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A BAD SCENARIO FOR BAD PEOPLE

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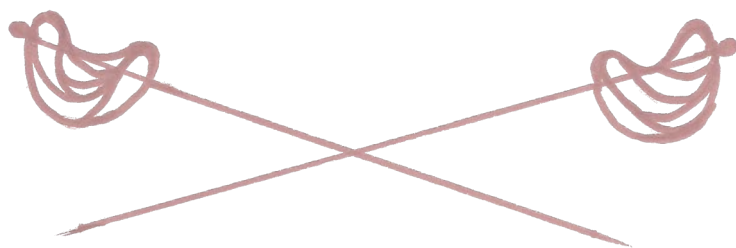
Heavy translation proofreading by Søren Aske Hjorth

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"Schmiss" draws inspiration from "The Duel" (1908) by Joseph Conrad,
"Alraune" (1911) by Hanns Heinz Ewers and "Der Golem" (1915) by Gustav Meyrink.

**Character illustrations by Martyn Noyé
and filigran by Mette V.W. Petersen**

Images and photos bought at the real Bartko Reher
(www.ansichtskartenversand.com)
visit at your own peril - it's pure nerd crack.



If you have run, read or played "Schmiss" and loved,
or hated, it and want to tell me about it, you are
more than welcome to drop me a line at
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"The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary: men alone are quite capable of every wickedness."
- Joseph Conrad



"We'll take this way too far
It'll leave you breathless
Or with a nasty scar"
- Taylor Swift

Intro

Introduction Welcome to **"Schmiss"**. A psychological horror scenario about repressed desires, honor, and bloody duels.

Originally written for the Danish convention Fastaval in 2024, where it was nominated in the categories Best Characters and Best Storytelling.

"Schmiss" is a free-form scenario in the Scandinavian tradition and is for four players and one game master, with pre-written characters, its own set of mechanics and will take around 4 hours to play. To play the scenario, you will need this text, **a coin** and **a smaller item**, that can serve as the Id-token.

The scenario revolves around four young men who, at the start of World War I, are left as the only remaining members of a German student fraternity. The fraternity is centered around concepts of honor and masculinity, with occult undertones. In the basement beneath the fraternity's estate, a magical creature dwells, devouring the young men's emotions. As the creature gathers its strength, the characters' inner turmoil and internal conflicts are entangled in a violent and erotic web, all while the outside world fades into the background.

Central to the scenario is the German academic fencing tradition, combining classical masculine virtues with fencing, though not ordinary fencing. This form of duel, known as Mensur, is not about winning or losing but about displaying your manliness and neither flinching nor withdrawing when struck in the face with a saber. The most recognizable feature of this form is the scars left on the participants, known in German as a 'schmiss', familiar from movie villains and images of German officers from that era.

The scenario uses a mechanic to have players fight duels with each other, and a supplementary mechanic bringing the subconscious and repressed into play.

The Synopsis

The scenario takes place in the town of **Halberstadt** in southeastern Germany, where **Villa Degen**, the headquarters of the **Bartko Reher Order** is located. At the beginning of the scenario, the four player characters are novices in the order, but with the outbreak of **World War I**, the majority of the fraternity's members are called to the front, leaving the player characters behind in the large villa, responsible for the villa and the associated estate, still under the supervision of the aging **Doctor Leine**.

The scenario is partitioned into three rounds or acts, named **Partie 1-3**. The Intro and Partie 1 should take about an hour and a half to play, Partie 2 lasts one and a half to two hours, and Partie 3 should take no more than half an hour of play.

The first part of the scenario allows the players to be "home alone," exploring Villa Degen, the order's headquarters, testing themselves against each other, engaging in their first duel(s), and receiving the resulting scars. The first part of the scenario ends when Doctor Leine passes away, and the creature in the basement is released.



If you want a quick introduction to the wild history and traditions of academic fencing check out these 10 minutes from **Today I Found Out** here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C4i8SJWByWA>

In the second part of the scenario, **The Veil** descends over Villa Degen, warping both time and mood inside the walls of the villa. The creature from the basement, the **"girl" Zophiel**, makes herself known to the young men, and her influence among the player characters increases, leading to conflict and drama. This part of the scenario unfolds in a series of scenes that can be drawn from an existing catalog or established by the players and the game master working together. The most important part is that the tensions within the walls and within the player characters are building up, with duels and drama becoming everyday occurrences as time outside the villa passes by at a much faster pace.

The final part of the scenario takes place in 1918 as the decimated remnants of the Bartko Reher brothers return in defeat after the war has ended and finds Villa Degen in ruins. The Veil is lifted, and the player characters realize, perhaps, that four to five years have passed, as they have been cut off from the outside world. In the climax of the scenario, they must decide how to react to the revelation as well as their own situation. Will they attempt to make amends for the decay they have undergone, or will they fight to bring back the Veil once more to continue living, disconnected from the world, together with Zophiel?

"Schmiss" can be a complicated scenario to run as a game master.

A large amount of freedom, initiative and agency are entrusted to players and a lot of the flow of the scenario depends on how far, and fast, the players are able to let go and embrace the fencing, ideals and ideas of the scenario. Maybe you have players who can instantly create conflicts and drama between the characters, and you will have to make sure they do not get out of hand too fast, or they might play more cautiously, and you have to help them out to encourage them into action.

Your main tools as game master is the ethos of Bartko Reher as well as the two supporting cast characters present in Villa Degen, Zophiel and Dr Leine. More about them and how to use them below.

Finally, "Schmiss" has a quite few mechanics, and those can be a bit of a handful to handle at the same time, from the fencing rituals as well as making both sides of The Veil come alive at different points in the scenario to the Id-token. Remember, you don't have to make everything click at once. Once the players have been introduced to the duel mechanic they should be able to take care of that themselves, and the same with activating the Id-actions, which should leave you with the main responsibility of setting up interesting scenes, pushing and pulling at the characters' feelings and desires, using Zophiel to create creating a magical and strange atmosphere surrounding them in the villa. Furthermore, the mechanics do not all have to take up a lot of space. If the players manage to generate their own amazing tension and conflict from the duels, then there is no rule that they need to spend time creating Id-actions. The mechanics are tools - for you and the players - use them as much or as little as you need.

But in general, trust in the players to generate their story and arc without too much direction or control from you. The scenario is almost a sandbox and if the drama between the four characters (and Zophiel) grows more organic, the more interesting and impactful the experience will become.



"Schmiss" is a psychological horror scenario but is also a scenario that when it comes to style and atmosphere can go in different directions depending on the players.

It can become a highly dramatic fencing scenario or take a more melancholic turn, focusing on broken young men, brotherhood, and escapism.

Gauge your player group accordingly.

Scars & Honor

The drive and main conflict of the scenario revolve around matters of honor. The concepts of honor and masculinity have been ingrained into the minds of the four player characters throughout their upbringing and their tutelage in the Bartko Reher Order. The notion of honor permeates everything and the dueling scars are the physical manifestations of this, but they are also mental scars, as the importance of masculinity and martial prowess prevents any option of showing weakness or displaying emotions.

The tenets of honor that "Schmiss" focuses its narrative around are masculinity, brotherhood, courage, to suppress both fear and pain, and never backing down once challenged. These tenets are central to an environment where scars and injuries are not even avoided but actively sought out.

These ideals, where honor and loyalty to the Order are of utmost importance, are deeply ingrained in the characters. Even though it is possible to defy these ideals, it is challenging, will put them under pressure and will most likely cost them dearly.

Once this toxic machismo collides with an occult power that exploits the characters' repressed emotions and inflames their internal conflicts, it will hopefully spark moments of intense drama between the characters.

The Barto Reher Order

The Bartko Reher Order traces its roots back several hundred years. It is an order, or brotherhood, dedicated to science, education, and **the creation of learned, honorable, and well-rounded young men of Germany.**

All novices and several full-fledged members live at the headquarters at Villa Degen, situated in the town of Halberstadt, where everyone goes about their daily duties, physical training, and academic education.

Members of the Bartko Reher Order are normally dressed in suits as well as the distinctive "tekkel" cap, commonly associated with student fraternities. During festivals or special occasions, members also wear a parade uniform, where the brotherhood's colors, black and green, are displayed on a broad sash.

The Bartko Reher Order has connections to the military, as many members serve or have served as officers in the German army, with the majority of the Order still being in the reserves.

The Order has about 40 active members in Halberstadt and the surrounding area at the start of the scenario, but almost all of them leave the town and headquarters to fight in World War I.



The Characters

The four characters are all boys aged 15-16 years old, each of them are novices in the Bartko Reher Order and all come with heavy baggage.

Heinrich Aurswald is the son of the local butcher. He is a sensitive boy, hiding behind a facade of a primitive bully. He lives in fear of his father and of being a failure.

Mattias Ludewig is the son of a religious entrepreneur and has grown up away from the city. He is diplomatic, superficial and is obsessed with his twin sister.

Eike Legenfeld is living in the shadow of his father's fame and notoriety as a soldier and war hero. While he is ambitious and driven he suffers from feelings of inferiority and a suppressed sexuality.

Alex Wolfsbach has a Jewish mother and views the world as a chivalrous romance, where he imagines himself as a noble hero. He is a naive dreamer with an unhealthy relationship to both his parents.



Heinrich



Eike



Mattias



Alex

Each of the characters have emotional issues and scars, that during the scenario will be pushed at and triggered by the ideals of the order, creating fertile ground for very toxic masculine behavior. In the characters you can find both homophobia, sexual assault and antisemitism, so make sure that your players are ok with playing around these themes in a roleplaying context! Their repressed feelings and trauma are a tool for you as the GM to turn up the drama and tension, between the four boys and with the help of Zophiel, who often will know more about the characters than they do themselves.

In the characters descriptions some things are left vague. For example Heinrichs feelings and actions towards Alma, his girlfriend outside the order. This is on purpose, to give the players more narrative control and agency in regards to their characters and what path they take in the scenario.

In the same fashion, the relational descriptions between the four characters are left more or less unexplored. In-game due to them having only been part of Bartko Reher for a short period, and on a meta level, as it will give the players a lot of freedom to define their inter-character relationships.

In previous runs and playtests, there have been sparks between almost every constellation of characters with friendships and enmity being forged between very different boys. Let the players map out their characters and take ownership of their feelings - it makes for interesting play.

Zophiel

Zophiel is the scenario's catalyst. She is a magical creature, created and imprisoned by Bartko Reher's leader, **Pater Hirschfänger**, in the basement beneath the order's headquarters.

In the form the player characters encounter her, she appears as a girl, perhaps 11-12 years old, with a slender figure, dark hair, and an androgynous face.

It is not important what Zophiel actually is. She is an amalgam of Jewish golem legend, German witchcraft, and alchemical magic. The most important aspect is that she is a shapeshifter who can adapt to whatever dreams and desires projected onto her being by those around her. If the player characters search for clues, they can find hints pointing to her origins (see Hirschfänger's Quaters, page 10), but it will never be definitively revealed what her origin is or why Hirschfänger created her. **This is not important to our story.**

Once Zophiel makes her entrance into the scenario and is somehow released from the basement, she moves into Villa Degen and can no longer be locked up or restrained by force. She will not leave the villa. At this point the Veil descends over Villa Degen, changing the light, mood, and time (see page 18).

Do your best to make her appear both human and inhuman, real as well as supernatural.



Her motives are not evil per se - she simply doesn't understand nor care about the emotions, lives, and motivations of people around her. As she acts as a metaphorical mirror of the four player characters' inner lives, she can easily turn into a decadent and destructive force.

While she lives in the villa with the player characters, she will learn more and more about them, both what they display outwardly and what they hide away inside themselves.

Her standard response, if someone confronts her about anything she has done or said, can almost always be a variant of "Well, I was just trying to make you happy." This is mostly true, even though the results might make the characters feel otherwise.

What can she do?

As a magical being, Zophiel can change her body. She can alter small things (eye- or hair color), change her body structure, or take on the appearance of specific people, such as Mattias' sister or Alex's mother. Generally, she does this only when she is alone with someone, but it is perfectly fine if you occasionally make small 'mistakes' or changes when describing her, so her eyes are mentioned as brown at one moment and green at another, her height shifts a bit, and she is described as looking like an 11-, 12-, or 13-year-old at different times.

If someone tries to do something violent to her, she shuts down. Her body collapses, becoming heavy as if made of clay, and life fades from her eyes. She remains in this stasis form until her surroundings have calmed down. Afterwards she returns to life and can either react hurt, angry, or even as if nothing had happened, depending on what preceded or what can have the most interesting effect on the story. She cannot be killed until the scenario's climax (see page 37).

Additionally, she reads the thoughts and feelings of her surroundings—their repressed fears and desires, things they may not even know they are struggling with. As a game master, you can use Zophiel to create drama and conflict, both for and with individual player characters and among the characters themselves.

It means she can (discreetly) prod at the characters where it hurts, for example Heinrichs fear of failure, Mattias' affection for his sister, Eikes sexuality or Alex' feelings towards either of his parents.



When the player characters meet Zophiel for the first time, they will likely have many questions for her. Here are some suggested answers you can use:

Who are you? "I am Zophiel. That's the name the Pater gave me."

Who locked you up? "The Father has kept me in the basement for as long as I can remember."

Where do you come from? "From here. The villa is my home. I can't remember being away from it."

Have you been outside? "Yes, at night the Pater let me out and took me into the garden and around the villa."

Why have you been locked up? "I don't know."

Are you dangerous? "I don't think so. Maybe..."

Use your game master skills to handle any other questions—otherwise, she can always shrug them off and be unwilling to answer.

How to play her

Play her as an alien. Let her be mysterious and otherworldly. There should be things she refuses to talk about or just shrugs off. She knows how everything in the house and the world works, but she should seem like she's observing it all from a distance. From the outside. Occasionally, let her mention things from the characters' backgrounds that she shouldn't be able to know about.

