

COUNTRY MEAT-GRINDER CLASSICS



“THE HELLSON HORROR”

A 2ND-LEVEL DCC RPG
ADVENTURE
BY TIM SNIDER

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**

COUNTRY MEAT-GRINDER CLASSICS “THE HELLSON HORROR”

A 2nd-Level Adventure for DCC RPG

By Tim Snider

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INTRODUCTION

Country Meat-Grinder Classics is inspired by the grindhouse horror “hicksploitation” films of the 1970s and 1980s. This is (hopefully) the first of other CMGC supplements to come. The concept of CMGC was also inspired by the likes of *Country Crawl Classics*, *Meat Planet*, and *The Arwich Grinder*, and I tip my hat to the creators of these fine DCC products.

In my vision of CMGC, the time and place is an otherworldly Appalachian-like village cut off from “proper” civilization and stuck in a perpetual 1930’s backwoods level of technology and knowledge. Gunpowder and firearms exist but are prone to misfires and malfunction. (It’s safer to use hand weapons anyhow.) Motorized vehicles are rare and ramshackle, so many still rely on horse-drawn conveyances. Folk magic and superstitions are common, but “true magic” (the casting of spells and manipulation of reality) is the stuff of demonic deals and infernal bargains and is rarely seen or experienced.

With a few tweaks to genre details, CMGC can be used in any number of ways in your own games: Cottonbark could easily be found nestled in DCC’s Shudder Mountains or possibly along one of the trails of Weird Frontiers. The denizens within wouldn’t even be out of place in the post-apocalyptic future of MCC’s Terra AD!

GENERAL BACKGROUND

About 30 years ago, the farming community of Cottonbark was nearly wiped out when drought dried out the crops for miles around. Folks began to starve and, in fact, some of the young and weak succumbed to their hunger. The Hellsons, the local “well-to-do” family who primarily raised swine, were charitable folk in those days. They opened their house for any in need of shelter and offered the contents of their storehouse to feed the community. The drought passed, prosperity returned, and the Hellsons mysteriously withdrew from society. Today, odd creatures have been spotted running amok in the Cottonbark area, and some of the townsfolk are now missing. All signs point to the Hellsons, and it may just be time to pay them a visit.

JUDGE'S BACKGROUND

The Hellsons were indeed a kindly charitable family in the past, but when they offered to help the area during the crisis, they were overwhelmed by the starving townsfolk. To meet the desperate needs of the community, they turned to infernal powers. The family matriarch, Mamaw Esther Hellson, summoned the demon Xxyzxx (ziz-zicks) and begged for its help in feeding the citizens. The infernal contract signed, the demon turned to their prize sow. *"So shall she feed you, so shall you feed her,"* the demon hissed, disappearing in a puff of sulfur-scented vapor. Without mating, the swine began giving birth to litter after litter of piglets, which grew to adulthood in a matter of days and were promptly processed to feed the community. When the crisis ended and the village began to thrive again, the sow stopped producing its infernal offspring and dropped into a deep sleep.

A year ago, the creature reawakened, now with a ravenous appetite. Trying to hide the infernal bargain they once made, the Hellsons fed the beast, first depleting their crops, then their livestock. But whatever it ate was never enough, and it also began to twist, mutate, and grow to a gargantuan size. As the monster ("Hawgziller") consumed the last of the livestock, it also managed to bite the hand off Mamaw Hellson, which seemed to finally quell the thing's hunger — for a while.

"So shall she feed you, so shall you feed her."

To keep Hawgziller satisfied whenever it began to stir, the clan began amputating their own limbs to feed to it. And to make sure none of them ever revealed their sinful pact, all but Mamaw Hellson carved out their tongues and fed them to the monster, thus never speaking of this horror. But now the Hellsons grow desperate as they need fresh "donors" to feed the beast. They began by abducting transients and passers-through who wouldn't be missed to feed the beast, but they have now started abducting Cottonbark citizens.

Finally, Hawgziller has begun live-birthing again; monstrosities like itself that have gotten loose and now roam the countryside ("Devil-sows").

The Hellsons made a deal with the devil, and now the devil watches from afar...and laughs.

