

Short historical tour through medieval Oppenheim. Please bear in mind that St. Catherine's Church and the ossuary are only accessible from 8-18 h (November to Easter 9-17 h)!



The Gravedigger of Oppenheim

*The year is 1570. After the harvest in the vineyards of the Lord of Schmittsburg in Dexheim is now finished, for you as a day laborer there is no more work to be done. So you have made your way to the nearby city of Oppenheim in the hope of some work and a few pennies to be earned. And if not, then you can still pilfer some apples on the market. Even from a distance you see the defiant city gate that is slowly coming nearer. The two halberdiers on the left and right of the gate are looking at you somewhat derogatory, but you can pass without difficulty. You take a look back and are surprised that apparently an old acquaintance of yours, Heinrich Plir, who you got to know many years ago in Worms over a glass of wine and who was a simple stone cutter at that time, has now risen to be a master builder because **A** years ago he has built this gate.*

*Since you are a religious person, first of all you turn towards the church of St. Bartholomew. After all, he is the patron saint of the farmers. And you spontaneously think of the old adage: "As Barthel behaves, so does the whole fall." Yes, this old rule, you can always count on it - on 24 August, St. Bartholomew's Day, there was very nice weather and lately there were also some golden autumn days. While getting closer to the church, you are overcome with a vision of golems and homunculi, artificial humans who will one day take over work so people like you are out of work. You shake yourself to get rid of these confuse thoughts and you notice that the reason for it was a strange relief on the side of the church that actually showed only a nativity scene with **B** human figures.*

*After you have prayed to your titular Saint, you think about how to get work now. Probably it is best to go to the town hall. Maybe there are some placards posted there. You cannot read, however there will be some ushers there for sure that you can ask. While you are getting closer to the magnificent building, you are once again attacked by bad thoughts. Although there are no vultures circling above you, but the **C** eagles up there in their airy heights do not look as they would spurn such a meager meat as you are. In fact, you catch an usher, but he only whispers you should try at St. Catherine's Church, just to get rid of you. „The sexton has exactly the right job for people like you!“*

*Though you are pretty piqued then, you prefer to refrain from raising a quarrel with this arrogant twerp, because in times like these you quickly end up in detention for a few days with water and moldy bread. Instead, you go up to the Gothic cathedral, which dominates the entire city. The sexton asks you to wait a short while, he will be ready for you immediately. Just to kill time you look around. In particular, the tower clock draws your interest. Quickly you understand how to use the sun's position to tell time and that in this way a maximum of **D** full hours (this corresponds to the dots between the numbers) can be measured. Nevertheless, the 10 minutes that you have to wait for the sexton are too short to be measured reliably in this way.*

*You explain your request to the sexton, that you want to earn some money. The sexton nods thoughtfully and says yes, he has work. However, no-one has endured it for longer cause it is a little bit - scary. You say that you do not mind, you are a healthy young man who is not unnerved so easily. Together you go round the cathedral to St. Michael's Chapel. On your way the sexton explains that over time the adjoining cemetery would have offered less and less room so that you cannot bury anyone anymore without digging out the bones of the long deceased. Therefore, a room was emptied below St. Michael's Chapel, that is from now on used as an ossuary. Your task would be to open all graves in one corner of the cemetery, gather the bones and pile them up neatly in the ossuary. Now you have to take a deep breath, this is not exactly what you had imagined. Nevertheless, the offered wage is not negligible so that you accept anyway. So you start with this back-breaking work, and pretty soon you do not know anymore how often you already commuted between cemetery and ossuary. Just to divert yourself from this disgusting work, you count the stones in the arch above the entrance to the ossuary every time you pass, and soon you are sure that there are exactly **E** stones.*

*After several hours you suddenly make a discovery. In the farthest corner of the cemetery, under a heavy slab that you had to heave aside operose, you find a strange box. So you rush to the sexton. Together you clean the urn-shaped object from clumps of dirt. This reveals a milky-white container that resists your efforts to open it. The sexton asks you to show him where you found it. Startled, he makes three signs of the cross. Once he cleared his mind, he explains that exactly at this place King Rupert III. was buried after he died in the year of our Lord 1410 on Castle Landskron. Since his peace of the dead is now disturbed, the sexton instructs you to bring the container to the sheriff in the castle, he will know what to do. Dirty and smelly as you are, you first go past the family well to wash yourself. There, a blabber wife tells you the meaning of the name of the well, because the crest of a noble family is mapped on every of the **F** sides.*

*You thank her for the explanation and stride uphill. At the tailor tower you meet a guard who obviously belongs to the tailors' guild. After a brief technical discussion on the pros and cons of cross stitch and satin stitch you continue your way to Castle Landskron. Why are these castles always built on top of a mountain? When you arrive at the gate exhausted, you sit down on one of the **G** tree stumps standing before the gate in order to catch breath again.*

*Finally, you pick yourself up and knock at the big wooden gate. From the left, down from the mighty keep, you are observed suspiciously and apparently found to be harmless, so the gate opens. You hold the box under the nose of the bored-looking lansquenet and you claim to be admitted to the sheriff. While waiting in the courtyard you look around and you marvel the magnificent three-storey palace, that apparently has just been finished, when suddenly the enraged sheriff shows up from inside the building. As he sees the container, he gets white as chalk. Obviously he knows what it is all about. "So it is true, Ruprecht, ye come back to take possession of the castle again," he exclaims. Quickly he calls his diviner to banish the curse. After the deviner has repeatedly asked his sticks and talked with the sheriff, they both come to you. "You have conjured the mischief up - now you have to dispose it for once and of all. Go to North $49^{\circ} 51.(G)(E)$ East $008^{\circ} (E-1).(C*D*F)(A+B-C)$ and hide this box behind and under stones, so no uninitiated will ever find it again. And hurry!"*

Confused as you are, you haul ass and rush away. When you arrive at the described location, you struggle with yourself. You are just too curious and want to know what is inside the box. You cannot believe that it is the spirit of Ruprecht cause after all you are an educated man and the ghost stories your grandmother used to tell just made you smile. But perhaps there is a treasure inside? Then you could treat yourself well, have a sumptuous meal with rose hip soup, barley hotpot, spelt pancakes and maybe even a pig's trotter! You buoy yourself up and with a last effort you manage to open the container. You carefully lift the upper shell and —

End of the chronicle.