But also play her as intensely human. Play up the contrasts and let her be childlike, sad, and angry like a 12-13-year-old girl (but make sure she doesn't turn annoying). Make it easy, or at least possible, to sympathize with her, especially if the characters get the sense that she is a creature created/kept captive by Hirschfänger, that she has no background or family. Make her feel like a lonely and melancholic figure.

Vary her expressions. Gauge the players' reactions and use her differently with the four characters. Let her be compliant and attentive to one character, sibling-loving to another, and subtly threatening to a third. This underlines the scenario's atmosphere and facilitates a foundation for conflict between the characters. It's also fine to shift personalities while around a single player character making sure that the players are never sure where they stand with her.

Avoid making her a sex kitten. Use her to reflect the player characters' distorted feelings and sexuality, but try not to make her promiscuous or sexually provocative. Make her appear clueless and innocent regarding nudity, both her own and the characters'. Let her pick up on the things the players show her and use her shapeshifting to lure or rouse them, but as much as possible, let the player characters take the first step if anything is to happen. Anything directly related to sex occurs off-screen.



But it's okay for her to be a Femme Fatale. It should become increasingly apparent that she is not a healthy or positive force in the house and that conflicts and drama follow in her wake. Whether they fight for her, about her, or because of her, she will leave them with scars. In the scenes in Partie 2, there are suggestions for ways Zophiel can be used in various situations to usher the scenario and player characters forward and over the edge.

Hirschfänger & Leine

In the scenario, two named members of the Bartko Reher Order besides the four player characters that appear.

Pater Hirschfänger is the leader of the order. A man in his late 40s who is the embodiment of the ideals lauded by Bartko Reher. He is noble, stoic, well-educated, and brave. In every interaction that the player characters' had with him before the scenario begins, he has been a strict but fair father figure of the young novices.

However, he is also Zophiel's creator who kept her imprisoned in the basement beneath Villa Degen. How and why remain unknown to the players, but the characters can uncover vague clues from his private quarters in Villa Degen and attribute sinister motives to him. Shortly after the scenario begins.

Hirschfänger leaves Halberstadt and Villa Degen, heading to war alongside the other members of Bartko Reher. He will only return at the end of the scenario, coming back from the front as a broken man, only to see the order in ruins.

**Pater Hirschfänger is noble, strict, and a paragon.
At the same time, he is absent and flawed.**

Doctor Leine is the only adult member of the order left behind in Villa Degen with the characters. Leine is a man in his late 50s and in poor physical condition, which is why he remains behind. He is lame in his left leg due to a hunting accident and has symptoms of tertiary syphilis, affecting him both physically and mentally, with early dementia, rashes, nodules on his body, and inflammation of the arteries.

Doctor Leine will guide the characters in their first duel(s) and be there as both judge and doctor, as well as the only adult in the house.

At the same time, he can be used to create conflict and unease in the villa if the players are cautious and reserved. You can use Leine as an antagonist and enforcer of the Order's culture in the house, by making him both strict and focused on matters of honor and shame, and by showing sides of him that are unpleasant, intrusive, drunken, and boundary-crossing.

**Doctor Leine is experienced and caring.
At the same time, he is decadent and in full decline.**



Villa Degen

Villa Degen is the headquarters of the Bartko Reher Order and the setting for the majority of the scenario.

The villa itself is an Italian-inspired, three story mansion, with yellow brick walls, red-tiled roof with two wings extending from a main building in a U-shape, with one wing serving as a stable and storage. Behind the house, there is a large and untended garden. At the back of the garden, almost out of sight from the main building, there is a pond and a small pavilion. A high wall surrounds the entire property.

Both the villa and the garden fall under the Veil once Zophiel is released, and from that point on, the property is cast in a unique light, and both indoors and outdoors, the place will appear to be larger and unexplored. Even though the player characters have lived in Villa Degen for months, they can discover rooms they hadn't noticed before, while corridors seem to be longer, and rooms appear to be deeper, just as the garden stretches further, allowing for long walks without crossing the same path twice.

This is why there is no map of Villa Degen and its surrounding area. Let the Villa be a dynamic location where the changes in buildings and rooms slowly become part of everyday life.

However, there are still several rooms and places on the property that can prove useful as reference points, especially those related to the daily activities of player characters.

Fencing Hall

A long room on the ground floor. The large windows overlooking the garden also extend into part of the ceiling, providing plenty of light.

In the center of the room are four marked fencing areas with white-painted lines on a dark wooden floor. The room is large enough to be used for other physical activities, such as gymnastics, wrestling, or other forms of training. It echoes slightly when people speak inside.

At the back of the room hangs a row of weapon cabinets containing sabers. The cabinets are locked, and at the start of the scenario, the key is handed over to Heinrich. You can also find chests with the brotherhood's parade uniforms here.



There are no locks on any doors in Villa Degen, except for the door to the basement.



Kitchen

A modern kitchen with two large cast-iron stoves and plenty of copper pots. A door leads to the back of the house, behind the stable, where supplies are delivered to Villa Degen from the town. From the kitchen, there is access to a well-stocked pantry.

There are no servants in Bartko Reher, and all household duties are handled by the brothers, so it is not unusual for the player characters to be in the kitchen and take care of cooking.

In the kitchen, you will find Villa Degen's only dog, **Jäeger**, an aging and good-natured hunting dog that loves to be petted or receive treats.

Stable

A large building next to the villa. It is two stories high, and a ladder leads up to an open hayloft under the roof. This is where garden equipment and tools for maintaining the grounds and buildings are stored. There is also a poorly maintained carriage.

The stable can accommodate 30 horses, but when the rest of the brothers leave, only two horses remain in the stable. The large building generally feels very deserted.

Novice Cells

All members of the Bartko Reher Order have their own rooms, including brothers who have lives and families in the town. This ensures that everyone has a place for peace and reflection. The cells are spartan furnished with a bed, a reading desk, a chair, and a chest for clothes and personal belongings.

Unlike most of the house, which has electric lighting, the cells are lit only by a single kerosene lamp. The cells are located along a long corridor on the first floor of Villa Degen.

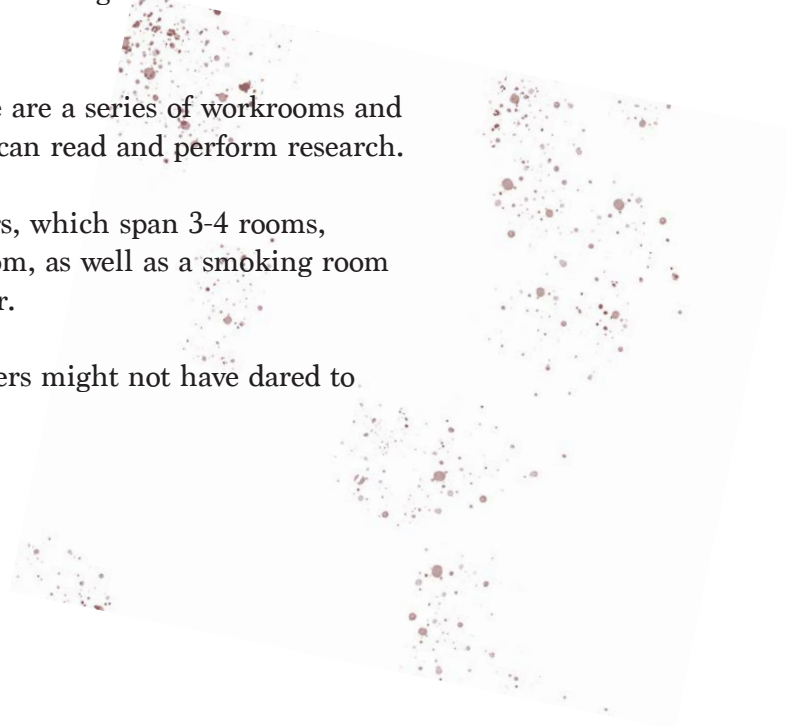
Both Doctor Leine and Pater Hirschfänger have cells along this corridor.

Hirschfänger's Quarters

On the top and smallest floor of Villa Degen, there are a series of workrooms and study chambers where the order's senior members can read and perform research.

The largest of these is Pater Hirschfänger's quarters, which span 3-4 rooms, which includes a bedroom, an office, a meeting room, as well as a smoking room and access to a small library through a French door.

The quarters are not locked, but the player characters might not have dared to enter in the past.



Basement

There is access to the basement from a discreet staircase hidden behind a curtain in the large entrance hall and from a ramp on one side of the house.

The basement is extensive and stretches under much of the villa, making it possible to get briefly lost. It is used for storage but mainly houses the order's extensive wine cellar, which runs through a series of rooms and corridors, containing thousands of bottles. At the back of the cellar, slightly concealed behind a large wine rack, there is a locked door. The key hangs on a hook next to it. This is where Pater Hirschfänger keeps Zophiel imprisoned.

Garden

Behind Villa Degen stretches a deep and untended garden. In the area closest to the house, there are several beds where vegetables and herbs are grown, but the lawn quickly gives way to denser vegetation, making it easy to keep out of sight of the main buildings.

When you move through the garden, you pass areas with wild and exotic flowers, dense blackberry bushes, and a small clearing with four beehives.

At the very back of the garden lies a small but deep pond, and beside it stands a small stone pavilion.

Additionally, the villa includes a dining room, several bathrooms, a chapel, meeting and teaching rooms, and anything else you think might be needed.

Halberstadt

Outside of Villa Degen lies Halberstadt, a small town in southeastern Germany. A couple of thousand residents, mainly making a living from craftsmanship, agriculture, and mining, live in and around the town. The nearest large city is Regensburg, 30 kilometers away, and the same distance again to the Austria-Hungarian border. There is no railway connection to and from Halberstadt and no cars.

The houses in Halberstadt are small and gray, the streets are cobblestone, and cattle from the surrounding farms are regularly driven through the streets.

Thus, Villa Degen stands out in Halberstadt, and there is a general sense of respect and awe for the Bartko Reher Order as well as its members, who usually keep to themselves and keep out of the daily life in Halberstadt.

The only time Bartko Reher makes its presence known in Halberstadt is during the annual harvest festival, held in a square outside the town. See more about the harvest festival on page 34.



Duels

Fencing is central to the scenario. In the Bartko Reher Order, as in all of German academic fencing tradition, duels are the most respected way to display manliness, courage, and honor. It's not about winning but about being steadfast as the blows rain down on you and being able to take a hit like a man, without flinching.

The duels should be few and potent and are, in "Schmiss" as in reality, highly ritualized with fixed actions and patterns performed each time a duel is fought. Once the decay spreads and the scenario progresses, these formalities can deteriorate.

Since duels in Mensur fencing are not meant to cause serious injury to the opponent, participants wear armor covering their torso, a leather collar, glasses with a metal nose-guard, and a gauntlet on the hand holding the saber. This equipment has been integrated into the scenario as part of the ritual and the mechanics surrounding the duels.

Duels in the Fiction

Characters can challenge each other to duels during the scenario. It can be due to a conflict, big or small, as a way to assert oneself, demean another, out of boredom or frustration, or on orders from senior brothers of the order.

It is possible to refuse a duel, but it is associated with great loss of face and shame.

Duels are always fought at dawn or sunset.

Each involved party chooses a second, with the challenged character choosing first. Since there are only four characters in "Schmiss," all player characters will almost always be involved, two as duelists and the other two as seconds.

Before the duel, the seconds retrieve two sabers. They are located in the weapon cabinet in the fencing hall in Villa Degen.

The seconds then assist the duelists to equip the fencing gear: armor for the body, collar, glasses, nose-guard, and gauntlets. The duelists are then handed their sabers, and a judge asks the combatants to prepare. In most cases, since there is no fifth person to act as a judge, one of the seconds must take on this role and call out the three steps leading up to the duel:

"Op!" (the duelists raise their sabers)

"Mensur!" (the duelists cross their blades)

"Los!" (the duel begins)



How Many Duels?

Depending on how the scenario unfolds, it's estimated there will be 1-2 duels in Partie 1, 4-5 duels in Partie 2, and some fencing scuffles in Partie 3, but probably no real duels.

Ensure the duels are not so frequent that they lose their intensity and value in the story.



The duel is then fought with sabers raised high, generally above shoulder height, with blows raining down on the opponent's head and torso and corresponding parries.

The duel ends when one duelist draws blood. The judge or a present doctor inspects the wound. If it is above three centimeters and still bleeding after three wipes with a handkerchief, the duel is declared to be concluded*.

Again, the main purpose of the duel is not to establish who wins, but if the participants do not retreat, flinch, or waver. If one can be wounded without shrinking away from the pain, they are as much a victor as their opponent and thus worthy of respect from their brothers and peers.

Duels mechanically

In the scenario, the mechanics follow a duel's progression in fiction through a series of beats, indicated by phrases.

The first beat is the task of the seconds as they are equipping their respective duelist.

In a set, ritualistic order of progress, the duelists are dressed for the duel, as the **the challenged duelist** calls out each points of the list of equipment with the seconds responding in turn:

Armor ("I help him with his armor")

Collar ("I put on his collar")

Nose guard ("I tighten his nose guard")

Glasses ("I ensure his glasses are correct")

Gauntlets ("I hand him his gauntlets")



* To keep it simple, every wound in the scenario's duels are assumed to be enough for the duel to conclude.

If a situation arises where a duel with multiple hits makes narrative sense, as the game master, you can manage and change the mechanics.

In the first two duels of the scenario (Duellum Interruptus, page 22 and The First Clash, page 26), Doctor Leine will call out the sequence, and the players, whose characters are seconds, should follow along and respond per the rules. In subsequent duels, it is their own responsibility to complete the donning of equipment according to the established phrases.

The duel sequence is found on the back of the players' name tags.

An important element here is that **a second does not need to perform their task to perfection**. It can be either consciously or unconsciously that a nose guard is not properly placed or that a duel starts without a participant wearing their gauntlet. The resulting injuries in the event of a defeat becomes more severe and bloody. The duelist cannot adjust poorly worn equipment himself, but it can be incorporated into the game afterward.

