

# *The Teller*

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In the area of the Known World which is called Romanda, there is an escarpment which rises many hundred measures.

At the cliff top there is a Keep, wherein lives the local lord. Below the Keep a small village has grown. Many of the villagers have homes which have the cliff face for a wall. Even the Inn is built flush against the crags.

It is not the wealthiest place in the Known World, nor the most beautiful, but for some it is home. And that is all they need.

A rough track cuts the village in two, and down it many merchants pass. The Lord, Velier, had a tollbooth built, to pay for the upkeep of the road. The toll was fair and paid by all.

Except one.

The Teller.

He held a special position with the villagers. Each month, early in the morning of on the appointed day, he would walk into town. Dressed in a dark, hooded cloak, carrying no possessions.

He would walk into the Inn and sit at the very back. In a chair which had been carved from the cliff face itself.

The Innkeeper would bring flagons of ale, and the Teller would drink.

One by one the Villagers would walk over to the Teller and recount the details on an interesting or amusing event which had happened to them during the last month. The Teller would listen, and drink.

At midday the Innkeeper would bring food and lay it before the Teller, who would silently eat. Once the food was gone the villagers would resume their stories. More ale would also be brought.

As the sun passed overhead and night descended the villagers would return to their homes, locking and barricading the doors and windows. The Teller would remain at the Inn drinking.

As the last of the Sun's rays disappeared, the Innkeeper would go to the animal pens. He would bring out a goat, tying a length of rope round its neck. Then drag it onto the dirt track in the middle of the village. And slit its throat.

After letting its blood spill onto the ground he would drag it into the Inn and leave it at the feet of the Teller. Then run upstairs to his room, locking and bolting his door.

As the night deepened, and the full moon rose, a baleful moaning could be heard throughout the village.

The Beast had returned.

From the escarpment above, it would creep down the cliff face, towards the village. Smelling the fresh blood below.

As it neared the foot of the cliff it would climb onto the roof of the Inn. Scratching and clawing, trying to find a way inside. A way to get to the flesh within. Frustrated it would roar and howl sending the villagers deeper into their loved ones arms.

The Teller remained calm.

The creature would then leap from the roof to the soft earth below. Sniffing and rooting around in the dirt, it would quickly pick up the trail left by the goats bloody passage. With an unconscious purpose, it follows the trail.

The door to the Inn was always unlocked and open on these nights. With an unnatural speed the beast would rush in and fall on the animals corpse. Ripping the flesh, gorging itself.

And while the creature devours the carcass the Teller starts to talk.

Slowly, with a soothing voice, he starts to repeat the tales the villagers have brought him. He amends each one, if need be, so that there is a happy ending. And still the beast eats and slobbers at his feet.

But soon the melodic voice of the Teller and a full stomach combine to weary the inhuman creature. It curls up, and sleeps. The Teller continues his stories until they are all told.

By this time the sun is rising, nights grip slowly released. As the rays of the sun creep throughout the Inn's open doorway, the Teller arises and steps over the body at his feet. He walks up to the Innkeepers door, and knocks three times. Wearily the Innkeeper opens his door.

"Your lord awaits below." is the only greeting the Innkeeper ever gets from the Teller. However, it is the only one he wants to hear.

The Innkeeper then goes round the village, spreading the good tidings. Their Lord's curse has been soothed for another month. As the villagers help their master back to his Keep, the Teller leaves. The guards on the Tollbooth let him pass, without payment.

For the next month the villagers have only two fears. That the Teller will not return. And that the world will learn of the Lord's curse. For then no one will use the road through the Village. They will become isolated and feared.

"Well" Said the Teller "Now one of their fears has come true."