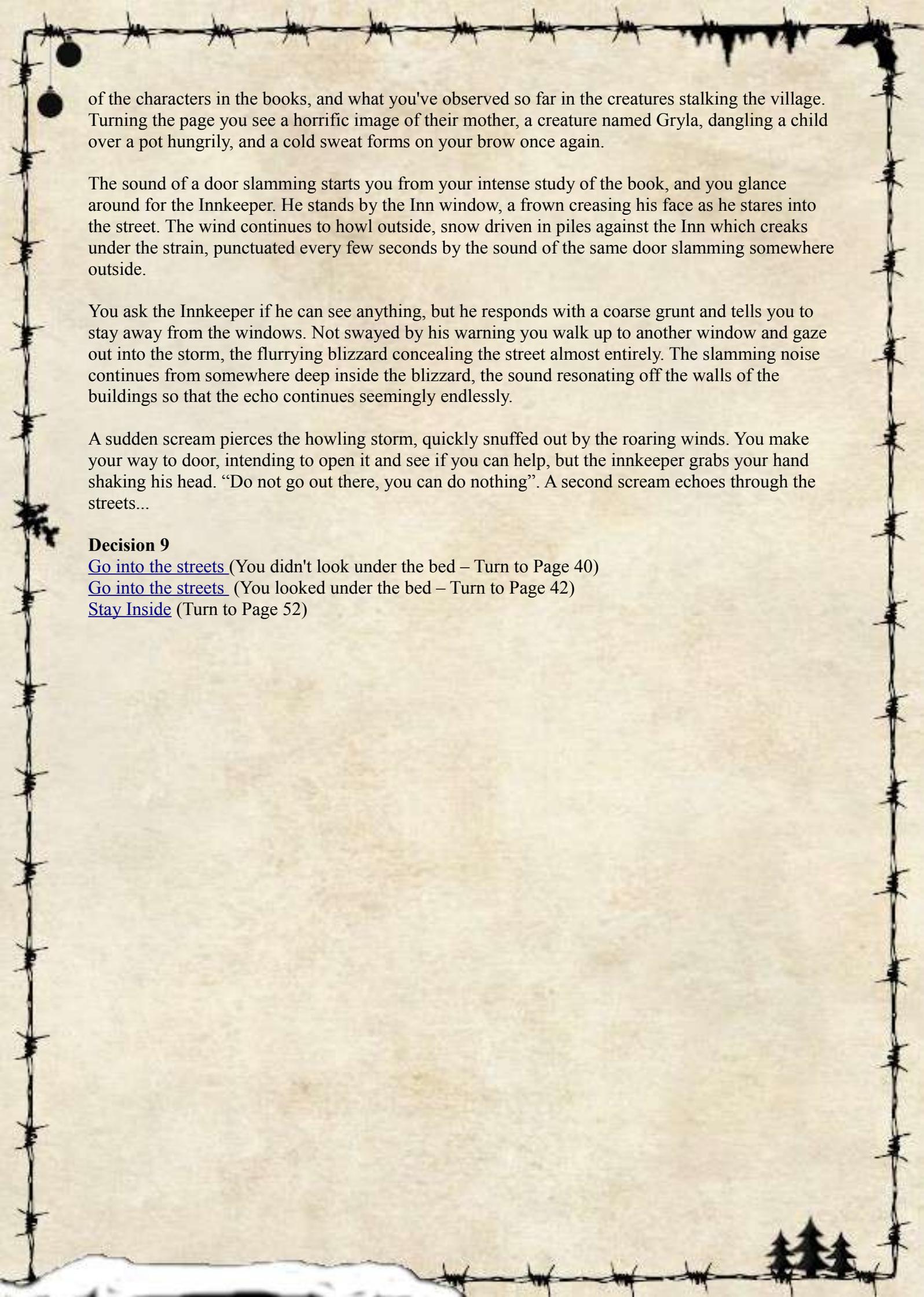
As the wind howls outside, snow blasting against the thick glass of the Inn, you pace around the building impatiently. The fireplace crackles a few feet in front of you, and you try to collect your thoughts about the last few days. It occurs to you that you've never seen another patron at the Inn, and with that in mind decide to explore the establishment in search of something that can help you make sense of the strange circumstances you find yourself in.

You walk towards your room thinking it a good place to start, but find yourself stopping at the door, hand raised to enter. The events of the previous night are still raw in your mind, and you think perhaps it might be better to start elsewhere. As you walk the hallways of the small inn you note several other rooms, some locked, others hanging open to reveal sparse yet comfortable furnishing. As you walk you see several pictures framed on the wall, one of a man bearing a striking resemblance to the Innkeeper catching your eye. He is dressed in a miners uniform, surrounded by several other men near the entrance of a large mineshaft you assume must be somewhere nearby. Based on the date of the picture, you assume it must be the Innkeeper's father.

Continuing your investigation you find yourself back in the armchair by the fire holding two books, one a map of the local area, and the other a children's fairy tale. The map was a simple choice, and it helps you get a better sense of not only the village, but of where the mine from the earlier photo is located.

The children's fairy tale book you saw on the mantle in one of the unoccupied guest rooms, the bright imagery catching your eye. As you skim through the stories a series of images causes you to pause, and you turn back to a page titled "Jólasveinar". You read about 13 trolls, children of a child eating ogress, that live in the mountain and descend upon people during the Yule-tide season. The story makes them sound mischievous, almost pleasant, leaving gifts in shoes or rotten potatoes for those who are disobedient.

The more you read the more your stomach churns as you draw similarities between the behaviours



of the characters in the books, and what you've observed so far in the creatures stalking the village. Turning the page you see a horrific image of their mother, a creature named Gryla, dangling a child over a pot hungrily, and a cold sweat forms on your brow once again.

The sound of a door slamming starts you from your intense study of the book, and you glance around for the Innkeeper. He stands by the Inn window, a frown creasing his face as he stares into the street. The wind continues to howl outside, snow driven in piles against the Inn which creaks under the strain, punctuated every few seconds by the sound of the same door slamming somewhere outside.

You ask the Innkeeper if he can see anything, but he responds with a coarse grunt and tells you to stay away from the windows. Not swayed by his warning you walk up to another window and gaze out into the storm, the flurrying blizzard concealing the street almost entirely. The slamming noise continues from somewhere deep inside the blizzard, the sound resonating off the walls of the buildings so that the echo continues seemingly endlessly.

A sudden scream pierces the howling storm, quickly snuffed out by the roaring winds. You make your way to door, intending to open it and see if you can help, but the innkeeper grabs your hand shaking his head. "Do not go out there, you can do nothing". A second scream echoes through the streets...

Decision 9

[Go into the streets](#) (You didn't look under the bed – Turn to Page 40)

[Go into the streets](#) (You looked under the bed – Turn to Page 42)

[Stay Inside](#) (Turn to Page 52)

Go into the streets

You cast the Innkeepers hand aside and wrench the door open, stepping out into the street. A gust of wind from the blizzard almost knocks you from your feet, and you brace yourself against the cold, covering your eyes in an attempt to see further through the blinding sleet. You hear the slamming noise again, louder this time, followed by the screams of a woman begging for help. The cries seem to come from all around you as the sound bounces off the various homes, the blizzard making it difficult to determine which direction you should go. As you start to make your way through the storm you wonder if this was a mistake.

The buildings loom through the white-out ominously as if in judgement of you, the sound of a slamming door echoing cavernously through the empty streets, helping guide your passage. A figure darts out of a nearby alleyway, and you brace for an attack as a woman collides with you, a wooden pole clasped tightly in her hands. She screams at you to get off of the road, pushing past you into the snow calling out a name desperately. You recognise her from the village on the day you arrived, a mother who was pushing her pram along the streets, but now the pram is absent. Following the woman you offer to help, asking what happened, and she bursts into tears cursing the village.

As she lay her child to rest in the front room of her house, the slamming sound drew her away, fearful she had left a door unlocked. When she returned having checked the house was secure she saw a creature, tall, thin and clad in a red robe walking into the blizzard with the buggy. Of course she gave chase immediately but quickly lost sight in the storm.

You both push forward into the snow, the slamming sound slowly getting closer, and before long catch sight of the figure drifting down the street, the buggy pushed ahead of it. Wrapped in a large red cloak the creature moves silently within the storm, gliding across the ice as if floating above it.



Its arms are concealed by long flowing sleeves which hang heavily from bony wrists, a multitude of twig like fingers extending from within the garment, too many to count. The woman cries out the child's name again, and the creature turns towards you. Its head is hollow, save for a set of large bone plates mounted where a face should be that slam together creating the door like effect. Showing no fear the mother charges at the creature with the pole, smashing the heavy wooden object into the creatures side causing it to gnash its plates violently, creating a cacophony of slamming noises.

Whilst it's distracted you bolt past, grabbing hold of the pram as best you can and dragging it away from the entity. It reaches longingly for the buggy with its withered hands clasping at the air, before the mother lands another blow, casting its hand to the ground where several fingers snap off. With the child safely out of reach, you go back to help the woman, but see it is already too late. As she raises the pole for another blow the creature lashes out, wrapping the fingers around her face. You turn away, not wanting to see the events that lead to the sickening crunching sound that follows, and grab the buggy, pushing it away into the blizzard.

The sound of the slamming slowly fades into the distance as you put yourself to pace pushing through the streets as you are blinded by the snow, the baby within the pram stirring and beginning to wail. Tripping on a snow bank you fall to your knees, only to feel strong hands lifting you to your feet, the Innkeeper stood over you. Somehow you made it back.

He grabs the child from the pram and brings you both inside, where you see several villagers waiting, concern lining their faces. As the Innkeeper enters with the baby they let out an exulted sigh of relief, and surround you thanking you profusely before focusing on the child, coddling it. An elderly woman walks up to you, taking your hand in an infirm grip, sorrow lining her face. "My daughter?" she asks, but you can tell from her expression she already knows the answer. You offer your condolences and she begins to weep softly, finding comfort in taking her grandchild in her arms.

Hushed whispers soon overtake the Inn as people begin to settle, concern lining many of the villagers faces. The Innkeeper plants a hand on your shoulder and thanks you for saving the child where he was too cowardly, they will remember this. One of the village elders stands amongst the crowd and calls for attention. He addresses the villagers calmly, but with conviction, declaring that the nightmare has gone on too long, that something must be done. Several members of the crowd start in protest, arguing that acting against the creatures puts them in unnecessary danger, but as the elder retorts, the danger is already here.

The elder then turns to you, apologising on behalf of the village. Though they try do right by most visitors, it is often better to let the creatures take a stranger than one of their own, a dark secret they are not proud of, but one which they hope you can understand.

Another elder stands up, condemning his brethren's actions, stating the deal the town made with the creatures must be upheld. Murmurs of discontent ripple through the crowd, and another voice pipes up disavowing the pact, claiming the creatures have broken it anyway, now it's time to fight back, or at least flee while they can. As the community falls into arguments amongst themselves they turn to you for the deciding vote.

Decision 10

[Fight back against the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 54)

[Attempt to communicate with the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 45)

Go into the streets (your arm is damaged)

You cast the Innkeepers hand aside and wrench the door open, stepping out into the street. A gust of wind from the blizzard almost knocks you from your feet, and you brace yourself against the cold, covering your eyes in an attempt to see further through the blinding sleet. You hear the slamming noise again, louder this time, followed by the screams of a woman begging for help. The cries seem to come from all around you as the sound bounces off the various homes, the blizzard making it difficult to determine which direction you should go. As you start to make your way through the storm you wonder if this was a mistake.

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Whilst it's distracted you bolt past, grabbing hold of the pram as best you can and dragging it away from the entity. It reaches longingly for the buggy with its withered claws, gnashing its face plates repetitively, before the mother lands another blow, casting its hand to the ground as several fingers snap off. With the child safely out of reach, you go back to help the woman, but see it is already too late. As she raises the pole for another blow the creature lashes out, wrapping the fingers around her face. You turn away, not wanting to see the events that lead to the sickening crunching sound that follows, and grab the buggy, pushing it away into the blizzard. Without the use of both arms the snow slows your progress drastically, and before long you hear the slamming of bone plates behind you.

Frantic, you desperately try to open the pram and scoop the baby away, but the straps around the cribs edge are difficult to unbuckle with only one hand, and before you can free the child a blow to the side of you head sends you flying against one of the nearby houses. Dazed, you struggle to get to your feet but put too much weight on your damaged arm, hearing a snap that sends you tumbling back to the ground with a cry of pain. As your vision swims you hear the slamming sound begin to fade, and watch as the creature disappears into the storm, the buggy soon vanishing from sight.

Propping yourself against the house to stand, you call out into the storm, stumbling through the white-out trying to catch up with the creature again, but soon find yourself lost in the blinding flurry of snow. Tripping on an icy bank you fall to your knees, only to feel strong hands lifting you to your feet, the Innkeeper stood over you. Somehow you made it back to the Inn, empty handed.

He brings you inside, where you see several villagers waiting, concern lining their faces. An elderly woman walks up to you, taking your hand in an infirm grip, sorrow lining her face. "My daughter? My grandchild?" she asks, but you can tell from her expression she already knows the answer. You offer your condolences and she begins to weep softly, soon surrounded by friends who comfort her.

Hushed whispers soon overtake the Inn as people begin to settle, concern lining many of the villagers faces. One of the village elders stands amongst the crowd and calls for attention. He addresses the villagers calmly, but with conviction, declaring that the nightmare has gone on too long, that something must be done. Several members of the crowd start in protest, arguing that acting against the creatures puts them in unnecessary danger, but as the elder retorts, the danger is already here.

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Decision 10

[Fight back against the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 54)

[Attempt to communicate with the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 45)

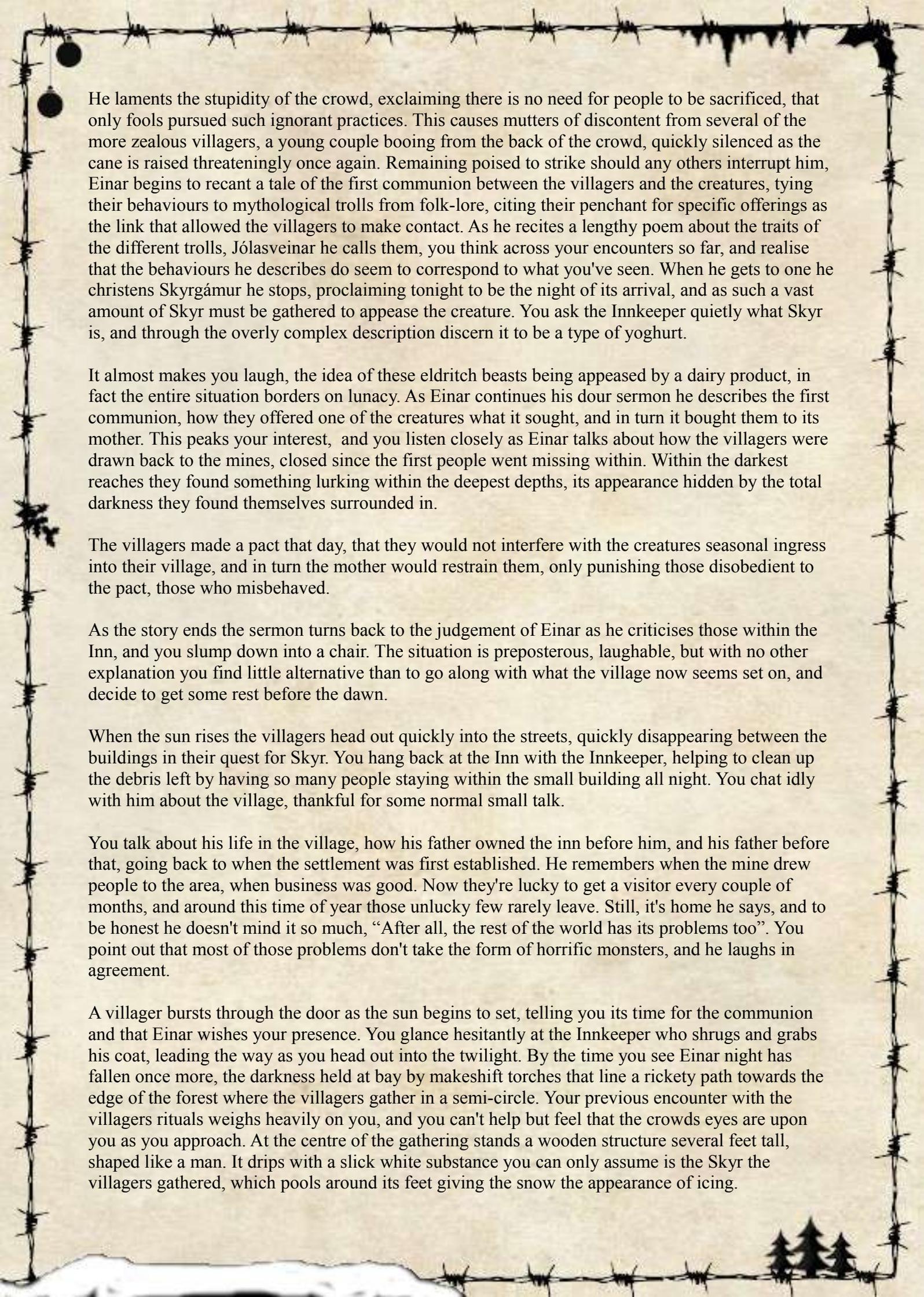
Attempt to communicate with the creatures



In truth you have no idea what to do next. You trained on the streets of a fairly rough city, missing people were a weekly occurrence. But monsters, cults... this was beyond your pay-grade. One of the elders senses your hesitation and scoffs, waving a hand dismissively at you. "They have no idea what's good for this village, trust in those who have kept you safe all these years. The pact must stand!"

Those who attempt to retort disapprovingly are swiftly shut down by their more aggressive peers, and within seconds you realise you have lost control of the situation once more. The Innkeeper stands next to you and takes a long sip on a pipe, the smoke making you cough. "Einar is an old goat, stubborn, willing to butt horns with anyone that challenges him. For now it is best you leave him to it, arguing will get you nowhere".

You're about to protest but the words catch in your throat, and you quiet yourself, sullenly joining the crowd that forms around the old man as he speaks, his voice hoarse yet powerful. He talks of the pact, claiming the creatures only attack now because the people have forgotten the old ways, that they grow lazy in their offerings. When another villager cries out that they can't keep sacrificing innocent people to the entities, Einar raises a walking cane and brings it down sharply on the villager's head, making him wince and causing several others to step out of reach of the cane.



He laments the stupidity of the crowd, exclaiming there is no need for people to be sacrificed, that only fools pursued such ignorant practices. This causes mutters of discontent from several of the more zealous villagers, a young couple booing from the back of the crowd, quickly silenced as the cane is raised threateningly once again. Remaining poised to strike should any others interrupt him, Einar begins to recant a tale of the first communion between the villagers and the creatures, tying their behaviours to mythological trolls from folk-lore, citing their penchant for specific offerings as the link that allowed the villagers to make contact. As he recites a lengthy poem about the traits of the different trolls, Jólaveinar he calls them, you think across your encounters so far, and realise that the behaviours he describes do seem to correspond to what you've seen. When he gets to one he christens Skyrgámur he stops, proclaiming tonight to be the night of its arrival, and as such a vast amount of Skyr must be gathered to appease the creature. You ask the Innkeeper quietly what Skyr is, and through the overly complex description discern it to be a type of yoghurt.

It almost makes you laugh, the idea of these eldritch beasts being appeased by a dairy product, in fact the entire situation borders on lunacy. As Einar continues his dour sermon he describes the first communion, how they offered one of the creatures what it sought, and in turn it bought them to its mother. This peaks your interest, and you listen closely as Einar talks about how the villagers were drawn back to the mines, closed since the first people went missing within. Within the darkest reaches they found something lurking within the deepest depths, its appearance hidden by the total darkness they found themselves surrounded in.

The villagers made a pact that day, that they would not interfere with the creatures seasonal ingress into their village, and in turn the mother would restrain them, only punishing those disobedient to the pact, those who misbehaved.

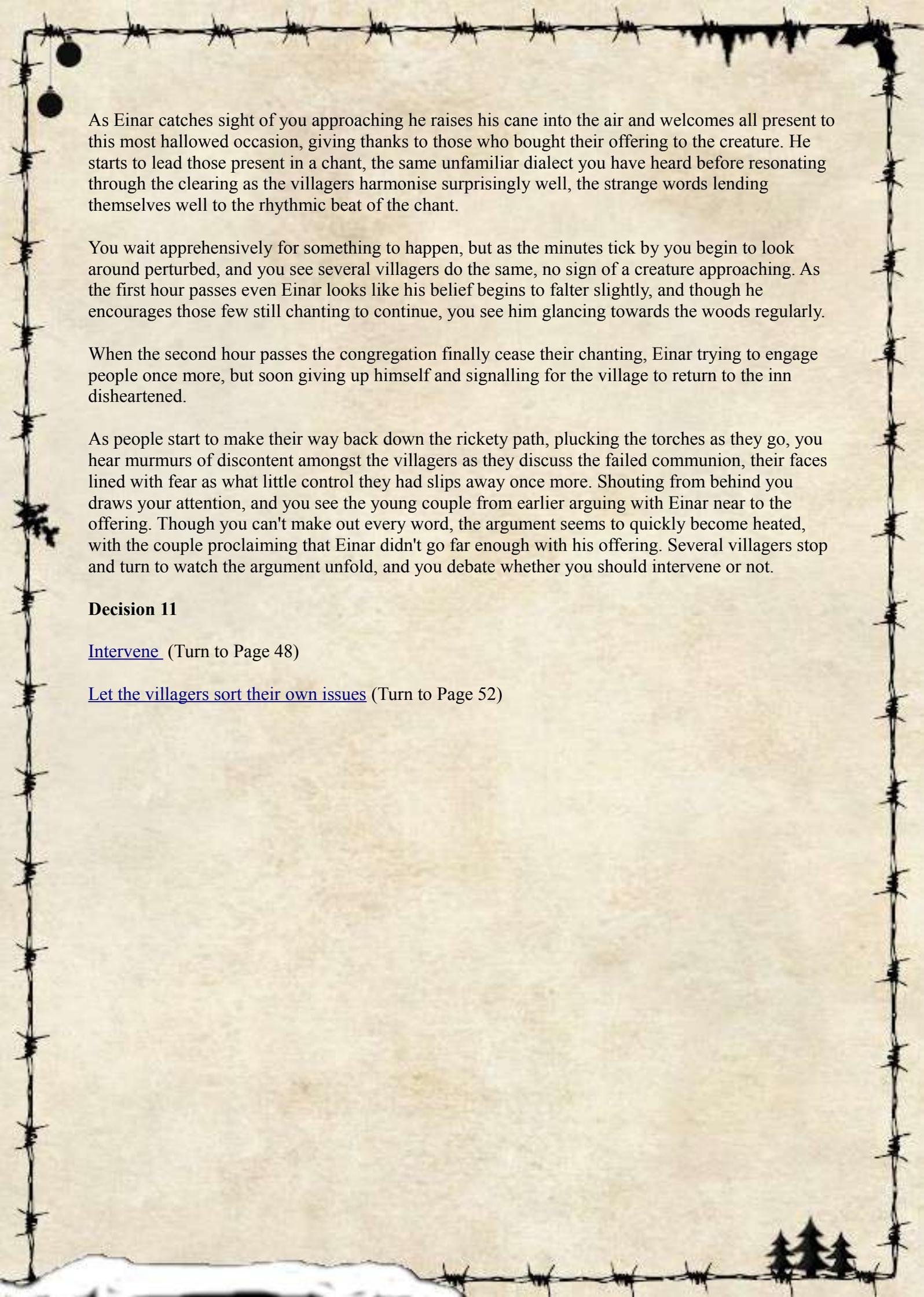
As the story ends the sermon turns back to the judgement of Einar as he criticises those within the Inn, and you slump down into a chair. The situation is preposterous, laughable, but with no other explanation you find little alternative than to go along with what the village now seems set on, and decide to get some rest before the dawn.

When the sun rises the villagers head out quickly into the streets, quickly disappearing between the buildings in their quest for Skyr. You hang back at the Inn with the Innkeeper, helping to clean up the debris left by having so many people staying within the small building all night. You chat idly with him about the village, thankful for some normal small talk.

You talk about his life in the village, how his father owned the inn before him, and his father before that, going back to when the settlement was first established. He remembers when the mine drew people to the area, when business was good. Now they're lucky to get a visitor every couple of months, and around this time of year those unlucky few rarely leave. Still, it's home he says, and to be honest he doesn't mind it so much, "After all, the rest of the world has its problems too". You point out that most of those problems don't take the form of horrific monsters, and he laughs in agreement.

A villager bursts through the door as the sun begins to set, telling you its time for the communion and that Einar wishes your presence. You glance hesitantly at the Innkeeper who shrugs and grabs his coat, leading the way as you head out into the twilight. By the time you see Einar night has fallen once more, the darkness held at bay by makeshift torches that line a rickety path towards the edge of the forest where the villagers gather in a semi-circle. Your previous encounter with the villagers rituals weighs heavily on you, and you can't help but feel that the crowds eyes are upon you as you approach. At the centre of the gathering stands a wooden structure several feet tall, shaped like a man. It drips with a slick white substance you can only assume is the Skyr the villagers gathered, which pools around its feet giving the snow the appearance of icing.





As Einar catches sight of you approaching he raises his cane into the air and welcomes all present to this most hallowed occasion, giving thanks to those who bought their offering to the creature. He starts to lead those present in a chant, the same unfamiliar dialect you have heard before resonating through the clearing as the villagers harmonise surprisingly well, the strange words lending themselves well to the rhythmic beat of the chant.