Example: *Eike dueling Heinrich. His second, Alex, "forgets" to call out the collar in the phrase ahead of the duel, meaning if Eike loses the duel, he will get a severely bleeding neck wound.*

After the callout sequence, the actual duel is now performed with the two dueling players either sitting physically opposite each other or standing up facing each other.

First, the result of the duel is determined. The challenger calls heads or tails, and the judge flips a coin. **The winner of this toss chooses who wins the duel. It is possible to win the coin toss and choose oneself as the losing party to gain a cool or shameful scar.**

The judge then calls out "Op", and the both the involved players, raises their right arm, so their hand is level with their face.

The judge then calls out "Mensur" and the players lower their hands, so the dueling players have their open right hands, palm to palm, as if just about to shake hands.

The players now have the opportunity for their characters to talk to each other, respectfully or threatening, or they can describe the thoughts and feelings running through minds of their characters.

The judge then calls out "Los" and, when the players are ready, the winning player slaps their palm against the other player's palm. It doesn't have to happen immediately—tension can be drawn out.

The losing party chooses whether to flinch—i.e., whether they come out of the duel honorably. The player can either keep their face directed forward toward the other player to symbolize taking the blow without flinching or turn their head to the side, indicating retreat. If there is any uncertainty, ask the player if their character retreated or not.

Ask the losing side how they were hit, let them describe their wound.

The duel is now over. The judge or seconds can now move in and check the duelists, examine the wound, and patch it up. Remember that poorly put-on equipment can make injuries more severe and gruesome.



Make sure to discuss the strikes when you go over the mechanics before the scenario starts. Agree on how hard/gently to strike. It works well if there is a good sound, but everyone must be comfortable with it, and it is perfectly fine just to mark the strike.

Example: Eike and Alex are about to duel. In the fiction, it occurs at sunset on the dew-covered lawn behind Villa Degen. Heinrich has fetched the equipment and is acting as second for Eike. Mattias act as second for Alex. The duel takes place after Doctor Leine has died, so Eike calls out the sequence (Armor - Collar - Nose Guard - Glasses - Gauntlet), and Mattias and Heinrich respond in turn. Mattias is about to flip the duel coin and Alex, who was the challenging party, calls "heads." It turns out "tails," so Eike must choose the outcome. He chooses to lose the duel himself. Heinrich then calls "Op," followed by "Mensur" and finally "Los," where Eike and Alex's players follow the call's positions. After "Los," Alex's player slaps Eike's player's palm, who reacts by turning his head. He has retreated. The game master asks about his wound, and the scenario continues in the fiction.

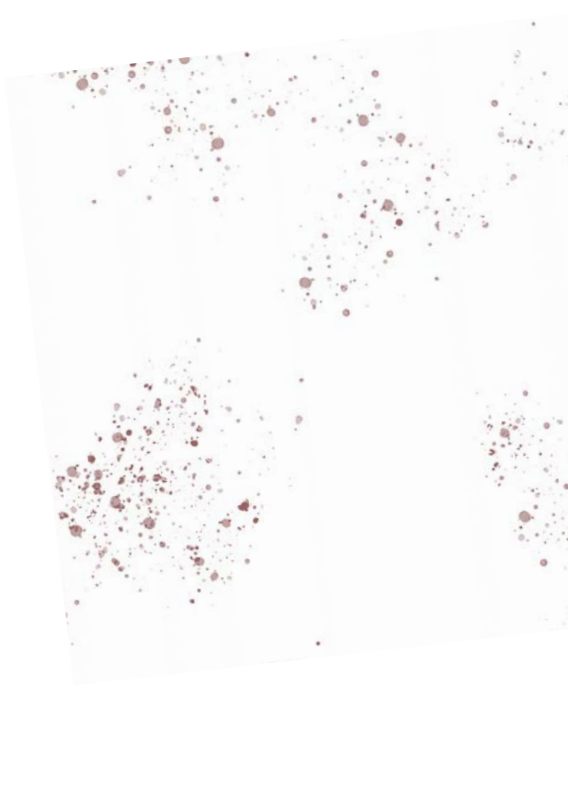
Remember that **the trapping and rituals surrounding the duel can degrade and decay as the scenario progresses.** If a conflict arises between two characters later in the scenario, it's okay if they grab sabers without running through the entire litany, interrupt other duels, or attack each other without declared formalities being respected. Let the players bring in what they remember/want to include and make sure that the duels, and especially their outcomes, are always interesting and meaningful for the scenario—in the narrative, they can appear to be pointless and random.

"You Stupid Boy"

The need for duels can arise in many ways in "Schmiss." They can be meticulously planned and part of daily life, like the first two duels in the scenario, or arise out of disagreements, slighted honor, or due to meaningless trifles. There should be room for player characters to argue and be in conflict without it automatically leading to a duel - duels should be interesting and dramatic elements in the story.

However, the players have a way to force a duel that the challenged cannot refuse in any way is by calling another character "you stupid boy", either as a direct insult or as part of a larger conversation.

Once the phrase "you stupid boy" is uttered, there will have to be a duel.



The Outcome of Duels

The duels will always result in one of the participants receiving a scar. It can be a physical badge of honor if one has endured their wound with dignity, or an indelible mark of shame if one failed to keep composure during the fight. The only way to restore one's honor is, of course, another duel.

As a game master, you can use these scars, or the lack thereof, to both set the mood and create drama during the scenario. Highlight characters' prominent scars, describe them as either beautiful and clear or ugly and disfiguring, depending on the situation.

A good rule is that whenever the characters are gathered and sitting down for a meal, the conversation turns to matters of scars and honor. You can also inquire how the player characters treat their scars, which scars stand out, or how they manage to heal. Encourage discussions about honor — their own, the order's, and the honor undoubtedly earned by the brothers who are now at war. If someone who recently backed out of a duel speaks too loudly, you as the game master should mention it, if the other players do not do so themselves.

You can also mention that they have been told by older brothers of the order that if someone backs out of duels three times, they will be expelled from the order. This can be used as a setup for further drama as the scenario progresses, and duels become more numerous, and it need not be disclosed beforehand. It could also be something that Zophiel brings into play.



Find an overview of duels, both in the fiction and mechanically, and how to run them on page 39.



Id-Actions

From Partie 2 onwards, players have the opportunity to create small nightly intermezzos through Id-actions. These are short, narrative sequences interjected between scenes, where the characters' subconscious desires, anger, thoughts, and lusts are brought into play, creating escalating drama and intensifying the pressure cooker mood.

Id-actions are narrated by a player from a first-person perspective, seen through the eyes of the one performing the action, and therefore told in the first person. However, it should not be clear which of the characters is actually performing the action.

The action must take place in Villa Degen at night, and can be performed on behalf of one's own or another character—without having to define who is behind it. You do not outright take over a specific character but are allowed to perform an action that is not (necessarily) something your own character does.

Think of the format as the scenes in classic horror films, where the camera is the eyes of the killer as they move after their victim in a dark house, and the identity of the first-person remains ambiguous.

Practically, Id-actions are enacted as the player claims the Id-marker once a scene has ended and takes narrative control of the story for the purpose of the action.

Example: *After a duel scene, Eike's player takes the Id-marker and narrates as follows: "It is night in Villa Degen, the moonlight falls through my window. I can't sleep. I let my feet slide out from under the blanket and down to the floor. Slowly, I rise from my bed and carefully open the door to the hallway. I pass by the other doors leading to the other novices' cells. Listening to their snores and whimpers in their sleep. I cautiously go down to the fencing hall. From one of the fireplaces, I have taken a piece of charred wood, which I use to write 'ZOPHIEL MUST DIE!' on the wall, in big clumsy letters. When I am finished, I stand for a moment and admire my work. I am satisfied. Before sneaking back to my bed, I wash my hands thoroughly, so there is no trace of soot or charcoal to be seen. When I return to my bed, I lay my head on the pillow and fall asleep with a small smile playing on my lips."*

Id-scenes's narrator is as stated before, anonymous, **but can still involve another named player character.** It can be the player's own character or perhaps one of the others. Thus, an Id-action can be used to sneak in and watch a sleeping character or perform something in a room where another character is lying.

If the Id-action has a significant and noticeable effect in the house, as in the example above, the next scene should take its starting point here. If it is a more discreet or subtle Id-action, the scenario continues. It is okay if a player subsequently picks up on something that happened in an Id-action and brings it into play or takes ownership of it. It can also be incorporated into a later Id-action, where an element from a previous action is built upon or used, for example, if something was stolen in an Id-action, it can be used afterward.



If you are into Freud, the Id is where you find "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality" and everything connected to sexual drive and aggression.

Example: Eike's player has performed an Id-action where someone broke into the late Doctor Leine's cell and took a bottle of laudanum. Later in the scenario, Alex says he reaches deep into his trouser pocket and fumbles with a small green bottle, not unlike something from Doctor Leine's medical bag.

To introduce Id-actions in the game, you as the game master perform the first Id-action yourself when Doctor Leine dies. See page 26.

Id-actions cause small tremors in the Veil. See below.

Let the players use Id-actions as much as they like. It is not an issue if they are not used many times in the scenario, but they are **a good tool for players to escalate drama and project their own and each others' feelings, desires, frustrations, and fears into the open.** For inspiration, you can find several suggestions for Id-actions on Page 40 that the players can use or draw inspiration from. Give it to the players when you enter Partie 2.

The Veil

Once the creature from the basement is released, a supernatural veil descends over Villa Degen.

First and foremost, the Veil means that time begins to pass differently for the four young men inside the walls than for the world outside.

The premise is that during the scenario, players get the sense that perhaps half a year to a whole year has passed, while in reality, closer to four years have gone by. A simple way to think about the passage of time in the scenario is that every time you say "a couple of days pass," a couple of weeks will have passed in the outside world, and whenever you say "a couple of weeks pass," it is in fact a couple of months, and in turn, "a month" turns into a year. However, don't let your job as the game master be bogged down by book- and timekeeping if you don't find it relevant. You shouldn't pace the scenario aiming to have the time accounted for to match up at the end.

The fact that the Veil warps time can be shown subtly. It's perfectly fine if the seasons blend with each other a bit, and it's completely okay if you go from a scene where there's snow to one that takes place on a sunny spring day, without you as the game master making it clear or going into detail about the time that has passed as expected. Just, brush it off if the players make comments on it.

In addition to messing with time, the Veil casts a soft light over everything that happens in Villa Degen. A sort of filter that makes life in the Villa seem more pleasant and nice than the world outside. The Veil should give the gameplay in the villa a somewhat dreamy quality.

The scents found inside Villa Degen are pleasant, whether it's fine tobacco, the old leather of the library or the freshly made food coming from the kitchen. The light is never sharp or burning, and in the outdoors, you are met with either gentle rain, warm sunshine or a pleasantly biting cold in the winter. Put emphasis on the sensory impressions.



Thus, it can also create a sharp contrast if the player characters at some point venture outside Villa Degen. Halberstadt, the town outside, appears gray, ugly, and hostile to the players, and simultaneously, the world outside sees the player characters in the state they really are, not as the players see themselves. Use this to make life within the confines of the villa seem almost paradisaical in comparison; the pleasant and logical choice for the characters.

Finally, the Veil also acts as a dampener on the outcomes of the players' actions, especially duels and Id-actions. Whenever the characters perform violent actions, it will affect the villa and its surroundings, but because of the Veil, the extent will seem lesser.

For example, an Id-action might result in many of the windows in the villa being shattered, or part of the villa burning down in a fire. Due to the Veil, the characters will not be able to realize the full extent of this. They might experience a broken window, a warm wind blowing through the house or a few smashed wine bottles, but the actual damage, obscured by the Veil, is much more severe.

It is only when the Veil is lifted in Partie 3 that the actual consequences of their actions are revealed to the player characters. So, if possible, foreshadow the damages revealed during the finale along the way.



The Scenario

"Schmiss" is divided into three rounds, Partie 1-3. The introduction to the scenario and Partie 1 should take about an hour and a half to play, Partie 2 lasts one and a half to two hours, and Partie 3 should take no more than half an hour.

All three Parties start with one or more pre-established scenes but will then take different directions depending on how the players approach the scenario. There is a catalogue of scenes made for each Partie, but it is also perfectly fine for you as the game master to incorporate the players' input to set up alternative scenes. These can be based around the results of Id-actions or be snapshots of daily life in Villa Degen.

The fixed scenes in each Partie are marked with an *.

Introduction The Scenario

When you are gathered with the players and ready, present them with the scenario.

Start with a brief alignment of expectations. Why have the players signed up, and what sort of experience do they expect to have with "Schmiss"?

Then introduce the scenario.

Setting: We are in Southeast Germany, in the town of Halberstadt, in 1914.

Roles: Four boys, aged 15-16, who are novices in a brotherhood.

Thematic focus of the scenario: Honor, duels, and repressed feelings. Spend some time and energy talking about honor in the context of the scenario, and make sure everyone knows that duels in this sort of academic fencing are not about winning but the fight itself, fighting and not backing down. Scars are regarded as badges of honor if obtained in a manly and brave manner. Discuss that it is not an environment with room for weakness or feelings.

Explain the duel mechanics and perform a quick walkthrough with a player.

Explain the "You Stupid Boy" mechanic.

Explain that the ritual surrounding the duels may degrade and be disrupted as the scenario progresses.

Introduce the Id-actions, but do not give examples until the end of Partie 1.

Reiterate why honor is important and how it is articulated in the scenario. Honor is something people talk about and display outwardly through scars or actions. Acts of dishonor are shameful and subject to mockery, disdain, and loss of status.



A few tips you can introduce to the players for a good, collective experience with the scenario:

- Emphasize that **it's okay to play for your character to "lose"**. Both duels, arguments or other conflicts. The mechanics of the duels allow for choosing defeat and dishonor. Consider what result is most interesting for both the individual character's story and the shared narrative.