*Special Note: Any time the action seems to be lagging, especially during lulls during travel between scenes or while the players are puzzling over some bit of minutiae, have 1d6 Devil-sows explode from the underbrush to attack the players. Those things are **everywhere**. (Oh, what are Devil-sows? Read on, my friend...)*

COUSIN VINNY'S HUNTING TRIP

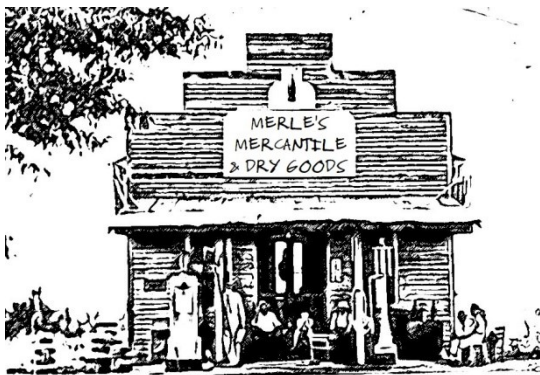
The adventure begins at the homestead of the players. If played as a one-shot, the players are all part of their own extended family line, related to each other in various ways and/or close family friends who “are pretty much family anyway.” One of the player’s friends/family members – Cousin Vincent (Vinny) – left in the family truck to go hunting a few days ago. Rumor tells of strange beasts that have recently been spotted in the woods around Cottonbark, and Cousin Vinny was going to see if he could bag one of them. Although it’s not unusual for Cousin Vinny to lose track of time when hunting, a few days have passed, and the players have become worried, especially with recent news that a few of the local folks have gone missing. Cousin Vinny said he was going to stop by Merle’s Mercantile – the local general store – for ammo and supplies before heading into the woods, so that’s likely the best place for the players to start their search.

Because Cousin Vinny took the family’s only vehicle (a rusted-out pick-up truck), the players’ only means of travel is the family’s horse-drawn flatbed wagon. The trip to Merle’s takes about a half-hour, and during the ride, the players can’t shake the feeling that they’re being watched. If anyone makes a DC 12 Intelligence check, they may catch a glimpse of several bipedal shadows running through the woods parallel to the road.

Parked outside of Merle’s is the family pick-up, but Cousin Vinny is nowhere around. If the players inspect the truck, the keys are still inside, and Vinny’s shotgun is still under the seat where he normally hides it. (After picking up his supplies, he thought he heard something

out back and, when he went to investigate, he was overpowered by both Devil-sows and Pete Hellson, who took him back to the Hellson Homestead as the newest “tribute” to Hawgziller.)

Inside the general store is Merle, the store owner; his wife Myrtle; and Zeke and Abner, two elderly hang-about who always seem to be loitering around the store. The four of them seem to be deep in conversation when the players enter.



Talking with the gossiping group, the players can discover the following information if they ask the right questions:

- Cousin Vinny stopped by the store a few days ago and picked up some ammo for his shotgun as well as some jerky and biscuits. He asked to keep the truck parked outside while he hunted, and Merle said it was OK. Merle has just assumed Vinny was still off in the woods somewhere.
- Zeke and Abner were sitting on the store’s front stoop when Vinny left, and he seemed to be interested in a noise he heard out back. Zeke and Abner didn’t hear anything (though they are both hard-of-hearing). They went inside shortly after this encounter, so they didn’t see what happened to Vinny. If any players go into the woods behind the store and investigate (DC 12 Intelligence check), they’ll find the box of shotgun shells and bag of jerky and biscuits Cousin Vinny purchased. A second successful check (DC 15 Intelligence check) reveals prints in the dirt nearby – bootprints (Pete Hellson) and large hoofprints (Devil-sows).
- About an hour ago, Myrtle waited on Pete Hellson, the only member of the Hellson clan allowed to come into town. Myrtle (and the others) may reveal some of the background of the Hellson family (their generosity during the drought 30 years ago and how

they've withdrawn from society shortly afterward). "It's said that God-fearing family was cursed by a witch for their good deeds!" she says. Of the clan, only Pete stops by every month or so for supplies. He never speaks, just silently hands a list to the grocers who fill the order and help him load it into his truck. "We have to help due to his limp, that poor thing," Myrtle says. (Pete is missing a leg and has a false one he uses to walk.) As the players entered, Myrtle was telling the others that, during this visit, Pete was wearing a very distinctive woolen cap, black and yellow with white fringe. She's certain this was the same hat worn by a homeless transient she fed a month ago. (Pete brought the hobo back to the homestead and fed him to Hawgziller. He helped himself to the colorful cap.)

