Curse of Strahd Companion



The Complete Edition

By Wyatt Trull

GUILD

Curse of Strahd Companion

Credits

Author: Wyatt Trull
Editor: Jason Price
Layout: Chris Hopper, Wyatt Trull
Graphic Design: Catlin Liliana Price, Trevor Armstrong
Artists: Olie Boldador, Alec Adams, Basilisk Art, Dean Spencer, Felipe Gaona, James Webster, Lore Wise Games
Cartography: CZrpg

On the Cover

Strahd von Zarovich watches from Castle Ravenloft as new playthings enter his realm. This scene was brought to life by Olie Boldador.

About the Author

Wyatt Trull is a fool that never stopped daydreaming about dragons in class—even while *teaching* classes. He is the author of well over half-a-hundred bestselling products for the fifth edition of the world's most okayest roleplaying game, such as *Daerdan's Class Feats*, *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, and many more.

You can support this fool's fantasies by pledging to his Patreon, following his website, or trumpeting his virtues on social media. It truly does take a village, and for this particular idiot, it might take a small nation.

For business inquiries, complaints, and advice on your own writing and/or love life, you can contact Wyatt at wyatt@wyatttrull.com. By clicking this link, you can stay up to date with his online profiles.



Why A Companion?

Even five years after its publication, *Curse of Strahd* is still lauded as 5th Edition's greatest campaigns: it is firmly rooted in gothic horror and provides a tight narrative nestled in a sandbox-like environment. The campaign's chief flaw, the *Companion* holds, is its organization—its buried details and uncommunicated direction. A Dungeon Master that fails to carefully read the module from cover to cover can find themselves later trapped when an important and missed detail crops up. The *Companion* seeks to remedy this: it looks forward so you don't have to. It also exists to streamline your session through advice, dialogue, and the providing of statistics (for monsters, magic items, and hazards) you would otherwise have to dig through other manuals for.

Companion Structure

The *Companion* is formulaic. Each chapter corresponds with a *Curse of Strahd* chapter:

Chapter 1 acts as a campaign overview, concerned with its characters and narratives.

Chapter 2 concerns Barovia itself, with an interest in its weather, geography, random encounters, and locations.

Chapters 3-15 concern their matching chapters in *Curse of Strahd* (i.e., both Chapter 3 of the *Companion* and *Curse of Strahd* concern the Village of Barovia).

Chapters 16-17 correspond to Death House, the optional *Curse of Strahd* prologue, and *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, the *Companion's* titanic conclusion to your campaign.

Appendices of the *Companion* provide the information for any a) magic items, b) creatures, and c) effects that appear in the campaign. For example, Appendix B of Chapter 3 provides statistics for all creatures found in the Village of Barovia.

Glossary

The *Companion* makes the most of several terms:

CoS refers to *Curse of Strahd*

CMP refers to the *Companion*

App. refers to an appendix of *CoS* or *CMP*

Destined Ally refers to the Strahd's enemy, the ally that is destined to stand with the party, as determined by the Fortunes of Ravenloft

Final Confrontation refers to the location in Castle Ravenloft where the adventurers are fated to fight Strahd to the death.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Into the Mists 4
Chapter II: The Lands of Barovia 25
Chapter III: The Village of Barovia 48
Chapter IV: Castle Ravenloft 74
Chapter V: The Town of Vallaki 106
Chapter VI: Old Bonegrinder 135
Chapter VII: Argynvostholt 150
Chapter VIII: The Village of Krezk 166
Chapter IX: Tsolenka Pass 183
Chapter X: The Ruins of Berez 192
Chapter XI: Van Richten's Tower 202
Chapter XII: The Wizard of Wines 217
Chapter XIII: The Amber Temple 228
Chapter XIV: Yester Hill 248
Chapter XV: The Werewolf Den 257
Chapter XVI: Death House 268
Chapter XVII: The Wedding at Ravenloft 297
Appendix A: Magic Items 335
Appendix B: Bestiary 346
Appendix C: Effects 395
Appendix D: Dramatis Personae 408

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, Ravenloft, Eberron, the dragon ampersand, Ravnica and all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries.

This work contains material that is copyright Wizards of the Coast and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild. All other original material in this work is copyright 2021 by Wyatt Trull and published under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.



Chapter I: Into the Mists

Table of Contents

Campaign Structure 5
Campaign Concepts 5
Act I: Welcome to Barovia 7
Act II: Shadows Gather 8
Act III: Against the Shadow 8
Act IV: The Devil's Wedding 9
Other Plotlines 9
Sample Plot 11
Revisions & Variants 13
Argynvostholt the Reanimated 13
Barovian Daylight 13
Bigger Barovia 14
Fear the Dark 14
The Heart of Sorrow 14
Soulless Barovians 14
The Redemption of Godfrey 15
The Voldemort Rule 15
The Fortunes of Ravenloft 15
The Holy Symbol of Ravenkind 16
The Tome of Strahd 17
The Sunsword 18
The Ba'al Verzi Dagger 18
The Destined Ally 19
The Final Confrontation 20
The Narrator's Toolbox 21

The *Companion's* inaugural chapter concerns the narrative of your *Curse of Strahd* campaign, with a focus on its characters, themes, and events. As an overview chapter, it is designed to be an easy-to-read guide to *Curse of Strahd*. The *Companion*, as it becomes clear later in this guide, is predicated around several key points:

- The *St. Andral's Feast* event, in which Vallaki's priest is slain by Strahd, is all but fated to occur. It serves as the Devil's first appearance before the players, and it leads to Vallaki being seized by Lady Fiona Wachter.
- Ireena Kolyana is later abducted by Strahd, preferably in Krezk. To spare the adventurers, she surrenders herself to the Devil, who upholds his side of the bargain.
- The adventurers must enter Castle Ravenloft before the campaign's endgame. They are delivered into its bowels by a magical mishap while Strahd is conveniently away. This gives them the opportunity to explore the castle's quest hooks that go otherwise unused since most parties enter Castle Ravenloft only once.
- The campaign ends with *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, the bestselling module written by the *Companion's* author. After capturing his beloved, Strahd invites both his sycophants and foes to Castle Ravenloft—including the adventurers.

By following these events, you can weave together a tale of woe, smote hope, and, ultimately, the triumph of good over evil. The *Companion* also introduces several campaign-wide variants and revisions you may wish to use for your *Curse of Strahd* playthrough.

Campaign Structure

One may be able to boil *Curse of Strahd* down to "find the relics, fight the vampire" but there is much more to the campaign than that. There is much ground to cover for the Dungeon Master, so draw upon this section to guide you.

Curse of Strahd can be divided into four acts, each of which are detailed below. This fourth act is *The Wedding at Ravenloft* which hinges upon Ireena Kolyana being captured and forced to marry Strahd in Castle Ravenloft.

Campaign Concepts

Several overarching elements serve as the foundation for your campaign's plot:

The Three Pillars

Curse of Strahd is composed of three chief plotlines; all other subplots are ancillary. These pillars are:

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. As many have tried before, Strahd's newest playthings must collect three artifacts that will allow them to stand against the Devil. The *Companion* provides a fourth artifact, if you are keen to use it—the very dagger used to murder Strahd.

The Devil's Bride. The Devil's long courtship of Ireena Kolyana has come to an end. Twice now she has been bitten by the vampire, and, with her father dead, he intends to make Ireena his bride. Neither she nor her brother Ismark can determine why the Devil is so obsessed with her—but such a mystery is at the very heart of Barovia's damnation. In truth, she is Tatyana reborn—bride of Strahd's brother Sergei, whose beauty is at the heart of Barovia's torment.

The Destined Ally. The Devil's playthings must search for a soul brave or foolish enough to stand with them against Strahd von Zarovich. Could it be the legendary hunter Rudolph van Richten? The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok? Or is there another ally bold enough to deliver this land from darkness? This character has—or rather should have—a story to tell.

In summary, the adventurers must search for power and assistance, all while protecting Ireena from the Devil. Ultimately, they should fail in this last endeavor to set up the campaign's titanic conclusion. It is up to you to weave together these plotlines. Other plotlines are also present, as described in the section below.

Strahd von Zarovich

Strahd is the centerpiece of your campaign—the shadow that looms over Barovia, the invisible menace slowly wrapping its fingers around the adventurers' throats. Every Dungeon Master has their own take on Strahd, but the *Companion* implores you to seldom show him. Like any monster, he must be heard, not seen, for as long as possible. Too many Dungeon Master's hurl him at their party early on in the campaign, thereby ruining the dread, gravitas, and mystique the Devil deserves. Too many interactions gives the party too much confidence and forces your hand to either back off or over-correct their disrespect.

The *Companion* has Strahd only appear *outside* Castle Ravenloft for these scenes:

- When the party first see the Black Carriage (see Area I), it is in motion, delivering Strahd to Castle Ravenloft.
- During *St. Andral's Feast* in Vallaki, when Strahd murders Father Lucian.
- At the Abbey of Saint Markovia, after Ireena's death and resurrection, wherein Strahd decides he can no longer play cat-and-mouse.
- In an epic showdown (preferably in Vallaki) wherein Strahd has Ezmerelda d'Avenir hostage and forces Rudolph van Richten to show himself.

By following this golden rule of horror, you ensure that your players will be terrified of even the *threat* of meeting Strahd.

Campaign's Themes

As a gothic horror, *Curse of Strahd* is rooted in themes not common to a typical campaign, in which heroes are destined to defeat the forces of darkness. No, in Barovia, the heroes, if they can even be called that, are playthings that might one day give their tormentor a taste of his own foul medicine. When running *Curse of Strahd*, embrace these themes:

Helplessness. Barovia is a dark and dismal land whose every shadow threatens death. The adventurers are to be outmatched at almost every turn, to be forced into a backpedal. Any hard-won victory they taste is fleeting. To enforce this theme, implement the following events:

- Pit the adventurers against werewolves early on in the campaign when they do not possess silvered weapons, so that they must flee.
- Pit the adventurers against relentless, roaming bands of undead that interrupt rests or force them into a march.
- Trap the adventurers in seemingly impossible situations where to fight is to die and to retreat is to fail—such as is the case with the hags of Old Bonegrinder.
- Force the adventurers to make hard decisions, such as having to abandon innocents to undead or werewolves. Although they make a choice, they have no control over the situation.

Mystery. Barovia is plagued with several mysteries that have gone generations without answer. Why is Strahd obsessed with Ireena Kolyana? Why are Barovians unable to leave the country? To cement this theme, try the following events:

- Show the symptoms, not the disease. The adventurers encounter blights and trees black with rot but cannot ascertain why they exist.
- Draw attention to the distant crows of ravens.
- Remark on the deafening silence of the Svalich Woods.
- Ensure that the adventurers are always being watched—by ravens, by bats, by unseen voyeurs that fan the flames of paranoia.

Defeat. The adventurers must suffer setback after setback to cement Barovia's oppressing, dismal nature. Failure will become a familiar companion, making any victory they earn all the sweeter. This theme is enforced by the following campaign events:

- The Death House sacrifice in the Prologue
- *St. Andral's Feast* event in Act I
- The abduction of Ireena Kolyana by Strahd in Act II
- The loss of any ally, innocent, or artifact

Campaign Mysteries

Curse of Strahd presents several mysteries to the players. The ones below span the entire campaign or concern the entire valley. They should not be revealed flippantly.

The Black Bottle. Coined by the *Companion*, the "black bottle" is the dismal realm Barovia's souls swim in until they are reborn into new bodies. Whenever someone is resurrected, they learn the truth and suffer resurrection madness as a result. Their ravings are discredited by the living. This mystery is best revealed by Ilya Krezkov during the *Something Old* event in Chapter 8.

D**aywalkers.** The adventurers will trust in the power of daylight to protect them against nighttime horrors—until they learn that vampires and vampire spawn can walk about in sunlight unharmed. This mystery is best revealed through action, not words—such as if Strahd's vampire spawn chase the adventurers as they flee from the coffinmaker's house in Vallaki.

Divine Eavesdropper. Strahd can eavesdrop on prayers offered to deities outside Barovia—and even issue a reply of his own. This is revealed by Strahd himself when he wishes to mock a religious adventurer. With a grin, he recites their recent prayers.

The Keepers of the Feather. Barovia is watched over by a faction of wereravens opposed to Strahd. This mystery is a slow burn and should only be revealed deep into the campaign when wereravens assist the party. Until then, many ravens display unusual intellect.

Arc Words

Many a great story utilizes a word or phrase as a motif—and given that D&D is largely an oral story, you can use this to great effect in *Curse of Strahd*. Arc words require a punchline or callback but can have great impact. Consider these arc words:

"He is the Ancient. He is the Land." First appearing in Death House, the *Tome of Strahd*, and even *I, Strahd: Memoir of a Vampire*, this phrase hints at just how much control Strahd has over the Barovian climate and its beasts. You can use this to great effect through the following:

- Madam Eva utters the phrase once during her tarokka reading: "...for he is the Ancient. He is the Land."
- Should a Vallakian relate the fate of Berez to the party, they or another nearby Barovian murmurs, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land."
- If an adventurer is infected with lycanthropy, but their first full moon is days or weeks away, Strahd may utter, "Fool! You rely on the position of the sun and stars to protect you? I am the Ancient! I am the Land! Watch!" He then wrenches the full moon into view, weeks early, causing the lycanthrope to immediately transform.

"Be Swift. Be Smart. Beware the Night." A Barovian saying coined by the *Companion*, this should replace "farewell" and "be safe" throughout the campaign. When Strahd at last encounters the party, he mocks, "I am the Night—and you were right to fear me."

"All Will Be Well!" Spoken ad nauseum by Baron Victor Vallakovich, this motif should be seeded into the story through your narration. Once the party reaches Vallaki, they at last hear "All will be well!" from an actual NPC.

"On the Shoulder of the Shadowfell." The Abbot reveals that Barovia exists as a demiplane in the Shadowfell. Thereafter, you should casually work the phrase into your narrations.

On the Shoulder of the Shadowfell. Few people know that Barovia languishes as a demiplane in or adjacent to the Shadowfell. Strahd, the Madam Eva, the Abbot, and the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok know the truth. This mystery is best revealed by the Abbot during Chapter 8, who describes Barovia as "standing on the shoulder of the Shadowfell."

Tatyana Reborn. Ireena is the reincarnation of Strahd's beloved Tatyana. This mystery spans the campaign; it's a slow burn. The adventurers either piece together the truth when Strahd begins to refer to Ireena as "Tatyana" or as they see depictions of her past lives in the Ruins of Berez and Strahd's study.

Welcome to Barovia. The first mystery is introduced to the party when they're brought into Barovia. They learn that the mists choke the life of all who attempt to escape Barovia—except Vistani. This is revealed by Ismark Kolyanovich on the same night he meets the adventurers. Madam Eva explains that only by slaying Strahd or securing his permission, can someone leave the realm.

Act I: Welcome to Barovia

Strangers to a strange land, a ragtag crew of would-be heroes learn that they are but the most recent playthings of the vampyr, Strahd von Zarovich. It will not be long before they are welcomed to this dismal land as long-lost children who have at last come home...

If *Curse of Strahd* is a noose, Act I is when the heroes are marched to the gallows. Every session must be devoted to cultivating an atmosphere of misery and dread. The party must feel trapped; they must come to understand just how precious, and futile, hope is. They are not heroes in Act I, but condemned folk.

Act I spans the prologue to the first phase of Vallaki, which itself is too complicated to run all at once. Ideally, it ends with the murder of Father Lucian, the first bright and unbroken soul met so far in the campaign, at the hands of Strahd himself. For details, see the St. Andral's Event in Vallaki, Chapter 5.

Major Events

Three key events prove instrumental in Act I. It is in your best interest to incorporate them into the campaign:

Funeral for the Burgomaster. Fearing a disgruntled mob or the Devil's agents, Ismark and Ireena must turn to the adventurers to bury their father, Kolyan Indirovich. This event, found in Chapter 3, is imperative for Act I, for the following reasons:

- It endears the party to Ismark and Ireena, who then have reason to trust these strangers. Ismark then beseeches the adventurers into delivering Ireena to Vallaki.
- It introduces the Barovian worship of the Morninglord, Doru (the priest's vampire son) and the failed peasant revolt of last year, which was led by a foreign wizard (the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok).
- As the *Companion* includes in its Village of Barovia chapter, it introduces the adventurers to Strahd's agents.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. The adventurers know that they must find a means of leaving Barovia—but until they meet Madam Eva, they will have little direction. It is imperative that they visit Tser Pool Encampment on their way to Vallaki to have the Fortunes of Ravenloft read. Consider the following:

- You must determine the adventurers' Destined Ally now, before they meet any more characters in the campaign.
- You require as much time as possible to plan out your encounters, and the adventurers deserve to have some semblance of a plan.
- The adventurers will be loathe to travel back to places they've already been to; it will be some time before they return to the eastern reaches of Barovia. You cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

St. Andral's Feast. Nothing sets the tone better for this campaign than the *St. Andral's Feast* event of Chapter 5. Father Lucian, whose faith and hope has yet to falter, has learned that the bones that sanctified his church have been stolen. Without these bones, there is nothing to hallow the church grounds. By the time the adventurers meet Lucian, there are only three days until Strahd and his ilk attack the church. Of all events in this campaign, this one proves to be crucial, for its consequences number many:

- The adventurers must deliver Ireena to the Abbey of Saint Markovia if they wish for her to be safe. As they learn, the mysterious Abbot is no beacon of light…
- Vallakian resentment for Baron Vallakovich comes to a boiling point, as it becomes clear his promise that "all will be well" is false. A mob quickly forms to usher in the Festival of the Blazing Sun by burning the baron and his wife at the stake.
- Lady Wachter capitalizes on the unrest to seize control of Vallaki. Her fiendish cult is then able to work openly, as she bends the villagers to her will.
- If Victor Vallakovich is alive, Lady Wachter forces him to marry her daughter Stella and cement her claim to Vallaki. Once Stella bears a child, Victor's life is forfeit. If Victor is the adventurers' Destined Ally, rescuing him from her clutches becomes paramount.
- The adventurers are, effectively, banished from Vallaki by Lady Wachter, who otherwise fears their meddling. This pushes the adventurers to explore other locations of Barovia, as well as assist the Markov family.

Barovian Intrigue

There are several points of intrigue that must be brought up or answered during Act I:

- The adventurers learn that they are trapped in Barovia; only the Vistani are able to leave. This grim news is best delivered to them by Ismark in the Village of Barovia, but it is often repeated by other Barovians and Vistani: "Welcome to Barovia."
- The adventurers learn that a vampire rules this forlorn land, and that he is referred to as the Devil. As noted in the *Companion*, uttering Strahd's name is forbidden, for it is believed that it attracts his dark attention and that to say his name thrice is tantamount to an invitation. In truth, it allows him to scry upon individuals from afar. Again, this warning is best delivered through Ismark.
- The adventurers learn that this vampire is obsessed with Ismark's sister, Ireena… who has already been bitten twice. Some believe she will be "turned" on the third. Ismark begs the adventurers to take Ireena to Vallaki or the Abbey of Saint Markovia.
- The adventurers learn that they are some of the many, many foreigners who have been swallowed up by the Mists, delivered to Barovia and they can only leave Barovia by receiving Strahd's permission to leave or slaying the Devil himself.

Act II: Shadows Gather

No longer content to be victims, the heroes gather their strength—but so too gather shadows. Their audacity must be punished, lest they grow too confident. The Devil has learned that great times are already in motion... and he has cracked a smile from the spires of Castle Ravenloft.

Act II is when the adventurers embrace their mission and at last begin to score victories against the Devil. With St. Andral's desecrated, they must take Ireena Kolyana to the safety of the Abbey of Saint Markovia—but they shall soon learn that it is no less wretched than anywhere else in Barovia. Despite grim tidings, the adventurers at last begin to gather strength and influence. Act II is the sandbox phase of the adventure. Here is when they begin to track down their first artifact and possibly meet their ally. Act II concerns the following areas:

Argynvostholt is best visited twice, with the party being forced to retreat after learning just how dangerous the ruined manor is.

Krezk is integral to your campaign, as it offers the only chance for Ireena Kolyana to escape Barovia, and it features the Abbot, who reveals the secret nature of this dismal realm. Krezk is a necessary chapter if you intend to run *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

The Wizard of Wines. If reclaimed from the druids, the Martikovs can lend their strength to the party—but only until Wintersplinter, the tree blight of Yester Hill, is awakened.

Van Richten's Tower's antimagic wards thwart Strahd's scrying, making it the perfect base of operations for the party.

Yester Hill is the best location for the *Tome of Strahd* and represents a turning point for the campaign: defeating the druids allows the Keepers of the Feather to lend their strength to the party.

Barovian Intrigue

During the events of Act II, several questions concerning the nature of Barovia are answered and more of its history is revealed:

- The adventurers learn that Barovia is a demiplane that "stands upon the shoulder of the Shadowfell" and that its souls can never find rest. This is best told through the Abbot, a celestial outsider. The Abbot, however, shouldn't know, or reveal, that the souls of the dead are reincarnated into new Barovians, as Act III is a better time to learn Ireena Kolyana is Tatyana reborn.
- The adventurers learn of the wereravens, and later, the Keepers of the Feather. This is a slow burn discovery, best drip-fed through spying ravens.
- The adventurers learn that the revenants of the Order of the Silver Dragon are devoted not to saving Barovia but prolonging its dismal existence only to torment Strahd. They also learn they may put the undead at ease if they can lay Argynvost's spirit to rest.

The Devil's Bride

Strahd begins hunting Ireena Kolyana during Act II. This can at first be accomplished through his minions, such as Arrigal, Kiril Stoyanovich, Barovian witches, and more. Ultimately, however, the Devil takes matters into his own hands. He himself arrives to take Ireena by force, and is willing to kill several of his new playthings in the process.

Ideally, this abduction unfolds at the Abbey of Saint Markovia and is provoked by Ireena's death: hearing the call of Sergei, she enters the sacred waters of the Shrine of the White Sun—but before her soul escapes Barovia, Strahd senses this miracle and answers it with a lance of lightning, for it is better to wait another generation than lose Tatyana forever. Ireena is slain, forcing the heroes to turn to the Abbot…

After Ireena is resurrected, Strahd appears to take her to Castle Ravenloft. When the battle proves unwinnable, Ireena surrenders herself to Strahd, who enwraps her in a cloak of mist and disappears. The next morning, wedding invitations are delivered across Barovia. This marks the transition into Act III.

Act III: Against the Shadow

The Devil's wedding looms over Barovia as a shadow. Invitations have been sent to vassals and adversaries alike... and it seems that as Ireena Kolyana screams her rage from her tower-top prison, so too does the valley begin to weep. Grueling rains batter Barovia, turning the roads to mud. Wolves haunt the woods in numbers never before seen. Ambulant dead have risen from their graves, as if they too were invited to Castle Ravenloft...

The adventurers have less than a fortnight to collect their artifacts and muster their allies. It seems as if Barovia itself stands against their efforts—the weather worsens and wolves harry the adventurers' every march. This is, of course, nothing less than the will of Strahd himself, who wishes to blunt their progress and erode their morale.

Notably, Act III should spirit the adventurers to Castle Ravenloft for an early visit while Strahd is away or asleep. This trip affords them insight to the castle's layout and defenses, as well as obtaining valuable loot from the Catacombs. Act III concerns the following areas:

The Amber Temple may very well be the adventurers' last delve before advancing into Act IV. It is here they are offered dark power. Will they decide that the ends justify the means? Will they choose corruption in order to provoke salvation?

Argynvostholt. If the adventurers lost the holy symbol of Ravenkind, it may be found in Argynvostholt with Vladimir Horngaard.

The Ruins of Berez belong to Baba Lysaga who is the best guardian of the *Sunsword.* A visit also reveals Ireena is the reincarnation of Tatyana.

Castle Ravenloft. The adventurers should be brought to Castle Ravenloft early, so that they may gain loot and explore its labyrinthine chambers.

Tsolenka Pass. This portion of the campaign can be completed in one session.

Vallaki. If Fiona Wachter seized control of Vallaki, the adventurers may need to liberate the Martikov family or rescue their destined ally. They find the town has begun to worship "the Night" and the Devil himself.

Into Castle Ravenloft

During Act III, the adventurers should be granted entry or forced into Castle Ravenloft, namely to search for one of their artifacts. Unbeknownst to the adventurers, Strahd is busy, asleep, or gone while they're inside. For details on this trip, see Chapter 4 of the *Companion*.

Gaining Entry. To enter Castle Ravenloft by its front gates is to warn the Devil and his minions—and that is tantamount to suicide. The *Companion* proposes a modest change to the module to facilitate their stealthy foray: a mage taps into Strahd's teleportation network.

Within his dungeons, Strahd maintains a magic brazier that allows one to teleport around Castle Ravenloft and even Barovia itself. As described in Area K78, Chapter 4, by tossing a stone into the fire, one can teleport to a new destination. Normally, this conjuration is one way—and Strahd, in his hubris, never anticipated that someone could use this magic to infiltrate Castle Ravenloft.

A confluence of events during Act III allows a mage to tap into the brazier's magic—by mistake or purposely. This mage might be Victor Vallakovich, the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, or even Kasimir Velikov. It might even be the adventurers' resident arcane spellcaster who senses an opportunity to escape whatever trouble they are in. Whomever does it, the adventurers are delivered into the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft.

For a short time, they may explore the castle until discovered by Rahadin or another minion. If a non-player character is responsible for delivering the adventurers to Castle Ravenloft, they remain behind in the Brazier Room to fix the device; it is preventing their exit.

When running this foray, ensure that Strahd is away. Refer to Chapter 4 of *Curse of Strahd* and remove any instances where the vampire finds the adventurers.

Getting Out. When the adventurers are ready to leave, they must return to the Brazier Room and cast a stone into the fire.

Barovian Intrigue

There are few mysteries left by now in the campaign:

- Madam Eva is Strahd's half-sister, which she reveals to the party if they come to her for guidance.
- Ireena is the reincarnation of Tatyana.
- Strahd can hear prayers offered to deities.
- The Amber Temple is the font of dark power in which Strahd found vampirism.

Act IV: The Devil's Wedding

Triumphant in his centuries-long pursuit of his beloved Tatyana, Strahd has invited his enemies and adversaries to Castle Ravenloft. All are expected to witness his dark union with the lovely Ireena Kolyana.

Act IV is the titanic conclusion of your *Curse of Strahd* campaign. It relies upon the Devil capturing Ireena, which may occur at any point throughout the campaign. This act is already described in *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, which is incorporated into Chapter 4 of the *Companion*. The act is contained entirely within Castle Ravenloft. Either the adventurers succeed in slaying Strahd or they join the countless heroes who have failed to end his reign.

Advancement. Act IV is designed for 9th- and 10th-level adventurers. The party enters Castle Ravenloft at 9th-level and level up after surviving several of Strahd's ambushes and schemes. Thus, they are 10th-level when they square off against the Devil, per their Final Confrontation tarokka card. Leveling up does *not* restore their full hit points and other resources; it only adds to their existing ones. For example, a wizard that advances to 10th-level increases their current hit points and hit point maximum by 1d6 + their Constitution modifier and gains their second 5th-level spell slot.

Other Plotlines

There is more to do in Barovia than protect Ireena, find the Fortunes of Ravenloft, and slay Strahd. The following plotlines are present in the campaign.

A plotline is distinct from a side quest or ordinary arc, for it spans several areas or chapters. If a quest is self-contained in its resident chapter, it is a side quest. For example, rescuing Arabelle from Lake Zarovich is a side quest, but restoring the Martikov family is a plotline.

The Lifeblood of Barovia

Barovians have few comforts in life and the valley's most precious one has mysteriously run dry: wine. Shipments from the Wizard of Wines winery, which is owned and operated by the Martikov family, have come to a halt. This plotline concerns Vallaki, the Wizard of the Wines, Yester Hill, and the Ruins of Berez (Chapters 5, 12, 14, and 10, respectively).

Summary. The Martikovs helm the Keepers of the Feather, an order of wereravens devoted to improving life in Barovia. They are menaced by evil druids and raiders that have been pushed by Baba Lysaga, a witch haunting the Ruins of Berez. Lysaga is the midwife that bore Strahd into this world and imbued him with the spark of magic to ensure he would become a mage. She takes it upon herself to eradicate any forces that would menace or oppose her beloved Strahd—and the mysterious wereravens have now made that list. While the druids of Yester Hill have pilfered one life-giving gem, Baba Lysaga has taken the other. The vineyard has since lost its fertility and the Martikov family the control of the winery itself.

Foreshadowing. The strength of this plotline is that its many elements all seem unrelated. To foreshadow The *Lifeblood of Barovia*, implement this order of events:

- Remark on the abundance of ravens in Barovia, and how they seem to be watching the adventurers. Sparingly, a raven is secretly a wereraven.
- Remark on the shortage of wine as early as the Village of Barovia through Arik the barkeep or any Vistani in the Blood of the Vine Tavern.
- Feature blights in the campaign as early as the Village of Barovia, or when the adventurers first leave it. A herd of blights, bereft of a druid, attack the party. A vine blight remarks, "The seed has born bitter fruit… We are that fruit!" When the party next encounters any blights, they see that such awful creatures are being shepherded by a druid.
- While traveling, the adventurers see random oak trees stricken with a black rot—the taint of the Gulthias Tree, which has begun to spread throughout the valley.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. If you wish to combine the search of an ally or artifact with this plotline, consider the following:

- If you intend to run Yester Hill, the *Tome of Strahd* is at the heart of the Gulthias Tree and its symbolism as the source of such great evil should not go unnoticed by your adventurers.
- Davian Martikov, patriarch of the Martikov family and the Keepers of the Feather, will only aid the adventurers if his family and estate are saved… or eradicated.

Peace for the Order

What was once a bastion of righteousness has become a house of hate. The Order of the Silver Dragon's greatest knights have risen from the grave, but instead of scoring victories for the Barovian people, Vladimir Horngaard has ordered his warriors to lay waste only to those who would ease the Devil's torment. Only be recovering the skull of the dragon Argynvost from Castle Ravenloft can the undead be put to rest and the order redeemed. This plotline concerns Argynvostholt and Castle Ravenloft (Chapters 7 and 4, respectively).

Revision. The *Companion* revises the module to allow the adventurers a more reasonable chance to restore the Order of the Silver Dragon: Argynvost's wingless corpse has been animated by Strahd and kept in the bowels of Castle Ravenloft. If slain, its luminous gem of a heart can be brought to Argynvostholt, acting in place of his skull. This revision is necessary if you want to resolve this plot before the campaign's end, for there is no reasonable way to transport Argynvost's 250 pound skull across Barovia. The whole point becomes moot if Strahd is slain, for the revenants are put to rest the instant the Devil dies.

Foreshadowing. This plotline appeals to crusaders and clerics alike. To properly foreshadow it, implement this order of events:

- Feature Sir Godfrey Gwilym as an agent of Strahd's (see Suggested Variants in the section below).
- Run the *Skeletal Rider* random encounter to demonstrate that undead endure in Barovia and not all are evil.
- Once in Vallaki, give the adventurers a rumor about the "haunted mansion" outside town. With any luck, the party investigates it well before they're equipped to actually battle the undead. They encounter the Living Fire of Area Q6 while there.
- Run the *Revenant* random encounter. The knight reveals the history of the Order of the Silver Dragon and begs the adventurers to redeem the knights by securing Argynvost's remains from Castle Ravenloft.
- Have Strahd steal the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* from the party; the revenants take the artifact by force, forcing the adventurers to face Vladimir Horngaard.
- Run the *Lost Battlefield* special event in the Ruins of Berez.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. This plotline can feature the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* and Sir Godfrey Gwilym.

The Hunt for Rudolph van Richten

Strahd's nemesis—the legendary Rudolph van Richten—has come to Barovia. Many are searching for him: the Devil, the Vistani, and even his protege Ezmerelda. The campaign is permeated by this hunt. This storyline is inherently tied to the party's Destined Ally, whom the *Companion* suggests be Ezmerelda or van Richten. For details, see *The Destined Ally* below.

Introduction. The adventurers are never explicitly told who their ally is. Rather, Madam Eva draws the Tempter card during the tarokka reading. The adventurers must save Arabelle from Lake Zarovich, but she isn't destined to be the heroes' ally—she is the key to finding that ally. By saving her, the party proves themselves to Ezmerelda, van Richten—and Arrigal, after she is returned to the Vistani camp. Arrigal offers his gratitude and implies that he wishes to see the Devil overthrown. In truth, Arrigal recognizes that these are Strahd's newest playthings and begins to plot against them. Thus, the adventurers are led to believe that he may be their destined ally.

Rumors. The adventurers hear rumors alleging that "Strahd's nemesis" has come to Barovia. They even come across would-be bounty hunters and witness raids led by Izek Strazni (who has been ordered by the baron to find van Richten). These rumors are given by Urwin Martikov. If asked about van Richten, the individuals below have some unkind words to say:

- Vargas Vallakovich grunts over dinner, "They say the caitiff van Richten has come to Barovia. His antics will surely bring ruin upon us all… but all will be well! All will be well, I assure you!"

- Lady Fiona Wachter sneers, "That fool van Richten has come to our dismal country, they say. As if the Devil could ever be slain. I wish him a happy life—and a quick death. Though I know our distant lord is not quite as merciful…"
- Kasimir Velikov murmurs, "Strange tidings are afoot. The Mists have drawn in tighter, as they do every other generation. I have heard it said that Rudolph van Richten himself has been trapped inside this time—more false hope, I imagine."

Revision. Van Richten's cover must be maintained. To that end, nix the Vallakian rumor that a half-elf has only recently come to Vallaki. Instead, Rictavio has been here for well over a month. You thereby nip early suspicion in the bud for both the adventurers and Ezmerelda.

Enter Ezmerelda. Ezmerelda is encountered outside Vallaki after Arabelle has been rescued. She has already made an attempt on Strahd's life and has been wounded by this foray into Castle Ravenloft. Werewolves are on her tail; as the adventurers return from exploring a locale, they are caught in the crossfire. Ezmerelda, haggard and bereft of spell slots, requires their intervention. She later reveals that she is none other than van Richten's protégé. "He works alone," she explains, "for a curse was laid upon him—a curse that brings ruin to all those around him."

Once again, the adventurers are mired in uncertainty. Who is their ally? Arrigal offers his gratitude, so as to ingratiate himself with the party. Ezmerelda decides to recuperate in Vallaki but might accompany them to Van Richten's Tower or Argynvostholt, after which sets out on her lonesome again. As for Rudolph van Richten, he stays in the shadows, aiding the adventurers when he can from Vallaki.

The Showdown. Inevitably, Strahd provokes a conflict that forces van Richten's hand. Arrigal at last betrays the adventurers, and Strahd holds his fangs to Ezmerelda's throat. To save his protege, van Richten attacks—or he tearfully holds back, allowing her to die. The adventurers are left with their Destined Ally.

Ideally, this event occurs in Vallaki and during Act III of the campaign. With careful planning, you can tie this into the Act III foray into Castle Ravenloft, if you feature Victor Vallakovich or Kasimir Velikov. You can also combine it with the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* event in which Strahd demands the artifact in return for someone's life (after which they must recover it).

Sample Plot

The following tried-and-true plotline has been provided. It is easy to implement, even when taking player agency into account, hitting the main notes of the campaign in efficient but cinematic ways. While your mileage may, of course, vary, it is useful for you to have a sample plotline with which you can compare your own campaign to.

It goes without saying the players might thwart any or all of the events listed below; however, having a sample storyline to refer to can help a Dungeon Master reroute themselves in the aftermath of that intervention.

As one can see, Act I is relatively straight forward, both narratively and geographically. The adventurers begin in the east, in the Village of Barovia, and soldier steadily on westward. Thereafter, in Act II, their path branches out, as both they and the DM grapple with what piques their interest and what the Fortunes of Ravenloft demand.

Summary. The many, many bullet points below can be boiled down to this summary:

Brought to Barovia, the adventurers meet Ismark and his sister Ireena, whom the vampire Strahd is obsessed with. Ismark insists they bring Ireena to safety: if not in Vallaki, then surely the Abbey of Saint Markovia. Vallaki falls to chaos after the local priest is murdered. The abbey proves no safer than Strahd himself arrives to abduct his beloved. With Ireena taken captive, and a wedding announced, the adventurers have but a fortnight to amass the power and resources they need to defeat Strahd von Zarovich.

Act I

- The adventurers arrive to the Village of Barovia, and, through Ismark learn that they are trapped in this dismal realm. Ismark requires help burying his father, fearing that a mob will form to give Ireena to Strahd, whom the villagers blame for their perpetual troubles.
- The Vistani in the Blood of the Vine Tavern remark, "Oh, you must be the newcomers Madam Eva foretold of. Seek her out, for she alone knows your destiny."
- The adventurers meet Donavich and learn of Doru's grim fate, as well as last year's failed peasant revolt, which was led by a foreign wizard. During the funeral, which must be performed at dawn, an agent of Strahd's arrives to demand Kolyan's corpse. A battle ensues. Should the adventurers triumph, they deserve to reach 4th-level.
- With his father buried, Ismark tasks the party with taking Ireena to Vallaki or Krezk. He warns the party against visiting Tser Pool Encampment.
- The adventurers travel through the mountains. If they do not visit Tser Pool outright, they are attacked by werewolves at Tser Falls. They can descend a treacherous slope and reach the encampment, which is protected by wolfsbane incense—an herbal ward the Vistani are loath to part with.
- The adventurers have their destiny read by Madam Eva, who informs them they are not the first to visit Barovia, "...but, perhaps, you shall be the last."

- The adventurers reach Vallaki and hear "all will be well" until they are sick of the phrase. They bring Ireena to St. Andral's Church; Father Lucian offers sanctuary and offers the Bones of St. Andral quest. The party meets Yeska, the altar boy doomed to die by Strahd's hand.
- The adventurers are given time to scope out Vallaki and meet its residents. Baron Vallakovich learns that Ireena has entered Vallaki and insists she come for dinner. He wishes to marry her to his son, Victor.
- Distractions continue to keep the party from recovering St. Andral's bones (or they waver once they learn that several vampires guard the bones), leading to the *St. Andral's Feast* event. Father Lucian is slain and the church is desecrated.
- Civil unrest comes to a boiling point now that the baron's promise of "all will be well" has been proven false. A mob, directed by Lady Wachter, drags the baron and his wife out to the town square to be burned alive—for what better way is there to kick off the Festival of the Burning Sun?
- Lady Wachter seizes control of Vallaki. The Martikov family, worried about their relatives and the winery, are content to watch from afar. Wachter, hoping to cement her claim to Vallaki, imprisons Victor Vallakovich and marries him to her daughter Stella.
- The party is forced to leave Vallaki—banished by Lady Wachter or motivated by circumstance, like taking Ireena to the Abbey of Saint Markovia.

Act II

- The adventurers begin their journey westward, to Krezk. They investigate interesting locales like Argynvostholt, Van Richten's Tower, and more.
- The adventurers arrive in Krezk with Ireena in tow. They receive a cold reception at the gates, but Ireena is able to convince Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov to open the gates by sharing details that only he and her late father would know (as the two communicated through letters). Without Ireena, the adventurers can gain access with wine, as noted in the module.
- Dmitri explains the Abbey of Saint Markovia was the site of a great atrocity long ago, and has since been taken over by the strange and unsettling "Abbot," who sought to cure the Belviews.
- That night, both the *Something New* and *Something Old* events occur. The Abbot visits the burgomaster's home while the adventurers are present. He raises Ilya from the dead—who is cursed with resurrection madness. Ilya raves about a "black bottle" in which his and other souls were forced to swim about in. This "bottle" is his perception of the Barovian afterlife.
- The next day, the *Something Blue* event occurs. Ireena is drawn to the Shrine of the White Sun (S4) and enters its waters. Just as her soul is about to escape Barovia, Strahd is alerted, and he hurls a bolt of lightning from afar, killing her instantly and destroying the shrine. Better to wait another generation for his beloved to be reborn than lose her forever.
- As dusk settles, the adventurers have nowhere to go but the Abbey of Saint Markovia, out from which ring the mad howls of the Belview family. The Abbot accepts them into his lair and uses this as an opportunity to teach Vasilka how to converse and dine with others.
- The Abbot reveals that Barovia "sits on the shoulder of the Shadowfell" and its souls are trapped. Only by truly making the Devil happy, he insists, may the realm be saved. He claims Ireena is too flawed for this task and that Vasilka shall deliver Barovia from evil. However, the fallen angel still offers to resurrect Ireena in return for a wedding dress (see *Something Borrowed*).
- Ireena is resurrected during dinner, but will be "held" by the Abbot until he has his wedding dress. When she is returned to life, she raves about a "black bottle in which all souls are trapped."
- Sensing Ireena has been resurrected, Strahd arrives at the abbey's gates with a hostage: Yeska, the St. Andral's altar boy. Strahd pretends that the abbey is hallowed ground that he can't invade; he demands Ireena be handed over. If the adventurers refuse, he snaps Yeska's neck and enters the courtyard. The battle for Ireena Kolyana begins.
- The Abbot, still believing this to be futile, does not join the battle. When it seems Strahd is about to murder an adventurer, Ireena willingly gives herself to Strahd if he will spare the party. The Devil agrees and a cloak of shadows envelopes the two. Ireena tells the party to find Ismark and deliver her from Castle Ravenloft.
- The next morning, the adventurers receive an invitation to Strahd and Ireena's wedding, dated up to two weeks from now. Now facing a deadline, the adventurers must brave the worst of Barovia and amass the power required to stand boldly against the Devil.

Act III

- With less than a fortnight before the wedding, the heroes must scavenge Barovia for allies and artifacts. There are many threats, but too little time to deal with them all.
- The adventurers return to Vallaki to assist the Martikovs, rescue Victor Vallakovich, or liberate the town from the iron grip of Lady Wachter, whose cult now practices openly. Wachter also has convinced the townsfolk to "embrace the Night" and worship Strahd.
- The adventurers return to the Village of Barovia to plan with Ismark, slay Doru, or recruit Donavich. They also visit Madam Eva, who now truly believes that they might be able to defeat her "brother." If the party has lost an artifact, Madam Eva provides a new reading to determine its new location.
- The adventurers visit the Amber Temple at the behest of Kasimir Velikov or in search of their last artifact (if not both). Kasimir follows, desperate to find the means to resurrect his sister Patrina. He is willing to both kill and die for this cause.

Act IV

Act IV is described in *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, which is detailed at the end of the *Companion*.

- The adventurers arrive at Castle Ravenloft under a grim and grueling storm. They are greeted by Cyrus Belview. The other wedding guests have all already arrived.
- The adventurers are welcomed into Castle Ravenloft but warned not to venture into forbidden areas. They must choose whether to obey the rules or stage a battle.
- The bride requests the presence of one adventurer, who is asked either to be a bridesmaid, groomsman, or even the maid of honor. This adventurer is watched over by Rahadin and all three of Strahd's vampire brides. As they are being escorted back downstairs, Strahd makes his way up the tower.
- Meanwhile, Strahd, or rather an illusion of him, has the other adventurers join him in the Dining Hall for wine. He offers the adventurers their freedom if they do not intervene in the wedding. If Strahd is allowed to marry and turn Ireena, he will allow them to leave Barovia at dawn. This is a lie—the Devil will have his cake and eat it too.
- The adventurers are given multiple opportunities to stop the wedding, but to do so would break the Laws of Hospitality, which Strahd claims to subscribe to, and incur his wrath.
- Ultimately, Strahd betrays the adventurers, whom he intends to make Ireena's first meal as a vampire. The adventurers must fight their way to the scene of their Final Confrontation (as determined by the Fortunes of Ravenloft).



Revisions & Variants

No campaign is perfect. The *Companion* recommends a few revisions to *Curse of Strahd* that its author believes will make for a tighter, more compelling story. These revisions affect much of the campaign, not just the chapter or location any associated characters are found in. It also recommends several variants that you might utilize in your campaign for additional fun and intrigue. The changes herein affect the entire campaign.

Argynvostholt the Reanimated

To lay the revenants to rest, Argynvost's 250-pound skull must somehow be transported from Castle Ravenloft to Argynvostholt. The *Companion* suggests a new variant: Strahd animated Argynvost's wingless corpse as one last insult to the Order of the Silver Dragon.

Argynvost's spirit cannot find peace for so long as this corpse endures. The dragon can and should be fought by the adventurers during an early foray into Castle Ravenloft. Once destroyed, a luminous gemstone forms in the dragon's chest cavity. If this gemstone—the Heart of Argynvost—is laid within the Argynvostholt crypts, the revenants are put to rest, triggering the *Lighting the Beacon* event.

Barovian Daylight

By default, vampires and vampire spawn aren't harmed by Barovia's pitiful sunlight, allowing the undead to walk out into the "light" of day. The *Companion* suggests revising this for vampire spawn, and possibly even Strahd itself. The sky can, and should, still be overcast, but even this pitiful light should be enough to sequester vampires and their ilk to the shadows. You can justify this revision through the Dark Powers, who wish to see Strahd suffer and struggle from the dark.

Canonically, Barovia does have sunlight, as shown in *I, Strahd: Memoirs of a Vampire*. That *Curse of Strahd* has neutered daylight is, the *Companion* holds, one step too far in making Strahd all-powerful. While it does make for a terrifying moment when the adventurers learn that not even the sun can protect them—when Doru bursts through the church's roof and clambers up the Pillarstone of Ravenloft, or when the vampire spawn in Vallaki pursue their prey out onto the streets, daylight should be the people's barest defense against the dark. Yes, Strahd is the Ancient, and Strahd is the Land, but this is the cornerstone of vampire lore, and the *Companion* believes it should be respected. It is up to you, however, as are all matters concerning your campaign.

By adopting this variant, Strahd is forced to rely upon his other minions during daylight hours. Likewise, he is prone to sleeping while the sun is up. You can circumvent this variant later through one trick Strahd has up to his sleeve: changing the weather. Through great exertion, the Devil can force a rainstorm upon the valley, diminishing daylight just enough for him to walk about unabated for a number of minutes. If you so wish, to do so also subjects him to a level of exhaustion.

Ultimately, the *Companion* acknowledges that ripping away sunlight as a defense is an incredible way to make the players and their characters feel naked and vulnerable. It simply disagrees that this is best for the campaign and its narrative. An all-powerful villain quickly loses their appeal and inevitably requires contrivance on the writer's or storyteller's part to justify just why the villain doesn't slaughter the heroes. Sunlight, therefore, is one barrier that feels instrumental in hampering Strahd.

Bigger Barovia

Barovia is a tiny country with a meager number of folk. In many ways, the valley's size and population limits your campaign—it deprives you of a blank check with which you can craft your own adventures. Ordinarily, it takes less than a day to walk from the Village of Barovia to Vallaki, depriving you of the juicy drama of camping outdoors or rushing for an inn as dusk falls. The *Companion* suggests two variants to better flesh-out your campaign and satisfy inconsistencies:

Population. Barovia has a population of fewer than three thousand, which has drastic implications for its culture, economy, endeavors, and… lineages. While your adventurers won't care about demographics, you might. The *Companion* suggests doubling the population, an effect of which can be invisible in your campaign. Additionally, remember it takes roughly five hundred people to support a medieval village. You can trust me, Wyatt Trull, on that number, and don't you worry about citations. Consider these points when using this variant:

- The Village of Barovia is not nearly as empty as it is in the module and the hundred zombies lurking inside its many abandoned homes should be reduced to twenty.
- Vallaki is a city in its own right, and is supported by steadings on its outskirts or near Lake Zarovich. No changes to the map are necessary to support this.
- Krezk, being entirely self-sufficient, should have at most a hundred-and-fifty people.
- The dusk elves should be scattered across Barovia. No changes are necessary to the camp outside Vallaki.
- The mountain clans, which includes the druids of Yester Hill, can play more of a role in Barovian affairs with their increased numbers. Ancient human tribes typically consisted of fifty or so members.

Geography. *Bigger Barovia* also increases the valley's size to facilitate longer travel. Without this change, it will take less than a day for someone to walk from the Village of Barovia to Vallaki, robbing you of drama and the potential of nighttime encounters. In general, every hex on the Barovian map is equal to 4 miles; however, travel should take as long as the plot demands. Thus, the *Companion* lists the inflated travel times for nearby locales in each chapter (e.g., how long from the Village of Barovia to the Tser Falls, etc.).

Bigger Barovia: Approximate Populations

Settlement	Original Population	New Population
The Village of Barovia	100	500
Vallaki	1,000	3,000
Krezk	75	150
Vistani	300	600
Dusk Elves	25	300
Wildlings	100	300

Fear the Dark

Those who are born outside of Barovia's darkness have no means to triumph over it. Under this variant, darkvision (when granted by a racial trait) doesn't pierce Barovian darkness for non-Barovian natives or those who have not acclimated to the Domains of Dread or Shadowfell.

Through this variant, you reintroduce mankind's ancient fear of the dark to player characters who would otherwise nullify this staple of horror.

Of all variants, this is the most controversial, so exercise it with caution. It requires your players' consent, for it will invalidate a choice they made during character creation. To some players, nocturnal vision is an important factor into their character design, especially for *Curse of Strahd*, so discuss this first with your players. As a compromise, you can have the adventurers acclimate to Barovian darkness. After 1d3+1 weeks, a character with darkvision (as a racial trait) can now use that trait normally.

The Heart of Sorrow

This minor revision answers the old question of where the third life-giving gemstone (which the Martikovs used to imbue their winery with fertility) has gone: it is the basis of the Heart of Sorrow. See Area K20 for details on the Heart of Sorrow.

Soulless Barovians

That nine of ten Barovians are born without souls is a new development unique to *Curse of Strahd*. Never in previous editions of Ravenloft did the Barovians suffer in such a way. It is recommended to reverse this ratio: only one in ten Barovians are born soulless. To have an entire country, albeit a small one, live their pitiful lives in fear and hate is interesting, but unfeasible. This condition would affect society in countless ways that are beyond the scope of your *Curse of Strahd* campaign.

The Redemption of Godfrey

There is no character more tragic in *Curse of Strahd* than Sir Godfrey Gwilym. His death at the hands of Strahd has damned his comrades and lover to a dismal eternity. The *Companion* recommends taking Sir Godfrey out of Argynvostholt and employing him as a recurring villain capable of redemption.

Per this variant, Godfrey has entered a pact with Strahd: six hundred years of service as his executioner for the return of Argynvost's skull, which will then put Godfrey and his fellow knights at rest. By the time the campaign has begun, Godfrey is two hundred years into his tenure.

Godfrey makes for an amazing villain: he is capable of redemption, and he cannot truly die. The adventurers can repeatedly cut him down only for him to turn up later—and no matter what new corpse his soul inhabits, Godfrey can be identified by his graven voice and the dull, red sheen of his eyes.

The *Companion* utilizes Godfrey during the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* event in Chapter 3. Through numerous playtests, it has been determined that four 3rd-level player characters, with Ismark and three guards at their side, can actually kill a revenant, even with Godfrey's spells. Through caution and restraint, the former on behalf of the DM and the latter on Godfrey himself, you can hurl this undead knight at your adventurers. As a revenant, he can tread where Strahd's vampire spawn cannot and you can afford for him to die.

Redemption. Godfrey can be redeemed by restoring the skull of Argynvost to his mausoleum or by utilizing the *Argynvost the Animated* variant.

The Voldemort Rule

To utter Strahd's name is forbidden in Barovian society, for it is believed it attracts his dark attention—and to say his name thrice is tantamount to a summons, or worse, an invitation indoors. This variant has a number of benefits:

- By forbidding Strahd's name, you foment tension in the campaign and breed an atmosphere of dread.
- The adventurers will inevitably flinch whenever Strahd's name is spoken, to the point where they will forbid each other from doing so.
- It will come as a shock when a defiant, brave, or foolish character utters Strahd's name. It may even betray their secret allegiance—for people like Arrigal or Vladimir Horngaard have little to fear from the Devil.
- It allows you to summon Strahd through the lips of a character. Should the heroes storm Wachterhaus, for example, Fiona Wachter could shout Strahd's thrice. Minutes later, the Devil himself arrives at Vallaki on the back of his nightmare steed.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft

The Fortunes of Ravenloft form the campaign's structure. Without them, the players lack the necessary direction to navigate Barovia. They represent the "Main Quest" of *Curse of Strahd*, but this quest usually won't be handed down until about three sessions into the campaign—for the adventurers must first grapple with the prologue and the Village of Barovia.

It is heavily recommended that you draw the Fortunes of Ravenloft beforehand and stack the tarokka deck when the adventurers meet Madam Eva. To draw randomly (in the moment) can cause a tangle of problems:

- Once Madam Eva offers her prediction, you are bound to it. To contrive a different meaning or directive after the fact may prove difficult. If you later regret the card you drew, you'll have to bend over backwards to change the location or character behind the scenes without confusing your players. Additionally, the adventurers are not likely to return to Tser Pool for some time. Unless you place Madam Eva in a wagon and have her appear elsewhere, you're stuck with whatever she told the adventurers before.
- By drawing randomly, you risk piling the artifacts up in one single location, which is narratively unrewarding. What, are the adventurers going to swoop in and take all three artifacts at once and shoot up three levels?
- Not all locations or characters are appealing, formidable, or even cool. Some might even be insurmountable until the latter stages of the campaign.
- If the artifacts are all in high level locations, the party will be starved for levels throughout the campaign.
- Your Destined Ally may have already died or been met, spoiling any chance for a memorable introduction.

Collecting the Artifacts

Collecting the artifacts is no easy task and must come with great pain and sacrifice. The *Companion* recommends structuring it so that the Holy Symbol is found first (only to be taken by Strahd and then recovered later), followed by the *Tome of Strahd*, and finally the *Sunsword*, as it is the most powerful artifact of all.

The adventurers are not the first to face Strahd von Zarovich. Many a hero has been swallowed by the Mists and brought to Barovia, only to die to his schemes. Their efforts may be the cause of an artifact's location. For example, the Four of Swords determines that an artifact is in the crypts of Castle Ravenloft—found in possession of a corpse at the bottom of a spiked pit. Thus, Strahd is not the sole explanation for an artifact's resting place. You can use these opportunities to feature the failed efforts of the party's predecessors.

The Holy Symbol of Ravenkind

The *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* (hereafter "Holy Symbol") ought to be the first artifact recovered by the adventurers, for it finally affords them a source of sunlight. Moreover, it is a beacon of hope that can guide them forward in the campaign. After facing so many losses and overwhelming odds, having something to fight the darkness becomes thematically powerful. However, that symbol of hope is doomed to be temporarily lost to the Devil. It is for this reason that the *Companion* recommends placing the Holy Symbol first in the party's path; whereas other guides may advise placing the Symbol second, this event necessitates an earlier acquisition of the artifact.

Revision. Per *Curse of Strahd*, the Holy Symbol can only be attuned to by good-aligned clerics or paladins. However, Celestial warlocks and Divine Soul sorcerers of good alignment should also be able to attune to it.

Recommended Locations

The Holy Symbol should be available only after the *St. Andral's Feast* event occurs or is thwarted. The locations below are recommended:

The Abbey. If you only have so many months to finish *Curse of Strahd*, it's best to place the Holy Symbol in the Abbey of Saint Markovia so that the adventurers can meet the Abbot, witness Ireena's abduction by Strahd (as described in Sample Plot above) and recover an artifact all in one chapter. See the 1 of Glyphs reading and Ch. 8, Area S13.

Old Bonegrinder. No locale is as deadly or infamous in early *Curse of Strahd* as Old Bonegrinder. Many a party meet their end here after biting off more than they can chew. Imagine their dread when they learn they must return to the hag lair to recover an artifact. See the 7 of Glyphs reading and Ch. 6, Area O4).

Event: The Symbol Stolen

Once Strahd learns the party possesses the Holy Symbol, an artifact he had to grapple with before, he does his best to remove it from their arsenal. This is best done through a hostage negotiation; Strahd demands the Holy Symbol in return for sparing an ally's life. Given his alignment, he is likely to honor the agreement.

Once Strahd has taken the artifact, he tasks a minion with hiding it. This may be Cyrus Belview, Rahadin, or even Sir Godfrey (if the *Companion's* changes are used). Thereafter, it is placed within one of the areas below. The adventurers can return to Madam Eva for guidance—if she does not already appear in a vardo to give them a fresh tarokka reading.

Author's Advice: The Symbol Stolen

I knew that to deprive the adventurers of the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* would make for a great and painful twist. To take it by force, however, would leave the players without agency; instead, I wanted them to suffer under a choice. Strahd was instrumental in this development.

With his fangs inches from Ezmerelda's throat, Strahd offered the adventurers a deal: her life for the Holy Symbol. They obliged. Much to my shame, I had Strahd take the Holy Symbol and her life. Until that point, Strahd had kept his word in all regards; thus, when I ran *The Wedding at Ravenloft* later, the players themselves did not trust the promise of peace that was offered to all wedding guests.

That, however, was not the end of the Holy Symbol. See, when I first performed the Fortunes of Ravenloft reading, I drew the 7 of Swords: the Symbol was meant to be in the Amber Temple. I learned afterwards that this was absurd, so I hid it in the Abbey of Saint Markovia, painting the Abbot as the "faceless god." Once Strahd had taken the Holy Symbol, and the adventurers were 8th-level, I embraced the original reading: the Holy Symbol was hidden in the Amber Temple by Strahd's agents. The heroes braved its depths to recover the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, fulfilling their destiny.

Argynvostholt. Vladimir Horngaard, a fallen paragon, is the perfect guardian of the Holy Symbol. His knights take the symbol by force from Strahd's minions while they are on their way to the Amber Temple. Madam Eva draws. Madam Eva draws the 1 of Swords to guide the party to this locale.

Wachterhaus. If Vallaki has been taken over by Fiona Wachter, Strahd entrusts her with the Symbol. Use this if the adventurers are disinclined to liberate Vallaki. As described in the *Companion's* Vallaki chapter, Fiona Wachter deserves far more formidable statistics in the aftermath of her coup d'état, making the recovery of the artifact all the more difficult. Madam Eva draws the 9 of Glyphs card to guide the party to the artifact.

The Werewolf Den. The werewolves lay the artifact at the foot of the cursed statue of Mother Night described in Area Z7. Madam Eva draws the 5 of Swords to guide the adventurers to the symbol.

Amber Temple. Rahadin sets out for Mount Ghakis and entrusts the Holy Symbol to the arcanaloth of Area 7 of the Amber Temple. Madam Eva draws either the 7 of Swords or the 8 of Bishops to guide the party there.

The Tome of Strahd

The *Tome of Strahd* (hereafter simply "the Tome") is the least helpful artifact. It is meant to shed light on Strahd's past and his weaknesses—weaknesses that any player should already know: sunlight, running water, et cetera. It is for these reasons the *Companion* suggests revising the Tome and putting it second in the party's path.

Revising the Tome

By itself, the Tome offers little mechanical benefit to the adventurers in their quest against the Devil. While it does shed some light into Strahd's weaknesses, much more can be done to make it less of a disappointment. There are two solutions to this issue: the Tome must reveal several secrets of Barovia and Strahd's reign and provide insight to his spellcasting—for the Tome is now also a spare spellbook of the Devil's.

Information. To read through the *Tome of Strahd* takes an avid reader 1d12+4 hours. For every 1d4 hours that a character spends reading, they learn one of the following pieces of information:

- Strahd was born in the Year 306, inherited his father's crown in 346, conquered the valley in 347, finished the construction of Castle Ravenloft in 350, and died (only to rise as a vampire) in 351.
- The tale of Saint Markovia as described on pgs. 222-223 in Appendix D of *Curse of Strahd*. The tale does not mention Saint Markovia's thighbone, the magic item, only of her crusade, death, and entombment in Castle Ravenloft's catacombs.
- Strahd has a flaming black stallion named Beucephalus. After reading its qualities and exploits, a character that succeeds on a DC 16 Int. (Arcana) check identifies it as a nightmare, which are created through a torturous ritual performed on a pegasus.
- Strahd believes Barovia has been "divorced" from his world and left to rot in the "depths of the Shadowfell." They also learn of his ancient debt to the Vistani people and as to why he allows them to leave.
- Seeking immortality, Strahd searched for "The Amber Temple" in the Balinok Mountains. Therein, he found a lich and sarcophagi within which languished vestiges of evil power—vestiges that offered him their own pacts. This dark covenant is the source of his vampirism.

Magic Item. The Tome ought to be a magic item in its own right, through which an attuned arcane spellcaster can cast minor spells like *fog cloud, pass without trace, misty step,* and *silence*—all spells iconic of Barovia. See *CMP* Appendix A for details.

Spellbook. The Tome is not only Strahd's diary, but a spare spellbook that can be studied to learn what spells Strahd prepares. These spells appear in Strahd's statistics and represent spells he mastered long, long ago. While the vampire can still prepare new spells he has learned in the meantime, this knowledge sheds light into the limits and preferences of his spellcasting—namely that he's a 9th-level spellcaster (a "magus of the fifth circle of magic").

True to Strahd's meticulous nature, the spells appear midway through the Tome and are encrypted. To decipher the notes requires a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. A reader with proficiency in Arcana has advantage on this check and a character with the Linguist feat will automatically succeed on this check. The encryption goes one step further, using allegory and metaphors to describe a spell and its processes. To identify a spell, a character must succeed on an Intelligence (Arcana) check, the DC of which equals 11 + the spell's level. Wizards have advantage on these ability checks. Through an hour of study and decryption, a character can decipher one spell.

The following spells are included in the Tome and can be copied by a wizard as they would with any other spellbook: *animate dead, animate objects, blight, comprehend languages, detect thoughts, fireball, fog cloud, greater invisibility, gust of wind, mirror image, nondetection, polymorph, scrying,* and *sleep.*

As noted above, Strahd has had many centuries to learn new spells and there is no telling when the Tome was last updated. A character is sure to realize this, but will know that Strahd likely can only prepare up to fourteen spells at a time, much like another advanced wizard.

Recommended Locations

The Tome has great symbolism and is best placed in one of the following locations:

Yester Hill. The *Tome of Strahd* is at the root of all evil in Yester Hill; it is the seed from the Gulthias Tree sprang. Through the 5 of Glyphs, the adventurers are led to believe that Strahd's mere secrets, the mere recording of his thoughts, can corrupt the land. This location also has the benefits of featuring the Wall of Fog (see Ch. 14, Y4.)

Castle Ravenloft. Placing the Tome in Castle Ravenloft justifies an early foray into Strahd's lair.

- Crypt 31 implies that the Tome was stolen by an earlier (and doomed) adventurer, whereas Crypt 38 provides more of a challenge (see Ch. 4, K84).
- What better place for Strahd's personal diary is there than his own study? Through the 8 of Stars, the adventurers are forced to undertake an early foray into Castle Ravenloft. Therein, they see a portrait of Tatyana and realize that Ireena Kolyana is but her reincarnation. (See Ch. 4, K37.)

The Sunsword

The *Sunsword* must be the last artifact to be recovered by the party and the most harrowing to acquire. Its power is too great to be given without much sacrifice and its very acquisition marks the transition into the endgame.

The *Sunsword* is reviled by Strahd—not merely because it sheds true sunlight, but because it is one last reminder of his brother Sergei's beautiful soul. Having ordered the weapon destroyed by the wizard Khazan, Strahd believes that the *Sunsword* is gone for good (unless previous, dead adventurers openly wielded it, if they even found it at all, in your version of Barovia). When Strahd is first exposed to the *Sunsword*, he reacts violently. For the very first time, the adventurers should recognize fear in the Devil's eyes.

Recommended Locations

There is no better guardian of the *Sunsword* than she who ushered evil into this world: Baba Lysaga. The witch has made it her duty to slaughter those who would oppose her beloved Strahd. Having already defeated a previous crop of adventurers, Baba has hidden the *Sunsword* in her hut. Therefore, the 9 of Stars (indicating Chapter 10, Area U3) is the best drawing. This location also has the benefit of revealing that Ireena is Tatyana reborn. If Baba Lysaga does not interest you, consider these two alternatives:

The Amber Temple. The *Sunsword* is sealed within the treasury; Madam Eva thereby draws the 8 of Glyphs. To recover the artifact, the party must grapple with the temple's guardians.

Argynvostholt. Unless the revenants have been laid to rest, Vladimir himself wields the *Sunsword* and will not part with it without a fight. If he is destroyed, Vladimir has his knights hunt down the party.

Roleplaying the Sunsword

The *Sunsword* is a chaotic good, sentient magic item—making it a silent character of your campaign. Without a voice, the sword can only communicate by transmitting emotions, granting you a new way to communicate with your adventurers. The sword is an ageless, impeccable judge of character that can recognize several of Barovia's oldest and enduring figures. When the adventurers face particular characters in the campaign, the sword transmits these emotions:

- The sword is furious at the sight of Strahd; suspicious of Rahadin and Madam Eva; disgusted with Arrigal, hinting that he cannot be trusted; and terrified of Baba Lysaga. It grows cold near undead and shapechangers.
- The sword expresses pity towards Kasimir Velikov and warms in the presence of Rudolph van Richten, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, and Ismark Kolyanovich.

Optional Revision. At your discretion, the *Sunsword* holds the soul of Sergei von Zarovich himself. A legend lore spell reveals this, otherwise Sergei's spirit emerges from the blade after Strahd has been slain. The sword does not hunger for vengeance against Strahd but instead to free Barovia from his grasp.

The Ba'al Verzi Dagger

At your discretion, you can add a fourth artifact to your campaign: the very *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* used to assassinate Strahd and usher him into undeath. This weapon was once wielded by Leo Dilisyna, the traitorous guard that slew Strahd the night of Sergei's wedding and made earlier attempts on the count's life.

You can substitute the dagger for another artifact or just add it to your campaign outright. Its location, however, is static: it will always be located in Castle Ravenloft.

The *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* is the evil counterpart to the *Sunsword*. It too has become a sentient weapon but it can only be wielded for and by evil. Its statistics are described in Appendix A of the *Companion*.

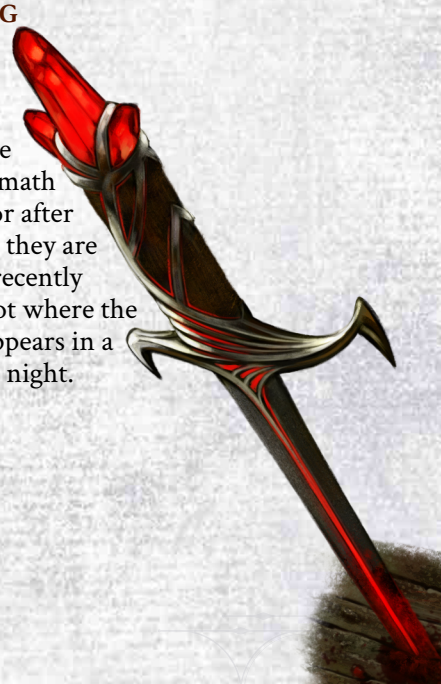
Revision. The fate and actions of Leo Dilisyna vary throughout the Ravenloft mythos. In I, *Strahd: Memoirs of a Vampire*, Leo made numerous attempts on Strahd's life but managed to avoid detection until he at last slew the Devil at Sergei's wedding, after Strahd had already murdered his brother. When Strahd rose again as undead, Leo went to ground. Strahd's death, however, sealed the realm off from the world, trapping Leo in Barovia. The assassin masqueraded as a monk (at the Monastery of the Silver Threads) for decades before Strahd found him. It was a bloody affair, for although the assassin had set a trap of holy wards, Strahd prevailed. Leo was slain and rose again as one of Strahd"s spawn—only for his dark sire to seal him in a tomb with no escape. Leo languished for years, deprived of blood and driven to madness. The warden of this tomb was none other than Lovina Wachter.

This story is mainly respected in *Curse of Strahd*, but the module strips Leo of his association with the Ba'al Verzi; the Monastery of Silver Threads is also absent. While Leo is mentioned in the module, he's been rewritten as one of the soldiers that betrayed and murdered Strahd. Instead of robbing Strahd of his life with a dagger, Leo shot him with a crossbow bolt.

The *Companion* argues that these decisions are awful and ought to be rectified. The information below utilizes this revision.

The Tarokka Reading

Unlike the other Fortunes of Ravenloft, Madam Eva shouldn't reveal the existence of this artifact until later in the campaign, such as in the aftermath of the *St. Andral's Feast* event or after Ireena is abducted—so long as they are 5th-level or higher and have recently suffered a defeat. It matters not where the party is in Barovia; the seer appears in a wagon or at their campfire at night.



When Madam Eva begins her last tarokka reading, read:

> Madam Eva gives you a graven look and speaks in a tone as dark and cold as midnight. "There is one last artifact that you may draw upon in your crusade… A weapon that is steeped in death… The very weapon that stole Strahd's life and ushered him into undeath. The assassin—Leo of House Dilisnya—did not know the pact the count had already made… and he did not expect Strahd to endure as one of the living dead. "
>
> Drawing a tarokka card, the Vistana seer murmurs, "A weapon as foul as this can only languish in a place of utter death…" She lays the card out, revealing the Master of Swords.
>
> "Death's Dagger languishes in the womb of darkness, the Devil's lair: the one place to which he must return. Scour the castle's catacombs. Find the Tomb of Strahd and there you shall find the tool of his second death."

Madam Eva draws the Master of Swords, the Warrior, revealing that the artifact lies in Area K86 of Castle Ravenloft. If this is also the scene of the party's Final Confrontation, worry not. Madam Eva tells them that these are two separate events and that the party must infiltrate Castle Ravenloft before the "Final Confrontation."

History. Madam Eva goes on to describe the Ba'al Verzi and the origins of the dagger. Read the following:

> For once, even Madam Eva looks uncomfortable. In a hushed tone, she whispers, "In the shadows of the Devil's ancestral lands operated an order of assassins. To speak their name in the dead of night was a sin—and an invitation. It is only here, so far removed in Barovia, that I dare speak it now: the Ba'al Verzi, the killers of kings, the 'Black Hands of Fate.' They have no agenda and swear allegiance to no one but Death itself. They do not traffic in gold nor silver; their price is far more intimate.
>
> "Twice had the Ba'al Verzi made an attempt on Strahd's life—and twice they failed. It was Leo Dilisnya, a noble of minor repute, who took the contract. He sought to replace the Zarovich line with his own rule. Leo, that poor fool… He did not know that Strahd had already sealed his dark pact with the blood of his brother Sergei. When he plunged his dark dagger into the Devil's back, it was with a smile—but Strahd did not die, oh no.
>
> "Leo fled the castle that night, but with Strahd's death came the Mists. He was trapped in Barovia just as we are now. For years he hid as a monk… but the Devil would not relent. He would not rest until he had vengeance. He found Leo, and although the 'monk's' holy wards almost felled the vampire, the Devil prevailed. Leo was slain and raised as a vampiric thrall… and entombed. For years he went without blood until at last he crumbled. His bones are still kept by the Wachters, whom Strahd appointed as Leo's wardens.
>
> "It is my suspicion that Leo's spirit endures—not in his bones, but in the blade itself. It hungers for vengeance, but such a terrible weapon can only be wielded by those poisoned by darkness of their own … and are willing to embrace it."

The Destined Ally

One person of Barovia is destined to stand alongside the adventurers against the Devil Strahd. This individual (hereafter "the Destined Ally") is your chief non-player character. Their story is just as important to the campaign as the adventurers'. Some allies are best left off-screen until the adventurers enter Castle Ravenloft whereas others are better used as constant companions.

With twenty allies to choose from, you might find yourself overwhelmed. This section separates the good allies from the bad, the overpowered from the weak, and the important from the insignificant.

Other Allies. The existence of a Destined Ally does not preclude support or exploration of other characters. You can still feature Rudolph van Richten and others in your campaign; they can even assist the party. Many of these characters even have roles to play in *The Wedding at Ravenloft*. Rudolph van Richten, for example, continues to masquerade as "Rictavio" so he can play the organ at the wedding—giving him an opportunity to drive a stake into Strahd's heart.

Recommended Allies

Not all Destined Allies are created equally; some are fragile or outright useless while others are so mighty they overshadow the party. The following allies are recommended:

Arabelle is a faux lead—she's not the true Destined Ally, but saving her proves to other potential allies, such as Rudolph van Richten, that the party can be trusted. She is the door through which the party finds their real ally. Truly, she can be the key to any ally related to Vallaki, even Ezmerelda d'Avenir or Davian Martikov.

Davian Martikov's appeal is rooted in his age. He is an old, done man that knows that Death waits for no one but the Devil Strahd. The requirements to gain his help are clear: help his family and defeat the druids of Yester Hill. Unfortunately, your players are likely to demand for Davian to infect them with lycanthropy.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir is a gripping character with relatable, actionable goals: find van Richten and murder Strahd. She makes enough appearances in the campaign that you can easily add her to the story.

Kasimir Velikov, as an ally, is a tremendous opportunity for the campaign: do the heroes accept Kasimir taking dark power from the Amber Temple or risk alienating the ally destined to stand with them against Strahd? Ultimately, however, this decision can be forced upon them regardless if Kasimir is their ally.

Author's Advice: The Doomed Ally

I am known as a particularly sadistic Dungeon Master and, as a storyteller, I believe no victory should come without pain. Pain is the ultimate medium in any story—the perfect salt for any narrative meal.

Over the last few years, in which I've ran several *Curse of Strahd* campaigns, I have come to believe that the Destined Ally should die. I believe the narrative is better served for the adventurers to fall in love with this tower of a person only for that tower to come crashing down. Their death, however sudden, is not in vain—it should enable the adventurers to escape Strahd's wrath or facilitate their victory. It can be an epic last stand; it can be a tragic accident. The mightier this ally, the more I believe they should die. So go ahead and give the adventurers the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok; lend them the strength and wisdom of Rudolph van Richten. Go ahead. Just kill the ally off in the most heartbreaking way. This is just one of the many ways I hurt my *Curse of Strahd* players—and in that pain and misery and resentment, the campaign shines. It is as they say: it is always darkest before the dawn.

Victor Vallakovich is an awful person, but a valuable ally and one with great narrative potential. Per the *Companion's* changes, Victor broke Stella Wachter's mind not with unkind words, but enchantment magic; Victor's teleportation circle has accidentally breached Castle Ravenloft's teleportation network, allowing you to fling the adventurers into the castle; and Lady Fiona Wachter intends to wed him to her daughter so she can cement a claim on Vallaki. Victor has so much potential and is such a vile, miserable cur that it makes him one of the best, if not the best, Destined Ally, especially in the absence of a wizard player character.

The Hunt for Rudolph van Richten

Fate is never in the hands of a Dungeon Master; it is in the hands of the adventurers. One can only set up the pieces and react. Such is the nature of fate in a sense: multiple possibilities that, in hindsight, appeared to be set in stone. The *Companion* recommends both Rudolph van Richten and Ezmerelda d'Avenir as the Destined Ally. However, only one can live. The suggested plotline below is steeped in misdirection, uncertainty, and intrigue, as befitting *Curse of Strahd*.

The adventurers must rescue Arabelle, who is the key to finding their true ally. They are first led to believe that the lying Arrigal is their ally. They then hear rumors of van Richten's existence and meet Ezmerelda. Ultimately, Arrigal betrays the adventurers for Strahd in a showdown at Vallaki; Ezmerelda is caught in Strahd's grasp, forcing van Richten out of hiding. One of these two are destined to die; the survivor becomes the adventurers' Destined Ally and joins them in Castle Ravenloft.

The Final Confrontation

The final Fortune of Ravenloft determines where the party is destined to confront Strahd in Castle Ravenloft. The significance of this fortune is often overlooked, but it is actually the most important: it is the only location in the castle where Strahd will not retreat from the adventurers.

Castle Ravenloft is a war of attrition. Strahd can phase in and out of walls at his leisure and regenerates 14% of his average hit points every turn. He is impossible to pin down and will employ hit-and-run tactics to terrorize the party. Therefore, the scene of the "Final Confrontation" is vital to the party's success—it is the only place where his hubris prevents Strahd from retreating.

The scene of the Final Confrontation is rooted in the Devil's hubris. If he were not so arrogant, he would only continue his game of cat-and-mouse in Castle Ravenloft. Alas, your chosen location represents when and where Strahd's ego has had enough.

Recommended Locations

No location is better than Strahd's tomb (Area K86). It forces the adventurers to navigate the castle's catacombs and features Strahd's three vampire brides. Because he is a glass cannon, Strahd is in sore need of minions in his final battle against the adventurers. For these reasons, it is best for Madam Eva to draw the Darklord card.

If you utilize *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, the party will be taken throughout the castle anyway, allowing you to run multiple battles in cinematic areas anyway. Thus, you do not need to worry about missing out on a dramatic skirmish on Ravenloft's battlements or at Strahd's throne.



The Narrator's Toolbox

This section covers several campaign-spanning tools and storylines you can use to enhance your campaign.

Death & Lingering Injuries

Curse of Strahd is a lethal campaign and is celebrated for it. Inevitably, however, there comes a time when even the most indifferent or lawful neutral Dungeon Master fears the death of a player character. At best, death undoes all the character development seen throughout the campaign. At worst, it means the departure of a player.

The early levels of *Curse of Strahd* constitute the most opportune time for death; the adventurers are low enough of a level that it's easy to contrive the arrival of another player character from beyond the Mists or the ranks of the Barovians, dusk elves, mountainfolk, or Vistani. As the campaign progresses, however, it becomes all the more difficult to justify the addition of a high level adventurer. Death, then, becomes a worry for the Dungeon Master.

Consider this alternative: a character that dies but is not outright slain can accept a permanent injury—the loss of an eye or limb, which impose mechanical penalties to the character, as described on the *Lingering Injuries* table. A player can choose this twice, after which their character truly dies.

Lingering Injuries

d20	Injury
1	**Lose an Eye.** You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and on ranged attack rolls. Magic such as the regenerate spell can restore the lost eye. If you have no eyes left after sustaining this injury, you're blinded.
2	**Lose an Arm or a Hand.** You can no longer hold anything with two hands, and you can hold only a single object at a time. Magic such as the regenerate spell can restore the lost appendage.
3	**Lose a Foot or Leg.** Your speed on foot is halved, and you must use a cane or crutch to move unless you have a peg leg or other prosthesis. You fall prone after using the Dash action. You have disadvantage on Dexterity checks made to balance. Magic such as the regenerate spell can restore the lost appendage.
4	**Limp.** Your speed on foot is reduced by 5 feet. You must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw after using the Dash action. If you fail the save, you fall prone. Magical healing removes the limp.
5-7	**Internal Injury.** Whenever you attempt an action in combat, you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, you lose your action and can't use reactions until the start of your next turn. The injury heals if you receive magical healing or if you spend ten days doing nothing but resting.
8-10	**Broken Ribs.** This has the same effect as Internal Injury above, except that the save DC is 10.
11-13	**Horrible Scar.** You are disfigured to the extent that the wound can't be easily concealed. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks and advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks. Magical healing of 6th level or higher, such as heal and regenerate, removes the scar.
14-16	**Festering Wound.** Your hit point maximum is reduced by 1 every 24 hours the wound persists. If your hit point maximum drops to 0, you die. The wound heals if you receive magical healing. Alternatively, someone can tend to the wound and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check once every 24 hours. After ten successes, the wound heals.
17-20	**Minor Scar.** The scar doesn't have any adverse effect. Magical healing of 6th level or higher, such as heal and regenerate, removes the scar.

The Devil Strahd

Evils are better heard than seen and Strahd von Zarovich is no different. Strahd should appear no more than four times in the campaign before the adventurers enter Castle Ravenloft with the intent to kill him. To feature him frequently is to familiarize him with the party and thereby ruin the suspense. The *Companion* suggests these scheduled appearances:

- When the party first reaches Area I, the black carriage is already in motion, implying that Strahd rides therein.
- The *St. Andral's Feast* event should be Strahd's first true appearance, which demonstrates his cruelty and wrath.
- When Strahd *finally* intends to abduct Ireena herself, be it at the Abbey of Saint Markovia, as the *Companion* recommends.
- Once during Act III to steal the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* or murder someone the adventurers' hold dear. This may happen in Vallaki, if the adventurers return to liberate the town from Lady Wachter.

The Devil's Minions

Strahd is a noble above all else and no noble does what his underlings can do themselves. Feature Strahd's many agents throughout the campaign:

- A **Barovian witch** shepherding **Strahd zombies** can force the party to abandon a rest and continue traveling at night. These proactive agents wish to impress their dark lord by tormenting the adventurers.
- Cyrus Belview is sent as a messenger on Strahd's behalf.
- Rahadin is sent to carry out important tasks or deliver threats.
- Arrigal can be sent to assassinate an adventurer in the dead of night.
- Kiril Stoyanovich and his ilk are dispatched (when they aren't already menacing the countryside) as Strahd's bruisers. Their affiliation with Strahd is better left as a secret for much of the campaign.
- Strahd sends his **vampire spawn** brides, Anastrasya, Ludmilla, and Volenta, for nighttime work he does not entrust to the reckless werewolves.
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym (if the *Companion's* changes to his character are utilized) is used to harry the adventurers throughout the campaign. After being slain once by the adventurers, Godfrey swears vengeance and can track them down with his Vengeful Tracker trait. He is the perfect field agent for the Devil.

The Doomed One

Throughout *Curse of Strahd*, the adventurers encounter illusions in which someone sees themself dead. The first is typically encountered at the River Ivlis Crossroads; this event is called *The Hanged One*. While the others see an unfamiliar Barovian swinging from the noose, one person sees their own corpse.

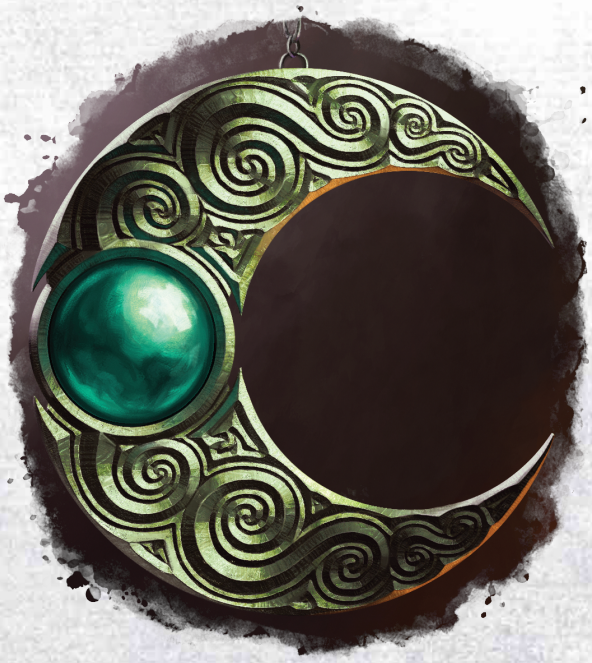
These dreadful sights are harmless illusions manifested by Strahd's will, the Dark Powers, or merely the evil that permeates Barovia. These illusions hold great potential, but *Curse of Strahd* doesn't provide this guidance; it just drops the phenomena into an area. The first illusion is unsettling, but others just become "gotcha" moments.

Foreshadowing is a key element to any story. You can use these deathly illusions to foreshadow that one person in the party will die. It doesn't have to be true, as fate can always be rebuked, but it will unsettle the adventurers nonetheless.

Choose one player character as "the Doomed One." Whenever a deathly illusions are encountered, it *always* depicts that person. In the first illusion, the Doomed One sees themself. Starting with the second, others see the Doomed One's deathly illusion, suggesting that fate really does have it out for them. Aim for four to five occurrences spaced throughout the campaign; any more will cloy.

Appearances. The illusions appear in the areas below:

- On a tombstone in the Barovian cemetery (*CMP*. Ch. 3, Area E6).
- At the River Ivlis Crossroads (Chapter 2, Area F).
- As part of the Corpse random encounter (see Chapter 2).
- Underneath a black cloth draped over an ordinary bust in Argynvostholt (Chapter 7, Area Q20).
- Underneath a black shroud covering the spare body parts Vasilka was made from in the Abbey of Saint Markovia (Chapter 8, Area S17).
- As the Horseman card, if the Doomed One ever receives a personal tarokka reading from Ezmerelda d'Avenir, Madam Eva, or some other fortuneteller.



The Hags of Old Bonegrinder

The hag coven of Old Bonegrinder is a tremendous asset in your campaign—when roleplayed accordingly. Hags seek to corrupt beauty and strike dark bargains with the foolish and desperate. Their power in combat is well-defined, per the rules of this game. *Narratively*, they have as much power as the plot demands. The hags can offer the party boons, magic items, and spells—but everything has a price. So long as the adventurers accept the terms of the hags' dark bargain, they can walk away with power, insight, or assistance. There are but few things the hags can't do, such as freeing the adventurers from Barovia. If you so desire, they can even teleport the party across the valley, spiriting them into Castle Ravenloft or some other locale (the Amber Temple notwithstanding).

As described in Chapter 6 of the *Companion*, the hags only fight in self-defense. The hags would sooner corrupt or manipulate the adventurers than murder them. Thus, do your best to avoid a slaughter at Old Bonegrinder. Most parties meet their end in the windmill because the DM fails to roleplay hags accordingly. While they may decide to slay an adventurer to teach the others a lesson, it is far smarter for them to enslave, corrupt, or employ the party as new minions.

Items

Never underestimate the power of noncombat items for your campaign. Consider adding these items to yours:

Magic Items

Curse of Strahd is notoriously empty of magic items so as to leave the adventurers feeling weak and helpless. Some items, however, can even heighten the tension. Consider adding the magic items below to the campaign.

- A *lantern of undead tracking* can be used to detect the undead. While the lantern is lit and within 100 feet of undead, its light takes on a sickly green light. This lantern will be your players' security blanket—the paper shield they cling to when the dead close in.
- An *amulet of proof against detection and location* stokes paranoia and forces the adventurers to wonder if the Devil has been scrying upon them all along. Worse, it forces them to answer who amongst them gets to wear it.
- A largely useless item that was once worn by a dead adventurer, like a *helm of comprehending languages,* that reminds them that greater and better-armed heroes have already died fighting the Devil.
- A cursed magic item, such as a *berserker axe* to curse its wielder with rage or a set of *armor of bludgeoning vulnerability* to mock the resident fighter or paladin (be sure to remind them that it could be worse—it could be a set of *armor of piercing vulnerability*!).

Mundane Items and Goods

You shouldn't underestimate the importance of mundane items, especially in Barovia, where the adventurers must survive on few funds and the prices of all goods are inflated. Consider dropping these items in the party's path:

- A silvered weapon is crucial to surviving the werewolf menace—so drop a silvered dagger in the party's path as a cruel joke.
- Horses and Vistani vardos are given only to be slain by werewolves or abandoned in a skirmish.
- Tents are important if they constitute a threshold that vampires cannot cross, especially if you use the *Bigger Barovia* variant. Tents become islands in a sea of utter darkness and provide the adventurers with just the bare minimum of comfort out in the wilderness.
- Wolfsbane (as described below) can be used to keep werewolves at bay… And the adventurers will rue the day in which they run out of the incense.
- A handheld mirror (perhaps found in a golden locket) will be brandished whenever the adventurers suspect someone of being a vampire.
- The wineskin gothic trinket (that refills itself when it is interred with a dead person for a night) can be used to placate Bluto Krogarov or gain access to Krezk if the adventurers lack wine.