- Appeal to the players that they **play their characters as if they were the hero of their own story**. All of the characters have their dark and dysfunctional sides, but the scenario becomes most interesting if you do not play the character as evil or negative. Instead, encourage them to keep justifying their actions as good and correct, done with the best intentions—even if they are unpleasant or twisted.

- **It's okay to have internal play**. Explain that all of the characters have their own baggage, secrets, and struggles. Not everything needs to be brought into the open during play. It's entirely fine to have secrets and problems that occupy the character's thoughts and can be considered when playing the character and used to guide the character's direction without being revealed. They may come up in open play, but it has just as much significance and weight if kept personal.

Re-emphasize to them that **they have a lot of control over the scenario and the story created, but it also comes with some responsibility**. The players should, within the scenario's framework, aim to seek out conflict and drama and push their characters to points where they will be scared, angry, under pressure or in doubt - put them on thin, creaky ice, and be ready to be swallowed up by the atmosphere and vibe.

Then, distribute the character sheets.

When it comes to, which player will take what character, use your instincts as game master. **Heinrich** is initially the simplest character but needs an active player who is willing to take the lead. **Eike** also benefits from an active player who can interact dynamically with the others and can front up to Heinrich, if he gets dominant. **Alex** is the least confrontational character and potentially suitable for a younger player or someone who enjoys a degree of introverted play. **Mattias** is the most flexible character and can be played in a cool, scheming direction or more emotionally and deviantly. Remember, all four characters are, in one way or another, messed up.

As mentioned earlier "Schmiss" is a scenario that covers a lot of serious and potentially unpleasant themes, like homophobia, antisemitism, sexism, incest, violence and pedophilia. It is very rare that these things will directly influence play, but the themes are still there lurking under the surface, ominous and threatening. They will rarely break into the scenario itself.

Still it is highly recommended that you talk with your players beforehand, especially if you have younger or inexperienced players, about the themes, so nobody gets any real life unpleasant experiences during the scenario. You do not have to list all potential themes, but have a talk with the players about if there are any themes that they are uncomfortable with playing on and cast the characters accordingly.



Partie 1

*Duellum Interruptus

It is a late summer morning in the garden behind Villa Degen. Four young men and an older gentleman stand in the early morning light. There is a faint mist over the grass.

Heinrich and Eike are selected to duel against each other. It is their first time. Mattias is the second for Heinrich, Alex for Eike. Besides the characters, Doctor Leine is present.

Conduct a dueling sequence as described on page 12, and let the players experience the format and the feeling while you call out the individual points as Doctor Leine in the judge's position.

Let the duel run its course until the two duelists raise their sabers and are fully ready (*Mensur!*). Then there are loud shouts from the square in front of Villa Degen. Something is clearly happening, and Doctor Leine orders the two duelists to lower their weapons and cancels the duel.

*Off to War

In the square in front of Villa Degen, there is intense activity. Order members are busy bringing horses out of the stable, while others are loading crates onto a wagon. Out from the villa comes Pater Hirschfänger and a couple of the older brothers, all of them dressed in full uniform. Bartko Reher is preparing for war.

Allow the players to have a moment before Pater Hirschfänger notices the characters. He gathers them on the staircase in front of the villa and tells them the following:

- The Empire is at war. Wilhelm II has declared war on Russia, and there is now conflict on two fronts.
- Bartko Reher are heading out to be part of the Bavarian Cavalry Regiment, heading first to Belgium and then on to France.
- Unfortunately, the characters are too young to come along (the minimum age for conscription is 17 at this point) and will have to stay behind in Halberstadt, but are expected to take care of Bartko Reher's buildings and honor.
- He emphasizes how great a responsibility this is before walking them around Villa Degen where he assigns them specific duties.
- First to the fencing hall, where **Heinrich** is given the responsibility to maintain a strict physical regime of training and exercises while the rest of the order is away. He is also entrusted with the key to the weapon cabinets where the sabers are stored.



· Next, they go upstairs, and Hirschfänger leads them into the library. He asks **Eike** to ensure that the remaining brothers read and educate themselves while he is away and to take good care of the books in the library.

- Then he brings them outside to the stable, where **Alex** is instructed to care for the stable, even though most of the horses are taken to war. The garden is also Alex's responsibility.

- He concludes by leading them back inside, through the door down to the cellar and then down the narrow flight of stairs. Here, **Mattias** is instructed to take good care of Bartko Reher's valuable and extensive wine cellar. He pauses before asking the other three to remain at the stairs while he brings Mattias further into the cellar. The two of them come to a closed door. Hirschfänger grabs Mattias by the shoulders and tells him that the door must not be opened. **It is of utmost importance.** He will say no more but he looks quite serious.

Back outside, the rest of the brotherhood are now almost ready to depart. All of them in uniform and on horseback. Before mounting his own horse, Hirschfänger gathers the four boys on the steps and imparts them with his final instructions on:

- How important it is to behave nobly and honorably.
- That the Bartko Reher Brotherhood is now **their responsibility.**
- **That nothing comes before the brotherhood. Not family, not friends, not the nation.**
- That he expects them to do their utmost to live up to the order's ideals.
- That they must listen to and respect Doctor Leine, who is also staying behind, and learn from their experienced Bartko Reher brother.

Then he mounts his horse and rides out of the gate alongside the rest of the order while deep, male voices sing "Die Fahne Hoch."



Everyday Life

The characters are now left alone in Villa Degen alongside Doctor Leine. The first thing Leine does is ask Heinrich to fetch him a bottle of Riesling from the cellar and bring it to him in the library.

Give the players some time to find their footing in the situation, and perhaps skip a day or two ahead.

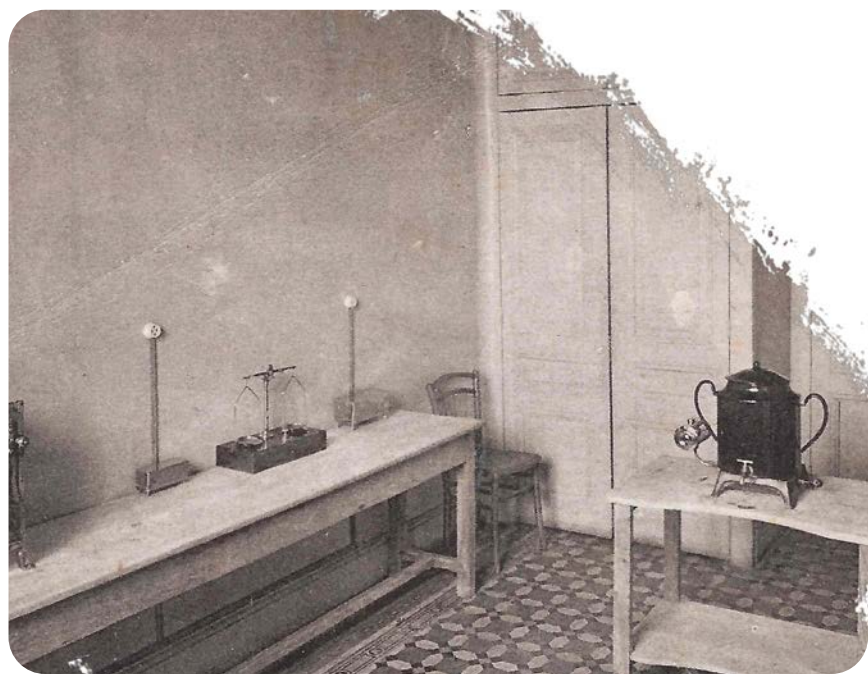
The players might want to use their characters' newfound freedom to relax and lower their guard, or they might try to maintain a daily routine similar to the one they had before the war. If there is no consensus on this new routine, it can be an excellent basis for conflict. Remember, each character has been assigned a responsibility: Heinrich and Eike's areas involve physical and academic work that require participation and effort from the others.

In this new routine, you can use Doctor Leine to reinforce the stern tone, the tenets of honor, and the strict hierarchy of Bartko Reher. Let him be the showcase and enforcer of the brotherhood's culture.

Even though he is old and may seem feeble, he will immediately assume the role as head of Villa Degen. Let him obviously pick both a favorite and a scapegoat among the characters when it comes to daily chores. Portray him as volatile; kind and ingratiating at one moment, and then lashing out with his cane, aggressively demanding respect and reverence the next. Play up his slightly too familiar mannerisms as the characters are sweaty after fencing matches or on their way to the showers, and let him react angrily to rejections or insinuations that his actions are inappropriate.

Escalate this further when there has been a duel, especially if one or more characters have withdrawn. There will be no end to the mockery that Doctor Leine will level at the cowardly boy, and he will strongly encourage the other characters to join in on said mockery. Doctor Leine also has a fascination with fresh scars.

The atmosphere you create around life in the house here will lay the groundwork for how the players approach Partie 2 when they are alone with Zophiel.



Below are some of the events of a normal day in Villa Degen. These can be used as lead-ins or conclusions to other scenes, both the fixed ones and those that arise from the players.

- **Breakfast.** Generally, the brothers gather in the kitchen to eat breakfast and talk about the day ahead. Do they stick to this?
- **Training.** In Bartko Reher, mornings are generally spent on physical training. Heinrich has been instructed to keep the others motivated and fit – can he manage it?
- **Kitchen Work.** Food needs to be prepared in Villa Degen. Who handles this? Study Time: Afternoons in the Order are spent with books, either in the library or in one's cell. This is Eike's responsibility, but who reads and what do they study?
- **Outdoor Time.** Fresh air is important, there is a whole garden to frolic in, and work can also be done outside and in the stable. What is the weather like, and how much time do they spend in the garden?
- **Dinner.** Usually held in the dining room. The events of the day can be discussed, and any conflicts can be resolved in a communal setting.
- **Evening.** After dinner, there is free time without assigned tasks or duties. How do the characters spend their evening before darkness fully descends on Villa Degen?

Exploring the House

One of the things the characters can do is explore the house and their surroundings.

Especially Hirschfänger's quarters and the cellar might be interesting to the young men. Hirschfänger's rooms on the top floor are significantly more luxurious than the rest of the villa, and Eike has been instructed to take care of the library that is located here.

In Hirschfänger's quarters, if one searches, you can find books covering occult subjects such as alchemy and witchcraft, as well as several editions of the Torah and other more obscure Jewish texts. In another room, in drawers and cabinets, you can uncover various types of materials and ingredients associated with sorcery and alchemy: mercury and other powdered substances, extracts from plants, jars with samples of what looks like fur or hair, and a very human-looking mandrake root floating in a glass-container filled with yellowish preservative liquid.

If someone, now or later, examines Doctor Leine's cell, they will find his well-equipped medical bag and on the table a couple of books from the library: one with pictures of Greek statues and another titled "The Erotic Secrets of Pompeii".

If the players do not naturally start gravitating towards the locked door in the cellar, let them hear someone crying somewhere in the building at night. Gradually escalate the intensity if nothing happens, and possibly let Mattias hear his sister's voice or Heinrich hear Alma calling from the cellar.



The First Clash

It is quite possible that conflicts break out among the characters early on in the scenario. You can use those conflicts as a base to have your first duel. They might also be very eager to complete the duel that was “stolen” from them at the start of the scenario. If this is the case, let Doctor Leine drag it out and instruct them to wait. Make the characters frustrated and seething, allowing for conflicts to simmer unresolved.

After a few weeks, if the players themselves have not initiated a duel, Doctor Leine decides that it is time to test the young men. As a game master, pick the two characters you think it would be most interesting to involve, but a rule of thumb pick one of the two selected from the interrupted duel, Heinrich or Eike, and one of the others. This way, one of the two original duelists will have an unresolved duel and may feel compelled to arrange a new duel afterward.

Run the duel strictly by the book (p. xx), with Doctor Leine acting as the judge, and let the players use and explore the outcome and aftermath—possibly over a few short everyday sequences.

Doctor Leine Dies/Zophiel Is Freed

Partie 1 ends once Doctor Leine dies and Zophiel is released. The two events can be connected, but they don't have to be. Set each of these scenes in motion once the everyday routine has been established and you, both players and you as the game master, have gotten a sense for the characters and the house. About an hour and a half after the start of the game is a good estimate.

You should stage Doctor Leine's death as an Id-action, where you take the marker and describe a sequence where someone either watches him die or plays a more active role in his death. It's up to you to find the format that best fits your scene, but an example could be a sequence like:

“I'm walking down the hallway when I hear a sound coming from Doctor Leine's room. It sounds like a raspy wheezing. I wonder what the perverse old swine is up to as I nudge the door open with my foot. Inside the dimly lit room, Doctor Leine lies on his bed. His nightshirt is open, and in the light from the oil lamp, I can see red splotches and lumps on his emaciated chest. He is clutching his heart, his face red and swollen. I step into his room and make eye contact with him. He recognizes me, and his eyes widen further. He raises a trembling arm and points to the small table just out of his reach. I see the small golden pillbox. ‘My nitro... glycerin,’ he rasps almost inaudibly. ‘Hand me the pills... I beg you.’ I take two steps to the table. Turning my back to the gasping old man, I pick up the box. I hold it up to the window, letting the moonlight play on its golden surface. I shake it so the pills inside rattle lightly. I do it again as I turn around and catch the doctor's gaze. His face is almost as dark as the room. Shake, shake. The sound of pills hitting the thin metal. I slip the box into my pocket, turn around, and head toward the door without looking back. As I close the door behind me, I can hear one last pitiful attempt at a scream, audible only to me.”



It's also fine if someone simply finds him dead or even plays a more active role in his death. However, it's important not to describe anything that clearly resembles a murder—because that would imply a) one of the players is the murderer and b) the scenario would run the risk of turning into a who-dunnit. So it can be violent - but not a murder. For instance, he shouldn't be struck down with a saber - unfortunately. Fall down a flight of stairs or choked on something is fine.

The options for releasing Zophiel are that a player character opens the door, either before or after Doctor Leine's death, or that Doctor Leine opens it and then dies. Keep an eye out for signs that the players might attempt to open the door. If they don't appear, keep Leine alive, and stage his death in front of the door where he has just opened it, or let the Id-action conclude with the first person narrator unlocking the door.