You wait apprehensively for something to happen, but as the minutes tick by you begin to look around perturbed, and you see several villagers do the same, no sign of a creature approaching. As the first hour passes even Einar looks like his belief begins to falter slightly, and though he encourages those few still chanting to continue, you see him glancing towards the woods regularly.

When the second hour passes the congregation finally cease their chanting, Einar trying to engage people once more, but soon giving up himself and signalling for the village to return to the inn disheartened.

As people start to make their way back down the rickety path, plucking the torches as they go, you hear murmurs of discontent amongst the villagers as they discuss the failed communion, their faces lined with fear as what little control they had slips away once more. Shouting from behind you draws your attention, and you see the young couple from earlier arguing with Einar near to the offering. Though you can't make out every word, the argument seems to quickly become heated, with the couple proclaiming that Einar didn't go far enough with his offering. Several villagers stop and turn to watch the argument unfold, and you debate whether you should intervene or not.

Decision 11

[Intervene](#) (Turn to Page 48)

[Let the villagers sort their own issues](#) (Turn to Page 52)

Intervene

The villagers watching begin to become incensed by the couples shouts, their sense of powerlessness devolving quickly into a panic that you fear could become dangerous. You start to walk back along the path towards the trio, determined to break up the fight before it escalates into something unpleasant, but as Einar swings his cane at the couple wildly you realise it is too late. Thrown off balance by the momentum of his strike Einar falls easily as the young man from the couple tackles him to the ground and a struggle ensues. The small gathering of villagers standing nearby leap to help the couple restrain the old man as he yells for help.

You break into a run and start pushing your way through the villagers as they claw at Einar, trying to hoist him towards the Skyr covered effigy, but are quickly repelled by the crowd who lash at you forcing you back. It is only when the Innkeeper joins you, hoisting several of the villagers out of the way with ease, that you manage to make it through to Einar. You knock the young man off him with a swift blow to the face that sends him sprawling into the slick Skyr that coats the ground.

The other villagers fall back, their fervour diminished as you help the battered old man to his feet, blood trickling from his nose. A look of shame overcomes their collective faces, and they begin to withdraw into the crowd, not wanting to meet you or the innkeepers gaze. Einar begins to thank you, but is cut short by a torrent of abuse that comes from the couple, the young woman helping her husband to his feet. They curse you and the Innkeeper, curse the village, and vehemently denounce Einar calling him a stupid old man, so lost in their hatred that they don't hear the crunch of snow behind them, or the ragged, heavy breathing that follows it.

The young woman blinks confused, looking next to her at the empty space where her partner stood moments before. As his screams begin to echo from within the darkness she falls back from the



treeline, long drawn out cries accompanied by the sound of tearing flesh. She trips on a mound of snow and begins to scabble frantically away, calling out for help. Before you can move something grips her by the ankle, dragging her into the woods as a flurry of snow billows from the speed of the movement. The villagers all stand frozen as the scene unfolds, horrified gazes locked on the edge of the forest. As the woman's screams replace the young man's, chaos breaks out and they flee towards the village, the communion no longer seeming like a good idea.

You are about to join them when Einar steps forward, shaking you and the Innkeeper off of him as he staggers towards the treeline, taking care not to step in the Skyr, before stopping at the edge of the flickering torchlight. He calls out to the creature, prostrating himself across the ground, and beseeches its guidance so that he can better please it and its mother.

The chewing sounds within the woods stop, and the trees stir as a large figure makes its way to the edge of the torchlight, its frame silhouetted by the dim moonlight. Large antlers protrude above the treeline from an elongated skull, leading down to a misshapen torso where several ribs protrude from the body, scraps of hide hanging from them, dripping with an unknown substance. Its legs buckle backwards at the knee, and are elongated so that the creature stands at least 7 feet tall, its clawed hands scraping at the treetops.

A ringing echoes through your head, quickly rising to painful levels that cause you and the remaining villagers to fall to your knees, the deafening sound all you can focus on. You struggle to look up towards the treeline, seeing one of the clawed hands touching Einar's brow as he gasps, blood running from his eyes and ears. Just before the ringing seems poised to drive you to unconsciousness it stops, and the creature withdraws its skeletal hand, retreating into the shadows of the woods, disappearing from sight. Einar remains frozen in place for a few moments before collapsing into the snow, you and the Innkeeper quickly rising to your feet and running to him. He lays on the floor breathing shallowly, his pale skin making his body seeming frailer than before. With a tired hand he clutches for you, staring through clouded eyes that can no longer see, and grips ahold of your coat as tightly as he can. He tries to talk but descends into a coughing fit for a moment, drawing a deep shaking breath at the end. "The will be no pact this year, no restraint. They are hungry, so hungry, and she calls to them, drives them to the hunt. She will leave none alive". With that he collapses into unconsciousness, and you and the Innkeeper share a grim look.

You carry Einar back to the Inn, several villagers helping to lay him into a bed, starting to tend to his wounds while you go and warm yourself by the fire. Those villagers that tried to help the couple are nowhere to be seen, their shame preventing them from returning, but as you slump into one of the armchairs you're forced to wonder how many other villagers plan to betray you for those things? Why should you risk your life to save them? Maybe you shouldn't....

Decision 12

[Leave on your own](#)

[Stay and help the townsfolk](#)

[Stay and help the townsfolk \(Innkeeper Dead\)](#)

Leave and let the village deal with its own issues.

The villagers watching begin to become incensed by the couple's shouts, their sense of powerlessness devolving quickly into a panic that you fear could become dangerous. Turning away from the group you decide to leave the villagers to their own issues, not wishing to become further involved in this mess than you have to.

The Innkeeper hesitates to follow you, seemingly unsure about whether to intervene or not, and when the sounds of a struggle break out you see him turn to run back and help, barrelling into the crowd that appears to have gathered around Einar attempting to drag him towards the effigy. The Innkeeper grasps at several of the villagers, pulling them away from Einar, but the young woman from the couple comes round behind him and lands a heavy blow with one of the torches across the back of his head, knocking him to the ground.

As the Innkeeper falls you rush back towards the crowd, the quickly escalating situation refusing to let you retreat to the safety of the Inn. He hits the floor with a crunch, and you slide to the ground next to him, checking his head and neck carefully before trying to shake him awake, unable to stop the villagers by yourself. You look up in horror as the crowd hoists Einar onto the effigy, binding the old man to the structure with rope and twine, his screams for help going unheard. The slick S kyr soon coats him and the villagers, with the couple tossing more at the effigy as if trying to saturate Einar as best they can, laughing cruelly as he sputters through the thick liquid.

The villagers are so lost in their fervour that they don't hear the crunch of snow behind them, or the ragged, heavy breathing that follows it. As you watch the trees beyond the edge of the torch light they bend and sway as something passes through them, snow falling to the ground in clumps.

The young woman blinks confused, looking next to her at the empty space where her partner stood



moments before. As his screams begin to echo from within the darkness she falls back from the treeline, long drawn out cries accompanied by the sound of tearing flesh. She trips on a mound of snow and begins to scabble frantically away, calling out for help. Before you can move something grips her by the ankle, dragging her into the woods as a flurry of snow billows from the speed of the movement. The villagers all stand frozen as the scene unfolds, horrified gazes locked on the edge of the forest, and as the woman's screams replace the young man's, chaos breaks out as they begin to flee.

An unearthly wail emanates from the forest, and trees cascade to the ground as the creature within charges forward, the remains of the young woman hanging from its ragged maw, flat teeth grinding bone with a crunch. Large antlers protrude from an distorted humanoid skull, leading down to a misshapen torso that seems held together by a broken layer of hide stretched far too thinly over bone and muscle. Several ribs protrude from the body, scraps of hide hanging from them dripping with an unknown substance. Its legs buckle backwards at the knee, and are elongated so that the creature stands at least 7 feet tall, its clawed hands scraping at the ground as it reaches down to scoop up more of the S kyr soaked villagers, drawing them to its maw and biting down with a crunch, quickly staining the ground red. As it continues its chase, disappearing behind a set of buildings in pursuit of a rather rotund man, you begin to drag the Innkeeper across the ground towards the village, reaching a porch which you take cover under as the rotund man's body collides with one of the trees at the woods edge, crumpling from the impact.

Before long the screams of the villagers are silenced, and you hear the steady crunch of footsteps in the snow as the creature makes its way back to the effigy, Einar whimpering as he sees the blood soaked entity cross the ground towards him. It stops before him, gazing down through empty eye sockets at his fragile restrained form, a long tongue slipping from within its maw to run across his face, licking at the S kyr. With a screech the creature clamps down on Einars head, crunching down through the bone, and pulls away with a snap. You don't watch the rest of the scene unfold, but by the time you hear the creature disappear the effigy and Einar are gone, broken parts of both scattered amongst the dead villagers.

Eventually the Innkeeper comes to groggily, panicking for a moment, unsure of his current whereabouts. You help him out from under the porch, and his face pales as he surveys the carnage of the failed communion. When you return to the Inn those villagers that left ask you the whereabouts of their friends and family, and uncomfortably you describe the scene that unfolded, many breaking down to weep, others seemingly glad that those who behaved in such a way were punished.

As you slump into one of the armchairs you're forced to wonder how many other villagers plan to betray you for those things? Why should you risk your life to save them? Maybe you shouldn't...

Decision 12

[Leave on your own](#) (Turn to Page 62)

[Stay and help the townsfolk](#) (Turn to Page 65)

[Stay and help the townsfolk \(Innkeeper Dead – Turn to Page 71\)](#)

Stay inside

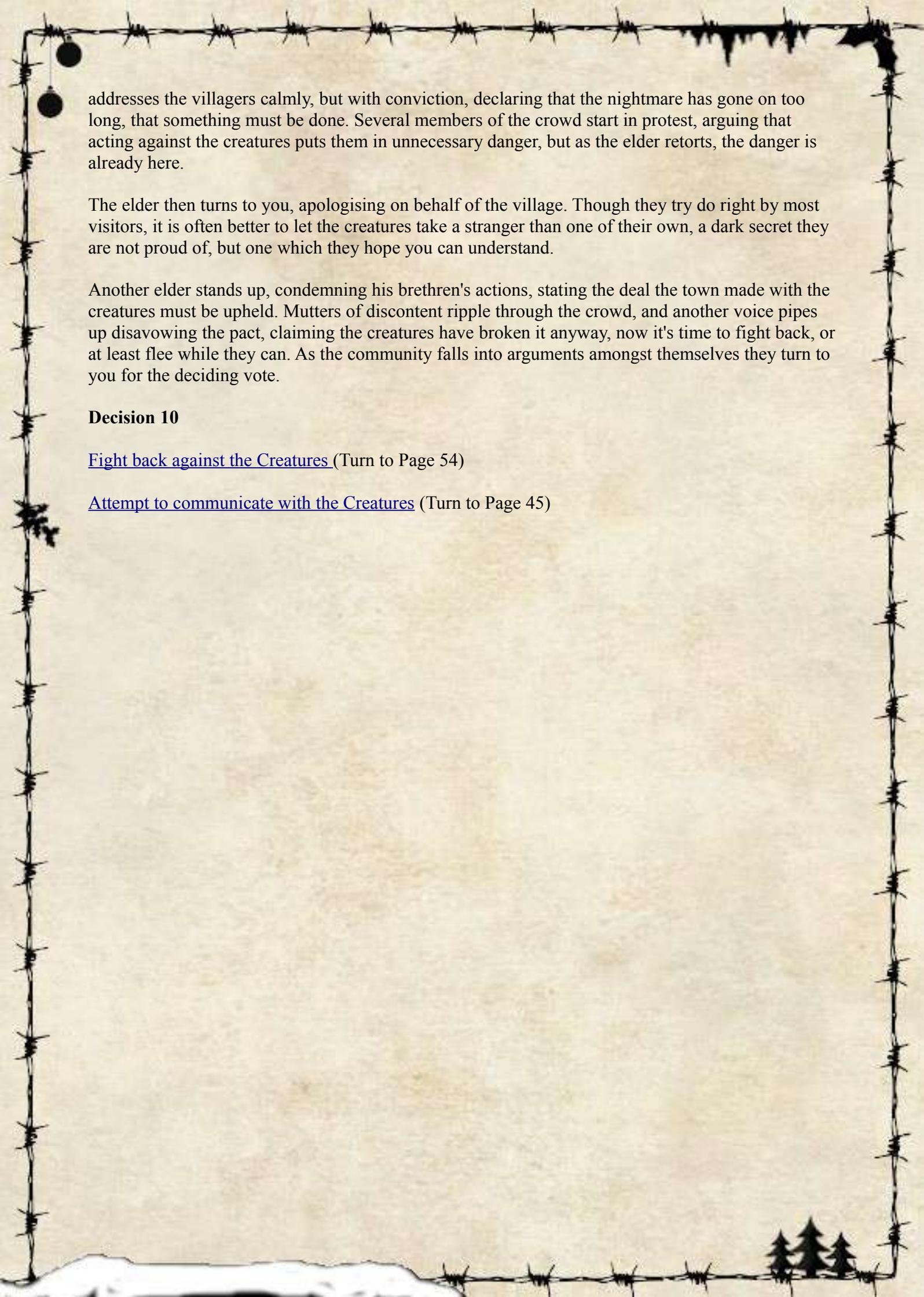
You fall back from the door, the Innkeepers grim demeanour cowing any ideals of heroism you had. The slamming sound continues outside, accompanied intermittently by a woman screaming in the storm, the howl of the wind often drowning both out completely as the blizzard rages. As time passes the windows gradually become clogged with snow. You watch through the frosty panes for as long as you can, staring into the white void in the hope that you may still be able to help, but as time passes the screams fade into the distance, as does the slamming noise, eventually lost to the roar of the storm.

It is around this time that people begin to arrive at the inn, a few villagers at first, then more until the front room is filled with members of the community. They talk in hushed whispers, often looking at you before descending into fervoured conversation with each other, many congregating around an elderly woman who sits weeping in one of the armchairs. You can't make out their conversation in its entirety, but from what you can gather the woman's grandchild was taken, and it was her daughter that headed out into the blizzard to find it.

The Inn door swings open suddenly and violently, causing many people to start or scream for fear one of the creatures had come to claim more victims. Instead a woman, near frozen stumbles inside before collapsing to the ground shivering, her lips blue. The villagers rush to her aid, and you grab a pile of blankets from one of the chairs, helping to cocoon her in the warm material as the villagers lead her towards the fireplace. The elderly woman struggles to raise herself out of the armchair and walks slowly across to her daughter, running a hand across her pale face before they collapse into an embrace weeping, struggling to cope with the loss to their family.

Hushed whispers soon overtake the Inn as people begin to settle, concern lining many of the villagers faces. One of the village elders standing amongst the crowd calls for attention. He





addresses the villagers calmly, but with conviction, declaring that the nightmare has gone on too long, that something must be done. Several members of the crowd start in protest, arguing that acting against the creatures puts them in unnecessary danger, but as the elder retorts, the danger is already here.

The elder then turns to you, apologising on behalf of the village. Though they try do right by most visitors, it is often better to let the creatures take a stranger than one of their own, a dark secret they are not proud of, but one which they hope you can understand.

Another elder stands up, condemning his brethren's actions, stating the deal the town made with the creatures must be upheld. Murmurs of discontent ripple through the crowd, and another voice pipes up disavowing the pact, claiming the creatures have broken it anyway, now it's time to fight back, or at least flee while they can. As the community falls into arguments amongst themselves they turn to you for the deciding vote.

Decision 10

[Fight back against the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 54)

[Attempt to communicate with the Creatures](#) (Turn to Page 45)

Fight back against the Creatures



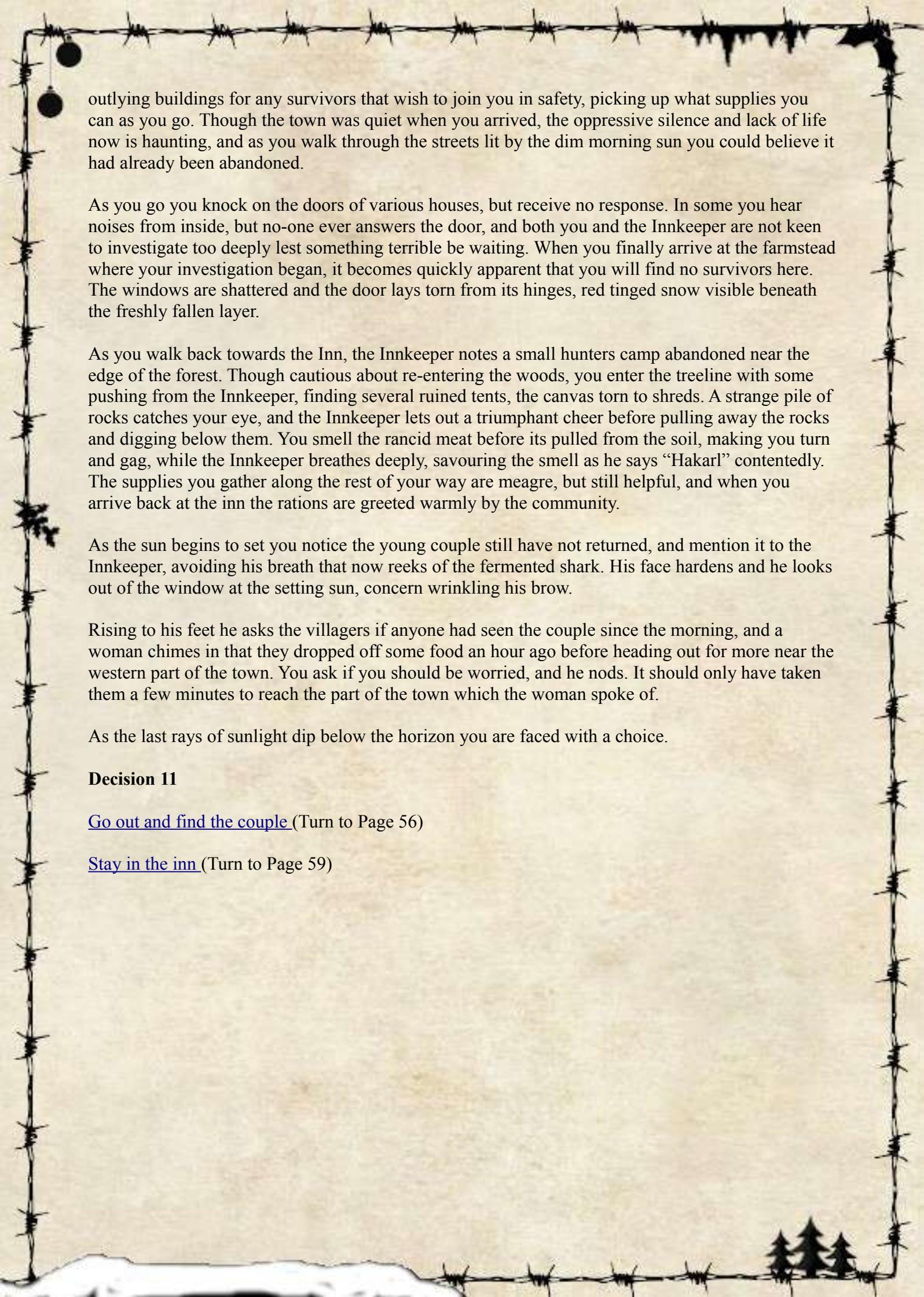
The villagers turn to you for a decision, and looking through the crowd you see many who would likely not survive the journey should you choose to flee. Though you're not sure fighting back will do you any better, it seems like the best choice right now.

Many of the villagers mutter in disapproval at your choice, one spitting on the ground and storming from the room, but many others seem to breathe a sigh of relief, happy to not be abandoning their homes. You ask for volunteers to help you defend the village, gazing hopefully across the crowd, but most avoid eye contact, staring at the ground shame-faced. Fear has driven these people into submission, and even now grips them unrelentingly.

Never the less, a few hands raise, and you are soon joined by a small band of brave souls willing to fight for their homes. Over the course of the night you talk strategy, how best to fortify the inn to best protect those inside, and what weaponry could be used to repel the creatures should they return. The village is woefully prepared, having abandoned any hope of fighting back years ago, but you make do with the little people can offer.

With daylight lasting a fleeting 4 hours, your time to gather supplies is short, but dividing into teams you set out to prepare as best you can. A young man and his wife offer to gather food for the villagers, noting that it may be a while before anyone can leave safely, while two older women set out to gather as much wood as they can to help barricade the Inn from intruders.

Emerging into a clear day, the storm passed, you and Innkeeper decide to search the village and



outlying buildings for any survivors that wish to join you in safety, picking up what supplies you can as you go. Though the town was quiet when you arrived, the oppressive silence and lack of life now is haunting, and as you walk through the streets lit by the dim morning sun you could believe it had already been abandoned.

As you go you knock on the doors of various houses, but receive no response. In some you hear noises from inside, but no-one ever answers the door, and both you and the Innkeeper are not keen to investigate too deeply lest something terrible be waiting. When you finally arrive at the farmstead where your investigation began, it becomes quickly apparent that you will find no survivors here. The windows are shattered and the door lays torn from its hinges, red tinged snow visible beneath the freshly fallen layer.

As you walk back towards the Inn, the Innkeeper notes a small hunters camp abandoned near the edge of the forest. Though cautious about re-entering the woods, you enter the treeline with some pushing from the Innkeeper, finding several ruined tents, the canvas torn to shreds. A strange pile of rocks catches your eye, and the Innkeeper lets out a triumphant cheer before pulling away the rocks and digging below them. You smell the rancid meat before its pulled from the soil, making you turn and gag, while the Innkeeper breathes deeply, savouring the smell as he says “Hakar!” contentedly. The supplies you gather along the rest of your way are meagre, but still helpful, and when you arrive back at the inn the rations are greeted warmly by the community.

As the sun begins to set you notice the young couple still have not returned, and mention it to the Innkeeper, avoiding his breath that now reeks of the fermented shark. His face hardens and he looks out of the window at the setting sun, concern wrinkling his brow.

Rising to his feet he asks the villagers if anyone had seen the couple since the morning, and a woman chimes in that they dropped off some food an hour ago before heading out for more near the western part of the town. You ask if you should be worried, and he nods. It should only have taken them a few minutes to reach the part of the town which the woman spoke of.

As the last rays of sunlight dip below the horizon you are faced with a choice.

Decision 11

[Go out and find the couple](#) (Turn to Page 56)

[Stay in the inn](#) (Turn to Page 59)

Go out and find the couple

You're reluctant to step out into the dark for another night, but can't stand by while more innocent people get taken. Donning your coat once more, the Innkeeper by your side, you head out into the pitch black village, the lack of homes lit by their inhabitants deepening the darkness to a near impenetrable level.

The Innkeeper hands you a torch, the bright beam carving through the shadows with ease, and lights a small lantern for himself, the warm light of the flame encircling you. As you walk through the streets the silence is deafening, and were it not for the crunch of the snow under your boots you'd fear you'd gone deaf.

Following the Innkeeper's directions it doesn't take you long to reach the storage shed where the couple said they were heading, seeing a flickering light leaking out from the metal door which hangs ajar. You call out to the couple, asking the Innkeeper for their names, Jon Viktorsson and Helga Jónsdóttir, but receive no reply. The Innkeeper bends down, picking up a log from a nearby pile of firewood and hefting it in his hand, and you both advance slowly on the shed.

Using the log the Innkeeper pushes the door open, taking care not to stand by the entrance, and calls out again to the couple with no response. As you enter you immediately see signs the couple were here, food piled into a basket, several shelves stripped bare, but find no sign of the two missing villagers. As you go to check the outside you almost slip on a slick substance that you see lines the floor in a trail, leading out of the shed.

The Innkeeper bends down, running a finger through the substance and sniffing. "Skyr", he says ominously, and you pick up a small axe from the store, knowing what comes next will likely not be pleasant.





It doesn't take you long following the trail before the Innkeeper stops, placing a hand on your shoulder and gesturing to a small alleyway between two houses, dimming his lantern. You follow suit, shutting off the torch and letting the darkness envelop you, listening for any sign of movement. As you advance on the alleyway, the dim moonlight reflecting off the slimy trail, you begin to hear voices calling out weakly, and though they are muffled you recognise the couple, pleading for someone to help them. With your axe raised you round the corner of the house with a shout, ready to attack whatever foul creature looms before you, the Innkeeper close behind you.

You pause, the alleyway is empty save for a few discarded trash cans buried deep in the snow. As you walk cautiously into the narrow space you exchange a confused glance with the Innkeeper, who grimaces, clearly unsure what to expect. With a thud your foot hits something hard in the snow, and you see a flash of red light beneath the white powder. Bending down you clear away the surface layer of ice, and pick up the object, turning it in your hands. With a crackle the tape recorder in your hand springs back to life, and the voice of the couple echoes from within it, repeating the same pleas for help you heard moments ago.