- The judge can also use this encounter to impart any general gossip and background information as found in the Introduction and General Background sections.

By now, the players should have enough information to prompt a visit to the Hellsons. As the conversation winds down, the players hear their horse outside screaming in distress. It has been surrounded by Devilsows that are now circling in for the kill.

Devil-sows (6): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1) or spines +0 missile (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8+4, 10 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Devil-sows are large swine (3 to 4' high) that run on their back legs like a bird (or dinosaur, if the characters have ever heard about or encountered one). They bite with a strong tusk-filled mouth for 1d4+1 damage. Their backs are covered with coarse hairs that hide razor-sharp spines they can fire for 1d4 damage. (These spines are barbed, and the character will take another 1d2 hp damage for each they yank out.)

Merle, Zeke, and Abner will help during combat as well as they can (Myrtle will hide in the store) and, after the fight is over, Merle will offer to let the players take whatever they need to confront the Hellsons ("On credit, of course!").

A TASTE OF SWEET OBLIVION

The Hellson Homestead is found on the far, far outskirts of Cottonbark. The road is rarely travelled (except for Pete Hellson) and it may take a few checks to ensure the players are taking the right road and/or not lost in overgrown brush. In fact, the only sign that the players are on the right track is when they pass through a broken and long-rusted-out barbed-wire fence marking the edge of the Hellson property. Shortly after passing through the fence, the path becomes too overgrown for a truck and/or horse-drawn cart, so the players will need to proceed on foot down a well-trod dirt path into the weeds.

If the players think to ask or search for it, Pete Hellson's truck is also parked here, hidden behind various tree limbs, brambles, and other foliage he's torn down. (They'll easily find it on a DC 5 Intelligence check, but only if they ask about it; don't just offer up the fact it's here!) Pete has his own "car alarm" in the form of a polecat (skunk) he's lured into the truck cab. When he returns, he lures it in with a bit of food, and lures it out the same way when he needs the truck.

Polecat (1): Init +4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d3) or spray; AC 10; HD 1d4, 2 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spray; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

The polecat's spray is a lung-searing musk that it will spray on the first unfortunate PC who opens the truck door (DC 15 Reflex check to dodge). This spray will cause the affected character to retch uncontrollably, losing 1d4 points of Stamina in the process.

As they walk the path, the PCs will be overwhelmed by a sickeningly sweet smell filling the air. The random weeds and brush clear out as its replaced by shoulder-high stalks of sorghum. (This is the only cultivated crop Hawgziller refused to eat. The Hellsons have let the fields grow wild.) This mutant strain of overgrown sorghum is about 4-5 feet tall topped with a grain-like head at the top of each stem. This head drips with a thick, viscous, syrup-like goo that is similar to molasses or honey. Although edible, it is also incredibly sticky, causing clothing and handheld tools/weapons to adhere to the body until washed off. (This may affect Reflex saves too if the judge is feeling particularly evil.) The

only way to avoid the dripping syrup is to walk hunched over, which will halve PC movement rates.

Although Hawgziller doesn't care for the taste of sorghum, the Devil-sows *love* this stuff. There are three more of the monsters lurking in the field, and they will start stalking the players when they realize prey has entered. They are also short enough to be unaffected by the sticky fronds.

Devil-sows (3): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1) or spines +0 missile (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8+4, 10 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

SEWAGE SWAMP

As the players leave the sorghum fields, the sickeningly sweet smell of the sorghum is replaced by the overwhelming smell of sewage. They now find themselves entering a swamp-like region filled with drooping willows, hanging vines, and a body of water that is horribly polluted by sewage runoff. The once-clean river that ran through the Hellson property has been contaminated by years' worth of fecal and hog wallow runoff produced by Hawgziller and her "children". It is a literal "river of crap."

The path the PCs have been following leads up to the riverbank, and the bootprints and markings in the mud reveal a boat was used to cross. (A small flatboat that Pete uses to cross is now on the other side of this festering bog.) The judge should reward the players if they come up with some clever way to cross the swamp waters: using a fallen log as a makeshift float, lashing together the truck tires as a raft, etc. (At its deepest, the water is only 5 feet deep, so a PC could conceivably wade through, although this is *wildly* ill-advised.)

