

# The Little Boy Everybody Wanted

An Adventure for *Ars Magica* Fourth Edition by Atlas Games

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A Mad Irishman Production

(with apologies to C.J. Cherryh)



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## BACKGROUND

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Aleksandr Vasilyevich Misurov ("Sasha") has been kidnapped by the Grigorevich clan...he's the illegitimate son of a boyar (Vasily Vasilyevich) and has been raised in the village of Vojvoda. There he served his "uncle" Fedya at The Cockerel, an inn where he worked as a servant and stable boy. (He was occasionally visited by his father, who was seeking some way to have him trained as a wizard or *volkhv* so as to aid him in his campaigns. His mother died several years ago.) This young lad has the Gift...everyone thinks him a bit strange and the villagers stay away from him, though he seems to have a rapport with animals. Recently, the Inn's barn burned down, with Sasha's uncle in it, and the villagers' fingers were quick to point to Sasha as the culprit. Before everyone could decide what to do with the boy (banishment and stoning were the most popular options), the boy vanished.

The Grigorevich clan had learned of Sasha's whereabouts because they had known Vasily Vasilyevich's son supposedly had magical abilities. When they heard that a boy matching his description was responsible for using witchcraft to murder his uncle, they descended upon Vojvoda and snatched the lad in the middle of the night. Sasha is a clever and resourceful boy, however, and he escaped from his Polish watchdogs and slipped away into the woods. So they begin their search anew, scouring the forest for the young lad.

Matters are further complicated by the fact that the villagers are still looking for him, as are the forces of Vasily Vasilyevich; even the Covenant of the Tower of Thorns has taken an interest, as one of their number (Sigurd of Tytalus) is looking for an apprentice and this boy sounds like a good candidate.

## MEET SIGURD

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Trekking through a forest of the Russian Principality of Galicia, the players will happen upon two men traveling together. They appear to be Scandinavian in descent, and while one looks like a Viking warrior, the other bears the trappings of a wizard.

Parleying with the pair will reveal that this man is indeed a wizard of the Hermetic Order, one Sigurd of Tytalus (players may recognize the name as that of the *pater* of Spitihnev of Tytalus). He will be polite but not forthcoming with

the players as to why he is in the area. His covenant, *Zavet Stlupa Trina* ("Tower of Thorns Covenant"), is located some days away in the Pripet Marshes of the Principality of Turov-Pinsk. His voice is deep and gravelly, and carries a hint of cruelty.

Sigurd will be quite interested in what the players are doing here, however, especially once it becomes clear they are not from the Novgorod Tribunal. He will attempt to find out what sort of important mission might bring them so far, and he is not above using magic on their grogs to find this out.

After spending some time conversing with the characters, and after satisfying himself that he has some knowledge of why they have come to Rus, Sigurd will bid them farewell and disappear back into the wilds of Galicia.

Unbeknownst to the party, Sigurd has heard of the boy Aleksandr and seeks him as a potential apprentice. If he discovers the characters at a later time with the boy, he will demand that the lad be handed over to him.

Sigurd, filius Lanerte, of House Tȳtalus

Sigurd is a barrel-chested man of average height but whose form suggests dangerous power. His hair is long, straight, and blond, while his pale blue eyes gaze menacingly over all potential enemies.

Age: 57; Size: 0; Confidence: 4

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| +1 Str | -1 Dex |
| 0 Stm  | -2 Qik |
| +3 Int | +1 Prs |
| +3 Per | +2 Com |

#### Personality Traits

|              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| +3 Demanding | +2 Ambitious |
| +2 Cruel     | +2 Curious   |
| +1 Deceitful |              |

#### Virtues and Flaws

The Gentle Gift  
Deft Art (Mentem)  
Strong-Willed  
Fury (when wounded)

#### Abilities

Speak Russian 4, Speak Scandinavian 4, Speak Latin 4, Scribe Latin 4, Scribe Church Slavonic 2, Acting 2, Awareness 2, Pripet Marshes Lore 4, Bargain 2, Guile 4, Church Knowledge 3, Single Weapon 3, Brawling 3, Etiquette 4, Faerie Lore 4, Folk Ken 3, Forgery 4, Intimidation 3, Swim 4, Stealth 4, hermetic History 3, Hemes Lore 3, Certámen 3, Concentration 2, Finesse 2, Magic Theory 5, Parma Magica 5, Penetration 2

#### Magical Arts

Creo 6, Intéllego 9, Muto 9, Perdo 12, Rego 9, Animál 5, Aquam 6, Auram 5, Corpus 6, Herbam 6, Ignem 7, Imáginem 13, Mentem 12, Terram 7, Vim 6

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon        | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Brawl Totals: | +4   | +3  | +3  | +0  |

Fatigue: +4                      Soak: +2  
(leather scale cuirass)

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Olaf

Olaf is 6'3", 240 lbs. of black-haired, blue-eyed, 39-year old ugly muscle. He is mute and responds only to Sigurd's commands. He wears half chain mail, carries a kite shield, and wields an axe in combat, though he also is armed with a short bow and a dagger.