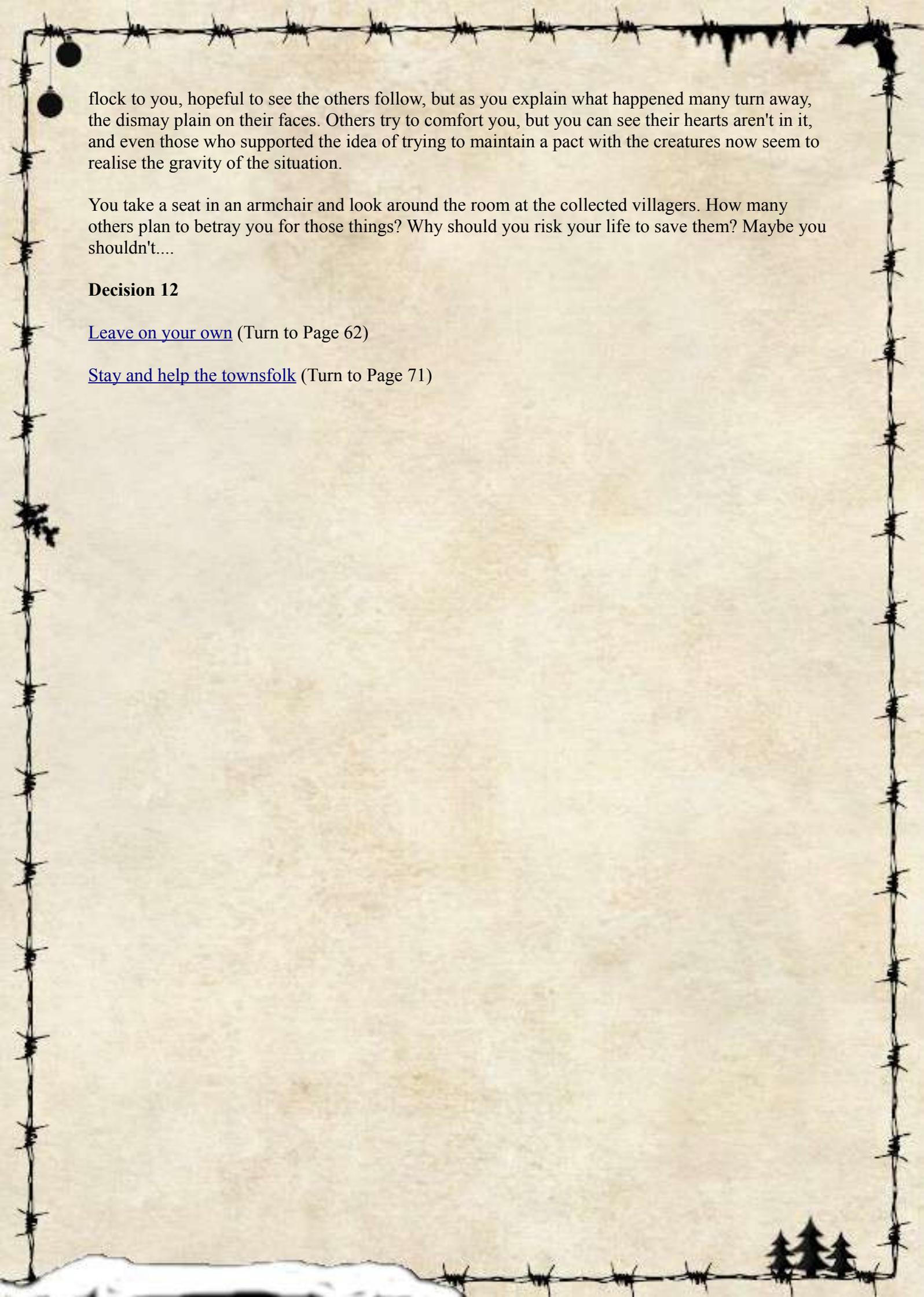
At that moment lights flick on above you, and the Innkeeper yells out as something is dumped atop you both, the thick liquid enveloping you, blinding you temporarily. You wipe it from your eyes desperately and see the Innkeeper do the same, cursing at two figures who hang from open windows above, laughing to themselves. The couple drop the bucket they held the liquid in, and begin hurling curses at you in a foreign dialect, cackling to themselves as you struggle to find purchase on the snow slick ground.

It is only when a horrific cry echoes through the streets that they stop, quickly uttering one final curse before shutting the windows and disappearing from sight. Too late you realise that their trap has been sprung, and as you turn you see a figure stood at the other end of the alley, silhouetted against the treeline by the moonlight. Large antlers protrude from a distorted humanoid skull, leading down to a misshapen torso that seems held together by a broken layer of hide stretched far too thinly over bone and muscle. Several ribs protrude from the body, scraps of hide hanging from them dripping with an unknown substance. Its legs buckle backwards at the knee, and are elongated so that the creature stands at least 7 feet tall, its clawed hands scraping at the second floors of the wooden homes.

The Innkeeper gasps, staggering back, and as the creature screeches piercingly through the night you break from your stupor telling him to run. You both bolt from the alleyway, narrowly avoiding slipping on the slick S kyr that coats the floor, and hastily retreat through the streets, the alleyway exploding behind you as the creature's girth tears wood from the structures with its passing. Though you run as fast as your legs can carry you, it is clear the creature will soon be upon you both, and a thought runs through your head that this may be where your journey ends.

With a scream so shrill it causes your ears to bleed, the creature lunges for you, its black eyes thirsty for its prey, and you close your eyes praying for a swift end. An impact from your side sends you spinning across the floor, and you slide underneath a low porch concealed by the heavy snow fall, the wind knocked out of you. The last you see of the Innkeeper he smiles at you, gesturing his farewell, and then vanishes as the creature barrels through him, sweeping him into its embrace, maw open. The screams last what seem like an eternity, and you lay beneath the porch, tears brimming your eyes as you pray it ends soon. When silence finally falls, a piercing screech from the creature rips through the silent village as it pads away into the night, and you allow yourself to break down, giving in to despair for a moment.

Returning to the Inn you pause outside the door, a sense of wrongness overcoming you as you consider entering the establishment without the Innkeeper. As you make your way inside people



flock to you, hopeful to see the others follow, but as you explain what happened many turn away, the dismay plain on their faces. Others try to comfort you, but you can see their hearts aren't in it, and even those who supported the idea of trying to maintain a pact with the creatures now seem to realise the gravity of the situation.

You take a seat in an armchair and look around the room at the collected villagers. How many others plan to betray you for those things? Why should you risk your life to save them? Maybe you shouldn't....

Decision 12

[Leave on your own](#) (Turn to Page 62)

[Stay and help the townsfolk](#) (Turn to Page 71)

Stay in the inn

You're reluctant to step out into the darkness yet again, the past few nights having given you more than enough cause to never leave the inn. Casting a weary and concerned glance towards the Innkeeper he meets your gaze, and you see a similar level of hesitancy on his face. You decide to wait, giving the couple ample time to return. Perhaps they got lost and will turn up shortly, or maybe they found somewhere else to hold up for the night once darkness fell?

Either way you don't think it worth the risk to head out into the inky night, and it seems none of the villagers are willing to contest your decision. Over the new few hours you help with shoring up the inn, nailing boards over the windows and ensuring the doors are locked and secure. A fire in the chimney is kept well stoked just in-case something tried to descend through it, and soon you begin to feel a semblance of safety for the first time since you arrived.

As the night drags on, eerily silent, the villagers huddle together at the centre of the inn, none willing to venture alone to the various rooms of the establishment, preferring the company of the community. You sit on a chair near the door, gazing out through a crack in the boards through a frosted window, the pit in your stomach growing as the night deepens with no sign of the missing couple returning.

The warmth and relative comfort of the inn begins to weigh heavily on your tired mind, and yawns soon turn into heavy eyelids as you gradually begin to drift off. As you finally begin to fall sleep you think how nice it would be to get a single decent nights rest, and then a bang starts you awake. For a moment you think you must have dozed off, the window now coated with a blanket of white that wasn't there before, but upon closer inspection you see the substance is a liquid that slowly drips down the frame. Several more bangs draw you to your feet, and several villagers do the same,





some huddling together in fright, others reaching for any makeshift weapons they can grab. A woman near one of the other windows begins to yell, and though you can't make out everything she says you recognise two names, Jon Victorsson and Helga Jónsdóttir, the missing couple.

Rushing over to the window you peer through the crack and see the couple launching pots of the white substance at the inn, laughing between themselves with a crazed look in their eyes. One of the pots shatters a small window above the doorway, and rolls across the inn floor smearing its slick contents across the floor. The Innkeeper grabs it and sniffs, his face changing from concern to confusion as he look as you and says "Skr?".

The bangs abruptly stop, and you glance back out the window at a now empty street. An uncomfortable silence falls across the inn, people whispering to each other as they debate what the couple were doing, and you eye the road frantically, looking for any sign of the man and woman. You're about to pull back when a snow-bank catches your eye just off from where Jon and Helga stood, the snow gradually turning a deep red as you realise the what you thought were branches jutting out of the white mound are in-fact the remains of the couple.

You turn to tell the Innkeeper when the window explodes behind you, the boards buckling against the weight of the creature that desperately tries to grasp at you through the fragmented opening. Its high pitched howl mixes with the screams of the villagers. Behind a clawing skeletal arm clad in what looks like dried skin stretched across entwined bones and ligaments, you see an animalistic eye frantically darting around its socket as it gazes into the inn. The Innkeeper grabs a fire axe and slams it down on the creatures arm, the bone splintering, and it elicits a howl that shakes the room as the creature withdraws.

Within seconds it renews its attack though, charging at the door with such fervour you fear the hinges will give way immediately. The Innkeeper shouts at you and the villagers, propping himself behind the door to add additional support, and you do the same, almost bowled over by the force with which the creature flings itself at the door, its frantic howls and screams piercing the air between each collision.

Even as it assaults the door, its elongated arms whip wildly across the building, and windows shatter from the force of its blows as it tries to find an entrance. Though your collective efforts prevent the door from caving in, chunks of wood start to shatter away from the force of the impacts and you catch glimpses of the creature as it assaults the building. Large antlers protrude from a distorted humanoid skull, a misshapen torso that seems held together by a broken layer of hide stretched far too thinly over bone and muscle heaving below. Several ribs protrude from the body, scraps of hide hanging from them dripping with an unknown substance. Its legs buckle backwards at the knee, and are elongated so that the creature stands at least 7 feet tall, its clawed hands scraping at inn. Inside the skull cavernous eyes with a pinprick of yellow at the centre dart wildly as the creature snorts, sniffing the air as if driven into a frenzy by the smell of something.

An elderly woman walks up behind you and tugs at your clothes to get your attention, pointing at the pot of Skyr which she holds in her hand and gesturing to the creature outside as the door rattles from another impact. You understand quickly, and realise with horror that the couple doused the Inn in the substance, drawing the creature to you.

Its howls only increase with ferocity as time goes on, and you realise the door will not hold much longer, large chunks peeling away as the creature batters the wooden structure. The elderly woman cries out as a clawed appendage shoots through one of the new openings in the door, grasping frantically at her as she attempts to run only to be caught in its bony grasp. You fall to the floor as the creature wrenches its arm back, slamming the woman into the door from the inside over and

over, her face quickly becoming bloodied from the merciless bludgeoning. Even as you and the villagers try to free her from the creature's grasp, the Innkeeper raining blows upon its arm with the axe, the creature unrelentingly draws its arm back, and with a final howl wrenches the woman through the door. A sickening crunching sound follows as her body contorts to fit through the smaller opening, shattering much of the door in the process.

For a while the creature withdraws, content with its kill, but soon it returns for more and as the night wears on its campaign of assaults only intensifies. In the intervening minutes you reinforce the door, laying a large wooden bookcase across it, and the creature alternates between attacking the main entrance and trying to squeeze itself through the various windows, injuring several villagers in its unpredictable attacks.

As the dawn approaches it becomes clear the creature will find its way inside before the sun rises, and the villagers fall back deeper into the inn, trying to secure themselves in the various rooms as best they can. When only you, the Innkeeper and a couple of villagers remain holding the door, it becomes a waiting game for a pause in the frenzied assault, the creature's fervour unrelenting. As soon as a brief respite hits you all bolt for the nearest room, hoping that you can hold out long enough for the sun to rise and the creature to hopefully leave.

Within seconds of you shutting the door you hear an explosion of splintering wood as the creature finds its way into the inn, and through a gap in the door see it leap desperately on the pot of Skyr, tearing the metal apart as it gorges itself on the substance, licking every inch of the container until it is empty. With the pot cleaned out the creature lets out a screech that causes you to cover your ears, its eyes whirling in its head as it scans the inn, setting its eyes on one of the rooms where the villagers within whimper loudly.

It takes a step forward then shrieks clutching its arm which seems to smoulder as the morning light casts its first rays through the room. The frenzy turns into panic as the creature realises it has waited too long, and though it tries to cower into a shadowy corner the damage it has done to the inn means beams of light soon shoot through the entire establishment, piercing it like spears. Each ray that touches it causes the smouldering to intensify, and soon the creature rolls across the floor in agony, devastating the remaining furnishings as it screeches in pain, a final croak escaping its skeletal maw before its entire body petrifies, coarse stone coating its body.

Over the course of the next hour the villagers emerge from the various rooms, cautiously approaching the creature's frozen carcass, and debate rages through the inn as to what the next step should be.

You survey the survivors. How many others plan to betray you for those things? Why should you risk your life to save them? Maybe you shouldn't....

Decision 12

[Leave on your own](#) (Turn to Page 62)

[Stay and help the townsfolk \(After the Skyrgámur Dies\)](#) (Turn to Page 68)

Leave on your own



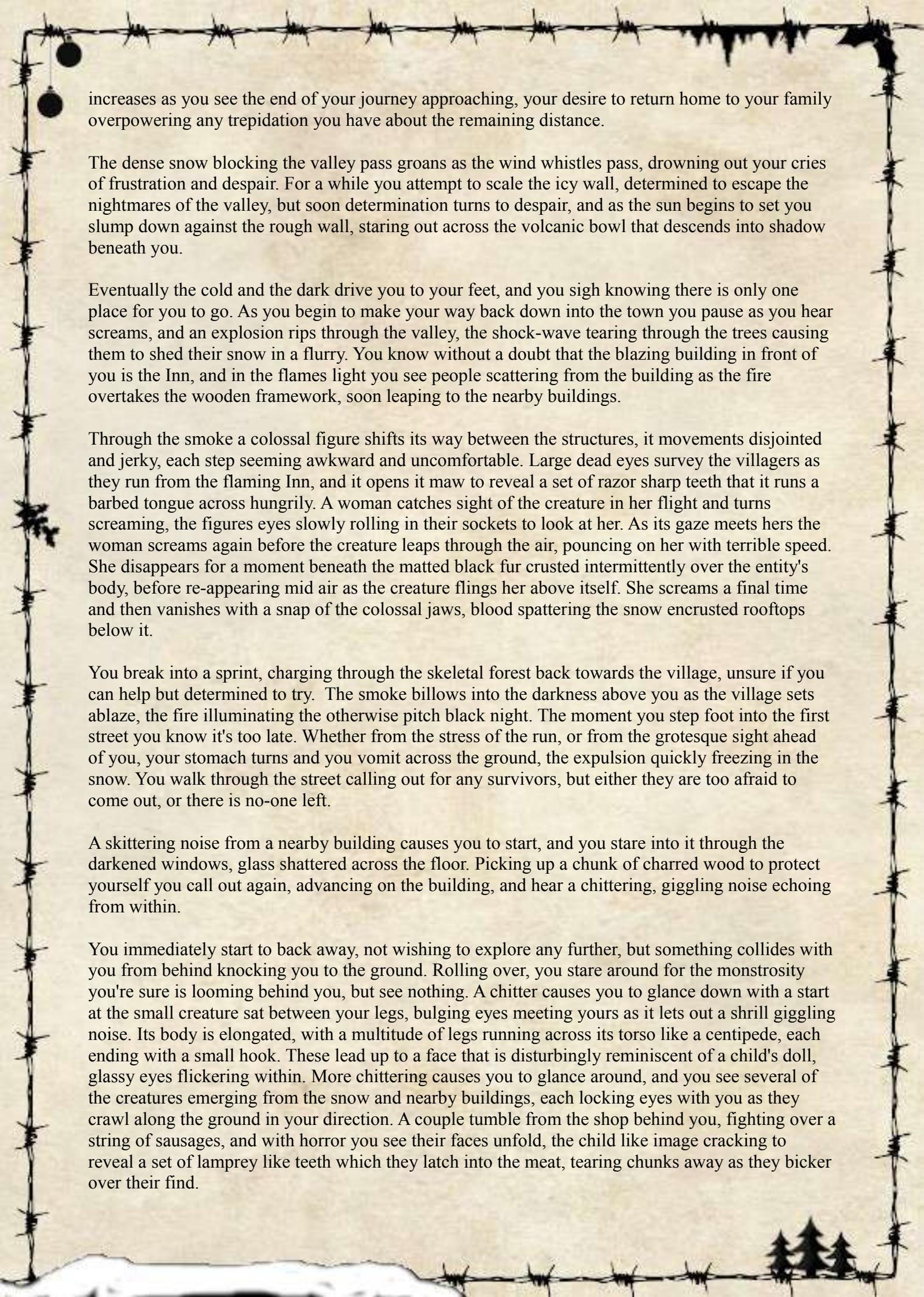
These people bought their fate upon themselves, whether by helping these creatures in their hunt, or by standing by idly as innocent people were taken to save their own skins. Perhaps it would be best if this entire village just disappeared. You head back to your room while the villagers huddle round the fire discussing what to do next, and gather your belongings into the small pack you arrived with. For a moment you consider bringing the information you've gathered with you, the sketches, the accounts of your interactions with these creatures, but decide against it. Best to play dumb about the disappearances and just pass off the first child as a wolf attack, after all no-one would believe you anyway.

The heavy snowfall created a large mound beneath your window, and ignoring the various abnormal footprints that dot the snow you lower yourself onto it as quietly as possible, not wanting to alert the villagers as you leave. Taking one final glance back at the inn, and the people within gathered together for what may be the last time, you shore up your coat against the cold wind and trudge down the road, the morning light beginning to crest the valley walls.

You follow the road to the edge of town, the quiet calm of the early morning feeling uncomfortable, and as you survey the various homes with boarded up windows or shattered doors, you can't help but feel like you're walking through a cemetery, and not a village.

The edge of the woodlands rises to meet you quickly, the skeletal forms of the birch trees quickly encompassing you as you head in the direction of the valley pass, the deep snow weighing heavily on your legs. As the morning light glints across the icy landscape you can't help but admire its beauty, despite the horrors it disguises, the vast expanse of wiry trees stretching seemingly endlessly.

Apprehensively you continue your journey towards the edge of the valley, the hours dropping away too quickly for your liking, but to your surprise you soon see the volcanic rock edifice stretching above you oppressively. Picking up the rough trail through the woods once more, your pace



increases as you see the end of your journey approaching, your desire to return home to your family overpowering any trepidation you have about the remaining distance.

The dense snow blocking the valley pass groans as the wind whistles pass, drowning out your cries of frustration and despair. For a while you attempt to scale the icy wall, determined to escape the nightmares of the valley, but soon determination turns to despair, and as the sun begins to set you slump down against the rough wall, staring out across the volcanic bowl that descends into shadow beneath you.

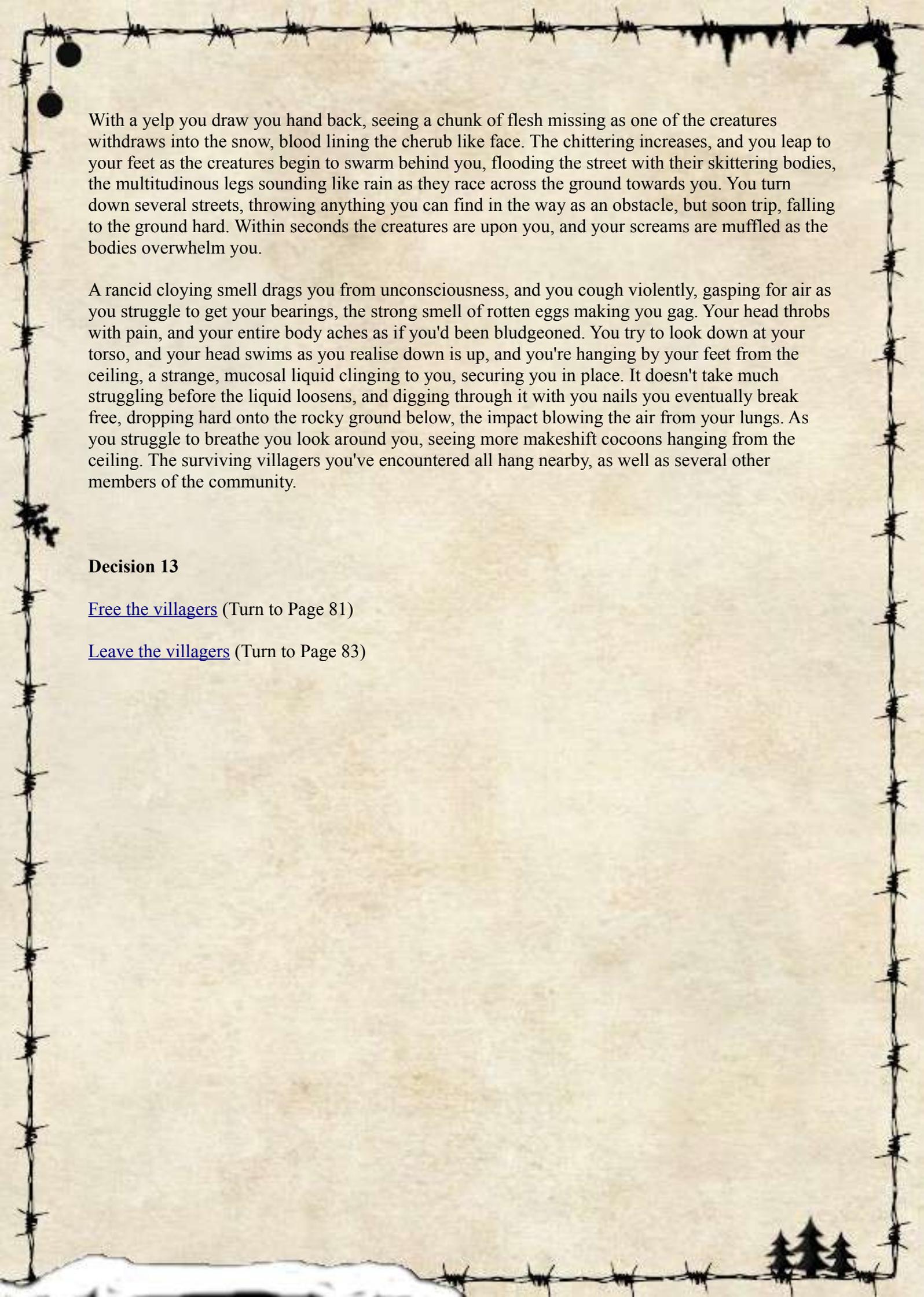
Eventually the cold and the dark drive you to your feet, and you sigh knowing there is only one place for you to go. As you begin to make your way back down into the town you pause as you hear screams, and an explosion rips through the valley, the shock-wave tearing through the trees causing them to shed their snow in a flurry. You know without a doubt that the blazing building in front of you is the Inn, and in the flames light you see people scattering from the building as the fire overtakes the wooden framework, soon leaping to the nearby buildings.

Through the smoke a colossal figure shifts its way between the structures, its movements disjointed and jerky, each step seeming awkward and uncomfortable. Large dead eyes survey the villagers as they run from the flaming Inn, and it opens its maw to reveal a set of razor sharp teeth that it runs a barbed tongue across hungrily. A woman catches sight of the creature in her flight and turns screaming, the figure's eyes slowly rolling in their sockets to look at her. As its gaze meets hers the woman screams again before the creature leaps through the air, pouncing on her with terrible speed. She disappears for a moment beneath the matted black fur crusted intermittently over the entity's body, before re-appearing mid air as the creature flings her above itself. She screams a final time and then vanishes with a snap of the colossal jaws, blood spattering the snow encrusted rooftops below it.

You break into a sprint, charging through the skeletal forest back towards the village, unsure if you can help but determined to try. The smoke billows into the darkness above you as the village sets ablaze, the fire illuminating the otherwise pitch black night. The moment you step foot into the first street you know it's too late. Whether from the stress of the run, or from the grotesque sight ahead of you, your stomach turns and you vomit across the ground, the expulsion quickly freezing in the snow. You walk through the street calling out for any survivors, but either they are too afraid to come out, or there is no-one left.

A skittering noise from a nearby building causes you to start, and you stare into it through the darkened windows, glass shattered across the floor. Picking up a chunk of charred wood to protect yourself you call out again, advancing on the building, and hear a chittering, giggling noise echoing from within.

You immediately start to back away, not wishing to explore any further, but something collides with you from behind knocking you to the ground. Rolling over, you stare around for the monstrosity you're sure is looming behind you, but see nothing. A chitter causes you to glance down with a start at the small creature sat between your legs, bulging eyes meeting yours as it lets out a shrill giggling noise. Its body is elongated, with a multitude of legs running across its torso like a centipede, each ending with a small hook. These lead up to a face that is disturbingly reminiscent of a child's doll, glassy eyes flickering within. More chittering causes you to glance around, and you see several of the creatures emerging from the snow and nearby buildings, each locking eyes with you as they crawl along the ground in your direction. A couple tumble from the shop behind you, fighting over a string of sausages, and with horror you see their faces unfold, the child like image cracking to reveal a set of lamprey like teeth which they latch into the meat, tearing chunks away as they bicker over their find.



With a yelp you draw your hand back, seeing a chunk of flesh missing as one of the creatures withdraws into the snow, blood lining the cherub-like face. The chittering increases, and you leap to your feet as the creatures begin to swarm behind you, flooding the street with their skittering bodies, the multitudinous legs sounding like rain as they race across the ground towards you. You turn down several streets, throwing anything you can find in the way as an obstacle, but soon trip, falling to the ground hard. Within seconds the creatures are upon you, and your screams are muffled as the bodies overwhelm you.