The Mist

The mist that perpetually chokes Barovia is your narrative tool to limit visibility, heighten suspense, and sow dread. There shouldn't be a single session in your campaign where it doesn't factor into the campaign. To maximize suspense and isolation, be sure to engage a character's other senses: though they cannot see beyond the mist, they hear shambling footsteps, the smell of rot, etc.



Resurrection Madness

Barovians that return from the dead learn the horrific truth: their afterlife is but a closed system—a "black bottle" as many victims of resurrection madness have described it. Driven to madness by the truth, their experiences are discounted as the ravings of lunatics.

Per the *Companion*, the adventurers ought to experience this at least twice: first Ilya Krezkov of Chapter 8 is resurrected by the Abbot; he immediately raves about "the black bottle." Then, after Ireena Kolyana is slain and resurrected by the Abbot (see *CMP* Ch. 8), she too raves about the black bottle. These ravings hint at one of Barovia's greatest secrets: that the souls of the living are trapped in a dismal reincarnation cycle.

The adventurers can experience this too, if they are resurrected. Per *CoS*, an individual must have been dead for 24 hours or more, but it's in your best interest to waive this requirement. The first time an adventurer is resurrected, read the following text:

> The darkness is all-encompassing, a tenebrous sea of black mist through which wade the souls of the dead—dim orbs of depressed ivory light that meander through the void. This is your afterlife, your eternity: a crushing darkness. The pressure mounts and the darkness grins. It has you in its clutches. It has you now and will never let go, no matter the gods you worshipped, the sins you committed, or the rewards you earned. It has you now and forever.
>
> The void splits above! A light crashes into the darkness! Thunder beckons! An unseen tide sweeps you up, as if some giant has uncorked this black bottle to take a swig! The souls! The souls wail all together! They rush towards the light! You give chase, but it is too late! When you reach that breach, another soul slips through—and all at once, the fissure snaps shut, condemning you again to eternity in this darkness.
>
> This is your eternity, your prison… a black bottle teeming with souls, all waiting for someone outside to take a swig. Could this be Hell?
>
> As you wade through the tenebrous depths, lost to timelessness, you hear that thunder again… another soul escaping. Again, and again, but how long has it been between episodes of salvation? How long?
>
> It is only when you give up all hope that you hear that thunder again—cracking out not from above like before, but all around you. You are swept up into that sovereign tide and burned in the beautiful light of day! You are but ash in a pyre that has burned for all of Creation!
>
> You wake back up in the mist-choked world of the living. Barovia. You've been brought back from that black bottle, your light restored. You twitch your fingers. You suck in a breath. The air is cold and lovely. You see it now. You see the truth… that the afterlife is just a black bottle filled with lonely souls waiting for salvation… You cannot go back to that. You can't. This place, this "Barovia," can be nothing more than a front for hell itself.

Werewolves: A Handy Solution

The Children of Mother Night are your most convenient tool in the campaign. Adventurers roaming in the wrong direction? Sound the wolves. Dawdling for too long? Cue a wolf's howl. On their way to the roadside inn? Wolves. The werewolves—more than mindless beasts—should be a constant thorn in the heroes' side.

The adventurers are exposed to the werewolves whenever they leave the safety of a settlement. You can use them to drive the plot forward and breed dread. Consider the following scenarios:

- During the prologue, werewolves attack a caravan the adventurers are traveling with, driving them into the woods… where the Mists of Ravenloft swallow such hapless fools, delivering them to Barovia.
- If the adventurers fail to visit Tser Pool Encampment after leaving the Village of Barovia, the werewolves attack the Tser Falls bridge from the north, forcing the adventurers to scale down a treacherous path towards the Vistani camp. The Vistani burn wolfsbane incense to ward off the beasts. See Chapter 2 of the *Companion* for this event.
- If you use the *Bigger Barovia* variant, roadside inns are placed along the Svalich Road. The werewolves burn down an inn just as the adventurers are almost there.
- The werewolves may be sent to steal an artifact from the adventurers, per Strahd's orders, in which case they hide it in the Werewolf Den (Area Z). This made all the better if they found the artifact elsewhere when Madam Eva's original tarokka reading pointed them to Area Z.

In the Narrative. Don't be surprised if the heroes hunger to eradicate the werewolf menace once for all. By featuring them so often in the campaign, you almost guarantee a showdown in Area Z. A victory in the Werewolf Den represents a major turning point in the narrative—a bloodied dawn when the party manages to free Barovia from its plague of wolves.

Contracting Lycanthropy

One bite against an adventurer is all you need to sow panic and paranoia into your campaign. Once a player character has been bit, do not call for a Constitution saving throw, especially in combat. Tell them that you will later roll the saving throw in secret, so that they—both character and player—won't know if they've succumbed to lycanthropy until the next full moon.

Suspicion, intrigue, paranoia—these emotions are all roleplaying opportunities which write themselves. Watch with amusement as the player character seeks out local healers or alchemists. Ultimately, Madam Eva offers the only true solution: slay the werewolf responsible for the infection, the "lupine sire." Unless specified otherwise, this werewolf is none other than Kiril Stoyanovich, who can be recognized by his eyes and scars, regardless of which form he is in.

Wolfsbane

Adventuring Gear

In the foggy woods of Barovia grows a stubborn weed that affords even the frail herbalist a defense against werewolves.

Herb. Wolfsbane can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature). It can be collected with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using an herbalism kit. Half a pound of wolfsbane is worth 10 sp.

A werewolf that ingests wolfsbane must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the werewolf takes 58 (8d6 + 30) poison damage, or half as much on a success. The werewolf is also poisoned for 2d4 x 4 days. A humanoid that is cursed with lycanthropy but has not transformed into their hybrid or beast form yet (e.g., the full moon has not yet risen) takes only 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The character is also poisoned for 1 hour.

Incense. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies, wolfsbane can be reduced to an oil that can be burned as an incense. To do so requires eight hours of distillation and 10 sp worth of supplies and is worth 5 gp. One tincture of wolfsbane incense burns for 1d4+6 hours and is dispersed by a wind of moderate or greater (at least 10 miles per hour). Werewolves within 1 mile of burning incense suffer disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks reliant on smell. Once within 500 feet, any check reliant on smell fails. A werewolf within 10 feet of burning wolfsbane incense suffers disadvantage on attack rolls.

Curing Lycanthropy. The cure to lycanthropy is known by few. Only Madam Eva, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, and Dr. Rudolph van Richtren know how to cure it: by slaying the same lycanthrope that infected the victim and eating their heart before the rise of the next full moon. After that, it becomes incredibly arduous to purge lycanthropy from the victims. In Barovia, such knowledge has been lost to time and tragedy. Although a *remove curse* can ordinarily cure a victim of their lycanthropy, the Dark Powers have forbid such an easy cure. If cast upon a lycanthrope, the spell fails. The adventurers will then have to seek alternative remedies if they wish to purge the affliction from their comrade.

Lunar Cycle. Unless it has already been stated otherwise, assume that the next full moon isn't due for another three weeks from when the adventurers entered Barovia.

Wolfsbane

The werewolves can't be allowed to run amok completely uncontested, otherwise you might have to answer the question of, "Well, why don't they?"

When using the werewolves, you need solutions and barriers that they can't overcome or refuse to grapple with. In comes wolfsbane, an herb so prevalent in myth and popular culture that the players will be able to identify. When ingested, wolfsbane proves deadly for a werewolf (but not a wereraven). See the Wolfsbane sidebar for more details on the herb and incense.



Chapter II: The Lands of Barovia

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 25
Chapter Progression 25
Running the Chapter 26
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 26
Dramatis Personae 27
Variants & Revisions 28
Areas of Barovia 28
A. Old Svalich Road 28
B. Gates of Barovia 29
C. Svalich Woods 29
D. River Ivlis 30
F. River Ivlis Crossroads 31
G. Tser Pool Encampment 32
H. Tser Falls 34
I. Black Carriage 35
J. Gates of Ravenloft 36
L. Lake Zarovich 36
M. Mad Mage of Mount Baratok 38
P. Luna River Crossroads 42
R. Raven River Crossroads 43
Random Encounters Revised 44
The Children of Mother Night 44
The Devil's Entrance 45
In Search of Arabelle 45
The Raven's Attention 46
The Revenant 46
The Wolf Hunters 47

The lands of Barovia are haunted by horrors—horrors that come in the form of both men and monsters. This chapter concerns the oft-forgotten corners of the country, explores new variants, provides advice for better random encounters and details the adventurers' journey to Vallaki.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 is a hodgepodge of information relating to Barovian geography, metaphysics, and effects. Thus, it lacks a true narrative structure and serves as the background between the campaign's chapters.

Chapter Progression

Chapter 2 can be divided into three acts:

Act I spans the journey from the Village of Barovia to Vallaki. The adventurers become acquainted with Barovia's many horrors, meet Madam Eva, and likely fall prey to the hags of Old Bonegrinder.

Act II encompasses the journey from Vallaki to Krezk, as well as the exploration of outlying areas such as Argynvostholt and Van Richten's Tower.

Act III sees the adventurers ascend the summit of Mount Ghakis in search of the Amber Temple. Through the Tsolenka Pass chapter, this expedition is lengthened by the *Companion* and turned into a true showdown of man versus nature.

Running the Chapter

Chapter 2 is woven throughout the campaign and, as such, effectively lacks a story. However, there is one arc of utmost importance that most Dungeon Masters struggle with: the first journey to Vallaki from the Village of Barovia. For some, the trip might be over in a flash; for others, it turns into a slog of wanting tense wilderness travel without enough substance from the module to fill in blank spaces on the map. The *Companion* provides the following storyline that makes the journey far more exciting while also keeping the adventurers on track.

Per the *Bigger Barovia* variant, it takes much longer to reach Vallaki than in an ordinary *Curse of Strahd* campaign. The adventurers must travel for two days and two nights to reach the town. Through werewolves, roving undead, and the hags of Old Bonegrinder, the adventurers learn how frail they are and how harrowing this untamed country can be. The party also finds breadcrumbs that foreshadow later conflicts in the campaign, such as the druids of Yester Hill.

Sample Journey

The adventurers set out from the village with Ireena Kolyana in tow. Upon reaching the River Ivlis Crossroads (Area F), they must decide between soldiering on up the mountainside or visiting the Tser Pool Encampment (Area G). They are being tracked by five werewolves. If the party doesn't visit Tser Pool, they're forced into a retreat when the werewolves attack at Tser Falls (Area H), taking a treacherous path down to the Vistani Camp, where they are welcomed and Madam Eva make her tarokka reading.

Leaving in the morning, the party faces an exhausting climb up the summit. As they journey on, the perceptive might notice signs of ambulant undead—half-devoured deer and disturbed roadside graves. Later that night, a herd of zombies herded by a Barovian witch interrupts the party' rest (see *CMP* Ch. 6 for details). When the dead prove legion and relentless (and guided by a spellcaster), the party is forced into a midnight retreat. Marching for hours, the adventurers reach Old Bonegrinder. With no other salvation in sight, the adventurers must knock on that door and enter the lair of Morgantha and her ilk. (Per the *Companion*, Old Bonegrinder is not a death trap, but a roleplaying opportunity; therefore, you should not worry about delivering the adventurers there).

If the adventurers refuse to enter Old Bonegrinder, they must march on. The undead are still outside, and although they are slower, they are no less relentless. As the adventurers come in sight of Vallaki, the werewolves burst from the treeline, forcing the adventurers into a mad dash towards the town's gates. See the *Children of Mother Night* encounter in the *Random Encounters* Revised section below.

Weather

The trek across the Barovian wilderness is a classic story of man versus wild. Add fog to lightly obscure or heavily obscure the path forward and heavy precipitation to drown out noise.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Amulet of Proof Against Detection and Location* (M12)
- *Potion of Flying* (M2)
- *Spell Scroll of Protection from Evil and Good* (M5)

Creatures

- The Angry
- Bandit
- Bandit Captain
- Banshee
- Berserker
- Choker
- Commoner
- Cyrus Belview
- Dire Wolf
- Draft Horse
- Druid
- Ghost
- The Hungry
- Kiril Stoyanovich
- The Lonely
- The Lost
- The Mad Mage
- Madam Eva
- Needle Blight
- Rahadin
- Revenant
- Scarecrow
- Scout
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym
- Strahd Zombie
- Swarm of Bats
- Swarm of Ravens
- Twig Blight
- Vine Blight
- Wereraven
- Werewolf
- Will-o'-Wisp
- Wolf
- The Wretched
- Zombie

Effects & Items

- Hunting Trap
- Wolfsbane

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Alexei	CN **Bandit**	N	RE	A Vistana teenager (see *In Search of Arabelle* revised encounter).
Arabelle	LN **Commoner**	N	L	A Vistana child kidnapped by Bluto Krogarov.
Bluto Krogarov	NE **Commoner**	H	L	The Vallaki town drunk attempting to drown Arabelle.
Cyrus Belview	Unique	H	I	Strahd's mongrelfolk manservant.
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	H	H	The Children of Mother Night's brutal werewolf alpha.
Madam Eva	Unique	F	G	A Vistana seer and secret half-sister of Strahd.
The Mad Mage	Unique	N	M	Mordenkainen, the legendary mage, fallen to madness.
Muriel Vinshaw	**Wereraven**	F	RE	A wereraven agent of the Keepers of the Feather.
Rahadin	Unique	H	I	Strahd's honorary brother and chamberlain.
Savid	N **Scout**	F	RE	A dusk elf scout (see *In Search of Arabelle* revised encounter).

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Arabelle

While her father was drunk, Arabelle slipped her babysitter and left camp. Bluto Krogarov kidnapped her and intends to drown her in Lake Zarovich. Saving Arabelle ingratiates the party to Luvash, Vallakians, Vistani, and even Rudolph van Richten.

Bluto Krogarov

A perpetual drunk and laughing stock, Bluto is the only one brave (or desperate) enough to fish at Lake Zarovich, but the fish have grown sparse. Believing Vistani to be good luck charms, Bluto intends to sacrifice Arabelle to bring back the fish.

Revision. Bluto drowned his pregnant wife months ago, and her spirit endures as a vengeful rusalka. To appease her, Bluto intends to sacrifice Arabelle, not to restore the fish, but to give his wife the child she was denied in life.

Cyrus Belview

Ordinarily only met in Castle Ravenloft, Cyrus is driving the Black Carriage when the party first reach Area I, per the *Companion's* changes.

Kiril Stoyanovich

Per the *Companion*, Kiril and his werewolves are tracking the adventurers during their journey to Vallaki. He attacks at Area H and sets fire to the Tser Falls Inn. He may also attack outside Vallaki, aiming to steal the children rescued from Old Bonegrinder.

Madam Eva

Madam Eva awaits the adventurers, having foreseen their arrival in Barovia. Through her tarokka reading, she offers the campaign's main quest. If your players somehow refuse to go the Tser Pool Encampment, have Eva appear along the Svalich Road so that they receive their tarokka reading.

The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok

Secretly Mordenkainen, the Mad Mage fell to madness last year after failing to slay Strahd. He now haunts the hills of Mount Baratok and the shores of Lake Zarovich. A *greater restoration* spell can restore his sanity. Until then, he is a loose cannon best treated with carefully.

Revision. The Mad Mage's sanity can be restored by ridding his extradimensional manor of sorrowsworn. See Area M for details.

Muriel Vinshaw

Muriel Vinshaw should be the adventurers' liaison with the Keepers of the Feather, and the groundwork for that role begins in this chapter through the *Hidden Bundle* random encounter and *The Raven's Attention* revised random encounter (see below). Per the *Companion*, it is her clothes that are found in the *Hidden Bundle* random encounter; the clothes smell of lilac perfume, which might later allow the adventurers to tie the clothes to her.

Rahadin

Per the revisions to Area I, the Black Carriage is en route to Castle Ravenloft, and it is Rahadin—not Strahd—inside. This is a contingency written into the chapter just in case the adventurers attempt to flag down the carriage. Strahd should not yet be met, but there is no harm in allowing the players to assume he is nearby.



Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The *Bigger Barovia* variant is felt most in this chapter. Consider each hex on the Barovia map to be 4 miles; however, the adventurers always arrive when the plot demands (e.g., they always arrive at Tser Falls at dusk).
- Areas H and R now each have an inn, which help facilitate pan-Barovian travel, especially with the *Bigger Barovia* variant in play.
- The Black Carriage (see Area I) is not parked and waiting for the adventurers but is en route to Castle Ravenloft. Driven by Cyrus Belview, the carriage contains Rahadin, but the adventurers will likely assume it to be Strahd.
- Bluto's motivations for drowning Arabelle at Lake Zarovich have been changed; he seeks to appease the drowned spirit of his pregnant wife, whom he murdered months ago. See Area L for details.
- The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok can be restored by riding his extradimensional mansion of sorrowsworn. See Area M.

Areas of Barovia

Barovia consists of twenty-six locales, several of which are only detailed in this chapter:

A. Old Svalich Road

The Old Svalich Road is the artery of Barovia. In ages past, it ran into other Domains of Dread, such as the land of Darkon, from which Rudolph van Richten hails. Only the Vistani and select individuals were able to travel between such dismal realms.

The Svalich Road will become a familiar sight for the adventurers as they travel throughout the country. It is, in a sense, their home. It is always there, rain or shine, after both victory and defeat. The road does not judge the adventurers; it does not want, nor does it envy. You can and should personify the road through your narrations.

Consider any of the following descriptions:

- "The road winds itself through the fog, as if it were an artery of this land. Your feet ring out across its surface—sometimes cobblestone, but chiefly dirt—and it does not complain. It never complains."
- "The Svalich Road is your sole companion in this trek. For hours on end, you engage it in silent conversation as you inch your way forward across the mist-wreathed lands of Barovia. Only the distant croak of a raven can interrupt your rapport."
- "Fleeing from your most recent failure, you take to the Svalich Road. Your time in this country is short but the road has been there for you ever since you were condemned to this valley of death. With danger hot on your heels, the road provides, its guidance integral to navigating the fog."
- "You burst from the woods, your skin slick with sweat and the wolves still howling in the distance. The road! The Svalich Road is there again for you yet again, its cold and dusty smile welcoming in this time of great peril."

Scenery. Sometimes you need to fill in lengthy travel montages with descriptions of the local scenery. While along the Svalich Road, the adventurers might encounter:

- A ruined Vistani wagon: "You come upon an overturned vardo, a Vistani wagon, overgrown with moss and missing half its wheels."
- A row of pikes impaled with rotting heads. A sign reads, "By Order of Count Strahd von Zarovich: Such is the price of thievery along the Svalich Road."
- The remains of a campfire made 1d4 days ago. A DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check confirms its age.
- A shadow cast by the roc of Mount Ghakis while the sky is obscured by fog: "A shadow passes over you—and the entire glen. One moment, bleak sunlight, another a flash of darkness."

B. Gates of Barovia

The Gates of Barovia are a set piece in the campaign. The eastern set is first seen by the adventurer as they enter the country; the *Companion*'s optional prologue in Death House makes great use of them when the adventurers are fleeing from werewolves. The second set marks the edge of Vallaki's barony.

Ireena Kolyana. Ireena recognizes the western gates, having passed through them as a child after she was separated from her family. Read the following:

> The gates loom before you, as ancient as the Devil's conquest of this valley, the stone witness to countless storms. They are all but identical to the set you first saw when you entered this dismal land. Like before, the titanic statues—carved as claymore-wielding knights—have been decapitated. You spot one head nearby, overgrown with moss. The other must be buried under dirt upheaved by storm or providence.
>
> Ireena pauses, her face as if it were struck by a shovel. She squints at the gates and murmurs, "I've seen this… in my dreams. There… There should be a lightning-struck oak behind the gates."

Sure enough, Ireena is correct: a lightning-struck oak stands upon the western side of the gates. A character that inspects the tree and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check surmises that the tree was struck some fifteen or twenty years before—when Ireena was but a child and wandered from Lake Zarovich to the Village of Barovia in a fugue state guided by Fate (or the Dark Powers). Ireena, for her part, has no explanation for how she knows of the tree; she rationalizes it as a prophetic dream. As far as Ireena knows, she has never been so far from the Village of Barovia before.

C. Svalich Woods

Like the Old Svalich Road, it behooves you to personify the woods through your scenery descriptions. The woods are, in a sense, watching the adventurers, its every tree a voyeur. Consider the following descriptions:

- "The woods watch on in patient silence."
- "Not a sound echoes across the silent woods. In that absence thunders a cold attention that clings to you like dew."
- "Between gnarled oaks and ancient elms you go, your every footfall a shout in this muted realm. Graveyards cannot compare to the silence of the Svalich Woods."

Scenery. You can spice up travel through the Svalich Woods without combat through these events:

- A vine reaches steadily towards an adventurer but pauses whenever looked at. It can be heard slinking through dried, crackling leaves.
- A wolf howls in the distance, answered by several more wolves.
- A tombstone overgrown with moss. Wiping away the moss reveals a simple epitaph written in Elvish or Draconic, implying the grave holds a dusk elf or a fallen knight of the Order of the Silver Dragon. Whatever corpse that was buried there has since been dug up—now existing as the cadaver for a revenant of Argynvostholt.
- A grim or satirical face carved into a gnarled tree.
- A raven caws in the distance.
- A lantern hangs from a tree branch, its flame flickering. As the adventurers watch, the flame is snuffed out by the wind.
- An adventurer spots a crushed skeleton pinned beneath a fallen tree.
- A stump strewn with animal intestines is found in a clearing.
- A wooden symbol of the Morninglord is found in the mud, its necklace snapped as if someone ripped it off in fury and abandoned their faith.
- A brass-rimmed handheld mirror is found in a puddle. As a person looks away from the mirror, it seems as if their reflection smiled or grimaced.

D. River Ivlis

The River Ivlis runs eastward, out of Barovia. It is common to throw unburied corpses into the river so that they may be whisked out of the country. Some do so for fear of the corpse rising as undead; others believe their soul can find peace in the lands beyond the Mist. Any villager, including Ireena, can share this lore.

The bridge closest to the village is inhabited by a **choker**, a rubbery aberration described in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*. This monster has cartilage, rather than a skeleton, allowing it to squeeze through spaces as narrow as four inches. A six-inch gap in the stonework allows the choker to reach up and strangle prey. It has already slain three individuals by seizing their shirts and bashing their brains in against the bricks. When the adventurers cross the bridge, it attacks. Read the following text:

> The river burbles on as it meanders through a land choked with silence. A bridge spans the river, ancient and weathered, its first stones perhaps laid by Ireena's distant ancestors.

Contest the choker's Dexterity (Stealth) check against the adventurers' passive Perception. Those who succeed can hear the slap of rubbery flesh against stone and a low, animalistic growl tinged with sadistic glee. When the choker attacks, read the following, directing it at one adventurer:

> A rubbery tentacle shoots out from a crack in the bridge, seizing your leg! Its appendage is needled with fangs that grip deep and pierce your flesh! The crack is hardly four inches wide and yet this foul limb can reach forth! The clawed tentacle reaches up higher, gripping at your shirt! It heaves! Like a tower you topple towards the stone bridge, forehead first! The creature intends to bash your brains out upon the stonework!

Roleplaying the Choker. The aberration speaks a foul language known as Deep Speech. Its laughter sounds like a strained frog's croaks and when it moves, its rubbery flesh slaps against the stones beneath the bridge. The creature is cunning but not intelligent.

You can voice the choker with the gibberish below uttered in Deep Speech. Translations have been provided in the off chance an adventurer speaks Deep Speech.

- "Da'bu-gah" ("You are mine.")
- "Tet-mo-ghestrys" ("It will not be quick.")
- When the choker flees, it snarls, "Mes-ta-gi-nesyayal res!" ("Death will return!")

Tactics. The choker uses the following tactics in battle:

- The choker is already hidden below the bridge. With its +6 Stealth bonus, it's all but guaranteed to surprise the adventurers. It uses its Aberrant Quickness trait on its first turn in combat, if it has a potential target.
- While attacking from the gap, the choker has total cover from attackers standing on the bridge. It can only attack creatures within 5 feet of the six-inch gap.
- The choker is fragile and must rely on subterfuge. If the party ventures down below the bridge, it retreats into a four-inch gap at the southern base of the bridge. From there, it has three-quarters against attackers.
- If it feels threatened, the choker emerges from the crack and takes the Disengage action, diving into the river to escape from the adventurers. It is still visible in the water until it gets 60 feet away.

Cover

A target with half cover has a +2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws. A target has half cover if an obstacle blocks at least half of its body. A target with three-quarters cover has a +5 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws. A target has three-quarters cover if about three-quarters of it is covered by an obstacle. A target with total cover can't be targeted directly by an attack or a spell, although some spells can reach such a target by including it in an area of effect. A target has total cover if it is completely concealed by an obstacle.





F. River Ivlis Crossroads

The River Ivlis Crossroads presents the adventurers with the choice of heading to the Tser Pool Encampment or trekking up the mountain to Tser Falls. At the crossroads looms a gallows. Provided Ireena is with the adventurers, read the following:

> Ireena hooks her thumb towards the gallows. "This is where we would execute the… the irredeemable, as they're known. Father insisted that death should have little place in our lives. That executions must be done far from our homes and the dead be carted straight back to the church."
>
> As she recounts her father's wisdom, Ireena blinks away what can only be a tear.

Ireena can shed further light on this grim place, if asked. She describes the last known person to be hanged here: Marek, whose name was drawn for the Lottery (see *The Lottery* in *CMP* Ch. 3). Read the following:

> Ireena swallows. "Last we used this noose was for a runaway lottery winner. His name was Marek. He came to the lottery as if he already knew his name would be drawn. He struck Ismark with a shovel and fled. We had little choice but to give pursuit—the Fates had decided he alone would dine with the Devil. He fled here… and when he saw there was nowhere left to run…"
>
> Ireena shakes her head in disappointment. "We had to send Anton Garvinsky instead. He at least knew that denying the Devil's thirst would spell ruin for us all."

To Tser Pool. Ireena cautions the adventurers from venturing to the Tser Pool Encampment, citing her need for secrecy: "We do not know who among the Vistani serve the Devil—or could be tempted to. Even with my hood drawn and my hair dyed, I am certain my identity will be determined." If the adventurers press on, she has little choice but to follow.

The Hanged One

Per the *Companion*, one adventurer is the Doomed One—one seemingly fated to die. Throughout the campaign, the adventurers come across illusions or delusions depicting someone's corpse—the same adventurer is shown (see *CMP* Ch. 1, *The Narrator's Toolbox* for details). The same is true here at the crossroads. Describe the Doomed One to that character; the other adventurers see an unfamiliar Barovian.

Ireena Kolyana. If present, Ireena remarks on this unsettling phenomena after the corpse is touched and melts away. Read the following:

> Ireena shakes her head in disapproval. "This land is cursed; these gallows especially so. We are not the first to see echoes of the dead hanging here only to startle the living. My father says—said—they appear to remind us of what we have lost. Ismark claims they remind us of what we shall one day be… Me? I hope only that the dead have found rest."

G. Tser Pool Encampment

Tser Pool Encampment is a vital stop in the adventurers' journey, as it is where they receive the campaign's main quest: the Fortunes of Ravenloft. If the adventurers elect not to visit Tser Pool, they encounter werewolves at Tser Falls (Area H), who force the adventurers to take shelter for the night with the Vistani.

Tser Pool Encampment is a stark contrast to the Village of Barovia. It is a place of good music and good cheer—enough so that the adventurers might even become suspicious. How can these people laugh and dance in a land as dark as this? The adventurers should enter this area guarded and leave confused.

Revisions. The *Companion* makes two revisions to Area G:

- The Vistani here are not in league with Strahd; such a role is better left for Arrigal's ilk outside Vallaki. Thus, this is an opportunity to prove Barovian prejudices wrong.
- No artifact can be found in Tser Pool Encampment, despite the *Fortunes of Ravenloft* section in this subchapter. To be handed the artifact would be a grave disservice to the campaign.

The Wolves Attack. If the adventurers were attacked at Tser Falls, the beasts do not follow the party to Tser Pool. A noxious smell assaults the adventurers' nostrils: wolfsbane incense (see App. C). Having foreseen this conflict, Madam Eva had her people burn the incense to keep away the werewolves.

Arriving to the Camp

The Vistani keep a tight vigil, for Barovia's horrors prove less kind than the Devil Strahd. If the adventurers arrive during the daytime, read the description on *CoS* p. 36. If they arrive at night, read the following description:

> The crescent moon shines upon this haven of light, life, and music. A lyre sings its chords in the firelight while figures dance around a bonfire or tap their feet along from benches. The smell of roasting chicken is in the air, drawing forth cries from your stomach. This is not the Barovian gloom you are used to—far from it.

Vistani Guards. Regardless of the time of day, the adventurers are stopped by a pair of mounted Vistani **guards** named Anegri and Melfta. Anegri has a sparkle in his eye but proves suspicious. Read the following:

> Before you can venture into the encampment, a pair of mounted Vistani trot over to you. The taller of the two is still wearing a greasy bib over his linen shirt and chewing his dinner. The other man's eyes sparkle with mirth but his half-smile betrays suspicion. "Halt," he shouts in a heavy accent. "Do you come to our camp as friends or foes?"

Should the adventurers reply "friends" or the like, Anegri says, "Swear it now then, before gods and men." Afterwards, he introduces himself and his companion. Read the following:

> "We are well met. I am Anegri. This oaf of mine choking on a chicken bone is Melfta. Forgive us but before you are welcomed into our home you must… Prove yourself." Anegri draws a dagger that glints in the light—a silvered dagger.

Wolfsbane Tests. The Vistani are ever-wary of werewolves and conduct a series of tests on strangers. This becomes a tense moment for any adventurer infected with lycanthropy. The first test is simple: slicing the palm with a silvered dagger, which the Vistani provide. Whereas others will only wince, the lycanthrope must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to hold in a screech of agony. If an adventurer refuses the dagger test, the Vistani offer a sprig of wolfsbane (see the sidebar). If an adventurer *has* succumbed to lycanthropy, this is an excellent opportunity to prove Madam Eva's prescience: as they are about to take a test, a messenger arrives from the camp. Read the following, which assumes the second test is being taken:

> The Vistani watch you in pregnant silence. The sprig of wolfsbane is heavy in your hand. A bead of sweat runs down the nape of your neck as you stare down at what may prove to be a deadly herb.
>
> Out from the camp comes a messenger, rushing for Anegri. You catch the latter half of his whisper: "...Madam Eva says to allow them in. Such are the strangers she has foreseen."
>
> Anegri pulls back and shares a startled glance. His eyes swing to you. "It seems that your arrival has been foretold, strangers. Madam Eva will see you and she will see you now. Come with me."

Anegri forgets to retrieve the wolfsbane. If the character holding it succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, they can pocket it before he has a chance to see it, thereby allowing them a chance to keep an herb deadly to werewolves. He then leads them to Madam Eva's tent.

Roleplaying the Vistani. The Vistani here are full of life and laughter—a stark contrast to the dour Barovians in the village yonder. They are fond of good times and good music and welcome the adventurers into the camp as kith and kin. The Vistani here do not know how old Madam Eva is, only that she "endures yet." If asked, one Vistana claims that his great grandfather once asked for Eva's hand in marriage. Another claims that Madam Eva has "always" been in Barovia. You can voice the Vistani with this sample dialogue:

- "We have seen the world and yet… and yet Barovia calls us home."
- "Beware the Barovians. They are not so tolerant as us. The odd fellow out gets stoned, as they say."
- "To be beholden to no master, to tread wherever the road goes—that is freedom."



Madam Eva's Tent

Madam Eva has foreseen the party' arrival and knows details about each of their lives. When they enter her tent, she calls them out by name and references their past.

Roleplaying Madam Eva. Madam Eva wears a smile like a shawl; never does she grimace. News and threats merely make her laugh. She cannot be surprised and she can hardly be impressed. Having divined their secrets, Madam Eva rips into the adventurers' past with no concern for how they might feel about such ancient history being brought up. If that wasn't enough, she calls nearly every person "child."

You can voice Madam Eva with the following dialogue:

- "I am blessed with the Sight. What was and what is and what will be are all known or will be known to me in good time. I am the loom that spins out the threads of Fate."
- "We are all but playthings in the hands of Fate. There is no shame in that, child."
- "The Devil's shadow is vast and deep. Barovia has choked upon his noose for too long. This land and its people cry out for freedom, but there are few who listen."

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. Madam Eva offers personal readings for each adventurer. Afterwards, she deals out the Fortunes of Ravenloft. You should have already picked out your tarokka cards and determined the Fortunes of Ravenloft. Read the following:

> The crone offers a toothless grin. "Sit. Sit, all of you. Sit, if you ever wish to see the sun again—if you ever wish to return home. The Mists have tightened around Barovia once again. Fate deals yet another hand. You are not the first to be brought to this accursed land… but perhaps you shall be the last. The Fortunes of Ravenloft have marked you. You are destined to stand boldly against the shadow, to stand against the Devil himself—or die as failures."
>
> Madam Eva spreads the tarokka cards across the table in a flurry of movements. When all is done, there are but five, arranged in a cross. "Others have stood as you did. None prevailed. Some came close. Some threw their lot in with the Devil. Some yet live in the shadows of this country. All sought the Fortunes—artifacts of great power without which none can stand against the shadow of Ravenloft. If you wish to free this land from darkness… if you wish to free yourselves, you must secure such artifacts before the Devil does. Only you can end the curse of Strahd."

Ireena Kolyana. Ireena Kolyana does not go unnoticed by Madam Eva, but the seer pretends not to know her true identity (especially with Ireena's hood up and her hair dyed, as she does before leaving the Village of Barovia). Madam Eva does not under any circumstances reveal Ireena's true identity as Strahd's beloved, nor does she explain why the Devil is obsessed with the poor girl. Read the following:

> Madam Eva looks beyond you, her grin widening you. "And you, my dear… Yours is the only future here I cannot divine, but I see the Devil's mark upon you nonetheless. I see woe clinging to like dew after dawn. You have lost so much already… but there is more that can be taken from you."
>
> Ireena grimaces, her chin reflected in Eva's magical flames. "Why me, seer? Why is he obsessed with me so?"
>
> "A vampyr covets beauty—and so too does he hate it. Undeath twists love into hate and pride into arrogance. Do not tarry at night, my dear. Flee now as fast as you can to the bastions of light left in this valley lest you become evil's bride—but beware! Beware, for salvation and sanctuary are often the most empty of promises and there will be those who wish to surrender you to the darkness. Trust only those that truly know you."
>
> Ireena's hands curl into fists. "Am I to wither away in some church, seer? To await death or the day the Devil grows bored with me? Is it my destiny to live in hiding?"
>
> Madam Eva smiles again, her last few teeth ghastly in the firelight. "No, my dear," she croaks. "It is not."

Aftermath. Madam Eva soon dismisses the adventurers from her tent and grants them permission to stay the night. While in the camp, the adventurers can converse with the Vistani. The *A Vistana's Tale* event occurs (see *CoS*).

H. Tser Falls

The Tser Falls overlook the eastern valley and are spanned by a bridge slick from mist. A thousand feet below runs the Ivlis River, which meanders towards Tser Pool where Madam Eva and the Vistani reside. With the *Bigger Barovia* variant, it should take the adventurers about 1d4 + 8 hours to reach this area from the Village of Barovia. Therefore, if they leave the village at dawn, they will arrive here as dusk begins to fall. See the *Running the Chapter* above for details.

Revisions. The *Companion* makes several sweeping changes to this area for the sake of the narrative:

- There is a treacherous footpath winding from the bridge down to the base of the waterfall that only the dumb or desperate would take. A character that takes the lead and succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check can guide the party safely down the path. On a failure, 1d4 members of the party each must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save as they trip and fall during the trek.
- There is an inn five minutes north of the bridge that provides much-needed shelter after dark.
- If the adventurers have not yet visited Tser Pool Encampment—and therefore missed out on receiving the campaign's main quest—the werewolves attack, forcing the adventurers down the footpath and towards Tser Pool so that they may meet Madam Eva.

The Tser Inn

The Tser Inn is vital to pan-Barovian travel but is doomed to burn down at the hands of the werewolf Kiril Stoyanovich. If you do not intend to utilize this development, the adventurers have the chance to stay at the inn and overhear rumors and receive quest hooks.

The Tser Inn has stood in some form for centuries. It is frequented more so by traveling Vistani than Barovians, who deliver wine from the west as they head east out of the valley. The inn is always stocked up when the Vistani return from the lands beyond the Mists. The inn is maintained by the old, cantankerous widow Ms. Elanka Parnistova. Two guests and two workers (Barovian **commoners**), are staying at the inn.

Ireena Kolyana. If Ireena is present, she remarks, "The Tser Inn should be just up ahead. We can shelter through the night and seize upon the dawn."

Services. The inn provides a bed for 3 sp a night and a meal—turnip stew, eggs, potatoes, and the like—for 1 sp. A pint of wine (the unremarkable Purple Grapemash No. 3 from the Wizards of Wine winery) is sold for 3 cp.



Rumors. The adventurers can pick up these rumors:

- "We're running low on wine. Last I heard from the Vistani, there's a valley-wide shortage."
- "They say the Mists have risen again. Immol has been separated from the valley again." (Immol is a village historically included in Barovia that was cut from *Curse of Strahd*).
- "If you find yourself in Vallaki, stay at the Blue Water Inn. The Martikovs are good people and their family provides wine to inns and taverns for free."
- "A traveler came in here the other week. Said the woods are 'moving.' Well, I asked him what in the Morninglord's name that meant and he said he saw bushes on the move, vines in the shape of men, and small treant-like figures that bristle with thorns and needles."

The Inn Afire

Kiril Stoyanovich, in a fit of rage, decides to burn down the Tser Inn. This can occur while the party is inside or as they approach from the south—if the inn isn't already a flaming ruin. Kiril and his four **werewolves** butcher Ms. Elanka and send her guests and workers fleeing into the woods. Upon sensing the party, the lycanthropes attack, and if they're on horseback, the wolves are content to slaughter the steeds before driving their prey down the path to Tser Pool Encampment. There the Vistani burn wolfsbane incense, forcing the beasts to give up their advantage.

Later in the Campaign. If your adventurers already visited Tser Pool Encampment, you can postpone this encounter until the adventurers return to Tser Falls later in the campaign. If so, Kiril also has 1d4+3 **wolves** at his command.

I. Black Carriage

As the adventurers round the bend, they sight the Black Carriage. Ordinarily, the carriage is parked alongside the road, existing as an open invitation to Castle Ravenloft. This is a trap; if your players take it, you must improvise an entire encounter in Castle Ravenloft.

Revision. The first time the adventurers reach this area, the Black Carriage is already in motion, with **Cyrus Belview** driving the horses. The implication is clear: Strahd von Zarovich is on his way back to Castle Ravenloft. In truth, it is only **Rahadin** returning from the Amber Temple. Nevertheless, the adventurers should be sent into a panic. The carriage is far enough away that the adventurers can't affect it but close enough that they are compelled to hide, lest they attract the Devil's dark attention. When they first see the Black Carriage, read the text below:

> From deep within the fog comes the thunder of hooves against rough cobblestones and the creaking of wood—a carriage. Dread washes over you, as if every instinct your ancestors clawed for screams at you to run, to hide, to survive! The brush offers shelter for those quick enough to claim it!

If a Barovian, like Ireena, is present, they remark, "The Black Carriage! Hide! Hide before we meet the Devil's gaze!" and leap into nearby bushes. Add the following:

> Out from the mists gallop stallions as black as night, as black as death. The carriage turns at the crossroads so fast the entire vehicle tilts on its rightmost wheels. A graven voice shouts through the fog, "Apologies, master! Apologies!"
>
> As the stallions right the carriage, you see a misshapen creature sitting upon the dashboard—a man with lizard scales on half his face and ears like a panther's. His jawline is furred and when he lifts his left leg, you see that he has the monstrous webbed foot of a duck. The carriage hits a bump in the road and the driver barks with laughter.





J. Gates of Ravenloft

If the adventurers do not get in the Black Carriage in Area I (which they shouldn't), the Gates of Ravenloft are likely to go unseen until the campaign's endgame. To feature it earlier in the campaign, plague an adventurer with a nightmare in which they walk up to it. Read the description provided in *Curse of Strahd*, stuffing the adventurer's dreamself in the Black Carriage and wheeling it up to Castle Ravenloft. See Appendix C for details on the green slime that haunts the gates.

Revision. The Gates of Ravenloft are a lore opportunity. Strahd's wrath. Sixteen dusk elf **zombies** hang from the battlements, all women. The number is symbolic: sixteen stones were hurled at Patrina Velikovna, and so Strahd hanged and reanimated sixteen dusk elven women. Add the following to *CoS'* description of the Gates of Ravenloft:

> Hanging from the battlements are sixteen corpses—corpses that have yet to quit moving. Each you notice are women, and elves for that matter, if their ears are any indication. You cannot know for how long they've languished here in undeath, but it is clear that the nooses have weathered both storms and centuries.
>
> The corpses lack the grace for silence. You see their bloated and ripped lips move, but their wails are snatched by a cruel and cold wind that cuts at your face and fingers. The ravens were surely at the corpses long, long ago, but the dark magic that sustains these women has yet to cease.

If the adventurers cross the drawbridge, 1d6+2 nooses snap. Half the zombies fall into the gaping chasm below, the other half land on the drawbridge, attacking the party.

L. Lake Zarovich

At Lake Zarovich, Bluto Krogarov prepares to drown a Vistana child—Arabelle. Saving her is a rare victory for the adventurers, and will endear them to Vistani, Vallakians, and even Rudolph van Richten. This detour also distracts the party from pursuing the bones of St. Andral, bringing *St. Andral's Feast* ever closer.

Foreshadowing. To foreshadow Arabelle's abduction, seed one of the following events into your campaign:

- The adventurers draw the Temper card when consorting with Madam Eva. This is the least subtle option.
- The adventurers meet Vistani or dusk elves looking for the child (see the *In Search of Arabelle* encounter below).
- The adventurers overhear Vallakians (such as Nikolai Wachter) gossiping that "Bluto says he can bring back the fish" and that "Bluto's gone out to the lake today. Morninglord rest his soul."

Revision. The *Companion* adds one twist to Lake Zarovich: Bluto Krogarov drowned his pregnant wife, Tereska, in the lake months ago. Now her spirit endures as a rusalka—a vengeful, drowned spirit with the statistics of a **banshee**. It is this spirit, Tereska, that has driven away the fish and attracted Barovian wolves to the shore. To placate his wife, Bluto intends to drown Arabelle, giving her the child she never had.

Saving Arabelle

The discovery of Bluto's crime should not be left up to chance; Arabelle's muffled cries carry across the water, and it's clear she's inside the sack when Bluto drops it into the lake. When running this encounter, do not track movement across the lake, only Arabelle's depth. Tracking any other movement only drags out the encounter, hence the Strength (Athletics) check to reach her in time (DC 10 if by rowboat; DC 15 if by swimming). Assume that Arabelle has sunk 15 feet when an adventurer is in a position to save her and continues to sink 15 more feet at the end of a round.

Swimming. A character without a swimming speed must expend 1 extra foot when swimming. Thus, it will take 30 feet of movement to save her on the first round.

Drowning. Arabelle drowns two rounds after the adventurers reach her position, giving them scant time to get her to the surface. If Arabelle drowns, she can be resuscitated on the surface with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check or if she receives healing. On a failure, Arabelle dies.

Freeing Arabelle. The burlap sack is heavy when waterlogged; 3 points of slashing damage are necessary to cut it open if it is still in the lake. On ground, a character can use their action and a sharp implement to cut it open.

If the adventurers don't take a boat out to the lake, prod them into action with the following text:

> The lone figure lowers his fishing pole. He labors over something in his boat—and it's then that you hear it: the muffled cries of a child. He heaves a squirming burlap sack up; the child elbows him in the face and stands, teetering on the bench! You watch in horror as the man plants a hand on the sack and heaves. With a pregnant splash, it goes sinking into the depths! From across the water, you hear the man heave a heavy sigh of relief.

The Rusalka's Wrath

Tereska arrives from the sunken depths to claim Arabelle as her own, but also hungers for Bluto's soul. With a smile, she will drag her murderous husband into the depths so that the three can be one eternal, unhappy family. If they are slain, Arabelle and Bluto become **specters**. If all spirits are slain, Lake Zarovich's fish mysteriously reappear and the wolf packs prowling its shores thin in the coming days, restoring Vallaki to its former way of life.

Roleplaying Bluto. Bluto only ever mumbles in a tiny, unsettling voice. His gaze is dead, his face nearly catatonic. Once Tereska is destroyed, Bluto becomes frenzied. He is reduced to howls of anguish and claims that what he's done, he did for Vallaki. You can voice Bluto with this sample dialogue; Bluto's mumbled sentences can hardly be understood.

- "...the fish left. The fish..."
- "...we pay for our sins... Vallaki paid for mine."
- "She always wanted a child..."
- "...I'm making things right..."
- "Vallaki will thank me."
- If Tereska dies, Bluto screeches, "Tereska! Tereska!" He then blames the adventurers, snarling, "How could you? How *could* you?"

Lady in the Lake. The rusalka materializes in the sunken depths as an adventurer saves Arabelle. Read the following:

> You catch the sack before it sinks any deeper into the frigid lake. The child struggling within grows sluggish as the cold creeps in and their lungs fill with water. You turn your gaze to the surface; it is mere meters away. You kick, looking about—and staring you in the face is the withered figure of a waterlogged woman. Her eyes glow like azure suns in the darkened depths and when she screams, you hear it in your very soul!

Tereska immediately attacks the adventurer, but reserves her Wail for later. That she's a spirit is clear, but a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies her as a rusalka, a drowned spirit similar to a **banshee**. She ascends to the surface, interposed between Arabelle and the closest rowboat and/or the shore. Read the following:

> The spirit rises from the dark waters, her body translucent but her features visible. Her flesh has been nibbled on by fish; her cheekbone juts out, revealing a swathe of bone beneath. Her hair is waterlogged and wrapped about her throat like a noose—and as her body breaches the surface, you now see she clutches her pregnant belly with a skeletal hand.
>
> With her eyes full of hatred, the spirit stretches her jaws impossibly wide and lets out a wail so dreadful it cuts at your very soul!

The rusalka uses her Wail, subjecting at least half the party to it. Arabelle and Bluto are conveniently immune to the wail. Creatures that fail while swimming float on the surface of the lake as if they were dead until the start of the next round, after which they begin to sink at a rate of 15 feet per round. If the rusalka is near death, she makes one last attempt to kill Arabelle by clawing at the girl (through the sack or not), making a Corrupting Touch attack.

If the rusalka has not been slain when Arabelle is brought to shore, the spirit kills Bluto by dragging him into the lake. If the rusalka is slain, read the following:

> The spirit is sent to her second death. With that last blow, a mighty fracture appears in what remains of her right cheek. It cracks out like shattered glass; as the fracture webs across her face, a look of fear crosses the spirit's face. With a mournful wail, she shatters into shards of blinding, blue light. When at last your ears cease ringing, and your eyes can handle the pale daylight, you see a translucent, white-blue heart floating atop the lake's surface.



The heart is a semi-magical remnant of the rusalka. A creature that uses their action to crush the heart unleashes a terrifying wail; all other creatures that are within 60 feet and can hear it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for up to 1 minute. Undead are immune to this effect. Once crushed, the heart becomes dust. The heart's properties can be identified with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

Roleplaying Arabelle. Arabelle's personality is described in Dramatis Personae above. Her first words after catching her breath are, "Take me home before dusk."

You can voice Arabelle with the following dialogue:

- "Father got drunk again, so I snuck out to collect raspberries. That man found me. Asked if I had a mother; I said 'No, sir. She died.' He smiled and said, 'Would you like a new one?' He already had me in the bag before I could run."
- "My father is a generous man. My uncle… a vicious one."
- "Father is likely still dead-drunk. If you can get me back to camp, I can pretend I never left. I'll sneak you back his coin purse."

Aftermath. If Bluto survives and is brought back to Vallaki for justice, Baron Vallakovich locks him in the Stockades—not for the attempted murder of a Vistana, child or not, but for "malicious unhappiness." Once Luvash hears about Bluto, he and 1d6+2 Vistani bandits demand justice. They appear at the Sunset Gate and try to force their way into Vallaki. One guard is slain in the process and another is critically injured. If Bluto is not surrendered to Luvash and his party is rebuffed, Luvash asks his brother Arrigal to slip into Vallaki at night to assassinate Bluto.

M. Mad Mage of Mount Baratok

Ordinarily, the Mad Mage's sanity can only be restored with a *greater restoration* spell, which requires a 9th-level character to cast. The *Companion* takes a bold new direction with the Mad Mage—he has lost his memories to the sorrowsworn that now haunt his extradimensional mansion. The sorrowsworn, detailed in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, are bleak incarnations of the Shadowfell's nature. Mordenkainen's arrival tore through the barriers of Barovia and, as punishment for his hubris, the Dark Powers have allowed the Shadowfell's influence to creep in. These foul creatures now torment the archmage. If destroyed, Mordenkainen's memories and sanity are restored. This is certainly a far more poignant solution than merely casting greater restoration on the Mad Mage.

The Mad Mage will only invite the adventurers into his home if they are 7th-level or higher; he even remarks, "Bah! Ye are not ready to face true demons! Come back when yer a wee more powerful!"

The Mansion of Madness. The Mad Mage's home is created by a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell (which he remarks upon with, "I perfected this spell, you know?"). The mansion is staffed by six half-transparent servants, all identical to the Mad Mage. A wizard that enters the mansion and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies this mansion as the product of a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell.

At midnight, the sorrowsworn emerge, heralded by a cold and bitter wind that extinguishes all firelight inside the manor. The Mad Mage cowers in his bedroom, refusing to leave, all while raving about the "living shadows" that stalk the mansion. At dawn, he forgets these monsters exist.



It is up to the party to rid the mansion of monsters. This encounter is a wave assault mixed with a good ol' fashioned traipse through a benighted mansion. Over the course of the next several hours, the following events occur in the order below:

- The Mad Mage's ethereal cats (1d4+2 **The Wretched** in disguise) shed their guises and scamper about the mansion—but only when they aren't looked upon. The cats choose one target and follow them about, whisking their tails playfully. A character with a passive Perception score of 16 sees the monsters running about undisguised. Otherwise, it isn't until the sorrowsworn attack a creature that their true forms are seen.
- Something beats within the kitchen—**the Lost**, desperate to be found. If the adventurers refuse to open the door, it bursts out before dawn rises or when the Hungry (see below) is in the kitchen. Skip to the next event and circle back to this creature later.
- **The Lonely** sulks in a chair in Area 10, its cries echoing throughout the manor. From behind, it appears to be a darkened human sitting before the fireplace—but when it turns around, its true, hideous form is revealed.
- **The Hungry** rummages loudly through the kitchen, searching for food that sustains its dark existence. If the adventurers do not attack the creature, it begins to hunt them and flees to the kitchen upon being reduced to 112 hit points or fewer.

Charm of Heroism
As an action, you can imbue yourself with bravery. You gain 10 temporary hit points, which lasts for 1 hour. Whenever a target makes an attack roll or a saving throw for the next hour, you can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to the attack roll or saving throw. Once you use this charm, its power vanishes from you.

- Once all other sorrowsworn have been destroyed or incapacitated, a terrifying roar shakes the manor. From the fireplace in Area M2 emerges **The Angry**, an amalgam of rage and hatred. The creature makes for the Mad Mage on the second floor and does not rest until the wizard is dead. If the Mad Mage is dragged from the manor, the creature is trapped there until the following midnight, after which it begins to stalk him across Barovia. Although the Mad Mage is frightened of the creature, he participates in the battle. He only casts *time stop* if half or more of the adventurers are rendered unconscious or are in critical condition.

The Mad Mage Restored. If the sorrowsworn are destroyed, their dark influence vanishes from Mordenkainen's mind. He bestows a *charm of heroism* (see the sidebar) on each adventurer and offers his support in teleporting the adventurers into Castle Ravenloft, if they need to stage an early incursion into Strahd's lair.

The Mad Mage Lost. If The Angry manages to kill the Mad Mage, the mansion begins to collapse. The adventurers are shunted out onto the summit of Mount Baratok in freezing weather. If it is not destroyed, the Angry will hunt the adventurers across Barovia.

M1. Foyer

A line of servants identical to Mordenkainen await his orders. Stairs lead to Area M10. Several cats sit on the couches, peering at arriving guests with dull expressions. These cats are secretly **The Wretcheds** that run amok at night.

M2. Den

The Mad Mage spends many hours here staring into the undying fire. The cabinet contains liquor, wine, and a *potion of flying*. **The Angry** emerges from the fireplace here during *In the Mansion of Madness*.

M3. Study

Upon the desk is a half-written letter addressed to Mordenkainen. It reads, "Dearest Mordenkainen, I write to you this day for aid. The people of Barovia—a distant land ruled by a deathless vampyr—cry out for freedom. All is not well. All is not well in Barovia. The very sun…"

M4. Dining Room

A nine course banquet sits here consisting of oysters à la Russe, cream of mushroom soup, poached salmon with mousseline sauce, chicken lyonnaise, Calvados-glazed roast duckling with applesauce, punch romaine, roasted squab on wilted cress, an asparagus salad with champagne-saffron vinaigrette, and pâté de foie gras. There is enough food on the table to feed ten people, with enough food in the kitchen to feed another ninety. The food is magically kept warm but disintegrates if taken from the mansion. Three spectral servants stand ready to seat guests, dab mouths with gold-trimmed handkerchiefs, and serve wine.

M5. Parlor

A *spell scroll of protection from evil and good* sits on the table next to a scroll case and a set of wizardly inks (worth 100 gp). The ink set never depletes. A wizard that uses the ink set to transcribe spells to their spell book can do so without expending gold.



M6. Cloakroom

Dozens of robes and cloaks and top hats are stored here. **The Lost** may lurk here behind the door during the In the Mansion of Madness event.

M7. Kitchen

The counters are stacked with uneaten food for the nine-course banquet. The smell is delectable. The Hungry rummages around here during the In the Mansion of Madness event.

M8. Pantry

The Lost may lurk here behind the door during the In the Mansion of Madness event.

M9. Nook

A lone bowl of cold oatmeal (sweetened with sugar and cinnamon) sits here, with a spectral servant standing at the ready with a handkerchief and creepy smile.

M10. Upstairs Hall

The Lonely later sulks here in a chair facing the unlit fireplace during the In the Mansion of Madness event.

M11. Guest Rooms

The beds are made up and ready for guests. A fake skeleton has been put in a random room's wardrobe—a gag by the Mad Mage.

M12. Master Bedrooms

The Mad Mage sleeps in the eastern room. Like his mind, these bedrooms are split in two. The dresser in the western room contains 10d6 x 10 scattered ep, all minted in different countries, worlds, and languages. Upon the dresser in the eastern room is a jewelry box containing a diamond (300 gp), a ruby-inlaid golden necklace (100 gp), and an amulet of proof against detection and location.

M13. Loft

This room connects the two master bedrooms.



P. Luna River Crossroads

The crossroads become the site of an ambush if the party's existence is now known to Arrigal. The Vistana stages an attack once during the campaign when the adventurers pass through this area. The bastard might be doing this out of revenge or on the orders of Strahd. He might intend to steal an artifact or abduct either Ireena Kolyana or the adventurers' Destined Ally. Personalize his motives to best fit your campaign and use this framework to your advantage.

The attack is swift and deadly. Arrigal himself never dirties his hands and instead fires from the brush with poisoned crossbow bolts. If he is still masquerading as an ally of the adventurers, the Vistana takes any precaution necessary to keep his identity secret—even if it means planting a bolt in the throat of his brethren.

Wagon on the Loose. The road to the southeast is uphill; the Vistani bandits kick a vardo downhill. By when it rumbles out of the mists, it is too late. The wagon bisects the adventurers' marching order. Characters in the path of this 8-foot-wide wagon must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The wagon continues rolling downhill towards the northwest for another 60 feet. It has nothing of value inside.

Ambushers. Once the wagon is loosed, 1d4+3 Vistani **bandits** emerge from the thickets to attack. If the adventurers are 7th-level or higher, one **bandit captain** is also in the mix. **Arrigal** remains 60 feet away, hidden in the thicket, where he looses a single crossbow bolt each round.

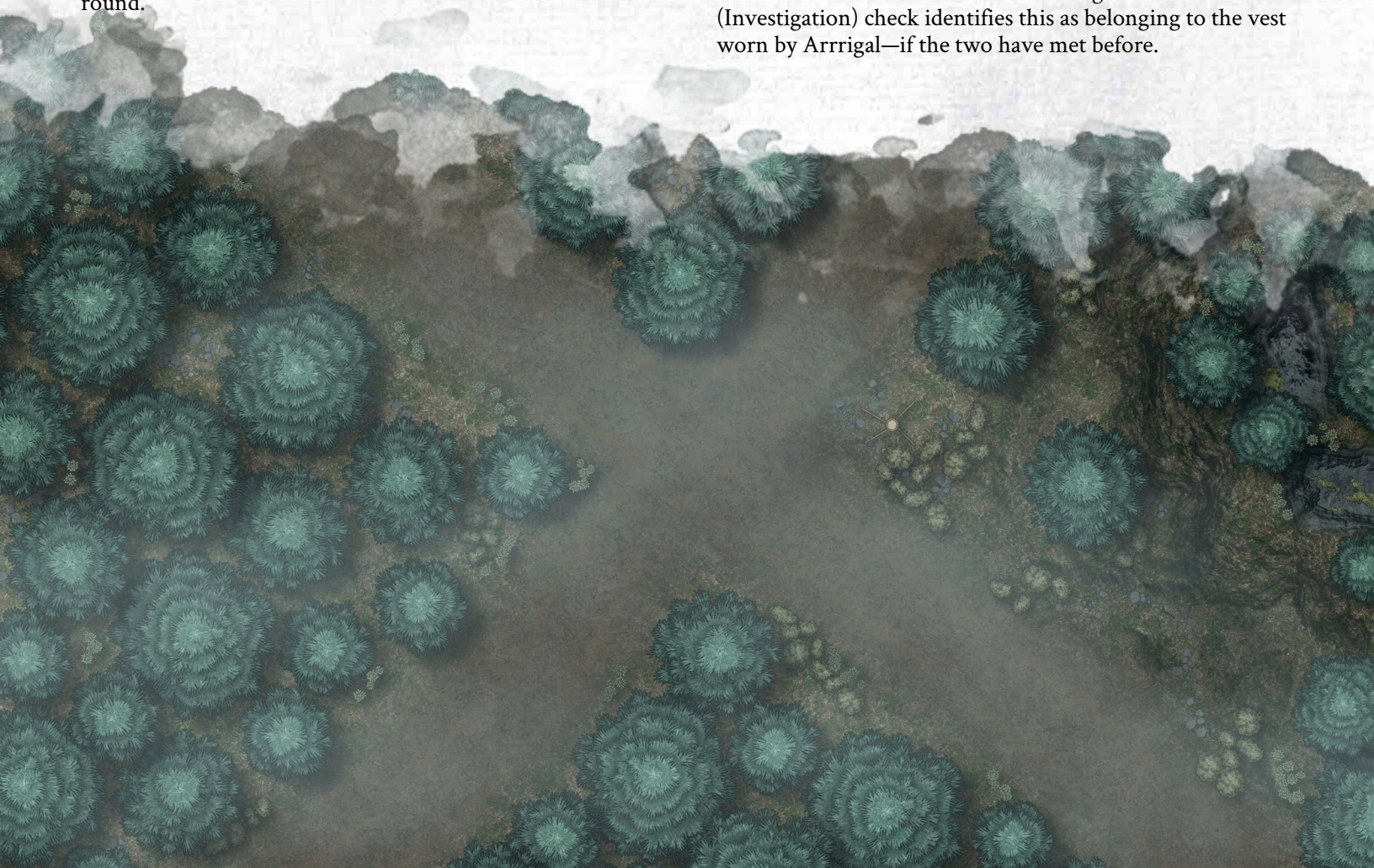
Arrigal's Poison

For this encounter, Arrigal has dipped several of his crossbow bolts in drow poison (see below). When attacking with these bolts using his light crossbow, his attacks do not inflict 7d6 poison damage, but instead must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Arrigal can swap back to his ordinary poison, if he intends to kill the adventurers or if they are high enough of a level that such a measure becomes necessary. A character that analyzes the poison and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check can identify it as drow poison. A drow character automatically succeeds on this check. That someone in Barovia has this poison should rouse a number of questions, such as who could procure it or if there is a drow in the valley working for the Devil Strahd.

On the second round of combat, a bandit relays Arrigal's demands, if there are any. The Vistani flee when reduced to 3 hit points and refuse to give up Arrigal's identity except through a successful DC 23 Charisma (Intimidation) check.

Arrigal himself flees into the woods if his minions are massacred—but not after shooting down the last survivor before the adventurers can milk information from him. During his flight, Arrigal's vest gets caught on a thornbrush. The adventurers can find a scrap of his distinctive clothing if they succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character with the Keen Mind feat, or one who succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies this as belonging to the vest worn by Arrrigal—if the two have met before.



R. Raven River Crossroads

So close to Yester Hill, the Raven River Crossroads is trafficked by blights and druids. Wintersplinter (the **tree blight** that is birthed at Yester Hill) might be encountered here if the adventurers fail to stop the druids' ritual.

Revision. In accordance with the *Bigger Barovia* variant, the *Companion* adds an inn to this location to facilitate pan-Barovian travel (see below). The blight encounter below is meant to tie in with the inn.

The Blights. A human **druid** is shepherding two **vine blights**, four **needle blights**, and six **twig blights** from Yester Hill. These foul creates emerge from the fog, eager to feast on the adventurers' blood. Read the following:

> The woods whisper all around you, as if to warn you against a threat. You can hear something slithering through the fog, as if it were dragging itself forward—perhaps a legless zombie, perhaps some sort of Barovian beast. Girding yourself for danger, you feel the brush rustle—and in that moment, two creatures reach up from behind you. Their voices are dry rasps: "The seed has born bitter fruit!" one shouts! "We are that fruit!" adds its companion.
>
> The creatures—chlorofiends, living plants—lunge forward with their viney appendages!

The Raven's Roost

The Raven's Roost has historically served winery workers on their way home or merchants visiting Krezk—before the commune closed its gates to outside trade. The inn has fallen on hard times but keeps afloat thanks to the Martikov family's contributions and Vistani returning from lands beyond the Mists. The inn is overgrown with vines—vines the owner does not remember being there last month.

When the adventurers see the inn, read the following:

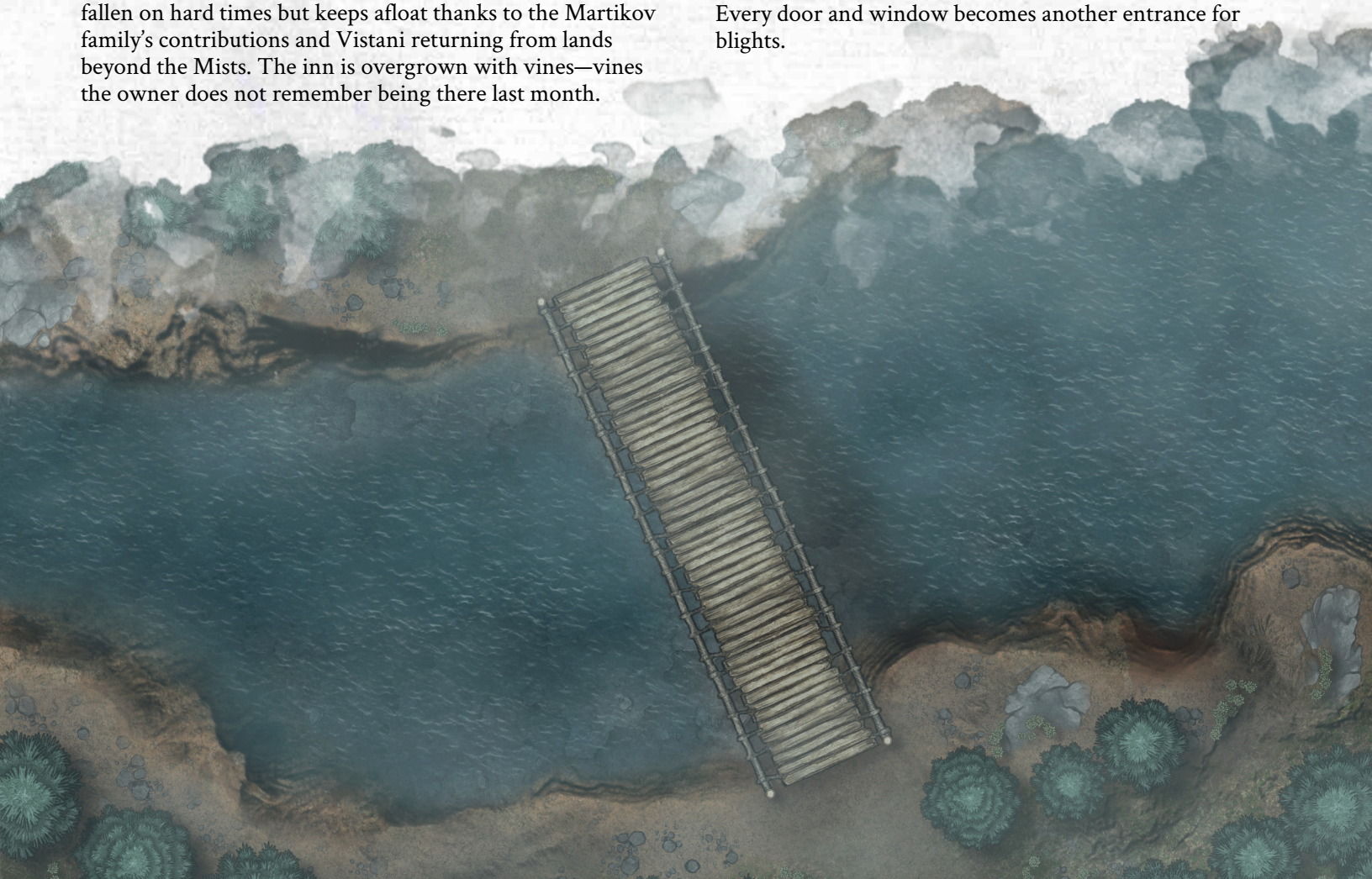
> A sign creaks unseen. Out from the mists looms an inn overgrown with vines. Lights therein suggest it is still frequented by travelers. The yard is enclosed by a five-foot-tall stone wall. Closer now, you can see the sign flapping in the wind. You have, evidently, arrived to the Raven's Roost Inn.

The inn is staffed by three human **commoners**: Waltar Swilovich, his wife Korina Grygorovich, and their son Waltar Waltarovich. Waltar Sr., who was raised in Vallaki, is a distant descendant of Artank Swilovich, a prominent member of the Barovian Wine Distiller's Guild buried in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft—a fact Waltar is quick to mention. He says "My great grandfather was entombed with more wine than even Bluto Krogarov could drink." If the 5 of Coins was drawn during the tarokka reading, this becomes a vital hint to the location of their artifact.

Services. The inn provides a bed for 5 sp a night and a meal—carrots, potatoes, and a wolf steak—for 2 sp. A pint of wine (the unremarkable Purple Grapemash No. 3 from the Wizards of Wine winery) is sold for 5 cp.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir. The inn makes an excellent place for the adventurers to encounter Ezmerelda, whether they've already met her or not. If the adventurers combed through the Abbey of Saint Markovia but never met Ezmerelda, now is the perfect time to introduce her. If present, she is the Raven's sole guest.

Blights. With the inn added to this location, the encounter above shifts in focus: holding out against bloodthirsty blights while protecting Waltar and his family. Every door and window becomes another entrance for blights.



Random Encounters Revised

Random encounters are a fun and interesting part of any campaign—but no encounter in a campaign as tight as *Curse of Strahd* should ever be random. At most, you should be rolling to see if an encounter happens, and if it does, you should have already planned out the encounter and rationalized where it fits in your overall story. In *Curse of Strahd*, encounters aren't random consequences of travel but the building blocks of a journey—of an arc in the campaign. They must be rationalized geographically and chronologically and crafted as stories.

Encounters Revised. *Curse of Strahd* provides skeletal encounters for your campaign—far too many than you need to use or should use. You need only a handful of eventful encounters in the campaign, most of which should occur in the large gaps between settlements. Replace the encounters presented in *CoS* Chapter 2 with the ones below.

Combining Encounters. The *Companion* advocates combining several encounters to make moments worthy of your precious time. For example, the *Hunting Trap* encounter is a waste of time on its own, but has great potential when combined with other encounters. Imagine the horror of aiding a "trapped" Barovian hunter only to learn he's an unharmed werewolf? Consider how disastrous one hunting trap can be when the adventurers are fleeing from a flock of undead.

Structuring Encounters. Whenever you intend to run an encounter, you must rationalize its geographic and narrative location. Some encounters ought not be run at higher levels. Some can't occur if the adventurers aren't near Vallaki, for example.



The Children of Mother Night

The werewolves are a handy solution for the campaign and manage to keep the tension throughout the campaign. The adventurers face the prospect of a lupine conflict any time they leave the safety of a settlement. Aim for at least two encounters but no more than three. The first one should occur at Tser Falls (see Area H above for details).

Conflicts with werewolves do not necessitate combat. Distant howls will motivate the adventurers into flight. The pack is both a faction to contend with and a vehicle to move the plot along. Once the adventurers acquire magical or silvered weaponry, they can turn the tables on the wolves—after which the Children of Mother Night grow cautious.

Consider these three possible encounters:

Fresh from the Mill

If the children Freek and Myrtle are rescued from Old Bonegrinder, **Kiril Stoyanovich** and his four **werewolves** (minus whichever were slain at Tser Falls or in other encounters) attack the party outside Vallaki. Kiril wishes to add new blood to the wolf pack and is eager to see how the horrors they went through will affect the children in battle. While in the last three hundred feet to the gates of Vallaki, Kiril and his ilk burst from the tree line.

When the beasts appear, Freek and Myrtle cling to one adult each: Ireena Kolyana, if she is present, and one adventurer. Ireena and the adventurer must succeed on a grapple check against a werewolf; if they fail, the child is stolen from their grasp. The werewolves head north towards Lake Zarovich if they are successful, allowing you to tie the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok into the narrative: the wizard deftly *lightning bolts* a werewolf without harming a child. Kiril, for his part, offers to spare the adventurers from his wrath if they give up the children.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

The werewolves, cunning and sadistic as they are, leave a trap. A **werewolf** in the skin of a man is seemingly caught by an old hunting trap in the woods. The iron does no harm to the werewolf, who can easily escape from it. Meanwhile, 1d4 more **werewolves**, perhaps even **Kiril Stoyanovich**—if he is not the "trapped" werewolf to begin with—are waiting nearby. To begin this encounter, read the following text:

> In the distance thunders a metallic clang, chased by a scream of utter agony. Some poor fool must've stepped into an old bear trap. A string of obscenities echoes out across the woods.

Because lycanthropes bleed cosmetically from wounds (without truly being injured), the victim looks injured; his or her pant leg is stained with blood.

The Devil's Entrance

When Strahd deigns to visit the adventurers, he may come in the form of a beast. This entrance is inspired by the *Dire Wolves* and *Swarms of Bats* random encounters, both of which provide grotesque or astonishing methods for Strahd to greet the party. These beasts also serve as minions for any would-be conflict that might erupt. Choose either of the variants below.

As with any visit from Strahd, this encounter can occur anywhere in Barovia and at any time. Per the *Companion*, however, it is best to keep Strahd's appearances in the campaign limited. Use this entrance for any encounter you would already use in your campaign.

Amongst the Wolves

The party is accosted by 1d6 **dire wolves**, the seventh of whom is none other than Strahd. When the vampire shapechanges back into his true form, it's by bursting through the flesh of a dire wolf. Read the following:

> From the rear of the pack stalks a white-haired wolf whose fangs drip with blood. The wolves pause and howl mournfully towards the sky, as if to pay the beast deference.
>
> And its maw twists into a smile.
>
> The wolf plants its paws into the dirt, its flesh bulging as something presses in from inside. Hands reach out from beneath the skin and burst from the beast's hide! From the creature's body crawls forth a tall and pale man crowned in bloodied, black hair. With a smile, he says, "Do forgive my appearance."

Amongst the Bats

The adventurers are accosted by 1d8 **swarms of bats**. One bat is none other than Strahd in bestial form. When he shapechanges back into his true form, it's in the form of a black mist that rapidly becomes solid. Read the following:

> Through shrieks you hear a low voice—a low chuckle that cuts through the din with the surety of steel. You feel an ill wind circulate amongst your ranks, coalescing at the feet of one bat that hovers before you. Its wings corrupt the very air into black fog that begins to take the shape of a man—and as it rapidly becomes solid, a pale man dressed in regal clothes materializes before you. His smile gleams in the starlight and his eyes smolder with curiosity.

In Search of Arabelle

Arabelle, daughter of Luvash, has gone missing—except her father doesn't know it yet. The Vistani and dusk elves have set out to find her before Luvash awakens from his newest drunken slumber. This encounter has two variants, both of which can be run. For details on Arabelle, see *Dramatis Personae* above. This encounter can only be run near Vallaki and before Arabelle has been returned to her father.

Vistani Searchers

1d4 + 1 Vistani **bandits** are searching along the road. They are led by Alexei, the Vistana due to be whipped bloody by Luvash when the adventurers first visit the Vistani Camp outside Vallaki. Read the following when the adventurers approach the Vistani:

> A shout echoes from the distance: "Arabelle!" shouts a man. "Arabelle! Come out, come out, wherever you are! Arabelle!"
>
> As you round a bend in the road, you see several men and women searching the thickets alongside the road. A scrawny, teenaged Vistana cups his hands again to his mouth and shouts, "Arabelle! Think of your father! Th-think of me! Please Arabelle!"

Roleplaying Alexei. The teenager is a nervous wreck who can't help but wring his hands in stress. Once he sees the adventurers, Alexei waves them over and all but shouts, "We are looking for a lost child—a little girl named Arabelle. Tell me you've seen her. Please, by the gods, tell me you've crossed paths with her. These woods… These woods are not safe for grown men, let alone children." Alexei promises a "ruby the size of your thumb" if the adventurers find Arabelle. If the party has Arabelle with them, Alexei shouts, "Girl! Why would you run off! Your father will whip you bloody! Hurry, hurry, for he grows drunker—angrier by the minute!"

The Search. If the adventurers search the nearby woods for 1 hour, a character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check can confirm there are no tracks of a young girl. There are, however, tracks of several barefooted individuals and strange footprints in the woods (druids herding blights to and from Yester Hill). Taking them at their word, Alexei pulls back his brethren and heads back to camp. With a shudder he says, "I pray Luvash found patience at the bottom of his last bottle."

Dusk Elf Trackers

The adventurers cross paths with three N dusk elf **scouts** in the Svalich Woods. These scouts are led by Savid, a dusk elf ordinarily met in Argynvostholt after he becomes separated from his fellows and accosted by blights. The elves too are searching for Arabelle, and hide when they first hear the adventurers. Savid abandons caution in the hope of saving a child, he calls out to the party. Read the following:

> A low and heavily accented "Hail" echoes out from the brush, the voice bouncing off tree trunks and becoming lost in the low-hanging mists. "Be you Barovians? Or outsiders?"

A character who understands Elvish or succeeds a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check identifies the man's accent as Elvish in nature. Savid reveals himself after hearing an acceptable response. The other two elves, Tasinov and Rethemar, grumble their misgivings to Savid in Elvish as he converses with the adventurers. A character fluent in Elvish understands what the two say:

- "You can't trust humans, Savid. Do you know nothing?"
- "At best they are outsiders; at worst, Rahadin's newest dogs."
- "Kasimir told us to keep to others."
- "We were to find Arabelle, not 'friends.'"

If an adventurer reveals their fluency in Elvish, the other two elves fall silent. Savid, for his part, ignores his companions. He explains that a young girl has gone missing and it isn't long before dusk—a time safe for no adult, let alone a child. Savid advises the adventurers to fan out and instructs them on how to get to Vallaki and the Vistani Camp.

The Raven's Attention

This encounter should only occur after the adventurers have visited Blue Water Inn in Vallaki. Now on the Martikovs' radar, the Keepers of the Feather assign Muriel Vinshaw to watch the party. Muriel, described in *Dramatis Personae* above, is ordinarily met only in the Ruins of Berez. The adventurers can find her clothes in the *Hidden Bundle* random encounter. This encounter can happen several times, but it progresses in this order:

As a Spy. Muriel spies on the adventurers as a raven, listening in on their conversations. She can also warn them away from dangerous locales by crowing.

As a Stranger. After spotting the party, Muriel emerges from the woods in her true form. She is here to test the adventurers' motives by acting as a stranger. She keeps her lycanthropic nature secret. How they treat her is reported to the Keepers of the Feather. If endangered, she runs into the woods and, after breaking the adventurers' line of sight, turns into a raven. The trail she leaves behind terminates at her discarded clothes and belongings.

As a Messenger. After her identity or the existence of the order is discovered, Muriel acts as a messenger for the Keepers of the Feather. She can inform the adventurers of what transpires in Vallaki, the Village of Barovia, and even Yester Hill. She rarely fights alongside the adventurers.

Hidden Bundle

The adventurers might find a bundle containing Muriel's clothes, which the wereraven must discard whenever she shapechanges. The clothes are drab and well-worn, but not filthy. A hint of lilac clings to the clothes—the perfume worn by Muriel Vinshaw, a wereraven. If she is later met, an adventurer that succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check matches that scent to her perfume.



The Revenant

The party encounters the Nameless Knight, the revenant described in the *Revenant* random encounter. Ideally, this encounter occurs in the woods south of Vallaki or on the road to Krezk. The Nameless Knight approaches the party as they are lost in a thick mist. Read the following:

> Out from the mists lumbers a corpse clad in rusted chainmail. Its eyes smolder with azure light. In the silence of it all, it pauses and, after a moment, draws a longsword from its scabbard. Its voice is but a rasp: "Justice does not rest. By the will of Argynvost…"

Believing the party to be minions of Strahd, the revenant attacks. He relents if the adventurers claim that they are enemies of Strahd, otherwise such an opportunity comes when he is reduced to 50 hit points. Read the following:

> In the midst of battle, the corpse knight shouts, "Minions of the Devil shall find no reprieve here! My duty is unending! By the will of the Silver Dragon, be vanquished!"

If the adventurers still do not take this opportunity to profess their lack of allegiance, the revenant also shouts, "Pray to your Darklord, cretin! Pray for redemption while you're at it!" Once the adventurers calm him down, the revenant sheathes his longsword.

Roleplaying the Revenant. The corpse is known as the Nameless Knight. His azure eyes smolder as he recounts the exploits of the Order, but this light dims as he shares the its tragic fate. He explains Argnyvost's death; the knights' dark rebirth, and Horngaard's decree that all the Devil's minions must be slain, ending this explanation with a request that they Argynvostholt and pledge their services to Lord Vladimir Horngaard.

You can voice the Nameless Knight with the following sample dialogue:

- "I was but a squire when the Order fell. My master died but did not return from beyond the Pale. My companions know not my name, nor do I. No matter; my name is forgotten, not my sense of duty."
- "So great was our need to right the wrongs of Strahd that the Order of the Silver Dragon endures through death."

Sir Godfrey. If you use Sir Godfrey Gwilym as the *Companion* intends, the Nameless Knight is searching for him. During this conversation, the Nameless Knight describes Godfrey and his current mission. Read the following:

> The knight squints at you. "The greatest of our champions has forsaken the Order. I speak of the traitor, Sir Godfrey Gwilym. This apostate has chosen to serve the Devil, to carry out executions at his behest. Lord Vladimir is heartbroken—to be betrayed by his love… I can't imagine the pain."

If he was not slain less than 24 hours ago, **Sir Godfrey Gwilym** arrives during the conversation. Read:

> The revenant curls his skeletal hand into a fist. "Godfrey must be brought to justice and the stain of his treachery be wiped from the annals of history. If I find him—"
>
> A familiar rasp floats forth from the mist:
>
> "You'll do what, squire?"
>
> From the fog steps out a corpse—the corpse of a woman whom you have never seen before, but whose eyes glow with the crimson hatred of Sir Godfrey's. The corpse is without arms or armor, and still it thunders out from the mist without hesitation. His hands glowing with a bright but malevolent light, Sir Godfrey rasps, "You will be the one who is forgotten."

Having manifested in the corpse of a peasant, Godfrey has a reduced AC of 12 and is armed only with his fists. He can, however, use his fists as weapons for the purposes of smite spells—much to the shock of any resident paladin in the party. During the battle, Godfrey disarms the Nameless Knight and murders him with his own longsword. When slain Godfrey rasps, "Death is only a wheel."

Aftermath. That night, the adventurers are not attacked as they make camp. Their paranoia, however, should fester if they don't know it takes 24 hours for Godfrey to be reanimated. The distant howls of wolves and the sound of snapping leaves should keep them on edge all night. The Nameless Knight might be encountered once again during the campaign—with his arms and legs cut off by Godfrey so that the revenant can't kill his corporeal form to find another corpse.



The Wolf Hunters

If the encounter occurs near Vallaki, the adventurers come across Yevgeni Krushkin and Szoldar Szoldarovich, the wolf hunters that ordinarily drown their woes in the Blue Water Inn (see Ch. 5, Area N2c). The hunters will stray as far as Mount Baratok, the Luna River Crossroads, or the most eastern bend of the Old Svalich Road as it twists south towards Old Bonegrinder (Areas M, P, and O, respectively).

The hunters have one purpose whenever they are met:

- The hunters are hunting wolves but are destined to encounter dire wolves (see the Dire Wolves random encounter) and become overwhelmed.
- The hunters have been hired to search for Arabelle, the missing Vistana child found in Area L.
- The hunters have heard of Baron Vallakovich's bounty on Rudolph van Richten and are checking abandoned cabins outside Vallaki for signs of life.
- The hunters are looking for a lost colleague named Darnist Darnistovich. The adventurers might later find his corpse being fed on by a **wolf.**



Chapter III: The Village of Barovia

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 49
Chapter Progression 49
Quick Notes 49
Running the Chapter 50
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 50
Dramatis Personae 51
Variants & Revisions 53
Funeral for the Burgomaster 54
I. A Coffin Fit For a Good Man 54
II. March of the Damned 56
III. The Devil's Hand 60
Areas of the Village 63
E1. Bildrath's Mercantile 63
E2. Blood of the Vine Tavern 65
E3. Mad Mary's Townhouse 68
E4. Burgomaster's Mansion 69
E5. Church 69
E6. Cemetery 71
E7. Haunted House 72
Special Events 72
Aftermath 73
Fate of Ireena 73
The Road Ahead 73

The Village of Barovia (hereafter "the Village") suffocates under the shadow of Castle Ravenloft. As the party's first true taste of Barovia, you must cultivate an atmosphere of dread, despair, and frailty. The adventurers must come to grips with their own mortality. They must learn that they are not heroes but captives at best and victims at worst—that they are now Barovians.

In addition to its usual mission of fleshing out *Curse of Strahd* and providing advice, variants, and narration text, this chapter of the *Companion* expands the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* event into the questline it deserves to be. This event is crucial to running the chapter.

Chapter Overview

The Village of Barovia is a place of despair. Every few years, outsiders arrive from beyond the mist, claiming that they will be the light in the darkness—a darkness that ultimately consumes them. There is no joy to be found in this miserable place, as the adventurers will soon learn.

The chapter is centered on Ireena Kolyana, which in turn is rooted in the burial of her father, Kolyan. In the original *Curse of Strahd*, this burial is a quiet affair; the *Companion* considers it the main quest and expands upon it heavily. To prove the danger Ireena faces, an agent of Strahd's attempts to abduct her in the quest's finale.

Chapter Progression

Chapter 3 should run through the following events:

Act I is a time of uncertainty and suspense as the heroes leave behind the horrors of Death House (or whatever prologue you used). Drawn by the promise of warmth and safety, they find themselves at the local tavern, where they meet Ismark Kolyanovich and the Vistani. Ismark welcomes them to their new prison. The Vistani welcome them to their destiny. If it is dusk or later, they must find a place to sleep for the night—a vulnerability they must now contend with.

Act II sees the adventurers explore the village in the safety of daylight. They must meet Bildrath Cantemir, Mad Mary, and Morgantha. Each character represents a pillar of Ravenloft: selfishness, tragedy, and horror that hides in plain sight. See E1, E3, and the *Dream Pastries* special event.

Act III grants the adventurers the chance to be heroes, to strike back against the shadow, by defending Ireena Kolyana from creatures of the night in the expanded *Funeral for the Burgomaster* questline. The horror of this dismal realm is also enforced by the introduction of Doru, the undead son of the local priest. Thus, Act III is centered upon the church, Area E5.

In the Aftermath of this chapter, the adventurers must head west, where they meet the vistana oracle, Madam Eva, and learn of their destiny.

Quick Notes

- The expanded *Funeral for the Burgomaster* questline is the crux of this chapter, and once it concludes, the adventurers must leave the village the next day with Ireena, before the forces of darkness have time to muster a response.
- The adventurers can't leave the village without having spoken to the Vistani in the tavern, who inform them that their arrival has been foretold by Madam Eva, and they must seek her out. This gives the adventurers the necessary direction for after the chapter.
- Ismark and Ireena's father, Kolyan, died three nights ago (or last night, if utilizing the *Companion's* changes).
- Before reaching the village, the adventurers should have found Kolyan Indirovich's letter on Dalvan Olensky's corpse in the Svalich Woods (see *CoS* Chapter 2, Area C).

Author's Criticisms

Having run the Village of Barovia four times now, it's my belief that *Curse of Strahd* doesn't provide enough direction for the DM. Everything is sprawled out and it traps the DM into an awkward position: railroad the players or let them roam aimlessly? I know from experience that players tend to ignore Ismark, humor the Vistani, and get bogged down trying to kill either Morgantha or Bildrath, if not both.

The importance of this chapter is also vastly understated. This chapter isn't a fun little breather from Death House, it's the plot's foundation. *Curse of Strahd* is built around Ireena and the Fortunes of Ravenloft. Both quests begin in this chapter, but players can easily skip them. It's for this reason I recommend taking a stern hand with your players. Have events happen to them. They find themselves at the Blood of the Vine Tavern. Ismark waves them over. The Vistani later invite someone to their table and casually mention that Madam Eva has foreseen their arrival into the country and they must seek her out.

In short, you must put your players on a rail—and although "railroading" is a slur in the D&D community, you will thank me for it later when your campaign is running at full speed. The players will have their time to mess around later; you need to lay a strong foundation for the campaign now.