It is clearly most interesting if it is the players who release her as an active choice — but she must be released, and once she is out, she cannot be locked back in.

The room she is in is slightly smaller than the novice cells. It is dark, but there is still some light that filters in from the wine cellar. In the room, Zophiel is sitting on the cold stone floor. She is dirty, naked, with her arms around her knees.

Her first line, regardless of whether it is the characters who have opened the door or not, is a pleading:

“Will you please let me out?”

The players will most likely react to this and get her out of the cellar.

If they are made of stone and just leaves her there, or even close the door again, she will soon appear walking around in the villa, forcing them to deal with her.

If you, as the game master, can time the two ending events in Partie 1 so that they almost overlap, that would be perfect. If the players release Zophiel very quickly, before there have been any signs of getting rid of Doctor Leine, let him be very drunk when he discovers that she has been let out and play him as frightened and incoherent if confronted with her existence. Then make sure that Leine dies during the night. It should feel mysterious.

Let the players take care of Zophiel as much as they can. She is naked and dirty. There are opportunities to bathe at Villa Degen—will they leave her to do it alone? It is possible to find an empty room for her and some clothes that she can wear. It will be in the same style as what the characters are wearing, and if she gathers her hair under a cap, despite her slightly shorter stature, she will quickly resemble a novice in the Order. She is also hungry if asked.

Let the players stew in their new responsibilities and the resulting conflicts before you move on.



Partie 2

In the second part of the scenario, the players are completely on their own. Doctor Leine is gone, the Veil has, without their knowledge, descended, and they are alone in Villa Degen with Zophiel.

As the game master, you can still adhere to the daily routine points, but it is fine if they start blending together and become more fluid. Allow the players a fair amount of freedom as long as there are interesting tensions among them, and they are not running in circles or becoming bored.

When needed, you can delve into the scene catalog below and use those that will be interesting for your group of players. But first, there's the small matter of the corpse of Doctor Leine lying somewhere inside or outside the villa.

Make it clear that Zophiel now moves around Villa Degen and lives there alongside them. Sometimes she follows a character around, other times she sits alone in the building or garden. There should be a sense that she is observing the characters and eavesdropping by the door, if not invited into the rooms where discussions are held. You can also have her appear unexpectedly—sitting in a player's room during the evening or in a meditative pose early in the morning, all alone in the fencing hall

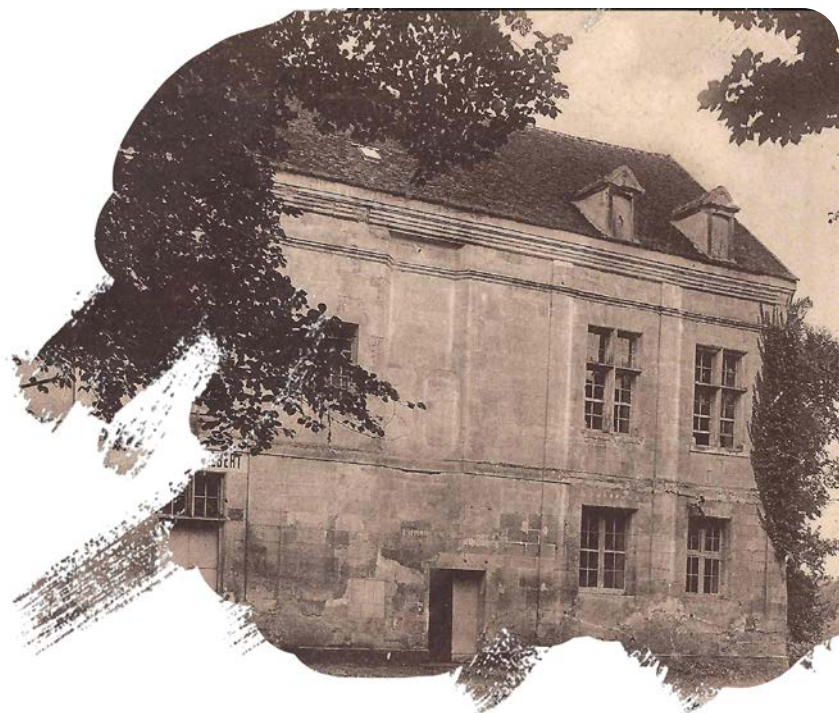
In this Partie the players might be eager to communicate with the outside world, most likely by letter. That is perfectly fine, and any letters they write get picked up by a mailman at the Villa Degen gate, but slowly you'll need to make it clear, if asked, that the frequency of mail arriving is growing increasingly longer.

Likewise, there will still be arriving goods and groceries from Halberstadt, delivered at the kitchen entrance, but as time progresses, no one really pays any attention to the delivery boys coming and going. Be vague about these small everyday occurrences if you can. They occur, but are hardly noticed after a while.

This is due to the effects of the Veil.



Remember, once Zophiel emerges from the cellar, the atmosphere in the house changes, and the entire house's decor becomes more dreamy and fluid.



The Funeral

Doctor Leine is dead. What should we do now?

The four characters and Zophiel are left with Doctor Leine's lifeless corpse. If they contact the outside authorities, they will be disobeying their vow to Father Hirschfänger to protect the Order's reputation. Will they even be allowed to stay in Villa Degen without an adult authority present? And how do they explain Zophiel to the police or to a priest?

Let the players discuss this for as long as it remains interesting, and then hold a brief ceremony for the Doctor, whether they bury him in the garden, place him in Zophiel's old cell, or attempt to hand him over to someone outside.

If they call for a priest or any outsiders, just tell the Players that the priest has promised to come by in a day or two later to handle the body. If the players inquire about this afterward, tell them that the priest came to the villa and took care of the matter.

Picnic in the Park/Swimming

It's a mild spring day, and Zophiel is weary of being indoors. She convinces someone to join her for a picnic in the garden, ideally by the lake.

Let as many characters join as they wish, but at least one should accompany Zophiel, if nothing else to ensure she doesn't drown.

Make it cozy and emphasize the pleasant weather and the scents of the garden.

At some point, Zophiel decides she wants to swim in the lake and encourages the character(s) to join her. She strips off all her clothes and jumps into the water.

Depending on how the players handle it, she might teasingly pretend she's drowning, forcing hesitant characters into the water and then coyly swim away from them. She'll make protests if they attempt to pull her out of the water.

There is plenty of opportunity to make the characters uncomfortable and embarrassed and have Zophiel pit them against themselves or each other in an innocent, yet not entirely innocent manner.



Snowball Fight

A deep layer of snow covers Villa Degen. The air is dry and frosty. You can either start shoveling snow or have a fresh snowball fight.

Fights in Bartko Reher are usually serious and dramatic. Here's a chance for them to "fight" without severe consequences and act more like children again.

Use Zophiel to initiate a snowball fight if the characters don't take the opportunity themselves.

At the same time, it's a chance to let a simple snowball fight escalate if someone feels their honor is slighted or if someone can't control their temper when it comes to physical conflict.

It's perfectly fine if there are bloody streaks in the snow when the scene ends.

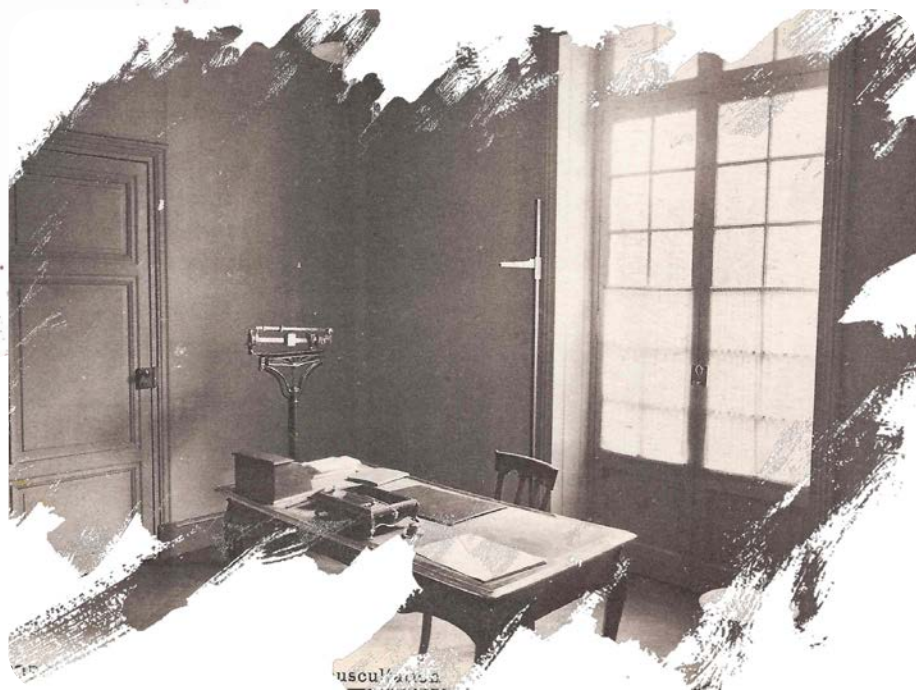
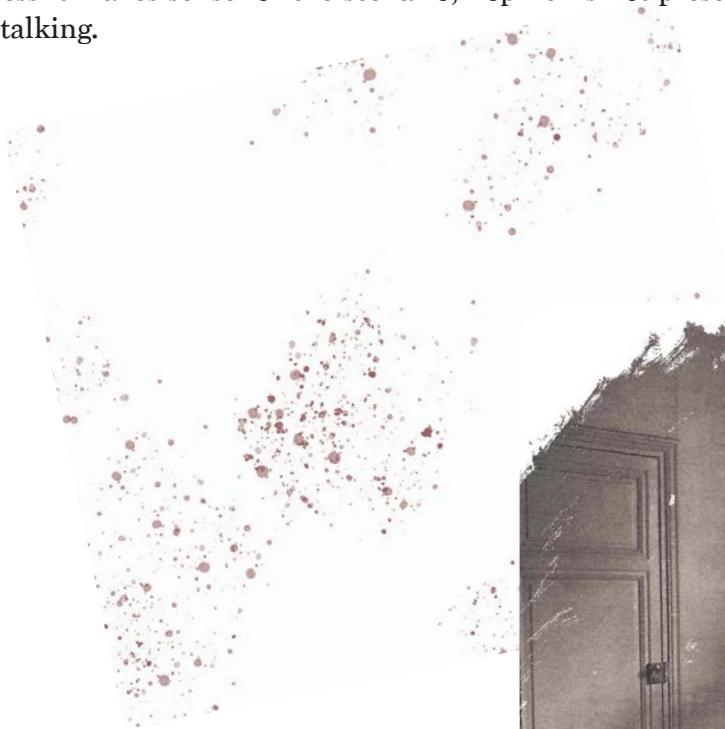
The Circle

Someone in Villa Degen is not living up to the ideals set by Pater Hirschfänger before his departure. A meeting is called to discuss tasks and the ideals of the order.

The characters are all gathered in the library. Feel free to ask the players who called for the meeting and give that character room to outline his grievances. This should provoke a reaction.

Assist the players in incorporating Bartko Reher's ideals and help them bring each other's failures and breaches of honor into the discussion.

Unless it makes sense for the scenario, Zophiel is not present. It's the men who are talking.



Stupid Boys

It's been a restless night in Villa Degen. Outside, the rain has been pounding against the windows and roof, and around midnight a thunderstorm rolled over Halberstadt. Everyone has slept poorly.

Start with an everyday scene, it could be during breakfast or training. Zophiel is present and is clearly in a foul mood. Let her seek conflict with one of the characters; it should be defiant and childish, but make sure it escalates a bit. At some point, she looks calculatingly at the character and says with a malicious smile, “you stupid boy.”

The character now faces a choice: duel with a significantly younger girl or back down. It will be shameful to back out, but on the other hand, there's not much honor in beating a girl.

Zophiel is ready and eager to duel. Should the challenged character back out, she will be pouring on both mockery and scorn until he gives in.

Allow there to pass a day before the duel, as it has to be arranged and make it possible for all characters to have time to discuss it.

If it comes to a duel, **and it should**, conduct it according to the standard duel format—with a second for the challenged character and one for Zophiel. The remaining character will act as the judge.

The only difference is that there is no coin toss to determine the outcome. The challenged character chooses whether he wants to win or lose the duel. So, either he defeats Zophiel, who will not only have a wound in her pretty face but also large, brave tears rolling down her cheeks, or he is defeated by her, which will be as shameful as it gets — regardless of whether he flinches or not. Let the aftermath run as long as it remains interesting.

The Doll

A piercing scream echoes through the villa. It comes from somewhere within the house.

Interrupt an everyday scene with the scream. It is Zophiel who is screaming, but it's difficult to determine from where. Eventually, she is found in the attic, right under the roof of the villa. She has reached the attic through a hatch in a corridor outside the library. It's an attic they haven't noticed before.

In the attic, where one can only crawl or inch forward, she sits a few meters in from the ladder, screaming. In front of her lies a figure. It's a doll, almost life-sized, and it eerily resembles Zophiel.

Zophiel will alternately demand to know what the doll is and insist that it be removed — burned, buried, just away from her.

If the doll is examined, it is formed from straw and clay, quite heavy, and if one examines it closely, there is a small piece of paper stuck in what seems to be the mouth. The paper is so dirty and dissolved enough to be unreadable.



Zophiel will, if she loses the duel, in the next scene have a distinct scar on one cheek. In later scenes the scar will be gone.

The Muster Officer

For the first time in a while, there is a visitor at the villa's gate. A man in uniform.

Outside Villa Degen is the local muster officer. He has been made aware that there are several young men of military age in Villa Degen and is set to enlist them into the army.

The characters might not be keen on this. After all, have they not promised to protect the honor of the Bartko Reher Order above all else, and are they even old enough?