Age: 39; Size: 0; Confidence: 3

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| +1 Str | +1 Dex |
| +1 Stm | +1 Qik |
| 0 Int  | 0 Prs  |
| 0 Per  | 0 Com  |

#### Personality Traits

|             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| +3 Obedient | +2 Patient       |
| +3 Violent  | +1 Unimaginative |

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon         | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Axe & Shield:  | +7   | +9  | +11 | +9  |
| Axe Totals:    | +8   | +8  | +7  | +9  |
| Dagger Totals: | +6   | +7  | +6  | +6  |
| Bow Totals:    | +3   | +4  | +3  | +4  |
| Brawl Totals:  | +4   | +5  | +3  | +3  |

Fatigue: +7                      Soak: +15  
(half chain mail)

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

## LITTLE BOY LOST

Resuming their journey, the characters discover a tattered, disheveled and hungry Sasha. He will not trust the characters but if they show him kindness he will gladly accept food from them and at least tentative acceptance. He will be particularly drawn to maternal figures (or at least women) but only to the most kind of men. He does not understand what is happening to him, but can tell the players about the barn burning and people getting mad at him. Sasha insists that he didn't burn down the barn, but that the *ovinnik* must have been angered and done it. He can explain to them what an *ovinnik* is (a spirit of the barn), and can tell them that

he was taken away by men in the middle of the night if pressed, but remember that although Sasha is a clever young boy, he is distraught and confused. Players should be somewhat frustrated in their attempts to arrive at a clear conclusion as to what has happened to the lad. He might be made to remember that the unknown men who took him spoke in some strange tongue (they were Polish, and players may learn that the Grigorevichi are allied with Polish forces in Galicia).

Players may notice that the boy is unusual; in fact, he has the Gift and may make someone a fine apprentice.

Aleksandr Vasil'evich Misurov

"Sasha" is 4 feet tall and weighs about 70 pounds. His sandy blond hair is short and fine, and his intelligence is made clear in his blue eyes. His face is wide, almost square, with a sharp nose. He is left-handed.

Age: 7; Size: -1; Confidence: 1

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| 0 Str  | -1 Dex |
| +1 Stm | -2 Qik |
| +3 Int | 0 Prs  |
| +2 Per | 0 Com  |

#### Personality Traits

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| +3 Loyal    | +2 Shy |
| +3 Insecure |        |

#### Virtues and Flaws

Cautious Sorcerer  
Inoffensive to Animals  
Ways of the Forest  
Premonitions  
Small Frame  
Chaotic Magic  
Judged Unfairly

**Abilities**

Speak Russian 4, Premonitions 3, Animal Handling 2, Kiev Lore 1, Stealth 1, Swim 1

**Combat Totals**

| Weapon        | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Brawl Totals: | -1   | -1  | -1  | +0  |

Fatigue: +1                      Soak: +0  
(unarmored)

**Body Levels**

OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Fatigue Levels**

OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

## LESHIYS TO THE LEFT OF US, LESHIYS TO THE RIGHT OF US...

**N**ot long after finding young Aleksandr, the party will run afoul of a *leshiy* and his family. These mischievous creatures will try their best to irritate and befuddle the group, leading people off their trail, mimicking others' voices, and using illusions to delude. Little Sasha should demonstrate his worth by having everyone put their clothes on backwards, which so confuses the *leshiy* he lets them go, perhaps after appearing briefly to converse with these interesting humans.

**Leshiy**

The vast forests of the Slavic lands are home to the *leshiye* [lyesh-EE-yeh], territorial faeries whose name is derived from *les* 'forest'. Thought to be the product of a union between a woman and a demon, the *leshiy* [LYESH-ee] is a mischievous, though good-natured, creature that harasses travelers who enter his forest domain. Most often they lead

astray those who attempt to find their way through the forest, sometimes making wild and distracting noises (including mimicing human voices or sobbing) or obscuring paths and landmarks. Many have entire families that assist in perpetrating these pranks. *Leshiye* often let the victims go when they grow bored; alternately, one may sit under a tree, undress and put all of one's clothes on backwards to ward his glammers. The *leshiye* are dormant throughout the winter but are extremely malicious when they reappear in the spring.