- As a cliffhanger for your prologue, lead the adventurers to the local tavern (Area E2) where Ismark morosely tells them, "You must hail from beyond the Mists… Welcome. Welcome to… Barovia."
- The adventurers should advance to 4th-level by when they leave the Village (if they complete the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* questline and/or slay Doru) so that you can hurl greater Barovian horrors at them on the road.
- Area E5g is a potential area for an artifact; if one is present, Doru brought it from Castle Ravenloft and they must slay him to retrieve it, otherwise it is an anticlimax.

Checklist

Most of this chapter's features are linked to later events in the campaign. It therefore behooves you to hit each one before the adventurers leave:

- Burying Kolyan leads to taking Ireena to safety—which leads to a questline that permeates the entire campaign, up until *The Wedding at Ravenloft*.
- The Vistani lead the adventurers to Madam Eva, who reads their future (the Fortunes of Ravenloft).
- Bildrath demonstrates that they will find little kindness in this dismal realm.
- The encounter with Mad Mary links the past with the present when the adventurers delve into Castle Ravenloft—an important element of storytelling.
- The encounter with Morgantha foreshadows the ruinous encounter at Old Bonegrinder in Chapter 6.

Running the Chapter

This chapter must be solid, and it must be short. You have three sessions at most to finish it. It is purposely kept free of bells and whistles so the adventurers quickly move onto the rest of the campaign. Therefore, you should avoid adding extra side quests or characters to the village.

Themes

There is no light in this chapter, only a thin ray of hope—and the threat of retribution from the forces of darkness. Embrace these themes for this chapter:

Suspense. The shadow of Strahd hangs over the party just as Castle Ravenloft looms over the village. You can build suspense through the measures below:

- Embrace the *Companion's* Voldemort Rule. Villagers flinch even when "the Devil" is said.
- Quietly reveal, through Ismark, that his sister has been bitten twice by Strahd and let the gravity of that sink in. Barovian superstition holds that a third bite is fatal.
- Obscure the world in perpetual mist, which foils earthly sight. Figures in the fog could be mere villagers or otherworldly malefactors.

Despair. There is a dearth of hope and happiness in the village, as edified through interactions with its residents. Throughout the chapter, draw attention to the unyielding presence of the castle looming over the village, which is seen whenever the mist clears.

Urgency. The adventurers must be kept stressed and rushed. Vallaki is where they can take a breather, not the Village. To achieve a sense of urgency, try these methods:

- Emphasize that Kolyan *must* be buried by the dawn after his third night aboveground, lest he be forsaken by the Morninglord. An excuse of "because religion" works quite well amongst the chapter's characters.
- Once Strahd's agent has been defeated, the adventurers *must* take Ireena from the village, before the forces of darkness can organize a counterattack.

Advancement

The adventurers must begin this chapter at 3rd-level. They earn another level if they:

- Slay Doru or reduce him to 10 or fewer hit points.
- Complete the expanded *Funeral for the Burgomaster* storyline (even if Ireena is taken).

Time

By the time the adventurers leave Death House, regardless if it was placed on the outskirts of town or kept at Area E7, it should be dusk or later. The tavern is the only source of light—symbolizing the beleaguered light in Ismark's own heart. The adventurers must then contend with the night: where will they sleep?

Lunar Cycle. When the party first enters Barovia, the moon is a waxing crescent. This can be interpreted as an omen—the worst is yet to come. If anyone has contracted lycanthropy, this informs them that they have two weeks at most to find a cure.

(A Lack of) Lodgings

The village seldom sees visitors and so it sports no inn. The adventurers can sleep at the Burgomaster's Mansion if they ingratiate themselves with Ismark by agreeing to help bury his father. Per Barovian custom, he does *not* invite them inside, but instead lets the door hang ajar to see if they can enter the house themselves unbidden.

If the adventurers don't stay with Ismark, they can stay at an abandoned rowhouse. Should they fail a group DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check, they later awaken a lone **Strahd zombie** that has lain dormant in the cellar. The corpse shambles out in the middle of the night to attack.

Weather

Throughout this chapter, the village is caressed by light fog that thickens as night approaches. Gentle but chilling rains cut to the bone and turn the streets to mud. Thereafter, during the Witching Hour, the fog thins enough to see Castle Ravenloft looming over the valley under the light of the stars and moon.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Cloak of Protection* (E1)
- *Enduring Spellbook* (E1)
- *Hat of Wizardry* (E1)
- *Lantern of Revealing* (E1)
- *Walloping Ammunition* (E1)

Creatures

- Acolyte
- Commoner
- Gladiator
- Ireena Kolyana
- Needle Blight
- Night hag (or Green Hag)
- Noble
- Rahadin
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym
- Spy
- Strahd zombie
- Swarm of rats
- Thug
- Twig Blight
- Vampire spawn
- Veteran
- Vine Blight
- Wolf
- Zombie

Effects & Items

- Dream Pastries
- Manacles

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Alenka	N **Spy**	F	E2	An owner of the Blood of the Vine tavern and spy for Strahd.
Arik	CN **Commoner**	N	E2	A soulless barkeeper.
Bildrath Cantemir	LN **Commoner**	N	E1	A callous scalper and shopkeeper.
Donavich	LG **Acolyte**	F	E5F	A distraught priest on the brink of insanity and atheism.
Doru	**Vampire Spawn**	H	E5G	The vampire son of Donavich, locked in the church undercroft.
Gertruda	NG **Commoner**	F	—	The lost daughter of Mad Mary, currently in Castle Ravenloft.
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	F	E4	The reincarnation of Tatyana, Strahd's beloved.
Ismark Kolyanovich	LG **Veteran**	F	E2	The son of Kolyan, brother of Ireena, and new burgomaster.
Kolyan Indirovich	—	—	—	The recently deceased burgomaster who died from stress.
Mad Mary	CN **Commoner**	F	E3	A distraught mother whose daughter has gone missing.
Mirabel	N **Spy**	F	E2	An owner of the Blood of the Vine tavern and spy for Strahd.
Morgantha	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	H	SE	A hag peddling addictive pastries made from childrens' bones.
Parriwimple	LG **Gladiator**	F	E1	The simple-minded, Herculean nephew of Bildrath.
Rahadin	Unique	H	E6	Strahd's honorary brother and chamberlain.
Sir Godfrey Gwilym	Unique	H	E6	An undead paladin.
Sorvia	N **Spy**	F	E2	An owner of the Blood of the Vine tavern and spy for Strahd.

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Alenka, Mirabel, & Sorvia

These Vistani drink and spy for Strahd.

Revision. The Vistani are not Strahd's servants; instead, they send newcomers to Tser Pool Encampment, claiming that Madam Eva has foreseen their arrival in Barovia.

Arik

Arik, a disinterested dullard, is the first soulless Barovian the adventurers meet in the campaign.

Bildrath Cantemir

Bildrath is a testament to the cruelty of Barovian culture. He peddles gear scavenged from long-dead adventurers, and price-gouges customers at every opportunity. In this, Bildrath sets the tone for most future interactions with Barovians in the campaign (while specifically contrasting Ismark's warm and friendly nature).

Revision. Bildrath is one of the chief conspirators in the conspiracy to kidnap Ireena and turn her loose in the woods so that the village will finally be free of Strahd's attention.

Donavich

Donavich, struggling with a crisis of faith due to his son's vampirism, becomes a focal point of the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest. Donavich told only his friend, Kolyan, the former burgomaster, of this dark secret. He has since closed the church. If Doru is slain, Donavich likely commits suicide the same night.

Doru

Doru is the first of Strahd's brood to be met by the party, and a grim reminder that vampirism is no fairy tale. Doru's death determines Donavich's fate.

Revision. How long ago Doru returned to the Village is never specified in *Curse of Strahd*; the *Companion* sets it at about a month. Nobody, especially Ismark and Ireena, should know that Doru has returned, only that Donavich has closed the church.

Gertruda

The search for Gertruda is a long-running quest that only altruistic adventurers will care about. Trapped in Castle Ravenloft, it's only possible to save Gertruda later in the campaign, such as during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* in Chapter 4.

Ireena Kolyana

No person is as important in this campaign as Ireena, the reincarnation of Strahd's beloved Tatyana. It is imperative that Ireena leave the Village with the party at the behest of Ismark, who remains behind to keep Strahd's attention. Twice now, she has been bitten by Strahd, and she fears she will not survive a third. See Appendix D for further details on Ireena, whose fate is at the heart of *Curse of Strahd*.

Ireena is the adopted daughter of Kolyan, who found her in the woods as a child. Despite their lack of blood, Ireena and Ismark truly love each other as siblings, as shown in this chapter, when Ismark risks everything to keep her safe.

Revision. The villagers know of Strahd's obsession with Ireena. During *Funeral for the Burgomaster*, a conspiracy to turn her over to the woods outside town unfolds.

Ismark Kolyanovich

The main character of this chapter, Ismark is the party's first and staunchest ally against the Devil Strahd. Though melancholy, he is a good man, warm and friendly—a sharp contrast to the gloomy village. However, he should and must remain the village, distracting Strahd's spies long enough to let Ireena slip away out of town with the party; having him tag along slows your campaign and often puts you in the position of having two NPCs speak to each other while the players twiddle their thumbs.

Opinions. Ismark is a wealth of (biased) information and strong opinions:

- As a young boy, Ismark considered foreign adventurers to be great heroes. Now he sees them only as grim reminders of what could be and what never was. Knowing they will inevitably perish, Ismark avoids befriending and relying on adventurers. He remarks, "I used to believe in people like you."
- Ismark has been raised on Barovian paranoia. His people are perpetually wary of the Vistani, who are full of life and are free to leave the valley. He warns the adventurers many consider Strahd their one true king. "Do not make the mistake," he says, "of trusting any stranger, Barovian or Vistani. There is no telling who serves the Devil."
- Ismark is unaware of Morgantha's true nature as a hag, but he does know that her pastries are addictive. He fears she may be a witch; certainly there was a reason why his father did not exile her from the village, if she was taking children away from addled parents? If he sees an adventurer with a dream pastry, he slaps it from their hand and cautions them against ever consuming another.

Kolyan Indirovich

The father of Ismark and Ireena, Kolyan's heart just could not take the stress of Strahd's nighttime visits and the assault against his home by undead and wolves. Kolyan's death sets this chapter's events in motion, with his burial being an opportunity for the party to ingratiate themselves with Ireena and Ismark. Kolyan and Donavich were great friends, and he went to his grave knowing Doru's secret.

Revision. Kolyan died last night, not three nights ago, and Barovian religion requires him to be buried at dawn after the third night.

Mad Mary

Mad Mary is another tragic figure used to underscore the campaign's tone. Her daughter is missing, despite her best (and shortsighted) lifelong attempts to keep Gertruda safe. Her wails can be heard throughout the night.

Morgantha

Featured in the *Dream Pastries* special event, Morgantha is instrumental in *Curse of Strahd* but requires great finesse to execute properly. She is best met during the daytime as the party is about to leave for Act I of the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest. By showcasing her when the party is busy, you force them to cut their interactions with her short. Extended time with Morgantha risks betraying her identity. Many players automatically assume Morgantha to be a hag or some other evil creature. The truly foolish attempt to kill her, never knowing how powerful she is or how harrowing her revenge will be. Those who cross her risk never achieving a long rest, thanks to her Nightmare Haunting ability.

- Morgantha must be met in the Village of Barovia to foreshadow the conflict at Old Bonegrinder. Her identity as a hag *must* be kept secret.
- Not even Ismark or Ireena know what Morgantha really is; they know only their father suspected her to be a witch and did not dare banish her from the village.
- Do *not* show Morgantha take a child from desperate parents, as it tips her hand, ruins the surprise of her evil nature, and motivates the party to kill her or intervene.
- You want the adventurers to turn up to Old Bonegrinder and drown in dread when Morgantha opens the door. If they already know she is evil, or a hag, they won't go inside, depriving you of the fun of that chapter.
- As elaborated upon in *CMP* Ch. 6, exercise restraint with Morgantha. It is her nature as a hag to corrupt, not kill. She only fights in self-defense and would rather strike a dark bargain with Barovia's newest outsiders.

Revision. See *CMP* Ch. 6., which suggests changing Morgantha to a **green hag** for DMs interested in nerfing the hag coven. If you embrace this change, ensure that it is obeyed herein this chapter.

Parriwimple

Simpleminded but kind-hearted, Parriwimple is a symbol of innocence taken advantage of by Barovian callousness. If the party harms Bildrath, they must deal with Parriwimple, whose love and loyalty to his uncle is unwavering.

Rahadin

Rahadin is a potential antagonist in *Funeral for the Burgomaster.* The chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft cannot die in this chapter, however—for he is protected by plot armor.

Sir Godfrey Gwilym

Sir Godfrey is a potential antagonist in *Funeral for the Burgomaster*, provided you use the *Companion's* revisions to his character. See *The Redemption of Godfrey* in *CMP,* Ch. 1.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* suggests several additions and revisions to this chapter, as summarized below:

- The *Funeral for the Burgomaster* event has been fleshed out into an entire three-act storyline. Per this storyline, Kolyan died the night before the adventurers arrived, not three days prior. This gives the party time to explore the village before the chapter's explosive conclusion.
- Doru only recently arrived in the village, as it's hard to imagine that no one has dealt with him for so long—or that it's a secret.
- The Death House (also known as "Durst Manor") is no longer in the village, but on a secluded hill to the east. Area E7 is instead a den of undead that can be cleared.
- The three Vistani owners of Blood of the Wine are not servants of Strahd; rather, they claim that "Madam Eva foretold of your arrival… Seek her out at Tser Falls if you wish to confront your own destiny."

Bigger Barovia

The Village of Barovia, as it's presented in the campaign, is far too skeletal to sustain itself. By the current numbers, sixty percent of the village's homes are empty, and *one hundred* **zombies** lurk within its borders. The village's grim and desolate nature can be maintained while still inflating the population for the sake of realism.

The *Companion* revises the Village's population to four hundred morose villagers. This also necessitates a change to the *Occupants of Houses in Barovia* table (*CoS*, p. 41). See the *Revised House Occupants* table below.

Undead. With the village more populated, one must remove the undead from their abandoned homes. They instead lurk in locked cellars or boarded up homes. If you remove the Death House from the village, most of the undead are concentrated in Area E7.

The Lottery

The Village of Barovia languishes under ritual sacrifice to appease the Devil. Once every four months, one poor soul must be sent to Castle Ravenloft to sate Strahd's thirst. This "lottery" was forced upon Kolyan early in his reign and has weighed upon his soul ever since. One random name is drawn from all adults in the Village, and rarely does the victim go quietly.

Kolyan Indirovich, like his father before him, made it a point to include his own name in the Lottery (but not his children's). Nonetheless, most villagers have nursed great resentment against Kolyan—and whenever his name was drawn, the Devil himself would refuse to take the poor burgomaster, further breeding discontent. Although the Lottery is a necessary evil, many villagers would revenge themselves upon Kolyan's corpse, or his children, now that he is dead.

The next Lottery is scheduled for about two weeks after the adventurers' arrival to Barovia. If they later return to the Village in Acts III or later, they witness it firsthand.

The Liar, the Glitch, and the Wardrobe

Gertruda, daughter of Mad Mary, has gone missing—but rather than wandering away from the village and being snapped by Strahd, she was accidentally teleported into Castle Ravenloft by Victor Vallakovich, that young and reckless mage of Vallaki.

Victor and Gertruda are secret sweethearts, and he used his flawed teleportation circle in his family's attic which can be used to teleport around Barovia, but not out of it. He has linked his circle to the Village of Barovia, specifically in Gertruda's wardrobe, so the two could meet, no matter the distance or danger. Alas, when Victor attempted to leave Barovia, he accidentally breached Strahd's own web of teleportation (which spanned much of the valley). When Gertruda next tried to visit Victor, she was teleported into Castle Ravenloft where she fell into Strahd's clutches.

This revision gives the adventurers a better clue as to Gertruda's whereabouts (the Blinksy doll, see E3) and a hook to find Victor. The *Companion* advocates a mid-game foray into Castle Ravenloft through a teleportation mishap (see Chapter 1), which offers the adventurers the opportunity to find and save Gertruda. It also provides a method for the adventurers to return to the Village, if they later learn the circle's command word from Victor.

For more details on this teleportation circle, see Area E3 in this chapter and Area N3T in Chapter 5.



Funeral for the Burgomaster

The burial of Kolyan Indirovich is crucial to this chapter's narrative, and the *Companion* expands it well beyond its skeletal representation in *Curse of Strahd*. The funerary rites of the Morninglord are clear: a corpse can linger for no longer than three nights, and it must be buried at dawn in a coffin carved with the deity's icon, a blazing sun.

Ismark and Ireena face several hurdles in burying their late father. Per this expanded storyline, they lack a proper coffin for Kolyan and the local carpenter has yet to deliver one. The siblings must also contend with malcontents who seek to revenge themselves on Kolyan's corpse (see *The Lottery* variant above) or give Ireena to the Devil… and when they at last lay Kolyan to rest, an agent of Strahd's appears to take his corpse to Castle Ravenloft, where it is to be raised as a wight forever in service to his lord and liege, Count Strahd von Zarovich.

Foreshadowing. *Funeral for the Burgomaster* foreshadows several campaign elements:

- The Gulthias Tree and its foul druids of Yester Hill are foreshadowed through the blights the adventurers face at the carpenter's cabin in Act I.
- The gathered mob featured in Act II foreshadows the one that may rage across Vallaki, if the *St. Andral's Feast* event occurs.
- If Sir Godfrey is utilized in Act II, it sets him up as the party's heel, foreshadows the conflict of Argynvostholt, and sets the heroes up on a quest to redeem the revenant.

Relevant Areas & Information. Familiarize yourself with the following details before you run this questline:

- Kolyan died last night (not three days ago, as written in *Curse of Strahd*) and must be buried by the dawn that follows the third night. He died from stress, for Strahd himself has been pursuing his daughter. The family manor has been hounded by corpses and wolves. Per this storyline, Ismark does not yet have a coffin.
- Donavich is the village priest, but he has withdrawn to his ragged church and ceased all services. Ismark does not explain why, but it is because Donavich's son Doru is a ravening vampire spawn. Doru's foul existence is an open secret amongst the villagers.
- The questline opens in Area E2 or E4, depending on where the party meets Ismark Kolyanovich for the first time.
- Act I features a trip to a blight-infested cabin outside the village.
- Act II begins in Area E4 and ends at E5. It may wind up involving E1 and E2, if the adventurers meddle.
- Act III begins in E5, where Ismark delivers a eulogy for his late father, and ends in E6, where Kolyan is to be buried.

Reward. For their assistance, Ismark pays the adventurers 50 gp and grants them each a deed to an abandoned house in the village. The deed is symbolic and represents a house becoming a home, even if a ragged one; creatures of the night, such as vampires, won't be able to enter uninvited. This protection is greater than gold. Further, the party levels up to 4th-level.

I. A Coffin Fit For a Good Man

Per *Curse of Strahd*, Ismark and Ireena already fashioned a coffin for their late father. This storyline revokes that so Ismark has reason to send the adventurers into the Svalich Woods: the local carpenter, Dmitri Nimirovich, has yet to deliver the coffin he promised Ismark. With his attention on keeping Ireena safe from the Devil's agents or a resentful mob, Ismark must turn to the adventurers.

The Carpenter. Dmitri Nimirovich is regarded as one of the Village's greatest lunatics, for he willingly lives in the Svalich Woods—and has ever since his late husband, Lazlo, passed three years ago. His cabin, made by his own two hands, is a half hour's walk from the village. Father Donavich tried to convince Dmitri to return to the safety of the village, but gave up after falling to his own despair when his son Doru left (and later returned undead).

Blights. Unbeknownst to Ismark, Dmitri is dead, but not from creatures of the night, not from woe nor wolves, but the woods themselves. Blights sired by the distant taint of the Gulthias Tree are now haunting the Svalich Woods, and poor Dmitri has become their first victim on this side of the valley. His blood has nourished a copse of blights and now his cabin is draped in ever-growing vines.

Introduction. When Ismark issues this quest, read the text below. He offers a hot meal, gold, and deeds to homes around the village if they see his father buried properly.

> Grim, Ismark tells you, "My father lies dead on our dinner table as we speak. My sister and I… we could have made a coffin ourselves, but our father deserves better—the best. He was a good man and deserves a greater rest… but Dmitri Nimirovich, the carpenter, has not yet delivered. Some call him a lunatic, for he lives out in the benighted woods. Has, ever since he lost his husband, Lazlo to the lottery."
>
> Peering at you with his sunken eyes, Ismark says, "I fear the worst… and I fear that Dmitri's absence is another trick of the Devil's. That, were I to go investigate whether Dmitri has been taken by the bottle or by the wolves, the Devil's agents would move upon my sister, Ireena. Dmitri lives a half hour's walk away. Would you check on him and return with my father's coffin?"

See below for details on Dmitri's cabin and the trail which leads to it. If informed of the blights that took over Dmitri's cabin, Ismark shivers and remarks, "I have never heard of such creatures… but Barovia has no shortage of horrors. I will warn the village not to trust the vines… and that we are in need of a new carpenter."

If the adventurers return without the coffin, Ismark and Ireena must fashion one from spare lumber around town. The coffin is shoddy at best and liable to worms. The icon of the Morninglord they carve into its lid looks more like a spiked plate than a blazing sun. Although their father can still be buried, Ismark and Ireena are visibly disheartened.



Cabin of Mourning

Dmitri's cabin lies northeast of the Village of Barovia and can be reached after 1 hour of travel at a normal pace. Ismark advises the party to make it back before dark.

The adventurers face one encounter on their way to the cabin. However, as the *Companion* advocates, no encounter should be random. Because the adventurers have a storyline to complete now, you want to avoid introducing too many new mysteries. For now, the simpler the encounter, the better.

Hidden Bundle. The party finds a werewolf's bloodied clothing, foreshadowing the conflict at Tser Falls.

Wolves. The adventurers are accosted by 1d4+2 **wolves**, which circle the adventurers on the trail.

Zombies. The adventurers find a single male **zombie** chained to a tree. Judging by the corpses surrounding it, it is clear someone was feeding their deceased loved one.

Alternatively, if the adventurers never found Dalvan Olensky's corpse in the Svalich Woods (see *CoS* Area C), they can encounter it on the way to the cabin. It is clear that Dalvan's corpse has been dragged a far distance and partially eaten by both wolves and undead.

Blight Nest. Once the party reaches the cabin, read:

> Through the silent woods you walk, coming at last upon a cabin overgrown with dark vines. It's as if nature itself sought to reclaim the wood used to build this disfigured home. The door is slightly ajar, presenting the cabin's black depths. You hear nothing within.

The cabin was already dirty with depressed neglect by when the vines began to creep in. After several weeks, one could hardly see the timber walls beneath. Poor Dmitri, still blind to the world while so deep into his woe, did not ever pause long enough to watch the vines move on their own accord. By when those vines began to creep into his house at night, it was too late.

Ismark Kolyanovich sent someone to the cabin two days ago to requisition a coffin from Dmitri. Last night, while Dmitri was nearly on the cusp of finishing it, the **vine blights** that had been growing inside struck. They strung the carpenter up on the far wall, drawing nourishment from his wounds. He now hangs dead, his unspent lifeforce nourishing the two **vine blights** inside the cabin. Additionally, three **needle blights**, and seven **twig blights** lurk in the thickets outside.

Should the adventurers call out for Dmitri, they receive no answer. The door isn't open enough for onlookers to peer inside the cabin from anywhere but the porch. If the adventurers enter the cabin, read the following:

> The cabin is a riot of undergrowth. The bed, the cabinets, the tables—all are wrapped with vines. A well-fashioned coffin sits on the floor, draped by a single vine. You notice a thick shape hanging from the back wall—and in that mess of vines is a pale, lifeless face.

Dmitri hangs along the back wall, his feet dangling four feet above the ground and his arms gripped by vines so tight that his corpse cannot slump forward. If approached, the vine around his throat tightens, as if to warn creatures from taking away its prize.

Cabin Features. The cabin has the following features:

- The cabin is heavily obscured by darkness, and its creaky floor imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. The vine-covered floor also counts as difficult terrain.
- A coffin lies on the floor beside a scattered set of carpenter's tools. It is a Large object that weighs 200 pounds, requiring a Strength score of 14 to be dragged by one Medium creature. The lid is carved with a bas-relief of a blazing sun.
- Two **vine blights** lurk within the cabin, one to the left of the door, one on the east wall. These creatures are indistinguishable from normal vines while motionless, and therefore can't be detected until they move or attack. When they do, read the following:

> The vines curl and shudder! A creature emerges from the undergrowth—a chlorofiend of dark vines wrought in the vague shape of a humanoid. It shrieks, "The seed… has born… bitter fruit." Another chlorofiend emerges from the wall, rasping, "We are that fruit!"

Tactics. The blights stage their attack shortly after the adventurers enter the cabin. You can use the initiative counts below to save time and give the adventurers a fighting chance.

- Thanks to their False Appearance trait, the two **vine blights** are undetectable and thus surprise the party. They act at initiative count 9 (losing ties).
- The three **needle blights** emerge from the woods in the first round, firing off Needle attacks from the brush at initiative count 15 (winning ties).
- The **twig blights** burst from the brush on the third round, at initiative count 13 (losing ties). Three attack from the south, another four come from behind the cabin, making towards the closest adventurer. They cackle with tiny, murderous glee.
- The vine blights can speak and are fond of phrases like "We are the land!" or "The roots run far and deep…" Every ominous remark refers to the Gulthias Tree of Yester Hill.

Aftermath. So long as Dmitri's corpse is left behind, the blights do not give chase. If the cabin is burned, the blights and vines unleash hideous wails that haunt an adventurers' dreams that night.

II. March of the Damned

The Morninglord's funerary rites are clear: the dead must be delivered to the chapel at dusk and be buried at dawn. Ismark must protect both his sister and his father's corpse, for there are many who would abuse either. Nothing can convince Ireena to skip her father's funeral, so he must turn to the adventurers for aid in transporting his family from the manor to the church (Areas E4 and E5).

When you begin this act, it is with Ismark at his family's manor. Read the following text:

> Ismark peers at you with his sunken eyes; the burden he bears must be heavy, indeed.
>
> "The forces of darkness bear down upon us. My father had no shortage of detractors in life… and there are those who may wish to desecrate his corpse. There is no telling what we may face tonight: graverobbers, ghouls, spirits of the dead. I… I don't…"
>
> Ismark heaves a heavy sigh. "I know not what may transpire this night, only that *something* surely will. We Barovians are afforded no quiet moments to grieve. I must protect my father's corpse and I must protect my sister. No force will stop Ireena from being there when our father is laid to rest… and there is no better chance for the Devil's agents, living or dead, to seize her. While I march in the light, someone must spirit her through the shadows."

Ismark and his pallbearers will march at dusk and spend all night at the church. Ireena intends to arrive sometime before dawn—but she must be present at dawn to say her goodbye to Kolyan Indirovich. When she leaves for the funeral is up to the adventurers charged with guarding her.

You can run one or both of the events below. If you run both, a mysterious fog obscures the village. Absorbing nearly all sound, the fog separates the party, with one-to-two adventurers being Ireena, and the majority remaining with Ismark.

Revenge for the Lottery

Barovians nurse grudges like a vintner ages wine, and no man in recent memory has earned as much acrimony as Kolyan Indirovich. He was a good man forced to shoulder an immense burden: sending the unlucky lottery winner to Castle Ravenloft. While it is an accepted evil in the village, many a widower resents Kolyan—and now that he is dead, their fury is due to explode. When the mob inevitably rouses, they will seize Kolyan's corpse and deliver it to the same abattoir their kinsmen were condemned to.

At dusk, Ismark and his three pallbearers set out from the Burgomaster's Mansion (Area E4). These pallbearers are each NG or N male human **guards**. Their names are Korga Barthos, Kobal Radovich, and Nimir Rilsky. They are loyal to Ismark but easily frightened by creatures of the night. If your party is too large and you wish to split it, subtract pallbearers so that Ismark has no choice but to ask the adventurers to help carry the coffin.

Mob Attacks

d20 Required	Attackers Needed per Hit
1-5	1
6-12	2
13-14	3
15-16	4
17-19	5
19	10
20	20

The Mob. By when Ismark reaches the town square, a mob marches down from the easterly road. They consist of the following participants:

- Ivan Garvinski, a NE **thug** who lost not one but two sons to the Lottery and has nursed his hatred for the last four years. He commands two mastiffs that savage his foes; they can be scared off with a DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. Nothing can convince Ivan to give up his quest for vengeance.
- Three NE bereaved or orphaned **guards**; inspired by Ivan's previous speeches and tonight's call-to-arms, these guards each have 5 temporary hit points.
- Eleven N **commoners** wielding torches and pitchforks (+2 to hit, 1d6 piercing damage). They can be scared off with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check. The DC is lowered by 2 for every two commoners slain; once four have been slain, the remaining commoners throw down their arms and flee. In battle, they use the mob rules described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, which are summarized below and tailored to this encounter. The mob initially splits into a group of six and a group of five, attacking two separate targets. Take a target's AC and subtract 2, then consult the "d20 Roll Needed" column in the table below. Instead of rolling a d20, a number of attacks automatically hit the target. To determine this, take the number of commoners and divide by the "Attackers Needed per Hit column" number (rounding down). For example, six commoners surround the party's fighter. The commoners have a +2 to hit and the fighter has an AC of 16. To hit the fighter, the commoners need a minimum of 14 on a d20 to hit. Thus, for every three commoners target the fighter, two hit automatically the fighter each round.

When the mob gathers, read the following text:

> Your breath steams in the chill… and as you march deeper into the village, you hear it—the tangled shouts of the malcontent, the bitter, and the downtrodden, who have risen up in one voice to declare that change will be wrought through red hands. Down the street the peasants march, brandishing whatever weapons they could find: shovels, pitchforks, and, of course, torches. Their shouts rend the night; their light speaks to a great and terrible rage that can only be forged from years of resentment.

The mob is due to intercept Ismark and his pallbearers. If any efforts are made to hide, the group must succeed on a group DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they are found by the mob, read the following text:

> Through the mist they march, galvanized by a ringleader's shouts: "And he will answer for his crimes! We will rip him away from his family, as he did ours, and we will send his corpse to Castle Ravenloft!"
>
> The mob shouts their approval and only now when the mist finally clears do you see them: fifteen would-be soldiers worked up into a frenzy. At their helm is a scarred man whose right hand holds two leashes—leashes to the slavering hounds at his side. His eyes narrow. "Ah. Ismark the Lesser. And so, the day comes… We have come to collect! To avenge those sent in your father's stead!"
>
> Ismark grips his scabbard. "Stand aside, Garvinski."
>
> "I stood aside when your father sent my boys to Castle Ravenloft! No more! Kolyan will answer for the crimes he committed in life!"
>
> "My father did what he had to do! What the Devil bid! He never once excluded his own name from the Lottery, and you know it!"
>
> Garvinski offers a sharp smile. "But did he exclude yours? Ireena's?"
>
> Ismark glares and draws his blade. "You will not take him, Garvinski. Call off your dogs."
>
> "You may be my liege now, boy, but you will never be my master. Only one person will be put in the ground tomorrow."
>
> "So be it," Ismark snarls. "Draw, Garvinski."

The adventurers have but one chance to frighten away the mob, but Garvinski, his hounds, and the three **guards** are wholly committed to violence. As described above, the mob can be frightened with a DC 16 Intimidation check. As soon as someone reaches for a weapon, or attempts to cast a spell, roll for initiative.

Roleplaying the Mob. The mob is fueled not by fear but the cold nectar of resentment, of unanswered injustice. Many, however, have been swept up by Ivan Garvinski's tirades and aren't willing to die in the pursuit of shipping Kolyan Indirovich's corpse off to Castle Ravenloft. As they battle the adventurers, they cry out for justice for the lost souls sent to Castle Ravenloft.

Roleplaying Ivan. Garvinski can find no other solace than hate. With no bodies to bury, he cannot get past the deaths of his sons. The ironic desecration of Kolyan is the only purpose he has left, and he will die in pursuit of it, no matter the odds.

Voice Ivan with the following sample dialogue:

- "Justice will be done! The dead shall be vindicated this night, upon the Morninglord's name, I swear!"
- As a curse, Garvinski shouts, "Mother Night take you!"
- "I want only Kolyan! I only want the bastard that stole the lights of my life!"
- If Ivan is threatened with death, he snarls, "Don't you see I already died after losing the last of my boys?"



Evil's Bride

As the object of the Devil's latest obsession, Ireena's mere presence terrifies the villagers. Many would sleep easier if she were gone. Others believe Strahd will reward those who turn her over to him. Under the deft hand of Bildrath Cantemir, that cur, these malefactors have hatched a plot that is due to unfold on the night of her father's burial. With the absence of her daughter, Mad Mary herself has also joined the plot; she believes the Devil stole Gertruda or is at least able to return her in return for Ireena.

This event occurs whenever Ireena leaves the safety of her family's manor. If she is not escorted by an adventurer, she is abducted by the malefactors and brought to the northeast edge of the Svalich Woods.

Lookout. The plot to seize Ireena has been brewing for quite some time now, but Kolyan's death has expedited it into fruition. The collaborators have posted a lookout, a paranoid but otherwise endearing crone named Mira. She watches from her second-floor window in the small home directly north of the burgomaster's manor. She has a passive Perception score of 14. If she spots Ireena, she shakes a laundry line tied to the sill of her window, which extends to the house across the street to the northeast.

Additionally, Bildrath's store has a commanding view of the town square. He has a passive Perception of 14 (despite being a **commoner**).

Malefactors. Most collaborators are mewling cowards all too ready to condemn others, so long as they can deny any culpability. The few malefactors willing to apprehend Ireena consist of two **thugs** named Tural and Andrej, as well as Parriwimple, the naïve nephew of Bildrath, who has been told that he is actually helping Ireena Kolyana.

Once the collaborators know Ireena has left her manor, the malefactors ambush her in the streets. They will not harm her under any circumstance—so any bluffs to the contrary can be sussed out with a successful DC 13 Wis. (Insight) check. To harm her is to invite Strahd's wrath—a wrath that will echo out across generations. Tural carries a set of manacles, which he uses to bind Ireena's hands.

When the malefactors appear, read the following text:

> You creep throughout the silent village, its every veranda empty, its every abandoned house and home, a voyeur. You can hear your very own heart thumping as the night presses in…
>
> "I do not like this," Ireena whispers, her blade drawn. "The mist… Is it closing in? Growing thicker?"

Take a moment to allow the adventurers to respond, even grope about in the mist, before continuing with:

> A sudden voice cuts through the dark: "Give us the girl." You see them looming out of the fog: two men clad in boiled leather. The mist curls around their waists with the disinterest of a bored lover. "Give us the girl and we can all sleep easy tonight."
>
> Recognizing these thugs, Ireena snarls, "Tural! Andrej! There are better ways! I will leave the village after my father is—"
>
> The blonde thug interrupts the noblewoman. "We have suffered long enough. You are a blight upon our people, my lady. You are suffocating us. You will be our doom, either this night, or the next. Your shadow ends now. Come quietly or—" the thug produces an iron mace, letting the threat hang in the air.
>
> Ireena brandishes her father's blade, and she does not seem small when doing so. "There will be nothing quiet about—"
>
> Out from the fog come two huge hands that close around the woman's waist, hauling her out of your vision! With a shout, Ireena worms her way free, twisting from the attacker!
>
> "But Miss Ireena," starts the boy before being cut off by Ireena:
>
> "Parriwimple?" Ireena croaks, betrayed by a young boy she'd always been kind to. "Why?"
>
> He steps forward—the broad-shouldered boy from the mercantile. "Uncle Bildrath says you have to go!" he shouts, smiling a grin as huge as his hands.
>
> A thug, Andrej maybe, groans.

Tural and Andrej offer the adventures only one chance to hand Ireena over. If refused, they immediately attack.

Tactics. The malefactors employ these tactics in battle:

- The thugs always remain within 5 feet of an ally, so as to benefit from their Pack Tactics. They are willing to harm and even kill the adventurers (much to the horror of Parriwimple) but they *will not* harm Ireena—to do so is to invite the Devil's wrath and doom the village.
- Tural flees when reduced to 14 hit points, squeezing into an alleyway. Andrej proves to be of sterner stuff and only surrenders when reduced to 11 hit points.
- Parriwimple does not wish to harm anyone, but this ox of a boy doesn't know his own strength. He wields no weapons and only makes unarmed strikes (+7 to hit, 2d4 + 4 on a hit). Most of his turns are spent attempting to grapple Ireena or shove others. When he is reduced to 90 hit points, he flees, blubbering in pain and fear (the first 22 points of damage represent blows to his stamina, and only at 90 is he truly struck with a dangerous blow).

The Jig is Up. If defeated and interrogated, Tural and Andrej prove tight-lipped; however, the threat of death (and a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check) convinces them to divulge the plot's details: Bildrath and "others" wish to give Ireena over to the Devil. They are to leave her manacled at the edge of town and shout Strahd's name thrice to invite his dark attention.

Parriwimple can hold no such secrets; he lets it slip that "Uncle Bildrath" wants to "help" Ireena. He can only be convinced of Bildrath's malignity with a successful DC 22 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the adventurers simply ask Parriwimple to bring them along, he obliges.

Edge of Oblivion. If the malefactors apprehend Ireena, they bring her northeast of the village, to the edge of the Svalich Woods. If only Parriwimple is present, he simply chants, "Strahd" on each of his turns to invite the Devil's dark attention. If either Tural or Andrej are still alive, read the following text:

> The light of a crescent moon slips through the thick fog above, revealing several figures at the edge of the Svalich Woods: a bound Ireena and her captors. A cold and bitter wind blows through the woods, which seem to watch in gravid silence. All sounds in the world have melted away, leaving only the wind—and the croak of, "We give her unto the darkness. Devil take her. Take her, Lord Strahd. Take your bride!"
>
> The woods shift. The wind groans. Out from the brush creeps a black fog—fog that makes straight towards the struggling Ireena.

Ireena is bound by hempen rope (2 HP, broken by a DC 17 Strength check). The darkness appears 90 feet away from her and creeps forward 30 feet at initiative count 10 (losing ties). If it subsumes Ireena, she disappears but can be found at the Tser Pool Encampment under Madam Eva's care or found running from undead outside Old Bonegrinder (see *CMP* Ch. 6). Ismark is broken by the disappearance of his sister and demands the adventurers find her. Despite all assurances, Ismark is certain that Ireena is still alive. "I can feel her," he whispers. "My sister lives. I know it in my bones."

At the Church

Rendezvousing at the church, the adventurers have several hours to kill before dawn comes. There they meet Donavich (see Area E5) and hear of Doru's cries. The adventurers are left with the decision to put down the priest's son, who continues to howl for blood below. So long as he howls, the adventurers can't achieve a long rest.



III. The Devil's Hand

Dawn creeps in from the east, promising thin daylight to Barovia. Father Donavich calls the funeral party out into the cemetery (Area E6). Alas, the Devil has sent his best to capture his beloved Ireena (if she was not taken by the darkness in *Evil's Bride* above). If Ireena is absent but not abducted, she appears at the church despite Ismark's orders to the contrary. If Ireena has been abducted, Strahd has instead sent an agent—"the Devil's Hand"—to take Kolyan Indirovich's corpse to Castle Ravenloft where the good burgomaster will be raised as a **wight**.

This Act serves as the explosive conclusion to this chapter and proves that Strahd does indeed hunger for Ireena Kolyana. It features one of the following villains as the Devil's Hand:

Rahadin. Strahd has sent his adopted brother, **Rahadin**, a dusk elf feared throughout Barovia.

Sir Godfrey. Strahd has sent **Sir Godfrey Gwilym**, a revenant of the Order of the Silver Dragon, whom the *Companion* revises into a villain for your campaign.

Rahadin and Godfrey are formidable foes, but they can be bested by a party of four 3rd-level adventurers so long as Ismark and his three **guards** are at their side. You must practice restraint when using this character; the Devil's Hand has been ordered to take Ireena (or Kolyan's corpse), not slay Strahd's newest playthings. One death is acceptable, but any more is excessive.

The Funeral Begins. As the adventurers gather around Kolyan's newly dug grave, read the following:

> A pale imitation of dawn creeps in from the east, not banishing the darkness, but edging it out. Father Donavich, his holy book in hand, stands before the grave. In a graven voice, he recites, "We are but children of the dawn. Sheep of the Morninglord. It is from his embrace we are born; it is to his arms we go, passing from this cruel world to the next.
>
> "No man alive knew this as well as Kolyan Indirovich. He dared to love, to laugh, to live. He bore the light of the Morninglord in his very heart, no matter how deep the darkness or how grim the day. As we lower him into the earth, under the light of the coming dawn, we must remember this: no light shines forever, but we may bask in the memory of its warmth forevermore.
>
> "Morninglord, I pray you accept this man into your kingdom. I pray you forgive him for his flaws, his sins. I pray you reward his candor and his kindness. Accept him, my lord! Accept him here and now as the dawn hurls back the darkness!"

The Devil's Hand soon interrupts the funeral. Choose one of the following variants:

Rahadin: Son of Barov

Rahadin has come for Ireena but knows her capture is inevitable. Under no circumstances should Rahadin die here; he always escapes somehow, for he is vital to the campaign. When he appears, read the following:

> The cemetery gate creaks open. Out from the gloom comes a tall, thin figure—an elf whose lips are stretched in a smug grin. "I fear I interrupt, my dear burgomaster. The count sends his regards and his condolences." The encroaching dawn glints upon the pommel of a scimitar.
>
> The Barovians flinch. A pallbearer gulps as another whispers, "Rahadin! The Devil's adopted brother!"
>
> Ismark straightens up and calls, "It is not tax day, chamberlain. You are not welcome here. Our affairs are our own. Begone from my village."
>
> "Your village, Ismark? Does not all of Barovia belong to Count Strahd?"
>
> The pallbearers flinch at that name; even Donavich's voice trembles as he continues his sacraments. Only Ismark seems undisturbed. "If the Devil wishes—"
>
> "I am here to satisfy his wishes, my lord. The Lady Ireena has been invited to dine at Castle Ravenloft. Would you—would she—deny his invitation?"
>
> Ismark draws his blade; it is the sound of a cold dawn, when the world wakes just before the onset of a long and cruel winter. "He has already stolen my father, Rahadin. He will not take Ireena!"
>
> "No," the elf muses. "I will." His blade is drawn in a flash—and in a cloud of mist he disappears, materializing behind Ismark!

Rahadin begins the battle with a *misty step* spell, after which the combatants roll initiative.

Tactics. The battle's combatants follow these tactics:

- When combat begins, Rahadin immediately cuts into Ismark's back and kicks him into his father's grave—a humiliating start for the warrior.
- Ismark's pallbearers rush towards Rahadin but flee screaming after they hear the wailing souls which surround Rahadin.
- Donavich falls into a great fury, for he blames Doru's fate on Rahadin just as much as he blames himself and Strahd. Snarling, he casts bless on the adventurers and spends his remaining turns hurling *sacred flame* spells at Rahadin. Rahadin Donavich down, but does not kill him. Before Donavich passes out, Rahadin sneers, "Your boy went to his death wailing like a whelp. I hope you fare better."
- Rahadin savors battle. He does not immediately pursue Ireena and instead terrorizes the adventurers and Barovians. Rahadin only uses his Deathly Choir once (or twice, if all victims emerge unscathed) and only when surrounded.

Author's Advice: the Devil's Hand

I know what you're thinking: how can any responsible DM hurl Rahadin or Godfrey at 3rd-level adventurers? Well, here's the thing: I already have. Twice now with each possible villain. It works because action economy is broken in this game and the Devil's Hand's mission is to simply capture Ireena. With Ismark and some guards to soak up the blows, the adventurers has a chance to prevail, even if they just finished fighting Doru.

When using the Devil's Hand, remember that they must practice restraint. Strahd will not allow for Ireena to be harmed, her brother slain, or his newest playthings to be murdered. Think tactically and have the Devil's Hand knock out his foes and pursue Ireena.

Roleplaying Rahadin. Rahadin is smug and always equipped with a smile and a jeer. He guffaws in the midst of combat as he weaves nimbly through the crowd. In this battle, Rahadin's hit points largely represent his stamina. Even as the adventurers' attack rolls hit, describe Rahadin parrying the blow or artfully dodging the attack. The elf does, however, begin to break a sweat.

Voice Rahadin with the following sample dialogue:

- To the adventurers, Rahadin laughs, "Is this the best you have to offer?"
- To Ismark, Rahadin sneers, "You have lived in your father's shadow and there you shall die!"
- To Ireena, Rahadin remarks, "My dear, it does you no good to bloody yourself in this conflict. I suggest you head home, pack a bag… I will be along to collect you shortly."

Roleplaying Ireena. Ireena, unaware of Rahadin's strength, stands and faces the elf alongside her brother. She draws her rapier, proclaiming it to be her father's blade—a blade that will feed this day on "the Devil's lapdog" as she calls Rahadin.

Developments. Two outcomes are possible:

- If Rahadin starts his turn grappling Ireena or holding her unconscious body, he uses an action to disappear in a cloud of black mist that delivers him into the Svalich Woods. Before they disappear, he mocks, "Oh, and I forgot to mention… Welcome to Barovia."
- Rahadin retreats after being reduced to 35 hit points or fewer. Gritting his teeth, he swears, "Savor this victory while you can, fools, for the wrath of Ravenloft shall soon be upon you! We are nothing more than the master's playthings, and he shall have his game!" He then conveniently disappears in a cloud of black mist. 1d4 days later, he returns to Castle Ravenloft to report his failure to Strahd.

Sir Godfrey: Dark Knight

Utilizing the *Companion*'s changes to Sir Godfrey, the once honorable paladin now does Strahd's dirty work. Unlike with Rahadin, you can afford to kill Godfrey, for he will simply rise again later. In fact, your campaign is better off if Godfrey is slain, for nothing is more disheartening than learning your foe can cheat death.

When Ismark and the others enter the cemetery, they find the knight sitting on a tombstone. Read the following text, which assumes Ireena Kolyana is present:

> The dawn creeps ever closer, edging out the darkness—and in the gloom, you see a knight sitting atop a tombstone, his greatsword drawn. His eyes—red as blood, red as wine—glow with bored malice. With a start, you realize he is a corpse, an undead warrior. His face is laired in by graveworms that continue to tunnel through his tomb of a face. His cheeks are broken, bits of jagged bone reaching out for fresh air. His rasping voice is an ill wind fit for only the most remote cemeteries:
>
> "Give me the girl, young burgomaster."
>
> Ismark's brethren are frozen in fear. Even Father Donavich has been awestruck by the horror before you. Ripping his longsword from its scabbard, Ismark snarls, "Godfrey—dark knight! Fallen paladin! Begone from this place! We will not suffer the Devil's shadow this day!"
>
> The knight leans forward, his busted elbows on his knees. "The girl, burgomaster. She has been invited to Castle Ravenloft. The Count hungers."
>
> Ismark levels his longsword at this "Sir Godfrey" and shouts, "The Devil shall go disappointed this day, corpse-knight! I will cut you down myself before I see any more of my family taken by Strahd!"
>
> The very mention of the Devil's name causes the pallbearers to flinch—and Sir Godfrey frowns. He stands up from the tombstone, raising his greatsword. "I will teach you the price of valor, whelp."

Seething with rage and grief, Ismark charges Sir Godfrey as Ireena shouts, "No!"

Tactics. The battle's combatants follow these tactics:

- Ismark effectively tanks most of Sir Godfrey's blows, but is spared from death. Ismark is stabilized at 0 hit points.
- Two of Ismark's pallbearers charge into battle but are cut down by Sir Godfrey (no action required).
- Donavich is frozen in fear and recites prayers to the Morninglord (thereby casting *bless* on the party). If an adventurer is dying, Donavich casts a *cure wounds* spell.
- Godfrey's goal is to capture Ireena and will incapacitate others to reach her. Until she flees, he fights around Kolyan's grave, forcing others to inch around it. He shoves a warrior into the grave to effectively remove them from the fight. Godfrey only resorts to his spellcasting—demonstrating that he is a fallen paladin—if he begins to lose the battle. He first casts a *blinding smite* and rasps, "I am the light personified!"

Roleplaying Godfrey. Godfrey never smiles, jeers, or laughs. He respects his adversaries and even compliments them in the heat of battle. Without the fear of death or even defeat, the knight fights with reluctant boredom. Godfrey's rasping voice is only raised when he casts a smite spell. You can voice Godfrey with the following dialogue:

- "My duty is unending."
- "The young never do learn..."
- "Strike me down and I will thank you. You know not how long it's been since I've faced a real challenge."

Roleplaying Ireena. Ireena has the common sense to flee during the battle. However, her first turn is spent in abject fear. On her second, she comes to her senses and rushes for the cemetery's entrance and the church. Godfrey, however, can pursue her indoors and simply breaks through a window.

Developments. This battle has two possibilities:

- If Godfrey proves victorious, he remarks, "This was a respectable defeat. You fought well. Perhaps you will die well too." He then drags Ireena into the Svalich Woods. Donavich manages to save any dying characters with a cure wounds spell that reinvigorates his faith in the Morninglord.
- Godfrey does not fear death and he fights to the bitter end. When slain, he rasps, "This is not yet over… Death is never the end…"

Areas of the Village

The village consists of the areas below. While the adventurers are in town, comment on how run-down the village is. A third of its buildings are abandoned and most windows are boarded up. Add these details:

- Curtains constantly twitch as villagers sneak a peek at these new outsiders.
- The ever-present mist clings to one's ankles like a child whose father is about to leave for war.
- The few villagers seen outside stare in quiet indignation at these newcomers, fearing they herald a dark, new chapter for the village (which they do).
- Some cellar doors are sealed shut with heavy iron padlocks… which tremble slightly whenever someone makes too much noise nearby. A detect evil and good spell or similar magic betrays the presence of undead within. A padlock can be picked through a DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.
- At night, sparse firelight spills out from window corners and prayers to the Morninglord and Mother Night can be heard by the most perceptive adventurers.

Revised House Occupants

The village's population has been revised with the *Bigger Barovia* variant above. Now, only a third of its houses are abandoned, instead of two-thirds, and while there are still undead lurking inside some cellars, they're much less of a threat. Before, an average of one hundred zombies lurked inside the village—and a century of undying corpses is no trivial matter. That a third of the village's homes are empty is no small matter either. Decimation is a huge toll on any population; the village has effectively suffered three.

Revised House Occupants

d20	Injury
1	1 **Strahd zombie** or 1d4 **zombies**
2-3	None
4-6	2d4 **swarms of rats**
7-20	Barovian **commoners**

Village Rumors & Lore

Villagers share these rumors and lore:

- It is believed that Ireena is a bastard Kolyan sired with a Vallakian prostitute. Only Donavich knows that Ireena is adopted, and neither he nor Kolyan shared that fact. Better they believe Ireena a bastard than an "outsider," "hag-child," or potential shapechanger.
- Ireena has been bitten twice by Strahd; once more, and she will be his for all eternity. (This is false; Strahd must kill Ireena with his bite for her to rise as a vampire.)

Six years ago, "the Mists" closed in tighter around the valley, separating it from more immediate lands. The village of Immol, which lay just beyond Mount Ghakis, can now no longer be reached.

E1. Bildrath's Mercantile

No person better represents Barovians at large than the bastard Bildrath. Through him, the adventurers learn that most of their interactions going forward will be full of spite and cold indifference. They will learn through him that this is a land of dour folk and the kindhearted are hard to find. In this chapter, Bildrath serves as the contrast to Ismark. By featuring Bildrath, this callous opportunist, you reinforce the importance of Ismark and Ireena. Though Bildrath will not make any future appearances in this campaign, his legacy will be secured through the first miserly interactions he has with the adventurers.

When the party enters Bildrath's Mercantile, read:

> The door creaks open upon a dusty storefront wreathed in shadows. Behind the counter, a portly man reads a well-thumbed copy of Greaves of Brass by Walt Whitdwarf, the poet. He glances at you lazily. "Ah. Customers. Newcomers. Foreigners from beyond the Mist. Welcome to the best, and only, mercantile this side of the valley."
>
> A true ox of a boy, broad-shouldered and tall, stomps out from a storeroom. "Outsiders, Uncle Bildrath? Really?" Throwing down his broom, the massive teenager storms over to prod and analyze you. "I'm Parriwimple!"
>
> This giant teenager barrages you with a flurry of questions. First, he asks if you're an elf—or a dwarf. And if you're an elf, have you ever met a gnome? Have you met two gnomes? Parriwimple heard that gnomes can't cry, but doesn't think that's true. And have you heard of a goliath? People call Parriwimple a goliath, but he's sure he's only human. He would sure like to meet a goliath and see who's taller. His father was very tall, a true mountain of a man, they say, but he died to cholera and Uncle Bildrath has raised him ever since. Bildrath is a tough but caring boss and Parriwimple is very grateful to have a hand in running the store. His name is Parpol Cantemir, by the way, but everybody calls him Simple Parriwimple, on account of how easy-going he is. He was such a huge and healthy baby that his mother, Bildrath's sister Ameli, died during childbirth. She's buried in the cemetery, four plots down from where Kolyan Indirovich, the dead lord, is meant to be buried. Nobody really goes to church these days, Parriwimple says, since Father Donavich stopped holding services because his son came home—but Uncle Bildrath said not to talk about that.
>
> When Parriwimple finally pauses to suck in a breath, his uncle calls, "Now, now, nephew. Do not fondle the customers. They are here for wares… and if they want something bad enough, they'll pay for it."

Once Parriwimple backs down, the adventurers are free to peruse Bildrath's wares.

Revision. Bildrath is a merciless scalper, but his prices are much too high. As described in *Curse of Strahd*, he sells goods for five times their usual price—which only ensures that the adventurers buy nothing, as they won't have the money for even the simplest goods. You can still depict Bildrath as a miser by reducing the prices to either twice their usual value, or their value plus 5 extra gold, and simply telling your players, "which you know is just ridiculous." For example, he sells a quiver of ten arrows for 10 sp, which is "just ridiculous." Bildrath can be convinced to lower his prices with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Thanks to his years of dealing with outsiders, Intimidation checks made against him have disadvantage, so long as his nephew is present. Without Parriwimple, Bildrath proves to be a coward.

Ordinary Stock. In addition to the items listed on the Adventuring Gear table (see *PHB* pg. 148), Bildrath sells the following ordinary merchandise:

- A hand-drawn map of Barovia which shows the route to Vallaki, Krezk, Berez (implying the map was drafted decades ago, before the village was destroyed), Castle Ravenloft, the Wizard of Wines winery, and "the Wall" (the Wall of Mist at Yester Hill; see Ch. 14). Bildrath is unfamiliar with "the Wall." He prices the map at 10 gp.
- A "visa" (a wooden disc painted with an image of Castle Ravenloft) that Bildrath insists will grant them entry into the walled town of Vallaki (which it totally can, at your discretion). He charges 5 gp for it.
- A wagon wheel repair kit that Bildrath charges 25 sp for.

Strange Stock. When someone enters Bildrath's store, they are immediately confronted with two of the gothic trinkets below, of which Bildrath has eight:

- A doll that always seems to be looking at someone. Bildrath tries to throw it in with any other purchase for an extra 5 cp, as he desperately wants to be rid of it, but must make a profit.
- A wooden top painted with images of scarecrows chasing children through the forest. Etched into its side is "Is No Fun, Is No Blinsky!" Bildrath describes Blinsky as "a misguided, tone-deaf fool on a crusade to bring joy to all Barovian children." He lets it go for 12 sp.



- Dice made from the knuckles of a notorious charlatan. "An outsider," Bildrath remarks. "Tried to cheat at cards. Learned the hard way how Barovians view cheating."
- A tarnished insignia of the Order of the Silver Dragon (5 gp). Thanks to the tarnish, the dragon's noble visage has been twisted into an eerie grin. Bildrath is unaware of the Order of the Silver Dragon. He says that it was found on a corpse in the Svalich Woods several years ago. If you include this trinket, equip the revenants of Argynvostholt (Chapter 7) with these emblems.
- A petrified goblin's hand that makes for an arcane focus. Bildrath doesn't know it's a goblin's hand, but he has heard of such creatures in children's tales. Claiming that it brings good luck, he tries to sell it for 5 gp. Contest his Deception check (+4) against a character's Insight.
- A lepidopterist's box filled of dead moths with skull-like patterns on their wings. Bildrath would be happy to give it away for free if he wasn't such a miser, but no one has been willing to pay 5 sp for it.
- A hangman's noose which feels heavier than it should (5 sp). "Never know when you might need to hang a bastard," Bildrath says, if the noose is pointed out.
- A black executioner's hood (3 sp). He throws it in with the hangman's noose for 1 sp.

Extraordinary Stock. Unbeknownst to Bildrath, he has a number of magic items for sale. If you did not run the Death House prologue for your campaign but did not furnish the adventurers with the few magic items found therein, now is a chance to equip them with such gear. A *detect magic* spell reveals their presence. Choose up to two of the following magic items:

- Six pieces of *walloping ammunition* (either arrows or crossbow bolts) mixed in a quiver of ten arrows, priced at 10 sp.
- A *cloak of protection* Bildrath believes is a rain cloak. He sells it for 3 gp. "Foul weather's on its way," says Bildrath. "Can feel it in my knee."
- An *enduring spellbook* that contains the *darkvision, disguise self, hold person, identify, invisibility, mage armor, magic missile, magic weapon, protection from evil and good* spells. The spellbook is written in Elvish, Draconic, or some other foreign language, which led to Bildrath believing it is a mundane tome. He sells it for 10 gp. "Books," Bildrath says, "will redeem us all."
- A grimy *lantern of revealing*. Bildrath is happy to let a seemingly mundane lantern go, as he sells oil for absurd prices. He'll part with the lantern for 2 gp. If you include this item, it behooves you deprive the party later on—so as to rip away one of their security blankets.
- A bloodstained *hat of wizardry* priced for 2 gp. "This," Bildrath says, "belonged to a mighty wizard indeed. An outsider, no less. See where all his spellcraft got him."

Bildrath

In a skeletal village hardly clinging on, Bildrath Cantemir eats well. His cutthroat prices, his scavenging, and his demeanor have earned little good will.

Roleplaying Bildrath. Bildrath is distant, bored, and perpetually unimpressed. His syllables and sentences are long and drawn out. He rarely makes eye contact and will almost *never* stand up from his chair; instead he continues to thumb the pages in his book. He has seen countless outsiders come and go, and can no longer be surprised.

Voice Bildrath with the following sample dialogue:

- "If you want it bad enough… You'll pay for it." This is always accompanied by a dry smirk.
- "You aren't the first to grace my door… You won't be the last either."
- "I've seen and heard anything you could possibly do or say. Threats are nothing here."

Bildrath's Redemption. All bastards in a narrative require some light in their black hearts, and Bildrath's light is Parriwimple. Although it does not seem like it, Bildrath does care for his nephew. Threats to the boy will cause Bildrath to acquiesce or seek out the burgomaster for justice—if he doesn't just hire muscle to punish the party.

Parriwimple

Parriwimple is a loveable oaf who takes immense pride in his uncle's store. He needles the adventurers with a litany of questions whenever he can. See Appendix B for his unique statistics; the *Companion* has removed his spear in favor of a broom and empowered his unarmed strikes, so as to better fit his distaste for violence.

Roleplaying Parriwimple. Sweet, clumsy, and naive, Parriwimple is an ox of a boy unaware of his own strength. He believes most of what he hears, unless Bildrath tells him otherwise. He is extremely clumsy.

Parriwimple doesn't have a taste for violence; he doesn't want to hurt anyone. He does not, however, know his own strength, so he may wind up harming others anyway. If forced into a scrape, his blows are nonlethal—unless dear Uncle Bildrath has been wounded or slain, in which the ox-of-a-boy loses himself to rage.

Funeral for the Burgomaster

As described in Act II of *Funeral for the Burgomaster*, Bildrath is behind the plot to turn Ireena over to the Devil when she leaves for her father's wedding. He has sent two thugs, Andrej and Tural, along with Parriwimple to arrest Ireena and leave her manacled at the edge of the Svalich Woods, where the Devil's agents will surely find her, at last sparing the village from her damning presence.

Parriwimple flees to the mercantile once harmed during this attempted kidnapping. If Bildrath is confronted by the adventurers, he proves to be a coward. He denies the accusations at first, but a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he's nervous; his hand suffers from a slight tremble. He only admits the truth if Parriwimple blows his cover ("but Uncle Bildrath, you said—" "Silence, boy!" "To take Ireena to—" "I said be silent, Parpol!") or if the boy's life is threatened.

If any harm comes to Bildrath, Parriwimple flies into a rage and beats the adventurers unconscious. His blows are nonlethal unless Bildrath convinces the boy to kill them (which requires a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check on his part; crying, Parriwimple obeys). See the sample dialogue below to color this encounter:

- "Why would I endanger the fair Lady Kolyana? What manner of monster would just dump her at the edge of oblivion?"
- "She will be the ruin of us all! I did what had to be done! Our children—your children—will thank me for this one day. On a day when our harvest is not so meager and the winter not quite so dark.

E2. Blood of the Vine Tavern

This tavern is instrumental to your first session in the village. The adventurers should be led here by the promise of warmth and wine. Its firelight spills out onto the streets, as if to defy the fog. It is, effectively, an island of light in a sea of darkness.

It is here where the adventurers receive the campaign's two most important quests: to protect Ireena Kolyana, and to seek out Madam Eva of the Vistani. The former quest sets the adventurers up against the Devil Strahd; the latter provides them with the means to triumph over him. The party cannot be allowed to leave the village until they have spoken with Ismark, who starts the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest (which involves Ireena) and the three Vistani, who insist the adventurers seek out their destiny by visiting Madam Eva in the Tser Pool Encampment.



When the adventurers enter the tavern for the first ever time, read the following, which assumes they are visibly haggard, bloodied and exhausted—such as if they just emerged from Death House. Ismark Kolyanovich, used to outsiders, should be the first character to address the party:

> There is no good cheer here. This is no laughter, no warmth. None of the pleasant amenities offered by a tavern in brighter lands. Instead, a bored barkeep polishes glasses while a broad-shouldered, grey-haired man pours himself yet another glass of wine. The tavern has but four customers: the man and three brightly-dressed women who whisper fiercely in the corner.
>
> Your very first step draws a groan from the floorboards. All eyes swing up to you. The grey-haired man turns in his chair and, with a sad smile, says, "You must hail from beyond the Mists… Welcome. Welcome to… Barovia."

The burden of addressing doomed foreigners is Ismark's. He explains the nature of Barovia: that those who wind up here can never leave. He also explains that his father has passed and Strahd hungers for his sister Ireena. He *must* begin the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* questline now. This initial conversation sets the tone for the campaign, so draw upon this sample text:

- "Ismark looks upon you with startling clarity. His eyes are red-rimmed and his hair disheveled. The wine is almost gone. Following your gaze, he remarks, "Forgive me. My father… My father passed."
- "'You are not the first strangers to show up at our door. From time to time, the Mists grow hungry… And those the Mists take can never leave our land of Barovia. Some take their chances in the Mists, but always find their way back—and worse off for it."
- "'Our people are ruled over by a deathless tyrant, a predator who wants not for riches or wine, but blood. A vampyr.'"
- If an adventurer speaks Strahd's name, Ismark snaps, "Do not speak that name! Never speak that name! And never speak it thrice, for names have power, don't you know? To speak his name is to beg for his attention. Twice, to betray your place in this land. Thrice is an invitation beyond the threshold. The Devil cannot walk where he is not bid, so say not his name and address him as we do."
- "'My sister has drawn the dark attention of the Devil himself. He is obsessed with her. Twice now has he shown up at our doorstep."
- (This assumes that Ismark hasn't fashioned a coffin for his father, as described in the F*uneral for the Burgomaster* quest): "'My father could not bear it any longer—the Devil at our doorstep. He has demanded my sister's hand in marriage. My father refused. He refused even when the wolves burdened our home and the dead scratched at our walls… but in the end, my father was only a man. His heart could not take it any longer. And now… Now he lies dead, his coffin unfinished, and my sister still imperiled."



Author's Advice: The Vistani

In my experience, players often gravitate towards the Vistani and discount Ismark. After all, the Vistani women are full of life and laughter, while Ismark is… not. You have to make it clear that Ismark is the true focus of the encounter. If your players often miss or disregard quest hooks, have the Vistani enter the tavern after they've spoken with Ismark. This allows you to demonstrate his distrust towards Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia—he scowls as they enter.

Soulless Arik

Arik serves as a mascot for soulless Barovians. His emptiness adds to this chapter's bleak themes. Rather than speak, Arik sighs and polishes glasses with an old rag. Narrate that often to your players. When he seldom speaks, consider the sample dialogue below:

- "If you came for a meal and wine, you will only be slightly disappointed."
- "It's a living."
- "We have what we have."

The Vistani

Three women, each full of life and laughter in such a dreary place, sit together. They are dressed in colorful garb. The tallest among them smiles at you and says, "Ah, fresh faces."

"So infrequent around these parts," demurs the shortest of the three, a woman whose hair is draped seductively over one shoulder. "So infrequent and so… welcome."

"You must be the outsiders Madam Eva foretold of," adds the last. "She urged us to send you to Tser Pool… there she promises to divine your destiny."

Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia serve one purpose: direct the adventurers to the Tser Pool Encampment. Madam Eva has foreseen the adventurers' arrival and sent word to the three women a few days ago. They don't let the adventurers leave without first informing them of this (see the text below).

Revision. The Vistani should not be servants of Strahd; it adds little to the plot and instead goes to further alienate Vistani from the adventurers.

E3. Mad Mary's Townhouse

Mad Mary provides an early game quest for a late game dungeon. It's a nice way to link the campaign's beginning with the endgame. Should the adventurers ever accept an invitation to dine at Castle Ravenloft, they meet Gertruda during dinner. Otherwise, they can encounter her when they enter Castle Ravenloft—either to slay Strahd at the end of the campaign, as part of the *Companion's* Act III foray, or when they begin *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

Meeting Mary. The village streets are haunted by Mad Mary's weeping. Should they come pounding on her door, she opens her bedroom window to look down upon her visitors. She only allows them inside if they ask to look about Gertruda's room—and just like any Barovian, she does not invite them in, but merely unlocks her door and see if they can enter unbidden.

Roleplaying Mad Mary. Mary is a shadow of herself. Her eyes as red as peppers. She mops up her snot with an old and patched handkerchief. Normally wary of any and all strangers (for fear they may harm her daughter), she welcomes any promise of aid.

Voice Mary with the following sample dialogue:

- "My daughter's gone missing. Ismark has offered naught but his sympathies. His *sympathies!* As if sympathy can bring back my dear Gertruda."
- "I fear the worst… I fear creatures of the night have stolen her. Ireena Kolyana is not the only woman with a midnight caller—but does Ismark care? No!"
- "Please. Please, anything I can offer is yours. Just bring home my daughter. And tell her I love her. Tell her I'm sorry I kept her locked up. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. All I ever wanted was to keep her safe. Please, tell Gertruda her mother loves her and just wants her to come back home safe."

The Liar, the Glitch, & the Wardrobe

As described in the *Variants & Revisions* section above, Gertruda did not leave her home by foot, but by magic instead. A circle of crude arcane sigils has been carved into the floor of her walk-in wardrobe. Mad Mary is unaware of the circle, just as she is unaware of her daughter's secret relationship with Victor Vallakovich. Mary always retires to bed early, and so she rarely heard the two speaking or being intimate on nights when Victor teleported in. Ironically, it is her belief that these noises were made by a spirit or ethereal malefactor which led to the village calling her "Mad Mary."

Investigating the Room. Through a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, an adventurer gathers the following clues:

- Gertruda did not leave by window; all are still locked. The fog, dust, and grime reveals no recent handprints upon the glass or frames. Similarly, no evidence of entry into the house can be found.
- A rug is found rolled up and hidden underneath the bed.
- A Blinsky doll is found hidden among Gertruda's bed pillows. Per this variant, this Blinsky doll (normally a hand-me-down from Mad Mary to her daughter) is an old gift from Victor Vallakovich. Mary has never seen the doll and is driven insane by the implications of its existence.
- A strange circle of sigils is found in Gertruda's walk-in wardrobe (see below).

Teleportation Circle. To find the circle, one must open Gertruda's wardrobe, where it is plainly visible. Do not gate its discovery behind an additional ability check; it is found as part of an Investigation check or whenever a character throws open the wardrobe, for Gertruda would usually hide it with a rug. Since she has yet to return, the rug is rolled up and hidden underneath her bed.

The circle has the following properties:

- Through a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the circle sigils can be identified as belonging to the school of conjuration. Additionally, the circle is flawed and quite dangerous. Clearly a novice, or self-taught wizard, drew the circle. There is no indication to where it is linked.
- A *detect magic* spell reveals the circle and wardrobe radiates conjuration magic.
- A *legend lore* spell reveals the circle's command word: "silver-lining." If spoken while a creature is standing on the circle, they are teleported to the attic of the baron's mansion in Vallaki (Area N3T, p. 109). Thanks to the circle's faulty design, the creature must also succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take a level of exhaustion.

Conclusions. If all clues above are presented to Mary, she becomes hysterical. Through her sobs and anguished cries, an adventurer can confirm:

- Gertruda never mentioned any friends or visitors she may have left to meet.
- Gertruda must have received the doll from someone else. Bildrath Cantemir may have sold it to her (which he confidently denies, claiming that "Blinsky dolls don't sell here. I learned that lesson the hard way.")
- Gertruda never displayed any magical aptitude—so how were such sigils carved into her wardrobe? And if she carved them herself, who taught her how?
- Mary latches onto the belief that a "Midnight Caller" has been visiting her daughter, "just like with that damned Lady Kolyana." Nothing can convince her that some sort of malefactor, ethereal or otherwise, has taken Gertruda.

Later On. Should the *St. Andral's Feast* event occur in Chapter 5, Victor Vallakovich tries to escape Vallaki by teleporting to the village (possibly with the adventurers in tow). Because of its faulty design, he accidentally enters Castle Ravenloft's Brazier Room (see Area K78, Ch. 4), as described in Chapter 4's *In the Depths of Ravenloft* quest.

E4. Burgomaster's Mansion

When the adventurers arrive at the manor, they learn a particular Barovian custom: never inviting someone, even one whom you're familiar with, inside. This custom is a precaution against creatures of the night, particularly vampires, who cannot enter a home unbidden. This lesson is taught through Mister Falkon, the ancient and unsettling family butler (added by the *Companion*). When the adventurers knock on the door, read:

> After several hard knocks that echo throughout what can only be an empty manor, the door cracks open. An old, well-dressed man peers out from the gap—the butler, no doubt. His eyes are dull and canyons line his ancient face. His hair has already gone the way of his father.
>
> "Mmm… yes?"

Ismark should have already told Falkon about these newcomers. If they are granted entry, the butler never invites them inside; instead, he unchains the seven locks upon the door and lets it swing wide open. He watches silently, waiting to see if they can come inside uninvited, and relaxes when they do. Falkon bids them to wait in the foyer while he fetches Ismark—which takes a good ten minutes, as the two are fighting upstairs.

Roleplaying Falkon. The butler is as a dry as a glass of merlot. He speaks very little and punctuates conversations with a long, drawn out "Mmm… yes." Having served the family for the last forty years, he is more of a living wall fixture than a person. He speaks only when spoken to and, being virtually invisible, always manages to surprise guests. He is, effectively, living furniture.

A Sibling Argument. Ismark and Ireena can be overheard, arguing about the funeral. Read the following:

> A distant argument becomes clearer: "It is too dangerous!" Ismark shouts, answered by a woman's snarl, "He's my father too, Ismark!"
>
> You reach the second floor; Ismark stands scowling into an open doorway. "Do you think I wish to be your jailor? Do you think I wish to deprive you of a goodbye, Ireena? I am only keeping you safe, as he would—"
>
> "There is no place in this land safe from the Devil!" this Ireena shouts. "I would sooner be taken in the night than cower until dawn! *I am going, brother!*"

Roleplaying Ireena. Ireena is gripped with fury when she first meets the adventurers. However, unlike Ismark, who is disillusioned with adventurers, Ireena still holds some hope. After she cools down, Ireena lambastes Ismark: "I know full well the horrors of the night, and yet my brother will not allow me to say goodbye to my father. He would keep me prisoner in this house."

Author's Advice: Attacking the Manor

Many a DM considers having Strahd appear at the manor—or at Kolyan's funeral—but it is my firm belief that Strahd is better heard, not seen. He is a shadow over the land, a shadow that haunts our heroes. To have him appear now would kneecap the very suspense you want to cultivate in your campaign. As I screech throughout the *Companion*, Strahd's first appearance should be during the *St. Andral's Feast* event in Vallaki.

E5. Church

The adventurers should only visit the church during the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest. When running this area, follow these guidelines:

- Immediately draw attention to Donavich, who is praying at his altar. Delay Doru's scream until midway through their conversation. See the alternative narration text provided below in *Welcome to Church* below. Read this rather than the text provided for Area E5a.
- Ignore all areas except for E5A, E5F, and E5G, as groups tend to throw open all doors before engaging Donavich. Area E5D should be locked as an added precaution.
- The *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest doesn't preclude the adventurers from confronting Doru.
- Doru can speak through the floorboards. If any of the adventurers are wounded, he follows them from below with his Spider Climb trait. His attention is like the warmth of a hot sun.

Revision. As noted earlier, Doru should be an earlier addition to the village. No one should know the priest's son has returned as a vampire, especially not Ismark or Ireena.

Resting in the Church. So long as Doru is alive and ungagged, characters can't gain the benefits of a long rest. His constant screams, demands, begging, laughter, and thumping against the floorboards prevents any and all sleep. No one, not even Donavich, can find peace in this church. A stubborn person can still achieve a short rest.



Welcome to Church

Read the text below when the adventurers first arrive to the church instead of what is provided in *Curse of Strahd*. That text reveals Doru far too soon. The text assumes Ismark is with the party, as part of *Funeral for the Burgomaster*.

> The doors swing open upon a darkened hall that reeks of mildew. A handful of candles light the altar, before which kneels a balding priest lost in prayer:
>
> "Please, oh lord… Please redeem him. Redeem him in the light. His heart—his heart can burn again. He can be redeemed, he can! He can—my lord—I can't…"
>
> Ismark clears his throat. "Father Donavich?"
>
> The prayers cease. A fragile voice calls back, "Services are closed. Have you not seen the sign?"
>
> "Father Donavich, we have come to bury my father. You remember, yes?"
>
> There comes a pregnant pause before the priest answers, "Yes. Yes, of course, my son. Enter the House of the Morninglord and be welcome."

Flesh and Blood

Doru, the vampire spawn, languishes in the undercroft. He hounds Donavich and the adventurers throughout the night until at last they visit him below.

> You feel eyes upon you—the hot attention of an afternoon sun. You find him there in the floorboards, his face pressed up against the crease, his bloodshot eye peering at you. "Blood… Blood… Blood!" he squeals in rapt attention. "You are too kind father!"

If the adventurers do not question Donavich—who ignores Doru by reciting prayers—Ismark or Ireena does. Donavich explains that Doru joined the march on Castle Ravenloft last year and has recently returned (see *Revision* above) as undead. Donavich confided only in Kolyan Indirovich. Doru can't escape the undercroft (the trapdoor to which Donavich has encircled with salt) and he can't dig beyond the walls of the church. Donavich is certain the Morninglord will restore Doru to life (or free his soul) if only Donavich proves righteous in his faith.

Donavich does not condone harm to Doru. Unless convinced with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he refuses to see the truth behind Doru's grim fate. Instead, he remains convinced that Doru will be "redeemed" in time. If he is not convinced, Donavich must be restrained while the adventurers pay Doru a visit. If Doru is slain, Donavich is heart-broken, but can be consoled through a DC 22 Charisma (Persuasion or Religion) check.

Ismark and Ireena express reservations about killing Doru, a boy they grew up with. Ismark can be convinced; Ireena is forbidden from exposing herself to his attacks. With a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Ismark can be guilted or convinced to join the fight. If not, he says, "I will not stop you… but forgive me if I cannot stomach killing the boy I once babysat."

In the Undercroft. Doru has been digging in the undercroft, producing mounds of dirt and 5-feet-deep pits. Doru hides in one mound, forcing the adventurers to fully enter the undercroft to find and face him. Once the adventurers enter, read the text below instead of what is provided in *Curse of Strahd*:

Damp clay and sour earth—the church's undercroft reeks of blood and mildew. It is clear that the good priest above sought to sate his son's thirst through livestock… And that son has been busy; unable to escape, it seems Doru has vented his frustrations upon the earth. The undercroft is filled with pits and mounds of dirt that, coupled with the rotting pillars that support the ceiling, make this place into a maze. Were it not for the candlelight slipping in from the cracks above, you would have already fallen into such a pit.

As you close the door behind you, a devilish voice whispers, "Thank you, father."

Terrain. Doru has dug through the undercroft. The hallowed ground prevents him from digging beyond the walls of the church, and so he vented his frustrations by digging down. The mounds of dirt are so tall and so numerous that creatures therein effectively have half-cover (granting Doru a +2 bonus to his AC and Dexterity saves). Likewise, the ground is difficult terrain for anyone but Doru. 1d4+4 five-feet-deep pits pock the floor, two of which are linked together, allowing him to cross the undercroft from east to west, appearing near the staircase. Doru fully utilizes this terrain in battle.

Tactics. Doru's instincts and strength have been heightened in undeath. He follows these tactics in battle:

- Doru begins the battle by hiding in a mound, which he can burst forth from with 10 feet of movement.
- Doru grapples a creature and pulls it into a pit to feed. He can easily escape thanks to his Spiderclimb trait.
- When reduced to 41 hit points, Doru dives into a mound or pit. Provided you're willing to buck Fifth Edition's combat system, you can give him a special turn in which he squirms through a tunnel to appear on the other side of the undercroft.
- If the trapdoor to the undercroft is left open, Doru makes a break for it. Rather than flee from the front doors, he heads towards the altar to kill his father and/or escape through the hole in the roof. He then begins to climb the Pillarstone of Ravenloft until he is out of range of the adventurers' attacks. If he escapes, Strahd takes him in and later uses him as the flower boy in *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

Roleplaying Doru. Doru is gripped between bloodthirsty madness and loathing for his dark fate. He only screams, his every word jagged and frenzied. You can voice him with the following sample dialogue:

- "Blood! Yes, the nectar of life! Give it to me! *Give it to me!*
- "The beat of the heart—the thrum of the veins—music like no other!"
- "I did not ask for this! I asked naught!"

Fortunes of Ravenloft

It is quite anticlimactic for one of the artifacts to be here in the church. However, if one is, it was stolen from Castle Ravenloft by Doru, who refuses to part with it.

E6. Cemetery

The cemetery is the site of the *March of the Damned* special event (which the *Companion* suggests removing altogether) and *Funeral for the Burgomaster's* finale. Read the description below as the adventurers explore the graveyard:

The cemetery's ranks are swollen and neglected. Most graves are marked only with wooden steles whose heads are engraved with an epitaph and a moniker of a blazing sun. Few were worthy of an actual tombstone, and as you traipse throughout the cemetery, you spot a freshly dug grave whose tombstone reads:

KOLYAN INDIROVICH

682 – 735

A GOOD MAN BURDENED BY HIS TIME

The epitaph was written and engraved by Donavich, Kolyan's truest, and last living friend. The script is as jagged as Donavich's sanity.

Notable Graves

The cemetery has accepted its fair share of corpses over the years, many of them once belonging to outsiders who came from beyond the mists:

- Indir Vladovich, Ismark's grandfather, is buried beside his wife Danya Stefanova, whose tombstone reads "Taken Before Her Time," which is ironic, Ismark admits, as her corpse was dug up by a necromancer some forty years ago. Indir's epitaph, which was written by Kolyan, reads, "As useless in death as he was in life."
- Per Barovian custom, Ismark and Ireena, as nobles, already have their tombstones ready. They are to the left of Kolyan's, with enough space in between them for a spouse to be buried. Ismark's tombstone denotes that he was born 31 years ago, whereas Ireena was born 24 years ago (which may be off by a handful of years, as neither Kolyan or Ireena knows her true age).
- Doru's grave is empty. When Doru did not return from his march on Castle Ravenloft, Donavich carved a tombstone for his son. He never expected to have to dig a grave as well. When Doru returned, Kolyan and Donavich dug it together—but alas, the priest could not bring himself to kill his only son. Now the grave is half-filled with mud and rotting leaves. Its tombstone merely reads: "Doru: Beloved Son, 715-735."



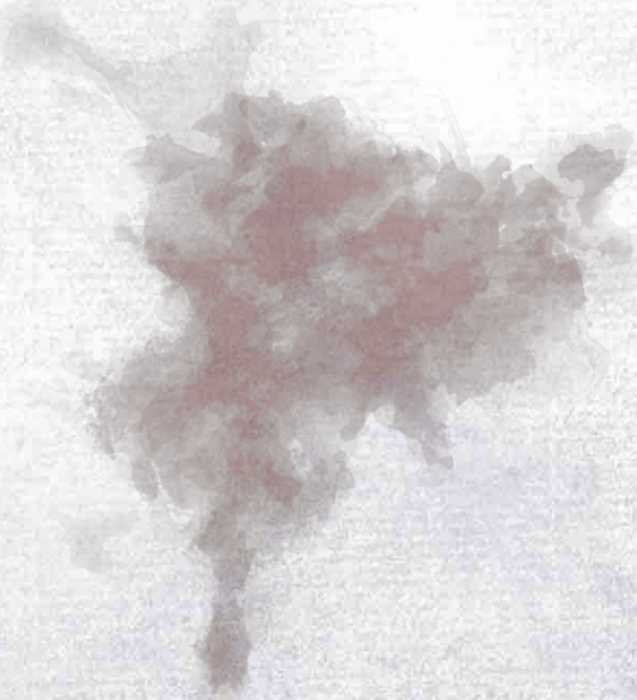
- One grave stands out—the "Failed Hero's"—vandalized by paint or blood that has long since dried. It belongs to Selva Aevyan, a wood elf huntress who dared to stand boldly against the Devil—but failed in her quest sixteen years ago. Ismark recalls meeting her at the age of 15 and can describe her as "a force of hope for a shadowed people. My father dared to believe in her." When the adventurers see this grave, read the following:

> You come across a vandalized tombstone. Blood or paint that has long since dried was clearly dumped on it. The fossils of broken egg shells suggest someone took out their grievances on the grave quite recently. The tombstone reads:
>
> SELVA AEVYAN
>
> OF THE LANDS BEYOND THE MISTS
>
> SHE WAS OUR HOPE

- A lone tombstone bears the name of one of the adventurers—the Doomed One, the adventurer foreshadowed to die. See *CMP,* Ch. 1, *The Narrator's Toolbox* for details on the Doomed One. Only the Doomed One sees their name on the tombstone; other characters see only that the name is covered in moss. The illusion bears the adventurer's name, lists their year as 735 and bears an epitaph of: "They died as they lived: a failure." If the tombstone's moss is wiped away, it reads: "Vasili Von Holtz: Taken by the Mists, 583-639."

E7. Haunted House

The *Companion* recommends relocating the Death House to outside the village. If you adopt this change, remove this location and stock it with undead. The windows are boarded up and the door is sealed, but still the undead can be heard moaning from within.



Dream Pastries

A number of changes are needed for Morgantha's dream pastries. As it stands, they'll likely fall unconscious on the street. Instead, the pastries should be addictive (with actual mechanics to facilitate that addiction). Nonetheless, both versions have been included below:

Original. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or fall into a trance that lasts for 1d4+4 hours, during which time the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0 feet. The trance ends if the affected creature takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor. While in the trance, the creature dreams of being in some joyous place, far removed from the evils of the world. The places and characters in the dream are vivid and believable, and when the dream ends, the affected creature experiences a longing to return to the place.

Revision. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety later experiences a euphoric dream when they next sleep. Upon waking up, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become addicted to dream pastries and gain the following flaw: "I can't think straight without a dream pastry in my belly." For every 24 hours the creature goes without eating another dream pastry, they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw. The DC begins at 16; for every dream pastry the creature has consumed in the last 30 days, the DC increases by 1, up to a maximum of 20. On a failure, the creature gains one level of exhaustion (up to three levels). If a creature succeeds on three of these Constitution saving throws in a row, their addiction to dream pastries ends.

Special Events

Two special events occur in this chapter. While the Village of Barovia definitely has the potential for more events, you don't have time for them. The adventurers should not tarry for too long in the village.

March of the Damned

It is recommended to remove *March of the Damned* from your campaign. Its intent is clear: to show the adventurers the many "heroes" that have come and gone before. With how often this is stated by Barovians, the event is overkill. Likewise, the spirits' march is very overt and not at all mysterious.

Dream Pastries

Dream Pastries is an all-but-mandatory event for your campaign. However, like Morgantha herself, it requires finesse. You must preserve Morgantha's identity by painting her as a sweet, old woman. Do *not* have her take a child in front of the party or reveal her to be a hag.

Morgantha's hunger to corrupt outweighs her caution. She inevitably crosses paths with the adventurers (shouting in a jagged, matronly voice, "Pastries! Get yer pastries!") and offers them a free sample or at a reduced cost—she cares not for gold, but baiting new victims. She doesn't mention her "daughters" and refers to everyone as "deary."

Revision. The *Companion* has revised the effects of a dream pastry, as shown above, and in Appendix C.

Aftermath

What transpires in the Village sets the tone for the entire campaign. Consider the following:

- If any of the adventurers die, Ismark honors them with a grave.
- For their support, Ismark grants the adventurers the deeds to homes in the Village. Having a home allows one to be protected from creatures of the night that can't enter unbidden. If you have more time to spare, the adventurers can clear a home of undead. However, you want to ensure that they still leave the village. Having a home means they can return.
- Ismark's chief concern is Ireena's safety and by entrusting her to the party, he imbues them with just the sense of urgency required for *Curse of Strahd*.

Fate of Ireena

Ireena is at the crux of Act III of *Funeral for the Burgomaster*. Her fate determines the adventurers' next steps:

The Maiden Saved

If Ireena is saved, she accompanies the adventurers to Vallaki. She dyes her hair black to better disguise herself from Strahd's dark gaze and wraps herself in an unworn cloak. Ireena also brings her father's sword, a tent and enough rations to last the week. Ismark furnishes the adventurers with twenty rations, rope, ammunition, and 50 gp. He acquires any weapon or armor (within reason) he can, such as a halberd or a breastplate (but not something as expensive as plate armor). Ismark also gives the adventurers and Ireena horses to speed them along their journey. These horses, however, are doomed to die at the hands of the werewolves haunting Tser Falls. In this manner, they represent another opportunity to dash the party's hopes.