A rancid cloying smell drags you from unconsciousness, and you cough violently, gasping for air as you struggle to get your bearings, the strong smell of rotten eggs making you gag. Your head throbs with pain, and your entire body aches as if you'd been bludgeoned. You try to look down at your torso, and your head swims as you realise down is up, and you're hanging by your feet from the ceiling, a strange, mucosal liquid clinging to you, securing you in place. It doesn't take much struggling before the liquid loosens, and digging through it with your nails you eventually break free, dropping hard onto the rocky ground below, the impact blowing the air from your lungs. As you struggle to breathe you look around you, seeing more makeshift cocoons hanging from the ceiling. The surviving villagers you've encountered all hang nearby, as well as several other members of the community.

Decision 13

[Free the villagers](#) (Turn to Page 81)

[Leave the villagers](#) (Turn to Page 83)

Stay and help the townsfolk



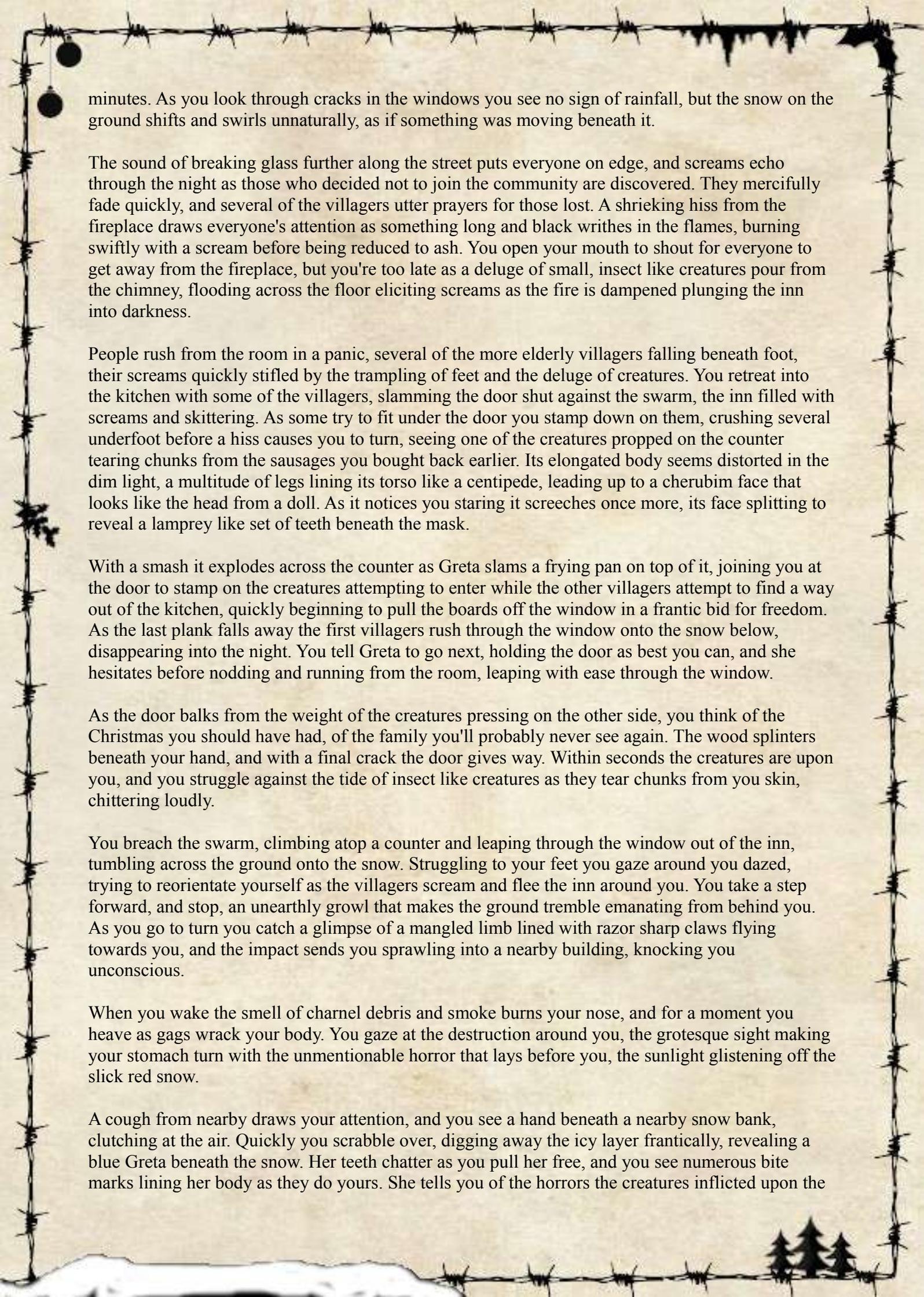
You quickly banish the thought, a lot of these people are innocent victims, they had as much choice in this as you. They didn't choose to have these creatures descend on them, and as you talk with them many seem to aggressively disagree with those who chose to worship the creatures, but saw little other choice than to let it happen, fearing for their own lives. They mention a few people who did stand up to those committing the various atrocities, but note how shortly after they disappeared or met a terrible fate through some means.

As day breaks the villagers gather together and set out into the village once again, more people willing to contribute to the hunt for supplies this time. Food supplies are running low for the gathered villagers, and so this becomes a priority, many people returning with what they can find. The village butcher, Greta Magnúsdóttir, allows you access to her shop, seeing no need to hoard her stock while people starve. A surly woman wearing a dirtied apron, she makes good company as you make your way through the village, and her conversational skills make you quickly feel at ease, almost forgetting the situation you find yourself in.

As you reach the butchers Greta leans down and raises a heavy metal shutter, revealing a well stocked shop with plenty to keep the villagers going. Together you round up as much as you can carry, winding several links of sausages over your shoulder to carry back to the inn. Greta laughs as you become entangled, helping to unwind you while filling a basket of her own with things that will be easy to eat without much preparation.

You arrive back at the Inn before the sun sets, and the atmosphere within becomes noticeably brighter with the arrival of the food, people seeming to relax and unwind a little as portions are handed out to the weary villagers.

When the last rays of sunlight dip once more beyond the horizon, the tension in the air grows as everyone sits waiting for the new night's horror. It doesn't take long. At first you think it has begun to rain, a pitter-pattering sound resonating through the inn, increasing to a heavy drumming within



minutes. As you look through cracks in the windows you see no sign of rainfall, but the snow on the ground shifts and swirls unnaturally, as if something was moving beneath it.

The sound of breaking glass further along the street puts everyone on edge, and screams echo through the night as those who decided not to join the community are discovered. They mercifully fade quickly, and several of the villagers utter prayers for those lost. A shrieking hiss from the fireplace draws everyone's attention as something long and black writhes in the flames, burning swiftly with a scream before being reduced to ash. You open your mouth to shout for everyone to get away from the fireplace, but you're too late as a deluge of small, insect like creatures pour from the chimney, flooding across the floor eliciting screams as the fire is dampened plunging the inn into darkness.

People rush from the room in a panic, several of the more elderly villagers falling beneath foot, their screams quickly stifled by the trampling of feet and the deluge of creatures. You retreat into the kitchen with some of the villagers, slamming the door shut against the swarm, the inn filled with screams and skittering. As some try to fit under the door you stamp down on them, crushing several underfoot before a hiss causes you to turn, seeing one of the creatures propped on the counter tearing chunks from the sausages you bought back earlier. Its elongated body seems distorted in the dim light, a multitude of legs lining its torso like a centipede, leading up to a cherubim face that looks like the head from a doll. As it notices you staring it screeches once more, its face splitting to reveal a lamprey like set of teeth beneath the mask.

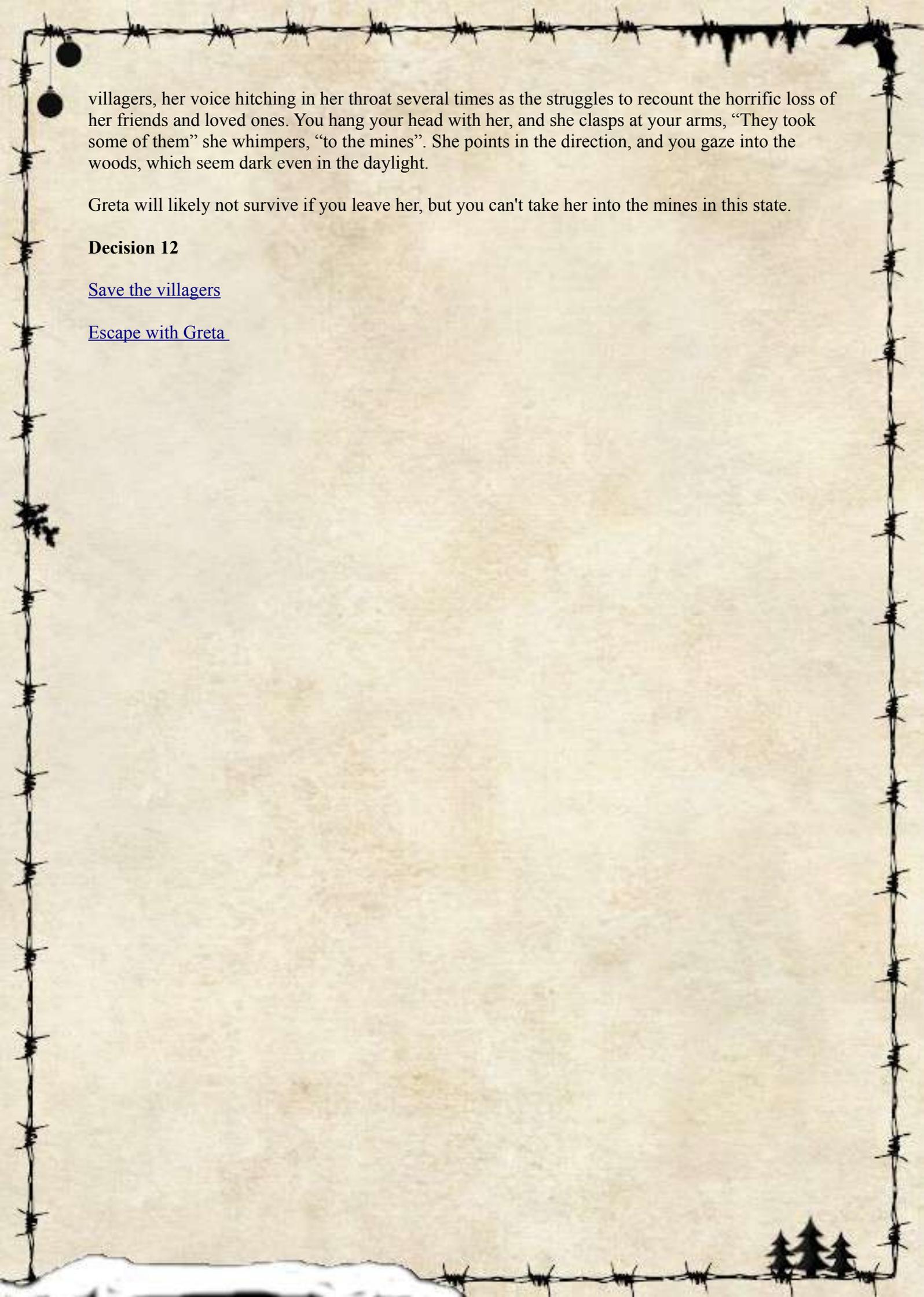
With a smash it explodes across the counter as Greta slams a frying pan on top of it, joining you at the door to stamp on the creatures attempting to enter while the other villagers attempt to find a way out of the kitchen, quickly beginning to pull the boards off the window in a frantic bid for freedom. As the last plank falls away the first villagers rush through the window onto the snow below, disappearing into the night. You tell Greta to go next, holding the door as best you can, and she hesitates before nodding and running from the room, leaping with ease through the window.

As the door balks from the weight of the creatures pressing on the other side, you think of the Christmas you should have had, of the family you'll probably never see again. The wood splinters beneath your hand, and with a final crack the door gives way. Within seconds the creatures are upon you, and you struggle against the tide of insect like creatures as they tear chunks from you skin, chittering loudly.

You breach the swarm, climbing atop a counter and leaping through the window out of the inn, tumbling across the ground onto the snow. Struggling to your feet you gaze around you dazed, trying to reorientate yourself as the villagers scream and flee the inn around you. You take a step forward, and stop, an unearthly growl that makes the ground tremble emanating from behind you. As you go to turn you catch a glimpse of a mangled limb lined with razor sharp claws flying towards you, and the impact sends you sprawling into a nearby building, knocking you unconscious.

When you wake the smell of charnel debris and smoke burns your nose, and for a moment you heave as gags wrack your body. You gaze at the destruction around you, the grotesque sight making your stomach turn with the unmentionable horror that lays before you, the sunlight glistening off the slick red snow.

A cough from nearby draws your attention, and you see a hand beneath a nearby snow bank, clutching at the air. Quickly you scabble over, digging away the icy layer frantically, revealing a blue Greta beneath the snow. Her teeth chatter as you pull her free, and you see numerous bite marks lining her body as they do yours. She tells you of the horrors the creatures inflicted upon the



villagers, her voice hitching in her throat several times as she struggles to recount the horrific loss of her friends and loved ones. You hang your head with her, and she clasps at your arms, “They took some of them” she whimpers, “to the mines”. She points in the direction, and you gaze into the woods, which seem dark even in the daylight.

Greta will likely not survive if you leave her, but you can't take her into the mines in this state.

Decision 12

[Save the villagers](#)

[Escape with Greta](#)

Stay and help the townsfolk (If the S kyr Gamur is Dead)

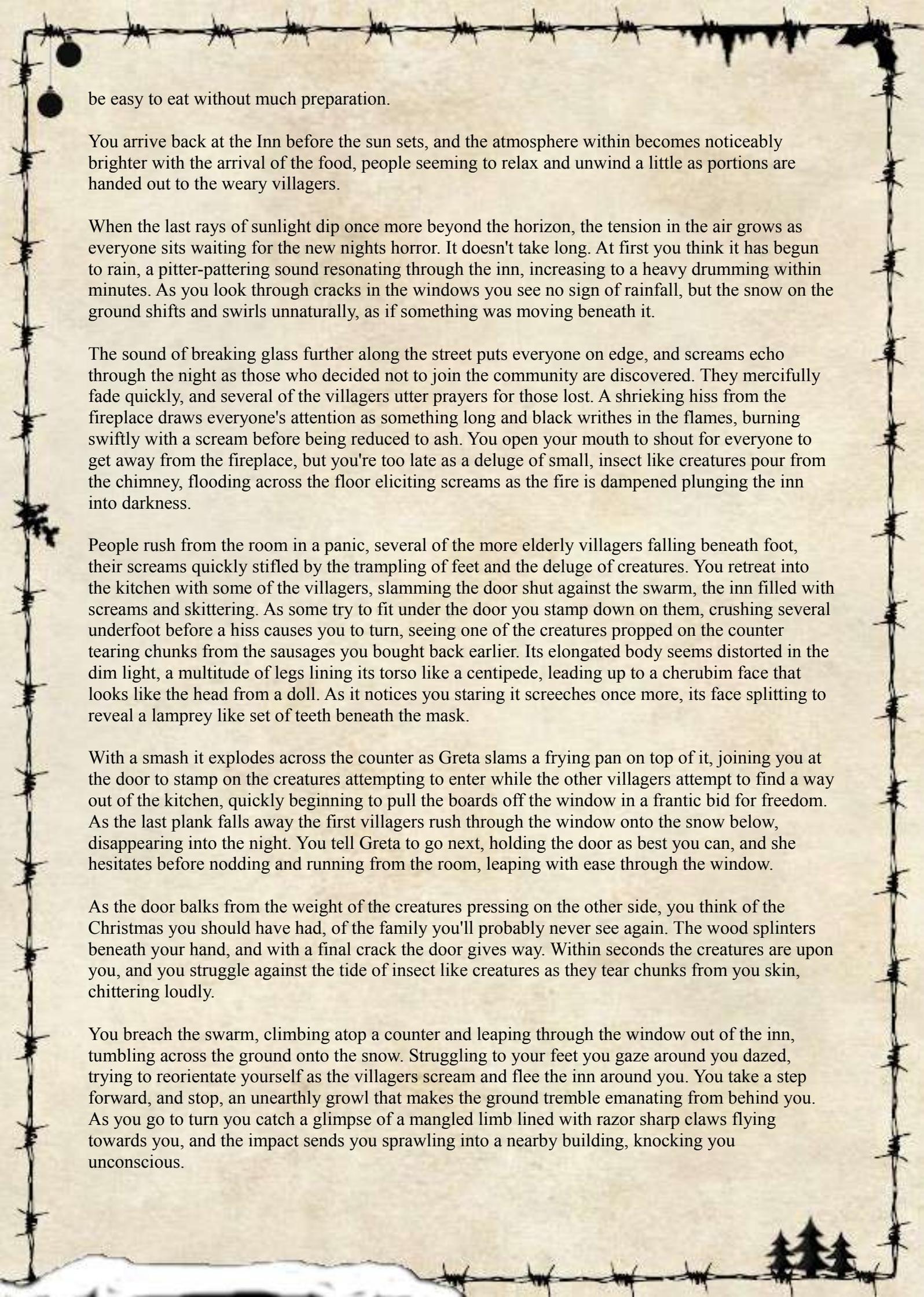


You quickly banish the thought, a lot of these people are innocent victims, they had as much choice in this as you. They didn't choose to have these creatures descend on them, and as you talk with them many seem to aggressively disagree with those who chose to worship the creatures, but saw little other choice than to let it happen, fearing for their own lives. They mention a few people who did stand up to those committing the various atrocities, but note how shortly after they disappeared or met a terrible fate through some means.

The frozen creature stands ominously in the centre of the inn, and despite its seemingly harmless state people give it a wide berth, not wishing to risk it awakening. After some discussion it seems the best option is to smash the monstrous statue, lest it come back to life when night falls, and so you and several villagers set about dismembering the creature, shattering it to pieces and casting the remains into the snow.

As day breaks the villagers gather together and set out into the village once again, more people willing to contribute to the hunt for supplies this time. Food supplies are running low for the gathered villagers, and so this becomes a priority, many people returning with what they can find. The village butcher, Greta Magnúsdóttir, allows you access to her shop, seeing no need to hoard her stock while people starve. A surly woman wearing a dirtied apron, she makes good company as you make your way through the village, and her conversational skills make you quickly feel at ease, almost forgetting the situation you find yourself in.

As you reach the butchers Greta leans down and raises a heavy metal shutter, revealing a well stocked shop with plenty to keep the villagers going. Together you round up as much as you can carry, winding several links of sausages over your shoulder to carry back to the inn. Greta laughs as you become entangled, helping to unwind you while filling a basket of her own with things that will



be easy to eat without much preparation.

You arrive back at the Inn before the sun sets, and the atmosphere within becomes noticeably brighter with the arrival of the food, people seeming to relax and unwind a little as portions are handed out to the weary villagers.

When the last rays of sunlight dip once more beyond the horizon, the tension in the air grows as everyone sits waiting for the new night's horror. It doesn't take long. At first you think it has begun to rain, a pitter-pattering sound resonating through the inn, increasing to a heavy drumming within minutes. As you look through cracks in the windows you see no sign of rainfall, but the snow on the ground shifts and swirls unnaturally, as if something was moving beneath it.

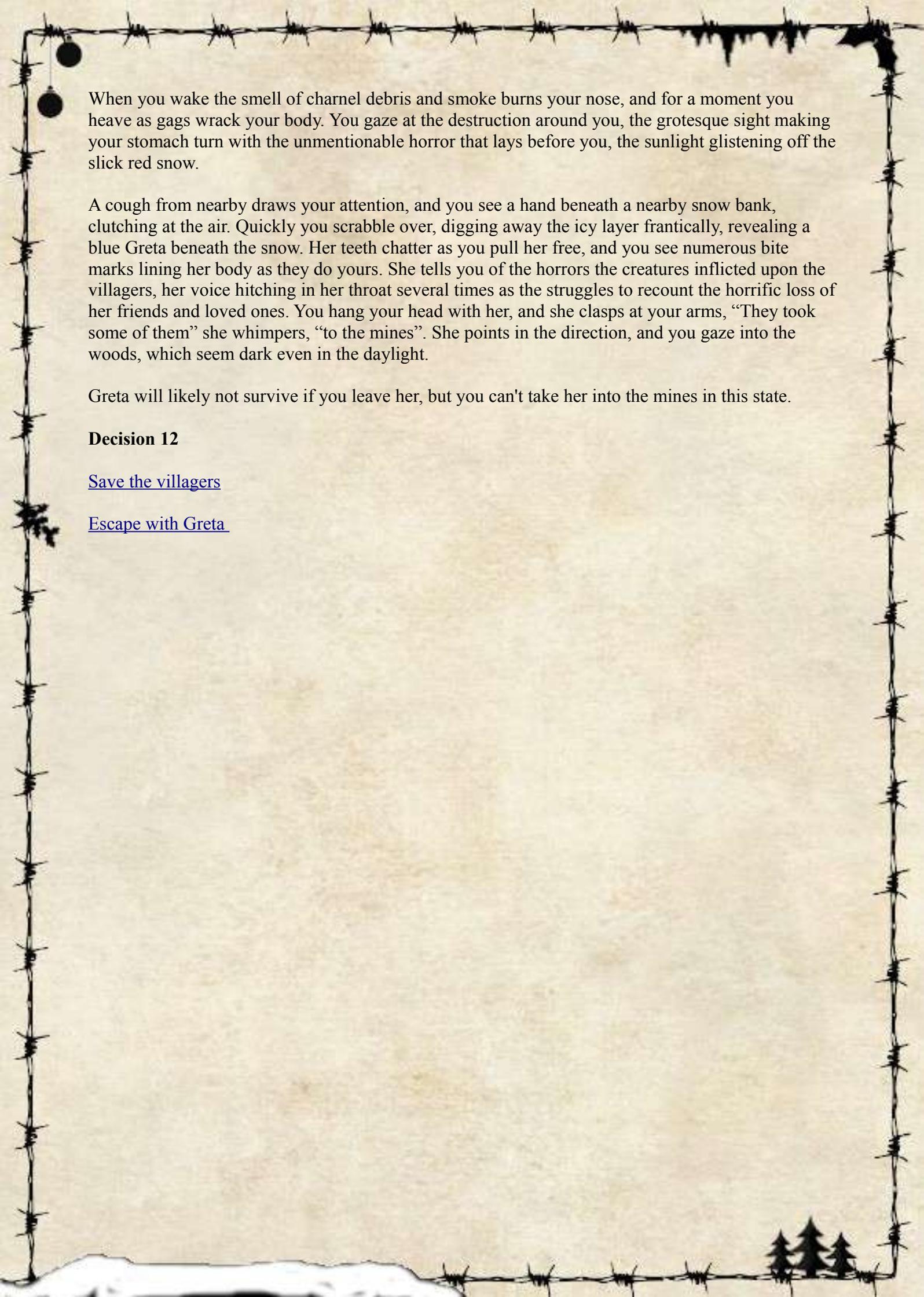
The sound of breaking glass further along the street puts everyone on edge, and screams echo through the night as those who decided not to join the community are discovered. They mercifully fade quickly, and several of the villagers utter prayers for those lost. A shrieking hiss from the fireplace draws everyone's attention as something long and black writhes in the flames, burning swiftly with a scream before being reduced to ash. You open your mouth to shout for everyone to get away from the fireplace, but you're too late as a deluge of small, insect-like creatures pour from the chimney, flooding across the floor eliciting screams as the fire is dampened plunging the inn into darkness.

People rush from the room in a panic, several of the more elderly villagers falling beneath foot, their screams quickly stifled by the trampling of feet and the deluge of creatures. You retreat into the kitchen with some of the villagers, slamming the door shut against the swarm, the inn filled with screams and skittering. As some try to fit under the door you stamp down on them, crushing several underfoot before a hiss causes you to turn, seeing one of the creatures propped on the counter tearing chunks from the sausages you bought back earlier. Its elongated body seems distorted in the dim light, a multitude of legs lining its torso like a centipede, leading up to a cherubim face that looks like the head from a doll. As it notices you staring it screeches once more, its face splitting to reveal a lamprey-like set of teeth beneath the mask.

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Greta will likely not survive if you leave her, but you can't take her into the mines in this state.