If the players don't make a clear decision, you can introduce Zophiel. She is very keen not to lose her brothers and housemates and will humbly and pleadingly appeal to the characters not to leave her. She might even physically assault the officer if it comes to that, and if he then strikes her, the characters might be forced to act.

It's acceptable for the situation to escalate when/if the officer needs to be turned away, and it's fine if the characters have to resort to violence to chase him away or eliminate him.

One-on-One

Zophiel corners a character and makes them an offer.

Starting from an everyday situation, Zophiel can show a character what she has to offer. Let the scene unfold slowly until she suddenly gets very close to the character and whispers, "I know what you want," then reveals something from the character's past that they have not shared with anyone. The character can either deny or dismiss it, but she will press the issue, promising that she can help the character: "I just want to make you happy." Then she will push her face right up in the characters and shift forms right before their eyes into someone from their past—**Alex's mother, Alma** (Heinrich's girlfriend), **Miriam** (Mattias's sister), Stellan (Eike's comrade), or the prostitute Eike visited in Regensburg. Make the transformation dramatic, transgressive, and clearly supernatural.

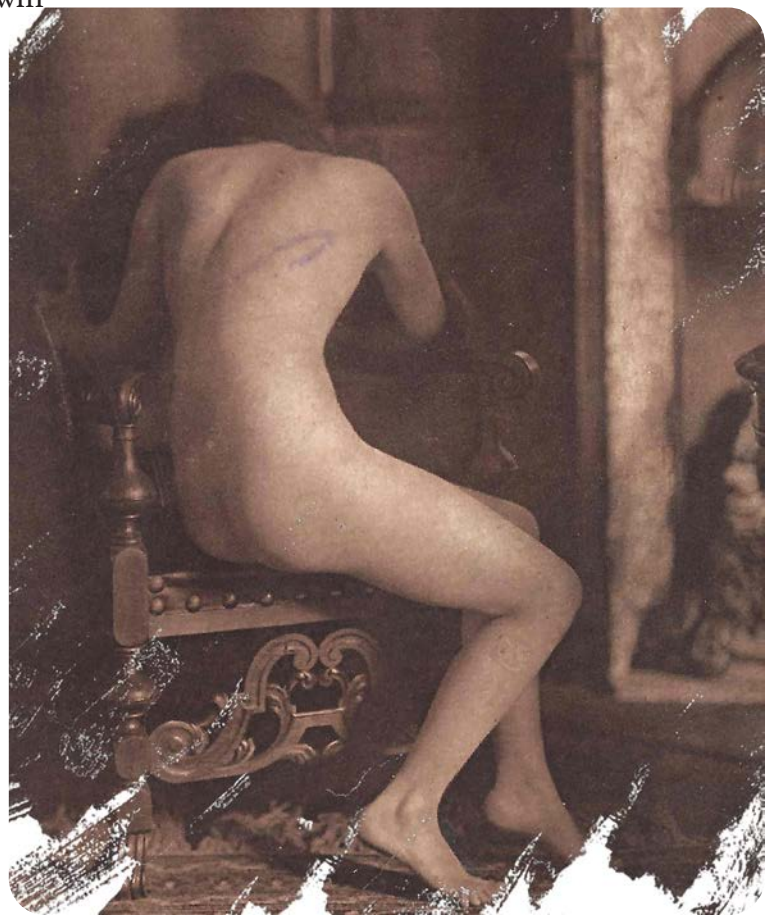
Make it as intense and nerve-wracking as possible. Uncomfortably intimate and equally threatening and enticing. If the character does not actively flee or resist, let the scene go dark, and keep what happens next untold.

This scene can occur somewhere the other characters can observe from a distance—through a window or across a larger room.

The scene can be repeated with another character if it seems relevant and interesting.



Be cautious with this scene, and only use it if the players seem to have settled comfortably into their lives at Villa Degen, dedicated to Bartko Reher and/or Zophiel. It would be counterproductive if they use this scene as an opportunity to enlist and leave Villa Degen and the scenario.



The World Outside

33

If the characters decide to venture outside Villa Degen at some point, whether for a specific errand or to visit someone or something, that is fine. Ensure that it doesn't happen too frequently, as it will undermine the atmosphere and intimacy within the villa.

Use the characters' trips into Halberstadt to lift a layer of the Veil slightly. The citizens of Halberstadt see the characters as they truly are—dirty and disheveled young men—while they see themselves through the Veil as clean and unspoiled. Let people they encounter look at them with confusion and skepticism. Have people be frightened or bewildered and allow for small hints that the order's brothers haven't been seen for a long time, with the general sense there is something wrong but without specifying what. As mentioned under the Veil, the world outside will appear grim, decayed, and ruined from the characters' perspective.

Depending on the players' actions, and how many of them have made the trip, you can include the following small scenes:

Heinrich visits his father's butcher shop. It's closed up, with boards nailed over the windows, and everything looks dark and abandoned. The family's apartment upstairs is similarly empty and deserted. If asked, neighbors or locals will say that the family moved away some time ago.

Mattias encounters his father's priest on the street. The priest recognizes him and is not afraid to confront Mattias, calling him fallen, perverse, and degenerate (without specifying why), in an attempt to bully him. Mattias can react as he wishes.

Eike is walking through Halberstadt when a group of mounted soldiers rides by. Among them, **he recognizes Stellan**. How does Eike react, and how does Stellan react if they make eye contact?

Alex sees a woman in town whom **he is convinced is his mother**. If he approaches her, she will want nothing to do with him and, if he is persistent, she will call for help, which could arrive in the form of a couple of Halberstadt men. Alternatively, Alex might meet **his father**, who is out looking for his missing son. The father is both relieved and enraged—how does Alex react?



The Harvest Festival

If none of the players decide to venture outside Villa Degen and you think a contrast with the outside world would be interesting, Bartko Reher can receive an invitation to the annual Harvest Festival in Halberstadt. A messenger arrives at the gate, looking surprised that someone is actually there to collect the letter.

Traditionally, the Bartko Reher Order would attend the festival in full regalia, with uniforms and weapons. The characters haven't attended before but will have heard about it and know it is an important tradition, both for Halberstadt and for the order.

If they choose to attend, Zophiel will, for the first and only time, be willing to leave Villa Degen, provided the characters promise to stay with her and protect her. However, she will insist on wearing a dress for the event. Someone will need to either buy one in town or make one with needle and thread.

The Harvest Festival takes place outside the city on a field. There's music, lederhosen, and beer. Most of Halberstadt attends, so it's possible to encounter the priest (whom Mattias knows) and Alma with her new boyfriend, Franz (whom Heinrich hasn't heard of). It's also possible to dance and have fun, but it's clear that the Halberstadt citizens view the Bartko Reher brothers with a lot of suspicion. And as the beer flows, there's ample opportunity for getting into conflict with the locals.

As previously, remember that the locals see the characters without the Veil - so even if they think they are dressed up, they are actually dressed in rags. If a conflict arises, let it start as a simple brawl and argument. A local can initiate it, but at some point you should ask, "Which of you is drawing his sabre?" From that point, it should escalate into a bloody, chaotic, and violent mess of a scene before all characters find themselves back behind Villa Degen's secure walls.

More Duels

When duels occur during Partie 2, make sure they remain interesting and varied.

You cannot force the characters to challenge each other, but you have Zophiel at hand to nudge the players if needed.

Aim to have around 3-5 duels in Partie 2, provided they are intense, exciting, and relevant.

Additionally, have Zophiel being present around the duels and use her reactions to affect play. She can appear deeply engaged in the duel or totally indifferent. She might be sympathetic and comforting to a wounded duelist or quite admiring of a winner. She might smear herself with the blood of the injured if she throws her arms around them, encourage more duels, or even shame a disgraced participant.



Partie 3

The scenario reaches its climax as time outside Villa Degen has passed. The once bustling Bartko Reher Brotherhood returns , and with them, the full weight of the consequences of what happened in their absence.

The Return of (the) Order

A sounds is heard from outside the villa. Creaking sound of rusty hinges followed by the thud of hooves on cobblestones.

Outside Villa Degen, Pater Hirschfänger rides up in front of the entrance to the main building. He is a shadow of the man who left. His uniform is worn and ragged, his eyes sunken, and one arm is in a sling. Accompanying him are two other Bartko Reher brothers in equally poor condition. They are all that has returned.

Hirschfänger dismounts laboriously and climbs up the steps to the house, staring with a a incredulous look around at the estate. When he meets a character, his eyes will widen, and he hisses through gritted teeth:

“What have you done?!?”

As Hirschfänger’s words echo in the wind, the Veil is lifted - like a spring morning mist or a summer haze. The villa, previously shrouded in a protective illusion, reveals its true state.

A House of Decay

Villa Degen now looks drastically different

Many windows are shattered, with tattered curtains fluttering through the gaps. The cobblestones outside are upturned, scattered amid trash and fallen roof tiles. There are signs of a fire within the building.

In the stable, everything is in disarray. The body of a horse lies dead on the ground, while another horse roams free, filthy and emaciated. A sack of letters, both to and from the house, lies here, damp and crumbling if touched.

Inside the villa, broken furniture is strewn about. There are deep saber marks in the walls, door frames, and tables. The kitchen reeks of rot and smoke; someone tried to use trash to fuel the stove, and the pantry is filled with spoiled and rotten food. The basement floor is sticky from all the spilled wine and covered with shards of broken bottles.

The garden is completely overgrown except where trees have been destructively felled. Remnants of furniture and the decor are scattered around the grounds.

Somewhere lies Dr. Leines’s corpse—perhaps hidden in a room or superficially buried in the estate’s dung heap.



Feel free to add more details, inspired by events that occurred in the villa during the scenario.

When the villa and the characters' state are revealed from the Veil, try to make sure there are recognizable details from the scenario. Scars and injuries from duels or acts of Id should be vivid and pronounced after the Veil is lifted.

However, these injuries are not just from these events but also reflect the years of neglect and mismanagement. This is the result of four irresponsible young men lulled into an otherworldly stupor.

So characters also look drastically different.

Their fencing injuries are severe. They will have ruined eyes, broken noses, deep scars, missing fingers, knocked-out teeth, and are generally skinny and outright filthy.

They have all grown significantly, with greasy, long hair and various degrees of unkempt beards. Their clothes are tattered; some of them wear ordinary clothes, while others are dressed in rags that were once parade uniforms.

The scene should feel like a tour through a chamber of horrors, as the characters' worldviews slowly fall apart.



Climax

Once he has regained his composure, Hirschfänger will demand to be taken to "her." It is clear he intends to kill Zophiel. He will hurl accusations and berate the characters for their failure and lack of honor. How could they let this happen? It's all their fault. If they have any honor left, they should step aside or help him clean up after their disgraceful actions and neglect.

Allow the players to react to this. Hirschfänger will confront Zophiel in the most dramatic setting, such as the basement or the fencing hall. Zophiel will at first appeal to the characters and, if that fails, will threaten them, trying to convince them to protect her and kill Hirschfänger. She will plead that if they just manage to drive him away, they can return to how things were before—when it was just them in the villa, and the world was soft and nice. It can all be good again.

Let the players respond as they wish. If any of them chooses to attack Hirschfänger, they can, and unless anyone interposes themselves, he can be struck down. The characters may also choose to fail their confrontation with their order's leader. If the characters come into direct physical conflict with each other, it can be resolved with a coin toss—like a regular duel, the winner determines the outcome. The losing character decides whether they die or are merely injured.

Play through the sequence until everything has exploded, and everyone has pushed their characters to the limit. Then, a silence fills Villa Degen.

If Zophiel is dead the surviving characters are left in what remains of Villa Degen and their lives. The villa looms over them as a testament to their downfall, and they must now confront the consequences of their actions. Hirschfänger, if he is still alive, just shakes his head in grave disappointment and with his head held low, he walks past them.

If Zophiel survives, the scenario ends outside, where she takes the remaining surviving characters by their hand and walks through the villa as the Veil slowly embraces the Villa once more.

And in this way "Schmiss" comes to an end.



In previous runs of "Schmiss" the climax has taken all sorts of directions.

One had Alex chopping down both Hirschfänger and Eike to defend Zophiel

In another Heinrich killed Hirschfänger to save her, before Mattias jumped in and slew Zophiel with his sabre.

Play to find out!

Scenario Overview

Characters

Eike Legenfeld, the son of a warhero

Mattias Ludewig, the twin

Alex Wolfsbach, the run-away bastard

Heinrich Aurswald, the butcher's son

The Bartko Reher Order

A brotherhood, dedicated to science, education, and the forming of learned, honorable, and well-rounded young men of Germany.

Led by **Pater Hirschfänger**.

Villa Degen

Large villa, three floors, with a stable, a garden and surrounded by a wall.

Home of the Bartko Reher Order.

Inside the villa you find, amongst other things, library, fencing hall, kitchen, wine cellar and cells.

The garden is large and will, with a small lake in the furthest corner.

Outside lies Halberstadt, a Southeast German town with a couple of thousand inhabitants, 30km from Regensburg.

Mechanics & Elements

Fencing mechanics: See next page.

Id-actions: Events taking place at night, played in descriptive story sequences, told by the players, without named characters taking part.

The Veil: Changes time and atmosphere within the walls of Villa Degen, making everything seem more pleasant.

Zophiel: Shapechanging being, locked up in the cellar at the beginning of the scenario. Reads feelings and minds.

Doktor Leine: The only senior member of Bartko Reher, representing its ideas and ideals.

Partie 1

Starts in 1914.

The players are introduced to Bartko Reher and daily life within the order.

Their first duel is aborted, but more follows.

Ends when Zophiel is released and Doktor Leine dies

Length: 1½ hour, including start and intro.

Partie 2

The characters are now home alone and The Veil covers Villa Degen.

They can try to keep normal daily life going, but everything, including the duels starts to slide.

Ends in 1918, when the order and Pater Hirschfänger returns.