Ismark's Farewell. As much as Ismark wishes to see his sister to safety, he decides to remain in the village—not only to continue his father's legacy, but to distract Strahd. Ismark's absence will surely be noticed, and thus he buys the adventurers time.

The Maiden Taken

If his sister has been taken, there is little that can convince Ismark to remain in the village. He insists on accompanying the adventurers. Father Donavich, for his part, claims the village still requires a leader and that birthright—that burden—falls upon Ismark. The adventurers can weigh in, but Ismark rebukes Donavich's advice and leaves in search of his sister. He accompanies the adventurers until Ireena is found, and returns to the Village of Barovia (or becomes separated in the Mists) afterwards. As above, Ismark equips the adventurers with horses, tents, and rations.

Although Ireena has been taken, the Dark Powers that truly reign over Barovia are not yet ready for Strahd to be reunited with his beloved Tatyana. In the darkness, Ireena is separated from her abductor and she is found at the Tser Pool Encampment later on in the campaign or found fleeing from undead outside Old Bonegrinder (see *CMP* Ch. 6). She cannot describe how exactly she escaped, only that "sinister forces" seemed to watch her from the woods with rapt and sadistic attention. The mystery of this is worth committing a *deus ex machina*.

The Road Ahead

The party must make their way to Vallaki, contending with undead, hags, and werewolves along the way. See the sample journey in *CMP* Ch. 2 for details.

As the adventurers leave the village, read the following text, which assumes Ireena is with the adventurers, Donavich lived, and *Funeral for the Burgomaster* occurred:

> "I cannot thank you enough," Ismark tells you, looking up towards the saddle. The sun has continued to creep along the sky, denied its bright reign by a thick canopy of mist. "My sword is yours and my loyalty unending. The road ahead, however, is fraught with danger."
>
> Father Donavich grunts. "You must hurry. Saint Andral's Cathedral is the closest sanctuary for Lady Ireena. Barring that, you must head west, to the other end of the valley. There in Krezk stands the Abbey of the Morninglord, a holy place without compare."
>
> Ismark nods and adds, "Remember. The Devil has spies everywhere—amongst the Vistani and Barovians alike. So too is the blood of a noble, well-sought after. I imagine there are many that would like to ransom Ireena or give to the Devil. Trust no one."
>
> With a look of worry, Ireena asks, "Can't you come with us, brother?"
>
> Ismark approaches Ireena's horse and reaches out for her hand. "Sister… Father would not abandon his post. And someone must continue the charade. The Devil must not know you have left—"
>
> "He'll kill you, Ismark," Ireena snaps.
>
> Looking into the distance, Ismark says, "Perhaps… but I've learned that there are far worse things than death. Promise me you will stay vigilant. Promise me!"
>
> Ireena's jaw tightens. The weak sunlight gleams upon the hilt of her sword—her father's sword. "I promise. Father's death will not be in vain."

If the truth behind Ireena's parentage is revealed, Ismark holds Ireena's hand one last time and says, "Remember… You are my sister now and forever." To the adventurers, Ismark says, "Fare well, friends. May we meet again on a brighter day. As we Barovians say: be smart, be swift—and beware the Night."



Chapter IV: Castle Ravenloft

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 75
Chapter Progression 75
Quick Notes 75
Running the Chapter 75
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 76
Dramatis Personae 76
The Devil's Playbook 78
Variants & Revisions 81
To Dine at Castle Ravenloft 82
In the Depths of Ravenloft 90
Areas of Note 93
K6. The Overlook 98
K7. Entry 98
K8. Great Entry 99
K10. Dining Hall 99
K15. Chapel 99
K20. Heart of Sorrow 99
K25. Audience Hall 100
K37. Study 100
K41. Treasury 101
K50. Guest Room 101
K60. North Tower's Peak 101
K63. Wine Cellar 101
K67. Hall of Bones 102
K74. North Dungeon 103
K84. Catacombs 103
K85. Sergei's Tomb 103
K86. Strahd's Tomb 105
K88. Tomb of King Barov & Queen Ravenia 105

Castle Ravenloft is an abattoir without equal and is the site of your adventurers' greatest victory or annihilation. In most campaigns, the party only delves into Castle Ravenloft once. The *Companion*, however, recommends two to three visits to the castle:

- While low-level and fragile, Strahd invites the adventurers to dine at Castle Ravenloft. There they meet Rahadin and Strahd's consorts, and perhaps even Ezmerelda d'Avenir on the eve of her ill-fated attempt on Strahd's life. This event, *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, is described below.
- While about 6th-8th level—still too weak to challenge Strahd outright—the adventurers are accidentally (perhaps intentionally) teleported inside Castle Ravenloft, and are given the chance to explore the larders, dungeons, and catacombs. This event, *In the Depths of Ravenloft*, is described below.
- Finally at 9th level, with the Fortunes of Ravenloft acquired, the adventurers return to Castle Ravenloft for Strahd and Ireena's wedding. *The Wedding at Ravenloft* is a separate chapter to the *Companion* and intended to be the titanic conclusion to your game.

Chapter Overview

Castle Ravenloft is a dungeon so large it can support social events, exploration montages, and scenic battles. It is what you make of it, hence why the *Companion* divides it into three storylines. *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* is a chiefly social storyline with exploratory opportunities later on. *In the Depths of Ravenloft* is chiefly exploratory, with potential combat. *The Wedding* combines all three pillars of 5e.

Chapter Progression

With three storylines in Castle Ravenloft, there is no one prevailing chapter progression. See each individual storyline.

Quick Notes

- Strahd's demeanor is determined by the nature of the adventurers' visit to Castle Ravenloft:
  - For *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, Strahd shows restraint.
  - For *In the Depths of Ravenloft*, Strahd is absent or busy, but could be pulled in if the adventurers are causing too much chaos.
  - For *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, Strahd plays the part of a magnanimous host until Act IV, when he betrays the adventurers.
  - When our heroes are at last playing for blood, storming through Castle Ravenloft to put Strahd to the sword, he becomes a ruthless tactician. See The Devil's Playbook below for details on how to run him in your campaign's finale.
- Castle Ravenloft is navigated by seven means; see *Areas of Note* below for more details.
  - The High Tower Staircase (Area K18), which is accessed from the chapel only, and is blocked below.
  - The North Tower staircase (Area K20), which is easily accessible if one uses the servants' entrance.
  - The South Tower staircase (Area K21), which is accessed easily from the castle entry.
  - The Guards' Stair (Area K64), which is difficult to access without discovering secret doors.
  - The Spiral Stair (K83), which leads from the Brazier Room (K78) up to the Study (K37).
  - The Brazier Room (K78) allows one to teleport to Areas K37, K60, and K86.
  - The elevator travels to and from Areas K61 and K47 (the Larders of Ill Omen and the Spires of Castle Ravenloft, Maps 11 and 6, respectively) in ten seconds, but it is by no means safe or convenient for the adventurers.

Checklist

- Familiarize yourself with the castle's layout with the Castle Ravenloft flowchart map in *Areas of Note*.
- Prepare appropriate music for the Dining Hall scene, and the *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* storyline.
- Choose an NPC dear to the party Strahd could feasibly kidnap to torture, if you expect them to be bored during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*.

Running the Chapter

Castle Ravenloft is a crumbling monument to hubris and failure, and the abattoir of many an adventurer. Throughout this chapter, call to mind the endless cobwebs, the ancient bloodstains, the torn curtains and tapestries, and the ever-choking dust that fills these halls.

If Strahd is at last hunting the adventurers, and not merely toying with them, he devils them throughout Castle Ravenloft, ambushing them at least twice. See *The Devil's Playbook* below for his tactics and strategies once the gloves are off.

Advancement

Advancement in this chapter is determined by the nature of the adventurers' time in Castle Ravenloft. If they slew Strahd, they should advance from 9th to 10th level. For the *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* and *In the Depths of Ravenloft* storylines, their rewards are material—magic items and knowledge they may have attained during their visit, and they should therefore not level up.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft

If the adventurers' tarokka reading promised an ally or an artifact in Castle Ravenloft, now is the time to remind your players. If they do not seize this opportunity, they will have a chance again later in the campaign during *In the Depths of Ravenloft* and *The Wedding at Ravenloft*.

Artifact. If you are adding the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* as a fourth artifact in your campaign, now is the opportunity for the adventurers to recover it. As described in Chapter 1 of the *Companion*, this sentient evil dagger, born from Strahd's murder many centuries ago, is in his tomb (Area K86). If this is also the scene of their Final Confrontation, entering the tomb does not trigger their destined showdown with Strahd; that occurs during the wedding or whatever your campaign's finale is.

Destined Ally. Sir Klutz languishes in the Catacombs (see Area K84, Crypt 33), whereas Pidlwick II lairs in the High Tower (see Area K59). Neither ally must remain there; Klutz's ghost could float into the Guest Room, bumping and tripping over everything, and Pidlwick II could come to "entertain" Strahd's newest guests—or push them down the stairs.

Time

It is always dusk when the adventurers reach Castle Ravenloft. Per the *Companion*, the portcullis should be closed and the drawbridge raised during daylight hours.

Weather

Without fail, the weather always worsens whenever the adventurers approach Castle Ravenloft, growing into a mighty storm that batters the windows with icy rain and splits the sky with lightning. Should the adventurers be outside, they must deal with heavy precipitation and strong winds.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *+1 Rod of the Pact Keeper* (K41)
- *+1 Shortsword of the Lost Crusader* (K74H)
- *+2 Plate Armor* (K85)
- *+2 Shield* (K41)
- *Alchemy Jug* (K41)
- *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* (K86)
- *Daern's Instant Fortress* (K41)
- *Helm of Brilliance* (K41)
- *Icon of Ravenloft* (K15)
- *Instrument of the Bards, Doss Lute* (K36)
- *Luck Blade* (K84 (Crypt 39))
- *Mace of Terror* (K15)
- *Manual of Bodily Health* (K30)
- *Potion of Greater Healing* (K41)
- *Potion of Healing* (K56)
- *Potion of Heroism* (K74C)
- *Saint Markovia's Thighbone* (K84 (Crypt 6))
- *Spell Scroll of Cone of Cold* (K84 (Crypt 37))
- *Spell Scroll of Fireball* (K84 (Crypt 37))
- *Spell Scroll of Lightning Bolt* (K84 (Crypt 37))
- *Spell Scroll of Magic Circle* (K84 (Crypt 31))
- *Staff of Power* (K84 (Crypt 15))

Creatures

- Animated Halberd
- Argynvost the Reanimated
- Bandit
- Banshee
- Barovian Witch
- Black Pudding
- Broom of Animated Attack
- Commoner
- Crawling Claw
- Emil Toranescu
- Ezmerelda d'Avenir
- Flying Sword
- Gargoyle
- Ghast
- Ghost
- Ghoul
- Giant Spider
- Giant Wolf Spider
- Gray Ooze
- Guardian Portrait
- Hell Hound
- Imp
- Invisible Stalker
- Iron Golem
- Mongrelfolk
- Nightmare
- Patrina Velikovna
- Phantom Warrior
- Pidlwick Ii
- Rahadin
- Red Dragon Wyrmling
- Rug of Smothering
- Shadow
- Shadow Demon
- Silver Dragon Wyrmling
- Skeleton
- Specter
- Strahd von Zarovich
- Strahd Zombie
- Strahd's Animated Armor
- Swarm of Bats
- Swarm of Rats
- Swarm of Spiders
- Thug
- Vampire Spawn
- Wight
- Wraith
- Zombie

Effects & Items

- Brown Mold
- Glyph of Warding
- Green Slime
- Heavy Precipitation
- Strong Wind
- Desecrated Ground
- Glider
- Gunpowder Horn
- Musket
- Webs
- Yellow Mold

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Anastrasya, Ludmilla, & Volenta

Strahd's vampire brides, who ordinarily guard his tomb, are dug up for *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*. If you include the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* in the campaign, this artifact lulls the brides to sleep when the adventurers first plumb Strahd's tomb to retrieve it.

Argynvost

Argynvost is either present in this chapter by dint of his inanimate skull in the Hall of Bones, or by his reanimated skeleton if you run *Argynvost the Reanimated*, in which case the dragon's skeleton must be fought.

Cyrus Belview

Strahd's faithful manservant, Cyrus greets the adventurers at the gates of Ravenloft during *To Dine* and *The Wedding*, taking their horses and carriage. With his grating voice, grim countenance, and creepy gaze, Cyrus is wholly unpleasant to be around.

Emil Toranescu

A werewolf, Emil was imprisoned by Strahd for sowing discord in the werewolf pack. His capture cemented Kiril Stoyanovich's regime. Emil languishes in the dungeons (Area K75, specifically).

Escher

Escher is one of Strahd's favored vampire consorts. He is handsome, blonde, and disturbingly pale. He too attends dinner during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

The rogue protege of Rudolph van Richten, Ezmerelda d'Avenir can be met as a Random Encounter in Castle Ravenloft or as part of the *To Dine* storyline. She has come to murder Strahd but fears already that she is over her head.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Anastrasya Karelova	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K86	Strahd's most anxious bride.
Argynvost	**Argynvost the Reanimated**	H	K67	The dragon's restless spirit, whose corpse is reanimated.
Beucephalus	**Nightmare**	H	K84	Strahd's nightmare steed (see Crypt 39).
Cyrus Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	H	K62	Strahd's monstrous manservant.
Emil Toranescu	Unique	N	K75A	An imprisoned werewolf.
Escher	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K49	Strahd's most insolent consort.
Ezmerelda d'Avenir	Unique	F	—	Rudolph van Richten's protege met in a random encounter.
Gertruda	NG **Commoner**	F	K42	Mad Mary's naïve and wayward daughter.
Helga Ruvak	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K32	A vampire spawn maid.
Khazan	—	—	K84	A long-dead archmage buried with his *staff of power* .
Lief Lipsiege	CE **Commoner**	N	K30	The royal accountant.
Ludmilla Vilisevic	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K86	Strahd's most stoic bride.
Patrina Velikovna	Varies	N	K84	Strahd's bride-that-never-was, now languishing as a banshee.
Pidlwick II	Unique	N	K59	A murderous, mute clockwork jester.
Rahadin	Unique	H	K72	Strahd's honorary brother and chamberlain.
Saint Markova	—	—	K84	A long-dead cleric that marched on Castle Ravenloft.
Sasha Ivliskova	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K84	Strahd's oldest bride, entombed in Crypt 20.
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	H	—	Lord of Barovia.
Volenta Popofsky	**Vampire Spawn**	H	K86	Strahd's most sycophantic, honey-tongued bride.

Gertruda

Unbeknownst to her mother, Gertruda has been in Castle Ravenloft this entire time, charmed by Strahd. She may be found in the castle throughout all three Castle Ravenloft storylines, but Strahd intentionally shows her off during *To Dine* and uses her as an Ireena decoy during *The Wedding*.

Helga Ruvak

Strahd's vampire maid, Helga does not appear to be undead. She wears a gold, ruby pendant worth 750 gp, and pretends to be a victim of Strahd's.

Khazan

Long-dead, the archmage Khazan is present in this chapter only by dint of his crypt, which contains his *staff of power*. This legacy is for the taking—anyone who speaks his name causes the staff to appear, and whomever survives its wrath commands it as their own.

Patrina Velikovna

Patrina's spirit languishes in the catacombs as a **banshee**. If resurrected by her brother Kasimir, she assumes her unique statistics **(Patrina Velikovna)**.

Pidlwick II

A potential Destined Ally, Pidlwick can be met wandering the castle. If shown kindness, the jester proves amiable. If not, its resentment grows until at last it attempts another murder. At 4-feet-tall, Pidlwick is not much a threat, but one good shove down the stairs is all the construct needs.

Rahadin

Rahadin acts as the Master of Ceremonies during *To Dine* and is the threat the adventurers inevitably rouse during *In the Depths of Ravenloft.* His survival is of utmost importance, as Rahadin has too many duties to execute during *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

Saint Markovia

Long-dead, Saint Markovia is present in this chapter by dint of her crypt, which contains her magical thighbone, which thirsts to destroy vampires (see *Saint Markovia's thighbone*).

Sasha Ivliskova

Sasha is the oldest of Strahd's brides, and he has long since tired of her. Ordinarily, she can be found languishing in her crypt, isolated and desperate to see and please her dreadful husband, but she is unearthed for *The Wedding*.

Strahd von Zarovich

Strahd von Zarovich is at his most terrifying in Castle Ravenloft, the monument to his hubris, ambitions, corruption, and failures. He can be met as a Random Encounter, but will always ambush the adventurers once the gloves are off.

Roleplaying Strahd. Always eager to play the role of a magnanimous host, the Devil welcomes the adventurers to his home in *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, but never is the true beast beneath his mask far off. A sadist, he loves to watch his playthings squirm, and delights in breaking their spirits.

The Devil's Playbook

Castle Ravenloft is where Strahd is at his strongest. This section covers the tactics and strategies the Devil would employ when he is at last done toying with the adventurers.

Glossary. *The Devil's Playbook* uses the following terms:

Bid Farewell. This refers to Strahd's second Lair Action.
Crowd-Control. A spell or effect meant to disable an enemy, rather than harm them.
Phase. This refers to Strahd's first Lair Action.
Shadows Alive. This refers to Strahd's third Lair Action.
Spectral Visit. This refers to Strahd's fourth Lair Action.

Spells

Strahd's default spells are ill-suited for a pitched battle with the party. In anticipation of their Final Confrontation, Strahd would prepare different spells. Further, if the players characters have access to spells in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* and *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*, it is only fair that Strahd does as well. See the Strahd's Spells table for how the Devil's spells change;

Limit. Strahd is a 9th-level wizard with an Intelligence modifier of +5, allowing him to prepare fourteen wizard spells and know three cantrips. For the sake of balance and fairness, you must respect this limit for Strahd.

Tactics. Assuming you implement these changes, Strahd's tactics follow the guidelines below. Strahd must ration his spell slots until the Final Confrontation, which is likely to be decided within 3 rounds; thus, having four or more remaining spell slots is a waste.

- Strahd reserves his four 1st-level spell slots for *shield* to prolong his life and avoid a disastrous hit with the *Sunsword* or a Divine Smite.
- Strahd reserves his 2nd-level spell slots for *misty step* spells, specifically to break grapples that would otherwise doom him. However, he burns a slot if he has the chance to hurl an enemy to their doom with a well-angled *gust of wind* spell.
- Strahd's 3rd-level spell slots are best used for *fireball*, early on in the night. Better to soften the party up and deplete their resources. *Counterspell* and *dispel magic* are used against game-changers, like a *wall of force* or *globe of invulnerability* spell cast via Khazan's *staff of power*.
- Strahd is likely to cast *blight*, *greater invisibility*, and *polymorph* once during the night.
- Strahd reserves his single 5th-level spell for a *telekinesis* spell if knows he must rip a magic item from someone's hand and hurl it out a window or off a ledge. He casts *animate objects* instead if he finds himself outnumbered in his Final Confrontation, when he's not allowed to flee.

Strahd's Spells

Spell Number	Default Spells	Revised Spells	With Xanathar's	With Tasha's
Cantrip 1	*Mage Hand*	*Mage Hand*	*Mage Hand*	*Mage Hand*
Cantrip 2	*Prestidigitation*	*Chilled Touch*	*Chill Touch*	*Chill Touch*
Cantrip 3	*Ray of Frost*	*Ray of Frost*	*Toll the Dead*	*Toll the Dead*
Spell 1	*Animate Dead*	*Counterspell*	*Counterspell*	*Counterspell*
Spell 2	*Animate Objects*	*Animate Objects*	*Animate Objects*	*Animate Objects*
Spell 3	*Blight*	*Blight*	*Blight*	*Blight*
Spell 4	*Comprehend Languages*	*Shield*	*Shield*	*Shield*
Spell 5	*Detect Thoughts*	*Misty Step*	*Misty Step*	*Misty Step*
Spell 6	*Fireball*	*Fireball*	*Fireball*	*Fireball*
Spell 7	*Fog Cloud*	*Fear*	*Fear*	*Fear*
Spell 8	*Greater Invisibility*	*Greater Invisibility*	*Greater Invisibility*	*Greater Invisibility*
Spell 9	*Gust of Wind*	*Gust of Wind*	*Gust of Wind*	*Gust of Wind*
Spell 10	*Mirror Image*	*Mirror Image*	*Mirror Image*	*Mirror Image*
Spell 11	*Nondetection*	*Vampiric Touch*	*Vampiric Touch*	*Spirit Shroud*
Spell 12	*Polymorph*	*Polymorph*	*Polymorph*	*Polymorph*
Spell 13	*Scrying*	*Telekinesis*	*Telekinesis*	*Telekinesis*
Spell 14	*Sleep*	*Dispel Magic*	*Dispel Magic*	*Dispel Magic*

General Tactics

Strahd, with his mighty 20 Intelligence, is a masterful wizard, a cunning tactician, and a veteran strategist, honed by long years at war and centuries as a vampire. In battle, he follows these general tactics:

- Strahd is the very definition of a glass cannon: if faced alone with four or more 9th level adventurers, he *will* crumble. He cannot afford a fair fight until the party is nearly dead, and so he will ambush them at least twice before the Final Confrontation, and rely on minions between those encounters.
- At the start of the evening, Strahd *might* cast *nondetection* on himself, which lasts 8 hours, and hides him from divination magic, as well as a paladin's Divine Sense.
- Before battle even begins, Strahd casts *mirror image* on himself, as well as perhaps *greater invisibility*. If he is bereft of allies or minions, he will also use Children of the Night, commanding these **swarms of bats** to take the Help action or harrying low-AC characters.
- Until he is out of spell slots, Strahd's action in combat is often used for a spell, whereas his Legendary Actions are used on Move or Unarmed Strikes.
- Strahd softens up the party with *fireball* spells.
- Strahd never bothers attacking foes with a high AC or HP; the Devil is smart enough to know his enemy's strengths and weaknesses. He strikes first at the healer or most vulnerable foes, all while evading warriors with his Move Legendary Action.
- A creature's attunement to a magic item ends when they die, even if they are brought back with a *revivify*. Thus, Strahd prioritizes killing those with the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, *Sunsword*, or *staff of power*.

Class-Specific Tactics

Some classes, by dint of their kit, require more planning on Strahd's part. If a class is not mentioned here, Strahd requires no particular tactics.

Against Barbarians, Strahd must keep his distance and rely on crowd-control. If he is grappled—a strength of the barbarian's—it's all over for Strahd.

Against Bards, Strahd's only concern is their Countercharm feature, which may be used to thwart his Charm ability.

Against Druids, Strahd limits his ambushes to cramped spaces so that the druid cannot assume the shape of larger beasts. While outside, Strahd would become a bat and goad the druid into following him on the wind, out of sight of their comrades.

Against Clerics, Strahd has much to fear, for they are likely to carry the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* and use Turn Undead, which he has no immunity towards. It should be noted, however, that Strahd may still utilize his Phase Lair Action to step through walls or ceilings, even if turned. Likewise, it is legal for him to use his Move Legendary Action.

Against Monks, Strahd must rely on Legendary Resistance to succeed against Stunning Strike, otherwise he is doomed. Only a monk has the speed and agility to pursue Strahd (especially since monks can run up walls at 9th level).

Against Paladins, Strahd is weakest. Divine Sense can track him; a Divine Smite can destroy him; and Aura of Protection might make the difference against his spells. The Devil's only recourse is to keep his distance, strike other allies, and wear the paladin down with minions.

Against Rangers, Strahd must worry about line-of-sight. A well-placed arrow can end his concentration and *hunter's mark* may ruin his ambushes. Strahd will, without mercy, kill a Beast Master's pet.

Against Rogues, Strahd's chief concern is Sneak Attack combined with the *Sunsword*.

Magic Items

The few magic items found in Barovia pose a great threat to Strahd. It is fair to assume he knows they might have such an item, thanks to his repeated *scrying* spells. To remove a magic item from the playing field, Strahd might:

- Use a *telekinesis* spell to rip it out of the wielder's hands.
- Charm the wielder into tossing it out a window or down a staircase.
- Resort to the Hostage Negotiation ploy.
- Leave the battlefield altogether, if he is not embroiled in the Final Confrontation.

These magic items pose a distinct threat to Strahd:

The Holy Symbol of Ravenkind's Hold Vampire ability can arrest Strahd completely. His only recourse is to overwhelm the adventurers with **vampire spawn** so that the wielder is forced to deplete the symbol's charges.

The Icon of Ravenloft wards its wielder with a *protection against evil and good* spell, preventing Strahd from charming them and disadvantaging his attacks against them. Strahd cannot touch the *icon*, nor can any evil creature, and must remove it from play somehow. Arguably, using a cloth to touch it is fine, but expect outrage from your players.

The Scroll of Heroes' Feast inures its recipients to poison damage, increases their hit points, and grants advantage to Wisdom saving throws, which many of Strahd's spells rely on.

The Scroll of Magic Circle takes 1 minute to cast, but should the adventurers pull it off preemptively against Strahd, he will be neutered.

The Staff of Power is a game-changer. A *wall of force* spell will be his undoing, and so he must *counterspell* it. If the wielder casts *globe of invulnerability*, Strahd will simply leave the battlefield.

The Sunsword is Strahd's bane, and when it flares into being, he shows true fear.

The Tome of Strahd provides several utility spells that might ruin Strahd's attacks, such as *pass without trace*.



Minions of the Devil

Strahd has a great number of servants, sycophants, and slaves at his disposal, in addition to any guests that are attending *The Wedding at Ravenloft*. Though it is fair to stock the Devil's ranks as you see fit, you as the Dungeon Master may wish to be more fair. Consider these numbers:

- Seven **Barovian witches** have pledged their lives to Strahd in return for arcane power.
- Rahadin is Strahd's chief confidant and staunchest ally, whom he is loath to waste. Together, they make a deadly team.
- Strahd has no more than twenty **vampire spawn** in the castle:
  - Anastrasya, Volenta, and Ludmilla, in his tomb (K86).
  - Sasha Ivliskova, interred in the Catacombs (K84).
  - Escher, in the Lounge (K49).
  - Helga Ruvak, his maid, in Area K32.
  - And several unnamed vampire spawn, who might all be the same five characters: one prowling on the rooftops, 1d4+1 met in a Random Encounter, 1d4 that come to Lief Lipsiege's rescue in Area K30, and the four sent to protect the Heart of Sorrow. At your discretion, these are either the same five vampire spawn, or Strahd has fourteen unnamed vampire spawn. If you have more than four players, choose the latter.
- From the Random Encounter, Strahd has 1d4+1 Vistani **thugs** at his command. He cares nothing for their lives and will readily hurl them at the party. Notably, a Vistana's Evil Eye ability can sever attunement to a magic item—which Strahd would rely on to thwart powerful artifacts. If the adventurers have more than just the Fortunes of Ravenloft, use the Vistani for this purpose; to sever their connection to a Fortune of Ravenloft artifact would be counter to the premise of this campaign.
- Strahd has up to twenty-three wights in the castle:
  - 1d4 from the Random Encounter
  - 1d4 that might come to Lief Lipsiege's rescue
  - Fifteen languishing in Crypt 14 of the Catacombs, ready to be plucked for another purpose.
- Strahd has as many petty undead (**zombies, Strahd zombies, skeletons,** and arguably, **ghouls**) as needed.

Dancing with the Devil

Strahd must ambush the adventurers at least twice on their way to the Final Confrontation. Specific areas of Castle Ravenloft lend themselves to a cunning and creative ambush.

Armed & Armored. On the Parapets (K46), the Devil battles the adventurers alongside **Strahd's animated armor**.

The Black Parade. While navigating the South Tower staircase (Area K21), the adventurers are sandwiched between two groups of undead: three **Strahd zombies** and two **ghasts** apiece (taken from the Amber Temple, each blessed with Drizlash's Spider Climb ability). Strahd stands behind the ranks, flinging *rays of frost* or *chill touches*.

Death Rides A Horse. Astride Beucephalus, Strahd's **nightmare** steed, Strahd ambushes the party in the Catacombs (Area K84) or outside (see Area K57).

Rain of Arrows. A retinue of five **skeletons**, each armed with bows, loose arrows from on high. This encounter is fit for Area K57-58 or K15 (the bowmen are stationed in Area K60A or K28, respectively, giving them a high vantage over the adventurers). Strahd faces the adventurers head-on.

Unseen Anguish. With the **Barovian witches** at his side, Strahd battles the adventurers in Area K20. They are all invisible (thanks to spells of *invisibility* and Strahd's *greater invisibility*). The witches fling *rays of sickness* from across the vast divide in the North Tower's curvature.



Ploys

Unlike encounters, ploys are prevailing strategies independent of a specific area. For the sake of a good game, ploys should only ever be done once—repeating the same ploy is bad storytelling, and will frustrate your players.

A Wolf Among Sheep. As described in *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, Strahd—the Ancient, the Land—can force the full moon into the open sky and force any character infected with lycanthropy to go rabid, turning on their companions. See the Act IV quest of the same name.

Between Fangs and a Great Fall. Strahd grapples a target and utilizes his Legendary Action: Move and Spider Climb feature to climb up a wall and on top of a ceiling so that his prey dangles over a great height and will suffer tremendous falling damage if they dare break the grapple.

Charming the Devil's Enemy. While isolated from the party, Strahd charms their Destined Ally, instructing them to betray the adventurers during the Final Confrontation. It is imperative that Strahd go undetected, otherwise the adventurers will suspect something is amiss.

Deal with the Devil. Strahd offers the adventurers to leave Barovia at dawn, but one adventurer must be left behind—preferably the most beloved or the one Strahd reviles the most.

Death's Door. With two turns of combat, or expert timing, Strahd can divide the party. After separating a single adventurer from the party with a shove, a grapple, or a *gust of wind* spell, Strahd uses Bid Farewell to close and lock a door. The next turn, he can set his Lair Action to Phase to move through that door, if he wants to fight that adventurer one-on-one. This ploy is useful to remove a healer or priest from the battlefield.

Hit-And-Run. Under a spell of *greater invisibility*, Strahd ambushes the weakest adventurer. With his Lair Action set to Phase, Strahd comes invisibly through the wall, and with his whopping +14 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks, it will be nigh impossible to spot him. The party will most likely be surprised, and Strahd will unload all his Legendary Actions on Unarmed Strikes, which are made with advantage thanks to him being invisible. After 1-3 rounds, or when his concentration is broken, Strahd retreats through a wall.

Hostage Negotiation. Holding someone hostage (their Destined Ally, a friend, Gertruda, even Helga Ruvak, if they do not yet know she's a vampire spawn), Strahd demands the party tosses a magic item of his choice out a window (e.g., the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, the *Icon of Ravenloft*, etc.). Of course, he's likely to kill the hostage afterwards, anyway.

On Wings of Night. As a bat, Strahd hides in a **swarm of bats**, who can occupy his space. At your discretion, Strahd has two more **swarms of bats** at his disposal. While a bat, Strahd is limited to his Bite and Charm actions, and limited to spells without a verbal component. Strahd's goal is to either attack or charm a particular character, using the swarm to surround that target.

The Final Confrontation

Each possible Final Confrontation site is covered in *Areas of Note* below, which detail Strahd's area-specific tactics. This section details his tactics regardless of what that Final Confrontation is. Given theD&D 5e's nature, it's unlikely that any combat lasts longer than five rounds.

- Per the rules of *Curse of Strahd*, the Final Confrontation is where Strahd will not flee from. His hit-and-run tactics vanish; he no longer phases back and forth through walls, but instead stands his ground. He can only leave the site of his Final Confrontation if the adventurers are in an adjacent area.
- Strahd's first turn is used on Children of the Night to summon allies or *mirror image* (preferably, he has used those prior to combat starting). He makes up for the loss of damage on that turn with Unarmed Strikes using his Legendary Actions.
- On his next turn, Strahd is likely better off casting *vampiric touch* so that he continues to heal from all further attacks or *fireball* (if he can avoid being in the blast radius himself).
- Strahd reserves his reaction for *shield* or *counterspell* and on turns he does not use his action to cast a spell, he uses *misty step* to close the gap with far-off targets.
- For his Lair Action, Strahd uses Shadows Alive until he has two **shadows** at his disposal. Thereafter, he uses the Spectral Visit Lair Action to harass the party's more distant members, if they are beyond 30 feet from him.
- Hopefully, Strahd was able to charm the Destined Ally into betraying the party, or has arranged it so that Rahadin can join the fray.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes a few changes to this chapter:

- The *Argynvost the Reanimated* variant is utilized.
- Strahd's spells are changed.
- The **red dragon wyrmlings** in Area K7 are instead **silver dragon wyrmlings**—the last children of Argynvost, accursed and broken now.
- The eight **gargoyles** in Area K8 have been reduced to three.
- **Crawling claws** may attempt to strangle an adventurer that sleeps in Area K50.



To Dine at Castle Ravenloft

Throughout the campaign, Strahd may invite the adventurers to dine at Castle Ravenloft. The module gives no guidance on how such an event would proceed. Whereas the *In the Depths of Ravenloft* event is an opportunity to explore the dungeons and catacombs before the campaign's finale, *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* is the opportunity to explore the castle's ground floor and spires. This storyline is evocative of the storm-battered visits to vampiric castles so favored in gothic horror.

Characters. In this storyline, Strahd digs up his wives (Anastrasya, Volenta, and Ludmilla), forces Escher to be sociable, and parades Gertruda in front of the adventurers. Cyrus Belview, Rahadin, and Lief Lipsiege are also in attendance.

Timing & Level. *To Dine* is recommended for adventurers of 5th or 6th level, when they are still too fragile to oppose Strahd, but tough enough to weather some of Castle Ravenloft's smaller dangers. This event must occur after *St. Andral's Feast* and before Ireena Kolyana is taken by Strahd in Krezk, for he will risk no attempts at rescuing Ireena from his clutches.

Strahd's Mercy. Throughout this storyline, Strahd is merely toying with the adventurers. Rahadin, Cyrus, his consorts, and the wights are under strict orders not to kill his playthings, and at most, harm or frighten them. Less sapient creatures in his demesne, such as **shadows** and **Strahd zombies**, do not obey this order, and individuals like the **Barovian witches** still defend themselves.

Points of Interest. Several of Castle Ravenloft's points of interest come too little or too late, if the adventurers are entering the castle only as part of the finale. During this storyline, you may wish to focus on these points of interest, which are fitting for adventurers of this level to encounter:

- Gertruda, whose mother, Mad Mary, yearns for her safe return. Gertruda can be encountered via this storyline or encountered in Strahd's bedchamber (Area K42).
- The Heart of Sorrow (Area K20), though the adventurers should have no chance of destroying it now. Strahd sends four **vampire spawn** to defend it, plus the ten **animated halberds** that already guard it. Simply beholding the Heart of Sorrow is a great boon for your campaign, as it informs the players of its existence.
- Strahd's personal dining hall (Area K36), where an *instrument of the bards (doss lute)* can be found.
- The Hall of Heroes (Area K45), where the adventurers can ask questions to Strahd's ancestors.

I. Welcome to Ravenloft

Invited to dine at Castle Ravenloft, Strahd sends forth the Black Carriage to pick up his guests. When it arrives is up to you, be it a few hours later or the next day, but thanks to Strahd's scrying spell, it finds the adventurers no matter where they are. Read the following:

> Parked a few strides away is a large carriage as black as the night, drawn by even darker horses. Snorting in the chilly air, the horses regard you with mild disinterest. As you watch, the carriage door swings open silently.

Refusing the Call. If the adventurers ignore Strahd's invitation, the Black Carriage appears before them throughout their travels, be it on the streets of Vallaki, the Svalich Road, or the mosquito-plagued marshes of Berez. If the party still refuses to enter the carriage for a third time, six **wights** emerge from inside. Read the following:

> Again, that infernal carriage appears, drawn by black horses—but the horses are different now. Their eyes now brim with malice, not boredom, and whilst in the corner of your eye, their flesh vanishes, leaving only equine skeletons behind. The carriage door swings open on silent hinges as it has before, but now six corpse-knights clamber out, each clad in rusted armor.
>
> "Our master requires your attendance," says the first wight, his tattered, white hair lifted in the breeze. He has no eyes, but all his teeth are devoted to a sick grin. "You are to dine at Castle Ravenloft tonight…" The wights draw their swords, six relics in all. "Unless you wish to argue?"

The wights fight only to subdue the adventurers, stuffing them inside the carriage and taking off at once for Castle Ravenloft at a rough gallop. They offer no replies, no answers, and remain silent for the entire journey. No matter the distance, the carriage reaches Castle Ravenloft by dusk.

At The Gates of Ravenloft

> After long and bumpy travel, the horses slow down to a trot, quelling the carriage. Dusk has fallen and storm clouds gather overhead, weeping openly over Barovia. What started as a pleasant drizzle has become an outright gale. Gusts of wind smash into the carriage's side, jostling its passengers.
>
> There is enough light left in the west to let you behold the majesty of Castle Ravenloft: turrets of stone and ancient spires. A drawbridge spans a yawning chasm, its rusted chains creaking in the wind. From atop the high walls, gargoyles peer down out at you with hollow eye sockets and hideous grins.
>
> The drawbridge groans as the carriage wheels over and passes beneath a rotting, wooden portcullis green with overgrowth. Through the forward window, you see that the doors of Castle Ravenloft stand open, a rich light spilling forth from within. That the maw of Hell itself could ever be so grand seems like a sick irony.

Cyrus Belview, Strahd's mongrelfolk manservant, awaits the adventurers in the courtyard (Area K1). He unbridles the horses and leads them to the carriage house. Read the following:

> Out from the gloom comes a hunched over figure, his cowl drawn over his face. "At last!" he cries, his throat full of gravel, "Our guests have come at last! Your horses, your horses, I shall take your horses! Chamberlain Rahadin awaits you in the Entry! Swiftly, before dinner cools! Swiftly! I shall take your horses!"

The Chamberlain

His patience already worn thin, Rahadin greets the party in Area K7:

> In the entry, watched over by four dragon statues, is a broody and weatherworn dusk elf. Rahadin, the chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft. His frown is as deep as the waters of Lake Zarovich, as cold as the peaks of Mount Ghakis. Though you have been invited here, he greets you with a scimitar at his belt and already clad in black leather armor. Unearthly wails seem to radiate from his, as if the ghosts of the dead howl in agony and resentment that Rahadin yet lives.
>
> "You're late," he says. "For too long have you kept our Lord Strahd waiting. And look at you—filthy, unfit for the majesty of these halls. We have enough vermin in these halls, so why my lord has invited tramps and slatterns such as yourselves is a mystery to my mind. But it is not my place to question my lord, only to fulfill his bidding, and he welcomes you."

Revision. See Area K7 in *Areas of Note* below; if you use its revision, Rahadin delightfully explains that the wyrmlings (revised by the *Companion* to be silver, not red) are the last four children of Argynvost, cursed into stone.

Rahadin cares nothing for the weapons the adventurers wield, nor the armor they wear. He has greeted countless adventurers at Castle Ravenloft, and all have been sent away (or below) screaming. He remarks on the party's more noticeable weapon, insisting that "Steel and spell is no use here." Without further ado, Rahadin takes the adventurers through Area K8 and K9. Read the following:

> Rahadin leads you deeper into Castle Ravenloft: first through the Great Entry, a vaulted hall held aloft by many a column, between which stretch cobwebs. The air is thick with dust and dimly lit by sputtering torches. Gargoyles are perched above, expertly carved, their hideous grins wide and ghastly. The frescoes on the ceiling are all cracked and faded. A grand staircase on your left leads up into darkness.
>
> Wasting no time, Rahadin directs you into a guest hallway ending with a spiral staircase, guarded by an animate suit of armor, well-oiled and glistening in the torchlight. Music and candlelight spill forth from the dining hall.

The Dining Hall

Unlike in *Curse of Strahd*, the Dining Hall (Area K10) Strahd is not in the dining hall. Instead, Anastrasya Karelova, one of Strahd's brides, is playing the organ. Halting her song, she greets the adventurers with a fanged smile. The little trick described in *Curse of Strahd* never occurs; the hall is never plunged into darkness, and Strahd will be along shortly. Read the following description, instead of *Curse of Strahd's* Area K10 description:

> Three enormous crystal chandeliers brilliantly illuminate this magnificent chamber, which is dominated by a long table set for several guests. The table is covered in a fine white satin cloth, empty of a single stain. The porcelain is immaculate, the goblets made from crystal.
>
> At the far end of the hall, between floor-to-ceiling mirrors, stands a massive organ, its pipe blaring out a thunderous melody of majesty and despair. As you enter, the song stutters to a halt, and the woman playing it turns to regard you. She is a tall, gaunt woman dressed in a scarlet gown, and round her neck is a black opal pendant. The grin she flashes you is fanged.
>
> "Welcome to Castle Ravenloft," the woman says, rising from the organ bench. "I am Anastrasya Karelova, beloved bride of our Lord Strahd."

Anastrasya entertains the adventurers until, moments later, Volenta Popofsky, Ludmilla Vilisevic, and Escher arrive with Gertruda. They introduce themselves each in turn. Gertruda, for her part, asks "Isn't this place wonderful? So grand, majestic. I feel as if I am living a fairy tale life." Escher sneers, "You are." Lastly comes Lief Lipsiege, Strahd's accountant, who mumbles some apology for his appearance, though he is well-groomed and well-dressed.

When Strahd and Rahadin arrive, read the following:

> The dining hall doors open once more, this time as if by magic. Rahadin again. The gravely screams of his many victims echo across the room. The elf stands at attention and, in a loud, clear voice, announces, "His Grace, Count Strahd of House Zarovich."
>
> Strahd's consorts rise from their seats in respect. Gertruda clumsily follows along a beat later. Rahadin stares daggers at you, as if demanding you too respect decorum, but there is no time for him to press the issue, for in walks Strahd von Zarovich.
>
> The Devil is dressed for the occasion. A black, silk doublet and a ruby pendant hung 'round his neck. He places a familiar hand on Rahadin's shoulder, ignores his consorts, and offers you a fanged smile. "For so long have I waited," he says. "You do not know how much I enjoy inviting your ilk here, to share wine and secrets, to extoll the virtues of old and grouse over the cold, dismal future."
>
> Strahd turns to his consorts and snaps, "Be seated."
>
> They obey without hesitation or question.

II. Fine Dining & Dancing

A night of fine dining and entertainment commences. Throughout these festivities, there is always an air of menace, as if Strahd is ready to strike at any moment. He is surrounded by his entourage of consorts but, as the night goes on, his number of minions dwindle.

Dinner Is Served

Dinner is the first of the adventurers' many ordeals tonight.

This Simply Shall Not Do. If the party is dirty from travel, or not dressed in fine clothes, Strahd uses his magic to clean them up (as if by a mass *prestidigitation* spell).

Seating. Strahd sits at the head of the table (the far west wall, near the organ) whilst Rahadin takes the foot of the table, near the doors. All of Strahd's consorts (plus Lief and Gertruda) sit opposite to the adventurers.

Refreshments. Helga Ruvak, Strahd's **vampire spawn** maid (see Area K32), serves the refreshments; she does not look undead, and plays the part of a frightened maiden. Guests have the choice of water, coffee, or wine—specifically Champagne du le Stomp, the richest wine produced by the Wizard of Wines. Rahadin remarks, "The winery no longer produces this vintage. We have in our cellar the last casks of Champagne du le Stomp."

Four Courses. Dinner is served by *unseen servants*, who carry in platters of food. While Barovians scrimp and starve, the adventurers feast on a lavish meal. Strahd remarks, "We have the Vistani to thank for such lovely ingredients. Gods know Barovian soil is too tough and barren for anything better. Strahd and his vampire spawn do not eat; if asked why not, Ludmilla remarks, "We have already fed."

- The appetizer is a "bloody beet" salad, with roasted beets, mixed greens, blood orange, goat cheese crumbles, dressed in a red wine vinaigrette.
- A black bean and pumpkin soup is served as the second course.
- Guests have their choice of entreé for the main course: bloody rare steaks with truffle butter; lamb shanks braised in a red wine sauce with rosemary; or stuffed portobello mushrooms (with spinach and goat cheese) sauteed in olive oil.
- A dark chocolate raspberry tart with blackberry coulis is served for desert.

Conversation. Throughout dinner, Strahd is rather gregarious, with a focus on current events in Barovia or his immediate circle. The adventurers are free to ask any question to Strahd, which he answers unless it's a Campaign Mystery (see Chapter 1 of the *Companion*) they have not yet learned, like Barovia's reincarnation cycle. Strahd provides mostly honest answers, unless he seeks to toy with the party, or if his answer might harm his own ambitions. Some subjects that might come up are:

- Strahd describes Rahadin's involvement with House Zarovich and the dusk elf genocide. "Rahadin and I are brothers. For his hand in destroying the dusk elf kingdoms, my father, King Barov, dubbed him an honorary Zarovich."
- If asked about his obsession with Ireena, Strahd merely says, "We are destined for one another." If the adventurers already know Ireena is the reincarnation of Tatyana, he speaks openly and frankly, revealing that he has almost had her several times over the last four hundred years but Fate always snatches her away at the last instant. He insists, "This time it shall be different."
- Gertruda mentions that Pidlwick II has been entertaining her. Rahadin turns to the adventurers and explains that Pidlwick II is a clockwork jester, fashioned by the legendary toymaker Fritz von Weerg to accompany Pidlwick the First, a jester brought to Castle Ravenloft by Duchess Dorfniya Dilisnya ("She sought my hand," Strahd murmurs. Rahadin adds, with the heat of an ancient argument rehashed, "And her cousin sought your death, may his soul rot. I care nothing for the delight it brought Tatyana and Sergei; it is thanks to Dorfniya that Leo gained access to Castle Ravenloft." Strahd merely shrugs). Rahadin then tells Gertruda, "Be careful around that thing, girl." Gertruda insists Pidlwick II is her friend, but Rahadin no longer cares.



Let Us Dance

With dinner over, Strahd retires momentarily, instructing Rahadin to take his guests up to the Audience Hall (Area K25, via K9 and K19), saying, "Now with such grand meals to gird us, let us dance."

Revisions. Strahd has done little to make the Audience Hall more inviting, but he has at least repaired the broken windows and his throne faces the hall instead of away. Read the following description instead of *Curse of Strahd's*:

> Altogether, Rahadin and Strahd's consorts lead you up the stairs—and it does not take a keen mind or eye to understand that you are being shepherded. Anastrasya, Volenta, and Ludmilla are at the rear, whereas Rahadin and Escher are up front. Gertruda, of course, is lost in her own little fairy tale.
>
> Strahd is already on his throne when you enter the audience hall, a goblet of wine in his hand and a smirk splayed across his lips. Though lit, this vast hall is no warmer or brighter for it. The air itself has a brooding menace to it. The ceiling cannot even be seen, thanks to the cobwebs above.
>
> "In the days of old," says Strahd from his throne, "we would hold lavish balls in this very room. Maidens would dance. Gentlemen would leer and laugh and spar for a maiden's hand. Secrets would be shared and wine spilled. We were so happy… and so… blind. We were blind to the wind, slowly wearing down our souls into sand. And now I and Rahadin are all who remain. We are the last torches of Ravenloft, burning so brightly in the dark."
>
> Strahd claps his hands together, and suddenly warmth and light floods the hall. The cobwebs are washed away, the grime on the windows is gone, and you are dressed in fine attire for the evening: ball gowns and suits sewn from rich silk. Baroque music floods your mind.
>
> "Let us recreate some of the magic of old," Strahd announces, smirking at the illusion. "Let us dance as better folk did in the brighter days of Ravenloft."

Whilst Strahd watches from his throne, Rahadin at his side, the consorts pair up with the adventurers, asking for a dance. The dance is archaic, if not a little familiar to more refined adventurers. A DC 15 Charisma (Performance) determines whether a character dances well. If an adventurer Strahd particularly hates or fancies fails their check, read the following:

> You bumble about, as graceful as a braindead doe. The Devil's consorts giggle and sneer at you, but Strahd merely shakes his head. "I will have to teach you," the Devil says, "yet another lesson in the long syllabus of Ravenloft."
>
> Strahd descends from his throne and crosses over the dance floor. With a flourish, the vampire offers his hand and announces, "I will have this dance."

Strahd leads the adventurer in the dance, taking the dominant role. Whilst the pair are pressed together, he might share secrets, taunts, threats, or dire omens.

Are You Not Entertained?
If the adventurers ever express their distaste for Strahd's accommodations, the vampire simply smiles and asks, "Are you not entertained? Very well... allow me to provide a greater spectacle." Strahd escorts the adventurers to the Observation Balcony (Area K77), which overlooks the Torture Chamber (Area K76), which he illuminates with magic. While the party is forced to watch, Strahd has Rahadin torture someone. Choose one of the following victims:

- Any character beloved by the party that Strahd could reasonably abduct in time for their stay at Castle Ravenloft.
- Barovian commoners (see the Random Encounter) that stormed into the castle.
- Cyrus Belview, just to show how little regard Strahd has for his own minions, let alone the adventurers. Cyrus, who has been abused by Strahd all his life, screams and begs for mercy, but remains steadfast in his delusional loyalty to his overlord.
- Emil Toranescu, with red-hot, silvered pokers.
- Gertruda, who is instructed to hold tight to two chains attached to the ceiling while the six **Strahd zombies** in the waters below mass at her feet, just inches away. If Gertruda's strength fails, she will fall into the waters below and be torn apart by the undead.
- Helga Ruvak, Strahd's secret **vampire spawn** maid. An expert actor, she feigns pain as Rahadin takes knives to her flesh. It is not readily apparent that Helga is undead, especially in the gloom; if Strahd chooses Helga, it is simply to see if the adventurers will spring to her defense or bargain for her mercy. He relents; later that evening, Helga offers her gratitude in the Guest Room—only to attack them, thereby revealing she was undead all along.

Cigars and Wine

Strahd invites the adventurers to retire to his Study (Area K37) for cigars and brandy. Conspicuously, he orders Volenta and Anastrasya to escort Gertruda "back to my chambers." Rahadin, Escher, and Ludmilla escort the adventurers upstairs. Read the following, as the adventurers are led from Area K25 to K37 via Areas K30, K21, K35, and K36:

> From the audience hall, Rahadin leads you into an office where Lief Lipsiege, the royal accountant, is hard at work balancing a ledger. He spares you a sheepish glance but says nothing.
>
> Through one door and out another, Rahadin leads you up a winding staircase, through a darkened chamber manned by two dark, vaguely man-shaped figures, each a step back into a cobwebbed alcove. You have little time to gawk as he leads you through Strahd's personal dining hall, where dust cloaks every surface and chokes the very air.

If you have a bard in your party, stop your description here to tell them that they notice a dusty lute in the corner, and its very presence brings their heart close to bursting with joy. Otherwise, continue with the description of the Study (Area K37):

> A blazing hearth fire fills this room with rolling waves of red and amber light. The walls are lined with ancient books and tomes, their leather covers well oiled and preserved through careful use. All is in order here. The stone floor is concealed beneath a thick, luxurious rug. In the center of the room is a large, low table, waxed and polished to a mirrored finish. Even the poker in its stand next to the blazing fireplace is polished. Large, overstuffed divans and couches are arranged about the room. Two chairs of burgundy-colored wood with padded leather seats and back cushions face the hearth. A huge painting hangs over the mantelpiece in a heavy, gilded frame. The rolling firelight illuminates the carefully rendered portrait. It is an exact likeness of Ireena Kolyana.
>
> Strahd enters in from another door and offers you yet another wan smile. "My personal study. Few have seen it. Fewer have been invited to it. A wealth of knowledge stands upon these shelves. Secrets lost now to time. Poetry that will never be recited, novels that will never be read. Treatises so old they have already been disproven by younger scholars or forgotten by academia. Over a thousand tomes in all. Last Master Lipsiege accounted for it, he estimated the entire collection was worth over eighty-thousand marks. Alas, who would purchase it? Who of my many subjects knows how to read and even appreciates such a wonder?"
>
> Carelessly, Strahd plucks a tome from the shelves—*Plight of the Dusk Elves*—and hurls it into the fire. "History," says the Devil, "is a war of attrition."

Only the Finest. For such exalted guests, Strahd busts out his finest cigars and brandy:

- The cigars have earthy and bitter notes, for its tobacco was made from the leaves of the Gulthias tree on Yester Hill. Strahd explains, "In the west stands a bloodthirsty tree, bare but not yet dead. I took the last of its leaves and had them rolled into tobacco."
- The brandy is from another world, delivered by the Vistani, and is of a brand familiar to at least one adventurer, who knows just by its bottle that it is afforded only by nobility.

Conversation. Strahd is gregarious; this time, he focuses the conversation on Barovian history, allowing you to provide lore for inhabitants of the catacombs below:

- Strahd mentions Saint Markovia and her doomed crusade. Escher adds to the conversation that he was one such fool led to righteous fury by Markovia, but "thanks to you, my lord, I was shown the truth."
- Rahadin speaks of Artimus, Castle Ravenloft's architect, and the mage Khazan, who oversaw its construction (and Strahd mentions that his *staff of power* ("his beloved staff") is interred below).
- Ludmilla speaks of the kings of olde interred in the crypts below: King Troisky, the Three-Faced King, who wore a three-faced helm into battle (one side furious, one despairing, and one laughing); King Katsky the Bright, an inventor and a self-proclaimed time traveler; and King Dostron the Hellborn, who claimed descent from a duke of the Nine Hells.

Soliloquy. Inevitably, Strahd launches into a soliloquy regarding Sergei and Tatyana. During this tirade, Rahadin looks sympathetic, whereas Escher and Ludmilla grow increasingly uncomfortable; with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, a character ascertains that Strahd's consorts find the prospect of Strahd reuniting with his "true love" frightening. Read the following:

> A silence creeps across the study. With an empty goblet in hand, Strahd stares into the fires. "I had to kill him, you know…" murmurs the Devil. "I had to… else, she would never love me. Tatyana would never love me if Sergei was alive. Sergei the pious. Sergei the bright, the beautiful, the innocent. Sergei, who never had to lift a sword, who never dirtied his hands fighting for our father's kingdom." Strahd's hand tightens on the goblet, warping the metal. "Sergei, who was spared from every scar and tragedy and tribulation, but allowed to reap the rewards of my efforts."
>
> Strahd looks to you. "I did love him," he whispers. "Gods above know I did… but she, I could not let him have. Sergei had been given everything, but I could not let him have my beloved Tatyana."
>
> Strahd's gaze swings up to the regal portrait of Tatyana hanging over the fireplace. "And for her, I would murder my brother, doom my kingdom, and damn my soul. She was too afraid to understand, to appreciate my sacrifice, and flung herself from the castle walls…"
>
> Strahd looks back to you and smirks. "But we are star crossed, she and I. So many times have we danced over these long years. Soon, so very soon, Tatyana will at last be mine, and it will be thanks to you."
>
> The Devil raises his goblet in a toast. "So here's to you, my friends. The engine of fate rolls on, greased by the sweat and blood of heroes like you."

Soon after this soliloquy, Strahd stands, smooths his clothes, and declares that it has been a wonderful evening but the hour has grown late, and the adventurers ought to retire to bed. As if on cue, Cyrus Belview appears in the doorway to lead the adventurers to their chambers. Strahd's parting words for the evening are, "I shall see you off at dawn. Until then… I bid you luck." He then leaves without further elaboration.

III. The Witching Hour

The adventurers are led to their chambers, but are under no orders to remain there. Strahd expects his guests to explore his home, and while the Devil promises to remain afar, Castle Ravenloft is still an abattoir like no other.

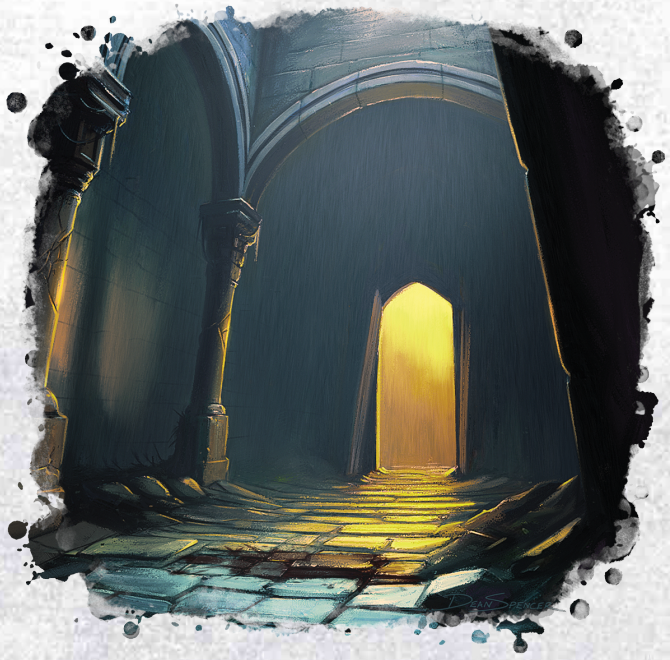
Events. What transpires during Act III is up to you and your players:

- If they stay put in their chambers, run *Boil, Boil, Toil and Trouble.*
- If they organically explore the castle, focus on Random Encounters.
- If they wish to rescue Gertruda, they might visit Strahd's bedchambers (Area K42) or find her in *Mary Had A Little Lamb.*
- If a Fortune of Ravenloft is in the castle, they are free to search for it.
- If you include her in the chapter, Ezmerelda d'Avenir seeks out the adventurers.

Strahd spies on the party with *scrying* spells but does not stop or harm them unless they are about to inflict serious damage, such as destroying the Heart of Sorrow or killing any of his more important minions (i.e., Rahadin, Cyrus, or any of his consorts)

Lodgings. The adventurers are meant to stay in the Guest Room (Area K50), in the South Tower. While there is only one bed (and is infested with 1d4+2 **crawling claws**, per the *Companion*, who will attempt to strangle the adventurers in their sleep), others might elect to sleep on the sofas in the Lounge (Area K49). Cyrus Belview, however, attempts to lead one (or two) adventurers up to the North Tower (Area K60), insisting that they are meant to rest there. This is by no means an order of Strahd, simply a sadistic game Cyrus plays with all guests.

Traps. When the adventurers are first led to Areas K47, the **rug of smothering** and Strahd's **guardian portrait** remain inanimate. However, should the party leave the safety of their chambers (Areas K49 and K50 specifically) these constructs become hostile.



Boil, Boil, Toil and Trouble

Above the adventurers' chambers, Castle Ravenloft's seven resident Barovian witches are hard at work upstairs. How they interact with the party is up to you:

- As written in *Curse of Strahd*, 1d4 **Barovian witches** intrude upon K50 via K51, hurling *sleep* spells to subdue the adventurers. This option justifies the slaughter of the witches, as they drew first blood.
- The adventurers overhear the witches' chanting upstairs, and can feel a foul energy in their eyes and marrow. If someone discovers the trapdoor in the closet, Area K51, they may peek into Area K55. This option gives the adventurers the chance to draw first blood.
- A cat (one of the witches' familiars) somehow enters the guest chambers. She is hunting for something, that it is clear. Hackles raised, she stalks into the bedchamber (Area K50) and chases a **crawling claw** out from under the covers and out the room. This option, the neutral option, allows the adventurers to follow the cat upstairs, to the witches' chambers.

The witches are eager to test their spells and concoctions on unassuming guests, but soon cave when a battle does not go their way. There is no secret too precious that they will not surrender to save their own skin. Strahd will not grudge the adventurers for putting these meddlesome hags to the sword. However, if the adventurers are intent on killing all the witches, three women—Ludvilda, Gretchurn, and Meredearth—escape the battle and can later meet the adventurers in the Amber Temple during Chapter 13.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Gertruda's life hangs in the balance. Fearing no evil, she traipses through the darkened castle, singing angelically. If the adventurers follow her, she leads them to the Overlook (Area K6), oblivious to the icy rain. Once there, read:

> You follow Gertruda out of Castle Ravenloft into the icy, biting rain. The maiden stands on a ledge overlooking the night. Far below lies the Village of Barovia. You can make out Mad Mary's house in the distance—candlelight flickers in her windows, as if to be a beacon to her lost laughter.
>
> "I came here," says Gertruda, her voice carrying in the rain, "to find myself… like a maiden in some fairy tale. I was so full of resentment for Mother. I am now old enough to be wed, but have hardly left my own home… But as wonderful as my time in the castle has been, I do long for my mother once more—just like all the maidens in all the stories, I understand now. She kept me locked away for so long, but I know now it was out of love and fear, not hatred. She feared for her little girl, but now I am a woman grown. Now… now I am stronger, braver, and I want her to see that. I want her to see the real me."
>
> Gertruda flexes her hands out over the ledge, as if trying to reach the village. "Mother is so close, yet so far… and… and I am but a dove that has yet to take flight… if only I had the courage to step from the nest…"
>
> Glassy-eyed and smirking, Gertruda takes a step into the open air and pitches forward! Dare you stop her?"

Using their reaction, a character close to Gertruda may attempt snatch her arm and yank her back from the edge with a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, both they and Gertruda topple over the edge; the character hangs onto the ledge, Gertruda dangling from their other hand. Thanks to the rain, Gertruda is slipping fast. The player must decide between letting Gertruda fall to her death to save themselves, or risking a DC 15 Strength saving throw to hold onto her until someone else can pull them back up. If they choose the latter and fail the Strength saving throw, both characters plummet 1,000 feet to their doom (taking 20d6 bludgeoning damage).

Ezmerelda's Folly

Ever headstrong, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, wayward protege of Rudolph van Richten, has infiltrated to slay Strahd. This assassination attempt is, of course, doomed to fail. In *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, she can serve as a powder keg by attacking Strahd. His cheerful facade melts away, regardless of whether the adventurers abetted her or were even nearby. The Devil's mercy and restraint vanishes, and the adventurers better flee from the castle as swift they can.

Continuity Concerns. Ezmerelda can be met throughout the campaign—before and after her attempt on Strahd's life—so if you include her in *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, consider the following and adjust accordingly.

- Ezmerelda can be met in the Abbey of Saint Markovia in Krezk during Chapter 6, which is implied to occur before her attempt on Strahd's life (as it is also implied that she entered Barovia from the west).
- At Argynvostholt in Chapter 7, Ezmerelda is being pursued by Arrigal and his Vistani after she stole horses from their camp outside Vallaki.
- At the Tower of Khazan in Chapter 11, Ezmerelda returns from Castle Ravenloft, bloodied and wounded, her assassination attempt a failure.

Because of these events, it must be assumed that the events of Chapters 6 and 7 occur before Ezmerelda's failed assassination attempt, for there is no mention of her being wounded in either chapter. Keep this in mind if you include her in *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, adjusting later scenes and dialogue to reflect that she has already met the adventurers here in Castle Ravenloft.

Meeting Ezmerelda. True to the Random Encounter that includes her in this chapter, the adventurers meet Ezmerelda (who is under a spell of greater invisibility) while walking the darkened halls of Castle Ravenloft (but if the adventurers refuse to leave their chambers, she knocks at their door). She has observed much of the evening, hidden from Strahd's senses by magic. Trusting the adventurers are also enemies of Strahd, she attempts to enlist them. Read the following:

> You feel a gentle tap on your shoulder but see nothing behind you. A whisper comes from the dark, a woman's whisper, deeply accented like a Vistana's:
>
> "Be not alarmed. I am Ezmerelda, and I believe that, ultimately, our goals align: the death of the Devil Strahd."

Ezmerelda's spell of *greater invisibility* soon dissipates, revealing her. She explains that she is Rudolph van Richten's apprentice and has "long tired of my master's hesitation; I am here to finish what he started by driving a stake through Strahd's dark heart." She admits her doubts—that she might be in over her head, that she has had trouble cornering the vampire—but remains steadfast in her dedication to his demise.

The Hunt. If the adventurers agree to accompany Ezmerelda, they face two encounters (random or not) before they finally find Strahd at the High Tower Peak (Area K59, Map 10). If finding him seems hopeless, allow Ezmerelda to have some divination magic up her sleeve that will help narrow down his whereabouts. When they find Strahd, read the following:

> Up endless steps you climb, Ezmerelda at your side, the only words she risks being, "The Devil is here. I can feel it." And up, and up, and up you go as thunder booms outside and overhead, as if the gods themselves are clearing their throats. The stones rattle. Rain batters the tower. There must be a leak overhead, for icy water is sluicing down the steps, driving frigid fingers into your boots.
>
> As you crest the stairs, a flash of lightning illuminates the scene: Strahd von Zarovich alone and aloof. The tower's roof is steep and conical, but time and weather have left a gaping hole in one side, open to the stormy sky, and it is there Strahd is facing, as if his gaze can pierce the rain and the darkness. In the center of the tower, a fifteen-foot-diameter hole drops into the cold heart of Ravenloft itself, and out from it comes frigid air, as if the castle were some great beast heaving out its dying breaths.
>
> Strahd does not seem to notice you. You cringe in the cold, sweat suddenly dripping down your foreheads. Are you really doing this? Will you really take up arms against the vampire? Another lance of lightning sets fire to the skies, chased by impatient thunder.
>
> Ezmerelda d'Avenir squares herself up, weapons drawn, and steps out into the open, shouting, "Die Devil! Answer for your crimes!"
>
> The Devil turns, a smirk already on his lips. In a deep voice that cuts through the wind and rain, Strahd sneers, "Finally."

The Devil Wroth. Give your players one last opportunity to abstain from the battle, otherwise Strahd opens up with a fireball spell and begins his attack. If the adventurers attempt to flee, Strahd gives them leave but continues to terrorize them until they reach the Gates of Ravenloft as described in *Daybreak* below. No character should die during this encounter; Strahd—or even the Dark Powers—will not allow it. If the entire party is defeated, they later wake in one of these areas:

- In the Lounge (Area K49), piled onto the floor and sofas, bruised and bloodied.
- The Front Courtyard (Area K1), soaked to the bone by icy rain.
- In the dungeons (Area K75) to be tortured for several days or weeks until Strahd one day leaves the doors to their cells open and they may flee the castle like the dogs they are.

Ezmerelda's Fate. Whether Ezmerelda lives or dies is up to you. If she is the adventurers' Destined Ally, Strahd lets her live only to be tortured in the dungeons below. Ultimately, she manages to escape Castle Ravenloft. Her death will not derail your campaign, but deepen its grim undertone. Later, if the adventurers meet van Richten, they have the pleasure of explaining that his apprentice, whom he *did* love as a daughter, is now dead. If you'd like to leave her fate a mystery for now, Strahd dangles her over the edge of the High Tower's shaft, sneers, "Your master ought taught you better." She falls into darkness. If you'd like Ezmerelda to live, she later explains that she cast *feather fall* on herself at the last moment.

IV. Daybreak

The adventurers are free to leave Castle Ravenloft at dawn, and the nature of their departure is determined by the events of Act III:

- If the adventurers did not incur Strahd's wrath, he bids them goodbye at Area K7 ("I thoroughly enjoyed our night together. Worry not, for there shall be many, many more. Barovia is your home now as much it is mine.") Rahadin sees the adventurers out to the gates. The traps and enemies that would otherwise attack departing guests (the gargoyles in Area K8, the wyrmlings in K7, and the green slime at the Gates of Ravenloft (see Area J, Chapter 2) do not attack.
- If the adventurers are fleeing from a wroth Strahd, they must contend with every trap and foe along the way to the exit. Strahd, for his part, prefers if most of the party survive. Thus, the gargoyles and wyrmlings in (Area K8 and K7 respectively) only attempt to wound or bruise the characters.

In the Depths of Ravenloft

The *Companion* advocates for an early foray into Castle Ravenloft before the adventurers are fully armed for the campaign's climax. This should occur at or around 7th level, when they are sturdy enough to survive the castle's inherent dangers but too weak to truly challenge Strahd and bring an end to the campaign. Strahd himself is nowhere to be found during this foray unless they begin to cause serious trouble; Rahadin is the chief antagonist to be faced here, and is backed up by minions. Ultimately, however, any battle with Rahadin is meant to push the party back into the Brazier Room and force them to teleport out from the castle.

Breaching Castle Ravenloft. The adventurers may gain access to Castle Ravenloft through any of these methods:

- Ezmerelda d'Avenir, a skilled wizard, convinces the adventurers to join her on a premature assassination attempt, but the backlash of breaching Castle Ravenloft's magical network leaves her too wounded to participate, forcing the adventurers to abort the plan altogether.
- Desperate, the adventurers strike a dark bargain with the hags of Old Bonegrinder.
- The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok teleports the adventurers inside as part of his madness, or as a favor once his sanity is restored.
- Victor Vallakovich, faced with a mob once Vallaki falls to Lady Wachter, might attempt to teleport out of Barovia rather than face execution. The adventurers are caught up in his spell, which deposits them in Castle Ravenloft.
- If the Tower of Khazan collapses (see Chapter 11), the chaotic magic unleashed from its destruction teleports them into Castle Ravenloft. See *Battered by the Winds of Fate* in Chapter 11 of the *Companion*.



Kasimir's Dark Gift

While Kasimir Velikov would be the perfect mage to teleport the adventurers into Castle Ravenloft—as part of his bid to resurrect his sister, if he acquired the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star in the Amber Temple—the *Companion* saves this event for *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, which is designed to distract the adventurers with several sidequests as they move towards their Final Confrontation in Act IV. Further, it is likely where Rahadin is last slain. You are free to incorporate this event early now during *In the Depths of Ravenloft* without the worry of harming your campaign or detracting from *The Wedding* so long as Rahadin survives this night and can assume his responsibilities later during the wedding.

Regardless of who or how, the adventurers are dropped into the Brazier Room (Area K78), which goes "offline" for an indeterminate amount of time—encouraging the party to explore the areas nearby.

Timing & Level. *In the Depths of Ravenloft* is recommended for adventurers of 6th-8th level, when they are strong enough to tackle many of Castle Ravenloft's dangers but still too weak to put Strahd to the sword. Likewise, they should be somewhat wounded—just enough to put the fear into them. This storyline should occur in Act III of your campaign, after Vallaki's fall and Ireena's capture by Strahd.

Points of Interest. Several of Castle Ravenloft's points of interest come too little or too late, if the adventurers are entering the castle only as part of the finale. During this storyline, you may wish to focus on these points of interest, which are fitting for adventurers of this level to encounter:

- The Catacombs hold several campaign secrets and hooks that would otherwise be impossible or useless to pursue later in the campaign due to *Curse of Strahd's* narrative and the geography of Barovia.
- If the adventurers wish to lay the Order of the Silver Dragon to rest, they may venture to the Hall of Bones (Area K67) above and recover Argynvost's skull (or, with the *Companion's* revision, his crystalline heart). A whisper from Argynvost can lead them there.
- If the adventurers are interested in werewolf pack's politics and fate, they may spring Emil Toranescu from the dungeons (Area K75A). His shouts of frustration and hunger can lead them there, or they might get deposited there by the marble slide trap (see Area K81).
- If you include the *Companion's* fourth artifact, the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger*, now is the time to venture to Strahd's Tomb (Area K86) to retrieve it. The dagger, sentient, reaches out to a potential wielder: the most evil-hearted or incorrigible adventurer feels a powerful darkness calling them to Strahd's Tomb.
- The Spiral Stair (Area K83) delivers the adventurers to the Study (Area K37), giving them the opportunity to explore the upper reaches of Castle Ravenloft, though this storyline is focused on the depths. If you'd like to prevent them from accessing these areas, magically seal the door to K37.

I. Dropping In

When the adventurers teleport into the Brazier Room (K78), read the text below, which assumes they do not intend to infiltrate Castle Ravenloft.

> The world grows dark and thin, and in between the seams of reality beckon strange shadows so black, they contrast the pervading darkness. They beckon with open palms of friendship, and when you do not oblige, they hiss and claw for the treasure that is your souls.
>
> And suddenly you are on cold, hard stone, dropping unceremoniously from about four feet. Your minds are in a haze. Your ears pop. Your guts are in an uproar, and the vomit explodes from your mouth in an instant.
>
> You are in a chamber. It is cold and damp. A stone brazier dominates the room, burning fiercely, casting strange shadows but no heat. Its flames are white and languid. Overhead hangs an hourglass as tall and stout as a dwarf, suspended by thick chains. And on its base is the sigil of House von Zarovich. The truth is plain but too sharp to accept: you are in the depths of Castle Ravenloft.

Once the adventurers pick themselves up and dust themselves off, give them a more detailed description of the chamber with these details: two huge iron statues of horseback knights; the cup-shaped indentations on the brazier's room and the seven, differently-colored stones; and the verse written in glowing script on the hourglass's base. However, mention that the sand in the hourglass is all on the bottom and slowly floating back up—this is to indicate to the players that the teleportation nexus is currently "offline" and must recharge, preventing them from just leaving Castle Ravenloft immediately.

Breaching Castle Ravenloft. After the description above, some further dialogue might be shared by whomever's responsible for the adventurers' arrival in Castle Ravenloft:

- Ezmerelda vomits blood on the stone floor and elaborates, "I… I… the backlash… Give me time before we—" She then vomits more blood and collapses, stable but weak. She asks to be hidden at the foot of a statue until she recovers.
- The hags telepathically sneer and giggle at the adventurers' predicament from the safety of their lair miles away, just before any magical connection between these two groups dwindles and dies.
- The Mad Mage writes a message in illusory, floating letters which appear in the chamber: "Enjoy!"
- Victor elaborates, "Several times before have I attempted to teleport from this accursed country, but I felt myself halted by some… metaphysical wall—a wall veined with magic avenues. This… this is a teleportation nexus. Perhaps it can be used to escape Barovia! Or… or perhaps only traverse it."
- If the Tower of Khazan's collapse is responsible, evidence of wild magic must be shown: for the next few moments, an adventurer has been *polymorphed* into a potted plant, someone's race has changed dramatically (an elf to a dwarf, for example) until dawn, and/or someone is under a spell of *invisibility* for the next hour.

II. Ill Omens Abound

Act II has no set narrative, but is what your adventurers make of it. Your party is free to explore, but you may drop hints to more pressing matters, as described below. The following objectives are appropriate for this time, if the adventurers remain in the depths of Castle Ravenloft:

Argynvost

If you or your adventurers are determined to redeem the revenants, Argynvost's spirit reaches out, revealing that his remains are nearby:

> In the white firelight cast by the brazier, a draconic shadow forms, its hiss echoing in your minds: "Heroes… my remains… desecrated… above you… redeem the Order of the… I beg you…"

The Chamberlain's Office. To reach Argynvost's corpse, the adventurers must take the staircase (K79) to Rahadin's office (K72). Rahadin is absent, but the **shadow demon** lurks here, watching and toying with the party by hurling objects from the darkness. If combat erupts, the demon disappears to go fetch Rahadin, who arrives in Act III.

The Hall of Bones. Once in the Hall of Bones (Area K67), the adventurers may recover Argynvost's massive, 250-pound skull. However, if you are running the *Argynvost the Reanimated* revision, the adventurers must battle Argynvost's animated skeleton and recover a crystalline heart instead. This heart is far easier to transport and serves the same purpose as Argynvost's skull. For this battle, see Area K67 in *Areas of Note* below.



The Catacombs

The catacombs are a wealth of lore and loot, but these must be earned. While it would be easy to have multiple objects "call out" to particular adventurers (such as Saint Markovia, urging a cleric to her thighbone, or the magnetic presence of Khazan's *staff of power* piquing the senses of your resident wizard) you must not allow the party to avoid or skip the dangerous or unnoteworthy crypts. Likewise, you must avoid overloading the party with magic items or risk undermining the feeling of helplessness *Curse of Strahd* is built upon. Thus, allow appropriate characters to sense the presence of powerful spirits and artifacts nearby, but never let that sense pinpoint the correct crypt; you only want to telegraph to your players that there is great reward here, should they take great risk.

- A priest might sense Saint Markovia's or Tasha Petrovna's presence; see Crypts 6 and 11, respectively.
- A mage might sense the overwhelming presence of Khazan's staff of power; see Crypt 15.
- King Katsky's spirit might manifest long enough to attract an artificer (or someone with an engineering background) to his crypt where they'll find his glider and firearms; see Crypt 13.
- If, somehow, one of your adventurers is a dusk elf, they find themselves just outside Crypt 21, where they may safely converse with Patrina Velikovna's banshee.

Time & Tension. With in-game time being so hard to feel and define and record during D&D, you may rely on this trick to keep tension up in your campaign and limit the adventurers' exploration of the crypts. Take 10d6, placing them in the open where your players can see. Whenever a crypt is explored, roll the dice, removing any 1s and ominously warn your players that they "better hurry up." Once all dice are depleted, skip to Act III, wherein Rahadin is alerted to the adventurers' presence and drives them back to the Brazier Room.

Strahd Astride. If you'd like to feature Strahd in this storyline but not use him, you may use this event. Mounting Beucephalus in Crypt 39, Strahd steers his **nightmare** steed towards Area K86A. The adventurers must hide as the Devil passes by or risk his wrath. This event telegraphs to your players that they truly may explore the catacombs without the risk of alerting Strahd—unless, of course, this is a trap (and it very might well be; at your discretion, what they perceive is entirely an illusion). Read the following:

> The bats overhead began to chirp and screech until your ears ring. A mighty presence moves through the darkness—an ambulant mist, a cloud thicker and more ominous than the fog that clings to this putrid floor. It does not seem to notice you and soon you lose sight of the mist. Then, in the distance, you hear stone groan against stone. A moving slab, an opened crypt. Then… hooves. Hoofbeats that ring out against the stone. Sulfur fills the air, your nose, your lungs. And down in the darkness, you see him:
>
> Strahd von Zarovich astride a nightmare steed, an infernal horse wreathed in flames.
>
> Hide!

By dint of fate, Strahd passes by without noticing the adventurers. By way of the High Tower Shaft, Strahd flies out of Castle Ravenloft, a legion of bats at his back, and for what purpose, the adventurers do not know.

The Dagger of Death

Should the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* exist in your campaign, it reaches out to the most dark-hearted adventurer, guiding—urging—them to Strahd's tomb. Read the following:

> You cast your gaze across the darkness… the inky blackness rippling… a voice calls out to you, its words muted, urging you on. Go forth into this darkness, it promises, and fear no evil—but cradle it. Power, power over death, can be yours if you are only so bold to step into the darkness, to brave the crypts and catacombs and plunder the most insidious tomb of all: the tomb of Strahd von Zarovich.
>
> And now, hearing that omen, that promise, you see in your mind's eye a dagger. A dagger dripping with blood, though it has not drank in several centuries. You feel it, reach for it, as an infant does for her mother's tit, eager to be nourished, to be comforted, to be loved for once. And it does love you, the dagger. It loves you so very much, and all you must do is embrace it.

The dagger draws the character towards the catacombs, and—at your discretion—even subconsciously warns the character of the trap in Area K81 and the teleportation traps guarding Strahd's tomb, granting advantage on the DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to detect the former.

In the Tomb of Strahd. As described in Area K86 in *Areas of Note* below, the dagger is embedded in Strahd's coffin as a mockery to death. During I*n the Depths of Ravenloft*, Strahd's brides do not attack when the character enters Area K86; they are elsewhere or slumbering, perhaps even lulled by the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger's* magic.

III. Escaping Ravenloft

The adventurers' exploits have at last gone noticed by Rahadin, who musters the Devil's minions for a swift and brutal response that forces the adventurers back to the Brazier Room. How Rahadin is alerted is rather simple: the shadow demon that haunts Area K72 ventured out and discovered the adventurers. Now the **shadow demon**, **Rahadin**, and four **wights** appear near the adventurers—opposite to a path back to Area K78, allowing them the chance to flee. Rahadin must survive this encounter at all costs.

Read the following when Rahadin appears:

> A choir of damned souls shatter the silence with their wails—Rahadin! The elf turns the corner, a retinue of wights at his back and a shadowy demon at his side like a dog, leering at you with too-wide eyes. "You have overstayed your unrequited welcome," Rahadin intones, brandishing his scimitars. "Even my lord cannot disapprove of exterminating uninvited vermin. I know not through which hole you crawled but I bid you to return at once or join the choir."

Tactics. The wights form a phalanx that continuously pushes the adventurers forward with Shove actions. Incorporeal, the shadow demon weaves through the crowd to attack from any angle. Meanwhile, Rahadin casts *magic weapon* on his scimitar; if he must keep his distance from the party, he relies on his poisoned darts, otherwise he would prefer to wade into the fray and unleash his Deathly Choir amongst the party. Rahadin relies on *misty step* spells to escape, if his life is endangered.

Whence. As the adventurers rush back to the Brazier Room, read the text below and adjusting to fit the circumstances. It is imperative that the adventurers understand that the brazier can be used to teleport. Rahadin does not follow them; perhaps the glitch that allowed the party inside Castle Ravenloft also cuts off any chase the chamberlain might mount.

> With catlike agility, Rahadin menaces you again and again, dodging your blows, weaving in and out, taking more and more ground with every dance and every advance. Like rats, you scurry back to the brazier, prey under the hunt. The stones will save you! The stones will spirit you away from this place, if only you can reach the brazier!

The adventurers must choose a teleportation destination. Assume their intrusion has scrambled the teleportation network, preventing Rahadin from following them. Their vision blurs and their minds reel as they are teleported from the castle. If you wish to further twist the story, send them to Vallaki—to Victor Vallakovich's circle, or even the razed remains of his home, if the Vallakians executed the baron. This is an opportunity to get the adventurers back in Vallaki to either oppose or witness Lady Wachter's reign.

Areas of Note

With its seven floors, forty-three crypts, and eighty-eight areas, Castle Ravenloft is a labyrinth like no other. The castle confuses players and Dungeon Master's alike. Consult the Flowchart Map to better understand the castle's layout.

Navigating Castle Ravenloft

There are seven means to navigate Castle Ravenloft, and often to gain access to chambers on the same floor requires traversing another floor entirely.

The Higher Tower Stair (Area K18) winds upwards from the Catacombs (K84) and can only be accessed from the chapel (Area K15). However, Strahd has blocked the way with a masonry wall, with a small gap granting passage only to amorphous entities (like a vampire in its mist form). The High Tower is, however, hollow, allowing one to fall, fly, or climb down its shaft (with the aid of magic or a climbing kit).

The North Tower Stair (Area K20) is perilous to climb, for the Heart of Sorrow shakes its very steps. To access it from the Main Floor, one would have to use the South Tower Stair (Area K21) to cross the Larders of Ill Omen, climbing up Area K20A.

The South Tower Stair (Area K21) is the castle's artery, being the most accessible, connecting to all floors, notably the Dining Hall, the Audience Hall, Strahd's chambers, the guest chambers, and the witches' chambers.

The Guards' Stair (Area K64) is an internal staircase connecting the Larders of Ill Omen to the castle parapets, with landings on Maps 3 and 4. Without discovering secret doors, it will be difficult for the adventurers to find the Guards' Stair. One would have to move Strahd's organ in the Dining Hall (K10) or open the secret door in the Audience Hall (K25) to gain access to the staircase.

The Spiral Stair (Area K83) is an internal staircase that climbs upwards from the Brazier Room (K78) straight to the Study (K37), with no external access.

The Elevator delivers someone from the Larder (Area K61, Map 11) to the Portrait of Strahd (Area K47, Map 6) in exactly ten seconds. Though the elevator can be accessed on Maps 4 & 5 (Areas K27 and K31, respectively), through secret doors, the elevator does not stop there. The elevator is entirely a trap; the only exit is through the trapdoor in the ceiling to Area K47, which most guests would not be able to reach.

Teleportation is possible thanks to the enchantments in the Brazier Room (Area K78), which allows one to teleport to Areas K37, K60, and K86.

Maps & Floors

Castle Ravenloft is represented by twelve maps:

Map 1 depicts Castle Ravenloft from the front, and will generally not be necessary to consult.

Map 2—"the Walls of Ravenloft"— spans Areas K1-K6 and represents the castle exterior. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K3, the Servant's Courtyard, which leads to the servants' areas on Map 3, which are quite difficult to access if one enters Castle Ravenloft's front entrance, sparing the adventurers from going up or down several floors.
- Area K6, the Overlook, a ledge that hangs 1,000 feet above the Village of Barovia.

Map 3—"the Main Floor"—spans Areas K7-K24. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K10, the Dining Hall, where Strahd's illusory avatar awaits guests. During *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*, the true Strahd has dinner here with the adventurers.
- Area K15, the Chapel, where the *Icon of Ravenloft* and a mace of terror can be found. The ceremony in *The Wedding at Ravenloft* takes place here, of course.
- Area K18, the High Tower staircase, which would allow the adventurers to descend to the catacombs, if Strahd had not sealed it off.

Map 4—"the Court of the Count"—spans Areas K25-K34. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K25, the Audience Hall, where Strahd has the adventurers dance in *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* and hosts the reception during *The Wedding at Ravenloft*.
- Area K30, Lief Lipsiege's office. Lief is a wealth of information.
- Area K31, the Trapworks, which hints at the elevator's existence.
- Area K32, where Strahd's **vampire spawn** maid, Helga Ruvak (who looks alive, not undead) is cleaning. She is a walking trap.

Map 5—"the Rooms of Weeping"—spans Areas K35-K46. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K36, the Dining Hall of the Count, where Pidlwick's ghost can be summoned, and an i*nstrument of the bards (doss lute)* can be found.
- Area K37, the Study, which has a staircase to Map 12 (Area K83) and leads to both the false and true treasuries.
- Area K41, the Treasury, where Strahd's true fortune can be found.
- Area K42, the King's Bedchamber, where Gertruda can be found.
- Area K46, the Parapets, where **Strahd's animated armor** prowls.

Final Confrontations

There is but one place in Castle Ravenloft that Strahd will not flee from, where his cat-and-mouse game will end. After completing the quests important to them, the party must race to their Final Confrontation, lest Strahd wear them down with hit-and-run tactics all night. If you drew the Mists, use Strahd's tomb. If Strahd is reduced to 0 hit points, he dissolves into mist and flees to his coffin, where the adventurers can drive a stake in his heart and kill him once and for all.