Decision 12

[Save the villagers](#)

[Escape with Greta](#)

Stay and help the townsfolk (Innkeeper Lost)



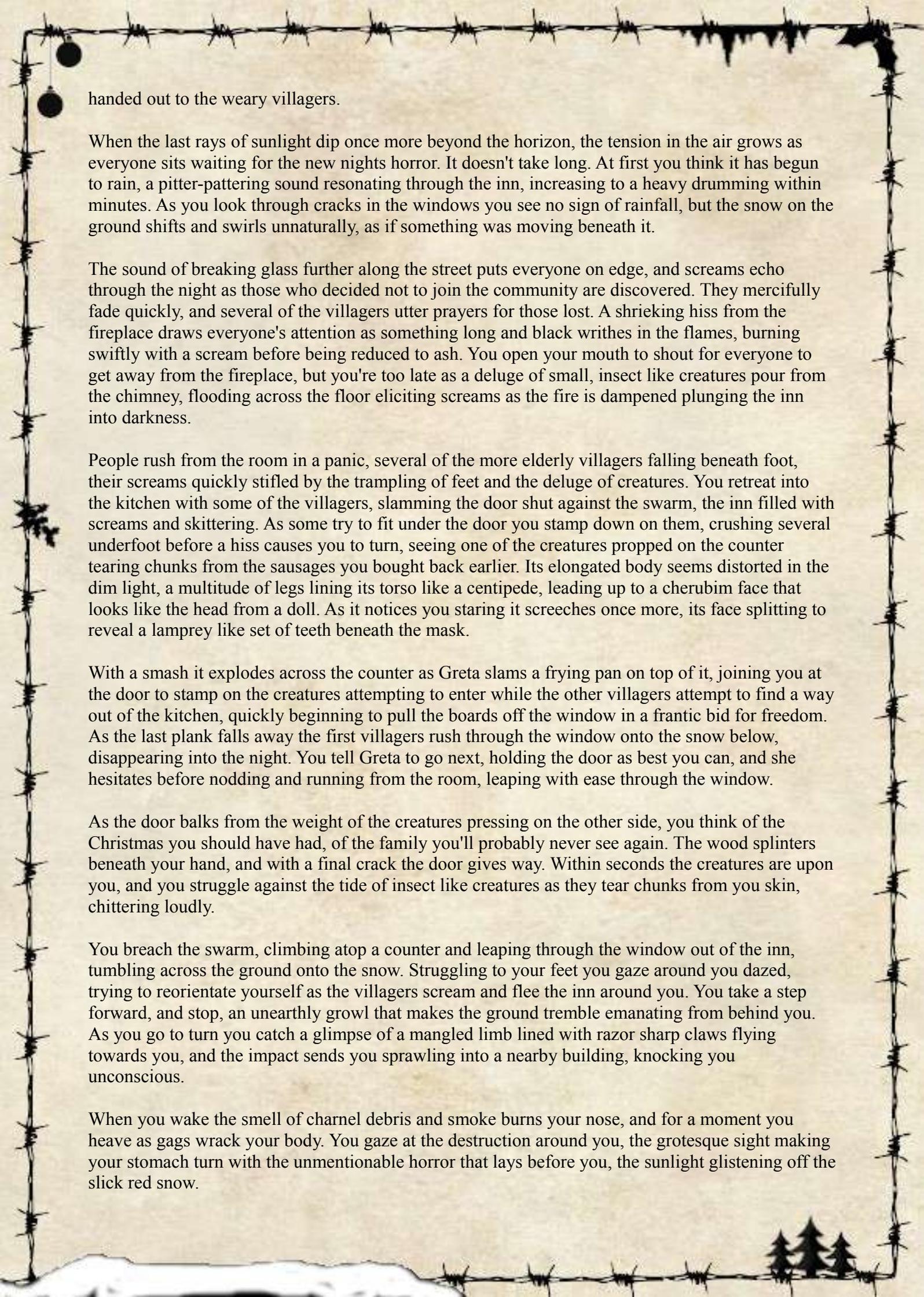
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With the Innkeeper gone the inn feels colder, less welcoming. Though he was hardly going to win awards for socialite of the year, you felt you could trust him, especially towards the end. The villagers seem to feel his absence too, and a sense of discomfort is palpable through the gathered people.

As day breaks the villagers gather together and set out into the village once again, more people willing to contribute to the hunt for supplies this time. Food supplies are running low for the gathered villagers, and so this becomes a priority, many people returning with what they can find. The village butcher, Greta Magnúsdóttir, allows you access to her shop, seeing no need to hoard her stock while people starve. A surly woman wearing a dirtied apron, she makes good company as you make your way through the village, and her conversational skills make you quickly feel at ease, almost forgetting the situation you find yourself in.

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handed out to the weary villagers.

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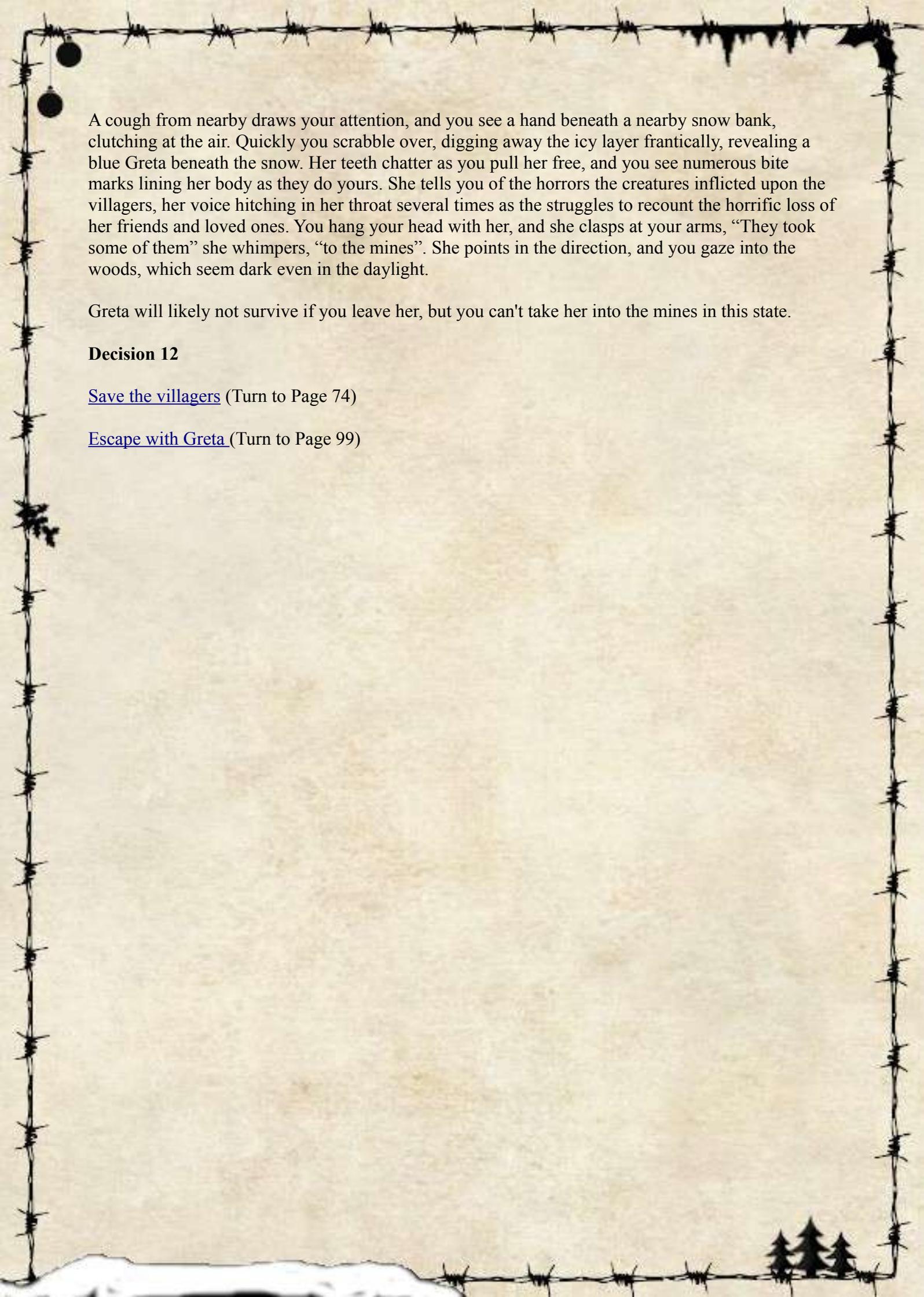
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Greta will likely not survive if you leave her, but you can't take her into the mines in this state.

Decision 12

[Save the villagers](#) (Turn to Page 74)

[Escape with Greta](#) (Turn to Page 99)

Save the Villagers



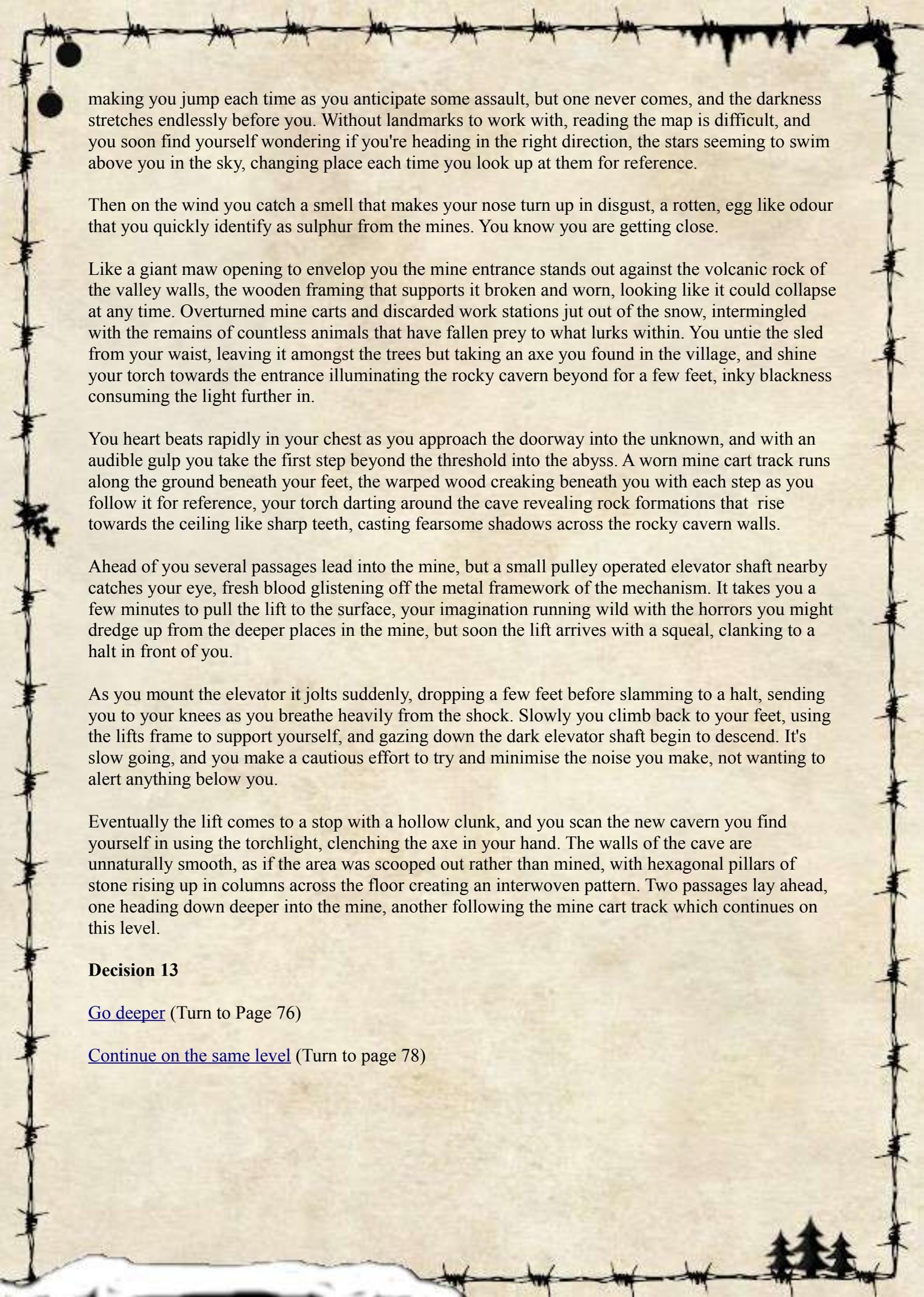
You look towards the forest, knowing somewhere within the skeletal expanse lays the entrance to the dark maw from which these creatures spawn each night. You have no way of knowing if the villagers are still alive, or if the creatures have already killed them, but you decide you can't take the risk that you're abandoning so many to such a terrible fate.

Greta sees you mulling the decision over, and grips your hand between hers, telling you to go. Her wounds are bad, and it's unlikely she'd make it even if you tried to help her, but that doesn't make the pit in your stomach feel any better as you decide to leave.

Propping Greta inside the now charred inn you head into the burnt building to look for supplies, finding some blankets that are only lightly singed which you promptly throw over her. You light a small fire in the miraculously still standing fireplace to help warm her, using the debris as kindling. It takes a while, but soon the colour begins to return to Greta, though she shifts uncomfortably as heat courses through several blackened fingers. The daylight begins to fade, and you know the time to leave is now or never, grabbing a map you found in one of the various draws dotted around the inn. Greta senses this and pushes you to leave, giving you a warm hug goodbye as you promise to return.

Wrapping a rope around your waist to pull a small sled with the supplies you've found, you head out into the twilight, the devastated village silhouetted like the carcass of a gargantuan creature in the purple haze of the evening. Alone the biting cold and bitter wind chills you even more, and as you enter the forest you wonder if this was really the right decision, the village soon disappearing from sight between the bone white trunks of the birch trees.

Silence engulfs you save from the creak of the trees around you, and the crunch of your footsteps in the snow. The sound of ice breaking and shifting occasionally punctuates the air with hollow cracks,



making you jump each time as you anticipate some assault, but one never comes, and the darkness stretches endlessly before you. Without landmarks to work with, reading the map is difficult, and you soon find yourself wondering if you're heading in the right direction, the stars seeming to swim above you in the sky, changing place each time you look up at them for reference.

Then on the wind you catch a smell that makes your nose turn up in disgust, a rotten, egg like odour that you quickly identify as sulphur from the mines. You know you are getting close.

Like a giant maw opening to envelop you the mine entrance stands out against the volcanic rock of the valley walls, the wooden framing that supports it broken and worn, looking like it could collapse at any time. Overturned mine carts and discarded work stations jut out of the snow, intermingled with the remains of countless animals that have fallen prey to what lurks within. You untie the sled from your waist, leaving it amongst the trees but taking an axe you found in the village, and shine your torch towards the entrance illuminating the rocky cavern beyond for a few feet, inky blackness consuming the light further in.

Your heart beats rapidly in your chest as you approach the doorway into the unknown, and with an audible gulp you take the first step beyond the threshold into the abyss. A worn mine cart track runs along the ground beneath your feet, the warped wood creaking beneath you with each step as you follow it for reference, your torch darting around the cave revealing rock formations that rise towards the ceiling like sharp teeth, casting fearsome shadows across the rocky cavern walls.

Ahead of you several passages lead into the mine, but a small pulley operated elevator shaft nearby catches your eye, fresh blood glistening off the metal framework of the mechanism. It takes you a few minutes to pull the lift to the surface, your imagination running wild with the horrors you might dredge up from the deeper places in the mine, but soon the lift arrives with a squeal, clanking to a halt in front of you.

As you mount the elevator it jolts suddenly, dropping a few feet before slamming to a halt, sending you to your knees as you breathe heavily from the shock. Slowly you climb back to your feet, using the lift's frame to support yourself, and gazing down the dark elevator shaft begin to descend. It's slow going, and you make a cautious effort to try and minimise the noise you make, not wanting to alert anything below you.

Eventually the lift comes to a stop with a hollow clunk, and you scan the new cavern you find yourself in using the torchlight, clenching the axe in your hand. The walls of the cave are unnaturally smooth, as if the area was scooped out rather than mined, with hexagonal pillars of stone rising up in columns across the floor creating an interwoven pattern. Two passages lay ahead, one heading down deeper into the mine, another following the mine cart track which continues on this level.

Decision 13

[Go deeper](#) (Turn to Page 76)

[Continue on the same level](#) (Turn to page 78)

Go Deeper



You settle on the path heading deeper into the mine and make your way over to it, shining your torch down the sheer passage that dives steeply deeper into the earth. As you slowly begin to make your way down the path, the loose ground beneath you occasionally slides under foot, sending a shower of rock bouncing down the passageway ahead, each impact sounding like a bomb going off in the deathly silence of the mine. After descending for a short while you realise you no longer need your torch, as crystalline structures embedded in the walls glow dimly, lighting the way. You take a moment to look at them closer, unsure what could be causing them to luminescence, and are forced to look away, the geometric configuration of the rocks giving you a headache as they grow in a manner that doesn't seem physically possible.

The closer you get to the ground, the stranger the environment becomes, colourful lichen soon coating the walls and floor in patches, some of the colours undulating through a spectrum you can't put a name to. As the tunnel finally opens up in a colossal cavern you see an abundance of flora that defies your understanding, colours and shapes that are beautiful, yet make no sense to your eyes, as if a trick of the light. Small insects flutter between the plants, glowing the same colour as the crystalline structures that here rise towards the ceiling imposingly, illuminating patches of the cavern while other parts remain lost to darkness.

You're so enraptured by the sights that you nearly step off the ledge of a large pit that has been gouged into the floor, descending far beyond the lights the crystals cast, a black void opening up beneath you. Gazing down into it you feel dizzy, and clutch at a nearby rock for balance, breathing deeply as you turn away from the gaping chasm, deciding that may not be the best path forward. Turning to walk away you feel your feet leave the ground, as a red robed creature pushes you with a series of twig like appendages that lance from its robe, casting you into the pit as it slams two bone like plates in its face together, creating the sound like a door smashing into its frame.

You let out a scream as you fall, the light of the crystal lit cavern quickly disappearing into the darkness, and soon you fall so fast the sound of your own voice vanishes as you try to speak. After a while, you're not even sure if you're continuing to fall, or if you've already met the ground and that this is death, the darkness and silence surrounding you so completely that it begins to play on your sanity, any sense of time and space lost in the endless void. With a crash the suffocating darkness suddenly ends, and you find yourself at the side of a road, snow falling heavily around you.

You take a moment, staring up at the snowflakes as they drift down onto you, your mind attempting to unscramble itself from what felt an eternity in darkness, before slowly pulling yourself to your feet, looking down the road. It stretches far into the distance, rising and falling across undulating hills in both directions, the snow covered countryside white and featureless. Above you in the sky several moons hang ominously, and great leviathans like colossal jellyfish float through the air, their tendrils raking the floor beneath them.

A woman's voice in your head calls out to you, softly, sweetly, yet commandingly. It tells you to walk, to find her, to come home to her.

You begin to walk, unsure on where you are, where you should go, how you got here, only that the snow keeps falling, always falling, and you're so cold... so very, very cold.

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

Continue on this level



As you gaze into the dark passage that descends deeper into the mine, you decide you've gone deep enough, and turn towards the mine cart track that runs off on this level.

The tunnel it enters is narrow, and you have to squeeze yourself slightly to fit through a gap where the two walls nearly touch. It soon opens up into a wider passageway that you cautiously make your way down, the torchlight illuminating the path but making the darkness seem more oppressive as it closes around you. In the silence your ears ring faintly, a low tone seemingly vibrating through the mine. You touch one of the walls, feeling the stone humming beneath your hand, the tone increasingly slightly in volume as you make contact, fading again once you remove your hand.

You soon come across a split in the path where the mine cart tracks deviate, one curving back in the direction you came, another heading onwards, and decide to continue going straight for now, any turns presenting an additional challenge for finding your way back. Warm air flows from the passage in contrast to the rest of the mine, and you soon find yourself warm in your winter clothes, the jacket becoming uncomfortable in the almost tropical heat.

A scraping noise causes you to freeze, your torch slowly scanning the path ahead. At the edge of the torchlight you can see the tunnel splits again, a small intermediary cave opening up just before the deviation, the scraping sound emanating from somewhere up ahead. Taking a few steps forward cautiously down the tunnel, you hear the scraping continue at an even pace, growing louder the closer you draw to the intermediary junction. Without warning a figure walks across the beam of light from your torch, a large metal hook dragging along the floor behind it, emitting the scraping sound as sparks fly from each rock it contacts.

It stops in the light, it's body short and squat, around 4 feet tall, plastered with a scaly skin from which seem to grow small micro-biomes of rock and moss. Its elongated arms drape to the ground,



four clawed fingers curling around a rope handle at the end of the hook, the other hand running alongside the wall. As it turns to look at you slowly, its frog like mouth opens into a grin of glittering razor sharp teeth, dead black eyes reflecting the light with a grin that gives it a truly malevolent gaze. It raises a clawed finger to it's mouth, and lets out a long "Shhhhhhh", before emitting a chittering sound like laughter, and your torch flickers, then dies, plunging you into darkness.

The sound of padding feet immediately fills the tunnel and sparks from the ground are the only warning you receive as the creature leaps from the ground, swinging the hook at you with a cackling scream. You raise the axe to block the blow, narrowly avoiding being impaled, but the force knocks your weapon to the ground and it skitters away from you. Dropping to the ground you successfully dodge another blow from the creature as it swings the hook sideways with a scream, the sparks illuminating its intention to skewer you through the midsection.

Desperately you claw your way across the rough stone, using the mine cart tracks to guide you as you grasp for the axe. A sharp pain through your left leg makes you cry out, the sound echoing off the tunnel walls in a cacophony of screams as the creature drives its hook cleanly through the limb, pulling sharply with a triumphant cry, dragging you across the floor towards it. Your hands find the broken torch, and you swing it wildly trying to hit your assailant, the flickering light illuminating the creature just enough to see its eyes rolled back into its head, a distended jaw protruding from its mouth with row upon row of teeth glistening as it jolts forward, clamping down on your leg.

The searing pain that follow is unlike anything you've felt before, the hundreds of needle like teeth piercing your flesh before tearing back, taking a good chunk of you with it. You lash out instinctively again with the torch and manage to catch the creature across the face, the torch flashing enough to see it rear back in pain as the glass pierces one of its eyes. It wrenches the hook out of you with a cry as it hobbles back into the dark, its howls deafening in the small space, and you frantically crawl back along the floor in search of the axe, finding purchase on its handle at last and flipping onto your back defensively as the creature leaps for you again, sparks illuminating its horrific form as it sails through the air, hook raised.

You swing the axe with as much strength as you can muster, and a sickening crunch signifies it finds its purchase, the creature rolling to the side with a howl as you're showered by its thick blood, the tarry substance finding its way into your mouth and eyes. The axe is torn from your hands as it remains stuck in the monster, and you hear it clatter off the rocks as the creature disappears once more into the tunnels, leaving you bloodied on the floor.

As you lay there in the dark, the warm blood pooling around your leg, you feel yourself slipping in and out of consciousness, shock setting in as you the darkness around you seems to grow deeper, more cloying. At some point it becomes like a warm embrace, one you just want to sink into, and you consider giving up entirely. Something drives you back to consciousness though, a burning sensation that starts in your belly and rises through your chest, a desire for something you can't place, a hunger.. Whether it's a second wind driven by your desire to help the villagers, or a primal drive to survive you push yourself back to your feet, screaming in pain as you accidentally put weight on your damaged leg, and begin to feel your way through the tunnels.

Walking through the dark you start to hear voices, someone talking within the shadows, someone calling to you. You try to shut it out but the voice bores into you, calling you to it, telling you to embrace it. You refuse, driving forward down the track, crossing a small bridge that hangs over a large cavern filled with strange flora that pulses with an iridescent colour you can't explain, not matching any spectrum that you recognise. But that doesn't matter, you drive forward, inexplicably knowing where to go, knowing the villagers are ahead.

When you find them they hang from cocoons above the ground, a thick mucus like substance securing them in place. You sniff the air, something pleasant wafting on the light breeze drifting through the mine shaft, something drawing you forward as you pull one of the villagers from their cocoons, determined to save someone, anyone, before you can no longer move. Save them.... save the villagers... so hungry.... save the... hungry.... you'll save them all...

As you finish eating you continue to repeat this mantra in your mind, the ground beneath you soaked with blood, scraps of clothing and bone littering the rocky expanse. A frail hand rests upon your shoulder, an elderly woman looking down at you, beaming with pride, her eyes hollow black pits. "Eat up little one, eat up for mother."

You will eat, for her, you'll change for her, and next year you'll hunt for her. For your new mother.

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

Free the villagers



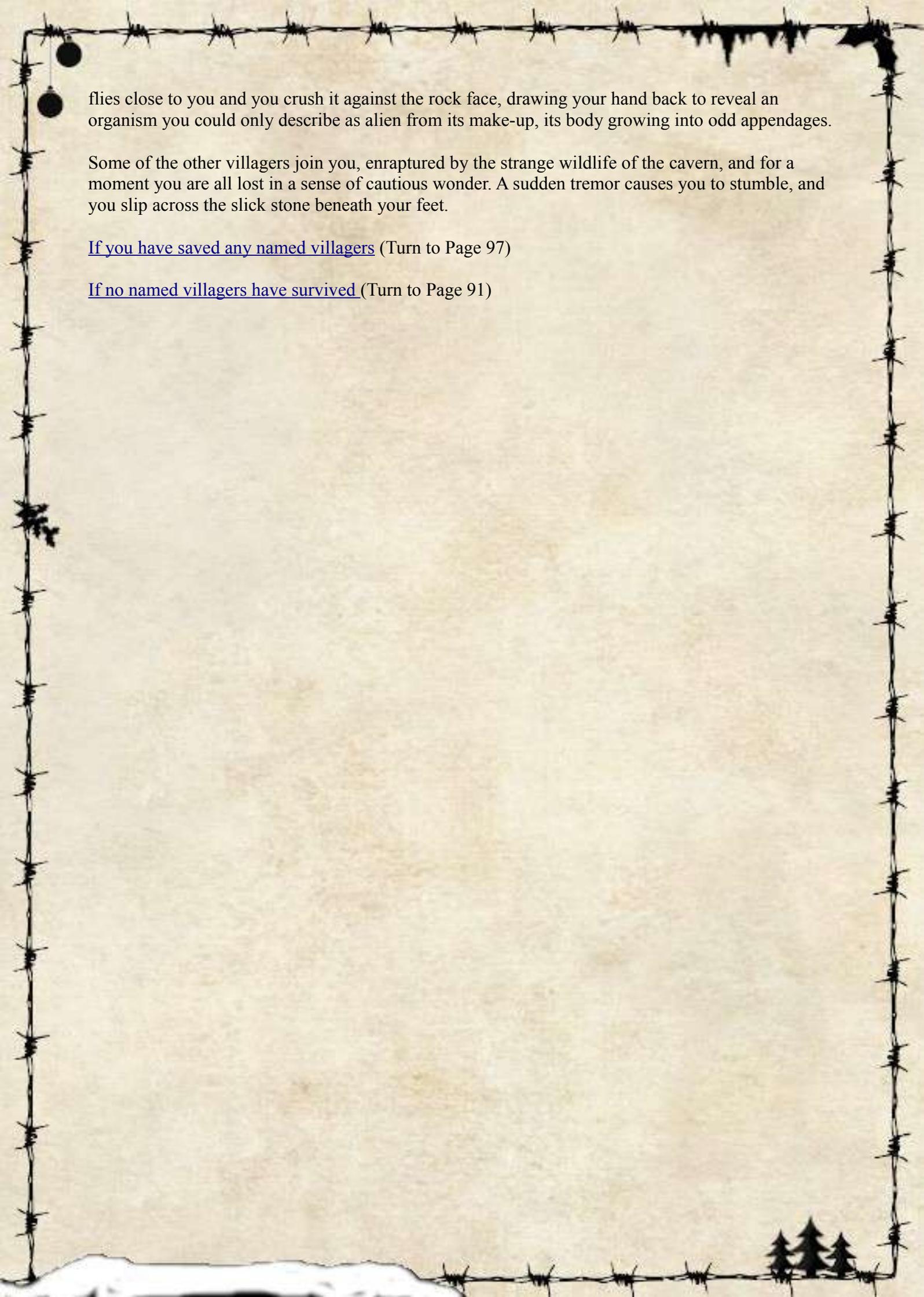
You begin to tear at the villagers cocoons, helping them to their feet as they drop to the floor. It strikes you as odd that there is any illumination here at all, and looking around you see several crystalline structures jutting from the ground and walls, glowing with dim light.