Length: Around 2 hours

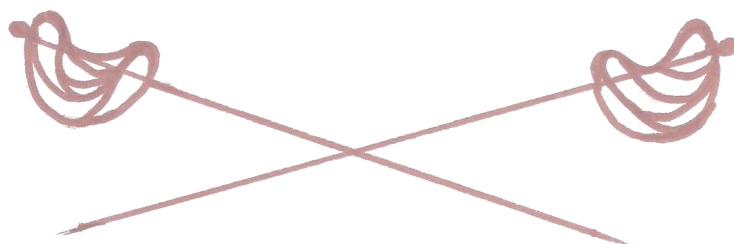
Partie 3

The order has returned and The Veils lifts. The world is now viewed, as it is actually looking.

Everything is in ruins.

Will the characters help Hirschfänger kill Zophiel or will they attempt to save her and seek oblivion under The Veil again.

Length: Max ½ hour



Duel Guide

In the fiction

Challenge - The duel is arranged and planned. The challenged part chooses his second.

Duelists and seconds meet at the planned time (dawn or sunset) and place, bringing weapons and equipment.

The seconds help the duelists don their gear

The duel takes place

The duel is settled.

A character is hit.

Does the loser flinch or retreat?

Aftermath

Description of- and patching up of wounds, talk

Mechanically

Evt triggered by "**You Stupid Boy**"

The challenged duelist calls the **equipment litany**.
The seconds *answers*.

Coin toss - the result of the duel is found and planned between the players.

The Fencing Ritual - the judge calls "*Op*" - "*Mensur*". The dueling players follows his call.

Contact between palms after "*los*".

Result signaled by face of the losing player either turning or looking forward.

Mensur litany:

Armor ("*I help him with his armor*")

Collar ("*I put on his collar*")

Nose guard ("*I tighten his nose guard*")

Glasses ("*I ensure his glasses are correct*")

Gauntlets ("*I hand him his gauntlets*")

Fencing Ritual:

"*Op!*" (Right hand raised to level of face)

"*Mensur!*" (Arm lowered - palms placed opposite each other)

"*Los!*" (Duel starts - resolved when the winner slaps his palm against his opponents palm)

Id-Actions

Hand out these examples of Id-actions at the beginning of Partie 2. The players can use them as written, be inspired by them or make up their own actions completely. Remember, Id-actions are not performed by named characters - so it is not (necessarily) the character of the player performing the action, that is the one doing the deed.

Someone burns something in the kitchen ovens

Someone kills Jäeger

Someone breaks open the weapon cabinets

Someone steals a sabre

Someone breaks bottles in the cellar

Someone takes an axe from the stables and smashes something in the house

Someone does something bad to the beehives

Someone hurts a horse

Someone breaks into someone else's room

Someone steals a piece of Zophiel's clothes

Someone goes crazy in the library

Someone sneaks into someone else's room while they sleep

Someone stalks someone else during the night

Someone places a knife in the door of another character

Someone breaks a window

Someone writes on a wall in the house with coal, blood or something else



Heinrich Aurswald (16 years old)

You look around at the other boys in the alley. Straighten yourself up. Wipe the blood from your cheek. You've won the fight, and your rivals from the neighboring town of Schwarzach have slunk away with their tails between their legs. All except the boy cowering in front of you. He fell while fleeing, and his comrades left him behind. Now you loom over him. Behind you, you can feel how your friends are holding their breaths. Waiting for you to do something. Expectant and still bloodthirsty.

Your blood is hammering in your temples. Your eyes flicker just slightly, though the boys behind you are unable to see it. Lucky for you. You look down at the ground. The Schwarzach boy looks up at you. His tears mix with the blood trickling down from his split eyebrow. "I didn't want to come," he sobs while snot bubbles from his nose. Shit. You don't want to fight anymore. Not now. But the mob behind you will never agree to let him go. Or let you off the hook.

Your hands move to your fly. You fumble with the buttons in your pants. You take out your cock. You look up while trying to focus, then you let the piss rain down over the boy. He writhes on the ground, and from behind you, you hear the roars of surprise and glee.

Your father is the butcher in Halberstadt. A man with money and power, but little recognition. You don't earn that as a butcher. No one wants to see the cow being slaughtered even though it puts steaks to their tables. No one wants to know how sausages are made.

The lack of respect that your father demanded took a toll on his family tenfold. Your mother, your two younger brothers and yourself lived in a state of constant dread, due to his volatile mood and unpredictable temper. A good, profitable day behind the counter or at the slaughterhouse could be ruined by a lack of acknowledgement from a respectable citizen on his way home. Then he was generous with his fists.

You brought that along with you out into the world, ever since you were quite young. You paid attention to when you should be quiet and blend in with the wallpaper. That and the knowledge that a hard fist could make most people obey you. In the schoolyard, it was all about being tough, and you quickly established yourself as the leader of the pack, with a group of boys your age backing you up. It didn't matter if you bowed your head as soon as you walked through the door at home, as long as no one on the outside knew, there was no problem.

As you turned 15, your entourage expanded to include your girlfriend, Alma. She was a beautiful, local girl whom you gave everything you had that you thought meant love and savored her adoration. Back then, you were the young king of your neighborhood.



You glance at the door. Was that a sound? No. They should all be out of the house. You turn towards Alma again, as she is laying in the hay. She's pulled her dress down below her shoulders and her pale breasts almost lights up in the dark of the barn. You reach out to her. Grips her arm and draws her closer. While her body seems cold and stiff, you can feel the blood rush through your body. Your cheeks turn red as you lean in over her, attempting to kiss her, just ashave done so many times before. But now, she is pulling away from you. Why?!?

It was your father who decided that it would be good for you to become part of the Bartko Reher Order. Good for your future. His ambitions were also on your behalf and he was in no way satisfied with the idea of you merely taking over the business after him. Your father wanted you to have those opportunities he felt were never given to him, and the first step to that was to bring you into proper company. So, your father bartered and pushed for your membership, and shortly before your 16th birthday, you were admitted into the order and moved to Villa Degen.

As a novice in Bartko Reher, you were suddenly the junior again. Young men, some of them almost fully grown, inhabited the enormous villa. They all used big, fancy words and were not afraid to push aside a newcomer who stood in their way. And then there were the duels. From your earliest days, you and your fellow novices saw the fierce fencing matches between the older members. Bloody duels that often left the participants with scars that would never fade. Eternal marks of nobility and proof of both courage and manhood.

It is your biggest fear; that you will falter when it is your turn to don the protective gear and heft the heavy sabre. What if you flinch? What if you can't fend for yourself when it really matters?

OUTER LIFE

Heinrich is an energetic and determined boy. He is physically strong and never seems afraid to take on challenges. He values masculine virtues and tries to live by them. Heinrich is a loyal friend and good at creating a jovial atmosphere and encouraging his friends to do their best.

INNER LIFE

Heinrich is a sensitive boy, shaped by his upbringing. His father's treatment has left him with a strong need to assert himself. When he is challenged, he can instinctively resort to violence, and he reacts poorly to being defeated, both physically and verbally. Beneath his tough exterior, however, he is insecure and lives in constant fear of failing and appearing weak.

You See Bartko Reher as a stepping stone

You are brave and foolhardy

You are afraid - especially of failure



THE OTHERS

Alex is the youngest of you and a bit of a weakling. He might be the type you should take under your wing, toughen up and turn into a good right-hand man.

Mattias is a local boy, and you think there is something odd about him. It is as if he always says what people expect or want to hear, which makes you unsure about him.

You know that **Eike** comes from a distinguished military family. His father is reportedly an actual war hero. However, you have some doubts about how strong he is behind his noble exterior as you have heard older fraternity brothers talk about him being expelled from a military school in Regensburg.



ALEX



MATTIAS



EIKE

ABOUT THE BARTKO REHER ORDER

The Bartko Reher Order is a student fraternity that traces its origins back to the 17th century. It is a fraternity dedicated to honor, science, and education, aiming to create well-read, honorable, and well-rounded German men.

Duels are an important part of Bartko Reher Order's history and code of conduct, and the majority of older members display several prominent scars on their faces as visible evidence of this tradition.

You are novices in Bartko Reher and live in the brotherhood's headquarters, Villa Degen, in the city of Halberstadt. You have been in the order for three to six months.

The order consists of about 40 active members. However, most adult brothers do not live in Villa Degen but use the headquarters in their spare time.

Pater Hirschfänger is the leader of Bartko Reher, and you're not sure if he likes you. He has always seemed cold towards you, as if he doesn't think you belong - even though your father's money was clearly good enough for him.

Doctor Leine, who also frequents Villa Degen, is a peculiar character. He regularly shows up when you're training or bathing and offers mumbled advice. He seems old and decrepit.





Mattias Ludewig (16 years old)

You've been out in the snow for hours. Just you and your sister. Wandering through the hills and the small forest near the farm. Talking about everything and nothing. Failing to crack the ice on the lake behind the trees. You look at her. Her dark hair hidden beneath the thick knitted hat and her pale cheeks, reddened by the cold. She is absolutely amazing.

You walk down the snow-covered slope and turn the corner. Around the barn and into the farmyard. You don't know what hits you first. The warmth, the smell or the sight. In the middle of the yard you see bother your father and two of the farmhands. On a hook near the water pump hangs the carcass of a pig. A big hog. Your father has just slit open the beast's belly, and the biggest farmhand is pulling out entrails and stuffing them into a large tub. The heat and the stench emanate from the animal's insides, you can feel it on your face several meters away. The snow is stained blood red.

Miriam stands behind you and shudders. Her hand frantically searches for yours and squeezes tightly once she finds it. You straighten your back and suppress the urge to turn away, swallowing hard to keep the rising bile in your throat.

You grew up on a farm outside Halberstadt. Your twin sister Miriam and you are the youngest children in a large family, and you recall your earliest childhood as being safe and carefree. The two of you had nature at your doorstep, few responsibilities, and each other to keep company in such a large family. Your devout father retired after a score of successful investments in coal and lead. Henow runs a large farm far away from the lights and temptations of the city. Your mother stayed at home and schooled both you and your siblings, so in spite of your secluded upbringing, you lacked for nothing when it came to culture and knowledge. The only regular contact with Halberstadt was the local priest, who frequently visited and engaged in long, deep conversations with your father.

In the family and around the farm, you've always been well-liked. You are good at reading people, and discerning what to say to make them like you. And it's important for you that people like you. In fact, you sometimes tie yourself up in knots to remain in everyone's good graces. Especially with your stern father, who rarely spent time with his children, but when he did, it was always accompanied with a critical eye and a lecturing remark. Had you mastered both spelling and math, and had you memorized the admonitions from the Small Catechism? Whenever he felt it wasn't sufficient, you were given one-on-one classes with the priest in your father's small office. Dogmas and rules were hammered into your head. So, you are painfully aware that God is always watching you and knows your every misstep and sinful thought.

The only person you've ever been able to relax and let your guard down with is your twin sister. Since the two of you were very young, you've had a special bond. Was it due to you being twins? Perhaps because you were quite a bit younger than the rest of your siblings?



Your eyes wander towards Miriam. She rests on the sun-warmed just a few meters away from you. Both of you just emerged from the water and are now drying off in the sun. You steal a few more glances at her naked body. The cold of the water has given her goosebumps all over. A voice in the back of your mind whispers that your father would not approve of this. God would not approve of this. But you don't care. You think that she is beautiful. Beautiful and yours.

You hear a twig snap and look up. Behind a tree at the other side of the lake you catch a glimpse of the priest. You have no idea how long he has been standing there, but he looks flustered and is fiddling with his belt. You catch his eyes. He looks angry. Angry and shameful. You wonder what he sees in yours?

Either to shut you up or as an act of revenge, the priest snitched on you to your father. Your father promptly pulled some strings with his old business connections, and in only a few weeks, he had secured you a place at the Bartko Reher Order in Halberstadt. It was never explained why, but you know it was some sort of punishment. But a punishment for what?!! Neither of you had done anything wrong. You tried to explain this, but it only resulted in a judgemental silence and searing slaps. It was unfair but you know your father well enough to read between the lines, and he had made it very clear that you are no longer welcome at home at this point. Never even mentioning for how long?!!

At Bartko Reher, you have had to adjust to being among strangers and peers. Suddenly, your life has been clamped in iron, having lost your freedom and the wide-open fields. Now everything occurs indoors, and you are constantly surrounded by smelly boys and men. Now you do your best to fit in, so that one day you can return home, strong enough that no one can control you or dictate your life.

OUTER LIFE

Mattias is a diplomat. He is good at interacting with other people, reading their signals, and making them feel comfortable. He can be polite and courteous, but he is also not afraid to use humor or engage in deep and confidential conversations with his peers.

INNER LIFE

Mattias is a loner who struggles to engage with other people or share genuine emotions. He is not genuinely interested in the lives and destinies of others. He is self-centered, selfish, and good at manipulating others. However, he loves his sister more than anything in the world. Far more than a normal level of sibling affection.

You see Bartko Reher as Purgatory

You are diplomatic and smooth talking

You are cynical and emotionally cold



THE OTHERS

You like **Alex**. He seems a little childish, but there's something in his blue-eyed and innocent idealism that you find almost sweet.

On the other hand, **Heinrich** is a primitive brute, and on top of that his father is just a simple, local butcher, so the way you see it, he should never have been let into Bartko Reher Order.

Eike, in turn, seems to be tailor-made for the Brotherhood. A stiff upper lip and annoyingly aware of his noble pedigree. You don't know what would be better for you, be at his heels sucking up to him or taking him down a peg or two?



ALEX



HEINRICH



EIKE

ABOUT THE BARTKO REHER ORDER

The Bartko Reher Order is a student fraternity that traces its origins back to the 17th century. It is a fraternity dedicated to honor, science, and education, aiming to create well-read, honorable, and well-rounded German men.

Duels are an important part of Bartko Reher Order's history and code of conduct, and the majority of older members display several prominent scars on their faces as visible evidence of this tradition.

You are novices in Bartko Reher and live in the brotherhood's headquarters, Villa Degen, in the city of Halberstadt. You have been in the order for three to six months.