Map 6-10—"the Spires of Ravenloft"—span Areas K47-K60. Its most noteworthy areas include:

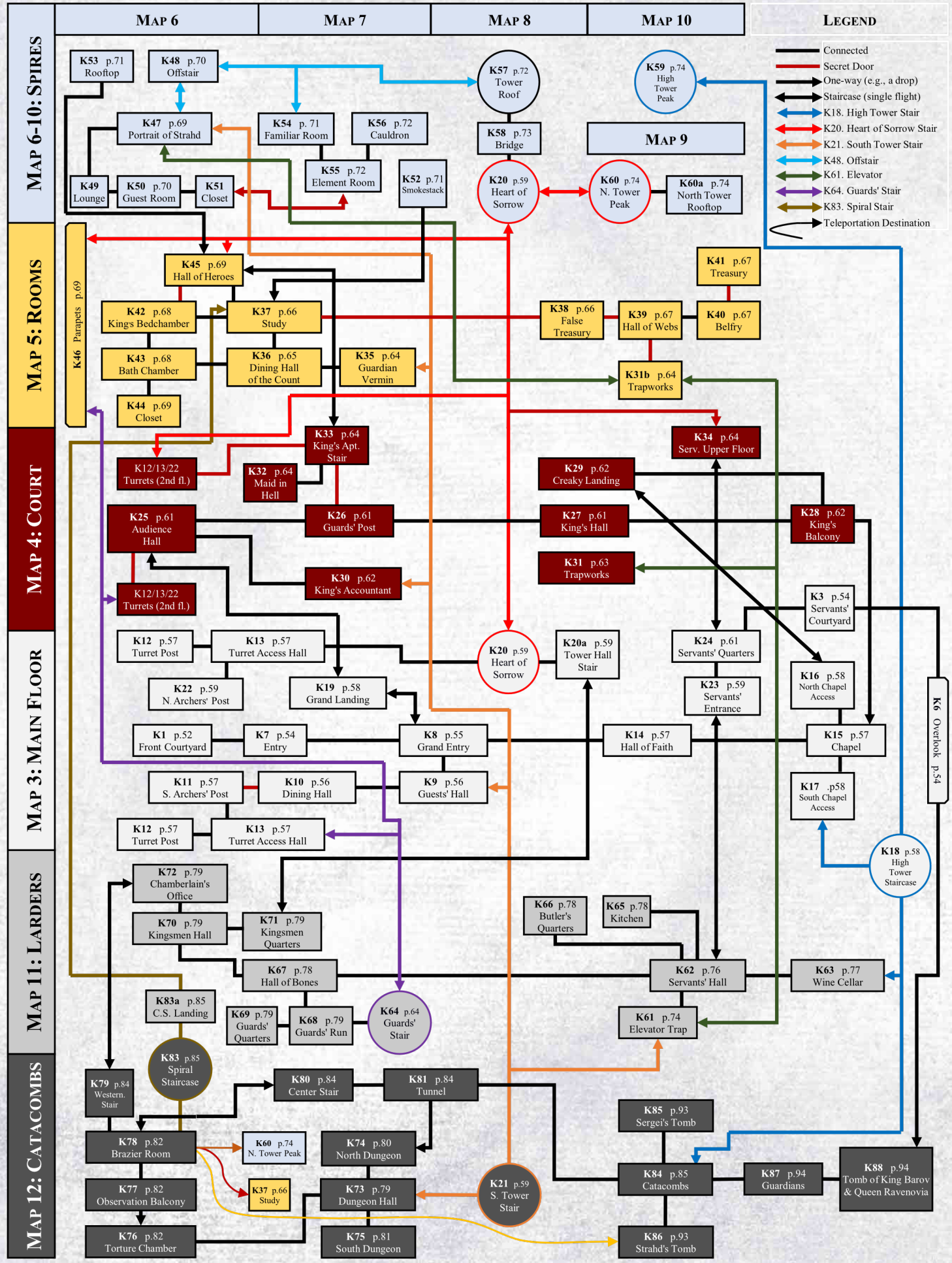
- The Heart of Sorrow (listed as Area K20, but appearing on Map 8).
- The guest chambers (Areas K47, K49-K51), Escher's favorite haunt, and where the adventurers are expected to rest during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft*. Strahd holds Ireena captive here prior to *The Wedding at Ravenloft*.
- The **Barovian witches**' chambers (Areas K54-K56), who are a source of information and *potions of healing*.

Map 11—"the Larders of Ill Omen"—spans Areas K61-K72. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K67, the Hall of Bones, where Argynvost's skull is.
- Area K72, the Chamberlain's Office, where **Rahadin** and a **shadow demon** await the adventurers.

Map 12—"the Dungeons and Catacombs"—spans Areas K73-K88. Its most noteworthy areas include:

- Area K78, the Brazier Room, the nexus of Strahd's teleportation hub, which would allow the adventurers to escape Castle Ravenloft. It is here the *In the Depths of Ravenloft* storyline begins.
- The Dungeons (Areas K74-K75), where Emil Toranescu and the *+1 shortsword of the Lost Crusader* languish.
- Area K84, the Catacombs, which comprises forty crypts.
- Area K85, Sergei's tomb, where the adventurers can find his *+2 plate armor*.
- Area K86, Strahd's tomb, where the adventurers must drive a stake into the Devil's heart.


Map 6
Map 7
Map 8
Map 10
Legend
Connected
Secret Door
One-way (e.g., a drop)
Staircase (single flight)
K18. High Tower Stair
K20. Heart of Sorrow Stair
K21. South Tower Stair
K48. Offstair
K61. Elevator
K64. Guards' Stair
K83. Spiral Stair
Teleportation Destination
Map 6-10: Spires
Map 5: Rooms
Map 4: Court
Map 3: Main Floor
Map 11: Larders
Map 12: Catacombs
Map 9
K53 p.71 Rooftop
K48 p.70 Offstair
K57 p.72 Tower Roof
K59 p.74 High Tower Peak
K47 p.69 Portrait of Strahd
K54 p. 71 Familiar Room
K56 p.72 Cauldron
K58 p.73 Bridge
K55 p.72 Element Room
K52 p.71 Smokestack
K49 Lounge
K50 p.70 Guest Room
K51 Closet
K20 p.59 Heart of Sorrow
K60 p.74 N. Tower Peak
K60a p.74 North Tower Rooftop
K46 Parapets p.69
K45 p.69 Hall of Heroes
K41 p.67 Treasury
K42 p.68 King's Bedchamber
K37 p.66 Study
K38 p.66 False Treasury
K39 p.67 Hall of Webs
K40 p.67 Belfry
K43 p.68 Bath Chamber
K36 p.65 Dining Hall of the Count
K35 p.64 Guardian Vermin
K31b p.64 Trapworks
K44 p.69 Closet
K33 p.64 King's Apt. Stair
K34 p.64 Serv. Upper Floor
K12/13/22 Turrets (2nd fl.)
K32 p.64 Maid in Hell
K29 p.62 Creaky Landing
K25 p.61 Audience Hall
K26 p.61 Guards' Post
K27 p.61 King's Hall
K28 p.62 King's Balcony
K31 p.63 Trapworks
K30 p.62 King's Accountant
K12/13/22 Turrets (2nd fl.)
K3 p.54 Servants' Courtyard
K12 p.57 Turret Post
K13 p.57 Turret Access Hall
K20 p.59 Heart of Sorrow
K20a p.59 Tower Hall Stair
K24 p.61 Servants' Quarters
K22 p.59 N. Archers' Post
K19 p.58 Grand Landing
K23 p.59 Servants' Entrance
K16 p.58 North Chapel Access
K6 Overlook p.54
K1 p.52 Front Courtyard
K7 p.54 Entry
K8 p.55 Grand Entry
K14 p.57 Hall of Faith
K15 p.57 Chapel
K11 p.57 S. Archers' Post
K10 p.56 Dining Hall
K9 p.56 Guests' Hall
K17 .p58 South Chapel Access
K12 p.57 Turret Post
K13 p.57 Turret Access Hall
K18 p.58 High Tower Staircase
K72 p.79 Chamberlain's Office
K66 p.78 Butler's Quarters
K65 p.78 Kitchen
K70 p.79 Kingsmen Hall
K71 p.79 Kingsmen Quarters
K67 p.78 Hall of Bones
K62 p.76 Servants' Hall
K63 p.77 Wine Cellar
K83a p.85 C.S. Landing
K69 p.79 Guards' Quarters
K68 p.79 Guards' Run
K64 p.64 Guards' Stair
K61 p.74 Elevator Trap
K83 p.85 Spiral Staircase
K79 p.84 Western. Stair
K80 p.84 Center Stair
K81 p.84 Tunnel
K85 p.93 Sergei's Tomb
K78 p.82 Brazier Room
K60 p.74 N. Tower Peak
K74 p.80 North Dungeon
K84 p.85 Catacombs
K87 p.94 Guardians
K88 p.94 Tomb of King Barov & Queen Ravenovia
K77 p.82 Observation Balcony
K37 p.66 Study
K73 p.79 Dungeon Hall
K21 p.59 S. Tower Stair
K76 p.82 Torture Chamber
K75 p.81 South Dungeon
K86 p.93 Strahd's Tomb

Areas of Castle Ravenloft: Summarized

Area	Notable	Description
K1. Front Courtyard	No	Warm light spills out from the castle.
K2. Center Court Gate	No	The portcullises are heavy, requiring a DC 15 Strength check to lift.
K3. Servant's Courtyard	No	Through this entrance, intruders can gain access to the servants' areas of the castle.
K4. Carriage House	No	Where the Black Carriage comes to rest.
K5. Chapel Garden	No	A dying garden with squealing gates.
K6. Overlook	Yes	A 1,000-foot-drop and a potential site for the Fortunes of Ravenloft (Final Confrontation).
K7. Entry	Yes	4 **red dragon wyrmlings** (revised to silver by *Companion*) attack those that flee the castle. Rahadin may be here to greet guests (such as during *To Dine* and *The Wedding*).
K8. Great Entry	Yes	**Gargoyles** (8, but revised to 3 by *Companion*) roost above, attacking those who return here later.
K9. Guests' Hall	No	The South Tower staircase (K21) can be accessed from this hall.
K10. Dining Hall	Yes	Gotcha! An illusory Strahd plays music, only to plunge the hall into darkness. In *To Dine*, Strahd has dinner here with the party.
K11. South Archers' Post	No	This chamber contains a secret door to K10.
K12. Turret Post	No	This chamber is empty.
K13. Turret Post Access Hall	No	This hallway connects to the Guards' Stair (K64).
K14. Hall of Faith	No	Statues watch passersby with moving eyes.
K15. Chapel	Yes	The ruined chapel contains the *Icon of Ravenloft* and a *mace of terror*, and is a potential site for the Fortunes of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation). In *The Wedding*, the ceremony occurs here.
K16. North Chapel Access	No	This chamber connects K15 to K16.
K17. South Chapel Access	No	This chamber connects K15 to K18.
K18. High Tower Staircase	Yes	The tower starts in K84 and climbs 300 ft. to its peak (K59) and opens to K15. The way between K15 and K84 is blocked by a makeshift wall.
K19. Grand Landing	Yes	Trapped by two mechanical traps in the form of rigged suits of armor. (DC 15 to spot pressure plates, DC 14 DEX save to avoid 2d6 bludgeoning damage).
K20. Heart of Sorrow	Yes	Also the North Tower staircase, the Heart of Sorrow is an artifact that absorbs 50 damage dealt to Strahd. It is guarded by 10 animated halberds and, after 3 rounds, 4 vampire spawn. The awakened tower shakes, requiring a DC 10 DEX save each round to avoid falling off the stairs. Another stairway at the tower's base (K20A) leads to Area K71.
K21. South Tower Stair	No	This staircase connects K73, K61, K9, K30, K35, and K47.
K22. North Archers' Post	No	This chamber is empty.
K23. Servants' Entrance	No	Accessed from K3 outside.
K24. Servants' Quarters	No	This chamber contains broken furniture and a staircase to K34.
K25. Audience Hall	Yes	A potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact and Final Confrontation). A secret door leads to K13's second floor (DC 16 to spot). Guests dance here in *To Dine*; the reception occurs here in *The Wedding*.
K26. Guards' Post	No	Manned by harmless, postured skeletons held together with wire.
K27. King's Hall	Yes	Another Gotcha! by Strahd; a mannequin dressed like Strahd, equipped with illusory noise.
K28. King's Balcony	No	2 **Strahd zombies** languish here, slouched on the thrones. The balcony overlooks the chapel.
K29. Creaky Landing	No	Staircase linking K16 to K28. It creaks, preventing anyone in K28 from being surprised.
K30. King's Accountant	Yes	Lief Lipsiege languishes here and conjures reinforcements if threatened.
K31. Trapworks	Yes	The guts of the elevator trap, which can be sabotaged.
K32. Maid in Hell	Yes	Helga Ruvak, the **vampire spawn** maid, is tidying up here. She fools the party into "helping" her.
K33. King's Apartment Stair	No	Staircase connecting K33 to K45.
K34. Servants' Upper Floor	No	A floating, animate dress dances forever. A secret ladder connects to Area K20.
K35. Guardian Vermin	Yes	4 **swarms of rats** (two apiece) are piled together to look vaguely humanoid.
K36. Dining Hall of the Count	Yes	The hall contains an *instrument of the bards (doss lute)*. Pidlwick's spirit can be conjured.
K37. Study	Yes	A portrait of Tatyana/Ireena hangs over the fireplace, which is a secret entrance to K38. This area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact and Final Confrontation).
K38. False Treasury	Yes	This chest contains 50 gp, 100 sp, and 2,000 cp and is trapped (sleeping gas; DC 18 CON save or paralyzed for 4 hours). A secret door leads to K39, opened by lifting the fireplace poker in K37.
K39. Hall of Webs	No	Choked by webs with a secret door to K31B, accessible only if the webs are cleared.
K40. Belfry	No	This area is hampered by webs. Ringing the bell provokes 5 **giant spiders** from above.
K41. Treasury	Yes	Strahd's true hoard. This area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation).
K42. King's Bedchamber	Yes	Gertruda awaits Strahd here, lost in her fairy-tale fantasy and unaware of the fragility of her life.
K43. Bath Chamber	Yes	Haunted by Varushka, a maid that killed herself, the bathtub is filled with illusory blood.
K44. Closet	No	The closet contains 28 capes and 16 sets of fine clothes.

Areas of Castle Ravenloft: Summarized

Area	Notable	Description
K45. Hall of Heroes	Yes	These ten statues are imbued with the spirits of Strahd's ancestors, which can be questioned.
K46. Parapets	Yes	Patrolled by **Strahd's animated armor**.
K47. Portrait of Strahd	Yes	Guarded by a **rug of smothering** and Strahd's **guardian portrait**.
K48. Offstair	No	This staircase connects K47 to K54 to K57.
K49. Lounge	Yes	Escher, a **vampire spawn**, luxuriates here.
K50. Guest Room	Yes	If guests rest here, 1d4 **Barovian witches** from K56 attempt to subdue them with *sleep* spells.
K51. Closet	Yes	A trapdoor (DC 13 to spot) in the ceiling opens onto K55, if the correct coat hook is pulled.
K52. Smokestack	No	A chimney that drops 60 ft. down to K37, dealing 1d6 fire per turn to a creature therein.
K53. Rooftop	No	The rooftops are slippery, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to traverse. On a 10 or lower, they fall 40 ft. down to K46.
K54. Familiar Room	No	Three cats, familiars of the witches, rest here.
K55. Element Room	No	The chamber is stocked with useless potions and ingredients.
K56. Cauldron	Yes	7 **Barovian witches** toil over their spells and cauldron here, each carrying a *potion of healing* (30% chance that potion has gone bad and become a *potion of poison*).
K57. Tower Roof	No	The South Tower's rooftop, 190 ft. above K1 and 80 ft. above K53.
K58. Bridge	No	This bridge connects the South Tower to the North Tower.
K59. High Tower Peak	Yes	The conical roof is missing a section. A 15-ft.-diameter hole in the center of the chamber plunges 300 ft. to K84. Pidlwick II lairs here.
K60. North Tower Peak	Yes	This grisly two-room chamber contains a locked chest whose key is worn by Cyrus Belview. It is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation).
K61. Elevator Trap	Yes	The elevator is trapped with sleeping gas (DC 15 CON save) and rises to K47 in 10 seconds.
K62. Servants' Hall	Yes	Cyrus Belview can be found here.
K63. Wine Cellar	Yes	The wine cellar is blocked by a portcullis (DC 20 Strength check). One cask is full of yellow mold. Another contains a **black pudding**.
K64. Guards' Stair	No	This staircase connects K68 to K13 and K46.
K65. Kitchen	No	3 **zombies** are being boiled in the pot.
K66. Butler's Quarters	No	Cyrus Belview lairs here, and it is full of trinkets taken from dead adventurers over the long years.
K67. Hall of Bones	Yes	Containing Argynvost's skull, this area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation). With the Argynvost the Reanimated revision, the dragon's animate skeleton knits itself together and attacks intruders.
K68. Guards' Run	No	This corridor connects K67 to K69 and K64.
K69. Guards' Quarters	No	When entered, 10 **skeletons** leap from the alcoves and attack.
K70. Kingsmen Hall	No	Shattered bones and broken furniture are scattered here.
K71. Kingsmen Quarters	No	A moldy sack containing 150 ep can be found here.
K72. Chamberlain Office	Yes	**Rahadin's** lair, guarded by a **shadow demon**.
K73. Dungeon Hall	Yes	This flooded corridor is trapped with hidden teleport traps that send victims into a particular cell.
K74. North Dungeon	Yes	A **gray ooze** lairs here. A *potion of heroism* and the *+1 shortsword of the Lost Crusader* can be found.
K75. South Dungeon	Yes	Emil Toranescu languishes here.
K76. Torture Chamber	No	Flooded; 6 **Strahd zombies** rise out from the water.
K77. Observation Balcony	No	The balcony overlooks the torture chamber.
K78. Brazier Room	Yes	Strahd's teleportation nexus, allowing him to teleport across the castle (K37, K60, K86) or across Barovia. Two **iron golems** defend the chamber against vandals.
K79. Western Stair	Yes	This staircase connects K78 to K72, and is warded with an illusion of Strahd.
K80. Center Stair	No	This staircase connects K78 and K81.
K81. Tunnel	Yes	Choked by fog, which hides the trapdoor to the marble slide (DC 20 to spot).
K82. Marble Slide	Yes	The slide sends intruders hurtling into a flooded cell (K74E). It is too slippery to be ascended without magic.
K83. Spiral Stair	No	This staircase connects K78 to K73.
K84. Catacombs	Yes	The catacombs hold forty crypts, summarized in K84 under *Areas of Note*.
K85. Sergei's Tomb	Yes	Sergei's corpse, magically preserved, is clothed in *+2 plate armor*. This area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation).
K86. Strahd's Tomb	Yes	Strahd's tomb, guarded by his three **vampire spawn** brides. This area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation). In *The Wedding*, Strahd hides Ireena's corpse here.
K87. Guardians	Yes	This enchantment teleports non-lawful-good characters back to the top of the stairs.
K88. Tomb of King Barov & Queen Ravenia	No	This area is a potential Fortune of Ravenloft (artifact or Final Confrontation).



K6. The Overlook

Final Confrontation

> The Devil smiles at this tortured land from his lofty perch. There, on the edge of the garden overlook, amongst the weeds and thorns, will Barovia's fate be decided.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd at the overlook (Area K6), in the shadow of his wedding. When they arrive, they find him gazing out from the overlook, ignoring the rain. No torches are possible in the storm, but the scene is periodically lit by lightning. Read the following:

> Rain smashes down onto the flagstones, spilling over the edge into oblivion. A flash of lightning reveals a cloaked figure gazing out from the balcony.
>
> "This valley is mine," the Devil Strahd whispers—even the wind dares not swallow his words, its screams muted by his very tongue. "Its people are mine. Its future: mine. Nothing you do tonight will change that, fools. Your end lies at the bottom of this cliff. So come, 'heroes'! Let us meet your end together."

Tactics. Strahd's prevailing tactic is to push his foes closer to the edge by circling behind them. Once in position, he lines up a gust of wind spell. Characters that fail their saving throw may use their reaction to snatch at the low wall's edge, making a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the character does not fall. On a failure, they fall 1,000 feet below. If adventurers succeed, Strahd also attempts to kick someone from the edge (via the Shove action) by using Legendary Actions to close the gap and attack.

Weather. The storm is a source of strong winds and heavy precipitation, disadvantaging ranged attacks with ammunition.

K7. Entry



Revision

How Strahd has procured four **red dragon wyrmlings** to guarding his Castle is a mystery. Consider this revision: they are instead **silver dragon wyrmlings** and the last of Argynvost's brood, stolen from his lair in the hour of his terrible defeat. With sorcery, Strahd has broken their minds and enslaved them to his will, reducing them to guard dogs. Cursed to be stone until a guest attempts to leave Castle Ravenloft without Strahd's permission, the wyrmlings are only ever conscious for a handful of seconds at a time. Given the infrequency of these episodes, the wyrmlings have only aged a handful of minutes in the long centuries since Strahd took them from their father. If the Argynvost's skull is present, the wyrmlings do not attack, and instead whimper and howl for their long-slain father.

Sample Dialogue. A conversation in Draconic will reveal these facts, as can Sir Godfrey Gwilym, but the wyrmlings are powerless to disobey. In Draconic, they might say:

- "Our father… dead… but not gone…"
- "Stolen from our brood…"
- "Forced to guard his lair…"
- "We are stone until we are flesh, and long years of slumber pass by…"

Rahadin. If Rahadin is greeting the adventurers here in Area K7, he is all too eager to reveal this hideous truth. Read the following:

> Rahadin points to the dragon statues above, smirking. "Impressive craftsmanship, is it not? So lifelike, so detailed? Our Lord Strahd took the last four of Argynvost's petty brood. For eternity, they shall languish here, petrified and accursed. A fitting punishment—for always must the son pay for the sins of his father."

K8. Great Entry

Revision

The number of **gargoyles** has been reduced to three; eight is just overkill in a campaign bereft of adamantine weapons. Of the eight statues, five are inanimate. Before attacking, the gargoyles might chuckle (which sounds like sifting gravel), leaving the adventurers to guess which statues are alive.

K10. Dining Hall

The events described herein do not occur during Act II of *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* or during Acts I-III in The *Wedding at Ravenloft* storylines, but should occur if the adventurers visit this area another time. Further, Strahd's avatar should stick around much longer than three rounds.



K15. Chapel

Final Confrontation

> Once, the chapel of Castle Ravenloft was a sacred place. A place of prayer and devotion. A brazier to light the darkness. No more. The Morninglord's light has long since fled this place, scoured by Strahd's fratricide. Now, in the darkness, lurks only the Devil Strahd.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in the chapel (Area K15). However, he is nowhere to be found when they enter the chapel during Act IV. Read the following upon their arrival:

> Weapons drawn, you burst into the chapel. The posies scattered during the ceremony crunch underneath your feet and bats squeal overhead. Destiny has ordained this place as the site of Strahd's demise—but the Devil is nowhere to be seen.
>
> Instead, Strahd's voice thunders out, bouncing off every stone and brick and pew: "You'll find no gods for you here, 'heroes.' The Morninglord has long fled this place. His light will never again shine over Barovia. There is but one god left in this world, and He is the Ancient. He is the Land itself, and only the penitent will live."

Tactics. As a bat, Strahd hides amongst the swarm of bats above, and can draw upon them as three **swarm of bats** that take the Help action in combat or attack the most vulnerable adventurers. Additionally, any of the four **wights** Strahd left in Area K26 during Act III move to the King's Balcony (Area K28) to loose arrows at the adventurers from above. Should a character fly up there to drive off the wights, they're accosted by the two **Strahd zombies** ordinarily found there; if the character retreats, the zombies follow, falling over the banister and die by dashing their skulls against the chapel floor, becoming difficult terrain.

K20. Heart of Sorrow

See Appendix B for the **animated halberds'** statistics.



K25. Audience Hall

Final Confrontation

To free Barovia, you must challenge the beast from atop his throne. Within the darkness of the audience hall will the fate of this land and its people be decided.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in the audience hall (Area K25). In total darkness, the Devil sits upon his throne with a deck of tarokka cards. Read the following when the party arrives, which assumes Act III proceeded as planned:

You burst into the very hall Strahd lorded over earlier. There is no light, no torches, only brooding darkness dispelled by the occasional flash of lightning. The reception decorations loom out, ghastly in the dark.

You hear a papery sound. A card scornfully drawn from a deck and thrown to the floor.

Strahd.

He sits upon his throne, a chalice of wine in one hand, and a handful of tarokka cards in the other. The Devil welcomes you with a smile. "You know," he murmurs, "All my life, I worried over fate. The war years and the killing years stole my youth just as I stole the lives of my many enemies—and doubt always gnawed at me. How fickle it all was. How pointless." The Devil tosses another card to the floor: the Beast, the very card Madam Eva drew for you long ago, the card that predicted this battle.

"Fate. What a joke," Strahd says, unaware of the portentous card at his feet. "Men are powerless to twist it, but I am no mere man. Neither, it seems, are you. So come, 'heroes.' Tonight we write our own fate. Face your end and finally learn that this is my world."

Tactics. The room is heavily obscured by darkness. With the reception decorations still up, Strahd has a plethora of objects for his animate objects spell and there is nothing more ironic than the Devil bludgeoning his enemies to death with the very gifts they gave him.

K37. Study

Final Confrontation

Amidst ancient knowledge and black despair will you find the Devil finally satisfied. End him, and free this land.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in his study (Area K37). If you're running the *Wachtercult* quest, **Fiona Wachter** and her forces (Ernst Larnak, four **cult fanatics**, and her **imp** Majesto) are present and fight alongside Strahd. The Devil cares nothing for the secrets the Wachtercult is pilfering, for he is in full bliss on his wedding night. Read the following:

A blazing hearth fire fills this room with rolling waves of red and amber light. The walls are lined with ancient books and tomes, their leather covers well oiled and preserved through careful use. All is in order here. The stone floor is concealed beneath a thick, luxurious rug. In the center of the room is a large, low table, waxed and polished to a mirrored finish. Even the poker in its stand next to the blazing fireplace is polished. Large, overstuffed divans and couches are arranged about the room. Two chairs of burgundy-colored wood with padded leather seats and back cushions face the hearth. A huge painting hangs over the mantelpiece in a heavy, gilded frame. The rolling firelight illuminates the carefully rendered portrait. It is an exact likeness of Ireena Kolyana.

Throughout the study are eight figures: Lady Wachter and her followers, their noses deep in books decorated with glowing glyphs, or stuffing their bags with ancient tomes.

Strahd's sudden voice echoes out from a chair facing the hearth. "Never did I believe all could be well. That love, sweet and warm love, could fill the pit in my heart—and that I could have that and humiliate my greatest enemies." The Devil sighs dreamily, the flames casting his wicked shadow on the wall. "You've failed," Strahd tells you. "Know that. Know that Tatyana is already mine in both flesh and spirit. All that's left is to provide her with her first meal: you."

Tactics. Strahd has no shortage of tomes to cast *animate objects* on. At your discretion, the Devil can call the four **vampire spawn** he's left in his bedchamber (Area K42) to join the fray. These spawn may even be his four previous brides, Anastrasya, Ludmilla, Sasha, and Volenta, if there is no chance the adventurers will battle Strahd in his tomb, where the brides are ordinarily found. Further, with the Wachtercult available, Strahd can use his Legendary Actions to attack cultists (with a Bite attack) to heal himself with their blood. At your discretion, every cultist slain this way rises as a **Strahd zombie** at the start of the next round.

K41. Treasury

Final Confrontation

Behind a woman of great beauty will you find the Devil in his vault, and at last end his reign.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in the treasury (Area K41, which is accessible from Area K37), perched upon the *Daern's instant fortress*. Read the following:

The vault is octagonal, free of dust and cobwebs, but dominated by a thirty-foot-high tower etched with arrow slits on all sides, and a battlemented roof. Perched there, atop the tower and below a domed ceiling painted with unfamiliar constellations, is the Devil himself.

His voice rings out, "By dawn, this vault will be meaningless—for I will have Tatyana's devotion and your bones. Have at me, 'heroes.'"

With a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character identifies this as a *Daern's instant fortress*.

Navigating the Tower. The adventurers will be hard-pressed trying to break down the walls of the tower. Some solutions include:

- Casting identify on the tower to learn its command word, and thus opening the doors.
- Using the space between the vault and tower walls to slowly scale the tower by bracing one's legs against the tower, moving at half their movement speed.
- Guessing Strahd's command word; if there were any keywords or refrains oft repeated by the Devil throughout your campaign, they might try repeating them. It's up to your discretion.

Tactics. Strahd has the high ground and can safely rain death upon his foes with spells of *ray of frost* or *fireball*.

K50. Guest Room

Revision

If the adventurers attempt to rest here, 1d4+2 **crawling claws** attempt to strangle them in their sleep.

Yellow Mold
Hazard
Yellow mold grows in dark places, and one patch covers a 5-foot square. If touched, the mold ejects a cloud of spores that fills a 10-foot cube originating from the mold. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save. Sunlight or any amount of fire damage instantly destroys one patch of yellow mold.

K60. North Tower's Peak

Final Confrontation

Only by pounding a stake through the Devil's black heart might Barovia at last be free from his tyranny—and fate has decreed that on the castle's tower peak will destiny be decided.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd at the North Tower Peak (Area K60), just above the Heart of Sorrow. This Final Confrontation allows you to skip or incorporate the *The Heart of Sorrow* quest at your leisure. They meet Strahd staring outside the window. Read the following:

As the wind screams, nearby thunder promises ruin. The Devil Strahd gazes into the storm from a nearby window.

"This valley is mine," Strahd whispers—even the wind dares not swallow his words, its screams muted by his very tongue. "Its people are mine. Its future: mine. Nothing you do tonight will change that, fools. Your doom lies at the bottom of this tower. So come, 'heroes'! Let us meet your end together."

Tactics. Strahd does not stay in this room for long, and instead takes the trapdoor up to Area K60A, so that he may battle the adventurers under the open sky. He favors *gust of wind* spells that might blow the adventurers off the tower, dropping them 130 feet below to Area K53, whereupon they take 13d6 bludgeoning damage. A creature that is within 5 feet of a falling character can reach out to snatch at them, making a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the character doesn't fall. At your discretion, Strahd can use a Lair Action to call down a bolt of lightning from the storm, choosing a point on the tower. Creatures within 5 feet of this point must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d10 lightning damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Weather. This area is tormented by strong winds and heavy precipitation, disadvantaging ranged attacks that use ammunition.

K63. Wine Cellar

See the sidebar for the effects of yellow mold.



K67. Hall of Bones

Argynvost the Reanimated

In Chapter 7, the *Companion* overhauled Argynvostholt and its eponymous master. Here in Castle Ravenloft, the adventurers must face **Argynvost the Reanimated**, a skeletal dragon animated by Strahd's necromancy. Soon after the adventurers enter this area, the many bones in here knit themselves into the body of a dragon beneath Argynvost's skull. Read the following:

> As you begin to leave this accursed place, the ground trembles. The ossuaries tumble over, huge bones flinging themselves across the fetid air, nearly smashing into you. In the span of seconds, the bones knit themselves into the skeleton of a dragon, all below the dragon's skull. In its ribs glows a crystalline heart, throbbing with foul life! Darkness blooms in its empty eye sockets, twinkling with hatred, and with a roar, the leviathan surges to life!

Thanks to this area's desecrated ground, Argynvost has advantage on saving throws here. If the dragon is defeated, read the following:

> The foul magic that animated this once-proud dragon falters, and all the bones come crashing down in an avalanche. Its crystalline heart floats there above the desecrated ground, the size of a human head. A voice cries out into your minds, "Swiftly, for now my spirit wanes! Deliver my heart to the crypts below Argynvostholt so my beloved knights may at last rest! Swift as the dragon flies, heroes, before the last of my light blinks out and the Order of the Silver Dragon is forever condemned to undeath!

As described in Chapter 7, this heart replaces Argynvost's skull, and is much easier to transport to Argnynvostholt.

Hazard: Desecrated Ground
An area of desecrated ground can be any size, and a *detect evil and good* spell cast within range reveals its presence. Undead standing on desecrated ground have advantage on all saving throws. A vial of holy water purifies a 10-foot-square area of desecrated ground when sprinkled on it, and a *hallow* spell purifies desecrated ground within its area.

Final Confrontation

> Destiny will be decided among the dead. Within a hall of bones and desecrated graves will you find the Devil.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in the Hall of Bones (Area K67). He sits at the head of the table, with a skull of a long-dead foe, Leo Dilisnya, whose bones were regifted to Strahd by Lady Wachter during the reception. Read the following:

> In this morbid hall sits the master of Ravenloft, sipping wine and gazing into the empty eyes of a skull.
>
> "There has been no enemy against which I have not triumphed," Strahd says, without turning to look at you. He swills his wine and smiles at the skull. "Leo Dilisnya slew me. Shot me through with arrows, but I did not die. I cannot die, and yet you fools truly expect to best me? I, who slaughtered the elves? Who trampled my father's foes? Who thundered across the world of yore with the wrath of a just god?" Strahd raises his glass, directing your attention to the dragon skull mounted upon the wall.
>
> "Not even Argynvostholt could best me! You stand on their bones and believe it can turn out any better? I will take your skulls as trophies!"

Tactics. This hall is a site of desecrated ground (see the sidebar), granting Strahd and any other undead advantage on saving throws. At your discretion, three **skeletons** join the battle at the start of every round, knitting themselves together from the bone piles.



K74. North Dungeon

K74H. Lost Sword

Given the magic sword's additional properties, the *Companion* has renamed it from *+1 shortsword* to *+1 shortsword of the Lost Crusader*.

K84. Catacombs

With forty crypts to dig through, the Catacombs have been summarized in the table below. Most notable is Crypt 15, where Khazan's *staff of power* may be found. This magic item can alter the very course of your campaign.

K85. Sergei's Tomb

Final Confrontation

> For his beloved Tatyana, the Devil Strahd murdered his own brother and damned Barovia to darkness. Now, in Sergei's resting place, justice will be met.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in his brother's tomb (Area K85). They find the Devil lying across his brother's coffin, weeping—in triumph. Read:

> A soft wail echoes through these wretched depths, and as you come upon the scene, you find the Devil weeping over his brother's coffin… but when you meet his gaze, the Devil smirks with triumph.
>
> "You've lost!" Strahd sneers, wiping a tear from his eye. "Tatyana is mine! For all his prayers and piety, Sergei himself could not stop me from taking her as my own. For her, I murdered my own brother! Contemplate what I will do to you."

Tactics. Strahd's objective is to separate the party by lowering the portcullis, which he can do by pulling the lever or using a Lair Action. A *gust of wind* spell can blow apart their ranks, possibly hurling some behind the portcullis. Raising the portcullis ordinarily requires a successful DC 15 Strength check, but if he uses a Lair Action to magically close it, the DC increases to 20.

Catacombs Summarized

Crypt	Epitaph	Contents
1	*Herein Lie the Ones Who Walk The Path of Pain & Torment*	The entrance to the catacombs, this crypt opens upon K81.
2	*Artista DeSlop: Court Ceiling Painter*	Seven worthless paintbrushes.
3	*Lady Isolde Yunke (Isolde the Incredible): Purveyor of Antiques & Imports*	Mountains of worthless antiques.
4	*Prince Ariel du Plumette (Ariel the Heavy)*	Ariel's evil **ghost** haunts this crypt.
5	*Artank Swilovich: Friend & Member of the Barovian Wine Distillers Guild*	Herein lie thousands of empty wine bottles and possibly a Fortune of Ravenloft.
6	*Saint Markovia: Dead For All Time*	*Saint Markovia's thighbone*. The crypt is trapped.
7	*Endorovich (Endorovich the Terrible): What the Blood of a Hundred Wars Did Not Do, the Spurn of A Woman Accomplished*	Two gargoyle statues, which Endorovich's spirit possesses one at a time (gaining the statistics of a **gargoyle**).
8	*Duchess Dorfniya Dilisnya*	A magically preserved quilt.
9	*Pidlwick: Fool of Dorfniya*	If Pidlwick's spirit was summoned in K36, a *deck of illusions* manifests here.
10	*Sir Leonid Krushkin (Sir Lee the Crusher): Bigger Than Life, He Loved His Jewelry*	Three jeweled necklaces (750 gp each) and Sir Lee's massive maul.
11	*Tasha Petrovna: Healer of Kings, Light unto the West, Servant, Companion*	The crypt is consecrated. A good-aligned character that touches her holy symbol is guided to the *ring of regeneration* at the Abbey of Saint Markovia.
12	*King Troisky: The Three-Faced King*	Moving King Troisky's three-faced helm activates poison gas is released.
13	*King Katsky (Katsky the Bright): Ruler, Inventor, & Self-Proclaimed Time Traveler*	Katsky's powder horn, musket, and glider.
14	*Stahbal Indi-Bhak: A Truer Friend No Ruler Ever Had. Here Lies His Family In Honor.*	Herein lie 15 coffined **wights**. When someone triggers Strahd's teleportation traps, they are swapped with a coffined wight.
15	*Khazan: His Word Was Power*	Khazan's gilded skull (2,800 gp) & his *staff of power*.
16	*Elsa Fallona von Twitterberg (Beloved Actor): She Had Many Followers*	Herein lies nothing of value.
17	*Sir Sedrik Spinwitovich (Admiral Spinwitovich): Confused Though He Was, He Built The Greatest Naval Force Ever Assembled in a Landlocked Country*	A funeral barge, which Spinwitovich was buried in.
18	*Ireena Kolyana: Wife*	Herein perpetually swirls fog.
19	*Artimus (Builder of The Keep): Thou Standest Amidst The Monument To His Life*	Herein lies nothing of value.
20	*Sasha Ivliskova: Wife*	Herein languishes a **vampire spawn** bride of Strahd's he's tired of.
21	*Patrinva Velikovna: Bride*	Herein languishes the **banshee** Patrina, restless and awaiting her brother.
22	*Sir Erik Vonderbucks*	Herein lies Erik's corpse, which is coated in gold (totalling 500 gp, if meticulously peeled from his desiccated corpse).
23	—	The Doomed One's (see The *Narrator's Toolbox, Companion*, Ch. 1) name is engraved on the tomb and their illusory corpse is on the bier.
24	*Ivan Ivliskovich, Champion of Winter Dog Racing: The Race May Go To The Swift, But Vengeance Is For the Loser's Relatives*	Herein lies nothing of value.
25	*Stefan Gregorovich: First Counselor to King Barov von Zarovich*	Herein lies Stefan's skull, which may be conversed with as if by a *speak with dead* spell. All his answers are false.
26	*Intree Sik-Valoo: He Spurned Wealth For The Knowledge He Could Take To Heaven*	Herein lies Intree's skull, which may be conversed with as if by a *speak with dead* spell. All his answers are true.
27	—	This crypt is missing its door and is infested with 3 **giant wolf spiders**.
28	*Bascal Ofenheiss: Chef Deluxe*	Trapped: if the bell is rung, fire fills the crypt.
29	*Baron Eisglaze Drüf*	Herein grows a patch of brown mold.
30	*Prefect Ciril Romulich (Beloved of King Barov & Queen Ravenovia): High Priest of the Most Holy Order*	Herein lies Romulich's jeweled holy symbol (750 gp) that, if touched by an evil creature, emits a radiant blast.
31	*We Knew Him Only By His Wealth*	Herein lies a 30-foot-deep hidden spiked pit and a skeleton with a *spell scroll of magic circle* and possibly a Fortune of Ravenloft.
32	—	This crypt has no epitaph. Entering the eastern alcove teleports you to K86.
33	*Sir Klutz Tripalotsky: He Fell on His Own Sword*	Sir Klutz (**phantom warrior**), a potential Destined Ally.
34	*King Dostron the Hellborn*	Herein remains an invisible, mischievous **imp**.
35	*Sir Jarnwald The Trickster: The Joke was on Him*	An illusion hiding a 20-ft-deep pit with 6 **ghouls** silenced by magic.
36	—	This crypt's epitaph is obscured by claw marks. It is empty of value.
37	*Gralmore Nimblenobs: Wizard Ordinaire*	Three *spell scrolls* (*cone of cold*, *fireball* and *lightning bolt*) and potentially a Fortune of Ravenloft..
38	*General Kroval "Mad Dog" Grislek (Master of the Hunt): A Leader of Hounds & Men*	This crypt is haunted by Grislek's **wraith**, guarded by 3 **hell hounds**, and potentially the site for a Fortune of Ravenloft.
39	*Beucephalus, The Wonder Horse: May The Flowers Grow Ever Brighter Where He Trods*	DC 20 Strength check to open; crypt of Beucephalus, Strahd's steed.
40	*Tatsaul Eris: Last of the Line*	Herein lies nothing of value.



K86. Strahd's Tomb

The Ba'al Verzi Dagger

If you've included the *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* in your campaign as a fourth artifact, it is plunged into the wood of Strahd's coffin as a testament to the death he denied the gods.

Final Confrontation

> The Devil's Wedding Night draws to its bloody close. In the depths of Ravenloft, in a palace of utter death and darkness, will you find Strahd von Zarovich in the one place he can be destroyed: his tomb.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in his tomb (Area K86), the most thematic Final Confrontation. Unlike in *Curse of Strahd*, the Devil is not in his coffin—Ireena is, dead and exsanguinated, per *The Devil's Bride*. Strahd has dissolved into mist that fills the tomb, and it is out from this mist Strahd's voice thunders. Read the following:

> The crypt teems with a clawing mist out from which the Devil's voice thunders:
>
> "The game draws to a close. Do you really think you can defeat me? Me? I, who slaughtered the elves? Who won my father's wars? I tore Argynvost from the very sky and butchered him in his own home! Saint Markovia starved in these crypts! Even Khazan could not best me! All of them, dead and buried, and yet here you stand on their ashes. You truly are the greatest foes I have ever faced.
>
> "The game draws to a close. Today, I die or live at last. Come heroes! Face your end!"

The mist condenses into the gaunt form of Strahd, appearing directly behind a character of his choice.

Tactics. At the start of the first round, Strahd's three **vampire spawn** brides (Anastrasya, Ludmilla, and Volenta) burst from the earth. If any of the teleportation traps are active, Strahd tries to bait an enemy towards one, using a Shove or a *gust of wind* spell to send them to Crypt, in which case a **wight** is conjured in their place (see Crypt 14, K84 for details).

K88. Tomb of King Barov & Queen Ravenia

Final Confrontation

> Strahd spent his youth in the shadow of his father, and it is under Barov's dead eyes will you break the throne of Barovia.

The adventurers are destined to face Strahd in his parents' tomb (Area K88). Their presence enrages him. Read the following:

> The otherworldly curtain paints the tomb in shifting hues of blue as lightning flashes struggle to filter in through the grimy, stained glass windows—and in that split of a second appears the darkened figure of Strahd von Zarovich himself.
>
> "You would *dare* step foot in this place?" the Devil shouts. The stones beneath your feet quiver. "You would *dare* to stand where my father rests? The man that shook this very world and draped it in his shadow?"
>
> The Devil's hands curl into fists. Outside the storm worsens, railing against the glass. "You do not deserve to be buried here, but it will be your tomb all the same."

Tactics. Strahd's prevailing tactic is to plant himself at the center of the tomb so that he may use a *gust of wind* spell for two purposes:

- To blow a non-lawful-good foe up into the otherworldly curtain in Area K87, so that they may be teleported away.
- To shatter the stained glass and blow a foe out of Castle Ravenloft altogether. The fall is 900 feet and drops a character into the Village of Barovia.



Chapter V: The Town of Vallaki

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 107
Chapter Progression 107
Quick Notes 107
Running the Chapter 108
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 109
Dramatis Personae 110
Variants & Revisions 113
The Bones of Saint Andral 114
I. All Will Be Well 115
II. Saint Andral's Feast 116
III. All Is Not Well 118
Approaching the Town 121
Areas of Vallaki 122
N1. St. Andral's Church 122
N2. Blue Water Inn 123
N3. Burgomaster's Mansion 125
N4. Wachterhaus 125
N5. Arasek Stockyard 127
N6. Coffin Maker's Shop 127
N7. Blinsky Toys 129
N8. Town Square 130
N9. Vistani Camp 131
Special Events 133
Justice for Arabelle 133
The Honor of Your Presence 133

Known in the *Curse of Strahd* community as "the Vallakian knot," Chapter 5 has a lot to unpack—too much even. With so many characters and areas, some of which are bloated with unnecessary details, it is easy for a Dungeon Master to become frustrated. Vallaki is somewhere between a sandbox and a time bomb. It is the only true bastion of civilization the adventurers can enjoy in Barovia—the only settlement with true industry and amenities—but the adventurers' time there is limited. For Ireena Kolyana, Vallaki is one of the few places in Barovia she can hope to be safe from Strahd.

Vallaki is home to three noble families: the friendly Martikovs, the scheming Lady Wachter and her brood, and the reigning Vallakoviches. Their politics are at the heart of this chapter, and *St. Andral's Feast*—wherein Strahd has orchestrated the theft of Saint Andral's bones to desecrate the church and stage an attack—is the spark to an inferno of shock, civil unrest, and treachery. As the *Companion* advocates, *St. Andral's Feast* should be Strahd's first true appearance in your campaign, and the attack on the church (and the upheaval it causes) marks the end of Act I for your campaign, when everything changes.

Chapter Overview

Vallaki is a powder keg waiting to explode. Strahd has orchestrated the theft of the holy bones of Saint Andral, which consecrate the local church. Without the bones, undead and fiends can step upon its once-hallow grounds. Strahd intends to attack the church three days after the adventurers enter Vallaki. By all logic, this tragedy effectively kicks the party out of Vallaki: it robs Ireena Kolyana of safe haven; it leads to civil unrest culminating in the execution of the burgomaster; and it allows Lady Fiona Wachter to seize control of the town. At best, the adventurers are banished by a paranoid Lady Wachter, who does not want any contest to her iron regime. At worst, the adventurers are *blamed* for the tragedy and face a bloodthirsty mob. Our heroes are effectively forced to flee Vallaki. These events are expanded upon in the *Companion's The Bones of Saint Andral* questline.

Chapter Progression

Vallaki is a three act-storyline that measures up perfectly with the *Bones of Saint Andral* questline described below.

Act I spans the adventurers' arrival and exploration of the town, as well as its outlying areas. During Act I, Father Lucian reveals the theft of Saint Andral's bones. Additionally, the baron invites the adventurers to dinner.

Act II covers the night of St. Andral's Feast event (both Act II of the Bones of Saint Andral storyline and the St. Andral's special event). Strahd attacks Vallaki in some way, even if his plot is foiled.

Act III is a time of chaos. Goaded by Lady Wachter, a mob drags the baron and his wife from their home to be executed. The adventurers are sure to be banished from Vallaki thereafter if they don't leave of their own volition.

In the Aftermath, Vallaki is seized by Lady Fiona Wachter, who encourages the townsfolk to worship devils and no longer fear Strahd. Citizens openly walk the streets at night—an unprecedented feat—and Wachter's cultists command all positions of influence. The Martikovs remain in Vallaki to keep an eye on Wachter for the Keepers of the Feather.

Quick Notes

- Ireena Kolyana is central to this chapter. She seeks sanctuary at the church and is obsessed over by Izek Strazni. Baron Vallakovich wishes to betroth her to his son, whereas Lady Wachter would sooner turn her over to Strahd.
- Vallaki is home to three noble families: the reigning Vallakoviches, the charitable Martikovs, and the wicked Wachters.
- Ordinarily, Father Lucian only confides in the theft of Saint Andral's bones to good-aligned clerics and paladins. The adventurers can otherwise win his trust by rescuing Arabelle from Bluto Krogarov at Lake Zarovich or liberating Udo Lukovich from the baron's manor.

Author's Criticisms: The Vallakian Knot

Vallaki is a hot mess. It deserves its nickname in the community. Critical details are missing from so many other portions of *Curse of Strahd*, but thank God we know that the Martikovs have a well in the front yard and what toys the kids have. When you factor in the Byzantine politics and the ticking time bomb that is *St. Andral's Feast*, it becomes incredibly difficult to run the chapter.

My advice is to take it slow. It is perfectly okay to run Vallaki as a sandbox and ignore *St. Andral's Feast's* timer. As long as the event does happen and the adventurers are given time to intervene, you're fine. It can occur three days from now or even a week. Hell, if your players are keen, you could spend an entire month in Vallaki—not every day will be full of adventure, however, and they don't need to be. The *characters* themselves require rest and relaxation. Barovia is a horrifying place which frays the psyche; it's okay if the adventurers take some time off and establish roots that will inevitably be ripped out by the Devil. With so many characters, landmarks, and nearby locales, you can truly experience a Barovian campaign. Now is the time for side quests and long dinners with nobles. Just relax and take it slow.

- Do not forget that the streets of Vallaki are alive. At your discretion, the adventurers can cross paths with any other Vallakian character instead of where they are presented in the book.
- If you don't want to run the *Festival of the Blazing Sun* or *Tyger, Tyger* events, you can just postpone the festival to the day after *St. Andral's Feast.* This has the benefit of changing the baron's method of execution: he and his family are immolated instead of stoned to death.
- Family portraits are useful tools; they inform the party of the entire family and offer insight into the family's social life. Be sure to show them before the adventurers deal with the noble families.
- Chapter 5 is likely the party's first encounter with Strahd.

Checklist

- Vallaki is a narrative labyrinth. You must accomplish the following tasks:
- Ireena Kolyana is brought to Saint Andral's Church. Father Lucian identifies her as Yasmine Strazni.
- Father Lucian sends the adventurers to Blinsky Toys to purchase toys for Yeska, Freek and Myrtle. The adventurers see the Ireena Kolyana dolls.
- Izek Strazni is seen in Town Square.
- Urwin Martikov asks the adventurers to visit Lake Zarovich to check on Bluto Krogarov.
- The adventurers visit the Vistani Camp, thereby meeting Kasimir Velikov and Arrigal.
- Kasimir Velikov asks the adventurers to join him on an expedition to the Amber Temple.
- Father Lucian tasks the adventurers with recovering the bones of Saint Andral.
- The adventurers are "invited" to the baron's home for dinner. The baron discusses the "incorrigible instigator Rudolph van Richten" and, if Ireena is present, proposes a betrothal between her and Victor.
- Victor Vallakovich's teleportation circle is discovered.

Previously on Curse of Strahd

- Ireena dyed her hair after leaving the Village of Barovia to better hide her identity.
- If you utilized the *The Liar, the Glitch, and the Wardrobe* variant, the adventurers may have found a Blinsky doll in Gertruda's bedroom (see *CMP* Ch. 3, Area E3). This doll, given to her by Victor Vallakovich, is a hook for the local toymaker, Blinsky.
- The adventurers may have saved Freek and Myrtle from Old Bonegrinder, in which case it is best to give them to Father Lucian at Saint Andral's Church. The priest sends the party to Blinsky Toys (Area N7) with some money to purchase toys for the traumatized kids.
- Morgantha may have hexed an adventurer into setting up St. Andral's Feast (see *CMP* Ch. 6, *Dark Bargains*).

Running the Chapter

Consisting of so many landmarks and characters, Vallaki can be difficult to run. One must take it slow and introduce its characters in small doses. The players can be overwhelmed just as easily as the Dungeon Master. Fortunately, the adventurers will only frequent the church, inn, and town square (Areas N1, N2, and N3). These are dynamic locations, visited by all Vallakians. Likewise, the streets are alive with people. If you have an encounter in mind, stage it there. Remember, Vallakians are living people with their own duties, habits, and wants to attend to. If you want the adventurers to encounter a certain character, do so on the street if you can't wait for them to return to a particular location.

Below is a sample plot you can draw upon for inspiration. This plot begins after the *Death in the Dead of Night* storyline described in *CMP* Ch. 6 (hence why the party arrive to Vallaki at dawn) but you need not follow it.

Sample Plot

- Arriving to Vallaki at dawn, the adventurers bring Ireena to the church. Father Lucian, recognizing her as the little girl who was lost to the woods twenty years ago, accepts her—as well as Freek and Myrtle, if they were rescued from Old Bonegrinder. The party, exhausted, retires to the Blue Water Inn. After several hours of much-needed sleep, the adventurers begin their first day in Vallaki.
- Returning to the church, Father Lucian seems troubled, but he waves them off. Lucian gives the party money to buy toys from Blinsky's Toys for Freek and Myrtle. He also admits that he's troubled over the continued imprisonment of Udo Lukovich, the shoemaker whose mother prays nightly for his safe release.
- On their way through town square, the party sees the donkey-headed criminals in the stockades. At Blinsky's, they find dolls eerily reminiscent of Ireena. Blinsky explains that the baron's henchman, Izek Strazni, orders him to manufacture the dolls. While on their way back, the party finally see Izek. If Ireena is present, he gawks at her and begins planning her abduction. Once back at the church, Father Lucian reveals that devil-armed brute is none other than Ireena's brother.
- The party find itself in a power struggle. Both Baron Vallakovich and Lady Wachter wish to host them for dinner (see *The Honor of your Presence* and *Lady Wachter's Wish* in *Special Events* below). The nobles do not tolerate that which they can't control, but the baron, in particular, wishes to wed Ireena to his son, Victor. Lady Wachter would sooner give Ireena to the Devil than risk his wrath.
- After earning Father Lucian's trust—such as by saving Arabelle the Vistana from Lake Zarovich, negotiating for Udo Lukovich's release, or other heroics—the priest offers his quest. This likely occurs on the second or third day in Vallaki. If the bones of Saint Andral are not recovered, Strahd attacks the church. This sparks civil unrest that sees the baron and his wife executed. As Izek Strazni flees into the wilderness, Lady Wachter seizes power. Eager to cement a claim on Vallaki, Wachter imprisons Victor, weds him to her daughter Stella, and promises to execute him after a child is born. Eager to rid Vallaki of any other threats to her rule, Wachter banishes the adventurers from Vallaki.

Advancement

Curse of Strahd expects the party to be 3rd-level, but the *Companion* advocates leveling them to 4th beforehand, and, after *St. Andral's Feast,* advancing them to 5th-level.

Exploring Outside Vallaki

Even with the *Bigger Barovia* variant, the adventurers should be encouraged to explore other locales. Lake Zarovich (and Mount Baratok), Van Richten's Tower, Old Bonegrinder, and Argynvostholt are all within a day's trek. A visit there also serves to waste more time before *St. Andral's Feast*. The adventurers can receive bread crumbs to these locales from the Blue Water Inn.

Navigating Vallaki

Because Vallaki has so many characters and landmarks, you must give your players a map—not the adventurers, but the players themselves. Moreover, they require the Dungeon Master's version of the map, which points out landmarks. The Player version of the map is, frankly, worthless. What use is there in being able to follow a road? Players are not their characters, so extra aid is required to facilitate informed exploration of the town. The map you give the players is simply a representation of their knowledge. One short conversation with a Vallakian can provide information on all nine landmarks.

A Dungeon Master must sometimes worry that by informing adventurers of a landmark, they are hinting that there lies a mystery or secret to unravel. In this instance, do not worry about spoilers; every Vallakian landmark is public knowledge, even Wachterhaus. For some innocuous descriptions of these landmarks, see the *Vallaki Landmarks by Description* table in *Areas of Vallaki.*

Weather

Weather is a powerful tool in Vallaki. Anything but a shower drives the villagers indoors and leaves Vallaki's streets eerily empty. It's a great way to alienate the adventurers or keep them indoors and thereby waste more time before *St. Andral's Feast.* Even better, if the adventurers brave Henrik van der Voort's home to retrieve the bones of Saint Andral, a storm can provide an excuse for the vampire spawn to pursue the party even during daytime.

It rains heavily on the first day in Vallaki, encouraging the party to take it easy for once. The skies are mostly clear on the second day, encouraging the exploration of nearby locales, like Lake Zarovich and Argynvostholt. The third day is a miserable one; from dawn to dusk, gruelling rains batter the streets.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Elixir of Health* (N2H)
- *Bag of Tricks (Gray)* (N2H)
- *Hat of Disguise* (N2C (worn by Rictavio))
- *Oil of Slipperiness* (N8 (The Apothecarium))
- *Potion of Healing* (N2H & N2Q)
- *Potion of Necrotic Resistance* (N8 (The Apothecarium))
- *Potion of Poison* (N9I)
- *Potion of Water Breathing* (N8 (The Apothecarium))
- *Ring of Mind Shielding* (N2C (worn by Rictavio))
- *Ring of Warmth* (N9A (worn by Kasimir Velikov))
- *Scroll of Protection from Fiends* (N5)
- *Scroll of Protection from Undead* (N5)

Creatures

- Arrigal
- Assassin
- Baboon
- Bandit
- Bandit Captain
- Commoner
- Cult Fanatic
- Cultist
- Draft Horse
- Fiona Wachter
- Ghost
- Guard
- Imp
- Izek Strazni
- Kasimir Velikov
- Mage
- Mastiff
- Milivoj
- Noble
- Priest
- Riding Horse
- Rudolph van Richten
- Saber-toothed Tiger
- Scout
- Skeleton
- Spy
- Strahd von Zarovich
- Swarm of Bats
- Swarm of Rats
- Swarm of Ravens
- Vampire Spawn
- Veteran
- Wereraven

Effects & Items

- *Glyph of Warding*
- Healer's Kit
- Holy Water
- Poisoned Needle Trap

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Alexei	CN **Bandit**	N	N9C	A Vistana being whipped bloody by Luvash for losing Arabelle.
Arrigal	Unique	N	N9C	A heartless Vistana assassin of Strahd's.
Bray Martikov	—	F	N2	Wereraven son of Urwin and Danika. Noncombatant.
Brom Martikov	—	F	N2	Wereraven son of Urwin and Danika. Noncombatant.
Danika Dorakova	**Wereraven**	F	N2	Agent of the Keepers of the Feather, and Urwin's wife.
Ernst Larnak	LE **Spy**	N	N4	Lady Wachter's disloyal, conniving spy and henchman.
Fiona Wachter	Unique	H	N4	An evil noble seeking to seize control of Vallaki.
Gadof Blinsky	CG **Commoner**	F	N7	A passionate but strange toymaker.
Gunther Arasek	LG **Commoner**	F	N5	Owner of the Arasek Stockyard, a general store & storage facility.
Henrik van der Voort	LE **Commoner**	N	N6	A coffinmaker forced to steal St. Andral's bones.
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	F	—	Tatyana reborn, who seeks sanctuary at the church.
Izek Strazni	Unique	H	N8	The burgomaster's devil-armed henchman & Ireena's brother.
Karl Wachter	N **Noble**	F	N2C	Lady Wachter's younger, mischievous son.
Kasimir Velikov	Unique	F	N9A	A dusk elf wizard responsible for his people's genocide.
Leo Dilisnya	—	—	N3P	The assassin that slew Strahd centuries ago, now a spirit.
Lucian Petrovich	LG **Priest**	F	N1	The town priest and *Bones of Saint Andral* questgiver.
Luvash	CE **Bandit Captain**	N	N9C	Arabelle's perpetually drunk father, and a Vistani leader.
Lydia Petrovna	LG **Commoner**	F	N3	The burgomaster's perpetually nervous, people-pleasing wife.
Milivoj	Unique	N	N1	The church gravedigger, who stole St. Andral's bones.
Muriel Vinshaw	**Wereraven**	F	N2C	A wereraven agent of the Keepers of the Feather.
Nikolai Wachter Jr.	N **Noble**	F	N2C	Lady Wachter's eldest, mischievous son.
Nikolai Wachter Sr.	LN **Noble**	—	N4O	Lady Wachter's dead husband, preserved by necromancy.
Rudolph van Richten	Unique	F	N2	The legendary monster hunter, disguised as the half-elf Rictavio.
Stella Wachter	CG **Commoner**	N	N4N	Lady Wachter's daughter, driven mad by Victor Vallakovich.
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	H	SE	The lord of Barovia, here as a consequence to *St. Andral's Feast.*
Szoldar Szoldarovich	N **Scout**	F	N2C	A wolf hunter that offers guidance through the woods.
Udo Lukovich	LN **Commoner**	F	N3M	A cobbler imprisoned by Vallakovich for "malicious unhappiness."
Urwin Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	N2	The wereraven proprietor of the Blue Water Inn.
Vargas Vallakovich	NE **Noble**	N	N3L	Vallaki's egotistical, deluded, desperate burgomaster.
Victor Vallakovich	NE **Mage**	N	N3T	The burgomaster's son and fledgling wizard.
Willemina Rikalova	LG **Commoner**	F	N1	Udo's distraught mother, who prays nightly for his release.
Yelena Arasek	LG **Commoner**	F	N5	Owner of the Arasek Stockyard, a general store & storage facility.
Yeska	—	F	N1	The altar boy, a noncombatant, who told Milivoj of the bones.
Yevgeni Krushkin	N **Scout**	F	N2C	A wolf hunter that offers guidance through the woods.

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Arrigal

Arrigal is Strahd's foremost assassin, able to go where his undead and wilder minions cannot. In this chapter, the Vistana watches his brother whip Alexei bloody, but makes it clear to the adventurers that *he* is the one to entreat with.

Arrigal has but one weakness: his niece, Arabelle. Even a heart as dark as his can know love, and he loves his niece unconditionally. If she is rescued, Arrigal extends his true gratitude… but even that is not enough for Arrigal to disobey Strahd's orders.

Justice for Arabelle. As described below in the special events, Arrigal seeks vengeance against Bluto Krogarov for abducting his niece. If Bluto is not given to the Vistani to face trial, Arrigal infiltrates Vallaki at night, assassinates Bluto, and leaves his corpse in town square for all to see.

Ernst Larnak

Fiona Wachter's disloyal spy can be bribed for as low as 10 gp, after which he reveals her secrets. He can be met during the *Lady Wachter's Wish* special event, but might otherwise seek out the party. He prefers to communicate through Thieves' Cant, if possible.

The only secret of Wachter's Ernst doesn't know is that she sleeps with the corpse of her husband Nikolai. Ernst refers to Wachter as his "fair lady."

In this chapter, use the following sample dialogue:

- "My fair lady hosts a book club every few nights—a little antithesis to Father Lucian's sermons, if you catch my drift."
- "My fair lady has made contact with… Well, we have a friend in our midst—Majesto—who is even more alien to this land than you are."
- "The family is broken. The boys drink themselves to death each night—when they aren't making messes I must quietly clean up, that is—and Stella is locked in her room. The girl has gone mad. We know not why… only that the tattered remains of her sanity stretch back to a private dinner with the young baronet."

Fiona Wachter

Fiona is this chapter's secret antagonist. Slowly, she has been amassing power and influence in Vallaki as both a noble and the leader of a devil-worshiping cult. Ultimately, in the aftermath of *St. Andral's Feast*, she manipulates civil unrest to have the Vallakoviches executed, after which she seizes control of Vallaki.

Henrik van der Voort

Poor Henrik is a tragic figure. He has been forced to house vampire spawn in his home and hold onto Saint Andral's bones until after Strahd's attack on the church. He is a prisoner in his own home, terrified of the vampires in the attic, but he is powerless to flee.

Ireena Kolyana

This chapter can shed light on Ireena's mysterious past. Provided the adventurers escorted her to Vallaki, Ireena seeks sanctuary on holy ground. Recognizing her from twenty years ago, Father Lucian reveals that her true name is Yasmine Strazni, born to Hans and Ruxandra (names conjured by the *Companion*); that she became separated from her father, brother, and Uncle Radu at Lake Zarovich; and that her parents, lost to grief, committed suicide. These revelations come later, after the party has seen Izek.

Father Lucian accepts Ireena, despite the desecration of Saint Andral's. Her arrival does not go unnoticed, and despite precautions to hide her identity, both Lady Wachter and Baron Vallakovich learn of her; these nobles would like to betroth her to their male heirs (see *The Honor of Your Presence* special event added by the *Companion*).

Izek Strazni

Izek is the baron's brutal enforcer. If he sees Ireena, he becomes a time-bomb—inevitably, he will attempt to kidnap her.

Kasimir Velikov

Kasimir informs the party of the Amber Temple, seeding the quest to later brave Tsolenka Pass and Mount Ghakis. He is also a wealth of information, for he predates Barovia's seclusion from the outside world. See Appendix D.

Lucian Petrovich

Father Lucian is central to this chapter. As one of the few good souls of Barovia, his near-inevitable death during *St. Andral's Feast* should devastate the party and prove to them that there is no hope in this campaign.

Revision. Father Lucian is ordinarily a **priest**, but it is better that he be a **commoner** instead. Vallaki should be bereft of spellcasters, especially one that can heal the sick and wounded and conjure food and drink. With such powers, Father Lucian has proof that faith will be rewarded and that the Morninglord is real. For a grimmer Barovia, strip him of this magic.

Luvash

Luvash is a terrible, perpetually-drunk brute, and together with his brother Arrigal, he rules over the Vallaki Vistani. However, if his daughter is safely returned, Luvash's heart softens for these strangers, setting him on a path towards redemption that culminates in *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

Muriel Vinshaw

Muriel has been added to this chapter by the *Companion.* She can be met at the Blue Water Inn, wearing the safe lilac perfume that hangs to her clothes in the *Hidden Bundle* random encounter described in *CMP* Ch. 2. As a wereraven, but not a Martikov, she is the perfect liaison between the party and the Keepers of the Feather. She serves little purpose in this chapter beyond putting a face to her name (and perfume) to seed future encounters with the party.

Nikolai Watcher Sr.

The Wachter patriarch died last year, but Fiona has kept his body preserved through frequent *gentle repose* spells. Learning that she still sleeps alongside their late father would destroy her sons' relationship with her.

Author's Criticisms: Van Richten's Secret

In the games I have run, every party has pegged Rictavio as Rudolph van Richten from the get-go. My players didn't even inspect his carnival wagon, they just knew somehow. I still don't understand how or why. Perhaps it's the nature of D&D: players can't help but wonder which NPCs are critical to the storyline.

I guarantee you, Rictavio's cover will at least be suspected. Thus, less face time with him is for the better. Remember, van Richten does not want to be found and he does not work with others. In my most successful campaign, the one *The Wedding at Ravenloft* was initially for, I had managed to keep Rictavio away from the party. The players already suspected him of being van Richten. During the wedding reception, I had Rictavio shed his disguise and fire a silvered crossbow bolt at Strahd. The players went wild. Van Richten then joined them in hunting down Strahd (although he was taken out of action when a vampire spawn Ezmerelda attacked).

Rudolph van Richten

Strahd's nemesis is hiding in plain sight here in Vallaki. Thanks to a *hat of disguise*, van Richten, a human, poses as "Rictavio," a half-elf bard and circus performer. His carnival wagon is in the Arasek Stockyard. He keeps a weather eye on the adventurers, slowly judging whether they can be trusted or if he is better off working against Strahd alone.

It is imperative that van Richten not blow his cover, else his life is forfeit. The hunt for Rudolph van Richten is a campaign-wide story (see the plotline of the same name in *CMP* Ch. 1).

Revision. Van Richten's racism against Vistani has been cut from the module. As such, he has not trained a saber-toothed tiger (see the *Tyger, Tyger* special event) to hunt down Vistani.

Stella Wachter

Fiona's mad daughter of Fiona Wachter, Stella's story is that of a victim—a victim of her heartless mother and the demented Victor Vallakovich.

Revision. Stella was not driven insane by Victor Vallakovich's "unkind words," nor does she believe she is a cat. Stella is instead a victim of Victor's. Stella was interested in Victor romantically… but when Victor fatally tested his teleportation circle with his family's butler and maid, Stella was ready to alert his father. Victor attempted to scrub her memory and charm her all with one spell and simply ended up fracturing Stella's mind. Later that night, when Stella got home, she walked in on her mother's bedroom only to find her father's magically preserved corpse. These horrors combined shattered Stella's sanity. To cope, she rips up anything she can get her hands on—fabric, sheets, clothes—because it helps her feel in control. She saw Victor's victims be ripped into pieces, and so herself rips up household items.

Strahd von Zarovich

Should *St. Andral's Feast* occur, Strahd himself attacks the church. He takes his time, sadistically and slowly advancing on Father Lucian. This terrifying scene should be the first time the adventurers ever meet Strahd face-to-face.

Urwin Martikov

Like Ismark, Urwin (and his family) are a rare source of warmth and friendship. So long as the adventurers prove themselves to be righteous, he accepts them into his home. He seeds the *The Lifeblood of Barovia* plotline by suggesting that the party go investigate his missing wine shipments.

Vargas Vallakovich

The baron of Vallaki is a brittle tyrant lost to his own lies. Vargas truly believes that, if everyone Vallakian is happy, the town will slip free from Strahd's grasp. To that end, he organizes asinine festivals, attendance to which is mandatory. His authority is felt throughout Vallaki. His guards, ever on the lookout for malcontents, can be found everywhere. Ultimately, Vargas is likely to die. If the *St. Andral's Feast* event occurs, Vargas and his wife Lydia will be executed by a mob.

Victor Vallakovich

The moody baronet is an aspiring mage with zero scruples. Having taught himself magic from a spellbook found in his father's library, Victor at last feels powerful. He practices his craft in the attic. His parents do not know about his newfound powers, nor do they know that he has killed two servants with his lethal teleportation circle.

Revision. Victor is the star-crossed lover of Gertruda in the Village of Barovia and his teleportation circle is linked to her wardrobe. He met Gertruda after his inaugural attempt to teleport, which hurled him into the village. After Gertruda dumped him, Victor tried to teleport away from Barovia. See *The Liar, the Glitch, & the Wardrobe* in *Variants & Revisions* for details.

Yeska

Not knowing any better, Yeska told Milivoj of the bones of Saint Andral, hatching the plot to desecrate the church. Yeska can play an important part in your campaign: he can be a target for the werewolves and a hostage for Strahd. When the Devil later appears at the Abbey of Saint Markovia, it is with Yeska in his arms.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The bones of Saint Andral are guarded by the vampire spawn in the same room. The party *must* fight the undead to retrieve them. Because this is now an inevitable conflict, the number of vampires is reduced to four.
- Stella Wachter was not driven insane by Victor Vallakovich's "unkind words." Instead, he fractured her mind with enchantment magic. Discovering her father's magically preserved corpse was the straw that broke the camel's back.
- The Araseks do not sell goods for five times their ordinary price.

The Liar, the Glitch, & the Wardrobe

As described in *CMP* Ch. 3, Victor Vallakovich is the lover of Gertruda in the Village of Barovia—or at least, he was. Using his flawed teleportation circle, Victor would teleport to Gertruda's home in the village. Alas, Gertruda came to her senses and broke things off with such a wretched soul. Distraught, Victor attempted to escape Barovia itself—and magically crashed into Strahd's web of teleportation. Victor himself was merely thrown across the room by this accident and left with some bruises; he never knew the consequences of his failed escape attempt. Gertruda, in a fit of idiocy, decided to take Victor back—but when she attempted to teleport to Vallaki, she wound up in Castle Ravenloft instead.

Victor, still believing Gertruda left him, continues to experiment on his teleportation circle, which can be used to teleport into Castle Ravenloft, just as it can be used to go to the Village of Barovia. As the *Companion* recommends an early foray into Castle Ravenloft, Victor's magic proves to be another vehicle of that expedition.

Author's Criticisms: The Liar, The Glitch, & the Wardrobe

When I came up with this variant for my own campaign, I intended for it to get the adventurers back to the Village of Barovia to recruit the newest player character to the campaign. The players never did use it. However, they did return to Vallaki deep into the campaign to liberate the town from Lady Wachter and free Victor (their Destined Ally) from her grasp. Utilizing the Voldemort Rule, Wachter called forth the Devil (shouting "Strahd, Strahd, Strahd!" when the paladin accidentally broke into her bedroom). This began a gruesome showdown with Strahd. The adventurers ended up using Victor's circle to escape Vallaki but instead fell into Castle Ravenloft. This is how I orchestrated my players' early foray into Castle Ravenloft, wherein they recovered Khazan's staff of power and found Strahd's tomb.

Tyger, Tyger

Per *Curse of Strahd*, Rudolph van Richten—Rictavio—has a pet **saber-toothed tiger** in his carnival wagon. He has trained this tiger to attack Vistani on sight. The ridiculousness of this notwithstanding, the *Companion* suggests removing this entirely from the campaign. It paints Rudolph van Richten in quite an unflattering light, to say the least. Van Richten is a paragon of Ravenloft, a bright and weathered soul who remains unbroken in the face of unyielding misery—don't reduce him to a racist. By removing the tiger, you also remove the *Tyger, Tyger* special event, which is already an unnecessary development in the story. Its absence goes a long way in reducing your narrative overhead and the complexity of this chapter.



The Bones of Saint Andral

Doom looms over Vallaki. The bones of Saint Andral have been stolen from the undercroft. Without the bones, Saint Andral's Church is no longer hallowed ground. This theft, begat by a priest's earnest desire to put a child at ease, now threatens to upheave Vallaki's way of life. This storyline is at the heart of Chapter 5 and is, ultimately, the most important thread a Dungeon Master must follow. It marks the end of Act I of the campaign and ushers in a new age of darkness and suspicion.

Summary. To console Yeska, the altar boy, Father Lucian told him of the holy protection radiated by Saint Andral's bones. Yeska told Milivoj, the teenage gravedigger, who then told Henrik van der Voort. Henrik, already under Strahd's gaze, informed the Devil of this great secret, who orchestrated the theft. Henrik paid Milivoj, who only wished to feed his family, to take the bones. The Devil then sent several **vampire spawn** to guard the bones until he attacks Saint Andral's Church—which occurs three days after the adventurers arrive in Vallaki. If this occurs, civil unrest leads to the murder of Baron Vallakovich. In the power vacuum, Lady Wachter seizes power and banishes the meddlesome adventurers.

Van Richten. Rudolph van Richten does not know the bones have been stolen. He should not, in any circumstances, assist in this storyline; it is the adventurers' burden to bear. If Van Richten learns of the theft, he does not attempt to retrieve the bones but flees Vallaki altogether, fearing that his curse will bring doom to the town.

The Bones of Saint Andral: When the Plot Demands

Ordinarily, *St. Andral's Feast* occurs three days after the adventurers arrive in Vallaki. Time, however, is a difficult thing to track in D&D. Some DMs might allow the adventurers to experience all of Vallaki in a single day, while others gate certain events and characters behind time. Then, one must factor in exploration of nearby locales, such as Argynvostholt and Lake Zarovich. It is easiest to measure time by long rests, but that still does not cover noncombat activities.

The ugly truth is that *St. Andral's Feast* unfolds whenever the plot demands. If your players are enjoying Vallaki and exploring nearby locales, let them. If they're befriending townsfolk or investigating Vallaki's mysteries, so be it. You alone truly know when the players have wasted their time. You will know it in your gut when the time of intervention has passed.

Revision. The bones of Saint Andral have been relocated. No longer are they in Henrik van der Voort's bedroom (Area N6E); instead, they are guarded by the **vampire spawn** in Area N6F. The bones must be won through battle now. To even the playing field, the number of spawn have been reduced to four (down from six).

Morgantha's Misdeeds. Morgantha of Old Bonegrinder may be tied into this storyline. To save their own life, or the lives of the children, an adventurer may have entered into a dark bargain with the hag. This bargain is cryptic: "deliver the letter, stand aside, and cast the first stone." This dark bargain is enforced by a *geas* spell. The adventurer must deliver a letter to Henrik van der Voort that urges him to move the bones into the vampires' room. Later, if an attempt is made to retrieve the bones, the adventurer must abstain from the operation. When Baron Vallakovich is dragged out from his manor to be executed, the adventurer is compelled to cast the first stone at his bloodied head.

I. All Will Be Well

The adventurers have only three days to recover the Bones of Saint Andral, otherwise this storyline progresses to Act II. Although the clock starts ticking the moment the adventurers enter Vallaki, you should not immediately offer the quest. Allow the adventurers to acclimate to the town (and the town to acclimate to them) before Father Lucian offers his quest.

A Priest's Plea

Father Lucian has kept the theft of Saint Andral's bones a secret, lest he incite a panic. Ordinarily, the priest will only confide in good-aligned clerics or paladins. However, if the adventurers rescue Arabelle from Bluto Krogarov at Lake Zarovich, news spreads of their endeavors, and they gain Father Lucian's trust. Freeing Udo Lukovich from the baron's grasp also earns Father Lucian's trust (see Area N1 for details).

Read the following text when Father Lucian turns to the adventurers:

> Father Lucian turns away from you. In the gloom, he looks haggard, skeletal even. Without seeing the hope in his eyes, the priest becomes just a tired, old man in the twilight of his life. With a match, Lucian begins to light candles upon the altar. He does not look at you.
>
> "There has been a terrible theft," says the priest. "And I fear that I am responsible. That which sanctified this otherwise rocky soil has been stolen… and with it, the Morninglord's protection. I speak of Saint Andral's bones. So great was his devotion, so fierce his conviction, his very skeleton managed to purge these grounds of evil and keep away the creatures of the night."
>
> Father Lucian turns to you. The laugh lines of his face you so appreciated earlier are now like deep canyons, and his eyes are full of worry. "It is a secret I have kept all my life, since I inherited the responsibility of this church and its flock—and I have failed them. The bones are gone, and with it, Vallaki's only place of worship. You must find them for me—for the good of the realm, for the sake of the laity. Saint Andral's Church is but one of the last few torches in this dark and dismal realm."

Confronting Milivoj

Barring a sudden burial, Milivoj's work is done for the week; the adventurers must therefore pay a visit to him at home. The boy lives in a run-down rowhouse in Town Square (Area 8). With his parents dead, it is up to Milivoj to provide for his younger siblings—Milena, Milana, Floryan, and Boris. As they confront Milivoj, the adventurers will see the motivation behind his actions.

If the adventurers have not yet seen Izek Strazni in Area 8 yet, it is better that he and his guards arrive after the party leaves Milivoj's house. When the adventurers show up at his front door, Milivoj is tending to a dying-yet-stubborn garden of turnips in his yard. Read the following:

> Following Father Lucian's instructions, you find the run-down rowhouse in Town Square, the one with a broken attic window and a raven carved above the lintel. There in the front yard, behind a rotting fence, a brawny lad roots around in a pitiful garden. With a cuss word, he rips a weed from the ground and tosses it into a wheelbarrow.

Roleplaying Milivoj. All bluster and brawn, Milivoj takes umbrage in the slightest provocations. Many believe the boy wants to prove himself as an adult, but he is still just a child at heart—an overburdened kid who never got to vent his grief and frustration. Belligerent and unable to accept criticism, he flies off the handle at every opportunity.

The Youngsters. During the conversation, Milivoj's younger siblings come home. Read the following:

> Brandishing his shovel, Milivoj furrows his brow. "Listen, I'm done with this. I'm done with you. Get off my—"
>
> A squeal of childlike wonder comes from up the street. Four children come running, one little girl brandishing a headless doll. Like race horses, they round the bend and burst into the yard. The tallest girl holds a wicker basket full of vegetables. Together they crowd around Milivoj—and the family resemblance is clear.
>
> The girl with the headless doll shouts, "Look! Look what Mr. Blinsky had! It has like six or seven heads we can put on!"
>
> Milivoj, looking between the doll and the vegetables says, "Milena, I said no fruit, no meat, no toys. You have to take that back to Mr. Blinsky."
>
> "Please? It was only nine copper!" Milena pleads.
>
> A pained look flashes across Milivoj's face. In a hushed voice you just barely hear, he says, "That money will pay for a week of food. We can't afford it."
>
> "But Milivoj!" the girl cries.
>
> The brawny lad, clearly worn down, shakes his head and puts out his hand. "Give it to me. I'll return it myself."

With his siblings now home, Milivoj deflates. After sending the kids inside, he admits to stealing the bones. Read the following:

> Milivoj's shoulders sag, his anger evaporated. "Look. Yeska told me about the bones and I told Henrik van der Voort—the coffin maker—when I came by his shop. I… I don't know why I did, but I did, and the next morning, Henrik offered me thirty—thirty!—silver if I stole the bones. I didn't know they were sacred; Yeska just said Saint Andral was buried below in the crypt below the church. I've got four mouths to feed—five, when we have enough food for myself."
>
> Milivoj's eyes flash with fear. Pointing at his run-down house, the boy pleads, "Don't hurt me. I'm all they have. They already lost their parents. I'm all they have, okay?" Then, in a small voice, Milivoj adds, "...and they're all I have."

The Vampire Nest

Armed with the name of Milivoj's employer, the adventurers seek out the local coffin maker, Henrik van der Voort. An outcast, Henrik has been enlisted as a reluctant agent of the Devil Strahd. Although his actions can't be forgiven, they can at least be understood. Once the beasts had found purchase in his home, what could the old man do? It was not even Henrik's idea to steal the bones of Saint Andral—the vampire spawn overheard Milivoj when the boy came to commission a coffin. As soon as he left, the spawn ordered Henrik to orchestrate the theft.

Revision. The bones of Saint Andral are ordinarily hidden in Henrik's wardrobe (Area N6E), which he tells the adventurers—right before telling them about the vampire spawn upstairs. The spawn only awaken if the adventurers somehow choose the wrong door. This is hilariously bad storytelling. Instead, the *Companion* engineers a conflict; the bones are with the vampire spawn in Area N6F. Their numbers have been reduced to four to compensate for this inevitable battle.

Into the Nest. The adventurers must force their way into Henrik's home, for he fears the wrath of Strahd far more than the adventurers. Once there, they must brave the vampire-infested nest. For details on this perilous invasion, see Area N6 in *Areas of Note* below.

The Bones Recovered

All is not lost, if the adventurers prove victorious. At your discretion, you may still ensure *St. Andral's Feast* occurs.

With his undead minions thwarted, Strahd turns to Arrigal, who enters the church through a backroom while Father Lucian delivers his nightly sermon. Armed with a crowbar, Arrigal pries up the floorboards and enters the undercroft. If the adventurers are outside the church, they may encounter the undead or witness Arrigal break inside. If they are attending the sermon, they might hear him rummaging around in the undercroft. Ultimately, the adventurers should have an opportunity to intervene. If the bones leave the church itself, all the church grounds become unhallowed. Strahd and his minions then attack, beginning *St. Andral's Feast.*

II. Saint Andral's Feast

Having failed to recover the bones, Lucian's fate is sealed. The weather worsens, but Lucian refuses to cancel the sermon. If the adventurers are not already attending the sermon, you can send them on their way through Henrik van der Voort (if he yet lives). Henrik stumbles up to the party, bleeding (but not bitten) and rasps, "They are gone! The spawn have moved on the church! Hurry!"

The church is stuffed with twelve terrified **commoners**, plus Yeska, Ireena Kolyana, and the two **scouts** Szoldar Szoldarovich and Yevgeni Krushkin (who are unarmed and unarmored). Father Lucian is embroiled in a fiery sermon. Read the following:

> The church is stuffed with terrified laity, all gripping holy books and sun-shaped wooden disks. Every single soul is enraptured by Father Lucian's fiery sermon: "—and so long as we stand together, warm with hope, there can be no evil that conquers us! The Morninglord is our torch in the dark, and we shall not want for light! We shall not let fear rule us! We shall not let fear divide us! The Morninglord shall provide!"

The Devil's Entrance. Strahd von Zarovich arrives under an ill wind that snuffs out most flames in the church. His surviving vampire spawn from the coffin maker's shop are crawling along the church's outer walls, waiting to burst in through the stained-glass. Read the following:

> From behind his altar, Father Lucian continues to preach. His brow is slick with sweat. His holy book, frayed at the edges from such frequent use, is held on high. The laity are lost to fervor, their cries swarming into a single chorus that follows Father Lucian's cues. The good priest shouts to the heavens and they sing. The good priest praises the Morninglord and they sigh. The good priest prays and they pray as well, their eyes shut tight to better look upon the face of God.
>
> "—and we know the Devil at our doorstep!" Father Lucian shouts, "We know him by name, by face, by crime, and by shadow, and we know him as the parasite that he is! We know his name and dare not speak it, but in this House of God, we need not fear evil! We need not fear the night! By the Morninglord's will, we shall overcome! In the name of Saint Markovia, we shall succeed! In the name of Saint Andral, we shall—"
>
> The church doors fly open, inviting an ill wind that blows out all but the most stubborn of flames. The laity cry out in sudden fear, and in the sudden darkness floats a voice most elegant, a voice both soft and firm. A saccharine voice that betrays both amusement and malice. A voice that taunts, "Dare you speak my name even now?"
>
> An arcane word is whispered. The candles flare up, but the light they shed is crimson and greasy. Standing before the church's threshold is a tall and thin man whose smile is like a knife. "Name me, my dear priest," he says. "Name the devil at your doorstep. Show me the strength of your faith. Show us all."
>
> Letting a wolf's grin leap to his lips, Strahd von Zarovich takes a step into the church.



Author's Advice: Ireena at the Feast

While writing this guide, it is difficult for me to pinpoint where Ireena is and what she's doing. If she is present for *St. Andral's Feast*—which is the most logical place for her to be, bones or no bones—then she has the chance to shine. Rather than cower or flee, Ireena draws her father's sword and stands before the Devil. She faces her stalker, her father's killer, with courage. Ireena knows she is no match for Strahd, but it is better to die a lion than be butchered as a lamb. Strahd, for his part, is impressed.

Under no circumstances does Strahd kidnap Ireena in this chapter—it would shorten Strahd's game of cat-and-mouse. All Strahd should do is disarm Ireena, caress her neck and bear his fangs. He whispers, "The third bite... I will save for our wedding night." Combat is effectively paused when Strahd and Ireena converse. Imagine it as a cutscene. The adventurers can interject but not intervene.

On the first round of combat, Strahd's surviving **vampire spawn** burst in through the windows. The pews and panicked churchgoers constitute difficult terrain for the sake of the encounter; Strahd and his brood ignore this.

Roleplaying Strahd. The *Companion* has thus far recommended keeping Strahd in the shadows. This should be his first appearance in the campaign, and so you must make a most terrifying first impression. Strahd is relaxed, even playful, as he cuts down his victims. He is quick to remind the adventurers that this is his demesne and they are his lawful subjects.

- You can voice Strahd with the following sample dialogue:
- To Father Lucian, Strahd says, "Your flame has endured long enough."
- To the adventurers, Strahd says, "Ah… our meeting is long overdue."
- "Is that anyway to greet your liege?"
- "I am not your beginning—but I will be your end."
- "The Morninglord is but an impotent voyeur. I am the only god left in Barovia."

The Heart of Sorrow. Strahd is protected by the Heart of Sorrow, a dark device stored in Castle Ravenloft. It magically absorbs damage. When the adventurers manage to land a blow on Strahd, describe how the wound reknits itself or any scorch marks left by hurled fire are quickly undone. Strahd, grinning a wolf's grin, mocks the adventurers: "I am without equal. Your magic fails you. Your blades are but porcelain. Face me and despair."

Strahd's Tactics. Strahd, an unstoppable force, plays up the melodrama in this battle. Calm and pompous, the Devil wages a psychological war on the adventurers and townsfolk. He intends to cultivate terror and to make it clear just how small and insignificant the adventurers truly are in comparison. Strahd never breaks a sweat; he never reacts to pain; he marches forward with the cold certainty of death. Avoiding more overt spells like *fireball*, Strahd wishes to sow terror with the most minimal effort.

- Strahd prioritizes Father Lucian above all other foes. When moving towards the priest, Strahd walks at a speed of 25 feet; he doesn't run. However, he utilizes his legendary actions to continuously close the gap. If his prey flees, Strahd begins to demonstrate his extraordinary speed.

- Strahd saves his best and most devastating abilities for later in the campaign. In this battle, he bites only Father Lucian and does not use his Charm ability on others. He only uses subtler spells like gust of wind and sleep.
- Strahd can transfer up to 50 damage to the Heart of Sorrow in Castle Ravenloft. If he reaches 40 or so damage, assume he can cut off his connection with a bonus action.
- Strahd sics his surviving vampire spawn on the adventurers. Running interference for Strahd, the spawn break in from the church's windows and leap from the ceiling and walls.
- Strahd does not kill any of the adventurers unless they truly disrespect him. As he lands the killing blow, Strahd sneers, "Let us make an example of you."