A mine cart track runs through the room and you see two paths, one leading up and one leading down. The villagers mutter amongst themselves, some weeping with fear, and they turn to you for leadership.

You reason that if you want to leave the mines you likely need to head towards the surface, so going up seems like the best choice. The mine cart track is worn and broken from years of disuse, the metal warped or snapped where the ground has shifted, and as you tread across it every creak of the wooden boards puts you on edge, the dark of the mines seeming to close in constantly.

The glowing crystals mark the way ahead with a trail that you would call beautiful under any other circumstances, but now the light seems like a danger that threatens to reveal you and your companions to any creatures lurking in the darkness. Occasionally you hear a scream or some unearthly cry from deeper in the mines, and some of the villagers stifle whimpers or cries as the situation bears too heavily on them. Trying to ignore the horrors within the dark you keep marching ahead along the track, the path seemingly unending.

As the way begins to open up ahead, you give the group a signal to slow down, aware the opening could signal an exit, or something worse. Slowly you creep towards the edge of the tunnel mouth, gazing out into a large cavern that stretches before you, the mine cart track creating a bridge between two tunnels that pass a few meters above the ground. A path leads down the side of the rock face to the base of the cavern, where dimly glowing crystals dot the floor sporadically, jutting at angles that seem to defy the natural laws of physics. You note that the floor and walls of the cavern are covered in a bizarre collection of flora and fauna, unlike anything you have seen before. The colours defy any palette you recognise, and you struggle to put a name to the sight. Strange insects flutter across the plant-life between the crystals, glowing themselves in a similar hue. One



flies close to you and you crush it against the rock face, drawing your hand back to reveal an organism you could only describe as alien from its make-up, its body growing into odd appendages.

Some of the other villagers join you, enraptured by the strange wildlife of the cavern, and for a moment you are all lost in a sense of cautious wonder. A sudden tremor causes you to stumble, and you slip across the slick stone beneath your feet.

[If you have saved any named villagers](#) (Turn to Page 97)

[If no named villagers have survived](#) (Turn to Page 91)

Leave the villagers

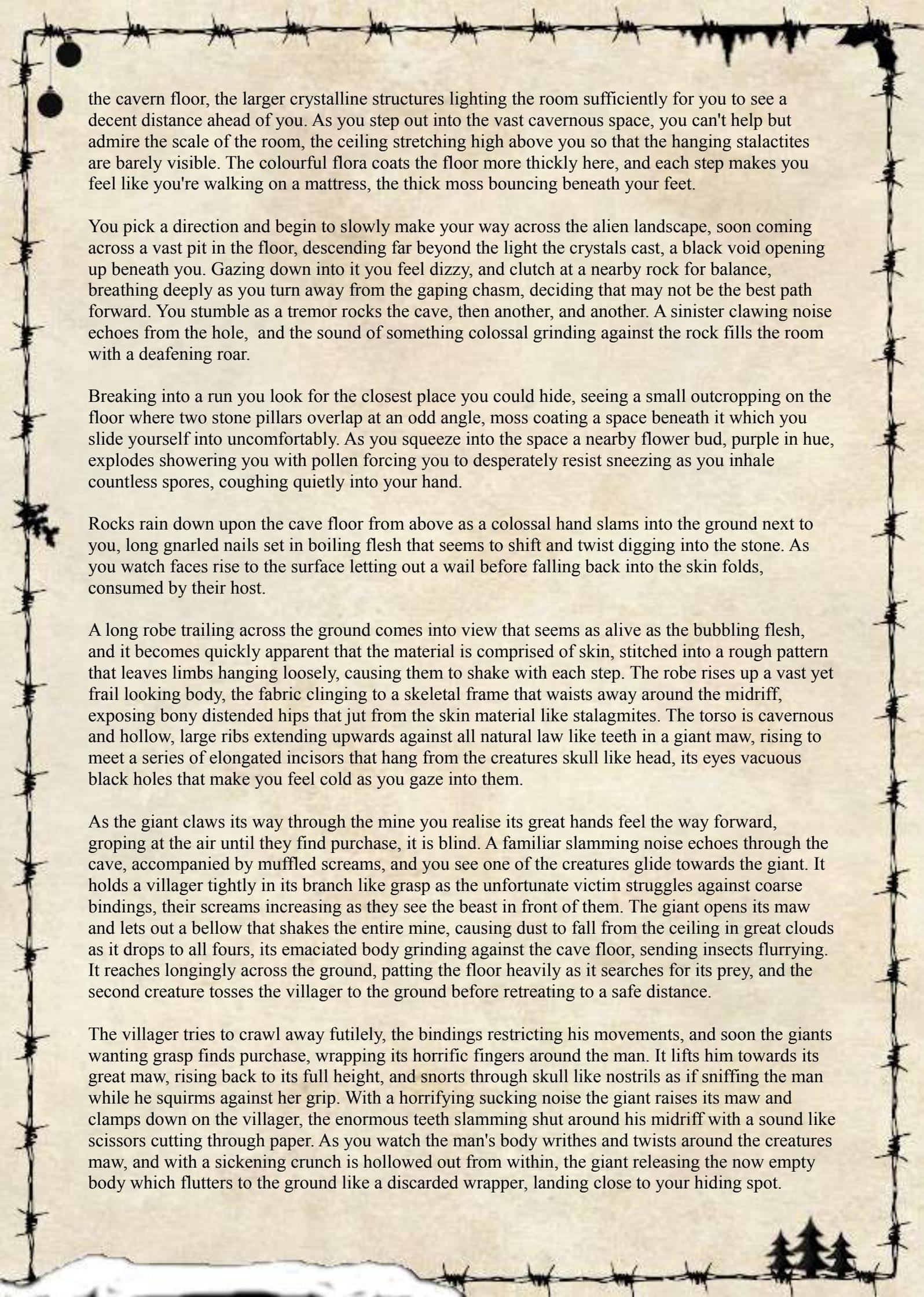


You reach up to the nearest makeshift cocoon, a villager unconscious within, and hesitate. The more people you try to get out with you, the less likely you can make a quiet escape. It would be better to come back after you get help, then you can save them all.

As you start to walk away a young woman grasps at your hand, desperately clutching for you, most of her face concealed beneath the cocoon. You grip her hand, trying to comfort her, and tell her you'll return with help. She screams beneath the cocoon as you let go, flailing wildly for you, and as you leave the small cavern you can't help but look back with guilt, the woman's eyes following you pleadingly until you lose sight of her completely.

Making your way through the tunnels you stick close to wall, trying to avoid stepping on the mine cart track that creaks longingly with each footstep, the warped wood twisting from your weight. Eventually the narrow tunnel opens up, revealing a large cavern. Slowly you creep towards the edge of the tunnel mouth, gazing out into the expansive space that stretches before you, the mine cart track creating a bridge between two tunnels that pass a few meters above the ground. A path leads down the side of the rock face to the base of the cavern, where dimly glowing crystals dot the floor sporadically, jutting at angles that seem to defy the natural laws of physics. You note that the floor and walls of the cavern are covered in a bizarre collection of flora and fauna, unlike anything you have seen before. The colours defy any palette you've seen, and you struggle to put a name to the sight. Strange insects flutter across the plant-life between the crystals, glowing themselves in a similar hue. One flies close to you and you crush it against the rock face, drawing your hand back to reveal an organism you could only describe as alien from its make-up, its body growing into odd appendages you've never seen before.

The tunnel ahead is dark, and your isolation begins to weigh on you, the realisation that there is no one around to help you chilling you to the bone. Instead you decide to take the path down towards



the cavern floor, the larger crystalline structures lighting the room sufficiently for you to see a decent distance ahead of you. As you step out into the vast cavernous space, you can't help but admire the scale of the room, the ceiling stretching high above you so that the hanging stalactites are barely visible. The colourful flora coats the floor more thickly here, and each step makes you feel like you're walking on a mattress, the thick moss bouncing beneath your feet.

You pick a direction and begin to slowly make your way across the alien landscape, soon coming across a vast pit in the floor, descending far beyond the light the crystals cast, a black void opening up beneath you. Gazing down into it you feel dizzy, and clutch at a nearby rock for balance, breathing deeply as you turn away from the gaping chasm, deciding that may not be the best path forward. You stumble as a tremor rocks the cave, then another, and another. A sinister clawing noise echoes from the hole, and the sound of something colossal grinding against the rock fills the room with a deafening roar.

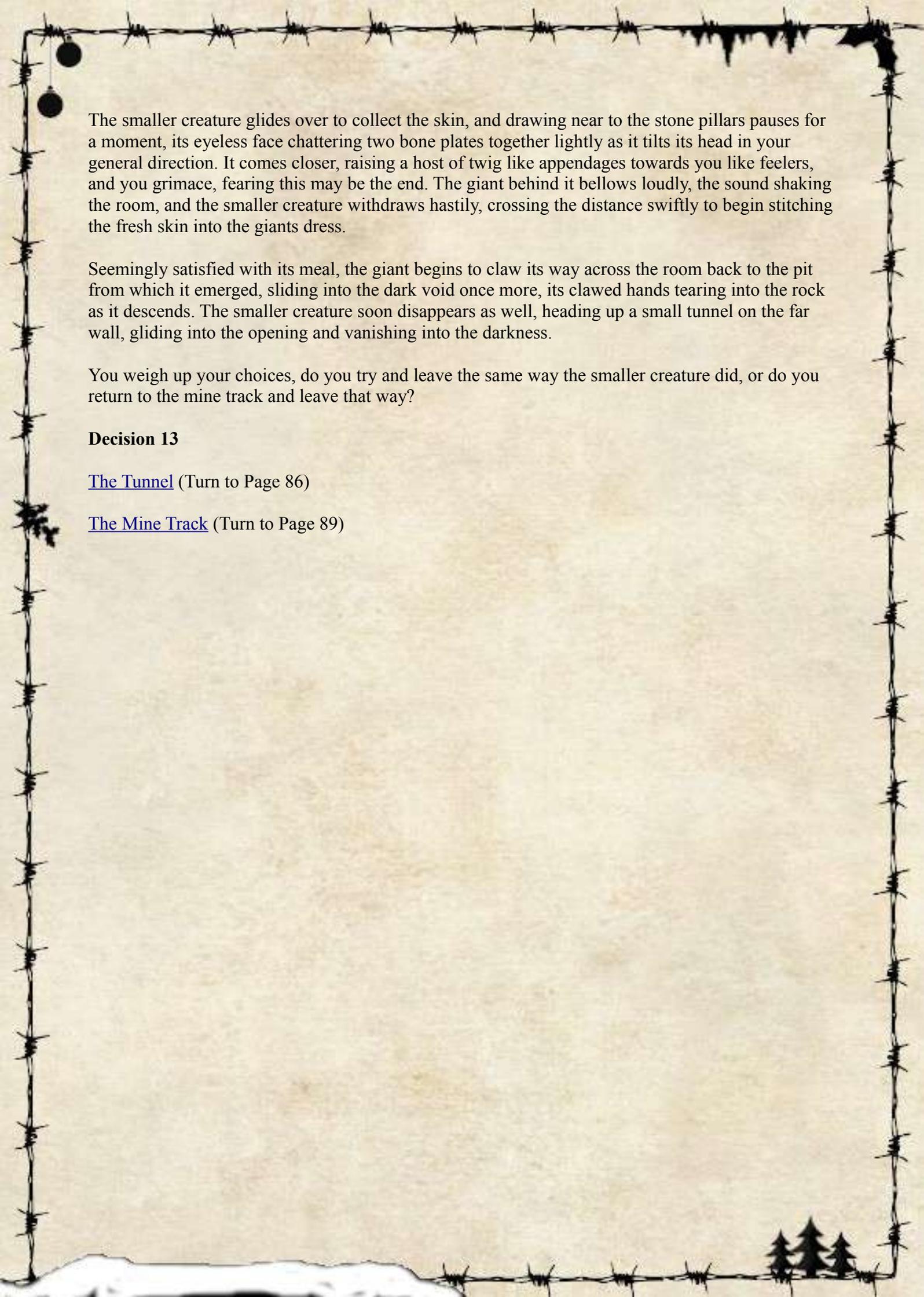
Breaking into a run you look for the closest place you could hide, seeing a small outcropping on the floor where two stone pillars overlap at an odd angle, moss coating a space beneath it which you slide yourself into uncomfortably. As you squeeze into the space a nearby flower bud, purple in hue, explodes showering you with pollen forcing you to desperately resist sneezing as you inhale countless spores, coughing quietly into your hand.

Rocks rain down upon the cave floor from above as a colossal hand slams into the ground next to you, long gnarled nails set in boiling flesh that seems to shift and twist digging into the stone. As you watch faces rise to the surface letting out a wail before falling back into the skin folds, consumed by their host.

A long robe trailing across the ground comes into view that seems as alive as the bubbling flesh, and it becomes quickly apparent that the material is comprised of skin, stitched into a rough pattern that leaves limbs hanging loosely, causing them to shake with each step. The robe rises up a vast yet frail looking body, the fabric clinging to a skeletal frame that waists away around the midriff, exposing bony distended hips that jut from the skin material like stalagmites. The torso is cavernous and hollow, large ribs extending upwards against all natural law like teeth in a giant maw, rising to meet a series of elongated incisors that hang from the creatures skull like head, its eyes vacuous black holes that make you feel cold as you gaze into them.

As the giant claws its way through the mine you realise its great hands feel the way forward, groping at the air until they find purchase, it is blind. A familiar slamming noise echoes through the cave, accompanied by muffled screams, and you see one of the creatures glide towards the giant. It holds a villager tightly in its branch like grasp as the unfortunate victim struggles against coarse bindings, their screams increasing as they see the beast in front of them. The giant opens its maw and lets out a bellow that shakes the entire mine, causing dust to fall from the ceiling in great clouds as it drops to all fours, its emaciated body grinding against the cave floor, sending insects flurrying. It reaches longingly across the ground, patting the floor heavily as it searches for its prey, and the second creature tosses the villager to the ground before retreating to a safe distance.

The villager tries to crawl away futilely, the bindings restricting his movements, and soon the giants wanting grasp finds purchase, wrapping its horrific fingers around the man. It lifts him towards its great maw, rising back to its full height, and snorts through skull like nostrils as if sniffing the man while he squirms against her grip. With a horrifying sucking noise the giant raises its maw and clamps down on the villager, the enormous teeth slamming shut around his midriff with a sound like scissors cutting through paper. As you watch the man's body writhes and twists around the creatures maw, and with a sickening crunch is hollowed out from within, the giant releasing the now empty body which flutters to the ground like a discarded wrapper, landing close to your hiding spot.



The smaller creature glides over to collect the skin, and drawing near to the stone pillars pauses for a moment, its eyeless face chattering two bone plates together lightly as it tilts its head in your general direction. It comes closer, raising a host of twig like appendages towards you like feelers, and you grimace, fearing this may be the end. The giant behind it bellows loudly, the sound shaking the room, and the smaller creature withdraws hastily, crossing the distance swiftly to begin stitching the fresh skin into the giants dress.

Seemingly satisfied with its meal, the giant begins to claw its way across the room back to the pit from which it emerged, sliding into the dark void once more, its clawed hands tearing into the rock as it descends. The smaller creature soon disappears as well, heading up a small tunnel on the far wall, gliding into the opening and vanishing into the darkness.

You weigh up your choices, do you try and leave the same way the smaller creature did, or do you return to the mine track and leave that way?

Decision 13

[The Tunnel](#) (Turn to Page 86)

[The Mine Track](#) (Turn to Page 89)

The Tunnel



You remain under the rock pillars for several minutes, waiting with baited breath for the creatures return, but as silence falls over the cavern, save for the alien chirps of the insects, you gradually emerge. You glance back at the mine cart tracks suspended above the cavern floor, but with no guarantee they lead to an exit you decide to push forward, hoping the tunnel ahead leads towards freedom.

Before long you arrive at the opening, gazing up at the path which rises sharply. You scabble up the sheer slope that makes up the tunnels floor, debris and loose rock giving way beneath your feet making the journey even more difficult. Occasionally you pause as the cries of various creatures echo through the tunnel, the darkness ahead seeming to constantly shift as you climb into it.

Placing one hand in front of the other to draw yourself along the loose rubble, your progress is slow, but soon you see the tunnel begin to open once more, the sharp gradient evening out until you finally crest the tunnels mouth, entering a small chamber with multiple paths connecting to it. Ahead of you an old elevator lays idly on the ground, a pulley system allowing it to rise to the surface.

You bolt for the elevator, wasting no time in your bid for freedom, but as soon as you exit the mouth of the tunnel an impact sends you spinning to the floor. Dazed, you clutch your head in agony, blood dripping between your fingers, and look upon the robed creature gliding towards you, it's bone plates chattering in it's head. Before you can get to your feet its branching fingers stretch towards you, gripping you tightly by the shoulder, sharp protrusions digging into your flesh as it

lifts you. The protrusions continue to dig into your body, and though you try to scream the pain drives the air from your lungs, leaving you gasping.

The creature draws you close, opening its maw wider than should be possible, preparing to inflict the final blow that will end your suffering, but pauses, its eyeless face titling almost inquisitively at you. It drops you to the ground, flesh tearing as the branches peel away from your shoulder, and watches as you writhe on the floor. Struggling to your feet you half crawl, half stumble across the room to the lift, the creature watching you unmoving as you yank on the pulley, beginning the ascent.

Each yank on the pulley draws you closer to the surface, and further away from the screeching creatures below, the giants bellow occasionally shaking the entire shaft. You struggle through the burning of your arms, fear and determination driving you, and eventually the pulley jars as you reach the surface, light streaming through an open cave mouth that marks the entrance to the mines.

You never looked back as you left the mines that day, running as fast as you could into the birch woods and through the snow, the branches whipping against your violent passage through the trees. Passing through the charred remains of the village you paused for a moment, grief and shame overwhelming you as you breakdown, letting the weeks of stress finally take hold. As you near the mountain pass you hear voices, and see the icy blockade being cleared by a group of workmen, several police cars behind them. As they see you, several officers begin to run over, and you collapse into the snow, the exhaustion driving you into the darkness.

When you finally awoke it was at a hospital in a nearby city, your wounds slowly healing, though the doctor warns you they'll most likely scar.

//

(If your arm was damaged by the creature under the bed)

As you gaze below the bed sheet you see a stump where your arm once sat, bandages tightly packed around the amputated limb. The doctor apologises but says there is no way to save it, though you already knew that.

//

The police question you for days, desperate to work out what happened to the population of the village, and how you ended up with such severe wounds. At first you tell them everything, drawing sketches of what you've seen, of the creatures that inhabit the mine, and of the giant that crawls blindly through the tunnels searching for prey. They react as you'd expect, with scepticism and distrust, claiming to have searched both the village and the mines and found nothing save for scorched buildings and blood stains on an old elevator left by you. For a while they consider you a suspect, but with no evidence to tie you to the disappearances you become a person of interest, then a witness, then nothing. You hear the mine has been sealed as the investigation closes, and a twitch of annoyance crossing your face.

The Doctors tell you to stay in hospital, that something isn't right with the various tests they perform on you. They call it an infection, but you can't stand the clinical charnal room any-more, and discharge yourself, you need to get home. As you walk the long journey back, your wife calls several times, but you don't answer. You'll be with her soon enough, you can even hear her voice in your head, calling you softly, telling you to come home. It's been like that for days, only in your dreams at first, but soon you could hear her voice even when awake, hear it pleading for you to come back, oh how you long for her embrace.

As you walk through the charred remains of the village, you note that your bare feet should feel the

cold of the now melting snow, but they don't, in-fact you feel very little at all save for the burning heat of the sunlight, scorching your skin uncomfortably. The closer you draw to the mine, the louder she calls, and you fall to your knees before the collapsed entrance, beginning to dig. Soon you'll be back with her, soon, you'll be home.

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

The Mine cart Tracks



You remain under the rock pillars for several minutes, waiting with baited breath for the creatures return, but as silence falls over the cavern, save for the alien chirps of the insects, you gradually emerge. Glancing back at the mine cart tracks suspended above the cavern floor, you decide that getting out of the giants cavern as soon as possible would be the best choice.

You climb the steep slope back up to the tunnel entrance, having to hoist yourself onto the tracks for the last few feet, the rickety path swaying and bending under your weight. Carefully you make your way across the narrow expanse and into the tunnel ahead, the crystal light here dimmer than before, making traversing the narrow passage difficult.

Before long you arrive at a junction the path splitting, and choose the path leading upwards in the hope that rising to the surface will hasten your salvation. You repeat this process several times in the dark, often pausing as some horrific cry echoes through the mine, glancing frantically into the consuming darkness for any movement. As one of these cries echoes from the tunnel behind you, you turn and gaze into the inky blackness, stepping back slowly as you prepare to run. It is because of this that you miss the long metal hook that slides from the shadows above you, and you cry out in pain as the spike bores through your shoulder, the barbed hook erupting from the front of your chest.

You look up, attempting to pull yourself off of the hook, and are met with a face that emerges from a concealed hole in the roof, squat and short with black shark like eyes, a large grin of jagged teeth spreading across the creatures face as it lets out a sound akin to laughter. You scream and frantically

thrash on the hook, which only makes the creatures laughter increase in ferocity, its wide mouth opening to reveal several rows of jagged teeth which it prepares to bite down with. A thin tongue slithers from within the mouth, running itself along your face before stopping with a start, the tongue snapping back into the creatures mouth as its grin turns to a frown, its laughter ceasing.

With a rip it tears the hook from your shoulder and scuttles back into the ceilings crevice, leaving you curled on the ground, clutching the now gaping wound. Stifling a scream you tear off your shirt and wrap it tightly around the wound, trying to staunch the bleeding. With great difficulty you pull yourself to your feet, stumbling across the ground, the world fading in and out of focus.

You nearly trip on a brown satchel that lays discarded on the ground, sending a number of red sticks rolling across the rocky floor. You blink bleary eyed, dynamite. Grabbing the satchel with your good arm, grimacing against the pain in your shoulder, you drag it along behind you through the tunnels, and soon come across an old elevator operated by a manual pulley, light streaming down from above it.

The journey to the surface is long and painful, and several times you lose consciousness, drifting into the darkness for a moment before snapping back to reality and continuing the climb. When you finally crest the top of the mine shaft, you roll to the floor breathing heavily, your shirt soaked with blood. You try to pull yourself across the ground, but the last vestiges of your strength leaves you, and you lay helplessly in the warm daylight. Soon the world begins to grey, and with a sinking feeling you know this is where your journey ends.

You drift in and out of consciousness as you feel someone grab you, dragging you from the top of the mineshaft, catching glimpses of an old woman heaving at your frame. For the next few days you only catch snippets of what happens, the old woman helping to stitch your wound shut, feeding you a thick liquid from a bowl, figures of various heights standing over you, watching you sleep. Your dreams are wracked with nightmares, visions of villagers screaming as they meet their fates, the village burning, and the blind eyes of the giant staring at you chillingly as she feeds you a black liquid... She cares for you, like a mother she only wants what's best for you, and you want to please her, after all she needs to eat. As you grow stronger you notice your body undergo changes that at first disturb you, but soon you accept it's what mother wants you to be. The air hangs heavy with seasonal energy, the days grow shorter, and soon the time will be right to go back out into the world for mother. You can't wait for Christmas this year..