Don't make crossing the waters too difficult as the players will have their hands full soon enough, as the swamp is now the lair of a giant crocodile that has become quite accustomed to the foul ichor it resides in. Pete usually tosses some scraps into the water before he begins rowing so the swamp-beast will allow him to cross unmolested. The

crocodile will slowly swim toward the PCs, just under the water's surface, waiting for the same handout. If they don't notice it or feed it something substantial, it will attack when they reach the deepest part of the swamp.

Crocodile (1): Init -2; Atk bite +5 melee (3d4); AC 17; HD 3d8, 12 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.

THE HELLSON HOMESTEAD

Special Note: With the exception of Mamaw Hellson, every Hellson is mute, having removed their tongues years ago. To communicate, each Hellson has a uniquely-toned whistle hanging around their neck. If in trouble, they will begin blowing their whistle in short bursts, and every Hellson within earshot will come running. (Allow observant players a DC 12 Intelligence check to notice they all seem to possess one.) Also, every Hellson is missing a limb, which was used to satiate Hawgziller as she grew.

Once the players make it to the other side of the swamp, they'll have reached the Hellson Homestead. A flatboat is beached on this side of the riverbank (used by Pete to cross back and forth). From their vantage point, they'll see three buildings of interest: a house, an outbuilding, and a barn. In the distance, Pete Hellson (still wearing the hat Myrtle described) can be seen hobbling from the house to the outbuilding. Two Devil-sows are tagging along behind him, like hungry dogs begging for scraps. (They are hoping to receive a "snack" from the outbuilding, which is actually the farm's abattoir.) If Pete or the Devil-sows see the PCs, they'll attack. (Pete will begin blowing his whistle in warning to the other Hellsons.)

Pete Hellson (1): Init +0; Atk knife +1 melee (1d4) or pistol +2 missile (1d6); AC 13; HD 3d6, 10 hp; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Devil-sows (2): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1) or spines +0 missile (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8+4, 10 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

The House: This is the primary Hellson residence. At one time a grand multiroom farmhouse, it is now barely standing due to years of neglect. Most of the rooms are barren of furniture or any degree of comfort. The bedrooms have little else but straw mats on the floor for each family member. The kitchen is dirty and squalid with vermin darting between piles of garbage. In the formal sitting room at the front of the house sits Mamaw Hellson, who seems to have been expecting the players. She sets down a well-worn book she was thumbing through (the Hellson family history) and stands to address the players.

"I s'pose it's finally come to pass," she says. "Time fer one of us to pay fer what I done brung."



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As a young adult, she was the one who initially summoned Xxyzxx, naively thinking she could control it. Over the years and with the new horrors that have surfaced, her guilt and horror as to what she released has turned to resentment and bitterness toward the Cottonbark citizens who are “ungrateful” for all she sacrificed. After 30 years, she is now a half-crazed witch-woman who feels the town is now getting what it deserves.

“Don’t y’all unnerstan’!?” she’ll shout. “If’n we hadn’t fed y’all, you’d be dead! It’s now *your* turn. She fed y’all, now y’all feeds her!”

Mamaw Hellson (1): Init +3; Atk knife -2 melee (1d4) or spell; AC 10; HD 3d6, 14 hp; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP spellcasting; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +8; AL C.

Mamaw Hellson knows the spells *demon summoning* and *magic missile*. She will initially cast *magic missile* at anyone who tries to attack her. She will use *demon summoning* only as a last resort knowing the heavy debt already placed upon her soul. The demon summoned will be a minor Type I aspect of Xxyzxx. (It is left as an exercise for the judge to determine exactly *what* form that might be!)

If anyone opens the family history book she was reading, they’ll find the *demon summoning* ritual for Xxyzxx, as well as diary entries explaining the sad tale of what came to pass here at the homestead. (The judge should share the information found in the Judge’s Background.)

The Outbuilding: This is the farm’s abattoir (slaughterhouse) where swine and other animals were processed and dressed. Now, it’s a charnel house where abducted victims are dismembered before being fed to Hawgziller. The dirt floor is black with the blood it’s soaked up over the years, and numerous flies and a coppery scent fills the air. On some of the hooks are slabs of meat and limbs that are recognizably human.

Jolene and Jeb Hellson are here processing recent victims. Jeb is missing a leg, thus he suffers an initiative penalty and reduced movement rate. However, he has a loaded shotgun leaning against the wall nearby and

he will grab it and begin firing on his turn. Jolene's "tribute" to Hawgziller is the stuff of nightmares. Rather than sacrifice a limb, she cut off her own ears, nose, and lips, giving her face a skull-like appearance. When first seeing her, players will need to make a DC 15 Willpower save or suffer a -5 initiative penalty during combat with her.