Other Reactions. Strahd and the adventurers aren't the only characters in this battle! Keep in mind how the following characters would react:

- If Father Lucian was not reduced to a **commoner**, he hurls *guiding bolts* at Strahd while shouting his convictions. If Lucian lacks spellcasting, he continues to shout in the face of the Devil, until at last Strahd drinks of his blood. Father Lucian never abandons his altar and must be forced away.
- Yeska, terrified, hides. A vampire spawn pulls him out from under a pew, forcing an adventurer to save the boy. He shouts for help.
- Ireena, clearly terrified, draws her father's rapier and puts herself between Strahd and Father Lucian. She shouts, "You have taken enough already, Devil! To kill the priest, you'll have to kill me!" Strahd smiles and says, "I will, my dear… eventually." He then squares off with Ireena but inevitably disarms her.
- Szoldar Szoldarovich roars with fury and rushes Strahd, shouting, "Run, Father! Run before—" His shout is cut off when Strahd crushes around Szoldar's throat with a single hand. Once Szoldar is slain, a heartbroken Yevgeni cradles his corpse while the battles rages on.

Strahd's Exit. Provided Strahd killed Father Lucian and did not leave the church, read the following text:

> The priest's body crumbles to the floor, bereft of any blood. His fingers twitch with one last spasm, as if he were reaching out to the god he so failed.
>
> Wiping the blood from his chin with a filigreed handkerchief, the Devil offers you a fanged smile. "I have not yet welcome you to Barovia," he says, stepping out into the night. All torchlight, the torches that burned so stubbornly in the streets, have been doused. Darkness reigns over Vallaki.
>
> Strahd zon Zarovich turns back to you, his eyes glittering in the moonlight. "Dine with me at Castle Ravenloft. You are welcome in my demesne. I will send the carriage for you."
>
> The mists surge forward to enrapture the vampire—and when the fog thins out a moment later, Strahd zon Zarovich is gone.

III. All Is Not Well

The Devil's assault on Vallaki's most sacred institution forever scars the town. For too long have the townsfolk suffered such a disaster. For too long has the baron assured them that all will be well. In the face of calamity, civil unrest is inevitable—especially when Lady Wachter is there to fan the flames. Shortly after dawn, the townsfolk storm the baron's manor and drag his family out to be executed. If you rescheduled the Festival of the Blazing Sun to occur after *St. Andral's Feast*, Vargas and his wife are immolated instead of stoned.

Morgantha's Misdeeds. If a character accepted Morgantha's dark bargain, they are compelled to instigate the execution by casting the first stone (or torch, if the Vallakoviches are to be immolated). To resist triggers Morgantha's *geas* spell.

The Baron's Execution. The mob marches upon the baron's manor. Although Victor Vallakovich is dragged out with his parents, Lady Wachter has his life spared. The adventurers are too far away to intervene until after Vargas and Lydia are taken, but still close enough to hear the mob and its leader, Lady Wachter. Read the following text, modifying it as you see fit:

> The dawn comes on the heels of slaughter, slow and cold. Never before have you seen such an early light, so dismal. In the distance, you hear a growing sound—the roars of the malcontents. You hear them by their shouts, by their demands, by the march of their boots against the muddied cobblestones. In the dawn's early light they march, thirty or forty of them altogether, sharing the same cry: "All will be well!"
>
> From here you can see it all: Baron Vallakovich, clad only in a torn and muddied robe, being dragged through the streets!
>
> "All will be well!" the mob cries, waving their weapons! In those sordid ranks, you see guards clad in the livery of the very lord they drag forward. "All will be well!" they shout!
>
> Beside the baron are his wife and son, each screaming as they are raked over the jagged cobbles towards Town Square. The mob halts. Vargas and Lydia are lifted to their feet and thrown towards the stockades, while their son is beaten senseless by the mob.
>
> In the chaos, Lydia begins to pray, her hands clasped tight together as she kneels before the masses. Her petition to the gods is too late—you know it in your bones that it is too late. The baron stumbles to his feet and shouts to the crowd, his demands swallowed by another round of "All will be well!"



By Stone. If the Vallakoviches are to be stoned to death, read the following:

> The baron takes a step forward—and from the ranks the first stone is thrown. It catches the baron right above the eye, leaving a red smear against his forehead. The next stone catches him square in the gut, driving him to his knees. Then the third, the fourth. The fifth tears the flesh from Vargas' cheek bone.
>
> "All will be well!" they shout as the hail pours forth. Lydia gives up her prayers and tries to flee, but the crowd catches her—hurls her back towards her husband as the rocks continue to fly. One catches her on the temple and down she goes, never to move again as the blood pools around her limp form.
>
> "All will be well!"
>
> The baron crawls to his wife's side under a hail of fist-sized stones. His robe all but gone now, his back is a bloody portrait. As he cradles Lydia's unmoving body, the stones halt. The crowd goes silent. Out from the ranks steps Lady Wachter—and in her hand is a stone the size of an apple.
>
> "You!" Vargas snarls, his tears caught in the dawn's early light.
>
> "You were right, baron," Wachter says. "All truly will be well."
>
> The last stone cracks out like thunder as Baron Vargas Vallakovich slumps to the ground.

By Fire. If the Vallakoviches are to be immolated instead, they are tied to stakes. At their feet, the mob heaps whatever wicker is left over from the Festival of the Blazing Sun (if it already occurred). Read the following:

> Vargas and Lydia are dragged to the platform, where there waits a stake and a heap of wicker. With sickening clarity, you realize the Festival of the Blazing Sun won't be canceled after all.
>
> "All will be well!" shouts the crowd, passing the first torches around.
>
> The baron pulls against his bonds while beside him, his wife prays to a silent and impotent god. Vargas shouts, "I am the rightful lord of—"
>
> "All will be well!" shouts the crowd, sharing a single flame across half a hundred torches.
>
> His face slick with sweat, Vargas Vallakovich shouts his last shout: "Please! A noose! A blade! Anything but—"
>
> "ALL WILL BE WELL!" shout the people, their decades-long resentment about to be revenged! The flames are lit now, the torches ready! Out from the ranks marches a lone woman: Lady Fiona Wachter. In her hand burns what you know in your heart to be the first torch here.
>
> Wachter's voice cuts through the chaos and silences the crowd. "Worry not, Vargas," she laughs. "All will be well—I promise."
>
> The first torch is cast. The wicker goes up immediately. The fire leaps from wicker to wicker until at last it licks at Vargas's toes. It catches a tassel along the robe—and soon Vargas' clothes are reduced to a flaming coffin in which he has not yet had the luxury to die in. The Vallakoviches scream and writhe and scream, but their people only watch. Their people only watch and add their own torches to the pyre, screaming, "ALL WILL BE WELL!"



Kill the Outsiders!

If the adventurers have rankled the townsfolk, the mob may blame the adventurers for their misfortunes as well. The party faces a mob of thirty **commoners**, twelve **guards**, eight secret **cultists** and three secret **cult fanatics**. A battle with so many combatants is, of course, impractical. It should be made clear to the adventurers that now is the time to flee the town. To truly twist the knife, have a friend or acquaintance of the adventurers declare, "They are to blame! Death to the Devil's agents!" Such a character might be Karl or Nikolai Wachter, Yevgeni Krushkin, or even Gadof Blinsky.

If the adventurers take flight, the guards Yintav and Erick (see *Approaching the Town* below) are stationed again at whatever gate the party uses. Yintav and Erick do their best to facilitate the adventurers' escape. They do not, however, leave Vallaki.

An Audience with the Baroness

If the adventurers do not flee Vallaki, they are summoned to Wachterhaus at about noon. Six **guards** and a secret **cult fanatic** are sent to fetch the adventurers, who are brought to Area N4I.

There waits Fiona Wachter with Ernst Larnak, three cult fanatics, and four guards. Fiona and her minions only fight in self-defense. Read the following:

"Excellent," Lady Wachter greets you, laying across an elegant sofa with a chalice of wine in her hand. Clad in a brocaded, lavender dress, it is clear that Wachter has washed up since the execution she led this morning. "Do not take a seat," she says. "You won't be here for long."

Wachter takes another sip of wine and sits up. "We need not be enemies," she says. "We need not resort to bloodshed. However, I cannot abide your presence in Vallaki any longer. I know your kind. I know your capabilities. I will not suffer the same fate as Vargas. From here on, we are even. You are to leave my barony at once and never to return under the pain of death."

Wachter again sips at her wine and continues, "I am not, however, unreasonable. Your arms, your armor, even your rations, are yours to keep. I know not where next you're headed but I wish you a swift and interesting journey there." Grinning, Wachter adds, "I do hope we can be civil."

Once their conversation concludes, Wachter has the adventurers escorted out of Vallaki by these minions. Whatever possessions the party left at the Blue Water Inn or elsewhere are given to them at the Sunset Gate.

The Baronet. If Victor Vallakovich was not slain, he is Wachter's prisoner—a prisoner she can't help but flaunt. During this conversation, Wachter has Victor brought out. The mage (who currently only has 5 hit points remaining) is manacled and gagged; he can't provide verbal or somatic components for spells and is effectively helpless. Read the following:

Lady Fiona turns to a guard and orders, "Bring him out."

"As you wish, baroness," the guard replies. Victor Vallakovich is pushed into the room moments later. The boy, badly bruised, has been gagged and manacled, with pegs driven in between his fingers. His sunken eyes beg for salvation.

"Victor here will wed Stella tonight at dusk," Lady Wachter explains. "Then he will live out his days under house arrest—at least until an heir is born. Then, I'm afraid, we will have no more use for him. I will, of course, have to act as regent of Vallaki until my grandchild comes of age."

Still smiling, Wachter bats her hand. With a muffled cry, Victor is dragged away.

Lady Wachter will not part with Victor under any circumstances. If the boy is the adventurers' Destined Ally, they will have to rescue him later in the campaign.

Approaching the Town

Vallaki's gates remain closed day and night, with guards posted at each of the three gates. Visitors must state their business and answer a series of questions. When the adventurers first come to town, the two guards on gate duty are Yintav and Erick. Those buffoons provide some comedic relief for your campaign: the two are always on shift when the adventurers approach a gate—any gate.

- Yintav Szoldarovich is the cousin of Szoldar Szoldarovich. Yintav is loud, belligerent, and suspicious—a stark contrast to his partner, Erick. Yintav often narrows his eyes and furrows his brow; he takes his duty quite seriously. After the adventurers pass through the gate, Yintav says, "My cousin Szoldar is a pretty big deal, you know. If you need a guide for the wilderness, he could guide you for a modest sum."
- Erick Erickovich is a soulless Barovian. Detached from worldly concerns, Erick proves to be the adventurers' advocate. Whenever Yintav grows belligerent, the bored Erick calms him down. He often says, "Come now, Yintav, come now…"

Arrival. Read the following text when the adventurers first arrive to Vallaki:

> "Halt!" bellows a guard from behind the iron gates, a pike in his head. "Present yourself before gods and men and state your business in Vallaki!"
>
> As you approach the iron gates, the guard remarks to his companion, "Erick, have you ever seen a lot as sorry as this?"
>
> "Not since my first days on guard duty, Yintav," answers the other guard in a bored and slowed voice. "They are practically disheveled."
>
> Yintav, an ash-haired young man, smirks at you. "And look at that posture, Erick! Morninglord's light!"
>
> "They will definitely suffer from spinal pain in the grim future," agrees Erick. "It is how my father went."
>
> "Your father died to cholera."
>
> Erick shrugs his broad shoulders and produces a wooden board. Words have been carved into the wood, the grooves filled in with paint. Bored, Erick begins to read off a checklist.

Whenever the adventurers attempt to enter Vallaki—even if they were previously admitted—Erick asks the following questions in the order below:

- "Names, pseudonyms, and aliases?"
- "What is your business in Vallaki?"
- "Are you related to any Vallakians currently living in town?"
- "Have you any wine?" (Erick is required to confiscate wine.)
- "Are you a wanted criminal?"
- "Are there any Vistani in your group?"
- "Has a Vistana bribed, blackmailed, or otherwise cajoled you into smuggling them or their goods into Vallaki?"
- "Have you been bitten by wolves since the last full moon?



- "Do you feel an urge to rend the flesh of men and devour us as if we were sheep, the flock of which you have so surreptitiously infiltrated?"
- "Have you ever dined at Castle Ravenloft?"
- "Has a beautiful man or woman of seemingly eternal youth invited you to a well-prepared dinner that they hardly pick at while complimenting you in ever more salacious ways until at last it grows too late and they *insist* you spend the night?"
- "Have you already secured lodgings in Vallaki?"
- "Do you swear before gods and men to respect the law and peace of our good baron?"

Wolfsbane Test. After the questions have been answered, Yintav produces a dagger and demands the adventurers stick their hands through the iron gate. He gently slices their palms while watching their reactions. The guards believe the dagger is silvered when, in fact, it is an expert forgery—as are all daggers in circulation, per the machinations of the Keepers of the Feather.

The Children of Mother Night

Per the *Companion*, the werewolves are on the hunt for the adventurers. They may have been met at Tser Falls or outside in the Svalich Woods. If the adventurers rescued Freek and Myrtle from Old Bonegrinder, Kiril Stoyanovich attempts to steal one of the children. See *CMP* Ch. 2 for more details on this encounter.

Vallaki Landmarks by Description

Area	Description	*CoS* Pg.
N1. St. Andral's Church	"If you're in need of a blessing, Father Lucian preaches at Saint Andral's Church daily at dusk."	97
N2. Blue Water Inn	"The Martikovs provide wine, gossip, and warm beds to any who need them. Some pointy-eared fellow has been staying there."	98
N3. Burgomaster's Mansion	"If you're looking for work, report to the burgomaster's manor. The baron needs strong hands for the next festival."	103
N4. Wachterhaus	"I wouldn't bother Lady Wachter if I were you. Wachterhaus has never been exactly welcoming, and Her Ladyship has never been the same since Lord Nikolai passed."	110
N5. Arasek Stockyard	"If you've a wagon to store, the Arasek Stockyard is cheap. Morninglord knows they'd appreciate the business."	115
N6. Coffin Maker's Shop	"Fresh from the Svalich Woods, are you? Bring your dead to Henrik van der Voort's shop on the east edge of Town Square. Then hightail it to Saint Andral's. It's illegal to be dead and unburied past dusk."	116
N7. Blinsky Toys	"Old Blinsky's hemorrhaging money. Keeps to his little shop, just up the road from town square. I'd like to help him out, but his toys give my son the creeps."	118
N8. Town Square	"Word of advice: mind yourself in Vallaki, lest you want to be humiliated at the stockades. Poor bastards..."	119
N9. Vistani Camp	"The Vistani roost outside the Vallaki alongside the elves."	119

Areas of Vallaki

Vallaki consists of nine landmarks, which can be described by any villager, as shown on the table above.

N1. St. Andral's Church

Provided the adventurers arrive during the daytime, read the following text when they enter the church:

> The church grounds are suffused with a quiet confidence. Though a thin fog hangs in the air, you feel a warmth. There is peace here; the grounds are tended to, the weeds missing and a plum tree overlooks the cemetery.
>
> Throwing open the church doors, you feel that quiet confidence exhale. Weak sunlight filters in through stained-glass windows that depict a radiant sun and white-robed saints. There at the altar kneels a priest well past his prime. Finishing his prayer, he turns to you. His eyes are full of life and light and trust. His smile is soft and warm. The deep canyons in his face were carved not by scowls but laughter.
>
> "Welcome to Saint Andral's. You are not of my flock—not yet, it seems. I am Father Lucian Petrovich and this house, the House of the Morninglord, is yours."

Father Lucian offers a warm welcome. The very paragon of charity, there is nothing he owns that he does not offer the adventurers. Food, warmth, drink, a prayer. Anything he has, Lucian insists, is theirs. The priest is genuinely happy to come face to face with newcomers. An insightful character might notice that Father Lucian seems troubled, but before the priest can assuage their concerns, Yeska the altar boy comes out from his bedroom. The child asks who the party is and if they were sent by the Morninglord. Lucian smiles and says, "Perhaps they were."

Freek & Myrtle. If the children were rescued from Old Bonegrinder, they can find refuge here at the church. Father Lucian has a local carpenter build two additional beds for Yeska's bedroom. He also gives the party money to go purchase toys from Blinsky (Area N7). "Although Blinsky's toys are… strange," Lucian says, "they are toys nonetheless, and a welcome comfort to these children."

The Bones of Saint Andral. As described in the storyline above, the adventurers must earn Father Lucian's trust before he reveals the theft of Andral's bones. If St. Andral's Feast occurs, the church becomes a bloodbath. See the The Bones of Saint Andral storyline for details on this battle.

Udo Lukovich. The local shoemaker, Udo, has been arrested for malicious unhappiness. His mother, Willemina, prays nightly for his safe release. Father Lucian requests the adventurers visit the baron's manor to negotiate for Udo's release. If the baron acquiesces, Lucian promises to incorporate his "All will be well" message in the next seven sermons. Rescuing Udo, legally or otherwise, earns Father Lucian's trust. Father Lucian warns the adventurers, "The baron respects only strength… but he also fears it. He does not tolerate any soldier he can't control. Push too hard and you will find yourself on the wrong side of the law."

The Devil's Bride

Ireena seeks sanctuary, and there is no place greater in Vallaki than St. Andral's Church. Upon meeting Father Lucian, she makes this humble request. Read the following:

> Sullen, with an air of guilt, Ireena pushes to the front. "Father," she says, "I must admit that we—I—bring ill tidings. For too long now, I have been hunted by a creature of the night. A creature most terrible. This… this monster preyed upon my home and sent my father to an early grave. It is only by luck and loyalty that I have made it this before."
>
> Clasping her hands together, Ireena pleads, "Father, I require sanctuary on hallowed ground. Please, will you accept me?"
>
> Father Lucian takes Ireena's hands. With a paternal smile, he says, "My child, all are welcome to sanctuary. Stay as long as you need and worry no longer, for you are in a house of God."



Family is Forever. Ireena was born in Vallaki and went missing as a little girl. Father Lucian recognizes her—Ireena has her mother's eyes, and the family resemblance to Izek Strazni is clear. While Father Lucian does not initially reveal her relationship to Izek, he does explain her past. Read the following:

> Father Lucian takes a step back and studies Ireena's face. His brow furrows—but then his eyes softened. "It can't be," he murmurs. "It can't. We thought you were dead"
>
> Ireena blinks at the priest. "What?"
>
> "Yasmine… It can't be."
>
> Ireena gives the priest a scathing look. "Are… are you all right, father?"
>
> Father Lucian shakes his head. "I read your last rites."
>
> "Father?"
>
> "Yasmine, my dear… Twenty years and I could not forget your mother's eyes."

Father Lucian explains Ireena's past: she was born as Yasmine Strazni to two loving parents, Hans and Ruxandra. Hans and Uncle Radu took Ireena and her brother fishing at Lake Zarovich. A dire wolf attacked, ripping off her brother's arm. While Hans rushed her brother to safety, Uncle Radu gave his life to distract the beast. Ireena was never found. Her parents succumbed to their grief.

Ireena for her part is troubled; she remembers only fragments of her childhood. She does admit, however, that this explains her phobia for wolves. Whether she believes Lucian or not, Ireena simply says, "I am the daughter of Kolyan and Kolyan alone." She does, however, wish to know about her brother. "He, too, is gone," Father Lucian lies. If asked for a name, Father Lucian stumbles to provide one and eventually goes with "Boris" (after thinking of Milivoj's brother). A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms the priest is lying.

N2. Blue Water Inn

The Blue Water Inn is the heart of Vallaki life. Here strangers come together to share drinks and sorrows, and to gossip.

Points of Interest. The Blue Water Inn is very detailed—too detailed. Most rooms are empty of actionable content. There are only four points of interest:

- The taproom (Area N2C) where most interactions are held.
- The loft above the stable (Area N2H) where the Keepers of the Feather's funds and emergency supplies are kept.
- Rictavio's rented room (Area N2N).
- The secret attic (Area N2Q) where the Martikovs sleep as ravens and keep their personal treasure.

Quick Notes. See the following:

- Not all guests have to be present at once. You can start off slow by only introducing the Wolf Hunters at first, then the Wachter brothers, and finally Rictavio. Nothing complicates a scene than having so many characters present.
- Urwin Martikov can send the adventurers to Lake Zarovich to check on the town drunk, Bluto Krogarov. "He goes fishing at dawn, but the shores teem with wolves. Please, if you are headed out that way, check for him." This puts the adventurers on a collision course to saving Arabelle from Bluto and thereby earn Father Lucian's trust.
- The inn has several secret doors: one in the kitchen, balcony, and loft above the stable (Areas N2E, N2J, and N2H, respectively). Furthermore, there are secret trapdoors in the Martikovs' bedrooms, which lead to a secret attic. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to notice a secret door.
- The Martikovs sleep in the secret attic as ravens.
- The Martikovs have hidden away several treasures.

Author's Advice: Roleplaying Wereravens

In my lore—the same lore I wrote into *Van Richten's Treatise on Lycanthropy*, my 154-page werebeast compendium that you should totally buy—the Curse of the Wereraven heightens paranoia and curiosity. Wereravens are lawful good yes, but that does not mean they are nice or polite. Wereravens are extremely paranoid and hunger for secrets. They traffic in gossip and mysteries, never letting any question stay unanswered.

This I suggest using in *Curse of Strahd*. The Martikovs exemplify the wereraven's curse. Urwin and Danika are fiends for gossip—and running an inn supplies them with all manner of secrets. Brom and Bray are too curious for their own good and can often be found snooping around Vallaki. So too is the entire family, as are all wereravens, paranoid—and this paranoia clashes with the good intentions encouraged by the Curse of the Wereraven.

Characters

Just about any character can visit the Blue Water Inn, but the following individuals are sure to be there:

Muriel Vinshaw. Described in *Dramatis Personae* above, Muriel is the wereraven best suited for being a spy and messenger of the Keepers of the Feather. She should be met here in the Blue Water Inn, especially if the adventurers have found her clothes in the Barovian wilderness. She can be met here on the adventurers' second day in Vallaki, reading poetry—*Greaves of Brass* by Walt Whitdwarf—while enjoying her meal.

The Wachter Brothers. The Wachter brothers are always in search of new friends. Although they get up to mischief—and escape consequences by dint of their noble birth—the brothers are not evil. They do not steal or hurt others. For lack of a better term, they're "frat bros". With a sigh, Urwin begrudgingly admits that the brothers are responsible for a quarter of the inn's income.

The Wolf Hunters. Yevgeni and Szoldar could have interesting parts to play in *Curse of Strahd*, but really they are destined to die in *St. Andral's Feast*. Introducing them now allows you to kill them off later.

The Stranger from Beyond the Mists

Vallaki is abuzz with gossip: a half-elf has come to Vallaki. He surely can't be the child of the dusk elves—all women were put to death centuries ago. Most villagers, however, avoid this stranger. Rictavio does not seem to mind. While the adventurers are in town, "Rictavio" mainly keeps to his room, the stable, and visits Blinsky while secretly investigating the wereravens. He has his own schedule to attend to and seldom crosses paths with the party—for van Richten can't afford to be seen with Strahd's playthings.

Rictavio's Test. Once, preferably at night after several glasses of wine, van Richten tests the adventurers with a tale. This tale is meant to determine the adventurers' nature. Are they pragmatists? Are they willing to make hard decisions—decisions that gut the very soul and haunt you for years on end? Or would they seek solutions of a more tender temperament, even if it led them to utter ruin? There really are no wrong answers. Read the following:

> "Urwin," Rictavio calls over his shoulder. "Another round for us, would you?"
>
> With a grunt, Urwin brings the bottle and tops off your glasses. Leaning back into his seat, Rictavio gives his glass a wistful look. "You know, I came across this man once. He was broken. His wife and son had been murdered by creatures of the night… and his son had not yet ceased living. With his son enduring as one of the undead, the man was faced with a choice no father should ever have to make. The boy pleaded with his father; he wished to live on in undeath… but the man knew very well what sort of dark thirst his son would develop. At such a point, he had no care for his own life, no worries. It was his friends, his family, his neighbors, even his adversaries, that he had to consider. He made his impossible decision. He plunged a stake through his son's heart. Those very same countrymen called the man a monster, but what choice did he have?"
>
> Rictavio sips his wine, a little trickle running down his chin. "What," he asks, "would you have done?"

Van Richten is relating his own tragic history. While this is quite obviously a clue that Rictavio is none other than Rudolph van Richten, it makes for good storytelling. It communicates van Richten's backstory and poses an ethical question. If the party seems to dig this tale, he continues to include his subsequent dealings with the Vistani:

> Rictavio shakes his head and murmurs, "Alas, that was not the end to this man's tale. With nothing left in his life but ash, the man sought out those who sold his family to the creatures of the night. Of course, they pleaded for their lives. The money was too good; the monster too fearsome to refuse. The man cared not. He pulled forth a blade and lunged—but then he heard from the other room, the cry of a young child. A little girl. Another impossible choice—and though his own son was dead, the man was still a father."

Rictavio, a natural storyteller, pauses there. If the adventurers ask what happened next, the bard answers only with, "What do you think he did?"

N3. Burgomaster's Mansion

The burgomaster's mansion is a monument to delusional authority. Everything Vargas and his wife do are for naught, and the adventurers need to see that. They should see the ludicrous amount of wicker and wood collected for the next festival. They should witness Lydia entertaining guests that are there only for a free meal. One conversation is enough to determine that the Baron should not be ruling Vallaki. That he is unaware of his own son's reckless pursuit of magic is proof of this. The adventurers should be brought here at least once in the campaign, as described in the *The Honor of Your Presence* special event.

Points of Interest. Thankfully, the baron's manor has only four places of interest: wherever the baron is met (usually the library, Area N3L), Izek's bedroom (N3J), Lydia's boudoir (Area N3P), and the attic, where Victor pursues magic (Area N3T). The adventurers shouldn't spend too much time inside the manor and most rooms have no content worth exploring.

Revisions. The *Companion* suggests two major revisions to the manor:

- The spirit of the Ba'al Verzi assassin, who can be summoned via Lydia's magical mirror, is the spirit of Leo Dilisnya himself, the assassin that murdered Strahd von Zarovich on his wedding night, and whose bones are kept by Lady Wachter.
- The adventurers need to witness a charmed victim testing Victor's teleportation circle (to disastrous results). Furthermore, if an adventurer is reduced to 0 hit points by Victor's teleportation circle, they lose a limb—it turns into paper and disintegrates—instead of being completely disintegrated.

Quick Notes. See the following:

- If the adventurers are invited to dinner, refer to the The *Honor of Your Presence* special event.
- The baron hosts guests in the library in the hope to appear more prestigious.
- Izek's room is filled with dolls, all in the likeness of Ireena Kolyana.
- The baron has imprisoned the local shoemaker, Udo Lukovich, for malicious unhappiness. His distraught mother, Willemina Rikalova, can be met at one of Father Lucian's nightly sermons. See Area N3M.
- Victor has warded the door to his workroom with a *glyph of warding* spell (save DC 14). See Area N3T for details.
- The *The Liar, the Glitch, & the Wardrobe* variant is in play.

Characters

The baron's manor is a busy place. Workers, guards, and commoners frequent the grounds and halls. The Vallakoviches are described in Dramatis Personae above.

Servants. Unlike Wachterhaus, you need not concern yourself with the Vallakoviches' servants. If the baron can't remember their names, neither must you—and this just goes to demonstrate how lazy and unobservant Vargas is. All you need to know is that his butler and maid have gone missing; Vargas thinks they were kidnapped or assassinated, whereas Lydia wants to believe they eloped. In truth, they were killed by Victor's disastrous teleportation circle. Per the *Companion*, another servant must die, this time in front of the adventurers. This servant, Cerina Krushkin, is the only servant you must familiarize yourself with. She is a young, bright woman who has bought into Vargas' philosophy of "All will be well." She repeats this phrase often. When she dies before the adventurers' eyes—crumbling to dust in Victor's flawed teleportation circle—her last words are, "All will be…"

Guards. A paranoid man, Vargas keeps a small garrison stationed at the manor: five **guards** and a **veteran**. A shift change is made every six hours. These soldiers report to Izek Strazni.

Prisoner. The local shoemaker, Udo Lukovich, has been imprisoned for malicious unhappiness. He languishes in chains, sequestered in a locked closet (Area N3M). If the adventurers discover him, you could have Victor come by. Victor claims he will hide Udo until his father goes to bed. In truth, Victor has the poor man test his murderous teleportation circle.

N4. Wachterhaus

Wachterhaus is a palace of misery, madness, and intrigue. Everything about it screams "dark lair" to a player, even its narration text in *Curse of Strahd*. Wachterhaus is synonymous with Lady Fiona Wachter, and so you should run it as a social exercise. It is only a matter of time before they learn of her dark ambitions and infernal pursuits. However, you want to avoid combat with Wachter and her cultists. You want it to be a horrifying discovery, but not an inevitable showdown. Wachter is needed in your campaign to seize Vallaki; her cultists are vital to that plan.

The adventurers should be invited to Wachterhaus for dinner or tea. If the adventurers do not notice anything strange—the terrified staff, the mad daughter upstairs, the traces of magic, the extremely obvious secret door—then you can use the treacherous Ernst Larnak to stoke the fires of paranoia. It is then up to the adventurers to investigate the manor.

Revisions. The *Companion* suggests four major revisions to Wachterhaus:

- Wachterhaus is stained by infernal magic. A *detect magic* spell reveals traces of magic in the vicinity, with conjuration being the most prevalent school of magic.
- Stella does not believe she is a cat—it's an utterly ridiculous part of this module. Instead, Stella's mind has been fractured by Victor Vallakovich's enchantment magic. She "talks" to her dead father and rips up clothing and fabric to feel in control of her life. See *Dramatis Personae* above for details on Stella.
- The cellar door is locked with a heavy padlock, requiring a successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open.
- Add a family portrait to Area N41 to clearly communicate the members of the Wachter family. Seeing Stella and Nikolai Sr. in the portrait causes the adventurers to question their whereabouts.

Quick Notes. See the following:

- The front door is locked (DC 20); the servants and sons and Wachter carry a key.
- Lady Wachter meets guests in the parlor (Area N4I) while Ernst Larnak lurks in the nearby den (N4K).
- There are three secret doors in the manor: one to the basement (DC 10, see Area N4F); one in the basement that opens upon the cultists' headquarters (DC 15, see Area N4S); and one in the library (DC 15, see Area N4P).
- The phrase to quell the eight **skeletons** in the cellar (Area N4S) is "Let the dead remain at rest."
- The key to the chest containing Leo Dilisnya's bones in Area N4O is hidden in the fireplace. Rather than a Wisdom (Perception) check to find it, it should be an Intelligence (Investigation) check because that's what the skill is bloody for.
- The key to the Wachters' trapped treasure chest in Area N4Q hangs from the collar of a cat in the library (Area N4P).

Characters

There are, at any point, at least five people in Wachterhaus, one of which Lady Wachter herself. The house is never truly empty.

Family. Fiona has three children:

- Nikolai and Karl are, in essence, the same person. They are always found together and rarely is it at Wachterhaus.
- Stella is perpetually locked up in her room so that the secret of her madness is not revealed to Vallaki.

Servants. The Wachters are attended to by four servants, all of whom know Fiona's dark secrets. Terrified of Wachter, they would sooner die than betray her. Frankly, they fear her devilish powers more than the adventurers'. The servants are forbidden from speaking about the cult and its activities, but they whisper their worries at night in the privacy of their shared bedroom. The servants are:

- Dhavit, the cook, is a handsome and skeletal young man whose food Fiona repeatedly criticizes. If his cooking is not up to Fiona's ridiculous standards, he is forced to go hungry for the night.
- Madalena, the older maid, is stealing from Fiona—she considers it her just reward for so many years of underpaid wages. Despite this reckless theft, Madalena still keeps Fiona's secrets.
- Amalthia, the younger maid, has been a terrified prisoner ever since she was caught eavesdropping on the cult—when Fiona first suggested that Amalthia be "given to the Devils Beyond" and be used as a surrogate to birth a cambion. Fiona has systematically isolated Amalthia over the years and spread rumors that she is a pathological liar.
- Haliq, the valet, makes frequent trips to Town Square. He is a miserly old man who haggles for everything he buys. Secretly, he loves Fiona—but is still terrified of her.

Cultists. Fiona Wachter commands a vast cabal, many of whom have no idea how far this web stretches. Only the lucky few invited to Wachterhaus know her dark secret. Her four favorite underlings are present when the adventurers breach the cellar:

- Jadran Tiutchevich, a young man who has the face of an angel
- Bratoljub Kohutovich, a balding hulk of a man
- Triska Novaka, a squat, middle-aged woman
- Vena Golitsyna, a tall, younger woman with an unsettling glare

The Spy. Ernst Larnak, Fiona's **spy**, is a wild card that you can use as you see fit. He alone is willing to blow the whistle on her infernal pursuits—for the right price. If any adventurer knows Thieves' Cant, have Ernst communicate in that innocuous, subtle language. Fiona Wachter will be none the wiser.

Investigating Wachterhaus

The adventurers might investigate Lady Fiona Wachter. The information below holds true even after she seizes control of Vallaki.

Surveilling. Observing the manor reveals these facts:

- The Wachter Brothers often leave at noon or later, heckled by the shrill calls of their tyrannical mother. They stumble back home after dark, drunk and raucous.
- Fiona has four to eight guests over every night. These guests come at dusk and all but four leave at midnight. A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests that these guests do not fear the night, whereas ordinary villagers retreat to their homes after the sun goes down. This ability check also reveals that four guests—a young man of angelic good looks, a balding hulk of a man, a squat, middle-aged woman, and a taller, younger woman with an unsettling glare—often stay the night. When they leave at about nine in the morning, it is with a smile.
- Fiona's servants rarely leave the grounds, suggesting they live at the manor. Fiona's valet makes regular trips to Town Square for food, sundries and, curiously enough, clothing. He buys large amounts of women's clothes from the local tailor. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms the clothes—sleepwear, chiefly—are sized for a young, skinny woman. (These are for Stella, who rips up her clothes.) The servants each carry the key to the front door.

Eavesdropping. Once when Fiona's guests are approaching Wachterhaus, a character can eavesdrop on their hushed conversation, making a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they overhear, "Majesto claims I am ready for the next chapter! I must—" before a nearby raven caw swallows the other words.

Infiltrating Wachterhaus. Wachterhaus is no fortress. Not only does every servant carry a key, but Nikolai and Karl can be easily persuaded into inviting the adventurers inside for a drink if they are already drunk. Even Lady Watcher will extend an invitation, if she thinks they can be useful tools. Further, unless you adopt the Companion's revision, the cellar door (Area N4R) is unlocked.

Once inside the manor, the adventurers must avoid servants during the day and cult fanatics at night. Unless the adventurers attack, no one resorts to violence, even the cultists. Fiona and her minions will use the law to their advantage; not even Baron Vallakovich can excuse trespassing onto a noble's estate.

Leo Dilisnya. The bones of Leo Dilisnya, the Ba'al Verzi assassin that killed Strahd, have been sealed away by the Wachter family. If you are using the optional fourth Fortune of Ravenloft (the *Ba'al Verzi dagger*), it is vital that the adventurers find Leo's remains. An echo of Leo's spirit clings to his bones; a *speak with dead* spell allows the caster to communicate with him. Leo reveals the gruesome details of Tatyana and Sergei's wedding. He also notes that the magical mirror in the baron's manor can be used to summon his spirit for ill. He provides the necessary rhyme that conjures him. Leo's bones are in Area N4O.

N5. Arasek Stockyard

The Arasek Stockyard is, essentially, Vallaki's general store. All manner of goods can be found here. What foreign adventurers bring to Barovia inevitably winds up here.

Revision. The Araseks sell adventuring gear for five times the ordinary price. Once again, the *Companion* advocates against this. The adventurers simply can't afford such absurd prices, and it therefore disincentivizes them from purchasing anything at all. Likewise, these prices make no sense in the context of Vallaki where most villagers are slinging copper coins around.

Rictavio's Carnival Wagon

Rictavio's wagon is locked—and trapped with a poisoned needle trap (see Appendix C).

Revision. The *Companion* recommends erasing the **saber-toothed tiger** and *Tyger, Tyger* special event from the campaign. If you adopt this change, Rictavio's treasure is moved from a secret compartment in the front to inside the wagon itself. The adventurers will have to break in to further investigate Rictavio's identity. Do not read the text provided in *Curse of Strahd*.

N6. Coffin Maker's Shop

It is always raining or about to rain when the adventurers set out to visit this place. Whether this is merely bad luck or manipulation on Strahd's part, no one will ever know. If the adventurers provoke a conflict with the vampire spawn inside, it begins to violently storm. See Appendix C for the effects of heavy precipitation.

Per *Curse of Strahd*, the adventurers can warn Baron Vallakovich about the bones of Saint Andral, who sends four **guards** to retrieve them. As the Dungeon Master, you can choose to have these guards butchered by the vampire spawn or opt for something far more horrifying: Baron Vallakovich doesn't believe the adventurers. "All will be well," he insists. Denied institutional support from the authorities, it falls to the adventurers to break in and steal the bones.

Revision. The bones of Saint Andral have been moved from Henrik's bedroom (Area N6E) to the vampire nest (Area N6f). To recover them, the party must fight the undead. To compensate for this, the number of **vampire spawn** have been reduced from six to four. If you do not adopt this change, the six vampires will still intervene; once they hear Henrik's bedroom door open, they emerge from their crates and stage an ambush. It is the only logical outcome—they cannot afford to fail Strahd.

Breaking in. Henrik's shop is a fortress. All doors and windows are locked. While behind the door, most magic that requires the spellcaster to see their target is foiled. Thus, the party can't simply charm Henrik into letting them inside. To break down a door requires a successful DC 15 Strength check. To pick a door's lock requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Henrik protests this intrusion but inevitably crumbles, and collapses into a chair. Read the following:

> In the oppressive silence, the coffin maker takes a seat and puts his head in his hands. "It is no use," he whispers. "*They* are here… creatures of the night. Th-they… They forced me… I didn't know! Morninglord's light, I did not know what beast stood at my door so long ago!"

Roleplaying Henrik. Henrik is a shell of a man. He shouts at the adventurers to leave, but this fire soon burns out—it was stoked only by fear, anyway. Faced with more adversity, Henrik crumbles. He speaks only in whispers and does not look at the adventurers. Broken now, he explains that a one "Lord Vasili von Holtz" came to his door long ago and began this entire affair. Henrik still does not know that Strahd is Vasili von Holtz, but he believes the nobleman to be a vampire regardless.

The vampires vent their unquenched thirst and frustration by physically abusing Henrik. When he sits in his chair, purple bruises become visible along his ankles and wrists. His body is stained with such bruises. He walks with a limp and winces with every twitch of his right arm.

You can voice Henrik with the following sample dialogue:

- "They are listening even now…"
- "I no longer sleep. At night, they sit at my bed and stroke my neck. They listen to the blood quicken in my veins and smile. They have promised me life everlasting—and I fear they will not take 'no' as an answer."
- "Pray you never meet him. Pray you never find yourself facing Lord Vasili von Holtz."
- "I, I cannot say more! They will know… They already know."
- If Henrik is killed, his last words are, "Morninglord forgive me…"

In the Vampire's Nest

The **vampire spawn** lurk in Area N6F. At night, they emerge from their crates to torment Henrik. The vampires awaken whenever someone enters Henrik's home and remain alert until these intruders leave—for Strahd von Zarovich has promised eternal torment for those that fail him in this dark hour. Without great luck and greater magic, the adventurers have almost no chance of sneaking past the vampires, who peek out from their crates. A spell of *pass without trace* or *darkness* is necessary to hide from their gaze—but even then the vampires are not idiots. They will investigate any disturbance and do whatever it takes to protect the bones.

The Bones of Saint Andral. The bones of Saint Andral are hidden in the crate along the western wall, far from the vampire spawn, who are sickened by its presence. The bones are in a sack of dirt. A vampire spawn that is holding or touching the sack has disadvantage on saving throws and attack rolls. A vampire spawn that touches the bones directly must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much on a failure; a vampire spawn can only take this damage once per round.

Author's Advice: Giving Chase

As described by the module, Barovia does not experience true sunlight—a secret known only to the Devil and his minions. If the adventurers escape with Saint Andral's bones, the vampire spawn *can* give chase—but this would reveal one of the campaign's most horrifying secrets. The people of Barovia trust in sunlight; it is one of the few protections they have against the Devil and his minions. The players are no different; you must choose when you rip away their security blanket.

To avoid blowing this secret, use the weather to your advantage. Storm clouds gather in the hour before the adventurers confront Henrik. The first peal of thunder cracks when the party is at his door. If they manage to escape with the bones, the vampire spawn give chase. Without the sun, they are "free" to run amok. Furthermore, the rain conveniently sequesters the townsfolk to their homes.

Behind this convenient storm lurks a terrible truth: Strahd von Zarovich can control the weather—and he is watching these events unfold from afar.

Creatures of Darkness. The four vampires are former adventurers and can be identified as fellow foreigners from beyond the Mists. If there are six vampires instead of four, the additional two are so emaciated and ancient, they lack any distinguishable features. These other vampires are:

- A male dwarf whose face is tattooed in the runes of an exile. His bloodstained beard is as dry and harsh as straw.
- A tall, female elf whose ears are decorated with six grimy earrings each. Her once-beautiful face was mauled into a hideous visage.
- A skinny, male human of Illuskan descent. He is dressed in tattered brown robes. A palm-sized silvered coin decorated in religious iconography hangs from his neck. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies this as the iconography of Tymora, goddess of luck.
- A short, female human of Calishite descent. She wears a scorched leather tunic. Half her head is burned off, as if she were pushed into a fireplace.

Tactics. The **vampire spawn** employ these tactics:

- The vampires extinguish any light sources in the room, unless the adventurers are overwhelmingly nonhuman.
- With their dark strength, a vampire spawn can hurl a crate using their action. While this does less damage than a traditional attack, it can add great tension to the battle. This attack should occur only once or twice in the encounter. As an action, the vampire chooses a 5-foot-wide cube within 30 feet it can see. A creature in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The creature is also restrained until it or another creature succeeds on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check made as an action.
- The vampires utilize their Spider Climb trait to scale the walls and ceiling, thereby avoiding opportunity attacks or otherwise routing the adventurers.
- The vampires cut off the adventurers' retreat (the door to the staircase) either by hurling crates at it or physically guarding it. They only do this if the adventurers actually manage to get the bones.



Escaping the Nest. Desperate times call for desperate measures. The adventurers can open and leap from the second-floor windows to escape. A creature that does so must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a success, the creature lands on their feet and takes no damage. On a failure, they land prone and take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall. To communicate this possible exit point to the adventurers, read the following text:

> "Die, daywalker!" a vampire hisses, her claws lashing out in the gloom. Twisting away, she finds purchase in your shirt and hurls you against the wall. Dust trickles from the ceiling as your ears ring from the impact. In the muted chaos, you look around. The scene is utter bedlam—but your eyes narrow upon the window!

Giving Chase. The bones of Saint Andral must not be lost. The vampire spawn must pursue the adventurers. With the weather outside so frightful, the vampire spawn have the perfect excuse to walk the streets of Vallaki before dusk. Provided the adventurers make it outside, read the following when the vampire spawn give chase:

> Out into the windswept streets you run, pelted by harsh and grueling rain. Another lance of lightning etches itself across the sky. In the silence before the thunder, you hear a snarl straight from a nightmare. Clinging in the window frame is a corpse—the vampire!
>
> "This is not yet over!" she hisses, crouched like a lion. With another snarl, she leaps from the window, landing in the street! With sinking horror, you realize that the sunlight cannot burn what it cannot touch! As the rain worsens, the creature breaks into a sprint!

The other surviving vampires follow. For the sake of the narrative, assume the vampires can leap onto buildings. They take alternative routes to cut off the adventurers' escape, or even head towards the church. If the adventurers give up the bones, the spawn retreat into the shadows.

N7. Blinsky Toys

Blinsky is a well-intentioned outcast with an innocent dream: to bring "hyappiness" to Barovian children everywhere. If the adventurers rescued Freek and Myrtle from Old Bonegrinder, Father Lucian or the Martikovs suggest purchasing toys from Blinsky—even if his toys are creepy. After all, "children so young," Father Lucian would say, "require certain comforts."

The Devil's Bride

Izek Strazni forces Blinsky to fashion dolls in the likeness of Ireena Kolyana, making this another chapter of her storyline. If Ireena is present, she conveniently stays outside the toy store ("I have seen enough of Blinsky's toys wash up in the village. I need not meet the man who made them."). Thus, she never sees the eerie dolls made in her likeness. The adventurers must decide whether to tell her. If Ireena sees the dolls, her face goes pale, and she asks to be brought back to Saint Andral's Church immediately ("This… this is too much. I, I need to lay down.").



N8. Town Square

Even if the Barovian economy is in shambles, Vallaki ought to be a place of industry. All but the most luxurious of professions are explored behind the safety of the town's walls. A town with over a thousand people require amenities such as a blacksmith, an apothecary, and more. No place is more fitting to house these shops than Town Square, three of which are briefly detailed below. With the Vallakian wilderness infested with so many wolves, the local tanner and butcher have seen a massive growth of materials.

The Devil's Bride. If Ireena is present, Izek Strazni recognizes her as she passes by. His mouth goes agape as a look of surprise and awe consume his otherwise ugly face. Ireena, for her part, pulls the hood up on her cloak and pretends not to notice him. Later, Izek informs Baron Vallakovich that his sister has returned. Baron sends a spy to investigate (and question Father Lucian, if Ireena stays at the church), thereby leading to *The Honor of Your Presence.*

The Apothecarium

This quiet shop is full of flowers, vines, and other plants. It is owned and operated by Senka Tolstoy, a spinster and herbalist. When she isn't serving as the local midwife, Senka sells poultices meant to ease fevers and other ailments. Capable of minor alchemy, Senka has the following potions for sale:

- Three *potions of healing* (15 gp each)
- A *potion of water breathing* (4 gp)
- An *oil of slipperiness* (8 gp).
- A *potion of necrotic resistance* (25 gp).

Senka can also make wolfsbane incense for 15 gp if the adventurers bring her a sprig of wolfsbane. This incense is nauseating to werewolves.

Branimir's Butchery

Until it rains, the stench of the local slaughterhouse drifts across town square. There, Branimir Stoyanovich strips wolf corpses down to the bone. Supplied by Yevgeni Krushkin and Szoldar Szoldarivch, Branimir has no shortage of meat to sell. A pound of "good" meat (good being subjective, as wolves are what they eat: carrion) is sold for 4 cp. Branimir is eerily laconic and only grunts his replies. His wife, Tsveta, handles customers, but she is gone on an errand when the adventurers first enter the shop. Unbeknownst to Branimir, his cousin Kiril is a werewolf and alpha of the Children of Mother Night. Ironic, given that Branimir's primary medium is the flesh of wolves.

Dementlieu Baguette

This bakery stands opposite of Branimir's Butchery, its mouth-watering scents ever at war with the butchery's nauseating stench. The store is owned and operated by Martine Jacquet, a young woman who came to Barovia four years ago. Martine hails from Dementlieu, another Domain of Dread created by the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. Martine became separated from her family by the Mists and found herself near Krezk. Denied entrance into the town, she waited until a troupe of good-hearted Vistani gave her a lift to Vallaki. Martine knows only that she hails from an "equally dismal land" and that the Mists prevent her from going home. Dementlieu. Dementlieu is detailed in Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft. It is a French-inspired domain ruled over by a Cinderella-esque Darklord named Saidra d'Honaire. Saidra hosts extravagant galas each week, and only the wealthiest and most influential are invited. Everyone vies for an invitation or otherwise sneaks in. The streets of Dementlieu are also haunted by "the Red Death," a mysterious wraith—Saidra d'Honaire's secret alter-ego.



N9. Vistani Camp

A visit to this camp is mandatory for your campaign. The party must be put on both Arrigal and Kasimir's radar. The party might be led here for any number of reasons:

- The party is seeking their Destined Ally or an artifact.
- The adventurers have rescued Arabelle from Bluto Krogarov at Lake Zarovich (see *CMP* Ch. 2, Area L). Alternatively, they met Alexei or Savid out in the woods (see the I*n Search of Arabelle* encounter in *CMP* Ch. 2).
- The adventurers were waylaid here by wolves, werewolves, or other creatures of the night.
- A Vallakian suggested they go speak with Kasimir Velikov, who is described as a "fixture of Barovian history."

Meeting Arrigal

Nothing happens in or around the Vistani camp without Arrigal's knowledge. He has spies and sentries everywhere. By when the adventurers mount the hill, Arrigal will have already been informed. He prepares accordingly. If Alexei is being whipped by Luvash, Arrigal intends for the adventurers to see it. So too does he make it clear, by calling off Luvash, that he is the one they must entreat with, that he rules the clan, not his wild brother.

Roleplaying Arrigal. Arrigal plays the part of the emissary. He wears a smile, the warmth of which fails to touch his eyes. He takes this opportunity to size up the adventurers, knowing that, sooner or later, his dark and distant master will call Arrigal into action. Sooner or later, Arrigal knows he will be burying a blade deep into the back of his newfound "friends."

Arrigal offers the adventurers refreshments—wine that he himself does not partake in, but his brother does. He offers the adventurers every hospitality, answers their questions, and demonstrates his subtle but undeniable rule over the clan. The adventurers should leave with the impression that Arrigal pulls all strings around the camp.

If the adventurers save Arabelle, Arrigal offers them a reward. Curious as to what sort of people these strangers are, he deliberately takes them to the Vistani treasure wagon. Unlocking it, he allows the party to choose one single treasure from the wagon. Before doing so, he stations several sober Vistani bandits nearby in case things turn bloody. Likewise, he keeps a sentry at the wagon at night.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. If an artifact is meant to be in Area N9I, Arrigal gets involved. The artifact was taken from dead adventurers several years ago. Arrigal is unaware of the artifact's importance until it is taken by the adventurers. He does not stop the adventurers from leaving with the artifact, but instead hatches a plan to retrieve it. Inevitably, Arrigal makes his move. He might slip into Vallaki one night while the adventurers are asleep, or he might stage an ambush at the Luna River Crossroads (as described in *CMP* Ch. 2, Area P).

History of the Dusk Elves

The tragic history of the dusk elves is summarized below:

- Strahd's homeland bordered the dusk elf kingdom. Strahd's father, King Barov, shattered the elves in a horrific war. This victory was only possible with the military secrets betrayed by Rahadin, who would be named the adoptive son of King Barov and later chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft.
- Their kingdom lost, the surviving elves fled from Strahd, who continued his late father's war. Spirited away by the Vistani, the elves secluded in what would later be named Barovia. The elves took on Vistani names to honor these friends.
- The Order of the Silver fought—and failed—to protect the dusk elves and other refugees of Strahd's wars. The elves are aware of the Order, having lived alongside Argynvost's knights.
- Strahd was content to let the elves live, even after Barovia was sealed away by the Mists. Patrina Velikovna, a powerful mage, sought Strahd's hand in marriage—and he agreed. Her brother, Kasimir, led her public stoning.
- As revenge for his lost bride, Strahd sent Rahadin to slaughter all dusk elven women and children, bringing their people to extinction. Rahadin is now as "the Dog of Zarovich" and "the Great Betrayer."
- The dusk elf men now exist as a broken people left to rot for centuries in Ravenloft. The Vistani they befriended centuries ago have long-since passed, and the current generation lacks much of the integrity and honor their forebears had.
- The surviving elves are both hostages and wards. The Vistani protect them from the horrors of Barovia but sometimes act like wolves themselves.

Meeting Kasimir Velikov

Kasimir sulks in his hovel, but will emerge if he hears newcomers are visiting the Vistani Camp. Meeting him becomes inevitable; read the following text:

> A soft voice draped in an Elvish accent calls out to you: "You must be new here," he says, "if we have not yet met."
>
> You turn, meeting the gaze of an earless elf whose sunken eyes speak to a lifetime of regret. He is tall, skinny—skeletal, really. His robes, now ancient, are woven with sigils of the arcane. Clearly he is a wizard of sorts.
>
> "My name is Kasimir. Kasimir Velikov. If you are anything like the last outsiders I met, you must have many questions about this dismal realm. Please, have tea with me in my home. Field your questions. I have, almost literally, all the time in the world."

Roleplaying Kasimir. Kasimir is full of nervous hope when he first meets the adventurers. He strokes what were once his ears as he explains the plight of his people. Having lived through quite literally all of Barovian history, he can act as the party's historian and scholar. His knowledge—in history, in magic, in alchemy, and geography—is vast and invaluable (see Appendix D for what secrets escape him, however). Kasimir happens to demonstrate his mastery of the arcane through rote spells like prestidigitation and other magic used to ease the burdens of daily life.

Kasimir took "Velikov" as a surname to honor the Vistana who bore his people to Barovia. He mentions this early with the adventurers and warns them, "Velikov's descendants… fail to live up to his memory." Other than saying, "Arrigal is a man of cunning," Kasimir elaborates no further on the Vistani; he can't afford to anger his peoples' wolfish guardians.

As a wizard, Kasimir has great knowledge of arcane magic. To curry favor with the adventurers or show his gratitude, he offers to teach the party's resident wizard a spell (from the spells already in his spellbook) for a reduced price of only 5 gp's worth of materials. This process takes 1d6 + 6 hours of studying alongside Kasimir. The wizard character can choose which of Kasimir's spells to learn. Kasimir is willing to continue teaching the wizard if they promise to seek out the Amber Temple.

Dreams of the Damned. Kasimir is burdened by dreams sent forth by his sister Patrina's spirit. Although he would normally keep this troubling news to himself, he is eager to mount an expedition to the Amber Temple. Fearing that he might not see the adventurers again, he quickly brings up his sister's unrest. He does not, however, reveal that she sought the hand of Strahd himself. Kasimir does not want to scare away the adventurers, and so he paints a far more forgiving picture of the past. Read the following text, which assumes the characters are in Kasimir's home:

> Kasimir tosses a log into the hearth. Through a spell, the elf sets the log ablaze. With his back to you, Kasimir murmurs, "Centuries ago, my sister Patrina was put to death. She was to be the Devil's bride—and our people would rather have her killed than lose such a powerful wizard to such a hungry fiend. She was hellbent on going to Castle Ravenloft. We begged her not to, but it was clear she was under the vampire's spell. Patrina was stoned. Dragged from her home in the dead of night… and gagged so she could not utter a spell."
>
> At his side, Kasimir's hands tighten into fists. "For depriving him of a new bride, the Devil had all our women and children put to the sword—a genocide carried out by Rahadin, the Great Betrayer."
>
> The elf turns to you, his eyes full of sorrow. "My sister is dead, but not silent. From the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft, her spirit calls to me. She whispers to me in my dreams. She has found no rest in the afterlife, but knows how to escape it. She knows where the power to cheat death can be found—the same foul sanctum in which the Devil stole the power of the vampyr. It is a font of evil buried deep in the mountains… a place once known to the Order of the Silver Dragon as the 'Amber Temple.'"
>
> Kasimir shakes his head. "The way is long, perilous. I have tried before and failed. Please, I beg of you: accompany me to the summit of Mount Ghakis. Brave the cold at my side. Brave the dark with me as well. Together, we can bring my people back from extinction."

With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, a character senses that there is something Kasimir is holding back. If pressed, Kasimir reveals that it was he who orchestrated the execution and that he lost his ears as a result. He says, "To my great shame, it was I who cast the first stone. It was I who rallied our people, who stoked the fires of paranoia. I told myself it was necessary. Patrina was the greatest of us. We—I—could not allow her to join the Devil in undeath."

The Fortunes of Ravenloft. If an artifact is meant to be in Area N9A, the *Companion* suggests a daring change: Kasimir already lost the artifact in a previous foray to the Amber Temple. This is a step-up from Kasimir simply giving the adventurers the unearned artifact.



Special Events

Several special events can occur in Vallaki. You do not need to use every single event in the story. You can easily eliminate *The Festival of the Blazing Sun* and *Tyger, Tyger* from your campaign by setting the baron's next festival for the morning after *St. Andral's Feast* is scheduled.

The *Companion* suggests two new events to this chapter:

Justice for Arabelle

Bluto Krogarov, if he still lives, must face justice for kidnapping Arabelle. The Vistani will not settle for anything less. This event should coincide with the adventurers' meeting with Baron Vallakovich (but not the *The Honor of Your Presence* special event).

If Arabelle's capture becomes known, Luvash, a CE **bandit captain**, and six Vistani **bandits** storm the Sunset Gate, demanding entrance into Vallaki and Bluto's head. The guards quickly send for Izek Strazni and dispatch a message to the baron. The baron is not inclined to start letting Vistani into town, but the adventurers can convince him otherwise with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. In his hubris, however, Baron Vallakovich refuses to hand over Bluto, citing Vallaki itself as Bluto's court, not the Vistani's.

If their demands are not met, Luvash storms back to the Vistani camp. Later that night, **Arrigal** slips into Vallaki and assassinates Bluto. His corpse is found in Town Square the next morning with a sign draped over his bloodied chest. The sign reads, "We will always have our vengeance."

The Honor of Your Presence

Baron Vargas is no fool. He knows firsthand, from his own experience, the wise burgomaster meets with visiting outsiders early on. He himself has met three separate groups of adventurers lured into Barovia. All told, the Vallakovich line has met just about every foreigner that has made it to Vallaki. Thus, Vargas extends an invitation to dinner once he learns new adventurers have entered Vallaki. Alas, hubris clouds Vargas's judgment; he is confident that his forces can overwhelm these outsiders. Additionally, Vargas does not take "no" for an answer.

The Messenger. Most nobles would send a well-perfumed valet to deliver an invitation. Not Vargas. He knows he must demonstrate the strength of his soldiers, and so he sends Izek Strazni and three guards. This is another opportunity to get Ireena and Izek face-to-face. When Izek approaches the party, preferably on the street, read:

As you rummage through the cabbage dealer's cart, you hear a hoarse "You there," from behind. Standing before you is the baron's monstrous henchman, the man with a fiendishly barbed arm. The brute tries to offer a smile that comes out forced and ugly. "Outsiders. His Sanguinity, Baron Vallakovich, requests the honor of your presence for dinner tonight. You will report to the manor at dusk. If you have wine, bring it."

The devil-armed thug rifles through his pockets until he produces a letter sealed with crimson wax. "Warm food and good cheer will be provided," he says. Looking over your frayed and bloodied clothes, the brute sneers, "Do try to dress for the occasion."

A crooked "V" is stamped into the crimson wax. The letter names each adventurer, thereby demonstrating that, in so little time, Vargas has managed to wring out secrets from other Vallakians, like the Martikovs. It continues to read, "The honor of your presence is humbly requested on this day in the year of the Morninglord, 735."

The adventurers are expected to arrive in "proper attire" (fine clothes, which cost 15 gp). The Martikovs can direct the party to a local tailor.

Dinner with the Baron. The party is warmly welcomed into the manor. The hallway is lined with servants who bow and curtsy as the adventurers approach Vargas, his giggly wife, and his perpetually-sighing son. Vargas welcomes them and, of course, promises them that "All will be well." He has planned quite the feast: beef tartare as an appetizer, followed by a goose neck soup; a salad of minced cabbage, onions, bell peppers, and cucumbers pickled in vinegar with dill and mustard seeds; and pan-seared glazed pork chops. For dessert, the cook has prepared a floating island. After dinner, Vargas intends to invite the adventurers into the library to smoke cigars and enjoy brandy he "confiscated" from some Vallaki merchants returning from beyond the Mist.

During dinner, Lydia giggles and squeals at whatever Vargas says. For his mother's every laugh, Victor sighs. Vargas engages in the following topics during dinner:

- Vargas' philosophy: "Once every man, woman, and child in Vallaki soars with joy, we shall slip free from the Devil's grasp and then… and then all will be well."
- Izek Strazni's history: "...and for his crimes, they demanded his death, but I saw in Izek the fires of redemption. He is my greatest achievement." Victor rolls his eyes at this.
- The esteemed monster hunter (or "incorrigible instigator" as Vargas calls him) Rudolph van Richten is rumored to have surfaced in Barovia. Vargas is offering a 1,000 gp reward to whomever brings him van Richten alive. Vargas claims that van Richten spreads chaos, unrest, and misery wherever he goes.

The Devil's Bride. If Ireena is present and her presence is known to Vargas, he proposes a betrothal between her and Victor—a nauseating prospect for Ireena. Read the following text, which assumes Baron Vargas does not know that Ireena's father is dead:

The baron stabs a hunk of wolf meat with his fork, leaving the utensil there. Sharing a smile with his wife, Vargas turns to Ireena and says, "Now, my dear, we come to the most exciting part of the evening. Though our two… baronies… have not done so in many a generation, I believe your coming here signals that it is time for our two noble lines to be wed."

Immediately, Victor heaves a heavy sigh. Lydia squeals, clasping her hand over Ireena's. "Victor will make a fine husband," she says.

"...when he shapes up," the baron grumbles beneath his breath before clearing his throat. "Well, my dear. How would you like to be the future baroness of Vallaki?"

Ireena is quiet only for a moment. Clearly she senses how fragile the baron is. After only the slightest hesitation, Ireena smiles. "That sounds lovely, my lord. I must, however, consult my father first. He will need to approve of the betrothal."

Vargas offers a strained smile. Through his teeth he agrees, "Of course."

"Don't I get a say in this?" Victor snaps.

"Quiet boy," answers his father.

"You would just sell me off to some stranger—"

"A stranger?" gasps his mother. She turns to Ireena and offers, "Please don't take that the—"

"It's fine," says Ireena, looking anywhere but in Lydia's eyes.

Victor, it seems, is not yet done. Pushing his plate away, the boy shouts, "You say you want me to grow up and yet you continue to treat me like a child!"

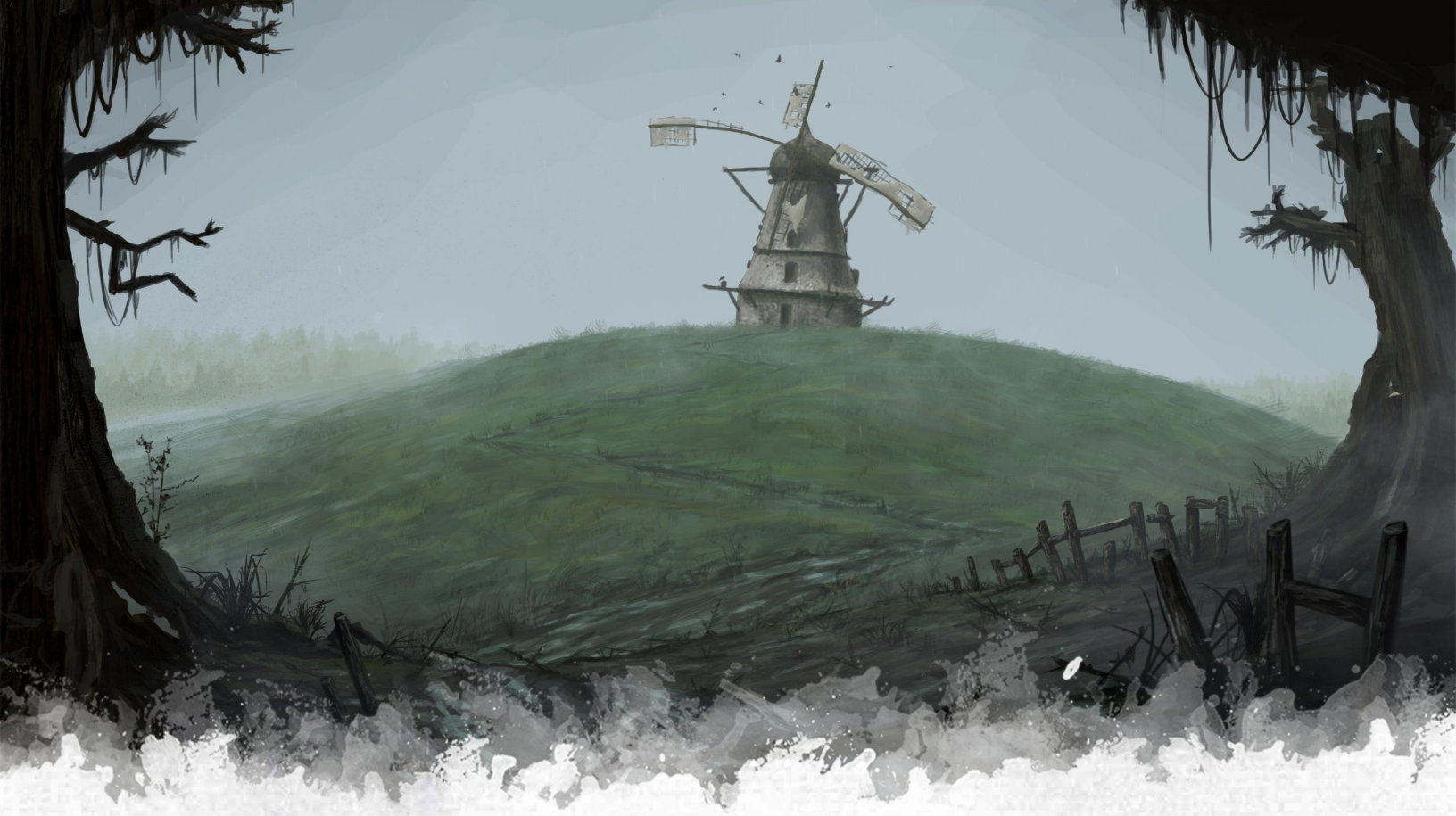
Vargas leaps to his feet. A mastiff raises her head, clearly excited. "You would waste away in that attic if it weren't for me dragging you out into the cold light of day. It's like it's your cave?"

"My cave?" Victor mocks.

"Your cave, you miserable, little—"

"I'm done with this, father," Victor snarls, ripping the napkin from his collar and throwing it to the table. With that, he storms out of the room.

"Have fun upstairs!" shouts the baron as his wife devolves into a symphony of embarrassed giggles.



Chapter VI: Old Bonegrinder

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 136
Chapter Progression 136
Quick Notes 136
Running the Chapter 137
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 137
Dramatis Personae 138
Variants & Revisions 139
Dark Bargains 140
A Malison for Mercy 140
Casting the First Stone 140
Into Castle Ravenloft 141
Death in the Dead of Night 142
I. March of the Damned 142
II. In the Home of Hags 143
III. The Curtain Lifted 144
Areas of the Windmill 145
O1. Ground Floor 145
O2. Bone Mill 145
O3. Bedroom 146
O4. Domed Attic 146
The Megaliths 147
Aftermath 148
The Coven Intact 148
The Coven Shattered 149

Along the Svalich Road lurks an abattoir like no other—a slaughterhouse staffed by butchers of a predatory nature. It has been a ruin of many an adventuring party. Known to its occupants as Old Bonegrinder, this house of hags has seen the death of countless children and the utter humiliation of the heroes who would dare liberate such victims.

Chapter Overview

Old Bonegrinder lives on in infamy amongst the *Curse of Strahd* community. It is here that most adventuring parties meet their end, for an inexperienced Dungeon Master often forgets the nature of a hag and not every combatant fights with the intent to kill. Bonegrinder is an opportunity like no other. As masters of dark magic, the hags have enormous creative power in your narrative; outside of combat, they can do whatever you need. The hags can provide potions, magic items, and even a portal into Castle Ravenloft—there truly is no limit to what they can do if given ample time and proper motivation. So too can the hags corrupt and curse the adventurers, rather than kill them.

Chapter Progression

Chapter 6 is short and brutal. It lasts one session at the most. Considering it a story, it can be divided into these acts:

Act I is exploratory in nature. The adventurers travel toward Old Bonegrinder, facing either random encounters along the way or the Death in the Dead of Night storyline.

Act II is social in nature and features heavy roleplay, provided the adventurers do not immediately come to blows with Morgantha.

Act III is focused on combat. A conflict at Old Bonegrinder is all but inevitable.

Quick Notes

- Old Bonegrinder is a deathtrap—if one does not roleplay hags accordingly. Instead, it should be an opportunity to further the narrative. You must exercise restraint when using the hags in battle.
- The Vistani refuse to speak of Old Bonegrinder or the hags. Assume that they believe the "crones" are witches, not hags.
- Morgantha can play a vital role in *St. Andral's Feast* in Vallaki. See *Variants & Revisions*.
- The coven's *hag eye* is possessed by Cyrus Belview. However, it is far more compelling if Morgantha demands an eye from a defeated adventurer in return for their freedom. If the opportunity arises, write Cyrus' *hag eye* out of the campaign.

Author's Advice: The Hags

Old Bonegrinder is a known abattoir in the *Curse of Strahd* community. Most parties die there. However, Old Bonegrinder must be considered an opportunity, not a death sentence. Hags don't kill, but instead corrupt. Morgantha is more likely to spare an adventurer, so long as they accept a dark bargain or live on with a curse. These forces drove my actions for this chapter, the experience of which is relayed below:

The party consisted of four 4th-level adventurers, plus Ireena Kolyana. I had reduced the hags to **green hags** to even the odds, but even then the adventurers were summarily defeated. The players already suspected that Morgantha was a witch of sorts. Using the *Death in the Dead of Night* event, I drove my players to Old Bonegrinder. Morgantha answered the door and left them to stew in suspense in Area O1—after offering them pastries from the oven. The hag insisted the adventurers meet her daughters; Offalia, she said, was in need of a husband. Inevitably, an adventurer crept upstairs and found the imprisoned children. Meanwhile, the party forced Morgantha's hand downstairs. The battle was bloody. The hags never went for killing blows; with a kiss on the forehead, Morgantha stabilized each fallen adventurer. I even had her *counterspell* healing spells.

Ultimately, the party was defeated and offered dark deals to escape: the loss of one's shadow, the loss of an eye, the unwitting agreement to orchestrate the *St. Andral's Feast* in Vallaki. The cleric bartered for the children's lives (after Morgantha demanded they choose for one to die). Only the resident wizard refused to make a deal in exchange for his freedom. Rather than kill the wizard, I had him imprisoned. The player still had to create a new character, but it was possible to rescue the wizard later.

The episode was controversial amongst my players. Some cited this as proof that *Curse of Strahd* is a "miserable slog" and suggested playing something more lighthearted. One player claimed I railroaded them into an unavoidable defeat; my explanation that I even *nerfed* the hags' statistics fell on deaf ears. Where I can admit that I failed as a Dungeon Master was not making it clear that the adventurers had a choice between going in or taking their chances on the road with the undead. This my players told me later on. In hindsight, I would also make sure that the exit was always open. Thinking tactically, I had Offalia block the exit through much of the battle, thereby cutting off the adventurers' most obvious means of escape. I also made the mistake of *polymorphing* an adventurer, thinking that the duration was just a minute—not an hour—and allowed saving throws. Learn from my mistakes.

Running the Chapter

Old Bonegrinder is focused on roleplaying. It is a slow dance with a bloody finish. The coven keeps up a charade until at last the adventurers are forced into action. It is through this cruel game the coven finds entertainment. Ultimately, the hags *want* to be found out, just as they want the children upstairs to be discovered. It is in the nature of a hag to corrupt; even if the adventurers leave Old Bonegrinder uncursed and unscathed, they will still have been sullied by making the conscious choice to leave behind two innocent children.

Morgantha answers the door or comes down to Area O1 to investigate the intrusion. Under the *A Semblance of Norm* variant, the windmill is much tidier. Hidden are the bones and other evidence that prove the crones are hags. Morgantha offers them food, tea, and shelter as part of her game. Wishing to "marry off" her daughter Offalia, Morgantha picks on one adventurer, preferring a strapping young man, and does her best to introduce the two. In the shadows, Morgantha's daughters prepare for trouble. Separating the herd, Morgantha and Bella continue the charade and do their best to keep the adventurers from escaping before the coven has had their fun.

Advancement

The *Companion* already advocates advancing the party to 4th-level if they complete its version of the *Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest in the Village of Barovia. If the party come to blows with Morgantha's coven, they deserve to advance to 5th-level, even if they did not kill a single hag. Surviving this ordeal is enough—and it allows us to throw greater horrors at the adventurers in Vallaki.

Maintaining Suspense

The party has every reason to suspect that Morgantha and her ilk are up to no good—this is Barovia, after all. If her true identity was not discovered in Chapter 3, your goal is to hint at Morgantha's secret, insidious nature by dropping dark, disastrous double entendres. Likewise, evidence of her identity can be found by searching Old Bonegrinder: the bones and potions in Area O1, the children in Area O3.

Time

Without the *Bigger Barovia* variant, the adventurers are likely arrive to Old Bonegrinder during the day. *The Death in the Dead of Night* storyline, featured below, is set at night to heighten the tension. The chapter can unfold at any time of day and should take a session at most.

Author's Advice: Ireena Kolyana

It is no secret the Devil is obsessed with Ireena. Morgantha would know this, having visited the village of Barovia so often. Thus, the hag has a tight rope to walk—as do you. You can't let it be *confirmed* that Strahd is tracking the party. Once I made the mistake of sending a raven to the windmill with a letter of Strahd just as Morgantha was about to harm Ireena. The letter's implications were clear: Big Vamp Daddy Strahd said "No" and was watching the events. It completely killed the suspense surrounding Ireena. Trust me, *never* confirm that the adventurers are being monitored minute by minute.

Instead, I would shift the burden to Morgantha. She claims Ireena has "Evil's Mark" upon her, that the woman is already cursed. Ireena, for her part, can press the advantage against Morgantha. The hag will not harm the Devil's beloved, and so Ireena can fight freely, escape from the windmill, or pull out her unconscious comrades.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Berserker's Axe* (O4)
- *Philter of Love* (O1)
- *Potion of Healing* (O1)
- *Potion of Poison* (O1)

Creatures

- Barovian Witch
- Broom of Animated Attack
- Commoner
- Dretch
- Green Hag
- Invisible Stalker
- Ireena Kolyana
- Mimic
- Night Hag
- Rug of Smothering
- Scarecrow
- Shadow
- Strahd Zombie
- Zombie

Effects & Items

- Cackle Fever
- Indefinite Madness
- Pale Tincture
- Rope

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Bella Sunbane	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	H	O3	A gregarious, but immature, hag.
Freek	—	F	O3	A seven-year-old boy taken by the hags.
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	F	—	Tatyana reborn, assumed to be with the adventurers already.
Morgantha	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	H	O1	The hag-mother of Bella and Offalia.
Myrtle	—	F	O3	A five-year-old girl taken by the hags.
Offalia Wormwiggle	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	H	O3	A hag masquerading as a shy seamstress.

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Bella Sunbane

Bella is uncouth and fond of making guests uncomfortable with bawdy comments and crude suggestions to "stay the night" with her. She wears several pieces of cheap jewelry to distinguish herself from the other hags: a silver choker too small for her throat, an ugly butterfly brooch, and four gaudy pyrite rings which have stained her fingers green. Dressed in a threadbare robe, she joins Morgantha shortly after the adventurers arrive.

Freek

Freek was sold to Morgantha by his parents Jirko and Kereza Lansten. Wearing a brace face, he comforts Myrtle, assuring he that everything will be okay—though he knows it won't.

Roleplaying Freek. When Freek first meets the adventurers, he asks in a quiet voice, "Are you going to hurt us?" Once freed from his cage, he says, "They were fattening us up. Giving us bread. More bread we could take." In times of trouble, Freek puts himself in front of Myrtle to shield her from harm and horror. The boy breaks down crying after he recognizes Ireena, an adult he knows and trusts.

Ireena Kolyana

It is assumed that Ireena Kolyana is accompanying the party in their journey to Vallaki. In this chapter, she is given the chance to prove herself in the battle against the hags—the same hags that know she is favored by the Devil Strahd and loathe to harm even a single hair on her head. The hags, for their part, claim that "Evil's Mark" is upon Ireena.

Ireena knows that Morgantha's pastries are addictive, but she does not know they are made from children. If this fact is learned, she is horrified. Once the children Freek and Myrtle are discovered, Ireena stops at nothing to save them. If the adventurers flee from Old Bonegrinder, Ireena attempts to return. She cares nothing for her own life when such innocents are being tormented by Morgantha. Ultimately, Ireena takes on a motherly role to the children and insists they be taken to St. Andral's Church in Vallaki.

Offalia Wormwiggle

Offalia plays the part of a shy seamstress. Morgantha repeatedly mentions that she wants to "fix her up with the right man." Offalia stays up in the bedroom (Area O3) throughout much of the chapter. In this regard, she acts as a floater—a combatant that remains ready to lend her support where it's most needed. Offalia can trundle down the stairs to join the fray, or even open a window and scale the windmill's walls.

Offalia's garments are woven from human flesh and hair. An observant character can perceive a hideous detail: an entire human face woven into the "fabric."

Morgantha

Morgantha a sickeningly sweet, nosy, well-meaning grandmother—or so she pretends. Through backhanded compliments, Morgantha eviscerates her guests' ego ("Why, what strength… if only you could scrub the grease from your face," and the like) all while dropping thinly-veiled threats. To a gnome or goblin, she might say, "So adorable. I could just eat you up." In particular, Morgantha remarks that her guests look famished, all while pushing them to try a dream pastry: "Deary, you look positively famished." She repeats "famished" *ad nauseam.*

Throughout the chapter, Morgantha teases the strongest of the adventurers and suggests they marry her "flower of a daughter, Offalia." This is more than just a psychological game for Morgantha; she truly wishes to marry off her hag-daughter to spread further discord in Barovia.

Considerations. Consider the following:

- Morgantha has an answer for everything. If someone points to her bloodstained apron, she claims to have butchered a rabbit this morning for the meat pies. If asked why she's baking at night, she claims to be an early riser plagued with creaking bones and insomnia ("When you get to my age, you'll be fast friends with such aches.").
- Morgantha is aware of Barovia's newest outsiders and can't be caught unawares. She has prepared for this moment by cleaning up Old Bonegrinder and practiced a veneer of hospitality. She will have measured up any adventurers she saw in the Village of Barovia.
- Morgantha is aware of Strahd's obsession with Ireena and will *not* harm her in any way. To save face (once her true identity is revealed), Morgantha remarks, "Evil's mark is upon you." Ireena can use Morgantha's reluctance to her advantage, but the hag is sooner to paralyze her with *hold person* and leave her outside unharmed.

- Morgantha is too crafty not to have an exit strategy. As a night hag, she can escape to the Ethereal Plane. As a green hag, she can fling herself out of a window, become invisible, and escape into the Mists. After fleeing, she plots her vengeance.
- Morgantha wishes to spread her dream pastries through Vallaki, but by starting with a noble's family. She asks—or demands, if her true nature is revealed—the adventurers to deliver pastries to Baron Vallakovich and the Martikov families. "Just tell them to heat the pastries up first; they're best warm!" she adds.

Myrtle

Myrtle's parents, Marek and Danya Oronovich, sold their five-year-old daughter to the hags. She hardly comprehends the horror she has been plunged into.

Roleplaying Myrtle. Myrtle does not truly understand what's happening. She still has not accepted that her parents sold her and expresses a wish to return home—a wish that is quickly admonished by Freek, who finally loses his temper and shouts, "They sold us Myrtle! Our parents sold us to monsters! Why can't you figure that out yet!" Myrtle then bursts into tears. Upon recognizing Ireena Kolyana, Myrtle wipes away her snot and tears and asks, "Miss Ireena, can we go home?"

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* suggests several changes to this chapter:

Dream Pastries

A number of changes are needed for Morgantha's dream pastries. As it stands, they'll likely fall unconscious on the street. Instead, the pastries should be addictive (with actual mechanics to facilitate that addiction). Nonetheless, both versions have been included below:

Original. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or fall into a trance that lasts for 1d4+4 hours, during which time the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0 feet. The trance ends if the affected creature takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

While in the trance, the creature dreams of being in some joyous place, far removed from the evils of the world. The places and characters in the dream are vivid and believable, and when the dream ends, the affected creature experiences a longing to return to the place.

Revision. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety later experiences a euphoric dream when they next sleep. Upon waking up, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become addicted to dream pastries and gain the following flaw: "I can't think straight without a dream pastry in my belly." For every 24 hours the creature goes without eating another dream pastry, they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw. The DC begins at 16; for every dream pastry the creature has consumed in the last 30 days, the DC increases by 1, up to a maximum of 20.

On a failure, the creature gains one level of exhaustion (up to three levels). If a creature succeeds on three of these Constitution saving throws in a row, their addiction to dream pastries ends.

A Fighting Chance

The adventurers stand no chance against a coven of three **night hags**. If you wish for them to have a fighting chance, consider reducing them to **green hags**. The coven will still prove quite the match, but the adventurers are not doomed. It is all but guaranteed that the adventurers will provoke a conflict, and although the hags can retreat to the Ethereal Plane in a pinch, they aren't going to do so if they have the upper hand. It is in your best interest to play it safe. One unlucky roll can kill an adventurer and there's no walking that back. To further convince you of this change, consider these facts:

- Night hags have 20 more hit points than green hags, plus resistance to cold, fire, and nonmagical weapon attacks—and it is all but certain that the adventurers currently lack a magical weapon. This amounts to 60 more hit points to burn through altogether in combat, or 120 if the party uses cold- and fire-dealing spells and lacks magic weapons.
- Night hags have advantage on saving throws against spells, further weakening the adventurers.
- The spells of a green hag coven are DC 13 and +5 to hit; those of a night hag coven are DC 15 and +7 to hit. With the latter, there is little chance for the adventurers to avoid or resist a spell.

Later On. With the coven reduced to green hags, the adventurers can revisit the mill at an earlier level. This is acceptable. Killing Morgantha and her ilk is a well-needed victory. In the slog that is *Curse of Strahd*, one requires grease—small victories—to keep the machine moving.

A Semblance of Norm

It's painfully obvious the "women" that dwell here are cannibals at best and monsters at worst. The room descriptions provided in the module immediately blow the hags' cover by nonchalantly adding phrases like "shrieks and cackles… cause the windmill to shudder" and "small human bones litter the floor."

If you run Old Bonegrinder as the unsettling trap it ought to be, remove these descriptions. Although the place is cluttered, it is not filthy, and the more insidious elements—while there—are harder to detect. See *A Semblance of Norm* in *Areas of the Windmill* below for alternative area descriptions that reflect these changes.

Dark Bargains

As a hag, Morgantha is in the business of striking ruinous deals meant to worsen the world and corrupt the individual. Only the dumb or desperate do business with a hag, but the adventurers might have no choice. Below are examples of the deals Morgantha is interested in making:

A Malison for Mercy

In return for accepting a malison—a greater curse which can't be undone by *remove curse*—Morgantha will spare someone's life. These malisons are roleplaying opportunities that should be pursued if the adventurers are reduced to 0 hit points. Except in particular instances, a malison should have no true mechanical impact on a character's statistics. A malison can, however, evoke disastrous consequences if certain conditions are met.

Suggestions malisons include:

Courage. The character becomes a mewling coward. They make saving throws against being frightened with disadvantage.

Deceit. The character loses the ability to lie.

Hand. Morgantha demands the character's hand in marriage, wedding them to Offalia or Bella. A ring is magically welded to their left hand. If the character dies while possessing a magic item or other item of repute (such as the *Tome of Strahd*), it is magically teleported to the character's spouse.

Sight. The character loses their darkvision racial trait, if they have it. If they don't, the character loses their vision but gains blindsight out to a range of 60 feet.

Shadow. The character loses their shadow to Morgantha. During the day, she can summon it as a **shadow** that obeys her commands. Once the adventurers reach 5th level, the **shadow** becomes an **invisible stalker**.

Voice. The character loses the ability to sing and speaks with a rasp so agonizing it motivates one to become willingly mute.

Youth. The character ages rapidly into the equivalent of an 80-year-old for their race. Morgantha's human guise becomes that of a 45-year-old woman. This has no mechanical impact on either character's statistics.

Casting the First Stone

Morgantha can play a key part in the *St. Andral's Feast* event in Vallaki. As part of a dark bargain, perhaps for the lives of the adventurer's comrades or the lives of Freek and Myrtle, Morgantha offers this deal: "Your tasks number three: deliver this letter, stand aside, and cast the first stone." She does not elaborate further.

If the adventurer agrees to her deal, they are effectively afflicted by a *geas* spell (save DC 15 if Morgantha is a **night hag** and DC 13 if she is a **green hag**). The spell ends immediately after all three edicts, described below, are fulfilled. These edicts can't be cheated in any way; doing so, triggers the geas spell. If the character is affected by a *remove curse* or *greater restoration* spell while in Barovia, the spell is suppressed for 1d4 hours, but not removed.

Morgantha's edicts and intentions are described below:

"**Deliver the Letter.** "The adventurer is compelled to deliver Henrik van der Voort, the Vallakian coffin maker holding the bones of St. Andral. The letter, addressed to Henrik and sealed in crimson wax, reads "Only the dead may guard the bones." Henrik then moves the bones from his bedroom to a crate in the vampires' room. (Per the *Companion*, the bones are already moved to this room, but this allows you to weave this more into the story.)

"**Stand Aside.**" Upon discovering the whereabouts of St. Andral's bones, the adventurer is compelled to stand aside as their comrades brave the coffin maker's vampire-infested home, thereby depriving the party of back-up.

"**Cast the First Stone.**" When Baron Vallakovich and his family are dragged out from their homes, the adventurer is compelled to throw the first stone in what will be their public stoning. Symbolically, "cast the first stone" can amount to any form of murder. For example, if the baron is to be immolated, the adventurer is compelled to toss the first torch. If someone beats the adventurer to the punch, they must still participate at least once in the death of Baron Vallakovich. If the *St. Andral's Feast* event is thwarted and the Vallakoviches are not murdered as retribution from the townsfolk, the adventurer effectively fulfills this edict.

Into Castle Ravenloft

The adventurers can turn to Morgana to infiltrate Castle Ravenloft. The hag coven can teleport them inside—for a price. To invade the Devil's sanctum is no small matter, and so Morgantha demands one of the following:

- A lock of Arabelle's hair and a vial of her blood. Knowing the Vistana child is related to Strahd, Morgantha wishes to use her blood to gain leverage over the Devil himself. It is her hope that, through this blood magic, she can manipulate or charm Strahd into letting Morgantha leave Barovia.
- Khazan's *staff of power* (see Crypt 15 in Area K84, *CoS* Ch. 4). With a *geas* spell, Morgantha forces the adventurer to seek out the staff and bring it back to her.
- The identities of the Keepers of the Feather, as well as a lock of Muriel Vinshaw's hair. The wereraven (see *CMP* Ch. 2) makes frequent contact with the adventurers, giving them the chance to cut off her hair.
- To be brought to the Amber Temple, when the adventurers at last venture there. She enforces this agreement with a geas spell cast on one adventurer.