*Leshiye* frequently appear as creatures with blue cheeks, bushy eyebrows, and green eyes and beards. At the forest's edge he might be small as a dwarf, but when striding through the heart of the forest he might be as tall as the trees. The *leshiy* has no shadow, and may appear in outlandish costumes: perhaps with a caftan buttoned backwards, his shoes on the wrong feet, and a brilliant red sash. They may also assume the form of other creatures or of an inanimate object.

| Creature Might | Size |
|----------------|------|
| 35             | +2   |

**Characteristics**

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| +5 Str | +4 Dex |
| +3 Stm | +2 Qik |
| +2 Int | +3 Prs |
| +1 Per | +2 Com |

**Personality Traits**

|                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| +1 Honest          | +2 Moody |
| +3 Kind to Animals |          |

**Powers**

|    |                                 |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 5  | Change size                     |
| 15 | Communicate with Animals        |
| 15 | Control Animals                 |
| 9  | Control Auram                   |
| 10 | Shapechange to Animal or Plants |
| 10 | Shapechange to Object           |

Leshiye are immune to all Auram effects cast in their domain, and can automatically dispel any Animál spell cast on their animals.

Vulnerable to religion

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon       | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|--------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Kick Totals: | +8   | +10 | -   | +15 |
| Club Totals: | +11  | +13 | +10 | +25 |

Fatigue: n/a                      Soak: +35\*

\*Iron weapons do +2 damage

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

## THE ENEMY DRAWS NEAR

Only a day or so later, some of the Grigorevichi scouts will stumble upon the group. Three Poles (from among Miezska, Tadeusz, Stefa, Henio, and Zbysek) will demand that the boy be turned over to them if they discover him. They will not attempt to take him if the group is too large, but will return in force to force the issue by force later. They speak Russian and one speaks some German. Sasha recognizes the men as being from the group which kidnapped him. He will attempt to flee should the party try to turn him over to the Poles.

Typical Polish (Hungarian) Soldier

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| +1 Str | +1 Dex |
| +1 Stm | +1 Qik |
| 0 Int  | 0 Prs  |
| 0 Per  | 0 Com  |

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon        | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Sword Totals: | +9   | +9  | +10 | +6  |
| Bow Totals:   | +5   | +4  | +5  | +4  |
| Brawl Totals: | +6   | +5  | +5  | +1  |

Fatigue: +5                      Soak: +4  
(half metal reinforced armor)

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

## REFUGE IN THE VILLAGE

Should the party flee to Aleksandr's village (or any neighboring village, for that matter), they may be in for a chilly reception. The villagers have all been convinced that Sasha is a *koldun*, an evil sorcerer who must be put to death. This has been encouraged by the *volkhv* Svetoslav, who doesn't like the idea of some young wizard whose talent is so promising eventually becoming a rival of his.

The villagers will attempt to take the boy from the party (though they are easily intimidated, especially by magic) if he is made known to them. They will wish to take him to Svetoslav so that he can pass judgement on him (this will be a death penalty). Given stiff resistance, the villagers will attempt to take him by more surreptitious means.

Some sample villager names are Male: Piotr, Vasya, Dmitri, Ivan, Gleb, Yuri; Female: Ilenka, Irina, Olga, Tatyana

Svetoslav the Volkhv

Svetoslav stands 5 feet, 8 inches tall, and weighs 163 pounds. His brown hair is

wavy and unkempt, and his hazel eyes betray a cunning intelligence.

Age: 39; Size: 0; Confidence: 3

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| 0 Str  | 0 Dex  |
| +1 Stm | 0 Qik  |
| +1 Int | +1 Prs |
| +1 Per | +0 Com |

#### Personality Traits

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| +3 Self-serving | +1 Nervous |
| +2 Opportunist  | +1 Helpful |

#### Virtues and Flaws

Divination

Hex

Overconfident

Reclusive

Magical Air

#### Abilities

Speak Russian 5, Brawl 2, Chirurgy 4, Folk Magic 3, Herbalism 3, Hex (spoil) 4, Legend Lore 3, Favor of the Gods 5, Survival 1, Scribe Cuts and Lines 1, Travel 6, Control 5, Alter 5, Ritual 5

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon        | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Brawl Totals: | +4   | +3  | +3  | +0  |

Fatigue: +4                      Soak: +2  
(half fur)

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

0 Per                              -1 Com

#### Combat Totals

| Weapon        | Init | Atk | Dfn | Dam |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Spear Totals: | +6   | +7  | +2  | +6  |
| Brawl Totals: | +4   | +3  | +3  | +0  |

Fatigue: +1                      Soak: +0  
(unarmored)

#### Body Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

#### Fatigue Levels

OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

## GUMANS ARE COMING

After a few more days, the last of the forces searching for the boy will be made known to the players. Though these forces belong to the boy's father, Vasily Vasilyevich, the players may end up fighting them because they do not realize this, because they oppose his treatment of the boy, or because of the nature of the forces which have been dispatched for him, for the next forces to find him will be Cumans, known as Polovtsy to the Russians, and allied to the boy's father and others in Kiev.