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

If no named villagers survived

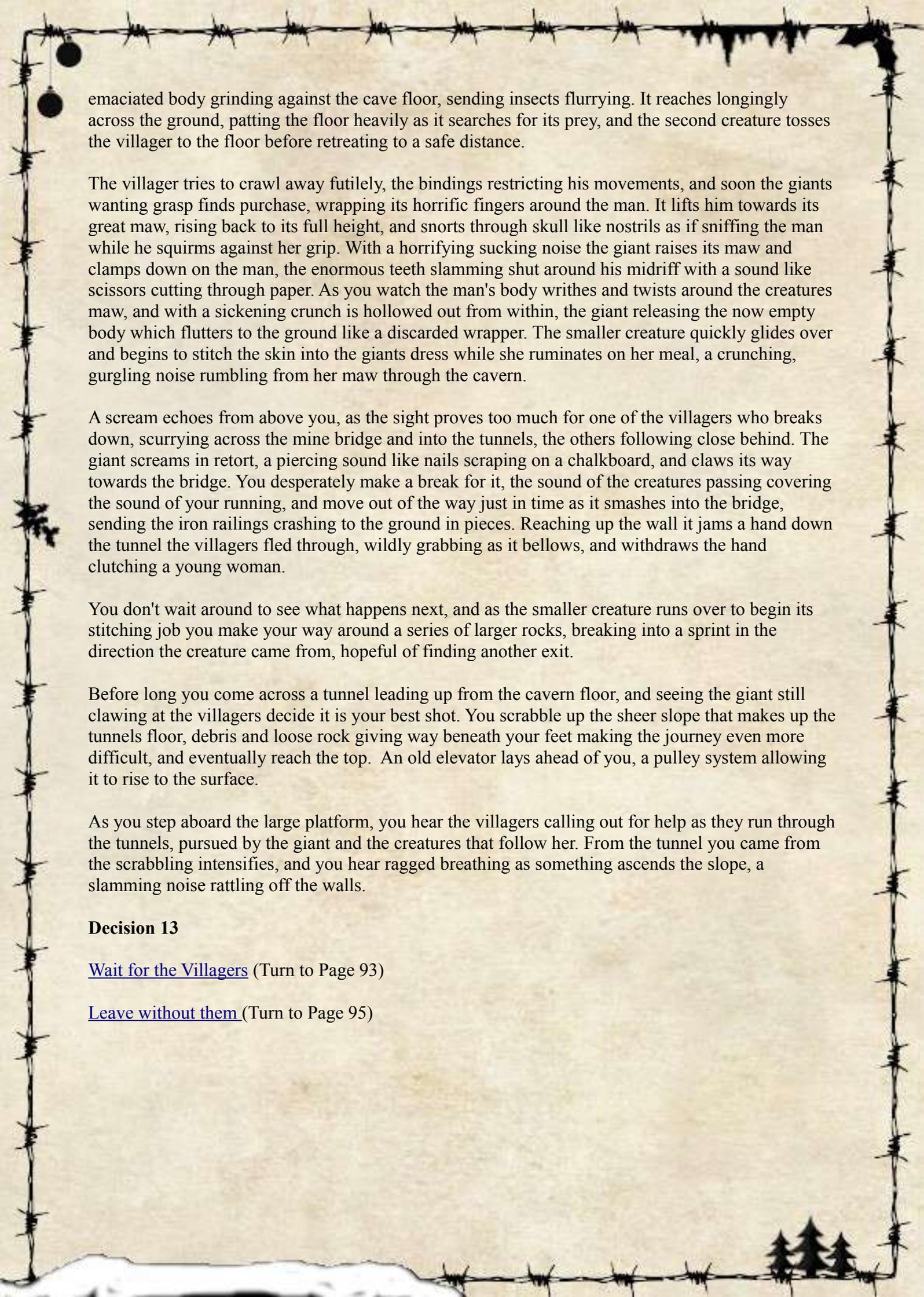


Desperately you reach out for something to find purchase on, but find nothing in time to prevent you from falling from the ledge. The colourful moss of the ground does little to cushion the blow, and you slam into it hard, your already bruised ribs sending waves of pain through your body. Clenching your teeth to stifle a scream of pain, you shuffle across the floor until you reach a small alcove in the wall, burying yourself into it.

Rocks rain down upon the cave floor from above as a colossal hand scrapes against the rock walls, long gnarled nails set in boiling flesh that seems to shift and twist digging into the wall. As you watch faces rise to the surface letting out a wail before falling back into the skin folds, consumed by their host.

It rounds the corner slowly, a long robe trailing across the ground that seems as alive as the bubbling flesh, and it becomes quickly apparent that the material is comprised of skin, stitched into a rough pattern that leaves limbs hanging loosely, causing them to shake with each step. The robe rises up a vast yet frail looking body, the fabric clinging to a skeletal frame that waists away around the midriff, exposing bony distended hips that jut from the skin material like stalagmites. The torso is cavernous and hollow, large ribs extending upwards against all natural law like teeth in a giant maw, rising to meet a series of elongated incisors that hang from the creatures skull like head, its eyes vacuous black holes that make you feel cold as you gaze into them.

As the giant claws its way through the mine you realise its great hands feel the way forward, groping at the air until they find purchase, it is blind. A familiar slamming noise echoes through the cave, accompanied by muffled screams, and you see one of the creatures glide towards the giant, holding a villager tightly in its branch like grasp as they struggle against bindings, their screams increasing as they see the beast in front of them. The giant opens its maw and lets out a bellow that shakes the entire mine, causing dust to fall from the ceiling in great clouds as it drops to all fours, its



emaciated body grinding against the cave floor, sending insects flurrying. It reaches longingly across the ground, patting the floor heavily as it searches for its prey, and the second creature tosses the villager to the floor before retreating to a safe distance.

The villager tries to crawl away futilely, the bindings restricting his movements, and soon the giant wanting grasp finds purchase, wrapping its horrific fingers around the man. It lifts him towards its great maw, rising back to its full height, and snorts through skull like nostrils as if sniffing the man while he squirms against her grip. With a horrifying sucking noise the giant raises its maw and clamps down on the man, the enormous teeth slamming shut around his midriff with a sound like scissors cutting through paper. As you watch the man's body writhes and twists around the creatures maw, and with a sickening crunch is hollowed out from within, the giant releasing the now empty body which flutters to the ground like a discarded wrapper. The smaller creature quickly glides over and begins to stitch the skin into the giants dress while she ruminates on her meal, a crunching, gurgling noise rumbling from her maw through the cavern.

A scream echoes from above you, as the sight proves too much for one of the villagers who breaks down, scurrying across the mine bridge and into the tunnels, the others following close behind. The giant screams in retort, a piercing sound like nails scraping on a chalkboard, and claws its way towards the bridge. You desperately make a break for it, the sound of the creatures passing covering the sound of your running, and move out of the way just in time as it smashes into the bridge, sending the iron railings crashing to the ground in pieces. Reaching up the wall it jams a hand down the tunnel the villagers fled through, wildly grabbing as it bellows, and withdraws the hand clutching a young woman.

You don't wait around to see what happens next, and as the smaller creature runs over to begin its stitching job you make your way around a series of larger rocks, breaking into a sprint in the direction the creature came from, hopeful of finding another exit.

Before long you come across a tunnel leading up from the cavern floor, and seeing the giant still clawing at the villagers decide it is your best shot. You scabble up the sheer slope that makes up the tunnels floor, debris and loose rock giving way beneath your feet making the journey even more difficult, and eventually reach the top. An old elevator lays ahead of you, a pulley system allowing it to rise to the surface.

As you step aboard the large platform, you hear the villagers calling out for help as they run through the tunnels, pursued by the giant and the creatures that follow her. From the tunnel you came from the scrabbling intensifies, and you hear ragged breathing as something ascends the slope, a slamming noise rattling off the walls.

Decision 13

[Wait for the Villagers](#) (Turn to Page 93)

[Leave without them](#) (Turn to Page 95)

Do you call to the villagers and wait for them?



You call out to the villagers, giving them a bearing to find their way through the mines, keeping an eye on the tunnel you came from as the slamming sound draws closer with each breath. A sigh of relief escapes your body as the villagers tear through one of the smaller tunnels, a couple missing from when you last saw them, several bloodied.

They pile onto the elevator and you waste no time hoisting the lift into the air with the pulley, drawing out of reach just as the creature barrels from the tunnel, scraping against the walls below as it slams its mouth deafeningly. As the lift ascends into the mine shaft the creatures are quickly lost from sight, replaced by the confined column of stone through which you now travel. Their cries follow you to the surface, echoing off the walls so loudly you're sure that the creatures can only be moments behind you, but as the lift broaches the top of the shaft, sunlight pouring through the mouth of the mine entrance, you collectively breath a sigh of relief.

Running towards the entrance one of the villagers grabs you, thrusting a small bag into your hand, the worn leather satchel looking like it hasn't seen the light of day in years. You pause confused, and open the pack, eyebrows raising as you see several sticks of dynamite, a long fuse chord coiled around them. As the villagers flee into the valley, you both set the explosives around the entrance, the howls from below causing you to glance fearfully back at the tunnel, expecting the creatures to emerge at any moment. As you reel the fuse out, leaving the mine entrance, you see an arm broach the mine shaft, tearing through the lift platform, but it quickly retreats as the sun scorches its skin, a howl of rage resonating through the cavern,

With the fuse lit you both run for the cover of the forest, and are lifted from your feet by the force of the detonation that tears through area, snow blasting past you as it is lifted from the forest floor by the shock-wave. When you look back the cave entrance has vanished, buried beneath a sea of stone and snow.

Arriving back at the village you find many sifting through the remains of their ruined homes, huddling together as a torrent of emotions strikes each of them, the loss of their homes balanced against the thrill of surviving. With a few words said in remembrance of those lost, the village begins its exodus, gathering as many tools as possible to clear the mountain pass and leave the valley. Yet as you near the mountain pass you hear voices, and see the icy blockade being cleared by a group of workmen, several police cars behind them. As they see you, several officers begin to run over, and you collapse into the snow, the exhaustion driving you into the darkness.

When you finally awoke it was at a hospital in a nearby city, your wounds slowly healing, though the doctor warns you they'll most likely scar.

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(If your arm was damaged by the creature under the bed)

As you gaze below the bed sheet you see a stump where your arm once sat, bandages tightly packed around the amputated limb. The doctor apologises but says there is no way to save it, though you already knew that.

//

The police question you for days, desperate to work out what happened to the village and those lost within, and how you ended up with such severe wounds. You tell them everything, drawing sketches of what you've seen, of the creatures that inhabit the mine, and of the giant that crawls blindly through the tunnels searching for prey and though they react as you'd expect, it becomes clear as they discuss the other villagers' similar stories that they are unsure what to believe. They claim to have searched both the village and the mines and found nothing you mentioned, no strange plant-life, no creatures. For a while they consider you a suspect, but with no evidence to tie you to the disappearances you become a person of interest, then a witness, then nothing.

By the time you leave the hospital the story of the surviving villagers has passed through local media, many of them naming you as a hero that helped ensure they survived. You receive offers for interviews, spotlights on TV, but decline, content to return to your family. Though Christmas has passed, you celebrate like there is no tomorrow, and after a few weeks recovering the horrors of the small village begin to fade, never gone, but suppressed.

A bark from your dog makes you jump as the post arrives, and after a moment wrestling with him you retrieve a small pile of letters, the majority junk, but one standing out, its worn parchment envelope looking almost antique. Tearing into the envelope a simple note falls out, and as you open it your blood runs cold. Written elegantly in thick black ink, four words scrawled across the paper make your hand tremble. "See you next year".

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

Do you leave?



You wait a few more moments to see if the villagers emerge, your voice catching in your throat as you go to call out, but realise this will only alert the creatures pursuing you.

Turning away, bitter tears in your eyes, you begin to crank the pulley that raises the platform into the air and up the mineshaft. A few meters off the ground you hear cries from below, and look down to see the villagers shouting for you to come back from the bottom of the shaft. Their cries are cut short though as one of the creatures slams into the group, followed by another, and soon the villagers cries stop coming. Each yank on the pulley draws you closer to the surface, and further away from the screeching creatures below, the giants bellow occasionally shaking the entire shaft making you fear the end. You struggle through the burning of your arms, fear and determination driving you, and eventually the pulley jars as you reach the surface, light streaming through an open cave mouth that marks the entrance to the mines.

You never looked back as you left the mines that day, running as fast as you could into the birch woods and through the snow, the branches whipping against you in your violent passage through the trees. Passing through the charred remains of the village you paused for a moment, grief and shame overwhelming you as you breakdown, letting the weeks of stress finally take hold. As you near the mountain pass you hear voices, and see the icy blockade being cleared by a group of workmen, several police cars behind them. As they see you several officers begin to run over, and you collapse into the snow, the exhaustion driving you into the darkness.

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By the time you leave the hospital the story of the missing village has passed through local media, and the last you heard it was being put down to the work of extremists who took the villagers to an unknown location. Never the less, the mine is closed, sealed off from the outside world. As you walk down the street towards your taxi home, you pass an elderly woman walking in the opposite direction who stops and asks you for food, begging for scraps. You brush past her, not willing or able to help, and she grasps your arm. Turning to push her away, you fall backwards as she stares at you blindly from cavernous black eyes, a gaping maw letting out a piercing wail from beneath her robe of skin and flesh.

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

If you saved a villager



Desperately you reach out for something to find purchase on, and slipping on the slick moss nearly fall from the ledge before a hand grabs hold of yours, quickly joined by several others. You nod with thanks to the villagers as they hoist you back onto the ledge, the drop below you making your head swim.

Rocks rain down upon the cave floor from above as a colossal hand scrapes against the rock walls, long gnarled nails set in boiling flesh that seems to shift and twist, digging into the wall. As you watch faces rise to the surface letting out a wail before falling back into the skin folds, consumed by their host.

It rounds the corner slowly, a long robe trailing across the ground that seems as alive as the bubbling flesh, and it becomes quickly apparent that the material is comprised of skin, stitched into a rough pattern that leaves limbs hanging loosely, causing them to shake with each step. The robe rises up a vast yet frail looking body, the fabric clinging to a skeletal frame that waists away around the midriff, exposing bony distended hips that jut from the skin material like stalagmites. The torso is cavernous and hollow, large ribs extending upwards against all natural law like teeth in a giant maw, rising to meet a series of elongated incisors that hang from the creatures skull like head, eyes vacuous black holes that make you feel cold as you gaze into them.

As the giant claws its way through the mine you realise its great hands feel the way forward, groping at the air until they find purchase, it is blind. A familiar slamming noise echoes through the cave, accompanied by muffled screams, and you see one of the creatures glide towards the giant, holding a villager tightly in its branch like grasp as they struggle against bindings, their screams increasing as they see the beast in front of them. The giant opens its maw and lets out a bellow that shakes the entire mine, causing dust to fall from the ceiling in great clouds as it drops to all fours, its emaciated body grinding against the cave floor sending insects flurrying. It reaches longingly across

the ground, patting the floor heavily as it searches for its prey, and the second creature tosses the villager to the floor before retreating to a safe distance.

The villager tries to crawl away futilely, the bindings restricting his movements, and soon the giants wanting grasp finds purchase, wrapping its horrific fingers around the man. It lifts him towards its great maw, rising back to its full height, and snorts through skull like nostrils as if sniffing the man while he squirms against her grip. With a horrifying sucking noise the giant raises its maw and clamps down on the villager, the enormous teeth slamming shut around his midriff with a sound like scissors cutting through paper. As you watch, the man's body writhes and twists around the creatures maw, and with a sickening crunch is hollowed out from within, the giant releasing the now empty body which flutters to the ground like a discarded wrapper. The smaller creature quickly glides over, and begins to stitch the skin into the giants dress while she ruminates on her meal, a crunching, gurgling noise rumbling from her maw through the cavern.

A woman behind you screams, the sight too much for her, and with horror you look back at the giant as it wails in retort, clawing its way towards the bridge. You bolt for the tunnel exit, running across the rickety bridge as the villagers follow closely behind you, the wood groaning with your passage and the metal warping causing the bridge to sway. As you reach the other side you stare back in horror as the bridge finally buckles, collapsing at its centre sending several villagers stumbling backwards towards the abyss. You reach for the nearest, a young woman, but before you can make contact she vanishes into the mouth of the giant who erupts from below, her jagged teeth clamping over those unfortunate enough to be in its grasp.

A villager grabs you by the shoulder and pulls you along the passage, knocking you from your stupor just in time to avoid the elongated clawed hand that rams itself into the tunnel, grasping desperately for you as the giant bellows, causing the rock to tremble.

You run through the confined corridors, villagers ahead of you clasping at the darkened stone walls for balance as the entire mine seems to shake with the rage of the giant encased within it. The tunnel splits, then splits again, each choice made in panic as you flee through the undulating shafts, the villagers blindly stumbling as you yell encouragement from behind. You collide with the villager in front of you suddenly as they grind to a halt. They stagger back into you as they turn rapidly in panic, and through the tightly packed tunnel you see the lead villager suspended in the air, a long barbed hook hanging from the ceiling and jutting through the base of their jaw. As they struggle a face emerges from a concealed hole in the roof, squat and short with black shark like eyes, a large grin of jagged teeth spreading across the creatures face as it lets out a sound akin to laughter before yanking the villager up through the rocky ceiling.

Turning quickly you bolt back through to the last junction, inhuman screams echoing from the tunnel you initially came from as the other creatures give pursuit. As you round a sharp corner lined with protruding stalactites, an old elevator draws into view, a pulley system allowing it to rise to the surface.

You step aboard the large platform, and hear the villagers calling out to their friends as they wait for the stragglers, the creatures cries sounding closer with each passing breath.

Decision 13

[Wait for the Villagers](#) (Turn to Page 93)

[Leave without them](#) (Turn to Page 95)

Stay and Help Greta

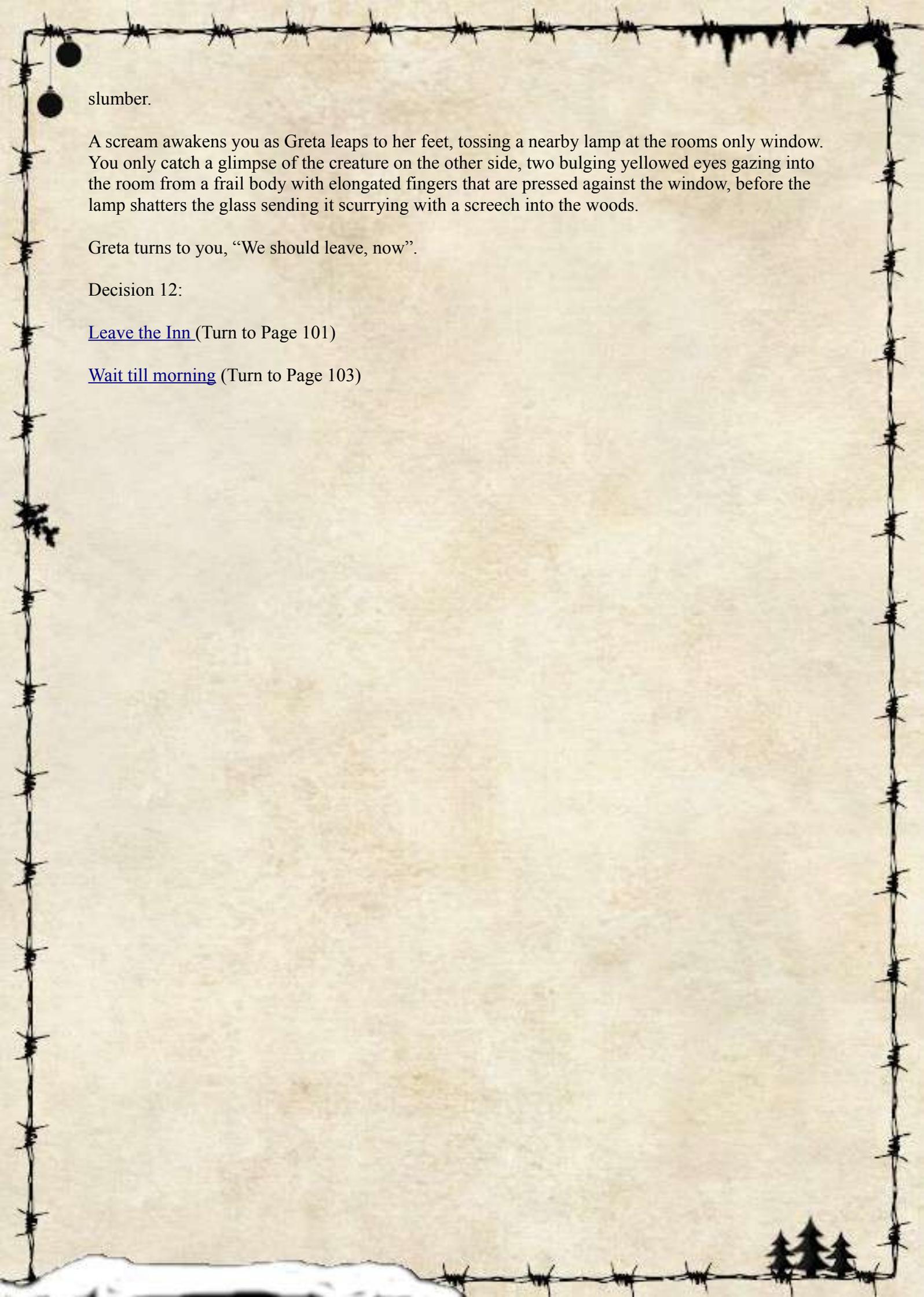


You look towards the forest, knowing somewhere within the skeletal expanse lays the mines where these abominations spawn each night, and for a moment you consider heading into the beasts lair to try and save as many as you can.

Then reality sets in, you're only one person, what could you do against an onslaught of such creatures. Greta is here with you now, and you can save her, that much you know. As you try to hoist her to her feet she pushes you away, telling you to stop, to help the village. But as your eyes meet she sees her fear reflected in yours, and both of you bow your heads ashamed before she stretches out her hand, allowing you to help hoist her to her feet. She lets out a cry as her wounds chafe with the movement and you see several large rivets carved through her flesh by the creatures, which though the bleeding has stopped it is obvious will last a lifetime.

Propping Greta against the side of the now devastated inn you head into the burnt building to look for supplies, finding some blankets that are only lightly singed which you promptly throw over her, lighting a small fire in the miraculously still standing fireplace to help warm her. It takes a while, but soon the colour begins to return to Greta, though she shifts uncomfortably as heat courses through several blackened fingers you fear are beyond saving.

As darkness begins to fall once more you decide to try and last the night together, then leave the village in the morning, not wanting to risk travelling through the darkened forest in your current condition. Using the last few minutes of light you manage to cobble together some supplies for the journey from what little remains undamaged, using a small sled to support it all. You store it amongst the remains of the collapsed inn, hoping the debris is enough to conceal it. Greta and you retreat to a small room that remains relatively undamaged near the back of the inn, and huddle against the cold night as the now familiar sounds of the night echo around you. You drift in and out of sleep as the night drags on, Greta doing the same, and soon find yourself lost in a dreamless



slumber.

A scream awakens you as Greta leaps to her feet, tossing a nearby lamp at the room's only window. You only catch a glimpse of the creature on the other side, two bulging yellowed eyes gazing into the room from a frail body with elongated fingers that are pressed against the window, before the lamp shatters the glass sending it scurrying with a screech into the woods.

Greta turns to you, "We should leave, now".

Decision 12:

[Leave the Inn](#) (Turn to Page 101)

[Wait till morning](#) (Turn to Page 103)

Wait till morning



You look out into the darkness after the creature and hesitate, knowing the horrors the dark forest could hold should you venture into the inky blackness. No, it's not worth the risk, at least here you can defend yourself, at least here you're warm.

Greta staggers across the room packing her few belongings, and you can see from her condition she is in no fit state to begin a treacherous journey through the ice and snow right now. You stop her gently, leading her back to the fire and helping her to sit, her wounds causing her to grimace as she reluctantly lays back against the wall.

You offer to keep watch until the morning, allowing her to gain some rest for the journey ahead, and although she argues at first, exhaustion quickly catches up with her. She soon falls back into a fitful sleep as the warmth of the fire and blankets take hold. You draw a broken chair up to the window, one of the legs missing, and stare out into the darkness, the handle of a shattered jug clenched in your hand as a makeshift weapon should the creature return.

The crackle of the fire punctuates the silence of the night, no other noise save for the low moan of the wind through the trees and the rustle of their barren branches. Occasionally Greta turns and murmurs in her sleep, her face clenched as some nightmare disturbs her otherwise peaceful rest, but it always passes swiftly.

The alluring warmth of the fire soon begins to wear down your tired body, and you once again find yourself yawning frequently, battling to stay awake against the inviting embrace of sleep. You rest your eyes for a second, opening them again with a start as you fear drifting off, but with each blink it takes longer to re-open them, and the forest seems darker, more distant. Suddenly the two yellow orbs return, only a few meters away, watching you through the trees.

You don't know how long the creature has been there, whether you drifted off or it appeared unnaturally swiftly, but you start to your feet knocking the chair to the floor with a clatter that wakes Greta from her slumber. She hobbles to her feet, staring out the window with you, and asks how long its been watching. You ashamedly admit you're not sure, but you don't think it's been long.

The added distance lets you get a better view of the entity staring at you unblinkingly, large rotund yellow eyes mounted on a head reminiscent of a hammerhead shark, small sharp teeth glinting in the light cast through the window. Its body is long and slender, and it slouches forward to keep its eyes level with yours, the ridges of its spine punctuating the curvature of its back. Elongated arms brush against the snow at its feet, two long claws digging grooves into the snow as it almost rhythmically unfurls and curls its hands. Its legs double back at the knee-joint, rising up to the height of its torso before descending in two narrow stalks that disappear beneath the snow.

For a while all three of you stare at each other, frozen in a standstill, the voluminous yellow orbs hypnotic against the dark backdrop of the forest. It's only when the ground trembles that you can tear yourself away from its gaze, grabbing onto the window ledge for support. Greta stumbles backwards and nearly falls, managing to right herself at the last minute, but a stronger tremor hits seconds later sending you both sprawling to the floor. You struggle to stand as the tremors intensify, and see the creature retreating into the woods, never breaking eye contact, but letting out a piercing wail in a frequency so high it shreds your ear drums. In return, something deep below you bellows hauntingly, and too late you realise the threat is beneath your feet.