The Ritual Commences. Morgantha proves to be a fey of her word. In the kitchen of Old Bonegrinder, she spreads around demonic tar to form an ugly *teleportation circle* spell. Read the following:

> With a thin smile, Morgantha murmurs, "To invade the Devil's lair takes hubris, daring… suicidal stupidity. I wish you the best."
>
> With the reagents prepared, you watch the crone spread black ichor across the floor in a circle and draw runes therein. Through frequent pinches of salt and glass sprinkled along the perimeter, she turns the circle into a font of magic, a gateway.
>
> Morgantha reaches for a mortar and pestle, giving its contents one last pummeling. "Dust from a brick of Castle Ravenloft… A feather of its long-dead ravens… Ash from an edict dictated by the Devil and penned by his dog, the dusk elf." With extreme finesse, Morgantha shakes the contents out and draws three triangles folded in upon themselves at the center of the circle. The hag strikes a cold intonation and offers a colder incantation whichcauses her hair to lighten and lift upwards, as if caught by an updraft. The arcane words have a greasy feel to them and reach inward with the persistence of winter—as if fingers of frost gripped at some unseen doorway and pried, and pried, and pried until at last something gives way. A cold draft blows through the windmill, setting cloaks aflutter.
>
> Sweat clings to Morgantha's brow. "The breach has been made, widened," she says, her voice hardly a whisper. "You are free to walk the catacombs of Ravenloft, but know this: the door will not stay open. Once you cross this threshold, our business is done. We will never speak of this crime; my kin and I will deny it to our dying breaths."

Unto the Breach. When standing at the center of the circle, a character can use an action to be teleported to the Brazier Room (Area K78) of Castle Ravenloft. Thereafter, they are free to roam the catacombs. Beware: Rahadin works in his office nearby (Area K72).

Read the following when the first character teleports:

> A shadow looms over you—a shadow as deep and dark and cruel as the night itself. Provided the hag has not lied, you are about to embark upon a blasphemous, perhaps even suicidal, journey. A bead of sweat slips down your brow as you foresee a thousand consequences for this one crime.
>
> Mustering your courage, you summon a surge of willpower and demand entrance into Castle Ravenloft.
>
> You are gone in a flash. To the others, you are there and then gone—vanished into thin air. The journey for you, however, is long and cold and sharp, as if you were being dragged by a horse through a thicket of thorns that have somehow defied winter's death sentence. You feel yourself cut in a thousand places, the blood sluicing over your face and stinging your eyes. You cannot breathe. You cannot fight. You can only endure the torment.
>
> There comes a crack of silent thunder and the cold, ungentle embrace of stone. You materialize in a dimly lit room, six feet above the floor—and come crashing down. In the gloom, you make out faint details: twin iron statues of knights on horseback and a brazier that burns with a white flame which produces no heat.
>
> With a mortal chill, you know for absolute certainty where you are:
>
> The catacombs of Castle Ravenloft.



Death in the Dead of Night

It is not enough to bring the adventurers to Old Bonegrinder—they must be forced inside it. They must have no other option but to knock at Morgantha's door and request asylum. How do we achieve that? With zombies. Set upon by the undead in the dead of night, the adventurers are forced to abandon their camp and march on. The dead, however, prove relentless—and even shepherded by a witch. With no possible quarter, the distant windmill becomes the only salvation in sight. All of Chapter 6 therefore occurs at night.

This storyline requires the *Bigger Barovia variant*, or some other contrivance that forces the adventurers to camp outdoors at night halfway to Vallaki. As described by *Bigger Barovia*, it takes far longer to reach Vallaki than in an ordinary campaign—three days and two nights, to be precise. Old Bonegrinder would be encountered on the second day of travel.

I. March of the Damned

A small horde of **zombies** and **Strahd zombies** shepherded by a Barovian witch are on a collision course with the adventurers. The undead are loud and rank; the party cannot be surprised. Surely, they will reach for the weapons and battle the undead—but the first corpses they cut down are but the tip of the spear. When a r*ay of frost* spell is flung from the brush, it becomes clear they must flee… straight toward Old Bonegrinder.

The Abandoned Elk

The undead that attack later that night must be foreshadowed. During the day, the party finds an elk that was shot dead by a hunter but feasted upon by some other creature.

The Devil's Bride. If present, Ireena shares some Barovian history just before the elk is found. Read the following:

> The mists thin out towards midday. You march in relative silence, ever wary for a threat to leap out from the fog or brush. This is, as Ireena can tell you, a land of hidden dangers. Just now, she was telling you the tale of Sir Leonid "the Crusher" Krushkin. "A true brute of a man," she says, "but noble at heart. For the hand of a maiden, they said, he would move mountains. And he had earned many hands by the ripe age of thirty-eight—the age at which he died. He was felled not by glorious battle but the touch of a stinging nettle which left him paralyzed… and then the wolves came. Some say he had slain a raven a fortnight before his death, ushering in his untimely, but deserved, demise."

Once the elk's corpse is near, read the following:

> A stench draws your attention towards the mists. The reek of carrion, ripe and rotten, rides the cold and careless wind that weaves through the nearby trees. Inching forward, you notice blood on the grass and a shattered antler. An elk—you've found an elk with an arrow in its eye and its innards spilled like a bowl of rice. The stench is unbearable.

A character who inspects the elk and succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check confirms the beast was slain recently. It looks as if something—something with fingers—tore right into its belly and began to feed. The arrow clearly killed the beast. Clumsy tracks in the form of boots head east, back whence the adventurers came. These tracks were made by a **zombie**.

March of the Damned

Per *Bigger Barovia*, the party must camp between Areas B and O on the map—or whenever the plot demands. During the night, an undead horde descends upon their camp.

The Devil's Bride. Ideally, the undead interrupt a conversation or the like. If the players can't come up with something to discuss in-character, Ireena can drum up conversation:

- Ireena remarks on her father's fate and the adventurers' arrival in Barovia: "My father's faith never wavered. Even up until the end, he believed that our endless night would at least be broken by the dawn. He would be proud to know you."
- Ireena remarks on the Black Carriage seen earlier at Area I: "The Devil rarely leaves Castle Ravenloft. Some say he sleeps for years at a time… perhaps that is why he sends Rahadin—his chamberlain and adopted brother—to collect the tax."

Head of the Host. Three hours before midnight, the first of the undead lumber towards the adventurer's camp: three **zombies** and a **Strahd zombie**. To whichever character is on watch, read the following:

> The night is long and cold, the woods pregnant with silence… until that first twig snaps nearby. Alert now, you peer into the gloom—and through the mists wafts a reek of rot. Another twig snaps; leaves rustle. The cadaver stench grows closer and now, only now, can you hear the moans of the living dead as they lumber out from the dark!

The zombies are easily dispatched—but on their heels marches an army. Read the following once the last zombie has been slain:

> The last living corpse crashes to the ground, but your victory proves short-lived—more of the dead shamble forth from the fog, moaning a mournful chorus. By the gods, there must be dozens of them, perhaps even a full legion of hungry dead.

The adventurers are likely to hide or clamber up trees so that the dead can't find them. That is when a *ray of frost* spell (+4 to hit) cast by an unseen **Barovian witch** crackles out from the dark. The spell is made against whichever character has lagged behind the rest, threatening to slow them long enough for the dead to catch up. That there is an intelligence shepherding the dead should be an alarming discovery. The undead are slow, but legion. The adventurers can easily outrun the dead, but never escape them. If the adventurers flee, read the following:

> The dead are relentless. Through the benighted woods you flee, dogged by hungry groans. For every corpse you fell by spell or arrow, another takes its place. The undead are legion in number. The corpses do not tire, only complain as you stay just out of reach. Peering into that tangled mass of bodies, you find a pair of eyes looking back—eyes that gleam with life, light, and malevolence. You know not what necromancer shepherds these foul creatures, but you do know it will show no mercy.
>
> For hours, you march, dogged by the dead. With no sleep, with no rest, it is only a matter of time before the first of you falls—and by then, there will be no escape. Gaining some distance, you escape the woods. Across the moonlit foothills, you see a windmill whose windows burn with candlelight—salvation! With the dead minutes away, your choice is clear: seek salvation, or continue long into the night?

At this point, you must directly ask your players to make a choice. There can be no mistaking it; you need their consent for the trouble to come.



Marching On. If the adventurers choose to soldier on, they eventually manage to shake the undead but trigger the Druids and Twig Blight random encounter while in or near the Svalich Woods. See *CoS* Ch. 2 for details.

To the Mill. If the adventurers choose to stop at the windmill, Morgantha answers the door after several tense knocks. Read the following text, which assumes the adventurers have met Morgantha and suspect her of being a witch of some sort:

> Three knocks against the door. Three knocks that echo out into the night. You hear a floorboard creak and a door swing shut. Slippers whisper against a stone staircase and a shadow darts across the candlelight in the room above.
>
> A crone answers the door. A crone whose face is like a boiled apple. A crone whose cold smile you last saw in the Village of Barovia where she peddled pastries so disastrous even Ismark Kolyanovich warned you not to partake.
>
> "Oh deary," Morgantha murmurs, "you look positively *famished*. Do come in…"
>
> The crone leaves the door ajar, revealing a dirty kitchen. There under the light of the moon, you find yourself facing a choice—and as the consequences weigh upon your mind, a rotten stench reaches your nose, carried there by the wind. In the distance, the dead burst from the tree line, their moans unmistakable.

II. In the Home of Hags

With the undead at their back, the adventurers accept refuge in Morgantha's lair. In this storyline, the windmill is cramped, old, and dirty, but does not exactly scream "hag's lair." During Act II, Morgantha converses with the adventurers, leaving them to investigate the first and second floor while she "wakes" her daughters upstairs. It should be close to midnight now, and so the hags pretend to have been asleep. The only proof to the contrary is the oven, in which pastries are already baking. If asked, Morgantha claims she prefers to "slow bake" the pastries and that her arthritis wakes her up anyway. It's clearly a lie, but the hag delivers it with such confidence, one might actually believe her.

Morgantha is quite social and does her best to keep the adventurers inside. She offers her guests food and shelter, indulges them in conversation, and traipses upstairs to check on her daughters, returning at the most inopportune moments. Picking a favorite adventurer to torment, Morgantha insists on sending them upstairs to meet Offalia. Bella joins Morgantha downstairs in case a conflict breaks out. If an adventurer goes to Area O3, they inevitably discover the hags' captive children.

III. The Curtain Lifted

Act III occurs when one side provokes a conflict. The hags won't give up Freek or Myrtle, and Morgantha is loath to let the adventurers leave unscarred or uncursed. If someone barters for the children, Morgantha purrs, "Deary, I can't let them both go… You'll have to choose."

When a conflict becomes inevitable, Morgantha gives the adventurers a look and offers a killer line which makes it absolutely clear there is no going back. Take inspiration from any of these possible quips:

- "Oh deary… You couldn't leave well enough alone."
- "Well, it looks like we've reached an impasse."
- "It's been fun, but I think we all knew this would have to end sooner or later."
- "Every fly gets there eventually."

When you roll initiative, read the following text:

> The crone reaches up to her cheek, her yellowed fingernails finding purchase against the flesh—and rips it right off, revealing a hideous face of violet-and-green flesh. She casually tosses the face at yours; it lands with a wet plop. The sight of this horror will haunt you forever.

Tactics. The hags have faced many an adversary. They use the tactics below. As described in the Coven Spells sidebar, the hags benefit from the Shared Spellcasting trait. For the sake of a fair fight, avoid spells that completely shut the party down, such as *polymorph*, and only cast a *lightning bolt* spell as a last resort.

- The hags' prioritize survival above all else—first their own individual lives, then the coven itself. A hag flees when reduced to 20 hit points or fewer (becoming invisible if a **green hag**, or by escaping to the Ethereal Plane as a **night hag**).
- If an adventurer is reduced to 0 hit points, Morgantha can stabilize them with a grandmotherly kiss to the forehead (no action required) so she can hold them captive.
- The hag closest to the barrel of tar in Area O1 uses an action to summon a **dretch**, which uses Fetid Cloud on its first turn.
- Each hag opens up with a crowd control spell: a *hold person* spell cast at 4th level, a *bestow curse* spell targeting the party's strongest warrior, and an *eyebite* spell meant to put the adventurers to sleep.
- The hags reserve their reactions for *counterspells*, unless an adventurer provokes opportunity while climbing the stairs or attempting to leave by the front door.
- If the adventurers flee, the hags chase the party to the Megaliths (see *Areas of the Windmill* below).

Coven Spells

The hags benefit from the Shared Spellcasting trait, which is detailed below. As night hags, the coven has a spell save DC of 15 and a +7 bonus to hit with spells attacks. As green hags, these spells are DC 13 and have a +5 bonus to hit.

Shared Spellcasting (Coven Only). While all three members of a hag coven are within 30 feet of one another, they can each cast the following spells from the wizard's spell list but must share the spell slots among themselves:

1st level (4 slots): *identify, ray of sickness*
2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, locate object*
3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, counterspell, lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *phantasmal killer, polymorph*
5th level (2 slots): *contact other plane, scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *eyebite*

The Party Defeated

Morgantha spares all but the most insulting adventurers from death, but binds them in rope woven from human hair. The survivors, including Ireena, awaken 1d4 hours later with 1 hit point apiece. Read the following text, which assumes all three hags survived:

> Through hazy dreams you swim, circling a dark maelstrom of phantasmal nightmares. The pain breathes through you like a tube as you meander the dreamways in discomfort. An iron cacophony brings you back to the realm of the waking: the hags bang together crusty iron pots and pans until you're all bleary-eyed and awake. You find yourselves bound by rope of a sort you've never seen, but understand to be human hair.
>
> Morgantha and her ilk stand before you in their dirty kitchen. The crone has her hands on her hips and a crude smile on her lips. "Sleep well, did you dearies?"

Morgantha offers the adventurers a deal. Consult the *Dark Bargains* section above for details, specifically the *A Malison for Mercy* section. The adventurers can barter all they like, but no one will leave the windmill unscathed. If an adventurer utterly refuses to play ball with the hags, they are to be slain outright or sacrificed at the Megaliths (see *Areas of the Windmill*)—after all, the adventurers had their chances.

Areas of the Windmill

Old Bonegrinder consists of the following areas:

O1. Ground Floor

Regardless if the adventurers knock at the door or barge into the windmill, Morgantha is drawn here by the noise. *Death in the Dead of Night's* Act II primarily occurs in this room.

Revision. The coven has warded this room with an *alarm* spell, as revealed by a *detect magic* spell.

A Semblance of Norm

To avoid blowing the hags' cover, read this alternative area description instead of *Curse of Strahd's*. Notably, the human bones have been removed from the floor. Additionally, the scent of the demon ichor is far less noxious. When the adventurers first enter the room, read the following:

> The first floor has been converted into a cluttered kitchen. Crusty dishware is piled up on a crate and baskets… there are wicker baskets everywhere. Adding to the clutter is a peddler's cart and, believe it or not, a chicken coop. To your left works an oven, from which emanates a mouth-watering scent—mince-meat pies. Given the gloom outside, a warm meal sounds divine.

Add further details as the adventurers further explore the room:

> Along the wall stands a weathered cabinet painted with flowers. As you become accustomed to the cramped chamber, a noxious odor assails your senses. After a moment, you find the source: an open, upright barrel full of some sort of tar.

Sack of Bones. As mentioned above, all bones ordinarily in this area are instead in one, nondescript sack. If the adventurers ransack the room or physically examine its wares, they find the sack of small bones. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies them as human.

Scrying Barrel. A character who analyzes the barrel of tar and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies this as a font for the *scrying* spell, but can't identify the tar. With a result of 20 or higher, the character identifies it as demonic ichor.

Flowery Cabinet. Morgantha's cabinet contains several elixirs ("poultices," as you should describe them to the players). The *Companion* adds a *philter of love*, a *potion of healing*, and a *potion of poison* to the shelves next to the vial of pale tincture, the elixir of youth, and the elixir of laughter. As *potions of poison* and *-healing* are visually identical, the adventurers are in for a surprise later. To determine which one is drunk, roll a die. On an odd result, the character unwittingly drinks the *potion of poison.*



O2. Bone Mill

As noted above, Morgantha is ordinarily met here, but she would be drawn down to Area O1. When the adventurers first enter this room, Bella Sunbane is coming down from the staircase. If Morgantha is toying with the adventurers, Bella stops adventurers from ascending to Area O3, claiming that "Offalia is getting dressed." Bella does her best to occupy the party here and then send only one—the hunk Morgantha has picked as a potential son-in-law—upstairs.

A Semblance of Norm

If you are using this variant, read the following text when the adventurers first enter this room, instead of what is provided by *Curse of Strahd.* This text does not assume that Morgantha is present.

> The stone staircase curves toward the second floor, every step bruised by years of use. The chamber is dominated by a millstone whose wooden gear shaft pierces the ceiling. The windows are caked with flour and dirt so thick, you can't see outside. In the room above, you hear a woman singing in a jagged voice.

O3. Bedroom

As noted in Area O2, Bella should have stalled the party downstairs and then join whichever of her coven is currently outnumbered by adventurers.

A Semblance of Norm

Per this variant, the hags here are doing something considerably less "witchy." Instead of the text provided by *Curse of Strahd*, read the text below when an adventurer first enters this room, which assumes Offalia is the only person present:

> It seems the women share one bed—and it is a filthy thing at that. The sheets are missing; the covers have clearly been chewed by moths; and the mattress is yellow with age. Sitting at a loom, next to the closet, is an ugly young woman working on what appears to be a dress.
>
> Turning her face away from you to hide a sheepish smile, the young woman merely says, "Hello. Did… did mother send you?"

During the subsequent conversation with Offalia, fill in further details of the room: the crates stacked in the closet (covered by a sheet), the gear shaft that dominates the room, the moldy mattress, and the ladder that leads to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

When the plot demands, the adventurer hears one of the children whimper. Read the following:

> From behind the sheet draping the crates, you hear the whisper of a whimper.

If the adventurer lifts the sheet, read the following:

> You reach for the sheet, your breath tight. You feel fear in the air, as if it were a palpable force. The floorboard creaks under your weight; someone sucks in a breath. Lifting the sheet, you see two caged, dirty children that recoil from the sight of you. Their cages are full of breadcrumbs and their faces full of fear.

O4. Domed Attic

Here is where Morgantha stashes her ill-gotten gains: valuables taken from stolen children and gear confiscated by past adventurers. Morgantha has warded the area with an alarm spell that alerts the coven to any intruders other than a hag. The *Companion* adds the following loot to this area, which are found on makeshift shelves.

- A *berserker's axe* once wielded by a dwarf barbarian.
- The bleached skull of a foreign warlock, which can be used as an arcane focus. The warlock's spirit has yet to find rest and periodically haunts its wielder's dreams.
- A coin purse containing 80 gp, 16 ep, 132 sp, and 55 cp.
- The gilded spellbook of the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, which contains the following spells: *Bigby's hand, cone of cold, counterspell, detect magic, dominate person, find familiar, fire shield, fly, guards and wards, ice storm, lightning bolt, mage armor, magic missile, mind blank, mirror image, mislead, misty step, Mordenkainen's faithful hound, Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion, Mordenkainen's private sanctum, Mordenkainen's sword, plane shift, polymorph, prismatic spray, programmed illusion, scrying, shield, stoneskin, telekinesis, teleport, time stop, tongues, true seeing,* and *web.* Taking this spellbook curses the thief with amnesia. While cursed, the character struggles to remember anything beyond basic facts about their life and time in Barovia. To recall a forgotten memory, the character must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. With each new day, the character forgets and remembers randomized knowledge.

If you include these items, add the following description to Area O4:

> Through the gloom, you make out makeshift shelves upon which are a number of ghastly items: a bleached skull carved with runes, a torn coin purse, a gilded grimoire, and an axe stained not by rust but blood.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft

If an artifact is present here, Morgantha has laid a heavy curse upon it. A character, other than Morgantha or her daughters, that touches the item is cursed. While cursed, the target is blinded. While blinded, the character's hearing is incredibly sensitive; they have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing, but any thunder damage the character takes is increased by 3. A *remove curse* spell or similar magic ends this curse.



The Megaliths

When the adventurers first approach this area, read the text below, taking on a more frenzied tone if they are fleeing from the hags:

> Ancient menhirs reach for the sky, curled like fingers of stone, eager to find purchase in loftier realms. The field is all but dead, with only a thin sheet of grass and stubborn weeds to cover its balding head. The ground, pocked by pits and stretches of black dirt, rises gently towards a hilltop where moss-covered standing stones are arranged in a crude circle.

To a druid, ranger, or Nature cleric, add the following:

> Something is wrong. There is a force here, and a tainted one at that. The beauty that once glimmered here is gone, replaced by a malevolence that is no stranger to Nature, but no ally either.

To a warlock (especially an archfey), an eladrin, or other character closely attuned to the Feywild, read the following:

> Something lurks here amongst the stones—a force unseen but not unfelt. It slips through the menhirs like a serpent whose scales reject any and all eyes. You feel its sinuous influence curl around you, just for a moment, before escaping into the aether again. It is watching you—evaluating you.

This influence is the attention of the wicked archfey Ceithlenn of the Crooked Teeth, whom the hags worship. Ceithlenn is always on the look-out for prospective warlocks. If any of your players plan to multiclass into one, now is the time. Ceithlenn communicates nonverbally; her attention is blistering yet chilling, and she waits for candidates to beseech her for power.

Sacrificed!

The hags appease Ceithlenn with occasional sacrifices. Ordinarily, the teeth of children are enough, but the archfey now hungers for a greater sacrifice. If an adventurer is defeated by the coven but refuses to accept a dark bargain, the hags bring them here to be killed. The sacrifice likely only has 1 hit point left, so even if they manage to break free from their bonds, they are sure to die. Allow them one last opportunity to escape, but accept that there is virtually no chance of survival.

Read the following text, which assumes all three hags are alive, when the sacrifice is brought to the Megaliths:

> "Enough of this!" Morgantha snarls. "You have had your chance! Ceithlenn take you!"
>
> At the mention of this "Ceithlenn," the other hags throw their heads back and cackle with glee. "She of the Wicked Teeth!" cries Bella in utter ecstasy. "Archfey of the Maw!" answers Offalia.
>
> Cackling, the hags grip you by your limbs and lead you out from the windmill. Your kicking and screaming does little to stop or slow these crones. Over dark earth and past stubborn weeds you go, up a hill and through a short maze of standing stones. With unnatural strength, Morgantha carries you into a circle of menhirs like you were but a newborn babe—and dumps you at the center of it all. The ground is littered with bloodied baby teeth.
>
> "Ceithlenn!" Morgantha calls, mustering an invisible malevolence which now permeates the grounds. "Ceithlenn!" calls the hag, as the mists begin to rise and the moss on the stones begins to quake. "Ceithlenn of the Wicked Teeth, I call thee!" Morgantha screams, her daughters offering shrill cries of their own!

The adventurer is given one last opportunity to fight. Ask the player directly what they wish to do, rolling initiative if they choose to fight. If the adventurer does nothing, or if they are defeated, read the following:

> "Ceithlenn! Archfey!" shouts Morgantha. Bones we give to you, and teeth to pluck! Accept this sacrifice and offer us your sympathy!"
>
> You feel a silent clap of thunder as something bears its unseen eye upon you. The malevolence weaves through the grass and ground, through the stones and across the sky. The bloodied baby teeth begin to move, forming unsettling sigils. Your teeth begin to ache, as if they were uprooting themselves. Blood runs from your gums, filling your mouth with a taste of iron.
>
> "She is with us, dear daughters!" Morgantha cries. The hag closes her claws around your throat, digging into your trachea with her thumb.
>
> Leaning down, Morgantha gives you one last whisper, "You had your chance, deary."
>
> And then she cuts—and she does not stop cutting until you're all but forgotten.

Aftermath

The hags are not content to sit within their windmill when such promising newcomers have at last come to Barovia. Whether the adventurers defeat the hags or escape by the skin of their teeth, the coven reacts to their presence in the country.

The Coven Intact

If the party demonstrate daring and strength, the coven prepares for war. The hags are too paranoid to not batten down the hatches and await retribution. The following changes are made to this chapter:

Dark Metamorphosis

If you made the coven into green hags, per the *Companion's* recommendation, you can have Morgantha alone transform into a **night hag**. Offalia and Bella remain as **green hags**. When using the Shared Spellcasting trait, Morgantha's spell save DC is 15 and she has a +7 bonus to hit with spell attacks.

Auntie Morgantha

If the adventurers are 7th-level or higher, Morgantha undergoes the cannibalistic rituals to become a powerful Auntie—a greater hag. Her efforts require numerous children and adults. Vistani in the area give an even wider berth, and rumors spread that the "crones" are up to something. Morgantha gains the use of lair actions, as detailed below.

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Morgantha can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects, but can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Until initiative count 20 on the next round, Morgantha can pass through solid walls, doors, ceilings, and floors as if the surfaces weren't there.
- Morgantha targets any number of doors and windows that she can see, causing each one to either open or close as she wishes. Closed doors can be magically locked (requiring a successful DC 20 Strength check to force open) until she chooses to make them unlocked, or until she uses this lair action again to open them.
- If Morgantha is a **green hag**, she creates an illusory duplicate of herself, which appears in its own space. As long as she can see her duplicate, Morgantha can move it a distance equal to her walking speed, as well as make the illusion speak on her turn (no action required). The illusion has the same statistics as Morgantha but can't take actions or reactions. It can interact with its environment and even pick up and hold real objects. The illusion seems real in every way, but disappears if it takes any amount of damage. Otherwise, it lasts until Morgantha dismisses it (no action required) or can no longer see it. If Morgantha uses this lair action to create a new duplicate, the previous one vanishes, dropping any real objects in its possession.
- If Morgantha is a **night hag**, she targets up to three creatures that she can see within 60 feet of her. Each target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be flung up to 30 feet through the air. A creature that strikes a solid object or is released in midair takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet moved or fallen.

Area Changes

The following changes are made to the windmill's areas:

O1. All potions in the cabinet are replaced with 1d4 + 1 *potions of poison*. Additionally, Morgantha hides a glass jar full of mirror shards near the baskets next to the stairs. If thrown against the floor, the jar unleashes a 2nd-level *cloud of daggers* (save DC 13) which lasts for up to 1 minute and requires no concentration. Moreover, the front door has been warded with a *snare* spell that triggers after a humanoid moves over the space for the second time in an hour. The rope is attached to the windmill's vanes and causes the victim to rotate around and around as a sudden gust sends the vanes spinning.

O2. The coven fashions three **brooms of animated attack** and leaves them in this room.

O3. The coven fashions a **rug of smothering** and lays it in front of the bedroom. Once an intruder steps on the rug, it curls up on itself and bludgeons its prey to death.

O4. A **mimic** is brought into the attic; the aberration takes the shape of a gnarled chest with signs of water damage—as if it were dredged from the depths of Lake Zarovich.

Megaliths. Petitioning Baba Lysaga for aid, the hags are granted three **scarecrows** that guard this site. While within 100 feet of the Megaliths of the windmill, a hag can telepathically call for the scarecrows, which arrive 1d4 rounds later.

The Coven Shattered

If Offalia or Bella are slain, Morgantha must devour an infant to give birth to a new daughter. This is an act you want to be seen by the adventurers. Thus, she might arrive at Krezk during the *Something New* special event to eat a newborn, or she might prowl the streets of Vallaki for a pregnant woman.

With their pride wounded and coven broken, the surviving hags pursue a certain course of action:

- If Morgantha alone survives, she torments the party. If she was a **green hag** in this chapter, she metamorphoses into a **night hag**. From the Border Ethereal, she bedevils the party by stealing or breaking objects in the dead of night, drawing forth wolves or other enemies, and using her Nightmare Haunting ability to deprive one victim of rest. Father Lucian, Rudolph van Richten, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, and other experts on the supernatural might mistake her misdeeds as a haunting and perform an exorcism that coincidentally gives them a look into the Border Ethereal, where they see Morgantha. You can also lay a *gem of seeing* in the party's path so that they discover Morgantha themselves.
- If only Offalia survives, she escapes into the foothills of Barovia and either joins Baba Lysaga as a minion or "marries" the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, if his sanity has not yet been restored. She then appears in his extradimensional mansion at Area M.
- If only Bella survives, she ventures to Castle Ravenloft to petition Strahd himself for patronage. The Devil, amused, allows her to leave with four **Barovian witches**. The hag then seeks out the witch shepherding the mass of undead in the *Death of the Dead of Night* storyline. Bella effectively becomes the head of an army and uses it to besiege Vallaki until the adventurers are cast out.





Chapter VII: Argynvostholt

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 151
Chapter Progression 151
Quick Notes 151
Running the Chapter 152
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 152
Dramatis Personae 152
Variants & Revisions 154
In the Court of Horngaard 155
I. The Shadow of Argnyvost 155
II. Hammer and Anvil 156
III. Vladimir's Vengeance 157
IV. Argynvost the Reanimated 159
Areas of Note 161
Q4. Spiders' Ballroom 161
Q6. Dragon's Den 161
Q11. Wine Storage 161
Q12. Dining Hall 161
Q13. Chapel of Morning 162
Q14. Chapel Staircases 162
Q16. Dragon's Mausoleum 162
Q19. Ruined Bedchambers 162
Q25. Trapped Hallway 163
Q29. Northwest Guest Room 163
Q36. Dragon's Audience Hall 163
Q37. Knights of the Order 164
Q45. Ancient Ballista 165
Q46. Destroyed Ballista 165
Q53. The Beacon of Argynvostholt 165

The ruins of Argynvostholt tower above the Barovian mist. Once the glorious sanctum of the Order of the Silver Dragon, the manor has become a monument to the blinding power of hate. It is haunted by undead—including the spirit of the dragon Argynvost himself, who cannot find peace while his knights are so blinded and his corpse languishes in Castle Ravenloft.

Argynvostholt is an unassuming dungeon stocked not by mindless monsters but undead blinded by hatred. The knights of the Order of the Silver Dragon molder in its silent halls, waiting for new orders from their overlord, Vladimir Horngaard, who is perfectly content to watch Strahd suffer from afar. Vladimir understands that Barovia is Strahd's own playground and personal hell. He will tolerate no end to the Devil's torments, even one delivered by heroes. Only by returning the skull of Argynvost, which lies deep in Castle Ravenloft, may the Order be restored. If the Order is redeemed, the Beacon of Argynvostholt comes alight, granting the adventurers and those who oppose Strahd a permanent +1 bonus to their AC and saving throws while in Barovia—an incredible reward!

Chapter Overview

This chapter has a heavy focus on combat until the party establishes a dialogue with the revenants. A conflict is inevitable with the revenants in the chapel, but those on the floors above are open to civil discussions. The adventurers are meant to visit Argynvostholt twice, any retreats notwithstanding. First, to come face-to-face with how far the order has fallen, and the next to restore it to its former grandeur. Ultimately, Argynvostholt is a story of redemption and a warning to the dangers of blinding hate. In the campaign, it is early proof that even the most righteous can be corrupted in Barovia and that the knights we rely on can choose personal vendettas over justice.

Argynvostholt is mostly empty. The manor is inhabited by four **giant spiders**, seven **phantom warriors**, seven **revenants**, **Vladimir Horngaard** and **Sir Godfrey Gwilym**. Most of its rooms lack any substance, making them only relevant once a character enters the chamber or a battle is waged. The manor's combatants, however, can easily cut down adventurers of 6th-level or lower, making Argynvostholt an abattoir reminiscent of Death House itself. Visitors may come—Arrigal and Ezmerelda d'Avenir in particular—and one already trembles inside: Savid the dusk elf. Thus, there is a mix of living and unliving agents the adventurers can interact with.

The party must have a strong motive for exploring—and later returning to—Argynvostholt. Such reasons may be a Fortune of Ravenloft, the recruitment of Sir Godfrey, or an effort to save Ezmerelda from Arrigal (if it is rewritten for the adventurers to learn of Arrigal's hunt *beforehand*).

Chapter Progression

Argynvostholt can be cleanly divided into three acts:

Act I concerns the initial exploration of Argynvostholt. The adventurers are sure to meet the revenants in the chapel, who tolerate no intruders. The revenants fight until destroyed or until the adventurers have been driven from the manor. In this manner, the chapter operates as a horror story, especially if the adventurers find and hide with Savid (leading to Act II).

Act II sees the arrival of Ezmerelda d'Avenir, whose firepower will be most welcome in the battle against the revenants. Ultimately, the adventurers meet Vladimir Horngaard himself, whose darkness is apparent.

Act III occurs long after the adventurers' first foray into Argynvost and covers the return of Argynvost's skull—or, if you utilize the *Companion's* revisions, his crystallized heart—and the subsequent attack by Argynvost's reanimated corpse.

Author's Criticisms: Argynvost's Skull

I have always loved the Order of the Silver Dragon and what they represent in a gothic tale: that even our heroes can fall and leave us to rot. Fortunately, *Curse of Strahd* provides a real way to redeem our fallen knights, but the way to do so is so impractical it verges on impossible. The Skull of Argynvost must be reclaimed from the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft and dragged back to the manor—and it weighs 250 pounds! Since Argynvost was an adult silver dragon, one can assume his skull is no smaller than a Large-sized object. There is no way the adventurers can reasonably sneak that out of Castle Ravenloft while Strahd is still alive. Thus, this heroic quest can only be realistically completed after the campaign, meaning the adventurers will not get to utilize the benefits of lighting Argynvostholt's beacon.

The solution is simple: Argynvost's corpse has been reanimated and kept in Castle Ravenloft. By destroying this abomination, a heart-shaped gem of light falls from his ribs. This small object can be brought back to Argynvost. As the *Companion* advocates an early foray into Castle Ravenloft, this gives your adventurers a motive (and reward) for delving the Devil's lair early.

Quick Notes

- Subtly remind your players that retreating is always an option. If the adventurers do attempt a retreat, the revenants allow them to escape.
- Vladimir's audience hall has a view of Argynvost's front yard, suggesting the revenants can see whoever enters the manor
- The *Arrigal's Hunt* special event has two Vistani bandits astride dire wolves. While this is certainly cool, it explicitly reveals the adventurers that Arrigal is an evil servant of Strahd. If Arrigal has yet to be revealed as the Devil's agent, the other Vistani are astride horses. Additionally, Arrigal can wear a mask to hide his identity.

Checklist

- Confront the adventurers with the Mournful Three early into their exploration.
- Communicate the party's objective (redeeming the revenants by retrieving Argynvost's bones) through his shadow. See Area Q6 for details.
- Direct the adventurers to Argynvost's journal page in Area Q40.
- Demonstrate how blinded Vladimir Horngaard and his knights are by hatred.

Running the Chapter

As a dungeon, Argynvostholt is a relatively easy chapter to run, as long as the Dungeon Master doesn't get bogged down by its fifty-three individual areas. Most areas are empty and devoid of substance. To take the chapter room by room is to slow your game to a crawl.

- The chapter will open slowly as the adventurers explore Argynvostholt, but all bets are off once they encounter the Mournful Three (see below) in the chapel. After that, the chapter is largely what the adventurers make of it. If they fight and are defeated, they are brought to Vladimir Horngaard to be judged. If they fight and succeed against the Mournful Three, they may open a dialogue with the remaining revenants. As the Dungeon Master, you must be flexible and look at Argynvostholt as a whole: revenants can move and react to the adventurers' presence.
- The revenants are divided into three groups:
- The "Mournful Three" (as the *Companion* refers to them) in Area Q13. These revenants are the first to be encountered by the adventurers and attack intruders on sight. Instead of killing the adventurers, the Mournful Three bring them to Vladimir Horngaard.
- The "Knights of the Round" in Area Q37, which consist of five revenants (or four, if Sir Godfrey is removed, per the *The Redemption of Godfrey* variant). These revenants sit in silence for years on end before erupting into another debate on the Order's mission; they only fight in self-defense or when ordered by Vladimir.
- Vladimir Horngaard in Area Q36, the audience hall. Vladimir wishes to meet and judge the adventurers.

Themes

Argynvostholt's themes are rooted in the corruption of the innocent and good. This is reflected through the manor's dusty and crumbled state, with the shattered towers being the most outstanding architectural example. By drawing attention to the crumbling grandeur and decaying opulence, you reinforce this theme. This theme is compounded once the adventurers learn of the revenants' blinding hatred.

Time

Even with the *Companion's Bigger Barovia* variant, the party should reach Argynvostholt within only a few hours of marching from Vallaki. Assume it takes 1d4 hours if the weather is fair, and 1d4 + 2 if it is not. Nothing is thematically lost if the party arrives in the daytime—in fact, the horrors of Argynvostholt are made all the more terrific when the adventurers know the sun is still up.

Weather

As the adventurers approach the manor, a peal of thunder crashes across the skies. For the sake of ambience, this should be followed up by a sudden, torrential downpour once the party is inside the manor.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *+2 greatsword* (Q36 (wielded by Vladimir Horngaard))
- *Potion of Invulnerability* (Q28)

Creatures

- Argynvost the Reanimated
- Arrigal
- Bandit
- Bat
- Dire Wolf
- Draft Horse
- Ezmerelda d'Avenir
- Giant Spider
- Phantom Warrior
- Raven
- Revenant
- Riding Horse
- Scout
- Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym
- Sir Vladimir Horngaard
- Smoke Mephit
- Swarm of Bats

Effects & Items

- *Wall of Stone*

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Argynvost

Argynvost's spirit has endured the long centuries, watching his beloved knights become blinded by hatred. Through the *Living Fire* event in Q6, the dragon implores the party to restore the Order to its former glory. His final journal entry can be found in Area Q40.

Arrigal

Arrigal is featured in this chapter through *Arrigal's Hunt*, a special event folded into Act II of *In the Court of Horngaard* below. He is pursuing Ezmerelda, who stole horses from his camp outside Vallaki. Fearing what molders in the manor, Arrigal refuses to pursue her indoors. Other than being mentioned by Ezmerelda, he is unlikely to have any screen time in this chapter—unless the adventurers ride out to meet him, in which case he and his minions take flight.

As the Dungeon Master, Arrigal's identity must be protected at all costs. During the event, he wears a black mask. Ezmerelda herself does not know who he is, only that he is a devilish assassin whispered about across Vistani encampments and caravans.

Revision. Arrigal is hunting Ezmerelda not for stealing a horse, but because he seeks a reward from Strahd. He has heard of Ezmerelda from other Vistani that travel the Domains of Dread and suspects that this monster hunter may be the student of Rudolph van Richten.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Argynvost	—	F	Q6	The dragon's restless spirit.
Arrigal	Unique	N	SE	A heartless Vistana assassin of Strahd's.
Ezmerelda d'Avenir	Unique	F	SE	Rudolph van Richten's protege.
Knights of the Round	3 **Revenants** + **Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire**	N	Q37	The Order's senior officers, moldering at their table.
Kolya	CN **Bandit**	N	SE	A Vistana that delivers an accursed coffin.
The Mournful Three	**Revenants**	H	Q13	Three sadistic, predatory revenants praying in the chapel.
Savid	N **Scout**	F	Q6	A wounded dusk elf taking refuge in the manor.
Sir Godfrey Gwilym	Unique	N	Q37	Undead paladin and Vladimir's lover.
Sir Vladimir Horngaard	Unique	H	Q36	The corrupted commander of the Order of the Silver Dragon.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

Through *Arrigal's Hunt* and/or *In the Court of Horngaard*, Ezmerelda appears in this chapter, having stolen horses from the Vistani Vallaki. It is a chance to show her in a heroic light. As the adventurers are being assaulted by revenants, Ezmerelda leaps into action. In this, she might earn the party's respect and trust. If the players are lost on their objective, Ezmerelda can state that they must recover Argynvost's skull to lay the Order to rest.

Roleplaying Ezmerelda. Ezmerelda says the following in this chapter:

- "At first, I thought it was a response to the horses I stole outside Vallaki—but this sharpshooter seems to bear a grudge far greater. And the wolves his lackeys ride upon? Such mounts are awarded only to servants of the Devil."
- "It would be wiser to stay in this manor. I know the dead. I can handle the dead like no other. It's the living that scare me most."
- "Throughout the Mists, Vistani whisper of this place. A place of knights whose hatred of the Devil was so strong, they rose from the dead to menace him for all eternity."

Knights of the Round

The Knights of the Round are the Order's most senior officers, patiently waiting for a change in Vladimir's orders. They are: Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire, a war mage; Sir Gervaise; Lady Gwendolyn; Lady Lyorne Raimbut. Sir Godfrey is the fifth Knight of the Round, but is described separately, given his new role in the *Companion.*

Kolya

Kolya is an otherwise nondescript Vistana featured in the Special Delivery special event—which the *Companion* recommends axing from the campaign altogether. Given that he merely drops a coffin off in front of Argynvostholt and rides off, the adventurers are unlikely to interact with him at all.

Roleplaying Revenants

There are a total of nine revenants in Argynvost, including Sir Godfrey Gwilym and Vladimir Horngaard. While each revenant has their own personality, they all share several traits by dint of being hate-blinded, undead knights forever bound to the immortal coil. Consider the following:

- Describe the creak of busted bones whenever a revenant walks, the sag of their organs as they jiggle and swing like pendulums, and the raspy voices each of the corpses command.
- The revenants are patient, even slow to act. Undeath has scoured their appreciation for the second and the minute, except in battle. A revenant might take minutes to respond to one of the living.
- As immortals, there is no danger in any battle the revenants wage and so, they never retreat in battle. The only wounds they can suffer is to their pride and honor.

The Mournful Three

The Mournful Three protect the manor from intruders. They are sadistic, predatory, and gregarious. A conflict with the Mournful Three is inevitable; if they are not discovered naturally in Area Q13, they instead roam the manor. They bring any defeated intruders to Vladimir Horngaard. The Mournful Three are: Sir Avadrone, Sir Caradwal, and Lady Isabel Essaveer.

Savid

Savid took refuge in the manor after being wounded by blights while searching for Arabelle. Savid really has only two purposes in this chapter: to shed light on the Order of the Silver Dragon (including where to find Argynvost's skull) and to be cut down by its undead knights. He should be slain by a revenant or phantom warrior, and may accidentally alert the undead by kicking a tarnished ewer on the floor. The death of such an innocent life can have a great impact.

Savid is ordinarily found in Area Q11, but he can also be placed in Area Q29, or Q4 or Q19. In the case of the former, he is hiding in a bedroom for roaming revenants. In the case of the latter two, he has been cocooned by giant spiders. The *Companion* suggests keeping him in Area Q29 so as not to impede the adventurers' collision course with the Mournful Three.

Savid's Wounds. Savid has only 4 remaining hit points. The *Companion* goes a bit further to ensure that he becomes a burden for the adventurers: a needle as long as a man's arm has pierced his calf. He can't walk in this current state without help or until all his hit points are restored through magical healing. A character can attempt to fashion a splint from nearby matchwood and torn curtains if they succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check. Otherwise, a character can help Savid walk at a speed of 10 feet (which reduces that character's speed to 10 feet). To move quicker, Savid and the character must succeed on a DC 14 Strength check. On a failure, Savid falls prone.

Roleplaying Savid. Savid is feeble and terrified in this chapter. He trembles at the slightest noise and winces with every step. You can voice him with the following dialogue:

- "This manor was once the bastion of the Order of the Silver Dragon, whose knights dedicated themselves to fighting the Devil's forces. It was led by Argynvost—a silver dragon masquerading as a man."
- "We have always avoided this manor—we elves *and* the Vistani—believing it to be haunted… And now I know the tales… the tales are true. Something stalks these halls. Things are not as dead and quiet as they seem."
- "Please. I am too weak to survive the journey home and too fragile to stay another night in this accursed place! Please, help me! Heal me! I… If I'm to die, let it be with my kin."

Sir Godfrey Gwilym

This chapter is both Godfrey's past and future. Assuming you run *The Redemption of Godfrey*, the revenant is removed from this chapter until the adventurers bring Argnyvost's skull (or heart) back to the manor, in which case Godfrey fights Vladimir—who is hellbent on remaining undead—so that the adventurers have a fighting chance. See Act IV of *In the Court of Horngaard.*

Sir Vladimir Horngaard

Vladimir is the rock upon which the adventurers are dashed. He is the warden of Barovia, the executioner of Strahd's minions and enemies. Though Vladimir has lost himself to hatred, he is still a knight obsessed with chivalry. He searches for any opportunity to act as a knight once more. The adventurers can appeal to his "honor" (in truth, his pride) to escape his blade, as described in Act II of *In the Court of Horngaard*, wherein the party, captured or defeated, are brought to his feet for a summary judgment.



Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The *Companion* utilizes *Argynvost the Reanimated.*
- The *Companion* utilizes *The Redemption of Godfrey.*
- Savid the dusk elf is relegated from Area Q11 to Area Q29. Meeting him early on ruins the suspense and horror of the Mournful Three encounter in Area Q13.
- The ballistae on the manor's rooftops are still functional.
- The Living Fire that communicates Argynvost's wishes is replaced wholly by a draconic shadow.
- Arrigal is hunting Ezmerelda not because she stole horses but because he knows her reputation as a monster hunter and believes that she may be the protege of Rudolph van Richten, Strahd's archnemesis.
- *The Special Delivery* special event has been removed, as it adds nothing to the narrative.

In the Court of Horngaard

Argynvostholt is presented as a location-based dungeon when truly it is meant to be an event-based one. The pieces are there: the the *Companion* just goes further to bind the chapter's elements into a coherent storyline. This storyline requires flexibility and will span separate visits to Argynvostholt if everything goes according to plan.

In the Court of Horngaard can be considered both modular and chronological. So much can happen at Argynvostholt that it is difficult to write a storyline. Consider the events below the building blocks of a sample plot.

I. The Shadow of Argnyvost

Act I opens at a slow pace as the adventurers explore the crumbling grandeur of Argynvostholt. In the silence, they are confronted with evidence of the manor's decay and opulence. The marble is stained dark with blood and its rooms of ruin lie sacked and empty—until they arouse the Mournful Three—the revenants that sit in crushing silence in Area Q13. Once alerted, the manor becomes the site of a pitched battle between tactical, undead knights and (presumably) frantic adventurers.

A conflict with the Mournful Three is inevitable. They are best encountered in the chapel but can be plucked and placed elsewhere. If the adventurers ascend to the second floor, they encounter two of the undead (Sir Caradwal and Sir Avadrone). If the adventurers attempt to ascend to the third floor, all three revenants appear nearby. The Mournful Three *must* be encountered to set the tone of this chapter. As described later, they do not kill these intruders but stabilize them and take them to Vladimir Horngaard.

The Mournful Three are formidable and likely to triumph over adventurers of 7th-level or lower. The *Companion* assumes a retreat will be called, during which Argynvost's spirit communicates their objective.

Initial Exploration. The manor's first floor is all but bare. Throughout the initial exploration of its chambers, appeal to the players' senses and dread through the following events:

- A peal of thunder crashes outside, followed shortly by pelting rains.
- The manor groans and creaks. In the distance, more bricks can be heard falling from the battlements.
- The reek of mildew and dirty water assaults the adventurers' nose.
- The silence is crushing. The adventurers hear not even a rat scurrying about the ruins.
- The draconic hiss of Argynvost's shadow.

The Mournful Three

The adventurers are in for a rude awakening once they rouse the revenants of the Mournful Three. These knights are further described in Area Q13. This section describes what happens outside of that area. It is imperative the adventurers encounter these knights before they reach the third floor.

The Mournful Three have but one duty: to protect Argynvostholt. They are satisfied with driving out intruders but take defeated foes to Vladimir Horngaard for his judgment. They employ these tactics:

- If the adventurers barricade the doors to Area Q12, two revenants take to the chapel stairs to rout the adventurers via the second floor.
- If the adventurers flee outside, the revenants prevent their entry to the mausoleum, seeing an intrusion there as a grave affront.
- If the adventurers attempt to flee, one revenant guards the entrance while the other two stalk the halls.

The Three Defeated. If the Mournful Three are slain, read the text below, which assumes Lady Essaveer is the last one alive:

> Your moment of triumph is at hand. The corpse knights lie defeated, the last of the three on the floor, her spine broken. The corpse looks up at you as best she can with broken vertebrae and smiles. "Death is never the end—for us." The smile freezes upon her lips and the hateful light in her eyes at last goes out.

The Dragon's Shadow

Argynvost's spirit communicates the party's objective: to redeem the revenants. This event ordinarily occurs in Area Q6, but the Dungeon Master should ensure that the party inevitably encounters the shadow. See *The Living Fire* in Area Q6 for details. The *Companion* augments it, as described below.

Revision. Argynvost's Living Fire has been replaced wholly by his shadow, which can speak to the adventurers. After the adventurers encounter the Mournful Three, the shadow appears. It might appear during the battle, during a retreat, as an adventurer loses consciousness, or as the party is being dragged to Vladimir Horngaard. The revenants are deaf and blind to Argynvost's shadow. Read the following when the shadow appears:

> The darkness gathers and takes form, betrayed only by a silver outline that paints it the shadow of a dragon. From its maw hisses a voice: "My knights have fallen to darkness. Redeem them! Show them the light they have lost! Light the high tower's beacon and let the ideals of the Order shine upon Barovia once again!"
>
> The shadow disappears—but not before painting a vivid scene upon the wall, all outlined in silvery light. You see a wicked castle that can be nothing but Castle Ravenloft. In the dungeons deep below lie the silvery bones of what can only be a dragon… and amidst them, a gemlike heart.
>
> The shadows die, whatever spirit or magic that fueled this shadow puppetry slipping away into the aether.

II. Hammer and Anvil

Act II is optional; it hinges on the *Arrigal's Hunt* special event that sees Ezmerelda d'Avenir and Arrigal to Argynvostholt. If you do not wish for the adventurers to meet Ezmerelda yet, then Arrigal does not arrive; his only purpose in this chapter is to pursue Ezmerelda and inadvertently keep the adventurers in the manor.

Act II is timed with the battle with the Mournful Three. Ezmerelda crashes into the manor just as the battle rages on. She announces her presence by hurling a *+1 handaxe* at a revenant and joining the battle. Even if victory is claimed there and then, she cautions the adventurers from leaving—a sharpshooter waits outdoors. Armed with poison and the Sneak Attack feature, Arrigal himself is a surprisingly deadly encounter for the adventurers at this level. Thus, you want to communicate how dangerous he is through Ezmerelda. The adventurers, likely already wounded by the Mournful Three, will have to choose their next actions carefully.

Trapped between the hammer and anvil, the party must decide whether to soldier on in the shadowed halls of Argynvostholt or take their chances outside in the Svalich Woods.

Ezmerelda's Entrance

In a desperate attempt to shake her pursuers, Ezmerelda slips into Argynvostholt. She has only heard of the haunted manor and is not expecting to find other adventurers there. As a monster hunter, Ezmerelda would rather contend with specters than the vicious killer on her heels. Fit her entrance to whatever is happening in your session.

On the Run. As the adventurers escape the manor, Ezmerelda scrambles up the causeway. She warns the adventurers of her mysterious assassin and takes cover behind the dragon statue. Read the following:

> Just as the heavy doors slam shut, you see a shape moving through the fog—a fog that is far thinner than when you first arrived at the manor. It's a woman dressed in an orange leather jacket wielding a wicked handaxe. Curiously enough, she is crouching while running, with her head down. That she notices you is never betrayed until she shouts, "Get down! Get down, he hardly misses a mark! Do you want a quarrel in your throat, fool? I said, get down!"
>
> The woman takes cover behind the dragon statue, her breath heavy and ragged.

Heroic Entrance. If the party is fighting the Mournful Three when Ezmerelda arrives, read the following:

> The corpse swings its weapon, narrowly missing your skull—but it immediately follows up with a feint you fall for and blow with its bony shoulder that knocks you to the floor. Just as the knight prepares to strike you down, there comes a cry—and a whirl of steel as *someone* hurls a handaxe right into the corpse's face. You look back and see a woman dressed in orange leather, her sweat-drenched face contorted with rage. "Get back!" she yells, drawing an untarnished rapier.

Aftermath. Ezmerelda insists the adventurers press on deeper into the manor with her. She correctly believes that her hunter will not stay after dark.

The Lord Commander

Any intruder that can stand up to a knight of the Order of the Silver Dragon earns the attention of Vladimir Horngaard himself. Knowing this, his knights bring any defeated intruders to his audience hall. This event is a chance for you to elaborate on the Order's history and shed light on the hateful curse which has befallen its members.

If this event occurs, read the following text instead of what is presented in Area Q36 by *Curse of Strahd*:

> Through the crumbling halls you go, watched over by undying knights whose eyes are red with hate. They watch with impeccable vigilance, with every possible escape stolen away. Through rubble you go, stepping beneath a gaping hole in the roof whose crumbling bricks threaten to crush your head.
>
> You are brought into a shattered hall whose floors are strewn with ancient weapons and shields that would have once boasted proud heraldry but have since succumbed to rust. At the far end stands a throne carved in the shape of a winged dragon. The throne faces the west, to the dying light fading above the Balinok Mountains.
>
> A firm voice echoes out from the throne—from a figure whose limbs you can see. "We were knights once," the figure muses. "We were soldiers. Champions of good. Defenders of the weak… wardens of the Amber Temple. The Devil Strahd… The Devil Strahd took that from us, as he has taken everything in this land."
>
> "Lord Horngaard," murmurs a knight. "We have brought you the intruders."
>
> The figure stands and comes 'round the throne, dragging a claymore across the rubbled floor. The blade gleams in the gloom, free of any rust, free of even a scratch. The knight that holds him was handsome once, but now is little more than a corpse clad in plate armor.
>
> "You are not the first to trespass in these hallowed halls… To step with nary a concern for the history you trod upon. Upon the graves you dance. I expect nothing less from curs such as you. I have met your ilk before—would-be heroes that believe they can save this land. Well? Are you? Dare you intend to stand boldly against the shadow? Dare you slay the Devil Strahd?"

Godfrey Intervenes

If you use the default version of Sir Godfrey, you can have him intervene while the adventurers are detained. This is especially worthwhile if Sir Godfrey is the adventurers' Destined Ally. Godfrey, seeing the light that burns within these mortal heroes, realizes he can no longer stand idly by while his comrades and lover languish in such hatred. Betraying the order he swore his life to, Godfrey cuts down his comrades. You have two opportunities for this to play out:

- While the adventurers are being detained in Area Q53.
- While the adventurers are being sentenced to death in Area Q36.

A daring escape from Argnyvostholt ensues wherein Godfrey has to hold off the other knights and duel against Vladimir Horngaard, who begrudgingly slays his love's current body. Godfrey finds the adventurers in a new corpse some days later.

The Redemption of Godfrey. If you utilize the *Companion's* changes to Godfrey's character, he can also appear during these events and fulfill the same role.

Vladimir waits to hear it from the adventurers' own lips that they intend to fight Strahd—or at least attempt to flee Barovia, which Vladimir knows is impossible without Strahd's death. Once the adventurers admit they oppose Strahd, read the following:

> Vladimir Horngaard's eyes took on a cruel glint. "It was as I feared," he admits. "Know this: there is no monster I hate more than Strahd von Zarovich. He slew Argynvost, broke the life of the knight I loved, and destroyed the valiant order to which we devoted our lives. Alas, Strahd has already died once. He cannot be allowed to die again—the Devil cannot be allowed to escape his own Hell. Whatever can be done to bring him misery I will allow, but those who seek to slay Strahd do so without my consent. I will slaughter any 'hero' that dares end the Devil's torment."
>
> Vladimir swings his greatsword from the floor to grip it with both hands.
>
> "It will be a swift death," Vladimir promises.

Trial by Ordeal. Vladimir will spare the adventurers should they each survive a trial by ordeal. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check, a character can ascertain that such a trial would appeal to Vladimir's chivalry. Vladimir proposes the trial for each adventurer, which might include:

- Dueling a Knight of the Round one-on-one. With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a character can stroke a revenant's pride and thereby convince it to allow two enemies to face it in combat.
- Dueling all the Knights of the Round in a mass melee.
- Leaping from Argynvostholt's battlements, which is 60 feet high. A character takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall. At your discretion, a character that succeeds on a DC 20 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check can find ways to mitigate the fall and halve the damage they take.
- Walking through Sir Ancelin's *wall of fire* spell.

III. Vladimir's Vengeance

Act III represents a storyline that can extend beyond the crumbling walls of Argynvostholt. The adventurers, Vladimir decides, represent a threat he can no longer tolerate. The Devil Strahd cannot be freed from this prison, and so the revenants scour Barovia for his would-be slayers. Still clinging to some semblance of chivalry, these undead drag the adventurers back to Argynvostholt to suffer under Vladimir's "justice."

Tracking the Adventurers. Vladimir, already a more powerful revenant, is able to swear vengeance on foes even in undeath. The adventurers become privy to his Vengeful Tracker feature. Armed with the knowledge of where to find the adventurers, he can direct his knights towards their last location. It does not take long for the revenants to track the adventurers from there to their current location. Vladimir, in his pride, does not leave Argynvostholt to hunt down the party.

The Dead On the Move

There is virtually no corner of Barovia but Castle Ravenloft that the dead cannot reach. If the adventurers hide in Krezk or Vallaki, the revenants begin killing themselves repeatedly until at last, their souls inhabit corpses already buried in local cemeteries. Doing so deprives the revenants of their weaponry, but it matters not when the undead can harm with their bare fists. These attacks come in two parts, spaced out between several days:

The Mournful Three. The Mournful Three track down the adventurers first. This battle occurs along the Old Svalich Road, preferably near the Luna River Crossroads (Area P), the Raven River Crossroads (Area R) and Van Richten's Tower (Area V). Once identifying the adventurers' location, the revenants can spend hours or even days lying in wait. Once their ambush is sprung, the Mournful Three begin loudly commenting on the intruders: "Lord Horngaard will be pleased, indeed," says Lady Essaveer.

The Knights of the Round. If the Mournful Three are slain, the Knights of the Round are mobilized two days later. They are led by Sir Ancelin if the Companion's changes to Sir Godfrey's character are utilized. Otherwise, Vladimir's lover leads the charge.

If Sir Godfrey is indeed Strahd's agent, as suggested by the *Companion*, he appears during the adventurers' battle with the Knights of the Round. Godfrey fights for the adventurers, if only to capture them for Strahd. The Knights of the Round become trapped between two vendettas: they must capture the adventurers but cannot also let the defector Godfrey go. The revenants form a line, devoting two revenants to the adventurers and two to Godfrey while Sir Ancelin hurls frigid fire from the backline. If the Knights of the Round are slain, the adventurers must still contend with Sir Godfrey, who has orders to capture Ireena Kolyana (if present) or even Ezmerelda d'Avenir.

Slaying the Knights of the Round grants the adventurers a six day reprieve from further assaults as the Order of the Silver Dragon recollects its members. Humiliated, Horngaard orders his knights to remain in Argynvostholt in case the adventurers return.

Judgment Day

If the adventurers are all reduced to 0 hit points, they are—quite literally—dragged back to Argynvostholt. The journey is lost to the adventurers, who slip in and out of unconsciousness. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence check, a character recalls one of the following events:

- Wolves cowering and snarling as the revenants passed by through the woods.
- A revenant cutting down an itinerant zombie, muttering, "Poor abomination. A creature without purpose…"
- A dusk elf scout locking eyes with a semiconscious adventurer while he hid in the brush (Savid, if he survived and escaped Argynvostholt).
- The revenants discussing the fate of a previous party of doomed heroes put to the sword by Vladimir Horngaard. At your discretion, they mention a Fortune of Ravenloft that the adventurers have yet to find, possibly hinting at its current location.

Awaiting Judgment. Without a proper jail, the revenants detain the party in Argynvost's tallest tower, so as to limit their escape options. The adventurers are imprisoned in Area Q53 and kept under watch by the Mournful Three. The tower is 100 feet high; characters that break through its windows and fall take 10d6 bludgeoning damage. The adventurers gain a short rest whilst detained. So arrogant are the revenants that they do not even bother stripping their prisoners of arms and armor.

The Mournful Three mock the adventurers for their "lack of prowess" and remind them that their time in this dreadful world is soon at an end. 1d4 hours later, Lady Gwendolyn and Sir Gervaise come to transport the prisoners to Area Q36.

Vladimir's "Justice." The adventurers are hauled before Vladimir Horngaard, who sits slumped in his throne. The Knights of the Round are present, as are any phantom warriors that have survived previous incursions to Argynvostholt. Read the following:

> When the revenants come, it is without a sound; without even a whisper. Their gruesome faces as inscrutable as stone, they haul you down the tower's stairs and through the rooms of ruin until at last you are thrown before the throne of Vladimir Horngaard.
>
> Slumped in his throne, the knight regards you with cold apprehension. His eyes are alight with a burning hatred and a gleaming greatsword lays across his lap. It is several moments before he thunders, "I have given my life, my very soul, to serve as Barovia's warden! At first, I relented. I took great solace in the truth that you too could serve a purpose in this deathless realm. That you would cut down many of the Devil's minions and thwart his most precious plans before you too succumb to the curse of Strahd. I was foolish. I see that now. I see that I was wrong to trust in your restraint. I have come to realize that, though it pains me, you cannot be allowed to run rampant across the land for which I gave my life and the lives of soldiers."
>
> Vladimir Horngaard, the weathered knight, the corpse clad in rusted armor, stands and brandishes his greatsword—a weapon clean of rust and, for now, blood. The commander stands from his throne, wielding that great weapon with a single hand.
>
> "No longer will you threaten the Devil's chains. No longer will you threaten the prison. By the authority of Argynvost himself, I declare your death here and now. Stand and face your doom as the heroes you so valiantly sought to be."

The adventurers are given the opportunity to fight or flee. The revenants have not bothered with any restraints that would hinder resistance. Godfrey Gwilym, if present, can intervene in the battle that will inevitably ensue, as described in the sidebar above. If the adventurers cut down Vladimir, the other revenants allow the adventurers to leave unharmed, knowing that their commander will wish to personally exact his vengeance on the party later once his spirit finds a new body to inhabit.

IV. Argynvost the Reanimated

This event requires the *Argynvost the Reanimated* variant. As the adventurers approach Argynvostholt with the dragon's gemlike heart, a fierce thunder is heard in the distance. Out from the mists roars a dragon whose scales are forged from shadow—the reanimated corpse of Argynvost himself. The adventurers must fend against the dragon as they attempt to light the beacon. This battle is a clear evolution of their previous battle with Argynvost's corpse in Castle Ravenloft.

Lighting the Beacon. Under this special event, the adventurers aren't to lay Argynvost's heart to rest in the mausoleum but take it to a brazier in Area Q53. They must then destroy Argynvost's corpse. Doing so causes the beacon to roar into light—even if the dragon topples the very tower.

The Revenants. The revenants sense Argynvost's heart as it approaches the manor. Vladimir Horngaard orders the adventurers arrested and the heart confiscated. Horngaard instinctively understands that the lighting of the beacon will lay the knights' spirits to rest—and thereby deprive Vladimir of the satisfaction of watching Strahd suffer. Betraying his own soldiers, Vladimir keeps this secret to himself. Sir Godfrey, however, realizes the same and incites an insurrection against his lover. A civil war consumes the manor. Ultimately, a wounded Vladimir emerges onto the battlements—with Godfrey hot on his heels—to stop the adventurers while the dragon attacks.

Thunder and Shadow

Read the following when the adventurers approach within 90 feet from Argynvostholt with the dragon's heart:

> The ravens have gone silent.
>
> You don't remember when it happened. You never noticed it… and now the silence is deafening. Argynvostholt looms in the distance, its crumbling decadence partially obscured by the roaming fog.
>
> And the fog is moving.
>
> The fog is moving as if a fierce and violent wind is blowing down the treetops, down the mountainside—but Mount Baratok towers in the north, and Ghakis in the south. The wind blows from the east, nudging the fog towards the dying sun.
>
> Only now do you hear it—a distant thunder crashing down. There is a rhythm to it, a consistency. With a sinking heart, you know very well what could cause such titanic noise.
>
> Out from the mists roars a dragon whose scales are forged from shadow itself! Argynvost, aloft on wings of shadow! The corpse's roar mauls the mountainside, the woods, and the valley itself! It roars, spewing shadow and frost from its reanimated maw! The dragon comes, with but one prize clearly in mind: Argynvost's stony heart!



Argynvost the Reanimated emerges from the mist 120 feet away, spewing shadows and frost. The closest adventurer starts combat 90 feet from the manor.

Tactics. The battle with Argynvost is more cinematic in nature. The dragon can tear away walls, reach into the manor, or shove its entire maw inside to snap at the adventurers. Consider the following:

- In this foul form, Argynvost is more beast than dragon. He displays animal cunning but does not rely on intelligent tactics. He has no sense of self-preservation.
- If the adventurers flee into the manor, Argynvost attacks from the shattered southern side of the manor. With a range of 60-feet on his breath weapon, the dragon can still penetrate the interior.
- Argynvost lands on the battlements shortly after the adventurers climb to the manor's top floor, crushing the damaged roof.
- Per the *Companion*, the ballistae on the rooftops are intact and operable. See Area Q45 for details.

The Shadow of Argynvost. If the party places Argynvost's heart into the brazier, a shadow of Argynvost himself is cast upon the floor. It cries out, "Destroy my body so that my spirit may at last find rest!"

Argynvostholt: Civil War

During Argynvost's attack, the Order falls to civil war. The Mournful Three side with Vladimir against the Knights of the Round, who are led by Sir Godfrey (even if you are running *The Redemption of Godfrey*; he appears at the manor just in time, betraying his covenant with Strahd to ensure Vladimir does not prevent Argynvost's restoration). The internecine battle unfolds near the party; for example, if the adventures are already on the manor battlements, the revenants thunder up the stairs and burst onto the scene.

Read the following:

> Between the dragon's roars and bursts of shadowfrost, you hear the iron footsteps of the dead and the voice of Vladimir Horngaard himself:
>
> "To me, my knights, to me! The living intend to sequester us to our graves forevermore!"
>
> The revenants burst onto the scene with their weapons flashing. Vladimir locks his hateful eyes on you and shouts, "You fools would free the Devil from Hell itself! Your days are done! I will see you cut down—"
>
> Steel rings out with quiet authority, followed by the bark of Sir Godfrey Gwilym himself. "No," he says. "No, my love, you will not. We will have our freedom. We will have our rest. We will have the light we have lost back; and the haze of hate that has so blinded will be scoured away by its brilliance."
>
> Vladimir Horngaard looks to the knight, his lover, with a look of utter betrayal—and then his deathless face contorts in rage. "You would turn your blade upon me, my love?"
>
> Sir Godfrey remains unwavered. "I would have the man I ought've married back."
>
> "You are lost," Vladimir cries out, gripping his greatsword.
>
> "No," Godfrey smiles. "Today, I am found and I will languish in the dark no longer."
>
> "Enough of this prattling," shouts Lady Essaveer, lunging for Godfrey—before Lady Lyorne smashes her face in with a warhammer and ushers in a new scene of chaos as the revenants turn upon each other, half with Godfrey and the others united under Vladimir's blinding cause!

Barring intervention by the adventurers, who ought to be preoccupied with Argynvost the Reanimated, the Mournful Three with Vladimir prove to be an equal match against the Knights of the Round—until a blast of shadowfrost cuts down Lady Essaveer, Sir Gervaise, and Sir Ancelin. Ultimately, however, the battle comes down to Vladimir and Godfrey. If the adventurers do not intervene, assume Sir Godfrey emerges victorious.

Read the following:

> The battle has come down to the last two knights: Vladimir and his beloved Godfrey, who parries Vladimir's heavy blade with deft strokes. With one final, fateful blow, Godfrey cuts Vladimir's legs clean off. As the living corpse crashes to the ground, Vladimir cries out, "You! You have betrayed every ideal we devoted our lives to!"
>
> Godfrey shakes his head. Through the din of dragon fire, you hear him reply, "I devoted my life to you. And now, in death—true death—we shall have everything we were robbed of. Be free, my love. Be free at last."
>
> Godfrey drives his blade into Vladimir's temple. The living corpse grows still.

If Argynvost has not been destroyed yet and the beacon has not yet been lit, Godfrey turns to the party and shouts, "Climb that tower, fools! Faster! My beloved's will was strong enough to raise the dead—he could return in this very corpse in seconds! Go!"

The Beacon Lit

If Argynvost's corpse is reduced to 0 hit points and Argynvost's heart is already laid in the brazier, read:

> With that final blow, a great thunder cracks across the world as fractures appear in the dragon's shadowy hide. The leviathan cries out in agony and rage as its scales crack and then—with a deafening boom—shatter! The noise drives you to your very knees as you clasp your hands to your ears and hope for reprieve. Argynvost's shadowy scales crumble to dust, leaving only the skeleton you fought before in Castle Ravenloft behind.
>
> The dragon roars again, but then the first crack appears in his skull, widening as a web of assured destruction! It roars again, unaware of its own demise! There is no third roar, but only pitiful thunder as the dragon's bones crack and crumble to dust, leaving behind a mass of silver light. Looking upon this brilliance, you sense the gratitude and relief of Argynvost himself. The light twitches and hurls itself at the tower, racing up its stony sides as a beam of silver light illuminating the dark Barovian sky. The spirit races up to the clouds and erupts into a silver silhouette of a dragon, its triumphant cry thundering across Barovia.
>
> The light is beautiful enough to bring a tear to one's eye—and when that dragon fades away, it leaves behind a beam of silver light the innocent can look to for hope and evil will turn its eyes from, in shame. This brilliance, this last remnant of the dragon, shares with you all the warmth and hope the Order of the Silver Dragon once commanded.

In the aftermath, the adventurers see the revenants lying still, their spirits departed, including Sir Godfrey's if he is not the adventurers' Destined Ally. If he is, Godfrey swears to venture into Castle Ravenloft and drive a stake through the Devil's heart with the party. He does not, however, travel with them throughout Barovia.

Areas of Note

Argynvostholt is massive, but most of its rooms are empty—for now. Every chamber has the potential to become a battle, especially if the adventurers begin to retreat. The areas below are of note—meaning, anything that requires your attention. You need not reference other chambers unless a battle occurs.

Q4. Spiders' Ballroom

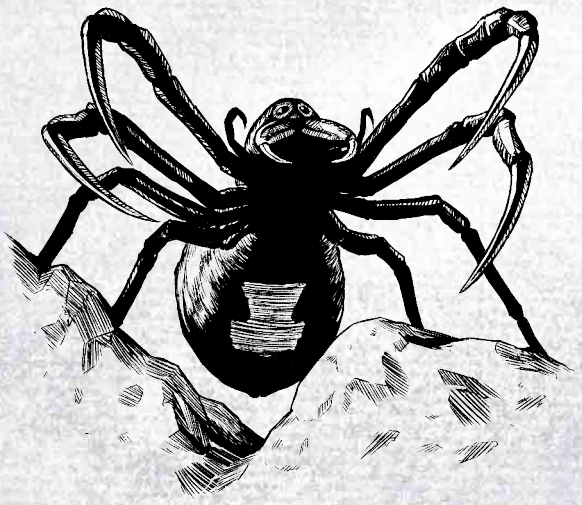
At your discretion, one set of doors to this room is open and a **giant spider** lurking therein ambushes an adventurer with its Web ability. If successful, it begins to reel its victim into the ballroom at a rate of 15 feet per turn.

Tactics. The spiders, hungry but simple creatures, follow these tactics:

- Three spiders assault the adventurers as they enter the ballroom. On the second round of combat, three more use their Web abilities from the ceiling. On the third round, three more spiders lower themselves from the ceiling (attacking the adventurers' rear).
- Once five spiders have been slain, the other four hiss with fear and climb up into Area Q19.
- If the adventurers are fleeing through Area Q3 or Q18, the spiders fling Webs. If no adventurer falls prey to the Web ability, the spiders do not pursue.

Variant: Savid

This area serves as an alternative location to introducing Savid, the dusk elf. Fleeing from the revenants, Savid was caught by a spider's flung web. The spiders wrapped him in a cocoon and drained his blood. If this variant is used, the cocoon is obvious; it twitches with Savid's delirious, dying spasms. He can be freed with an action, but he's poisoned.



Q6. Dragon's Den

It is imperative that the Living Fire is immune to damage and does not attack the adventurers. It is one of your few opportunities to communicate the adventurers' objective regarding Argynvostholt. It cannot be slain.

Revision. Argynvost's Living Fire has been replaced wholly by his shadow, which can speak to the adventurers. After the adventurers encounter the Mournful Three, the shadow appears. It might appear during the battle, during a retreat, or as the adventurers are being dragged to Vladimir Horngaard. It is imperceptible to the revenants. Read the following when the shadow appears:

> The darkness gathers and takes form, betrayed only by a silver outline that paints it the shadow of a dragon. From its maw hisses a voice: "My knights have fallen to darkness. Redeem them! Show them the light they have lost! Light the high tower's beacon and let the Orders ideal shine upon Barovia once again!"
>
> The shadow disappears—but not before painting a vivid scene upon the wall, all outlined in silvery light. You see a wicked castle that can be nothing but Castle Ravenloft. In the dungeons deep below lie the silvery bones of what can only be a dragon… and amidst them, a gemlike heart.
>
> The shadows die, whatever spirit or magic that fueled these paintings slipping away into the aether.

Q11. Wine Storage

Savid ordinarily hides here. See *Dramatis Personae* for details on how to roleplay him and contend with his wounds.

Revision. The *Companion* recommends moving Savid to Area Q29 on the second floor so as not to distract from their encounter with the Mournful Three. Savid essentially ruins the surprise—he knows that revenants haunt the manor and would warn them away from venturing further inside.

Q12. Dining Hall

The doors to the chapel (Area Q13) can be easily barricaded, thereby cutting off the revenants. The dragon-statues in the corner of the room wield rusted halberds. Although the blades are rusted beyond use, the shafts are still strong. A character can pull the halberd from a statue's grasp and slide it through the chapel doors' handles (no action required). While barricaded in this manner, a character in the chapel must succeed on a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check (or 22, if two halberds are used) to burst through the doors, destroying the halberd's shaft on a success.

If the revenants in Area Q13 are cut off from this area, Lady Essaveer continues to pound on the doors while her comrades take the Area Q14 staircases upstairs. A character that observes the doors and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check realizes the revenant is merely distracting them—and the blows against the door are too few in number to be made by more than one person.

Weaponry of the Mournful Three
The revenants have been retrofitted to not all use longswords. The Mournful Three have the following attack options:

- Sir Caradwal wields a longsword. As an action, he makes two attacks with the longsword, dealing 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage on a hit.
- Lady Isabel Essaveer wields a spear, which has a reach of 10 feet. As an action, she makes two attacks with the spear, dealing 11 (2d6 + 4) on a hit.
- Sir Avadrone wields a gilded, dragon-shaped mace (worth 50 gp) and shield, raising his AC to 15. As an action, he makes two attacks with the mace, dealing 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage on a hit.

Q13. Chapel of Morning

The Mournful Three, the **revenants** described below, kneel before the altar in prayer. Read the following when the adventurers enter the chapel:

> Through the fog and gloom, you see three knights kneeling before the altar. The silence of the chapel is ruined by a rasp:
>
> "Intruders in Argynvostholt…"
>
> "They seek the secrets of the Order," croaks a woman.
>
> "Then they may take them—if they dare," murmurs a third voice.
>
> The knight in the middle stands and turns—and only now do you see that he is clad in rusted chainmail and rotten flesh. His eyes are aglow with crimson hate. With a fleshless hand, the corpse knight draws a longsword and rasps, "You were fools to come here."
>
> With shocking speed, the corpses lurch into action!

The revenants attack the adventurers immediately and will not be satisfied until the intruders have been driven out of Argynvostholt or turned over to Vladimir Horngaard. Any survivors are dragged to Area Q36 to be seen by Lord Horngaard. See Area Q12 if the adventurers barricade the chapel doors.

Tactics. The revenants begin 35 feet away from the chapel doors. The revenants roll separately for initiative. They follow these tactics in battle:

The revenants make nonlethal blows when reducing a creature to 0 hit points.

- Lady Essaveer hurls her spear on her first turn. If she reaches a target in the same turn, she makes one Fist attack as well with the same action. She recovers her spear at the start of her next turn.
- Sir Avadrone marches into the thick of battle to hold the line, granting half-cover to his allies behind him, who receive a +2 bonus to their ACs. He punishes whomever dares move with opportunity attacks.
- Sir Caradwal challenges the strongest warrior to battle with a raspy, "Have at thee, fiend!" He is content to let others flee as he battles his rival.

Roleplaying the Revenants. A member of the Mournful Three always speaks in a way that another member can answer or add onto, as they do in the description above. Never yelling, they comment with bored disinterest. You can voice the revenants with these sample remarks:

- If the adventurers take the fight to the revenants, Essaveer remarks, "What valor. To rush headlong into danger…" Sir Caradwal then adds, "Valorous indeed, my Lady Essaveer. Were we not so, in the days of yore?" Avadrone then adds, "And just as foolish."
- If the adventurers flee from the revenants, Essaveer remarks, "The enemy is routed. Another victory for the Order." Sir Caradwal then adds, "Wisdom, it seems, has triumphed over hunger." Avadrone then muses, "Death makes veterans of us all."
- "Lord Horngaard will wish to interrogate these intruders," remarks Caradwal. Essaveer replies, "May he prove gentler than last." Avadrone then adds, "We cannot fail him again."
- If the revenants strike down a foe, Essaveer remarks, "Freed from the mortal coil." Avadrone then sneers, "How we envy you," sneers Avadrone. Caradwal adds, "Our duty is unending… our devotion without equal."

Q14. Chapel Staircases

The Mournful Three use these staircases to cut off the adventurers' retreat, especially if the party barricades the Dining Hall doors. While Lady Essaveer distracts the adventurers, Sir Caradwal mounts the northern staircase and Sir Avadrone the south. Both take the Dash action to cover more ground. It costs 20 feet of movement to ascend a staircase.

Q16. Dragon's Mausoleum

Argynvost the Reanimated

Per the *Argynvost the Reanimated* variant, the adventurers must lay the dragon's gemlike heart in a brazier in the tower in Area Q53 to put Argynvost to rest. Thus, this area becomes pointless.

Q19. Ruined Bedchambers

See Q4 for the giant spiders' tactics.

Variant: Savid

If the adventurers missed Savid by never visiting Area Q11, you can place him here in a cocoon. See Area Q4 for details.

Q25. Trapped Hallway

When the trap is triggered, read the following:

> Approaching the door, you feel a gust of cold wind—a trap! You cringe, readying yourself for the slings and arrows but none come! Instead, the timbers groan as a wall of solid stone rises from the floor at the hallway's intersection. Before you can leap to the other side, it reaches the ceiling with a firm but quiet thud that echoes out across the silent halls. Such a spell must have laid in wait for centuries!
>
> In the crushing silence that follows, you hear a murmur… several murmurs from behind the very door you stood before. Through the wood peers a torn and ghostly face—a soldier's face, scarred and wounded by years of war. His blue, spectral flesh is aglow. With a grimace he cries out in an ethereal voice, "Intruders! The Devil's soldiers have invaded Argynvostholt! To arms, brothers, to arms!"
>
> The call to arms rings out across the hallway. Beside the soldier appears another comrade, stepping through the door as if it weren't there. Behind you appears another phantom wielding a wicked longsword aglow with malevolent energy!

Tactics. The phantoms stagger their attacks and retreat, phasing through the doors to Area Q27 and Q28, which are locked.

- On Round 1, Phantoms 1 and 2 come from Area Q27. Phantom 3 comes from Area Q28.
- On Round 3, the previous phantoms phase back into their rooms, replaced by Phantoms 4-7.
- On Round 5, all seven phantoms fight together.
- If reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, a phantom uses its Etherealness action to escape into the Border Ethereal.

Roleplaying the Phantoms. The phantoms are delusional. They do not understand that the order they devoted their lives to has crumbled and its last knights fallen to blinding hatred. They believe the battle against Strahd's forces still rages on and considers the adventurers enemies that must be cut down. Furthermore, they cannot be reasoned with or cured of their delusions. During the battle, a phantom might cry out:

- "For the Order! For Horngaard! For Argynvost!"
- "Die, Zarovichian dog!"
- "Our lives for justice!"
- "Your dark master will not avail you here!"

Q29. Northwest Guest Room

The *Companion* relegates Savid the dusk elf to this area. The wounded dusk elf, doomed to die in this manor without aid. He can be ordinarily found in Area Q11, but the *Companion* moves him to here so as not to distract from the Mournful Three encounter. If the Mournful Three have been alerted but not vanquished, one walks outside this room. Savid, aided by his elvish hearing, quiets the party just before the knight's metallic footsteps can be heard ringing up and down the hall.

Describing the Phantoms

The phantoms died horribly in life. Such wounds are present even in their spectral forms. Throughout the combat, refer to these wounds when you describe the phantoms' actions:

- Phantom 1 is nearly headless: "…whose head hangs by a sliver of flesh, whipping around as he shouts, 'For the Order!'"
- Phantom 2's back is littered with arrows: "…as he dodges, arrow-needled back is shown, a cloak of bloodied feathers on display…" If he is destroyed, Phantom 3 shouts, "Sir Barrowick! No!"
- Phantom 3 is clad in dented, spectral platemail. His left spaulder has been knocked clean off.
- Phantom 4 is missing an arm that continues to spurt spectral arterial blood.
- Phantom 5 has a spectral pike driven through his stomach, causing him to grunt through pain he so fiercely fights through.
- Phantom 6 has a spectral quarrel through her right eye.
- Phantom 7 has tied a bloodied, spectral banner of the order's around his chest.

Q36. Dragon's Audience Hall

Vladimir Horngaard ruminates here. He can call upon the Knights of the Order, but he himself does not partake in a battle unless half their number is slain.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir. If Ezmerelda is present, she condemns Vladimir's (in)action. Read the following:

> Ezmerelda pushes forward, her hand resting on the haft of the handaxe looped through her belt. "You… You would let generations suffer for your own hatred? You would condemn Barovia to an eternity of woe, just to slake your own thirst for vengeance?"
>
> Vladimir Horngaard bristles, his voice taking on a cruel edge. "You know nothing of sacrifice, girl. We do—I do. We have given our souls to keep the Devil chained in his own Hell."
>
> Ezmerelda clenches her fist and snarls, "You have given yourself many honors, my lord. You have heaped them upon yourself, buried yourself beneath prestige, never realizing that it is pride that keeps you from the grave. Who are you to sacrifice Barovian lives? Who are you to judge what is best for this country when you can't see beyond the haze of hate that clouds your eyes?"
>
> The knight bares his teeth. "I have warned you once. Leave these cold and quiet halls. Content yourself with whatever dregs of life you have left."



Fortunes of Ravenloft

If Vladimir possesses an artifact, he remarks on it:

The Holy Symbol. Vladimir wears the holy symbol around his neck and gingerly touches it. "A symbol of hope… Many have searched for this amulet. Scribes and priests write of it, sermonize on it, claiming that there is indeed hope made manifest in this dismal land… But they do not know that the only person that hope could belong to is the Devil Strahd. His torment is unending—but the light of this symbol could reduce him to ash. It cannot come to pass."

The Tome of Strahd. Vladimir shakes the tome and remarks, "That I am the keeper of the Devil's secrets should come as no surprise. I have long studied my foe and know what screws to turn to keep him in agony. To share his failures, his wants, his needs would give me great joy—to humiliate him so. Alas, the secrets of his undeath must not fall into the hands of the reckless. Begone, and content yourself with this truth: Strahd was but an ordinary man once."

The Sunsword. Vladimir brandishes the hilt and reveals the history of the blade. "This weapon was wielded by Sergei von Zarovich, the very brother of Strahd—not his pet butcher, Rahadin, but his flesh and blood… a man of light and love… a priest. Fearing the blade, the Devil had his wizard, Khazan, destroy the weapon. The wizard failed, and so this hilt remains. It hungers for vengeance. It hungers for the vampire—and so it may never leave my side, lest it free the Devil from Hell."

Q37. Knights of the Order

The Order's surviving, senior-most officers languish here, including Vladimir's beloved, Sir Godfrey. The *Companion* further describes these five revenants in *Dramatis Personae* above. The knights only fight in self-defense or if ordered by Vladimir Horngaard, to whom, upon discovery, they are hellbent on bringing these intruders to.

The Redemption of Godfrey. If you utilize this variant, he is not present here in Area Q37.

Repeated Argument. The revenants ordinarily sit in silence here. The *Companion* provides the skeleton of a conversation that communicates to eavesdroppers that the knights are conflicted over Horngaard's decision to let Strahd live in suffering. Read the following text instead of what is provided in *Curse of Strahd*:

> Through the rotten timbers, you hear a scratchy voice—a conversation you have come upon:
>
> "—and the Devil is distracted! We should strike now!" snarls a woman with a husky voice.
>
> "Still your tongue, Gwendolyn," rasps a man. "Our orders are as they have always been. We move only when Lord Horngaard decides."
>
> "And how much longer are we to languish here?" asks a sharp, cold voice bristling with indignation. "For how many more centuries?"
>
> That voice again rasps, "The Lord Commander's word is law. A law you have sworn to abide, Sir Ancelin."

Weaponry of the Knights of the Round
The revenants, other than Sir Godfrey, have been retrofitted to not all use longswords. The Knights of the Round have the following attack options:

- Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire wields no weapon and instead flings frostfire, as described in his statistics.
- Sir Gervaise wields a morningstar stained by ancient blood. As an action, he makes two attacks with the morningstar, dealing 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage on a hit.
- Lady Gwendowlyn wields a gilded longsword (worth 50 gp). As an action, she makes two attacks with the shortsword, dealing 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage on a hit.
- Lady Lyorne Raimbaut wields a warhammer whose spike was snapped off. As an action, she makes two attacks with the warhammer, dealing 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage on a hit. When she hits a target with the attack, she can move them to an adjacent space. She can use this ability thrice per day.

If Sir Godfrey is not present, the rasping man is Sir Gervaise. The sharp, cold voice belongs to Sir Ancelin. If the adventurers are detected, Lady Lyorne interrupts the conversation with, "My knights… the living are here." Read the following when the adventurers come face to face with the revenants in this area:

> The corpse knights regard you with cold apprehension. A woman with whose face has been cleaved in half remarks, "Why dare you disturb the dead?"
>
> A knight whose eyes burn with blue fire growls, "Intruders. Scoundrels. Vultures. They have come to pick at the corpse."
>
> A knight with a morningstar resting before him adds, "Lord Horngaard would be most eager to meet these flowers."
>
> Another woman nods. "Aye. And it is our duty to oblige him."



Ballista
Large Object
Armor Class: 15
Hit Points: 50
Damage Immunities: Poison, Psychic
A ballista is a massive crossbow that fires heavy bolts. Before it can be fired, it must be loaded and aimed. It takes one action to load the weapon, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it.
Bolt. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) piercing damage.

Q45. Ancient Ballista

Argynvost the Reanimated

If you use this variant, this ballista is still functional and has nine pieces of ammunition. See the Ballista sidebar for details on the siege weapon.

Q46. Destroyed Ballista

Argynvost the Reanimated

This ballista is also functional.