The order consists of about 40 active members. However, most adult brothers do not live in Villa Degen but use the headquarters in their spare time.

Pater Hirschfänger is the leader of Bartko Reher, and you're not sure if he likes you. He has always seemed cold towards you, as if he doesn't think you belong - even though your father's money was clearly good enough for him. **Doctor Leine**, who also frequents Villa Degen, is a peculiar character. He regularly shows up when you're training or bathing and offers mumbled advice. He seems old and decrepit.





Alex Wolfsbach (15 years old)

"Hey there, jew-boy? Got any pocket money to share with us?" The three boys have you cornered in a remote part of the school yard. The biggest of them has a stick in his hand. He is swinging it from side to side, while a sneering smile displays his discolored teeth.

You close your eyes. You already know how this is going to end. But you refuse to just hand over the coins in your pocket. It is about more than money. This is about honour. So, you clench your fists and lunges towards the smallest of your opponents. He is about your height, and as you crash into his body, you see fear and surprise in his eyes, just seconds before your forehead connects with his nose followed by an unpleasant crunching sound.

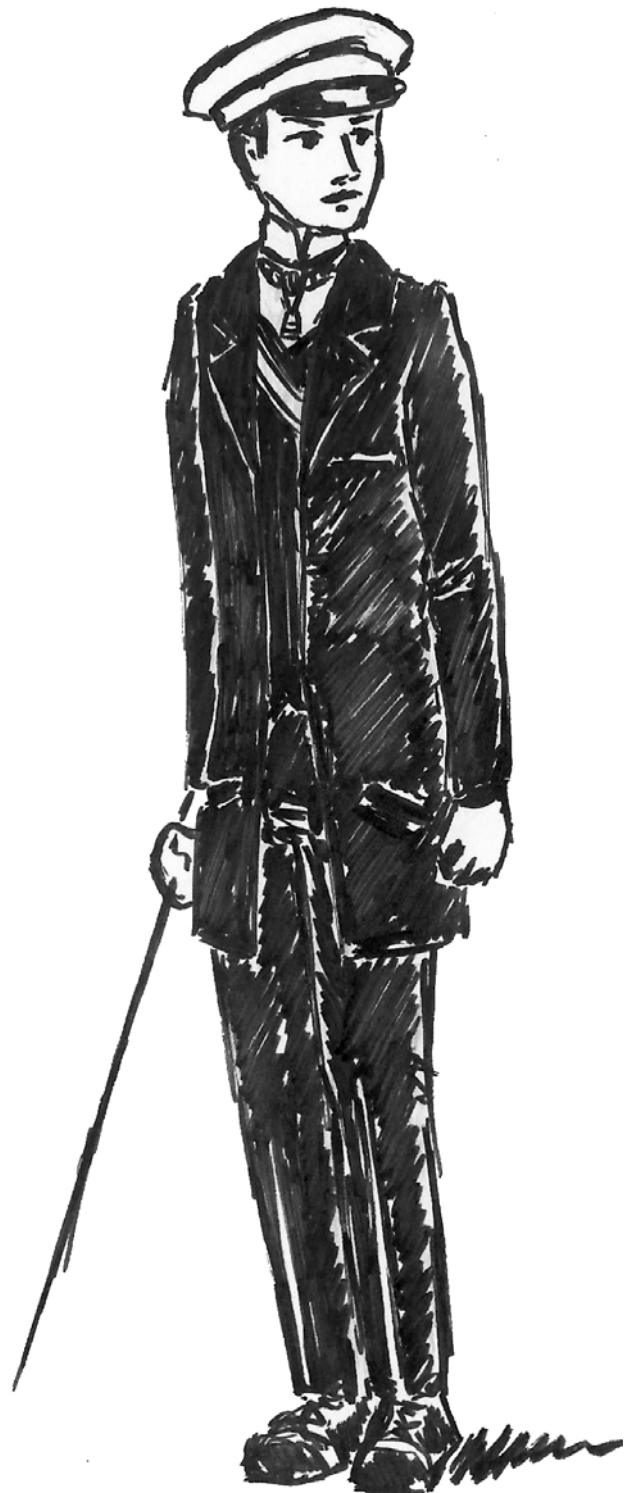
It cannot have taken more than a minute or two. But your one eyebrow is so swollen that you cannot see with that eye, and you can feel someone else's skin and blood under your fingernails.

A young female teacher gently leads you inside the school while two other teachers try to get the howling mob under control out in the schoolyard. She sighs. "You are such a smart and pretty boy. Why is it that you constantly get into trouble? You really shouldn't be friends with that type of boys."

You are the result of an affair between an elderly Austrian businessman and a much younger Hungarian Jew. Unwanted by both of your parents, but nevertheless not so unloved that when your father was confronted with the fruit of his loins, his only child, he took you into his house and promised your mother to raise you right. However, he didn't want to have anything to do with your mother. That would have been far too great a stain on both his life and status. Thus, you grew up in his great house in Linz with servants and governesses as your closest family. Only on Sundays did you have dinner with your father. A duty both of you clearly hated, but which your father still kept up until you became a teenager.

You never met your mother. Your father refused to tell you anything about her, besides highlighting her heritage. Always with hidden contempt. *Jewish*. But in your dreams, there she found you. Almost every night. Beautiful and unspoiled. She comforted you, whispered sweet words in your ear that made you wake up with a gnawing longing and a compulsion to lean into her bosom, for her embrace and comfort.

The books provided you with a replacement for family. The stories of King Arthur and his knights especially struck a chord with you, and when your father took you on your annual educational trip to Salzburg, you attended *The Valkyrie*, and everything fell into place. The deeds of the legendary heroes shocked you, but also lit a fire within you. Afterwards, you began fantasizing about chivalry and heroism.



You desired to ride across Europe, achieve great honor, return home and then save your mother from her ignoble fate. Seek her out wherever she might be. Probably right where your father had left her, like the knave he was. She needs to be rescued. He needs to be punished.

You stand up on your toes, so you have a better view through the narrow crack under the roof. Underneath you, the barrel you are standing on is rocking. It's slimy and greasy, but you keep your balance. You feel the heat emanating from the wall in the clammy autumn morning. The sauna in the Jewish ghetto has been open for several hours and today is women's day.

You can see the figures inside. Almost hidden by the steam that rises from the large wads of hot water, they sit. Four women. Adults. Lush. Light skin and dark hair. You can feel a tightening in your pants.

A sound from the street. A figure is yelling at you. You're about to lose your foothold, but you're able to jump down from the barrel. You can hear loud women's voices from inside the house, but you don't look back. You pull the collar of your jacket up around your ears and run.

You had only just turned fifteen when you ran away from home. Well-prepared, you scoured the house for money and everything valuable that could be easily sold. Your goal was Munich, but by happenstance you ended up in Halberstadt and joined the Bartko Reher Order. A place where young men are educated and taught about honor and martial arts in the classical way. A knight's order. The perfect place to start your journey.

OUTER LIFE

Alex is enthusiastic, curious and adventurous. He always wants to do his best and show himself. He may seem naive and dreamy, but in a way that's contagious. He likes to tell stories and is good at speaking to others and letting himself get carried away and be impressed.

OUTER LIFE

Alex is obsessed with a mother he has never known. His relationship with women is twisted, and he sees her in everything. Much in his life is being done with her in mind. It drives a childish dream of chivalry and honor. At the same time, he has an unresolved anger towards his father, but it can also be directed towards others in his absence, often manifesting in a petty or malicious manner.

You see Bartko Reher as an order of knights

You are enthusiastic and openhearted

You are driven by messed up dreams



THE OTHERS

You feel comfortable alongside **Mattias** even though you know that he probably doesn't love Bartko Reher as much as you do. Maybe you can convince him that brotherhood is important and true?

Heinrich is scaring you a little. He's big and intelligent, but you also see a confidence and strength in him that you might want to aim for, maybe with just a little more elegance.

Eike, on the other hand, looks like a hero from your daydreams. You look forward to learning from him, and maybe one day you could match him in appearance and posture.



MATTIAS



HEINRICH



EIKE

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It was **Doctor Leine** who helped you into Bartko Reher. The elderly doctor met you out in town and showed interest in your well-being and used his influence in the order to get you in as a novice. However, he does not seem to be interested in the principles of the order but spends a lot of time in the wine cellar and observing the younger members as you train. **Pater Hirschfänger**, on the other hand, is a real hero. In the leader of the brotherhood, you see a great man and one to mirror.





Eike Legenfeld (16 years old)

You're looking down on yourself. The uniform is new, the boots cleaned. You're standing side by side with the members of your squad. At your sides rest your rifles, and in your belts are the sabres, gleaming in the morning sun. A crash roars out and sends a shiver through your body. You look quickly to the side. You hope nobody saw it. The others, at least, stand as still as pillars of salt.

"Well, young Legenfeld, why are you standing there, twitching your head?" You wince and try to keep your back straight. The officer is standing in front of you, a patronizing smile barely hidden beneath the mustache.

"What would Colonel Legenfeld say if he knew that his son was quivering in the breeze as soon as there was a slight noise from the cannons?" The officer puts extra emphasis on your father's rank, and you can hear a suppressed giggle a little further down from the line.

You can feel the blood pulsing in your temple and cheeks and feel the tears welling up. You breathe deeply through your nose. The only thing that will make the situation worse is if you start bawling.

You are the son of a Colonel in the German army, born in Regensburg in southern Germany. Your upbringing was trouble-free. Even though you spend much time with your father, who spent several years of your childhood fighting down rebel natives in German Southwest Africa, you've always felt attached to him. Lot more attachment than to your feeble mother, who from a very young age left you for the governesses and servants to raise. Neither did she give you that little brother you so desired.

Instead, you mimicked your teachers. Intelligent, young men who from your earliest childhood schooled you in languages, books and music. That was your life until your father came home permanently. However, you've often wondered if he left most of himself back in Africa.

At the age of fourteen, you were sent to the military academy in Munich. Along with other young men with noble parents or fathers who were officers, you were trained to dominate the battlefields in future imperial conflicts. The Academy was a place full of traditions and a very special hierarchy. Even though your father was renowned as a true German war hero, it was not taken into account. On the contrary. It meant harsh discipline - along with humiliation if you couldn't cut the mustard.

The clique you ended up being part of, became a safe haven. Especially you found kinship with Stellan, whose father had also served in Africa. Along with a small circle of other boys, you as a group became known as maybe less-than-promising soldiers, but you did earn a reputation for being good at making rowdy merriment and shenanigans - always at the expense of others.



"Come in, come in. Make yourself comfortable." The woman sitting on the bed in front of you is at least twice your age. Her hair is a mess, and she hasn't even bothered getting her clothes in order again. Her mouth is painted red, and the color stands out sharply in the darkness. You can hear the three other boys whispering and fidgeting on the other side of the door. You're number three in line, and you've paid in advance.

The prostitute begins to open up her scantily closed dress. Slowly her breasts become more and more visible. They look worn out. Like the bed and the blanket. You want to flee the room.

You close your eyes, and in your mind's eye you see Stellan. First with the woman on the stained mattress. Then instead of her. She grabs your hand, and you open your eyes. She's very close to you. The smell of sweat and schnapps hangs like a cloud around her.

"Do you need help, my little friend," she whispers in your ear.

Your visit to the brothel was a disaster. No matter how much you begged the others not to say anything, the story spread like a wildfire. First among the other students and then quickly to the teachers, making you the subject of ruthless mocking and ridicule as a result. Everyone turned their backs on you, including Stellan, and life at the academy became so unbearable that you tried to put an end to it.

However, you were found in time, "saved" and sent home to your father, who received you in absolute silence. After weeks without a word from him, he marched into your room and declared that you were now enrolled in a "less demanding" education, off in remote Halberstadt, that "even you should be able to complete."

Your admission into the Bartko Reher Order is a defeat for you. A degradation because you weren't ready. Not ready to live up to the expectations that the world had of you. Fortunately, the other novices in Bartko Reher do not know anything about your background and you hope for a fresh start.

OUTER LIFE

Eike is well-educated and noble. He's a good friend and a loyal supporter if needed. He is at the same time cheery and with a twinkle in the eye, often ready to make some trouble or break the rules as long as it is not too serious.

INNER LIFE

Eike is frustrated and angry. He feels let down by everyone he has ever trusted. Alone and abandoned with feelings he cannot understand, especially when it comes to his own gender and his own sexuality. The betrayal at the hands of his former comrades has hurt him deeply, and he has difficulty trusting other people, just as he has a suppressed need to avenge himself on someone. Anyone.

You see Bartko Reher as an escape

You are polite and noble

You are insecure and frustrated



THE OTHERS

Among the others, **Heinrich** is probably your biggest rival. He's big and boisterous, and you're probably a little scared of him. On the other hand, it would also be a strong statement if you made him bend the knee.

Mattias acts as a proper young man and is the one you most recognize as your equal in matters of ideals and intellect.

Alex seems like a nice boy, but also a little naive. He told you that his mother is Jewish - you're not sure you'd told anyone about that if it were you. Are boys of that blood permitted in Bartko Reher at all?



HEINRICH



MATTIAS



ALEX

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Bartko Reher is headed by **Pater Hirschfänger**. In many ways he reminds you of your father, but without the emotional distance. Hirschfänger has taken you aside several times and told you not to be burdened by the past and ensured you, that your life in the order starts with a blank slate. In Villa Degen you also daily come across **Doctor Leine**. The elderly man seems feeble and distant, far from the ideals that you, on a daily basis are taught to aim for.





Alex

MENSUR LITANI

Armor ("I help him with his armor")
Collar ("I put on his collar")
Nose guard ("I tighten his nose guard")
Glasses ("I ensure his glasses are correct")
Gauntlets ("I hand him his gauntlets")

DUEL CALL

OP!
MENSUR!
LOS!



Mattias

MENSUR LITANI

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DUEL CALL

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Eike

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Heinrich

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