

An American squad fleeing the German onslaught of the Battle of the Bulge stumbles onto a holiday-themed nightmare! Use the *Weird War II* characters on our Savage web site (www.peginc.com) or make your own.

- Wacht am Rhein -

The German offensive known to the Allies as the Battle of the Bulge smashed the heroes' frontline positions this morning with a devastating 90 minute artillery barrage, followed by an attack against their company's positions by hordes of Nazi infantry and tanks. The last order from higher headquarters — "It's every man for himself" — sent the survivors of the characters' squad fleeing into the snowy vastness of the Ardennes forest to their rear. Now, as night falls, the soldiers stumble on an isolated chateau whose wreath-bedecked windows gleam with a warm and inviting light to the cold and frightened troopers.

- Chateau Silberhaus -

Chateau Silberhaus is the home of Countessa Silberhaus, an elderly German noblewoman who married a Belgian nobleman at the turn of the century. A beast of a man, Count Silberhaus had satisfied his sadistic urges as a colonial governor in the Congo Free State before ill health forced his return to Belgium. In Chateau Silberhaus, his urges were vented on his young wife, who found solace in her collection of Christmas nutcrackers. Eventually, the Count's mistreatment became

too much for his wife to bear, and she murdered him, hiding the body in the large nutcracker in the entranceway. Unfortunately for her, his evil spirit lives on, haunting the house, driving off the servants, and tormenting the Countessa.

The estate is isolated in the rugged Ardennes Forest with no telephone or electrical service, and no vehicles in working order. It is an imposing two-story stone structure in a Gothic style, with a converted stablehouse in the rear, all covered with a foot of snow.

When the heroes enter the house (either by knocking or kicking in the door), Countessa Silberhaus greets them and bids them welcome to her home for as long as they need it. Suspicious characters note her German accent and the lack of servants, who she says have fled the nearby fighting. The Countessa is sitting down to dinner, and shares her meager meal with the soldiers.

The interior of the house shows a faded grandeur, decorated for Christmas with wreaths and candles. Most surfaces are covered in nutcrackers of all size and description, the collection crowned by a larger-than-man-sized nutcracker of a government official in the entrance hall.

The squad has a couple of hours to explore the estate before the excitement begins. The mansion is rambling and mostly unused, with rooms filled with drop sheet-covered furniture, cobwebs, and clouds of dust. Stuffed animal heads glare down from the walls, and the omnipresent nutcrackers fill shelves and cover the tops of tables and dressers in most rooms.

Any characters bold enough to search the Countessa's bedchamber may find (Notice -4) a bloodstained dagger under a pillow on her bed. It's the weapon she killed her husband with, and she refuses to speak of it if confronted with it.

The Warmaster should improvise a few unsettling events as the heroes search the mansion (creaking floors, doors closing suddenly, unexplained lights, etc.) to heighten the tension as they move through the chateau. Unless they look inside the giant nutcracker in the entrance foyer, there is nothing untoward to find. A successful Notice roll (-4) finds a concealed panel that

opens to reveal a mummified corpse in a hollow space inside. If confronted about this, the Countessa breaks down, and the Count awakens his minions (go to **The Clock Strikes Midnight**).

The stable has a broken down truck and touring sedan, but they suffer from years of neglect and exposure to the elements. A Repair roll (-4) allows a mechanic to cannibalize enough parts to get the truck running after eight hours of work, but a lack of gas will restrict it to no more than 20 miles along the snowy roads before it conks out.

- Uninvited Guests -

As the grandfather clock strikes eight, any American sentries posted outside may notice a German squad of nine men leave the treeline 200 yards away and move toward the house across the grounds. They are sweeping the forest for American stragglers and move in a wedge formation toward the house, which they will search if allowed to enter. Any Americans who surrender will be taken to the German lines and shipped to a POW camp in Germany for the rest of the war.

- The Clock Strikes - Midnight

Once the Germans have been dealt with, the squad is free to treat their wounds, post sentries, and settle down for night. When the grandfather clock strikes midnight, however, the dead Count Silberhaus decides he has had enough of these armed peasants and awakens the nutcrackers to rid his home of these intruders.

Suddenly the nutcrackers come to life and attack the Americans in an endless tide (one Small Burst Template for each character, replaced as destroyed). The Count animates the large nutcracker, and guards the front door, attacking anyone who attempts to leave the chateau that way. Only the defeat of the Count will end the attack of the maniacal nutcrackers.

The Countessa cringes in the kitchen during the attack, mumbling childhood prayers in German that may be mistaken for spellcasting by panicked troops. If attacked and killed by the heroes, her death has no effect on the crazed



figurines, although the Count senses her death and moves to kill those responsible for the destruction of his plaything.

The death of the Count is the only thing that stops the attacks, although the nutcrackers will not follow fleeing heroes into the surrounding woods. If they survive the night, they remain deep behind enemy lines in the middle of the largest and bloodiest land battle the Allies fought in WWII, with all the attendant horrors that such an event unleashes.



Count Silberhaus (Animated Nutcracker)

The sadistic and depraved Count Silberhaus tormented his younger German wife for years until she stabbed him to death one night in 1930 and hid his body in the giant nutcracker in the chateau's foyer. Unfortunately for her, his evil spirit remained anchored to his remains, and he continued to haunt her.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Faith d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; not affected by disease and poison; does not suffer Wound Modifiers.
- **Fear:** Seeing this giant nutcracker come to life requires a Guts check (a Spirit check if using the *Weird War II* rules).
- **What Big Teeth You Have!:** The huge mouth of the nutcracker is Str+d8, AP 2.
- **Invulnerability:** Count Silberhaus can be Shaken by normal weapons, but he can't be wounded or truly destroyed by anything except his Weaknesses.
- **Weakness (Fire):** The giant nutcracker does not take additional damage from explosives, but suffers +4 damage from fire and receives a -2 penalty to Fighting attacks against anyone brandishing an open flame.
- **Weakness (Dagger):** The dagger that killed him is the only thing other than fire that can finally banish the Count's evil spirit and end his reign of terror.

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Nutcrackers (Swarm)

The hundreds of nutcrackers the Countessa has collected over the years are animated by the evil of the Count, and at midnight come alive to do his bidding. Their large numbers mean that as long as the heroes are in Chateau Silberhaus, there is no end to the swarms of nutcrackers they will face—unless the Count is destroyed.

The swarm is treated just like a creature. When it is wounded, the swarm is effectively dispersed. Swarms cover an area equal to a Small Burst Template and attack everyone within every round.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** The nutcrackers inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; because the swarm is composed of scores of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

Wehrmacht Infantry (9)

These German troops are elated at their successes of the opening of the battle, and are in high spirits as they search for American stragglers. They realize that a cornered rat can still bite, though, so they are cautious in their search, and the few veterans in the squad have instilled a sense of professionalism in their teammates seldom seen in the Wehrmacht these days.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges & Hindrances: None

Equipment: Steel helmet (+2), 2 stielhandgranate, snowsuits (+1 to Stealth in snow), 9 x Kar98K, 2 x MG42, plus 1d6 panzerfausts.