Jolene Hellson (1): Init +3; Atk machete +3 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 3d6, 10 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

Jeb Hellson (1): Init +0; Atk shotgun +3 missile (1d8); AC 13; HD 3d6, 10 hp; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Cousin Vinny lays trussed up nearby and unmoving. He is merely unconscious and, once awakened and freed, he'll gladly join the players in the quest to shut this abomination down.

The Barn: When the doors of this huge structure are first opened, it appears utterly empty. In fact, there are no stalls, no loft, and just a few support beams to hold the roof up. Initially this is where the Hellson prize sow birthed her offspring during the drought and the barn was "opened up" to give the piglets space to quickly grow. When the sow stopped producing and dropped into its sleep, the Hellson clan – wishing to hide what they had done – moved her into the underground root cellar beneath the barn.

Later when she awoke and began to grow, the Hellsons excavated the earth around her, opening the cellar up into a large one-room cavern where she now eats, sleeps, and live-births Devil-sows. A large trapdoor leading into Hawgziller's lair is in the floor near the rear wall. (The trapdoor easily pops open when pushed from the underside, allowing newly born Devil-sows to freely exit.)

As the players investigate, Beau and Henry Hellson will enter from the cavern below. Depending on any noise the players have been making, the Hellsons may be aware of the player's presence and will move to surprise them. Both are missing a hand and have a wicked-looking hook in place that they will use as a weapon. (Note that Beau has two melee attacks per round as he stabs with the knife and swings his hook.)

Beau Hellson (1): Init +2; Atk knife +1 melee (1d4) and hook +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d6, 10 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20, 1d16; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Henry Hellson (1): Init +2; Atk hook +1 melee (1d6) or pistol +0 missile (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d6, 10 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Opening the trapdoor reveals a dirt slope that gently descends into the darkness. However, there is enough sunlight filtering through the cracks in the barn floor to allow the players to see. The barn sits overtop a large, humid, one-room cavern that reeks of animal sweat and manure. Various bones – both animal and human – are strewn about the cavern floor. There is a large dirt mound in the center of the room, and the players can hear the squeals of Devil-sows coming from the other side. This “mound” is actually Hawgziller, caked in mud and dirt, lying with her back to the players. Three newly-born Devil-sows have finished nursing and are now sleeping nestled against their mother. If the players attack the Devil-sows or assault Hawgziller, the beast will awaken, roar with rage, and rear to its full 20-foot height. The floor of the barn will shatter and the building will begin to crash down around the players.



Newborn Devil-sows (3): Init -2; Atk bite +0 melee (1d4-1) or spines -3 missile (1d4-1); AC 10; HD 1d8+4, 6 hp; MV 20'; Act 1d16; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

Hawgziller (1): Init +4; Atk bite +5 melee (2d6+1) or spines +0 missile (2d4); AC 15; HD 4d8+6, 22 hp; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