The leader of this band is Tureng, a member of the "Swift Feet" tribe of the Polovtsy. His orders are to retrieve the boy unharmed, so he will not attack unless absolutely necessary. His forces include three shapechangers and he and his other eight men are mounted on hardy horses (remember to add charging and/or higher ground bonuses to mounted warriors' attacks).

Typical Villager

#### Characteristics

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| 0 Str | 0 Dex  |
| 0 Stm | 0 Qik  |
| 0 Int | -1 Prs |

Typical Polovtsy Warrior

#### Characteristics

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| +1 Str | 0 Dex  |
| +2 Stm | +1 Qik |
| 0 Int  | -1 Prs |

|                                  |             |                              |            |            |        |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|------------|------------|--------|
| +1 Per                           |             |                              |            |            | -2 Com |
| <b>Combat Totals</b>             |             |                              |            |            |        |
| <i>Weapon</i>                    | <i>Init</i> | <i>Atk</i>                   | <i>Dfn</i> | <i>Dam</i> |        |
| Sword Totals:                    | +9          | +6                           | +10        | +5         |        |
| Lance Totals:                    | +11         | +11                          | +7         | +7         |        |
| Brawl Totals:                    | +6          | +4                           | +5         | +1         |        |
| Fatigue: +7                      |             | Soak: +9<br>(full ring mail) |            |            |        |
| <b>Body Levels</b>               |             |                              |            |            |        |
| OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated |             |                              |            |            |        |
| <b>Fatigue Levels</b>            |             |                              |            |            |        |
| OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated |             |                              |            |            |        |

|   |             |            |             |            |  |
|---|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|--|
| Polovtsy Shapechanger (in wolf form)  |             |            |             |            |  |
| <b>Magic Might</b>  |             |            | <b>Size</b> |            |  |
| 15  |             |            | -1          |            |  |
| <b>Characteristics</b>  |             |            |             |            |  |
| +2  | Str         | +2         | Dex         |            |  |
| +4  | Stm         | +1         | Qik         |            |  |
| +2  | Int         | 0          | Prs         |            |  |
| +4  | Per         | 0          | Com         |            |  |
| <b>Powers</b>   |             |            |             |            |  |
| <b>Strike Dumb, ReCo 15/ReAn 15, 3 points</b>   |             |            |             |            |  |
| — If the shapechanger gazes at its prey, it can paralyze the creature unless it makes a Stm roll of 12+ |             |            |             |            |  |
| <b>Combat Totals</b>  |             |            |             |            |  |
| <i>Weapon</i>   | <i>Init</i> | <i>Atk</i> | <i>Dfn</i>  | <i>Dam</i> |  |
| Bite Totals:  | +5          | +6         | +4          | +6         |  |
| Fatigue: +4   |             | Soak: +14  |             |            |  |
| <b>Body Levels</b>  |             |            |             |            |  |
| OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated   |             |            |             |            |  |
| <b>Fatigue Levels</b>   |             |            |             |            |  |
| OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated   |             |            |             |            |  |

## RESOLUTION

Players being what they are, there are any number of possible outcomes to this adventure. What follows are simply some possibilities based on the decisions that the players make.

- **If they turn the boy over to Vasily Vasilyevich:** The party will have earned Vasily's gratitude. He will be amenable to sending the boy off with them to be trained as a wizard (after all, he'd be safer far away), with the understanding that upon completion of his training, he will return to his father's court to aid him in his political endeavors (never mind that the Code prohibits this or that the father is unlikely to still be in power when he completes his training).
- **If they turn the boy over to the forces of the Grigorevichi:** The adventure is over as far as the party is concerned. The boy will be taken away but will likely escape his captors once again. He may show up years later for payback.
- **If they turn the boy over to the magus Sigurd:** They will have gained some small favor with the Tylalus, though not too much. After all, it's his territory and he's the elder magus, so he expects such treatment. However, they boy was found by the player characters and turned over to Sigurd they will gain some small Hermetic influence. This option may be combined with the first option; that is, the players may turn the boy over to his father but suggest that his magical training come from the Tower of Thorns. Still, the Tylalus is a cruel and demanding master; once again, maybe Sasha meets the characters some day as a bitter and twisted young magus.