With a crash the ground beneath you gives way, a gaping maw opening up directly below the inn that swallows the building, the world quickly vanishing into darkness.

A rancid cloying smell drags you from unconsciousness, and you cough violently, gasping for air as you struggle to get your bearings, the strong smell of rotten eggs making you gag. Your head throbs with pain, and your entire body aches as if you'd be bludgeoned. You try to look down at your body, and your head swims as you realise down is up, and you're hanging by your feet from the ceiling, a strange, mucosal liquid clinging to you, securing you in place. It doesn't take much struggling before the liquid loosens, and digging through it with you nails you eventually break free, dropping hard onto the rocky ground below, the impact blowing the air from your lungs. As you struggle to breathe you look around you, seeing more makeshift cocoons hanging from the ceiling. Those villagers you've saved all hang nearby, as well as several other members of the community.

Decision 13

[Free the villagers](#) (Turn to Page 81)

[Leave the villagers](#) (Turn to Page 83)

Leave the Inn immediately

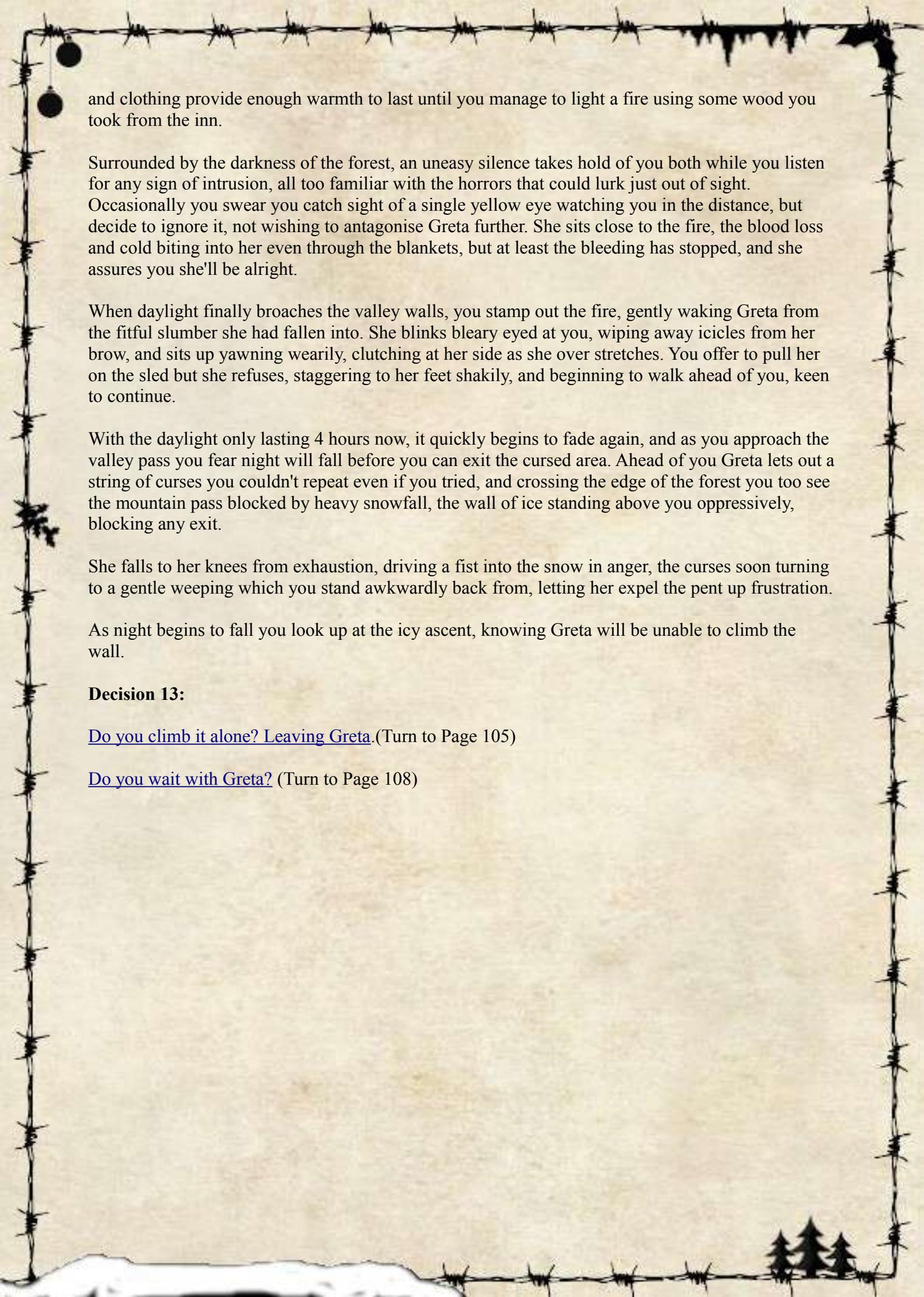


It doesn't take you long to gather your belongings together, and you pull the sled out from beneath its charred cover, the supplies mercifully still there. Wrapping a rope around your waist to pull the supplies along you head out into the night, the devastated village silhouetted like the carcass of a gargantuan creature in the moonlight.

You quickly reach the edge of the woodlands, and as you walk between the narrow trunks of the birch trees, the sled skips along the ground behind you, Greta thanking you again for pulling it. As you walk you frequently catch sight of two yellow eyes watching you from between the foliage, darting away as you make eye-contact, but swiftly returning. It never draws closer, but the constant knowledge of its presence is unnerving, and soon Greta lashes out, unable to take the constant voyeurism any longer.

She screams into the night at the eyes, hurling abuse and threats at the creature that continues to watch intently, its gaze unblinking. Picking up a rock she hurls it towards the yellow orbs, and manages to catch it off-guard, hitting it squarely in one of the eyes which pops with a sickening squelch. The creature rears back screaming, its elongated arms scratching at the wound on its face, yellow pus running down into the snow where it hisses on contact. It charges away into the night, eliciting a cry like a child sobbing, and swiftly disappears between the trees, its wailing sobs carrying on the wind for a few minutes before fading away.

Greta lets out a triumphant bellow, raising her arms above her head before wincing and clutching at her side, forced to one knee. You see blood begin to seep through the thick coat she wears as a wound re-opens, and run over to her, helping to add pressure as you strip back the thick winter clothing to reveal a large rivet carved by the creatures leaking profusely. Greta weakly tells you she's ok, and that she can keep going, but you see she's in no state to keep travelling and decide to camp temporarily here, at least until morning. The trees provide little cover, but the thick blankets



and clothing provide enough warmth to last until you manage to light a fire using some wood you took from the inn.

Surrounded by the darkness of the forest, an uneasy silence takes hold of you both while you listen for any sign of intrusion, all too familiar with the horrors that could lurk just out of sight. Occasionally you swear you catch sight of a single yellow eye watching you in the distance, but decide to ignore it, not wishing to antagonise Greta further. She sits close to the fire, the blood loss and cold biting into her even through the blankets, but at least the bleeding has stopped, and she assures you she'll be alright.

When daylight finally broaches the valley walls, you stamp out the fire, gently waking Greta from the fitful slumber she had fallen into. She blinks bleary eyed at you, wiping away icicles from her brow, and sits up yawning wearily, clutching at her side as she over stretches. You offer to pull her on the sled but she refuses, staggering to her feet shakily, and beginning to walk ahead of you, keen to continue.

With the daylight only lasting 4 hours now, it quickly begins to fade again, and as you approach the valley pass you fear night will fall before you can exit the cursed area. Ahead of you Greta lets out a string of curses you couldn't repeat even if you tried, and crossing the edge of the forest you too see the mountain pass blocked by heavy snowfall, the wall of ice standing above you oppressively, blocking any exit.

She falls to her knees from exhaustion, driving a fist into the snow in anger, the curses soon turning to a gentle weeping which you stand awkwardly back from, letting her expel the pent up frustration.

As night begins to fall you look up at the icy ascent, knowing Greta will be unable to climb the wall.

Decision 13:

[Do you climb it alone? Leaving Greta.](#) (Turn to Page 105)

[Do you wait with Greta?](#) (Turn to Page 108)

Climb it alone



As the darkness of night begins to consume the valley once more, you stare up at the icy barricade blocking your path. Greta huddles against the wall, wrapping blankets around herself as she leans on the cold surface for support, her breathing heavy and ragged.

She stares out across the valley, a grim look of resignation running over her face as she surveys the remains of the village she called home all these years, and while she stares into the distance you watch her. Even if you somehow got her over the barricade, her wounds are severe, and the journey on the other side is long and just as treacherous. There's no guarantee she would survive anyway.

She smirks, letting out a light chuckle that quickly erupts into a coughing fit, and you realise she was aware of your gaze. "It's ok" she says. You try to protest, ashamed by your thoughts of abandoning her, but she silences you, telling you she doesn't need you to risk your life for her. You got her this far and she's grateful. All she asks is that you make her a fire to sit by before you go, and send help if you find someone. "Who knows" she chuckles, "Maybe I'll still be here".

Over the next hour you build a large campfire, going to great lengths to build up the flames until they spiral high into the sky. The fire warms Greta as she rests nearby on the ground, huddled in the remaining blankets, and she thanks you, before telling you to get going, the night only getting colder and darker the longer you wait.

As you approach the wall you glance back one final time at the woman sat next to the fire, and begin your ascent. The layers of snow make the climb treacherous as grip after grip disintegrates in your hands, threatening to send you hurtling back towards the ground. Still you push on, scrabbling up the wall through the ice and snow, finding purchase where you can. Before long you are several meters off the ground nearing the top of the obstruction. Frustration boils inside you, at how such a simple inconvenience cannot be overcome without the right tools, you shouldn't have to leave Greta.

A piercing cry from the forest causes you to start, temporarily losing your footing as you slide back down the wall a few feet, catching hold of a icy outcropping which you cling to for dear life. Looking back you see some of the birch trees bend from the passage of some intruder working its way towards the fire. You look down to see Greta's grim face staring back at you, determined as she picks up one of the branches from the fire, using it as a torch. Hefting the heavy piece of wood clearly puts a lot of strain on her, and she lets out a cry that she quickly stifles, the creature in the woods wailing in retort, the sound of heavy footsteps echoing through the forest.

For a moment you consider climbing back down to stand with Greta, but she calls out to you, telling you to climb faster, to let people know what happened to the village. You hesitate, and she yells again, telling you to go before you both die.

You freeze as you lock eyes with a series of beady globes staring at you from within the woods. As the creature draws itself into the light you see an elongated skull emerge from the shadows, its prominent snout growing into a set of razor sharp tusks that glint in the flames light, each eyeball set beneath a bony ridge that serves to make them stand out against the bleached skin of the creature that crawls across the ground. Several disjointed limbs sprawl from beneath it in an almost spider like fashion, working in an awkward synchronicity to carry the creature forward, each ending in a large three fingered claw that caress the ground as it travels.

It sniffs the air loudly, gratingly, before letting out a high pitched wail, snow tumbling from above you as the tone dislodges large chunks of the freshly fallen powder. Slowly it crawls towards the fire, snorts and grunts emanating amongst sharp wines from its mouth as it circles Greta. A purple tongue coils around its tusks before retreating back into its mouth. She lashes out with the torch as it draws close, stumbling from the exertion, and the creature rears back from the flame, letting out a sharp hiss followed by a bellow as it rears its haunches at her intimidatingly.

She turns and lets out a final scream at you to move, the panic in her voice kicking you into motion as you scabble up the wall, your arms aching from the exertion. You turn back as Greta screams piercingly, and you see the creature lock its maw around her body, shaking her like a rag-doll as the tusks pierce her torso. With a final cry she jams the torch into one of its eyes, digging the blazing branch deep into the socket. The creature screeches with pain, tossing her aside as it rubs its face along the ground attempting to staunch the burning sensation, thick blood trailing behind it.

Greta lays motionless on the ground, and you see the snow turning red beneath her. You offer a silent prayer for the brave woman, and launch back at the wall, covering the last few meters swiftly, the screeches of the creature, and the subsequent crunching of bone driving you on.

As you crest the valley wall you don't look back, running across the top of the snowy expanse until you reach a descent that leads to the road below, sliding down the slick snow to land on the dirt track with a grunt, your own wounds aching from the stress of the climb and the sudden impact.

You walk for hours before encountering a truck driving along the road, and as the driver pulls over to help you your body finally gives way, and you collapse into unconsciousness.

When you finally awoke it was at a hospital in a nearby city, your wounds slowly healing, though the doctor warns you they'll most likely scar.

//

(If your arm was damaged by the creature under the bed)

As you gaze below the bed sheet you see a stump where your arm one sat, bandages tightly packed

around the amputated limb. The doctor apologises but says there as no way to save it, though you already knew that.

//

The police question you for days, desperate to work out what happened to the population of the village, and how you ended up with such severe wounds. At first you tell them everything, drawing sketches of what you've seen, of the creatures that stalk the valley, and of the brave woman who gave her life to help you escape. They react as you'd expect, with scepticism and distrust, claiming to have searched both the village and the mines and found nothing saving for scorched buildings and blood stains on an old elevator left by you. For a while they consider you a suspect, but with no evidence to tie you to the disappearances you become a person of interest, then a witness, then nothing.

By the time you leave the hospital the story of the missing village has passed through local media, and the last you heard it was being put down to the work of extremists who took the villagers to an unknown location. As the years go on you watch for news of the valley carefully, checking every news outlet local to the area, and watch as the disappearances begin once more, this time further afield in neighbouring towns or villages, occurring at the same time every year. You may have escaped, but with the village no longer there to appease the creatures, their hunting grounds expand in their search for new victims, and you know soon nowhere will be safe from their yule-tide wrath.

THE END

[Return To Start](#)

Do you wait with Greta?

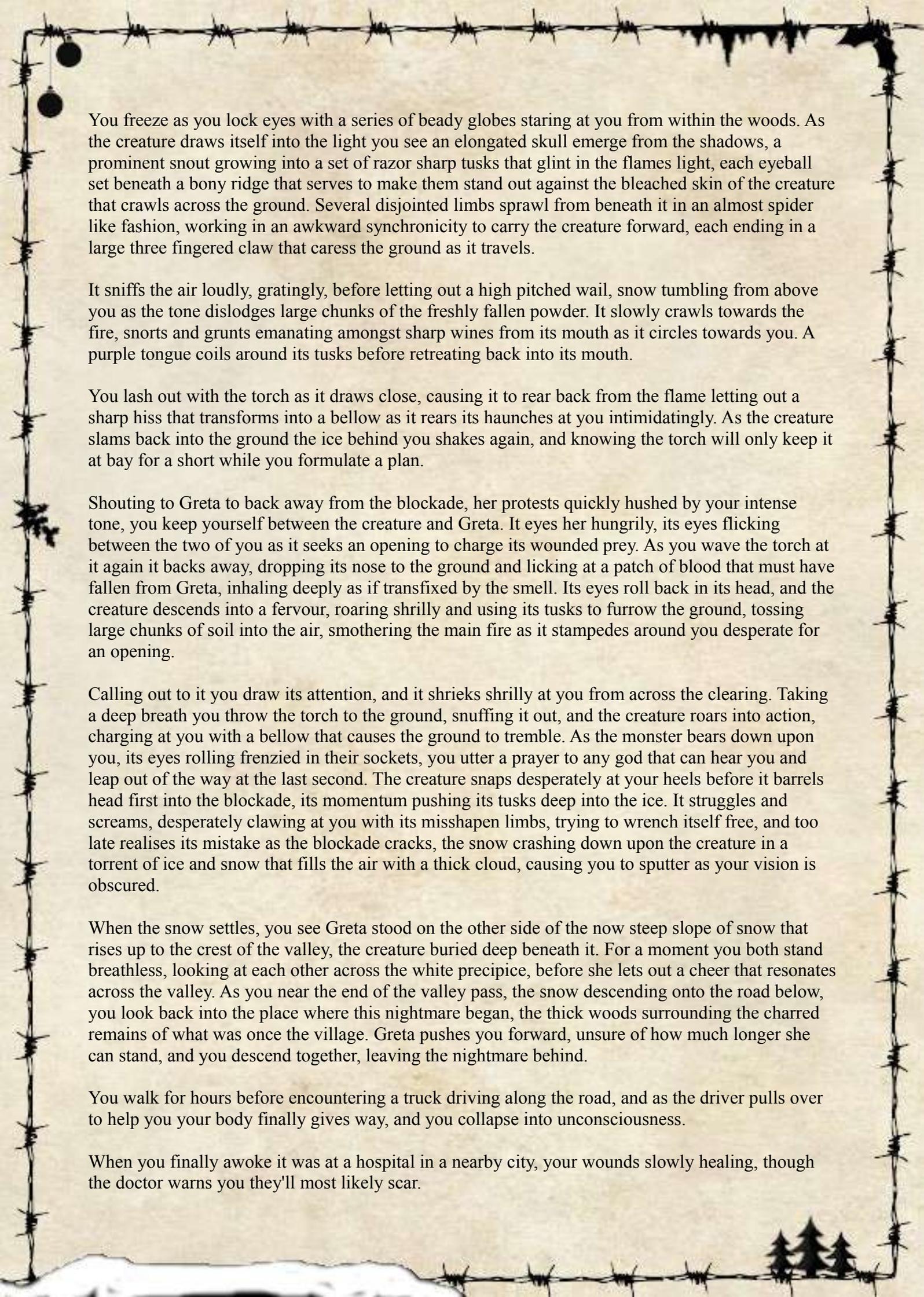


You've come this far with Greta, and you're not going to leave her now, especially with night falling again so soon. You walk the length of the mountain pass while Greta rests, but see no easy path through the obstruction, the solid block standing like a monolith before you. As night begins to fall once again you set up a camp at the base of the icy blockade, the solid mass to your rear providing some comfort in that nothing could sneak up behind you.

With a fire lit you huddle close to Greta again, noting that her skin is greyer still, and when you ask about the bleeding she assures you it's slowed a lot, that she'll be ok. Her unsteady smile lets you know that she's lying, and you draw an extra blanket from yourself to cover her, ensuring she is as warm as possible.

Gazing back down into the valley, the soft moonlight glinting off of the snow, you admire the natural beauty of the valley. Even the skeletal woods seem elegant in their own way. If it weren't for the various nightmarish abominations you'd even consider coming back some time, and the thought makes you chuckle. You're drawn into a conversation with Greta about her life here, how she grew up in the valley. Her parents protected her from the creatures until they too became victims of the darkness surrounding the village, by the creatures hand or the villagers she was unsure. It was all she had ever known, and the store she inherited was here, she had no desire to leave despite the horrors that lurked just out of sight. At least they were only around a few weeks of the year, most places have to deal with terrible people all year round she laughs, eliciting a light smirk from you.

A grunt from the woods silences you both, and a snuffling noise emanates from somewhere beneath the trees, wheezing and shrill, as if someone was breathing through a straw. You rise to your feet, cursing yourself for not taking more time to find a weapon at the village, and grab one of the longer branches from the fire, using it as a torch. Waving the light along the treeline, the flickering flame casts animated shadows that make it difficult to pierce the darkness, and for a moment you believe the sound could perhaps have been a wild animal.



You freeze as you lock eyes with a series of beady globes staring at you from within the woods. As the creature draws itself into the light you see an elongated skull emerge from the shadows, a prominent snout growing into a set of razor sharp tusks that glint in the flames light, each eyeball set beneath a bony ridge that serves to make them stand out against the bleached skin of the creature that crawls across the ground. Several disjointed limbs sprawl from beneath it in an almost spider like fashion, working in an awkward synchronicity to carry the creature forward, each ending in a large three fingered claw that caress the ground as it travels.

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You lash out with the torch as it draws close, causing it to rear back from the flame letting out a sharp hiss that transforms into a bellow as it rears its haunches at you intimidatingly. As the creature slams back into the ground the ice behind you shakes again, and knowing the torch will only keep it at bay for a short while you formulate a plan.

Shouting to Greta to back away from the blockade, her protests quickly hushed by your intense tone, you keep yourself between the creature and Greta. It eyes her hungrily, its eyes flicking between the two of you as it seeks an opening to charge its wounded prey. As you wave the torch at it again it backs away, dropping its nose to the ground and licking at a patch of blood that must have fallen from Greta, inhaling deeply as if transfixed by the smell. Its eyes roll back in its head, and the creature descends into a fervour, roaring shrilly and using its tusks to furrow the ground, tossing large chunks of soil into the air, smothering the main fire as it stampedes around you desperate for an opening.

Calling out to it you draw its attention, and it shrieks shrilly at you from across the clearing. Taking a deep breath you throw the torch to the ground, snuffing it out, and the creature roars into action, charging at you with a bellow that causes the ground to tremble. As the monster bears down upon you, its eyes rolling frenzied in their sockets, you utter a prayer to any god that can hear you and leap out of the way at the last second. The creature snaps desperately at your heels before it barrels head first into the blockade, its momentum pushing its tusks deep into the ice. It struggles and screams, desperately clawing at you with its misshapen limbs, trying to wrench itself free, and too late realises its mistake as the blockade cracks, the snow crashing down upon the creature in a torrent of ice and snow that fills the air with a thick cloud, causing you to sputter as your vision is obscured.

When the snow settles, you see Greta stood on the other side of the now steep slope of snow that rises up to the crest of the valley, the creature buried deep beneath it. For a moment you both stand breathless, looking at each other across the white precipice, before she lets out a cheer that resonates across the valley. As you near the end of the valley pass, the snow descending onto the road below, you look back into the place where this nightmare began, the thick woods surrounding the charred remains of what was once the village. Greta pushes you forward, unsure of how much longer she can stand, and you descend together, leaving the nightmare behind.

You walk for hours before encountering a truck driving along the road, and as the driver pulls over to help you your body finally gives way, and you collapse into unconsciousness.

When you finally awoke it was at a hospital in a nearby city, your wounds slowly healing, though the doctor warns you they'll most likely scar.



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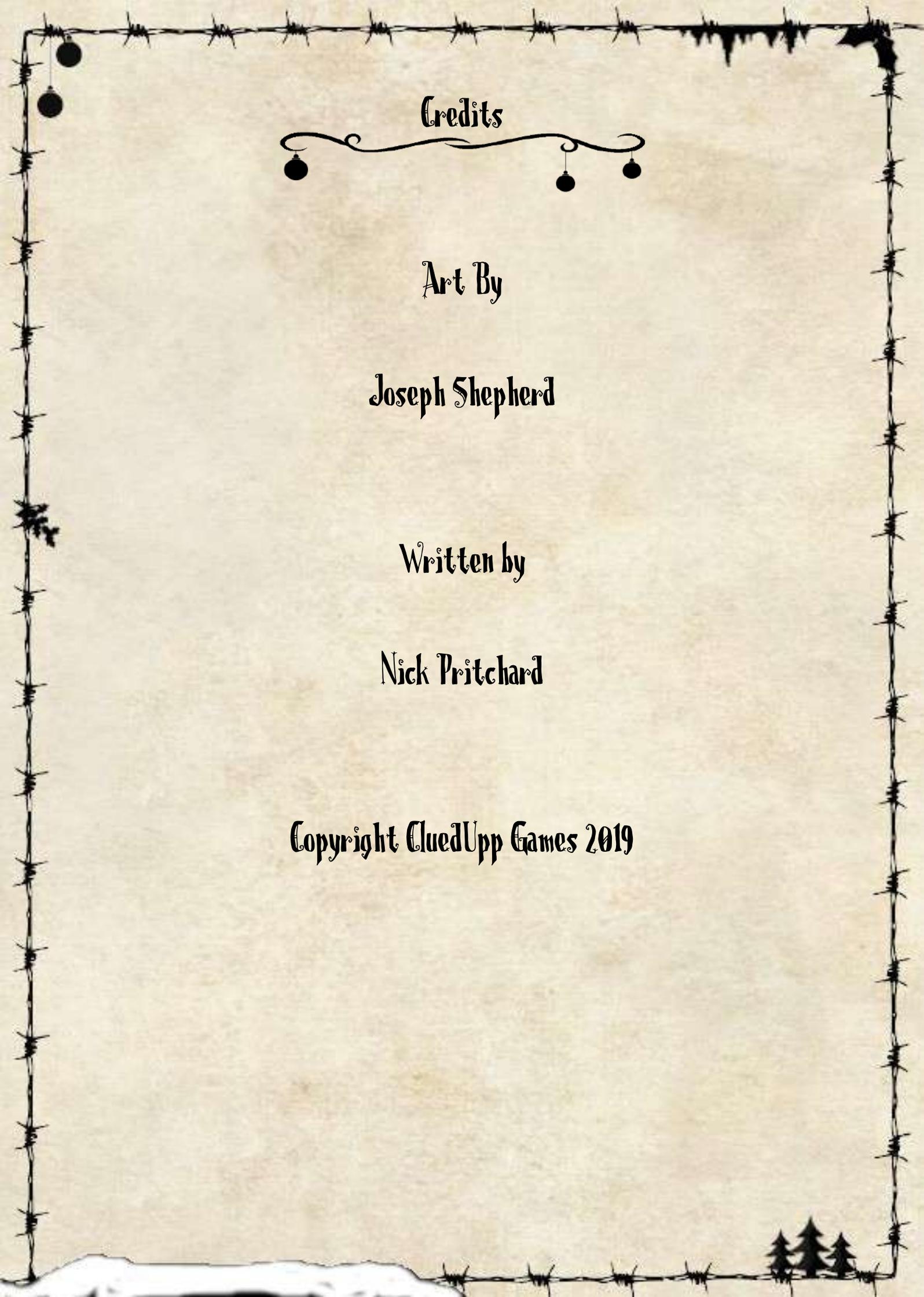
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THE END

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Credits

Art By

Joseph Shepherd

Written by

Nick Pritchard

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