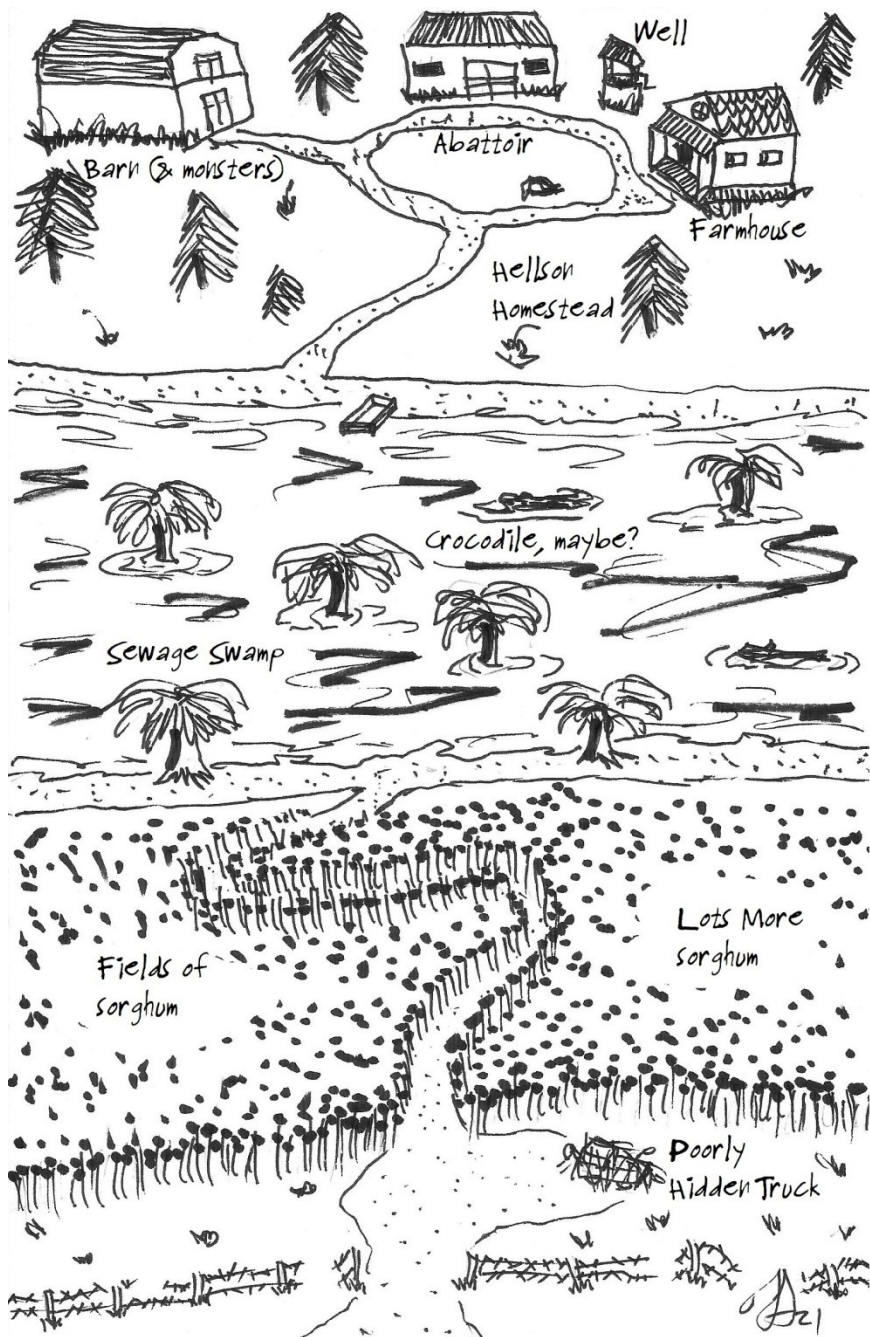
If Hawgziller bites anyone and rolls a natural 20, that character will be swallowed whole by the ravenous beast. Once Hawgziller is enraged, only its death will stop its rampage. It will begin crashing through the Hellson Homestead, bringing down the other structures. Any Hellsons still alive will first try to bring Hawgziller under control. Once one or two have been eaten, they'll turn tail and run, trying to escape the demonic creature's wrath. Once the deathblow is landed, Hawgziller will crash to the ground and slowly begin to shrink and revert back to its original self. A black vapor will steam from the corpse, forming the demonic shadow of Xxyzxx who will fade into nonexistence until summoned again.

AFTERMATH

Once word gets out as the nature of the Devil-sows and what the players achieved at the Hellsons, they are celebrated as local heroes. All remnants of the Hellson Homestead are torn asunder and burned, and both prayer rituals and hex signs are offered up in an attempt to cleanse the area of the demonic influence.

As for the Devil-sows? With the infernal influence gone, they are actually quite tame livestock (though still twisted and unseemly to look at). Merle has caught a few and now raises them behind his general store. And although the church-going folk think it's blasphemy, Merle's new line of Devil-chops, Devil-roasts, and Devil-bacon is selling quite well.





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"IN THE PAST, THE HELLSONS WERE GOOD CHARITABLE FOLK, FEEDIN' THE HUNGRY AND SHELTERIN' THE POOR AT THEIR HOMESTEAD. THEY SAY A WITCH DONE HEXED 'EM FOR IT, AND NOW NOBODY GOES THERE ANYMORES. THEY EVEN SAY WEIRD CRITTERS DONE BEEN SEEN LURKIN' IN THE WOODS NEAR THEIR FARM. AND NOW, FOLKS'RE STARTIN' TO TURN UP MISSIN'. IT JEST MAY BE TIME TO PAY THE HELLSONS A VISIT..."