Q53. The Beacon of Argynvostholt

Argynvost the Reanimated

If you utilize this variant, there is a cold, dead brazier at the top of the tower. Here is where the adventurers must lay Argynvost's stony heart. Once his corpse has been destroyed, the heart flares as if it were coal, igniting the beacon.

Fortunes of Ravenloft

As described before, it is better for Vladimir Horngaard to possess an artifact rather than it simply lying up here.



Chapter VIII: The Village of Krezk

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview....167
Chapter Progression....167
Quick Notes....167
Running the Chapter....168
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects....168
Dramatis Personae....168
Variants & Revisions....170
Evil's Bride....170
I. The Abbot's Visit....171
II. Freedom Denied....172
III. The Resurrection....173
IV. For Whom the Wedding Bell Tolls....176
V. Aftermath....178
Areas of Note....180
S2. Gatehouse....180
S6. North Gate....180
S7. Graveyard....181
S9. Gardens....181
S13. Main Hall....182
S15. Madhouse....182
S17. Loft and Belfry....182
S23. Nursery....182

The commune of Krezk, for it can no longer be considered a village, stands in the west, upon the very edge of Strahd's domain. It is here where your campaign truly enters the third act, if you utilize the *Companion*'s changes. Ordinarily, the adventurers will not be permitted inside until they provide wine to Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov. As described below, the *Companion* suggests cutting this requirement. Just let the adventurers inside and give them a quest to investigate the Wizard of Wines later on.

Other guides to *Curse of Strahd* suggest expanding Krezk. The *Companion* suggests otherwise: Krezk should be a short pit-stop for the adventurers. It is here where the plot gets kicked into overdrive through something very simple: the death, resurrection, and abduction of Ireena Kolyana. These events set up the events of *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, the *Companion*'s fourth and final act.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 8 is centered upon the Abbey of Saint Markovia, and its tragic host, the Abbot, a fallen angel. The Abbot, described further in *Curse of Strahd* Appendix D, came to Barovia to aid its people, to rekindle hope, and to redeem Strahd von Zarovich. Alas, Strahd deceived this angel and set him upon a path of corruption. The Abbot has fallen from grace and believes that the only way to save Barovia is to make Strahd von Zarovich truly happy, and that can only be possible with a bride—*his* bride. The Abbot has fashioned a flesh golem named Vasilka, whom he intends to perfect and present to Strahd.

Ordinarily, the adventurers can't gain access to Krezk without bringing wine (thus leading them to the Wizard of Wines). To remove this from your campaign is acceptable, especially if the winery subplot does not interest you. Ireena Kolyana acts as a good substitute; she demands entrance as a noble of Barovia. Dmitri and Anna Krezkov, recognize Ireena, having met her as a child (a change made by the *Companion* for the purpose of this revision). They then allow the adventurers inside.

Krezk is a commune; it has no economy (except for the purchase of wine). Its citizens are devoted to self-sufficiency as they shiver from behind the safety of their walls, waiting for the Sun to return or for them to find rest in the grave. It is a miserable place, tormented not by the Devil Strahd, but a dark echo of the religion that once warmed the people. The night is rent by the howls of the mongrelfolk—the Belview family whose cancers were cured years ago by the Abbot and then, in his misguided compassion, were reduced to mutants. The people find no peace but dare not venture beyond the walls. They are, in essence, prisoners.

Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov and his wife Anna are the only pillars of light in this community, but they too are fading. The death of their last child, Ilya, is imminent. As described in the Something Old special event, the Abbot arrives to resurrect Ilya, demonstrating his angelic powers to the adventurers. However, not even this compassion is without pain, for Ilya succumbs to resurrection madness (see *CoS* Ch. 2 and *CMP* Ch. 1).

Evil's Bride

The *Companion's* most critical change to this chapter is the *Evil's Bride* storyline, which sees Ireena killed by Strahd from afar, resurrected by the Abbot, and then abducted by the Devil, who then begins to plan his wedding. Thus, this storyline leads directly into *The Wedding at Ravenloft* and kick-starts your campaign into overdrive. You can delay this storyline for as long as you need, but the point of no return occurs in Act II, when Ireena is drawn to the pool at the Shrine of the White Sun (as described in the *Something Blue* event). However, instead of receiving her happy ending, Strahd hurls a lightning bolt from afar, killing Ireena and destroying the shrine. Better is it for Strahd to wait another generation for Ireena to be reborn and grow up than to lose her forever.

The adventurers will have already witnessed the Abbot's powers in the Something Old special event (which is covered in *Evil's Bride*). Thus, with a dead Ireena on their hands, the party will have little choice to ascend to the Abbey of Saint Markovia as the mongrelfolks' baleful howls rend the night. The Abbot eagerly resurrects Ireena, and intends to keep her until the adventurers return with a wedding dress for Vasilka. However, this plan is interrupted by the arrival of Strahd von Zarovich, who *will not* leave without his beloved.

Chapter Progression

Krezk can be cleanly divided into three acts:

Act I begins when the party is admitted to Krezk. Run the Something New, Something Old, and Something Blue events in order, with Ireena dying to Strahd's thunderbolt.

Act II involves exploring the Abbey, meeting the mongrelfolk and the Abbot, and Ireena's resurrection.

Act III concerns a showdown with Strahd, as he arrives to finally claim Tatyana before she once again dies.

Quick Notes

- *Evil's Bride* is a full storyline in which Ireena dies in Krezk, is resurrected by the Abbot, and then kidnapped by Strahd to usher in *The Wedding at Ravenloft.* The Abbot does not fight Strahd and Strahd does not outright try to kill the adventurers, if he can help it.
- Ireena Kolyana can escape Barovia by joining the spirit of Sergei von Zarovich in Area S4. Under no circumstances should this be allowed to pass; as described in the *Evil's Bride* storyline, Strahd hurls a lightning bolt that kills Ireena before her spirit escapes.
- The Abbot casually reveals that Barovia is in the Shadowfell (or in the Domains of Dread, if that distinction matters to you). He does not, however, know that Barovians are reincarnated.
- Ezmerelda d'Avenir can be met in this chapter (see Area S19). However, if you run the *Evil's Bride* storyline, it is best to remove Ezmerelda altogether from the chapter. There's enough going on without her.
- The Abbot has sixty unnamed mongrelfolk. To quickly describe a random mongrelfolk, use the random table included by the *Companion* in *Areas of Note.*
- Within this chapter exists another "Gotcha!" moment: in Area S17, the adventurers fall prey to yet another of Strahd's illusions. This shallow trick can be revolutionized by using the *Companion*'s *The Doomed One* technique described in Chapter 1.

Checklist

- Krezk is a relatively simple chapter. Unlike Vallaki, there aren't hidden characters or hooks buried in the prose. Everything is straight forward, especially if you run *Evil's Bride.*
- Run the *Something Old* event on the first night in Krezk to demonstrate the Abbot's awesome powers and foreshadow Ireena's resurrection.
- Sentence the adventurers to mundane chores to earn their keep.
- Have Ireena die at the Gazebo of the White Sun the morning after the party arrives in Krezk.
- Follow *Evil's Bride* to its completion.

Running the Chapter

Krezk is a short chapter best handled in two full-length sessions and only two nights. The first session features the Abbot's resurrection of Ilya Krezkov and ends with the death of Ireena Kolyana (see *Evil's Bride*). The second session concerns the exploration of the Abbey of Saint Markovia and Strahd's arrival, as part of Evil's Bride.

Nothing in Krezk is free. The adventurers are expected to earn their room and board by performing chores around the village: from chopping firewood, to plucking feathers from dead chickens, to even churning butter. These events can be passed over through a few sentences of narration to expedite the session. It also serves as a chance for the players and adventurers to rest before the campaign is kicked into overdrive.

Advancement

Provided you run *Evil's Bride*, the adventurers deserve to level up from 5th to 6th level for surviving a battle with Strahd.

Themes

The chapter's running themes are pride and corruption, as illustrated by the Abbot's self-righteousness and the Belview family's abominable existence. These themes are further highlighted by the filthy state of the Abbey of Saint Markovia, whose windows are thick with grime.

Time

If you waive the requirement of wine to enter Krezk, the adventurers should arrive at dusk. Otherwise, they should arrive at midday so that the party has time to go investigate the Wizard of Wines and return with wine.

Weather

Pursuant to the art included in this supplement, the region surrounding should be white with fresh snow. To spend a night outside without a fire all but guarantees an illness.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Potion of Superior Healing* (S13)
- *Ring of Regeneration* (S7)
- *Spell Scroll of Heroes' Feast* (S16)
- *Statuette of Saint Markovia* (S15F)

Creatures

- Abbot, The
- Clovin Belvew
- Commoner
- Ezmerelda d'Avenir
- Flesh Golem
- Guard
- Mongrelfolk
- Mule
- Nightmare
- Noble
- Raven
- Scout
- Shadow
- Strahd von Zarovich
- Swarm of Bats
- Swarm of Rats
- Wight

Effects

- *Lesser Restoration*
- Madness
- *Raise Dead*

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

The Abbot

The Abbot is Chapter 8's central character—a mysterious figure able to raise the dead, heal the sick, and warp the flesh. Comparable to Frankenstein, the Abbot does not understand he himself has fallen from grace. Unlike other characters, it is best to carefully plan out what the Abbot says. Rely heavily on the scripts provided by the *Companion.* When in doubt, the Abbot can answer with silence, as any arrogant angel would when pestered by a mortal. See Appendix D for what secrets of Barovia he knows and how he shares them with the party.

Revision. The Abbot came to Krezk over a century ago. To preserve his mysterious nature, it is far better to place his arrival to twenty years ago—long enough for Krezkites to be shocked by his eternal youth, but not long enough to prove he is inhuman.

Anna Krezkova

Mother to four dead children, Anna is featured in the *Something New* and *Something Borrowed* special events. In the absence of a genuine priest, Anna fulfills the duties of the church of the Morninglord. She oversees domestic matters and offers prayers to the faithful, such as when Dimira Yolensky's child is born.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
The Abbot	Unique	N	S13	A fallen angel, corrupted by Strahd's lies.
Anna Krezkova	LG **Noble**	F	S3	Wife of Dmitri Krezkov and the acting-priest of Krezk.
Clovin Belview	NE **Mongrelfolk**	N	S17	An alcoholic viol savant and the Abbot's faithful martinet.
Dimira Yolensky	LG **Commoner**	F	SE	A woman about to give birth to a soulless Barovian.
Dmitri Krezkov	LG **Noble**	F	S2	The grieving burgomaster of Krezk.
Ezmerelda d'Avenir	Unique	F	S19	Van Richten's wayward apprentice.
Ilya Krezkov	LG **Commoner**	F	SE	Last and youngest of Dmitri Krezkov's children, who died seven days ago. The Abbot resurrects him during *Something Old*.
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	F	—	Tatyana reborn, who surrenders herself to Strahd to save the party during *Evil's Bride*.
Kretyana Dolvof	LG **Commoner**	F	SE	The midwife in *Something New*, who believes the baby is soulless.
Marzena Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	N	S12D	A batlike Belview chained in the courtyard.
Mishka Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	N	S12A	A spidery Belview hiding in the abbey well.
Otto Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	N	S6	A donkey-faced Belview standing guard at the abbey gates.
Sergei von Zarovich	—	—	S4	The spirit of Strahd's brother, who calls out to Ireena S4.
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	H	SE	The Devil, come to abduct Ireena from the Abbey.
Vasilka	**Flesh Golem**	N	S13	A mute golem created by the Abbot to be Strahd's "perfect" bride.
Zygfrek Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	N	S6	A lizard-faced Belview standing guard at the abbey gates.

Clovin Belview

Clovin Belview is the Abbot's faithful servant, the Igor to his Frankenstein, and is responsible for feeding his family and tending the abbey. While drunk, he performs beautifully with a viol.

Dmitri Krezkov

The burgomaster of Krezk, Dmitri's. His role in the campaign is a minor one. His good nature contrasts that of Baron Vallakovich and Lady Wachter but, ultimately, he is inconsequential.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

At your discretion, Ezmerelda is at the Abbey of Saint Markovia, preparing for Strahd's next visit to the abbey. The *Companion* strongly recommends removing Ezmerelda from this chapter for the sake of the *Evil's Bride* storyline.

Ezmerelda knows very little of the abbey's bloody history and believes it is hallowed ground. Clearly, Strahd can still tread upon it, but its holy nature must weaken him—or, so she believes.

Revision. Ezmerelda is unaware that Strahd visits the Abbey, and that this once-hallowed ground is desecrated. She believes that he cannot step foot into the Abbey.

Ilya Krezkov

Ilya died seven days ago (presumably by consumption), the last of Dmitri and Anna Krezkov's children to pass. The Abbot resurrects him during *Something Old*, which *Evil's Bride* elaborates on. Having been dead for more than 24 hours, he is afflicted with Resurrection Madness and raves about "a black bottle" (the *Companion's* term for a mortal's perception of the Barovian afterlife). The rest of his days will be spent raving about this maddening truth.

Ireena Kolyana

Doom comes for Ireena Kolyana in this chapter. Per the *Evil's Bride* storyline, Ireena will reunite with her beloved Sergei in Krezk's sacred pool, only to be slain by Strahd's thunderbolt. When resurrected by the Abbot, she describes a "black bottle of souls" (the Barovian afterlife) and is tinged with only the slightest madness that comes from such an unwelcome truth. This chapter represents the culmination of Ireena's character development. When Strahd proves too terrible to contend with, Ireena sacrifices herself to save their lives. She goes from a frightened woman stalked by a creature of the night to a hero willing to brave the depths of Hell to spare her friends from death.

Revision. Ireena has met Dmitri Krezkov and can appeal for entrance into Krezk without securing wine. Along the way to Krezk, Ireena remarks, "I have never been to Krezk, but I have met its nobility in years of yore at… at Castle Ravenloft. Long before the Devil came knocking at my window at night. Dmitri Krezkov, lord of Krezk, was a kind man then, and I hope a kind man still."

Sergei von Zarovich

The spirit of Strahd's slaughtered brother can be called forth at the Shrine of the White Gazebo if Ireena Kolyana dares enter its sacred waters. His cameo in this campaign is short-lived but consequential: his presence confirms that Ireena is a reincarnation of Tatyana.

With only one line in this chapter, you must instead describe Sergei's profile. He is a young, raven-haired man wearing a symbol of the Morninglord. If the adventurers have met Strahd in person, note that he is the spitting image of his brother, so much so that someone might initially mistake Sergei for Strahd.

Strahd von Zarovich

Per the *Evil's Bride* storyline, Strahd arrives to Krezk shortly after Ireena's death and resurrection. There is no mirth to the ordinarily playful Devil. The games are over; Ireena's near escape from Barovia has convinced the Devil that he can no longer afford to continue this game of cat-and-mouse, this terrible courting of his beloved Tatyana. He decides to seize her once and for all. Though Strahd is committed to abducting Ireena, he still can't help but play with his prey. He proves sadistic, but not lethal, to the adventurers. If he has it his way, they will be left wounded, humiliated, and broken but alive so that they may witness his wedding later.

Vasilka

Vasilka is a mute flesh golem whose frame and fierce auburn hair is eerily similar to Ireena Kolyana's. Vasilka appears ordinary from a distance, but the seams running through her flesh becomes soon becomes apparent. She is dressed in a torn, red dress taken from a Krezk villager.

With the *Companion's* changes, Vasilka is a moot point in this chapter, a hideous display of the Abbot's fall from grace. It is better that she survives this chapter's events, for the Abbot presents her to Strahd during *The Wedding at Ravenloft*. Likewise, she should not harm Strahd. If anything, she tries to seduce him in her own grotesque way.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- If Ireena Kolyana is with the adventurers, she manages to convince Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov to allow her and the party inside Krezk without a shipment of wine. Furthermore, the *Companion* waives this requirement in general because it's a bit heavy-handed.
- Pursuant to above, the nobility of Barovia have met many times before at Castle Ravenloft at the behest of the Devil Strahd. Thus, Dmitri and Anna Krezkov have met Ireena when she was young (long before Strahd suspected that she was Tatyana's reincarnation). This allows Ireena to cite old memories as a means to prove herself as Kolyan's noble daughter and guarantee entrance into Krezk.
- Ireena's death at the Gazebo of the White Sun is inevitable, as is her resurrection.
- The Abbot arrived to Krezk only twenty years ago, instead of over a century ago. This is long enough for it to still rouse suspicion over his ageless beauty without instantly alerting the populace to the fact he is inhuman. This makes for more grounded storytelling.
- A good-aligned character (preferably a religious one, especially a cleric or paladin) that approaches Tasha Petrovna's grave (see Area S7) is graced with a vision that informs the character of how to earn her *ring of regeneration*.
- The nonmagical statuette of Saint Markovia found in Area S15F, which magically grants a +1 bonus to saving throws of good-aligned creatures carrying it, has been remade into an actual magic item. See Appendix A for details.

Evil's Bride

The adventure nears its endgame. Krezk is the ultimate opportunity to deliver Ireena into Strahd's clutches and set up *The Wedding at Ravenloft*. When this storyline is over, your *Curse of Strahd* campaign will enter Act III.

This storyline is brutally simple: Ireena Kolyana answers the call of Sergei's spirit at the Shrine of the White Sun. Sensing that his beloved is about to escape Barovia forevermore, Strahd hurls a lightning bolt from afar—killing Ireena instantly. The Devil knows it is far better to wait another generation or two for Ireena to be reincarnated than to lose her forever.

By now, the *Something Old* special event should have occurred. Already having witnessed the Abbot raise Ilya Krezkov from the dead, the adventurers must make a choice: to bury Ireena or take her corpse up to the Abbey of Saint Markovia. The Abbot eagerly resurrects Ireena, demanding that the adventurers then return with a wedding dress for Vasilka.

That very same night, Strahd von Zarovich arrives to the abbey's gates with a hostage. The Devil pretends he cannot tread upon the allegedly hallowed ground and demands an exchange: his hostage for Ireena. When the adventurers inevitably refuse, Strahd kills his hostage and steps onto the church grounds—for the atrocities committed on its soil have long since desecrated the abbey. His power on full display, Strahd intends to take his beloved Ireena. He shows no restraint and offers no mercy. Ireena, ultimately recognizing this, gives herself to the Devil to spare the adventurers' lives. The next morning, the adventurers receive wedding invitations set a fortnight later.

Considerations. This storyline comes with a number of caveats:

- The storyline supersedes the exploration of the abbey.
- The storyline is smoother if Ezmerelda d'Avenir is not in the abbey, and so it deprives you of the chance of introducing her to the party.
- The storyline can be delayed so that the adventurers visit the Wizard of the Wines and Yester Hill, but there is no turning back once Ireena is killed.
- While the *Companion* acknowledges Strahd could easily use his teleportation network in Castle Ravenloft to teleport to the Abbey, it is far more satisfying for him to arrive and leave on the back of his **nightmare** during the *Evil's Bride* storyline. As such, ignore this teleportation circle for the sake of the narrative.
- No matter what, the Abbot doesn't intercede on behalf of Ireena or the adventurers when Strahd arrives. Instead, the Abbot is shocked that Strahd can step on "hallowed" ground.
- The storyline sets a definitive date for Strahd and Ireena's wedding. A fortnight gives the adventurers enough time to finish exploring Barovia and find the Fortunes of Ravenloft. You can set the wedding for a later date if you intend to run the campaign at a far slower pace.

Strahd's Plea

If the adventurers fail to take Ireena Kolyana to the Abbot for resurrection, Strahd himself arrives, dressed in mournful attire. Strahd takes Ireena's corpse (by force, if necessary) and climbs the switchback road to the Abbey of Saint Markovia, where he throws himself on his knees before the Abbot and pleads for his aid. It is the only vulnerability Strahd ever betrays. The Abbot, moved by Strahd's tears, realizes that Ireena Kolyana is the true bride for the Devil. Forsaking Vasilka, the Abbot resurrects Ireena—and stands idly by when the Devil whisks her away to Castle Ravenloft.

Simply put, Ireena *will* be resurrected, just as she will inevitably be taken by Strahd.

I. The Abbot's Visit

The Abbot's awesome powers must be first demonstrated to the adventurers through the *Something Old* event, in which the Abbot resurrects Ilya, Dmitri's recently passed son. Ideally, the Abbot arrives at dusk while the adventurers are staying at the burgomaster's cottage. Read the following:

A knock interrupts your dinner of boiled chicken with the burgomaster and his wife. Grumbling, "Who would be out at dusk?" Dmitri throws his napkin bib to the table.

"Perhaps it's a wall-watcher, dear," suggests Anna.

"He better have spotted Hell itself to interrupt us…" Dmitri undoes the many locks on his front door and opens it to reveal a strangely youthful priest wearing a pleasant expression. He is dressed in a simple monk's robe, unadorned except for a wooden holy symbol depicting the Sun.

"Dmitri," says the priest.

The burgomaster is clearly distressed. "A-Abbot! To what do we owe the… the…"

"The pleasure," Anna suggests, though her face bears a strained smile.

"The honor," the Abbot corrects. "May I come in?"

"Of course. We were… we're having stew. Would you like some?"

"No, thank you. I do not favor the taste of chicken. Now, Dmitri, I am here for but a simple reason. I am here to make a difference. About your son."

Dmitri furrows his brow. "My son is dead, seven days hence."

"I know. That's precisely the difference I'd like to make. Come, let us speak in private." Like a gentle but firm shepherd, the Abbot leads Dmitri into another room.

While Dmitri and the Abbot speak privately, Anna Krezkov pulls the adventurers aside to explain the nature of the Abbot. Per the *Companion*, the Abbot only arrived in Krezk twenty years ago (instead of over a century ago, as in *Curse of Strahd*). When Anna describes the Abbot, read the (admittedly, long-winded) text below:

Anna Krezkov grimaces. "We know nothing of him. Not his name, not his homeland. He appeared years ago, shortly after Dmitri and I had our first child. He claimed to be sent by the Morninglord himself, that he would redeem this land and rekindle hope."

Anna scoffs. "Some hope. We were hopeful—at first. He cleaned up the abbey. He buried the nuns and the priests who lost it years before, whose corpses our forefathers did not dare touch, let alone bury. For the first time in centuries, the church bell rang. Sermons were held. I took our children up to the abbey for service. The Abbot even baptized our first three children… but by the time we had our last, Ilya—whom we buried just last week—the Abbot had changed. The Belviews, that family of lepers, heard of this mysterious priest. They heard of the miracles he performed—curing the blind and the diseased. They came from the hills to have their ancestral leprosy cleansed. And the Abbot obliged. I saw his work firsthand. But the Belviews wanted more. They wanted to be beautiful, but even the Abbot could not reverse centuries of inbreeding. And it ate at him for a year. How could he redeem Barovia if he could not redeem a pack of lepers? And so, in his pride, he worked tirelessly to perfect the Belviews. But the Belviews had a strange notion of perfection. They did not want to be ordinary. They wanted the eyes of cats, to fly as bats, the strength of a mule, and a serpent's guile."

Anna's face darkens. "And the Abbot obliged. The Abbot used his otherworldly powers to transform Marzena Belview into what she is today: a spider-faced, cloven-hooved abomination with the arms and legs of a bat. She fell upon us like a plague. All her blighted kin did. Those we were not forced to kill were collected by the Abbot like wayward dogs. And there, in his madhouse of a hospital, do they still linger, howling all throughout the night for food, for entertainment, for freedom, and… and for further perfection."

Anna shivers violently. "And I tell you this. Twenty years and we still do not know his name. He has not aged a day, I swear it. Twenty years and he has developed not a single wrinkle, not a single gray hair. He was already older than us when we first met, and yet, we alone have borne the years. I fear the angel sent to us has since become a monster."

The Abbot and Dmitri emerge shortly afterward. Anna asks her husband what was discussed, but Dmitri does not answer. Dmitri, seemingly lost in a fugue state, walks outside, grabs a shovel, and leads the Abbot to the backyard where Ilya is buried. Anna follows, growing more and more panicked. Read the following:

> Anna snatches Dmitri's shirt and violently shakes her husband, wailing in a pain only a mother can know. Dmitri, stone-faced, steadies his wife and shouts, "He can bring him back, Anna! He can raise Ilya from the dead! We will have our boy again, don't you understand?"
>
> Anna babbles something only her husband hears. Grimacing, Dmitri snarls, "We are not the Belviews! We're not! Our boy was already perfect! Forgive me, but I am only a father—and to have my son back, I would give anything!"
>
> "And you will," cuts in the Abbot. The strange, ageless priests cares little for the shovel. With a silent gesture, the earth roils and cleaves, spitting up a coffin adorned with symbols of the Morninglord. The coffin opens without a mortal touch, revealing a graven teenager. The rats have not yet been at him, nor the worms.
>
> The Abbot, that strange and unsettling priest, begins to glow with celestial light. His hands are like two torches in the dark, whose flames mend and warm. "We kneel together to welcome a world without sin. And together, we shall warn away the night. There is no grave that may hold the faithful down. Rise, Ilya Krezkov! Rise to the warmth, the light, the trumpet of the Morninglord!"
>
> The Abbot shines with the very radiance of the Sun, banishing the night. And when that brilliance dims, you see him—Ilya, son of Dmitri, once dead, but no longer. His eyes open.
>
> And he *screams*.

Ilya, afflicted by Resurrection Madness, screams endlessly. He produces only one coherent thought: "A black bottle of souls, all waiting for someone to take a swig!" As described in Chapter 1 of the *Companion*, this "black bottle" is Ilya's perception of the Barovian afterlife, where all souls wait in misery and agony to be reborn. See Chapter 2 of *Curse of Strahd* for details on Resurrection Madness. Ilya's madness manifests as endless screaming and psychic agony.

The Abbot lingers long enough to tell Dmitri and Anna that he will later call upon them for a favor—and if refused, Ilya will be sent back to the grave. Dmitri and Anna spend the rest of the night attempting to quiet and console Ilya to no avail. The adventurers get little sleep if they stay at the burgomaster's cottage. When the Abbot departs, read the following:

> The Abbot leaves as quietly as he came, wading through the empty and tenebrous streets of Krezk. You see him in a spot of torchlight. His teeth gleam in a smile so sincere, it sickens you. Up the slopes he goes, to the baleful howls of what can only be the Belviews, unceasing in their demands for hunger, for company, and, of course, perfection.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir: A Potential Wrench

Ezmerelda can be met in this chapter, but her presence can interfere with Evil's Bride. The *Companion* suggests removing her altogether from the chapter, especially if the adventurers have yet to meet her. If you still include her, follow these guidelines during Act III and IV:

- The Abbot has already met with Ezmerelda but declines to mention this to the party.
- Ezmerelda approaches the adventurers after the Abbot leaves them to finish the tour of the hospital on their own. She expresses her horror and fear over the Abbot.
- Ezmerelda attends the resurrection of Ireena and mounts a defense for when Strahd arrives in Act IV. This is an opportunity to prove her heroism to the adventurers.

II. Freedom Denied

Ireena's chance at happiness must be denied in the most brutal fashion. This Act concerns the *Something Blue* event, with the twist that Ireena inevitably dies to Strahd's lightning bolt.

Nothing comes free in Krezk. The adventurers must earn their keep; Dmitri Krezkov quickly puts them to work chopping firewood, assisting in gardens, and collecting eggs from hens. The day passes slowly. As they sweat in the cold, crisp air at the end of their chores, the adventurers and Ireena find themselves at the Shrine of the White Sun (Area S4). The spirit of Sergei von Zarovich soon calls out to her. Read the following:

> Nothing comes free in the commune of Krezk, where gold has lost all meaning. The burgomaster was clear: your room and board is earned by contributing to the village's health. After a long day of honest work, of chopping wood and milking cows, you find yourselves resting at the strange gazebo locals call the Shrine of the White Sun. The gazebo is on the eve of ruin, on the edge of collapse, but it will do for now.
>
> In the cold, crisp air, the sweat on your skin is biting but refreshing. The Sun is falling in the west, ever-obscured by Barovia's perpetually overcast skies. All is at peace. By now, villagers are retiring to the safety of their homes. A change in the guard is underway. For so long, your time in this dismal country has been nothing but fear and peril but now, for a few fleeting moments, you can exist as ordinary people. Not victims, not miscast heroes, but ordinary people.



Something Blue. The *Something Blue* special event unfolds. The spirit of Sergei von Zarovich stirs, recognizing his beloved nearby. Ireena's—or rather, Tatyana's—memories are momentarily rekindled. Unlike in *Curse of Strahd*, the adventurers have no chance to stop her from entering the pool, otherwise Strahd might not get his opportunity to kill his beloved. Read the following:

As Ireena reaches the pool's edge, an image appears in its sparkling blue waters: a handsome youth of kind and noble visage. The sadness in his eyes turns to sudden joy.

"Tatyana!" he says. "It has been so long! Come, my love. Let us be together at last."

Ireena's eyes glaze over. In a fragile voice, she whispers, "My beloved Sergei, my betrothed… Has… Has this blessed pool called your spirit to mine?"

She reaches toward the water's surface as a hand of water rises up to take hers. Ireena is pulled into the pool and embraces Sergei beneath the rippling water. You have never seen a happier couple as they both begin to fade from view.

A sudden peal of thunder shakes the land, and the dark clouds coalesce into a terrible visage. A deep, dark voice from beyond the mountains cries out, "She is mine!" A terrible crack resounds as blue lightning splits the sky and strikes the pool.

The explosion is enough to blow you back, to trigger the gazebo's inevitable collapse, to shake every roof and shingle of Krezk, and provoke baleful howls from the Abbey of Saint Markovia. When the dust settles, the pool has lost its idyllic charm… and floating there is the smote corpse of Ireena Kolyana, her skin scorched and her hair crackling with sparks.

Mongrelfolk: Heard and Unseen
A classic rule of all horror is that the unknown is far more terrifying than the known. The mongrelfolk are no different. At your discretion, it may be better for you to never show the mongrelfolk outside of Clovin, Otto, and Zygfrek Belview. If you decide to do so, remove Marzena Belview from the abbey courtyard (Area S12) and adjust the read-aloud texts accordingly.

III. The Resurrection

With Ireena smote and slain by her abuser, the adventurers have but one chance to see her raised from the dead. Already have they witnessed the Abbot's powers with Ilya Krezkov—but they must wonder if Ireena too will be afflicted by the same madness. As dusk begins to fall and baleful howls rend the night, the party must venture to the Abbey of Saint Markovia and meet with the Abbot.

An audience with the Abbot invariably ends any unsupervised exploration of the Abbey. The adventurers will be brought inside to the courtyard, then the main hall for dinner. Strahd's later arrival cuts out any further exploration, unless the adventurers run away through the madhouse. This is considered an acceptable sacrifice; the adventurers will already become acquainted with the Abbot's insanity and the Belview family's deformities. If, however, you'd like to facilitate this exploration before Strahd's arrival, have the Abbot offer a tour at his side.

If the adventurers wake Otto and Zygfrek Belview at the gates, they fetch the Abbot. The adventurers have a good five minutes before the priest arrives; if they choose to force themselves into the abbey, so be it. Draw their attention to a noisy door around the corner (the outer doorway leading to Area S15). Be forewarned the adventurers will encounter the Abbot's **flesh golem** prototype in Area S15 and therefore slightly ruin the surprise of Vasilka.

An Audience with the Abbot

Otto and Zygfrek leave to alert the Abbot, leaving them with the ghastly Marzena Belview. When the Abbot arrives, read:

> The minutes grate by as the cold wind slips its knives into your joints and that bat-like freak pulls at its chains in a desperate bid to leave this wretched place behind. Ireena Kolyana's corpse has grown so heavy in your hands as the wind tussles her hair and tugs on her eyelashes.
>
> As the seventh minute crawls by, the doors to the northern wing open in utter silence. Out steps a young man dressed in a plain, monastic robe: the Abbot, a soft smile fresh on his face. That same smile does not waver when he eyes Ireena's corpse.
>
> "Ah," he coos, "Another life lost too early in this dismal realm. Have you come for last rites? To return her to the Morninglord?"
>
> Before you can answer, the Abbot's smile twists into a smirk.
>
> "Or is it Death you wish to cheat? Could you be so arrogant? So… desperate?"

The Abbot accepts Ireena's corpse and hands her to Otto and Zygfrek, who carry her into the main hall (Area S13).

A Tour of the Hospital

At your discretion, the Abbot offers a tour of his madhouse while Clovin Belview prepares supper. This tour is an opportunity for him to ruminate on the nature of sin. The Abbot's **flesh golem** in the hospital wing is conveniently out of sight unless the adventurers attack the Abbot, in which case the golem comes crashing in 1d4 rounds later.

The tour begins in the courtyard (Area S12) and leads into S15. The Abbot then pauses and excuses himself; the adventurers are given the run of the convent as he prepares to resurrect Ireena. The golem still does not attack them.

The Bat. The Abbot begins with Marzena Belview, the bat-like beast in the courtyard. Read the following:

> The Abbot gestures to the bat-like woman attempting to flee from this wretched place on black wings. "This, my guests, is Marzena. She sought freedom, and so I gave her the Morninglord's gift—to light upon the dawn on wings of grace. Alas… there are several villagers buried nearby that can attest to how she abused that gift."
>
> The Abbot continues, "It is my burden to bear. I could not bring myself to strike her down. I raised some of her victims but…" The Abbot shakes his head and gestures to another wing of the abbey. "This way, if you would…"
>
> As the Abbot leads you further into his madhouse, Marzena snarls almost incoherently—but you can't help but piece together the words shoved between the growls. And those words were, "Kill me."

The Abbot's Comments

As the adventurers tour the hospital, the Abbot comments on his charges. When a room is inspected, he says:

- S15A: "Idolatry is a sin… but I must admit, I cannot bring myself to deprive these ones of their last icon. Clovin—Clovin Belview, my man, their relative—is at work carving a symbol of the Morninglord so that these ones may place their faith… correctly."
- S15B: "Brothers, all. They fight not to kill or maim, only to assert dominance. A true insight to humanity."
- S15C: "Pitiful, aren't they? They're incanting a spell. They believe the dinner bell brings food, not that it heralds it. And as such, they resort to false magicks to make it ring. They do not yet understand that with the trumpet comes deliverance, not dessert."
- S15D: "And these are the ascetics. A truly devilish lot. But worry not… as the days without food grow, so too will their love for the Morninglord. In abstinence, they shall find redemption. I have high hopes."
- S15E: "Now these are the truly lost… Gluttons all, driven to cannibalism. May the light of the Morninglord guide them back."
- S15F: The Abbot, smarted by the gleam of the *Statuette of Saint Markovia*, shields his hands and walks by this room silently."
- S15G: "A new generation cries out for the love of the Morninglord. And with them, the school may finally be reopened. The villagers too will be welcome to join for instruction."
- S15H: "Thomas and Gretchen here are quick upon the path of recovery."

The Madhouse. Within the madhouse, the Abbot ruminates on the nature of sin. Read the text below, taking note that the Abbot says, "Who among *you* is without sin?" instead of "Who among us is without sin?"

> The Abbot leads you into a den of madness—an abattoir where sanity is treated like cattle due for slaughter. The hall rings out with the legion cries of the criminally insane. And the Abbot smiles. The priest smiles, as if that noise were a heavenly choir.
>
> "Behold now, the Belviews, proud and pitiful and on their way to redemption. Lepers, they were, all of them, in the days of yore. They came to me, desperate to be cleansed—and I obliged. And again and again, they returned to beg for more of the Morninglord's love. I obliged, of course, for what am I but His servant, His messenger, His instrument on this earth? When they wished to fly like angels, when they wished for the strength to serve the Lord, I had no choice but to oblige."
>
> The Abbot smiles proudly. "Pitiful, aren't they? Sinners, all, but can we hold that against them? Who among you is without sin? Is it not man's nature to sin and later bleat for forgiveness? To mewl is to be mortal. To commit mistakes, to judge, to bleed and bite and murder. I would not fault a mortal for sinning, any more than I would a mosquito for drawing blood. The Morninglord will make them whole—*I* will make them whole."

Ending the Tour. Once the Abbot reaches the end of the hallway of S15, he excuses himself. Read the following:

> At the hallway's end, the Abbot pauses to ponder in silence. His face affixed in a crooked smile, the priest says, "You must excuse me. If I am to raise Lady Kolyana from death, I must prepare. Please, do continue on the tour in my absence. There is more to see in the floor above. Once you hear the bell toll, come back to the feast hall, where at last we might reunite with your fair maiden."
>
> Without awaiting a reply, the Abbot brushes past you, his boots slick with grime and grave dirt.

The Resurrection

The church bell tolls, calling the adventurers back to the courtyard, where Clovin Belview awaits them. Clovin calls out, "Yes! Over here, yes! His holiness awaits you! Come, quickly, for the hour draws nigh, and you must bear witness to his miracle!"

Within Area S13, a feast has been prepared—an assortment of dishes arranged around Ireena's corpse. Vasilka is not present. Read the following:

> Though the hearth burns, though the candles are lit, this hall is no warmer and no brighter than a mausoleum. Shadows dance upon the walls, cruel caricatures of every candelabra and icon of the Morninglord. A feast has been prepared—and amidst the saucers and plates lies the corpse of Ireena Kolyana.
>
> The Abbot stands before her, his hands pressed together. "Bear witness to the miracle," the priest commands you. His hands begin to glow with celestial light, that too fails to rid this room of shadows. His voice like crushed velvet, the Abbot intones, "We kneel together to welcome a world without sin. And together, we shall warn away the night. There is no grave that may hold the faithful down. Rise, Ireena Kolyana! Rise to the warmth, the light, the trumpet of the Morninglord!"
>
> At first, nothing happens. In the corner, Clovin Belview whimpers. The Abbot stares at Ireena's corpse, as if willing her to live. The shadows dance feverishly along the walls, clawing at the light. Clovin whimpers, "Master, is it—"
>
> "Silence," the Abbot snaps. The former softness in his voice has petrified. The Abbot presses a hand upon Ireena's chest and intones, "And together, we shall warn away the night. Hear the trumpet of the Morninglord, my—"
>
> Ireena bolts upright, gasping for air, clawing for a hand. The Abbot's smile shines in the gloom as he holds her shoulders and intones, "Welcome back, my dear. The Morninglord has given you up from—"
>
> "A black bottle!" Ireena screeches, tearing herself away from the priest. Dishes clatter to the floor, a saucer spilling over. Ireena collapses to the floor and crawls away, screeching incoherently.

Ireena can be comforted with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, otherwise she screeches for several more moments before coming back to her senses. Having been dead for less than a day, she is unafflicted by Resurrection Madness.

Something Borrowed. The Abbot has no intention of releasing Ireena until he receives a wedding dress in return (see the *Something Borrowed* special event). If the adventurers cannot provide one within seven days, the Abbot threatens to kill Ireena and then turn his wrath upon the adventurers.

Last Supper

As if to underscore how mundane a resurrection is for him, the Abbot insists the adventurers stay for supper. During this grotesque facsimile of finery, the Abbot reveals Barovia's grim nature and his even grimmer creation, Vasilka.

On the Shoulder of the Shadowfell. Once during the dinner, the Abbot reveals the nature of Barovia. He is not aware that Barovians are trapped in a cruel reincarnation cycle, only that Barovia is in the Shadowfell (or Domains of Dread) and that the dead cannot find rest. Read the following:

> Smirking quite unpleasantly, the Abbot takes on a scholarly tone. "I am ordained. Sent by the Morninglord to redeem this land and its people… And perhaps you have wondered just how I, a citizen of the heavens, could so easily arrive here. Even the gods must go through trouble to pierce the veil surrounding the mortal realms."
>
> That vile smirk widens into a sickening grin. "But Barovia is not veiled. Barovia does not belong to the mortal realm. Surely, you've realized that by now, haven't you? That this realm is divorced from the worlds of men? Don't be surprised, my children. No curse could shroud the Sun so perpetually. No power could detain mortals. Have you never thought as to why the Devil does not leave? Barovia is his prison. His punishment—but not by the gods, no. The gods provide more penitent suffering. No, my children, Barovia sits upon the shoulder of the Shadowfell, a mockery of life, a realm of death and despair."

Ireena Kolyana. Ireena reacts to this truth quite violently—and, at first, with denial. Read:

> Ireena is aghast—as any person would-be upon learning that her world is a prison cleaved from reality. In a very small, very fragile voice, she whispers, "You lie. It can't be. It can't!"
>
> The Abbot favors her with a patient, parental look. "Oh, but it is, my dear. You did not swim in the darkness long enough to be afflicted by the maddening truth, but surely, you must remember the tenebrous depths? Surely, you must remember?"
>
> Ireena clicks her tongue against her teeth nervously. "I remember… I remember… A black bottle. A black bottle…"
>
> "In which all the souls swim until at last someone takes a swig, yes. You would not be the first to describe it in such a way. When Barovians—when any mortal—dies in this dismal realm, their soul is trapped. But worry not," the Abbot says with a sincere smile, "for when I at last restore this land, so too will the souls of the dead find rest."
>
> "Morninglord, help us," Ireena gasps.
>
> "He is," says the Abbot. "I am his instrument. *I* am your redeemer."

Vasilka. It is time for the Abbot to introduce the horror that is Vasilka. The Abbot makes a gesture; the doors to the hall open, revealing the flesh golem. Add the following to the Abbot's dialogue above:

> The Abbot continues, "This world is a prison. The Devil cannot leave any more than you can… but worry not, for I hold the key to those misty gates, the key that will liberate us all. And that key… is Vasilka."
>
> The doors to the hall open of their own accord. A woman stands there in a tattered, red gown. Something about her… isn't right. Merely looking at her makes you queasy, as if your instincts know arcana your mind has not yet been made privy to.
>
> "Come, Vasilka," commands the Abbot. "Meet our honored guests."
>
> The woman obeys in silence. As she approaches deeper into the torchlight, you see then the stitches that divide her flesh. The mismatched body parts that account for the difference in her gait, in the length of her arms, in her disparate fingers. Though her skin is powdered to hide the scars, you can clearly see that this woman—this *thing*—is a grisly amalgam of body parts. A golem forged of flesh.
>
> "Say hello, Vasilka," the Abbot bids.
>
> The golem opens her mouth, unleashing a horrid burble of nonsense syllables.
>
> Grinning ear to ear, the Abbot turns to you—the madness gleaming in his eyes—and declares, "She will be the *perfect* bride for the Devil. And having at last found true love and true perfection in a bride, Strahd von Zarovich, will cease to be, and the mists shall fade into a foul memory. We will be free, praise the Morninglord."

Soon after this horrific introduction, Clovin Belview wheels in a cart of vittles and supper—chicken, chilled wine, and a thin stew of lamb and turnips. The Abbot commands Covin to play his viol. During this hauntingly beautiful performance, the Abbot suggests an adventurer dance with Vasilka. He grows irate if refused, claiming, "She must be *perfect*! Would you deny thousands salvation for your pride? Dance with her, mortal! Dance before hubris spells your end!" If obliged, Vasilka proves to have two left feet.

IV. For Whom the Wedding Bell Tolls

The Devil can wait no longer for his beloved. Terrified by how close Ireena came to escaping Barovia forevermore, Strahd decides he can no longer play with his food. Setting out on Beucephalus, his **nightmare** steed, Strahd reaches Krezk hours after Ireena's death. Ordinarily, to travel to Krezk, Strahd can use his teleportation network (see Area K78) to teleport into Area S17. Because Strahd can't teleport back from S17, he has to physically travel to Krezk. Regardless if you use the *Companion's Bigger Barovia* variant, he arrives after dusk.

Strahd pretends he cannot enter the Abbey of Saint Markovia, never revealing that the sins committed by the nuns and priests of yore sullied the once-hallow grounds. When it becomes clear the adventurers will not invite him inside, Strahd kills his hostage and takes an exaggerated step onto the church grounds and sneers, "Run."

The Devil At Your Door

When Strahd arrives, read the following text:

> As dusk deepens, the weather begins to worsen—from a light dusting of snow to full on sleet that falls from above like spears plunging into the earth. The wind, frigid and sharp, finds its way into the hall. The dinnerware rattles beneath its howls, and the candles begin to gutter out one by one. And above all this, above the ravenous wind and falling sleet, you hear a sound: horse hooves dancing upon the clouds.
>
> The Abbot cocks his head, confused. He opens his mouth several times but cannot decide on what to say. In the corner, a string on Clovin's viol snaps; the man shivers and reaches out to guzzle down someone's half-finished wine.
>
> Only Ireena speaks. In a small, terrified voice, she whispers, "I know it in my bones. He's here. The Devil is *here*."

Roleplaying the Abbot in Act IV
Throughout this storyline, the Abbot does not harm Strahd or intervene on Ireena's behalf. Instead, the arrogant angel stands stunned by the evidence of his own foolishness. He gawks, he trembles, and he stammers, "But the Morninglord's love... His light..." *ad nauseam*. Strahd openly mocks the angel.

Once Ireena has been taken, the Abbot, humiliated, throws the adventurers out from the Abbey of Saint Markovia to obsess over his failures and "perfect" Vasilka, whom he now sees as his only chance at redemption. The Abbot will not be featured again until *The Wedding at Ravenloft*.

Strahd awaits the adventurers at the abbey gates (Area S6). With him is his hostage. Ideally, this is an innocent dear to the party but not too important to the campaign or the country of Barovia. Strahd, as a lawful tyrant, would not murder his direct vassals, thereby ruling out Ismark and Dmitri Krezkov. Other candidates include Donavich, Blinsky, Arabelle, or a Martikov.

Read the following when the party enters the courtyard:

> It is as Ireena Kolyana feared: at the gates stands the Devil Strahd himself. Beside him is a horse as black as night, as dark as that corner of your mind to which you dare not venture. The steed's mouth is fanged and its mane is pure fire that dances in the darkness.
>
> "We meet again," Strahd tells you, his voice cutting through the howling wind. His smile is all fanged. "You have something I want: my beloved Tatyana. And I *will* have her."

The party is sure to have a retort, but Strahd soon reveals his hostage and makes a simple demand: to give him Ireena Kolyana. If refused, Strahd murders his hostage and steps onto the church ground. Read the following:

> With a flick of Strahd's wrists, the gates swing open. Defying all laws of the gods, the Devil steps foot onto hallowed ground. "This place is no more sacred than my crypt. The priesthood saw to that when they made a feast out of their own brethren. You were fools to trust such fickle assumptions."
>
> Grinning savagely, the Devil Strahd offers a simple warning: "*Run.*"

The battle for Ireena begins; roll initiative. Strahd proves as relentless and implacable as a tsunami devouring the shoreline. The Devil slowly walks to Area S13 to collect his bride, shrugging off blows.

Tactics. Strahd bedevils the party but doesn't attempt to outright kill them, nor does he harm the Abbot (who, in kind, does not harm Strahd). He follows these tactics:

- If the gates to Area S13 are shut, Strahd bursts in through a window.
- Strahd makes full use of his spellcasting in this battle, which the adventurers may not have ever seen before. He opens up with a *fireball* to weaken the party.
- Strahd charms one adventurer into fighting their peers, preferably a character with low Wisdom and high Strength.
- Strahd summons 2d4 **swarms of bats** with Children of the Night to further accost the party. At a minimum, a swarm can take the Help action to grant Strahd advantage on attacks against a target. Otherwise, the bats all swarm a back line combatant.
- Strahd devotes his concentration to a *polymorph* spell, turning an adventurer into a **mule**. He adds, "Now at last you are your truest self." This is, of course, Strahd's polite way of calling that person an ass.
- Once the adventurers are low health, Strahd casts *sleep* at 5th level (rolling 13d8) to further pacify the adventurers.

Shadowy Reinforcements. At this level, it is unlikely the adventurers manage to truly harm Strahd. However, if he is reduced to 72 hit points or fewer, two **shadows** are summoned to his side, appearing in unoccupied spaces of Strahd's choice within 60 feet. These shadows vanish when Strahd leaves the abbey.

Mutant Reinforcements. As an added challenge, Strahd can call upon the **mongrelfolk**. Having helped the Abbot "perfect" them under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, the Devil holds a magical sway over these mutants (with exception to Clovin Belview). You can add Marzena Belview (whose chains shatter) and Mishka Belview to the fray as allies of Strahd (see Area S12).



Ireena's Sacrifice

Inevitably, Ireena Kolyana sacrifices herself to spare her allies from certain death. Read the following:

> "No more," you hear Ireena murmur, her voice caught in a gap in the chaos. Then, resolving herself, she shouts, "No more! No more, Strahd!" The very mention of that word causes the candles to flicker out and the hearth to grow dark—only for a moment, only for a brief moment before the flames reawaken. Ireena Kolyana strides forward, "No one else shall die because of me, Devil! Take me!"
>
> Strahd pauses his incantation; the black fire in his hands grows shorter, even if for a moment. "Oh?" he asks, his grin fanged and red. "You would give yourself to me, my dear?"
>
> Ireena brandishes her father's sword. "I would, if you swear upon your honor—*my* honor, my life, and my life's blood—that my companions may live and walk free from this night. I… I will be yours, Strahd, if you would only spare them."
>
> Again that name darkens the world, but in the gloom the Devil beams. Striding towards Ireena, the Devil takes her hand and kneels on one knee. "You would marry me, Tatyana?"
>
> Ireena shivers, but her eyes are hard and bright. "I will, if you swear to me now, Strahd."
>
> There is no hesitation. The Devil nods once. In the firelight, you can't help but notice a tear glistening on the vampire's cheek. "Then so shall it be."

The party will surely attempt to intervene.When Strahd has had enough, he teleports himself and Ireena onto Beucephalus and kicks the nightmare into flight.

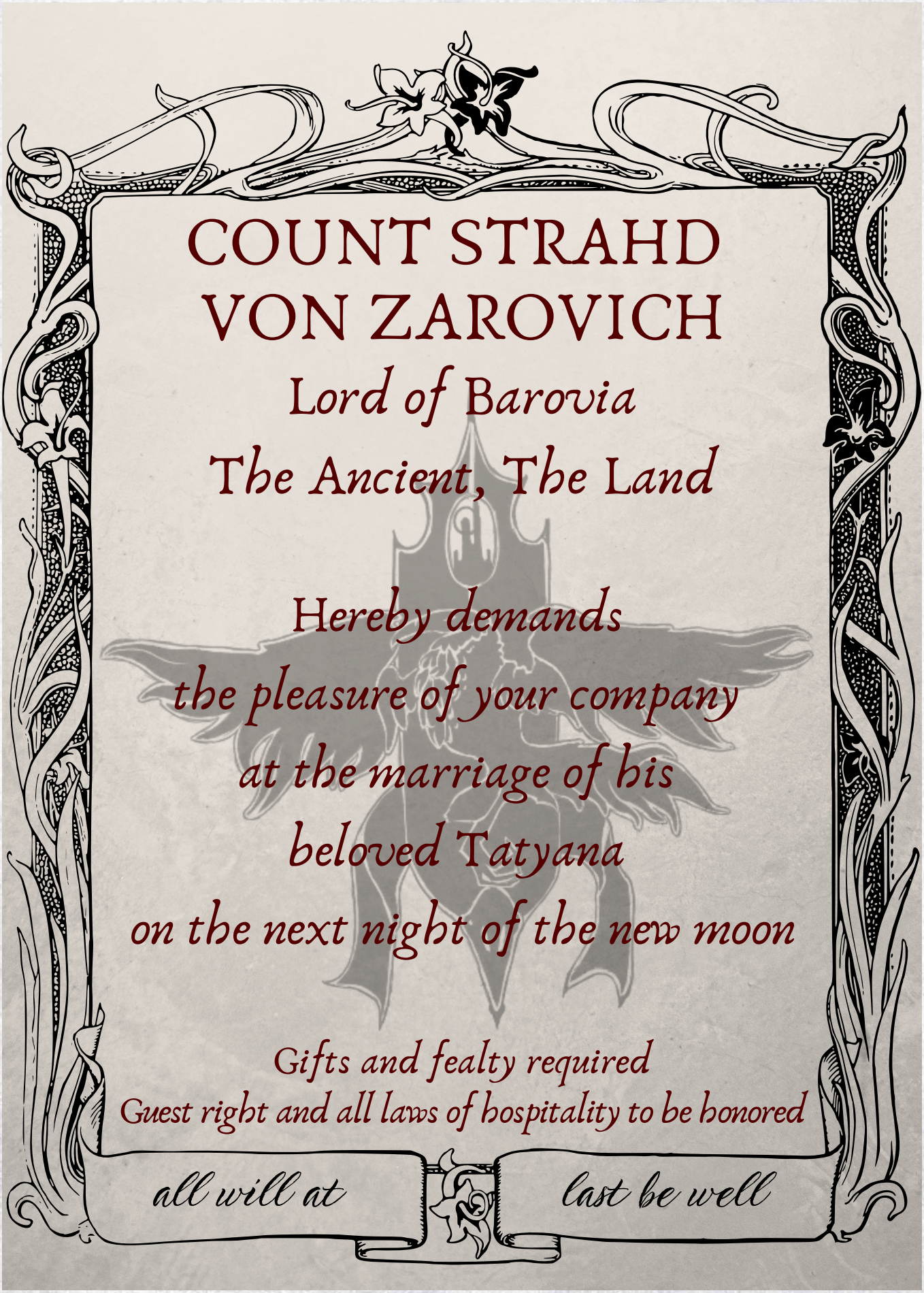
Read the following:

> Strahd embraces Ireena Kolyana. From his cloak boils out a black mist which cloaks both and spirits them away, past your reach and outside where the nightmare steed awaits, its black coat streaming with fire. Ireena and Strahd materialize again on horseback.
>
> "At long last, I have you…" Strahd murmurs. Though it is barely a whisper, all of Barovia seems to quiet so that you may hear it. The vampire brushes back Ireena's hair and whispers, "my dear *Tatyana*…"
>
> Ireena shivers and squirms at his touch but does not flee. Locking eyes with you, Ireena all but shouts, "Come for me! Promise me, my friends, rescue me from this beast if you have compassion in your heart and opportunity in sight!"
>
> "Oh, they will," the Devil laughs. "They will have their chance, indeed."
>
> Strahd kicks his devilish steed into flight, its hooves dancing upon the wind like thunder. In a flash, the nightmare steed ascends to the heavens, leaving behind a cold and bitter wind that snuffs out all firelight in this wretched place.

V. Aftermath

This storyline has drastic consequences:

- The next morning, wedding invitations are sent out across Barovia—to vassals, sycophants, and enemies alike (see *The Wedding* for a complete guest list). No matter where the adventurers shelter for the night, they wake to invitations; they might be left at a windowsill or on a tree branch. The wedding is dated for approximately two weeks, on the night of a new moon. It reads, "Count Strahd von Zarovich, Lord of Barovia, the Ancient, the Land, hereby demands the pleasure of your company at the marriage of his beloved Tatyana on the next night of the new moon. Gifts and fealty required. Guest right and all laws of hospitality to be honored. ALL WILL AT LAST BE WELL."
- Humiliated, the Abbot closes down the abbey and throws himself fully into perfecting Vasilka in time for Strahd's wedding. The mongrelfolk go hungry and dare creep from their rooms. Without the Abbot's authority behind him, Clovin quickly succumbs to the horde. The stores are soon depleted and havoc is unleashed upon Krezk.
- If the adventurers were able to enter Krezk without visiting the Wizard of Wines, Dmitri Krezkov suggests they go visit the winery. If *Evil's Bride* was run to its completion, Dmitri insists that they go. "There is a rumor… one that my father ignored and his father before him… that the Martikovs possess a mysterious gift. If you truly wish to save the girl," Dmitri says, referring to Ireena, "I would seek out allies with a long history of hatred for the Devil."
- At your discretion, Dmitri requests the adventurers slay the Abbot and drive out the Belviews. Now that the truth has truly come to light, Dmitri decides it is better to be without light than to live next to a fallen angel. If the abbey is reclaimed, Krezkites slowly begin to clean the halls under Anna Krezkova's oversight.
- Until the wedding, Ireena is held prisoner in the spires of Castle Ravenloft (Areas K49 and K50). She is kept under guard by five **vampire spawn** (Escher and Strahd's four brides) and other minions. Strahd also wards the bedroom with a permanent *alarm* spell that alerts him whenever a non-vampire enters or exits K49. Any rescue attempt before the wedding proves suicidal, even if mounted by the Keepers of the Feather.


COUNT STRAHD
VON ZAROVICH
Lord of Barovia
The Ancient, The Land
Hereby demands
the pleasure of your company
at the marriage of his
beloved Tatyana
on the next night of the new moon
Gifts and fealty required
Guest right and all laws of hospitality to be honored
all will at
last be well

Areas of Note

This chapter of the *Companion* is devoted more to arming you with better flavor text, much of which is already covered in the *Evil's Bride* storyline. The following areas necessitate further details or are mentioned here to remind the Dungeon Master of important details.

S2. Gatehouse

If Ireena Kolyana is with the adventurers, she can convince Dmitri Krezkov into letting the adventurers into the city. She names herself proudly, cites her noble lineage, and bears her father's sword. Read the text below, which posits that the Krezkovs have met Ireena and her family in safer years of yore; see *Revisions & Variants* above.

In light of this absurd requirement—to fetch wine in return for safe harbor—Ireena Kolyana pushes to the forefront and shouts, "Are you with such little compassion, Burgomaster? What is left of the man who once bandaged my bloody knee and helped my brother Ismark down from a rotted wardrobe? Would a man that kind truly turn away the downtrodden for fear of nefarious intent or lupine nature?"

Above, the burgomaster pauses, his words choked into silence. After a moment, he calls back, "Ireena? Daughter of Kolyan?"

"The very same!" Ireena nods and draws her father's sword from its sheath at her hip. "Nearly twenty years and I have not yet forgotten that day. And in the… the memory of my father, Morninglord rest his soul, I do request safe harbor as a noble of this wretched kingdom… please."

Dmitri Krezkov vanishes from sight. After a long, tense moment, an order is shouted and the gates of Krezk open with a thunderous groan.

"God be praised," Ireena whispers as she hurries to the gates, as if they could close at any moment.

S6. North Gate

If Otto and Zygfrek are woken by the adventurers, such as if the iron gate squeals open, read the following:

The iron gates squeal. It's painfully loud and terribly awkward. After a brief moment, you hear movement within the stone buildings flanking the gate, and two voices ring out, one gruff, the other soft and feminine:

"Hmm? Guests?"

"Guests?"

"Guests!"

"No guests visit us."

"Yesterday, yes. Today, no."

"They must be here for mass."

"Mayhaps they come for Clovin."

"Clovin? None come for Clovin."

"Hey! Hey, you! Yes! You! Have you come for Clovin Belview?"

"We would be happy if he left."

"Very happy."

"You can have him."

"We ask only that you make him miserable."

"As miserable as he has made us!"

"If not more!"

Otto and Zygfrek Belview move to stand behind the gates. Both wear hooded cloaks that initially disguise their monstrous features. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check made while within 10 feet of them reveals the truth: that Otto is a donkey-faced abomination, and half of Zygfrek's is scaled and the other furred. Regardless of the adventurers' reactions, the Belviews remain friendly and jovial.

If asked why they would like to be rid of Clovin, they claim it is because he is a "sadistic, miserly martinet determined to starve the family and claim the inheritance for himself." Neither can truly explain what the family inheritance is or could be.

S7. Graveyard

The graveyard is an opportunity to shed light on the abbey's gruesome history. A cleric, paladin, or overly religious, good-aligned character that enters the graveyard is drawn to Tasha Petrovna's grave. Read the following to your chosen character:

> As you step into the graveyard, your eyes begin to mist over. Your vision trembles and your hands ache. Your gaze is naturally drawn to a frosted gravestone. Through the rime, you can still read its epitaph:
>
> TASHA PETROVNA
> Healer of Kings
> Light unto the West
> Servant, Companion, Believer

This character is then graced with a terrible vision. Read the following:

> Tears spring involuntarily to your face, almost acidic in the bitter cold. Gone goes your sight of this world; your mind plunges into a light-wreathed vision. When you look about the abbey, it is no longer a decrepit relic, but a house of hope and healing. The candlelit halls ring out with the gentle prayers of a hundred nuns and priests and devotees.
>
> But then a door slams shut. The gates close. The windows are locked. Out go the lights, and then come the screams. Time accelerates. Your mind becomes home to fear, hunger, and loathing. It is a nun that is first to turn on her brothers and sisters, the first to let the dagger fly. Over the coming months, this place of worship becomes an abattoir. Feasts are had, oh yes, and prayers to the Morninglord are made, but there is no warmth, only the cruel and distant laughter of some devilish voyeur watching from afar. You see his shadow in every patch of darkness. You feel his eyes upon you from every uncurtained window. He is out there in the night. He is the night. The Ancient and the Land.
>
> With an effort of will, you pull yourself from the vision, from this madhouse. Your mind is shunted far, far away. You see a forlorn castle. Your eyes plunge downward, through the earth, through the stonework, until at last you find yourself tiptoeing through the silent catacombs. The darkness is overwhelming—but as you enter a weathered crypt, you must shield your eyes, for there in the dark burns an icon of the Morninglord, a sun in its own right.
>
> As you look upon this holy symbol, a voice echoes across your mind: "There is a grave to the west, with roses that never die, in a place built by healers, in a village called Krezk. When all turns to darkness, touch this holy symbol to the grave to summon the light and find a treasure long-lost."
>
> You snap back to reality, staring at that same grave.

S9. Gardens

Fortunes of Ravenloft

If an artifact is hidden here, it was hidden by Baba Lysaga herself years ago after slaughtering another adventuring party. If you adopt the *Companion*'s changes to the Abbot's arrival (twenty years ago, instead of over a century) then this occurred just before his arrival, otherwise assume she did it under the cover of darkness.

When the artifact is taken from the scarecrow, both it and the western scarecrow animate (gaining the statistics of **scarecrows**). At the same time, the seven **wights** burst from the ground. These wights, the remnants of that slaughtered adventuring party, were once foreign mercenaries that were swallowed into Barovia:

- A human man dressed in the livery of a nation that one of the adventurers hails from. Forced to fight by Baba Lysaga's dark magic, he demands, "Slay us! End our misery! End it or die and rise as one of us!"
- A human woman wielding a rusted shield that increases her AC by 2. In a mournful voice, she confides, "We were heroes too once…"
- A dwarf who snarls, "We did not ask for this! None of it! None of it at all!" The dwarf wields a greataxe instead of a longsword and deals 1d12 + 2 slashing damage on a hit.
- An elf that exclusively wields a longbow and whose arrows are made of shadowy energy. On a hit, he deals necrotic instead of piercing damage. He openly laments, "This world is a prison from which there is no parole and no escape. It would be merciful to end you now."
- A tiefling, whose red flesh has rotted away but whose horns remain. Once during the combat, the wight can cast *hellish rebuke* (DC 12). Upon casting the spell, she snarls, "We did not come here to burn! We did not come here to drown!"
- A pair of gnome twins, each with a size of Small and the ability to move through the spaces of Medium or larger creatures without provoking opportunity attacks.

The Abbot Intervenes. As the battle continues, the mongrelfolk in Area S15 crowd around their windows to watch the fight, howling with delight. At your discretion, the Abbot arrives at the end of the fourth round, if the wights are not all yet dead. With a prayer to the Morninglord, he sweeps out his hand and turns the remaining wights to ash. Chalking it up to another spell of Barovia, the Abbot quietly burns with the knowledge he never sensed those wights before.

If he sees and learns of the nature of the artifact, the Abbot gently admonishes the adventurers for resorting to murder, magic, and arcana to deal with Strahd, and hints that he has something "subtler" to free this land (Vasilka, whom he reveals later).



S13. Main Hall

The *Companion* furnishes this area to further contrast the abbey's physical and moral state of decay: three gilded portraits, each painted with golden ink by Artista DeSlop, the very same artist whose bones are interred in Castle Ravenloft's catacombs. The portraits, which are signed, are worth 300 gp apiece:

- The paladin Lugdana soaring over the skies on the giant raven that gave to her the *holy symbol of ravekind*. Per the *Companion's* revisions, this giant raven was corrupted by the Dark Powers into the very roc that guards Tsolenka Pass. When the roc is seen later by the party, they might realize the truth.
- Saint Markovia on the eve of her doomed crusade against Strahd, clad in armor, and holding a longsword.
- The Abbot in his true form, his wings outspread, lit by the Morninglord's love. If the Abbot's true identity has been revealed, he casually admits that he acted as the Artista DeSlop's divine muse centuries ago, appearing in her dreams—hence why the portrait all-but-perfectly depicts him, down to the last detail. "She was a credit to her art," the Abbot comments.

S15. Madhouse

You can use the Mongrelfolk Generator table to quickly describe a mongrelfolk the adventurers gawk at while in this area. Roll at least 2d12 for each mongrelfolk.

Golem. The Abbot's **flesh golem** patrols here. You can keep it away and use it as a punishment for the adventurers' actions, rather than outright attack them with it. If the Abbot has turned hostile or the adventurers harm the mongrelfolk, it comes barreling out from the staircase in Area S14.

Mongrelfolk Generator

d12	Body Part	Animal	d12	Body Part	Animal
1	Eyes	Caterpillar	7	Arm	Anteater
2	Ears	Jackal	8	Hand	Crocodile
3	Nose	Mule	9	Fingers	Cow
4	Mouth	Barracuda	10	Leg	Ferret
5	Teeth	Badger	11	Foot	Boar
6	Skin	Goose	12	Face	Ape

S17. Loft and Belfry

Teleportation Circle

While the *Companion* acknowledges that Strahd could easily use his teleportation network to arrive at the Abbey, it is far more satisfying for him to arrive and leave on the back of his **nightmare** during the *Evil's Bride* storyline. As such, ignore this teleportation circle.

The Doomed One

As usual, when the adventurers are presented with a "Gotcha!" illusion in this campaign, it is better to tailor it to the *Doomed One*. See Chapter 1 of the *Companion* for details on this narrative tool.

S23. Nursery

Fortunes of Ravenloft

If an artifact is located here, move the six **shadows** from Area S21 to this area. The shadows are the size of infants that crawl at horrifying speeds and are no less deadly for their diminutive stature.



Chapter IX: Tsolenka Pass

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 184
Chapter Progression 184
Quick Notes 184
Running the Chapter 184
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 184
Dramatis Personae 184
Variants & Revisions 186
The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis 186
I. Bloodhorn's Gaze 187
II. The Snow Maidens Fair 188
III. Lugdana's Legacy 190
IV. On the Summit of Ghakis 191
V. Aftermath 191
Areas of Note 191
T1. Gatehouse Portcullis 191
T2. Demon Statues 191
T3. Curtain of Green Flame 191
T4. Guard Tower, Ground Floor 191
T8. Stone Bridge 191

Tsolenka Pass is a treacherous road that must be undertaken to reach Mount Ghakis and the Amber Temple. This is truly a "man versus nature" chapter, one of the archetypal stories of fiction—except Nature in this case proves sadistic thanks to the Dark Powers. Blizzards and avalanches assail the adventurers as they climb up the mountains.

The *Companion* takes Tsolenka Pass beyond the single map provided in *Curse of Strahd* and includes everything up until the adventurers actually set foot on the doorstep of the Amber Temple. Per the *Bigger Barovia* variant the *Companion* assumes, this journey should take, at a minimum, four days there and three days back. Not only does this provide a grueling opportunity to invoke the Exploration pillar, it gives Barovia a week to react to the adventurers' latest endeavors.

Utilizing the major elements of this chapter—the roc, Sangzor, and the specters haunting the Tsolenka Tower—the *Companion* crafts a story that turns Tsolenka Pass into more than just a footnote in your campaign. With the addition of characters like Kasimir Velikov and Sir Godfrey Gwilym, this "Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis" will test the adventurers' resolve in the face of such unforgiving wilderness.

Chapter Overview

Tsolenka Pass embraces the Exploration Pillar of 5th Edition D&D, turning a short chapter into a multi-day trek through a frigid mountain pass.

Chapter Progression

This chapter has no true story progression without the *Companion's* intervention. *The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis* provides a framework:

Act I covers the attacks by Sangzor and spying bats loyal to Strahd.

Act II covers Tsolenka Tower and the Snow Maidens.

Act III covers the Tsolenka Bridge and the roc.

Act IV covers the fourth day, in which the adventurers finally reach the Amber Temple, only to find Sir Godfrey Gwilym attack them.

In the Aftermath, the adventurers must contend with any threats they left behind, should they trek down Ghakis after reemerging from the Amber Temple.

Quick Notes

- During *The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis*, the party cannot achieve a long rest, thanks to the machinations of the Dark Powers until they at last reach the Amber Temple.
- Kasimir Velikov is the one likely to inform the adventurers of the Amber Temple and will insist on accompanying them.
- Ordinarily, the portcullis in the Gatehouse opens when the adventurers approach (not so in *The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis*).
- The Curtain of Green Flame can be suppressed with *dispel magic* (DC 16).

Checklist

- Review the weather and hazard that plague the pass.
- Ensure Kasimir Velikov has been met and has proposed venturing to the Amber Temple, and that his backstory has been explained, specifically about his sister Patrina.

Running the Chapter

Chapter 9 is a "Man versus Nature" arc, pitting the adventurers against unforgiving weather. Before they set out on their journey, the party should be reminded again of Kasimir Velikov, the dusk elf that informed them of the Amber Temple and intends to go there to find the power to save his people from extinction. If they refuse to trek with Kasimir, he shows up anyway, using rumors, spies, a familiar, or even divination magic to time his arrival.

Bigger Barovia. Divide the map of Tsolenka Pass into two areas: the tower and the gate (Areas T1-T6); and the Bridge (T7-T9), expanding the distance between them by several miles. You want the adventurers to approach the tower on the second day and the bridge on the third.

Time

The journey to the Amber Temple should take four days, and the journey back three, giving Barovia an opportunity to breathe in the adventurers' absence.

Weather

Thanks to the Dark Powers, the weather turns bitter, cold, and sadistic as the adventurers clamber up Tsolenka Pass. The entire pass is an area of extreme cold, heavy precipitation, strong winds, and prone to both avalanches and blizzards (see Appendix C for these effects).

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Ring of Warmth* (worn by Kasimir Velikov)

Creatures

- Gargoyle
- Grick
- Kasimir Velikov
- Roc
- Sangzor
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym
- Snow Maiden
- Vrock

Effects

- Avalanche
- Blizzards
- Extreme Cold
- Heavy Precipitation
- Strong Wind

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Kasimir Velikov

Kasimir, who suggests the expedition to the Amber Temple in the first place, is central to Chapter 9. He refuses to be left behind; if the adventurers leave without him, he shows up anyway, having learned of their intention through gossip, a spying familiar, or scrying, appearing at the Raven River Crossroads with rations, cold weather gear, tents, and other equipment—and if that doesn't convince the party to take him with them, he reveals (or reminds them) of his spellcraft, which he swears to make available.

Kasimir's knowledge is vast, but he is unaware of the following secrets of Tsolenka Pass:

- The Snow Maidens persist in undeath as loyal soldiers guarding Tsolenka Pass—Kasimir believed they all died in a blizzard centuries ago.
- The Curtain of Green Flame at Tsolenka Pass.
- The Roc of Mount Ghakis, whom he thought was just a myth, but after witnessing it, suspects it to be the giant raven that delivered the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* to the paladin Lugdana in ancient days.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Kasimir Velikov	Unique	F	—	The dusk elf wizard intent on delving the Amber Temple.
Minadora von Zarovich	**Snow Maiden**	H	T6	Strahd's ghostly cousin, invented by the *Companion*.
The Roc of Mount Ghakis	**Roc**	H	T8	A monstrous bird, once Lugdana's giant raven.
Sangzor	Unique	H	—	A monstrous goat feared by the wildlings.
Sir Godfrey	Unique	H	—	A revenant of the Order of the Silver Dragon.
The Snow Maidens	**Snow Maiden**	H	T6	Ghostly soldiers loyal to Strahd in undeath.

Minadora von Zarovich

Invented by the *Companion*, the Snow Maidens are led by Minadora von Zarovich, a long-dead cousin of Strahd with a successful, bloody military career. Strahd sequestered her and her loyal soldiers here to remove a potential claimant to his throne. Like her soldiers, Mina succumbed to the cold in a deadly winter the year after Strahd became a vampire. If someone mentions to Mina that Strahd stationed her at Tsolenka not out of love or trust or respect, but out of fear and contempt for a potential challenger to his rule, she goes berserk.

The Roc of Mount Ghakis

The Roc of Mount Ghakis has preyed upon Barovia for millennia—but the *Companion* reaches deeper into its past and rewrites it into the very giant raven that delivered the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* to Lugdana, the paladin, long ago. Corrupted by the Dark Powers, the raven has betrayed its holy purpose and become a shadow of itself.

Under this revision, the Roc is a true character. It now guards the Amber Temple, mystically recognizing those that are aware of the temple and intend to enter it. The roc will not, however, attack whomever wields the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, which thrums and vibrates when the roc is near.

Sangzor

Sangzor is a monstrous, evil goat that enjoys supernatural resilience to harm and exhibits greater sentience than other beasts. The wildlings of Barovia have been hunting Sangzor for years; his pelt commands their respect, sparing the adventurers from an attack.

Sangzor is used by the *Companion* to welcome the adventurers to Tsolenka Pass. The goat is seen during the day, murdering a wildling, and then attacks at night, attempting to destroy tents and supplies and drive the party out into the cold where Sangzor can pick them off one by one.

Sir Godfrey

If you utilize the variant *The Redemption of Godfrey*, Sir Godfrey tracks the adventurers here. On the first day of their journey, the adventurers must evade the gaze of a swarm of bats loyal to Strahd. Failure to do so alerts Sir Godfrey, who uses the Castle Ravenloft teleportation network to appear at Tsolenka Pass (in Area T4), a day or two later. (Alternatively, if the adventurers succeed against the bats, or if you dislike the implication that Strahd will know where the adventurers are, simply have Sir Godfrey follow the adventurers up from the valley.)

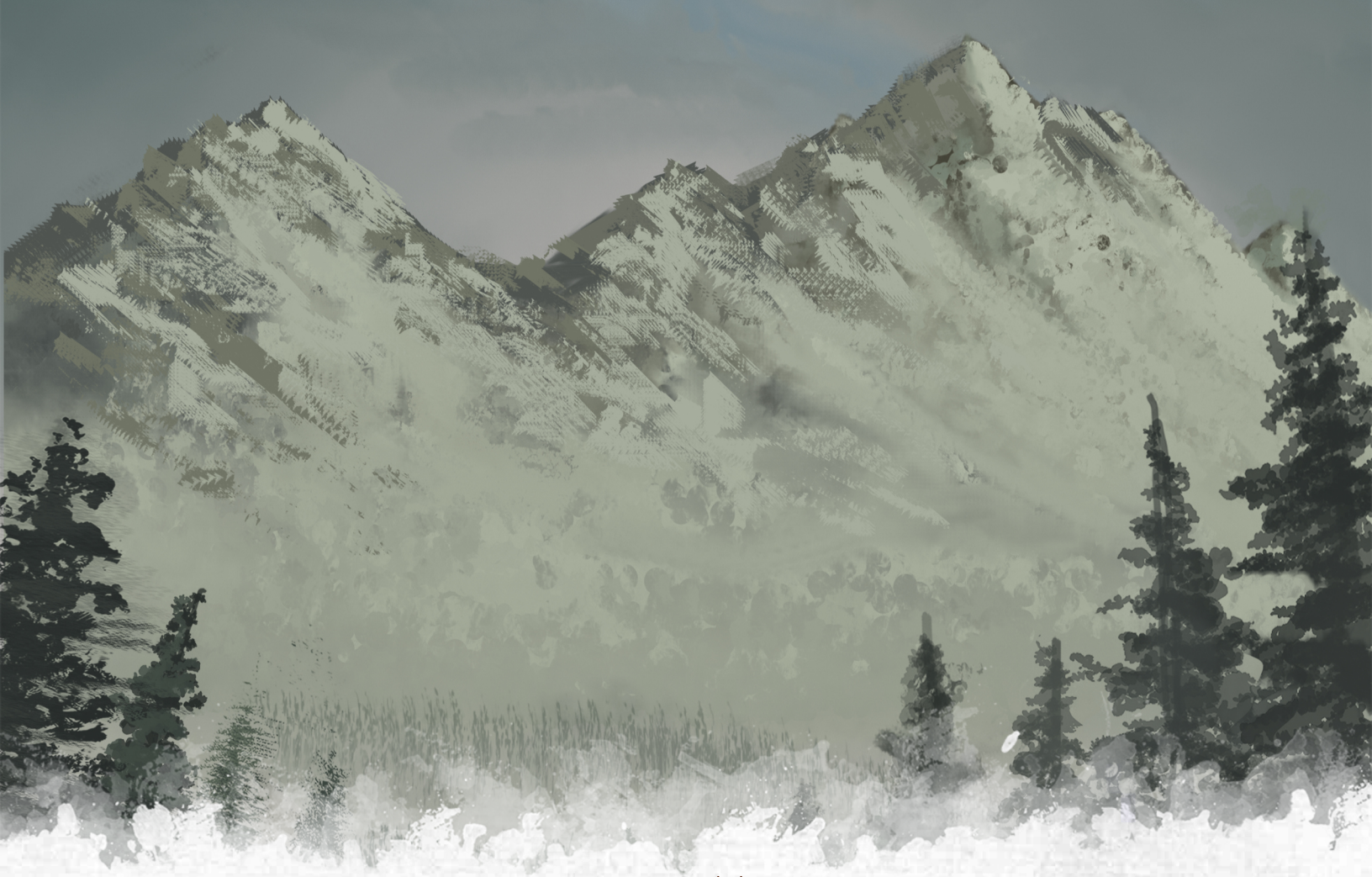
Godfrey has more on the line than his service to Strahd: in life, the paladin swore to safeguard the Amber Temple from those that would meddle with the evils therein. Godfrey does not trust the adventurers to resist temptation or wield such powers responsibly; when he attacks the party, it is with true gusto.

The Snow Maidens

The snow maidens are six specters that ordinarily guard a Fortune of Ravenloft artifact in the Tsolenka Pass Tower, but the *Companion* makes full use of them for this chapter, rewriting their lore for its purposes.

The Snow Maidens were once a highly esteemed, all female unit of soldiers that Strahd entrusted to hold Tsolenka Pass during his first wars over Barovia. When the Mists of Ravenloft sealed the valley away from the world, the Snow Maidens weathered a harsh and brutal winter that ended in infighting, death, and cannibalism. In undeath, the Snow Maidens prove faithful to their distant master, harrying anyone but him and Rahadin that dare navigate the pass. Their long isolation in undeath has warped their heart and twisted their sense of duty to king and country into an obsession with Strahd; each maiden loves him with all her incorporeal heart.

Revision. With this revision, the Snow Maidens can speak, and their statistics are truly unique than what is presented in *Curse of Strahd*.



Variants & Revisions

The entirety of Chapter 9 is one huge revision:

- The journey through Tsolenka Pass up to Mount Ghakis takes four days, and three days coming back.
- Tsolenka Pass is plagued by extreme weather: snowfall, heavy precipitation, strong winds, extreme cold, blizzards, and avalanches.
- The Snow Maidens, the six specters that appear if someone attempts to take a Fortune of Ravenloft from the Tsolenka Tower, now guard the pass in its entirety. They have been rewritten to be elite soldiers faithful to Strahd, even in undeath. They are led by Minadora von Zarovich, a late cousin of Strahd's invented by the *Companion*. The **Snow Maidens** are not mere **specters** and now have slightly different statistics.
- Sangzor's statistics have been minorly upgraded, granting him truesight and extra damage.
- The Roc of Mount Ghakis was the giant raven that delivered the *holy symbol of Ravenkind* to the paladin Lugdana in ancient days, now corrupted by the Dark Powers.
- Because the *Companion* amps up the difficulty of this chapter and deprives the party of the ability to rest, the **vrocks** in Area T2 should be replaced with **gargoyles**.
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym is included in this chapter, pursuant to the *Companion's The Redemption of Godfrey* variant; Godfrey hunts the adventurers for Strahd but in this chapter he is furious that they may dare pilfer the Amber Temple of its dark knowledge.

The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis

The journey up Mount Ghakis is long and treacherous, taking at least four days to reach the Amber Temple, and three to return. The path is plagued by foul weather, haunted by spirits, and preyed upon by both Sangzor and the Roc of Mount Ghakis.

Weather. For the entirety of this journey, the adventurers are exposed to extreme cold, strong winds, and heavy precipitation (snowfall). An avalanche and blizzard are both due to occur.

Preparing for the Journey. So long as they bring him along, Kasimir Velikov supplies the adventurers with tents, cold weather gear, climbing kits, and other supplies. He approaches them outside Vallaki or just shows up at the Raven River Crossroads, insisting that they take him along.

Resting. The Dark Powers deprive the adventurers of a long rest through repeated storms, extreme cold, and just pure, sadistic magic. No matter what the adventurers attempt, they fail to achieve a long rest, even under a spell of *Leomund's tiny hut*. As a caveat, however, they do not receive a level of exhaustion for failing to complete a long rest in a 24 hour period, so long as they sleep. Have the magi or the wisest among them make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Arcana) check to determine that some sort of curse is preventing their weary bones from finding rest. The adventurers can rest once they reach the Amber Temple; camped inside its evil halls, the Vestiges whisper to the party, giving you the opportunity for a horror story.

I. Bloodhorn's Gaze

The adventurers' first day on the trail puts them in the murderous sight of **Sangzor**, the monstrous goat of Mount Ghakis, responsible for numerous deaths.

Eyes of the Devil

In the morning, a **swarm of bats** flies in from the northeast. These beasts are spies of Strahd. In a scene evocative of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the adventurers must find cover and hide as the swarm passes overhead, lest their position be reported to Strahd. Read the following:

> In a rare glimpse of the clear sky, unobscured by Barovia's mist, you see a flock of dark birds flying in from the northeast.

Ask for a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check based on sight. On a success a character discerns the flock for a swarm of bats. Ask for a DC 13 Wisdom or Intelligence (Insight) check; on a success, a character intuits that such a swarm might be spies of Strahd. The adventurers must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to reach cover nearby (rocks and ledges they might hide under to avoid the bats' sight). On a failure of any of these aforementioned tests, the bats spot the adventurers and wheel about to go inform Strahd at Castle Ravenloft, guaranteeing the arrival of Sir Godfrey Gwilym on the fourth day of their journey.

A Murder Most Caprine

In the afternoon, the adventurers encounter a Barovian wildling fleeing from Sangzor, the monstrous goat of Mount Ghakis. The human is bloodied and terrified and speaks in an unfamiliar accent. Read the following:

> A desperate shout comes from above. Your eyes follow the tall face of a cliff until at last you spot a human man, bloodied and haggard. "Hey!" he shouts, waving one arm wildly. His other arm hangs limp and blood at his side. "HEY! Halp! Halp me!"

The cliff is sixty feet high, and a stretch of about sixty feet separate the adventurers from its base. If the adventurers intend to help, roll initiative. On initiative count 15 (losing ties), Sangzor appears and rams the wildling to his doom. Read the following:

> Out from the mists charges a monstrous goat, a true brute of a creature, with eyes as red as fresh roses! The beast rams the man off the cliff! He screams and screams until all at once he crashes onto the rocks below in a sickening crunch, and screams no more.
>
> The goat looks down at you with disturbing sentience and disgust, then turns around and retreats into the snowblown mist.

A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity (Survival) check can reach the rocks the wildling fell to, where they discover he is still alive. In a thick accent, he says, "Sangzor—Bloodhorn—Scourge of Ghakis," and then fades away into death, his eyes losing the last of their light. On a strap around his torso, he has a distinct drinking horn; this horn is recognized by Helwa, the barbarian leader met in the Amber Temple. Helwa stoically receives the horn and explains that this man, Granhis, was one of her many husbands. Sangzor himself is gone, far from the reach of the party, but will return later.

Kasimir. If present, Kasimir laments that he prepared *feather fall* today but was too shocked to intervene. "This death will weigh on me," Kasimir sighs, "like so many others."

Sangzor's Sadism

That night, Sangzor storms the adventurers' camp, smashing through tents and forcing the adventurers out into the cold.

The weather worsens as the day grows long and the trail closer to the gray heavens above. Snow begins to fall and the wind picks up, forcing the adventurers to pull up their cloaks and collars. As night begins to fall and the temperature drops to well below zero, the adventurers will have to stop to make camp. Nearby pine trees make for excellent kindling, and whomever decides to hunt need only to succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check to find deer (requiring a successful ranged attack against an AC 10 to bring it down).

Weather. The scene is one of strong winds and heavy precipitation. Thanks to the snowfall, Wisdom (Perception) made to spot Sangzor before he barrels into the camp are made with disadvantage and the strong winds mask the noise of his approach. Establish which characters are sleeping, who will be unconscious and prone and inside their tents. Those with a passive Perception score of 15 or higher will wake, hearing the chaos of Sangzor's charge—shouts of whomever is awake, the crash of the tents. Such characters will be surprised when combat erupts. Those who did not wake do so on the second round of combat, also surprised.

The Attack. Sangzor is a sadistic beast that intends to drive the adventurers into the cold, where he can pick them off one by one in the dark.

- Kasimir remains asleep unless his tent is destroyed by Sangzor.
- When combat begins, he bursts through someone's tent at initiative count 20 (losing ties). On his first turn, he tramples 1d4 + 1 more tents, subjecting those inside to a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw; a creature takes 1d8 +3 bludgeoning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.
- On his second turn, Sangzor attempts to flee; if he makes it 50 feet or more away from the camp, he disappears into the darkness, the heavy snowfall cloaking him from onlookers and masking his trail. A DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check is necessary to track him.

A tent ruined by Sangzor can only be fixed through a mending spell. If he makes it into the darkness, Sangzor spends the night harassing the adventurers. The beast is too proud and too successful in his bloody career to consider the possibility of his own death and does not flee. Regardless, Sangzor's attack portends a grim and grueling campaign up Mount Ghakis.

Exposure. Without their tents, the adventurers risk freezing to death overnight. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, a character can find shelter in a nearby cave. If not, they must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against exhaustion. In the morning, they must dig themselves out from the cave, the entrance to which has been sealed by snow. At your discretion, two **gricks** and a **grick alpha** infest this cave.

II. The Snow Maidens Fair

On the second day of their journey, the adventurers reach the Tsolenka Pass Tower (Areas T1-T6) where the undying Snow Maidens are forever garrisoned. The weather has not yet relented, but instead grows in intensity as the day grows long, first to a heavy snowfall, to a blizzard by day's end.

Kasimir Velikov. If Kasimir Velikov is present, he sheds some history on Tsolenka Pass, unaware that Minadora von Zarovich and her soldiers persist as ghosts:

> Kasimir Velikov, ever morose, breaks his long silence to spout lore: "We are coming upon the Tsolenka Pass," says the elf, shrugging his collar up against the growing cold. "The Devil built a wall there, long ago, and garrisoned the tower with the Snow Maidens—elite winter soldiers with enough kills under their belts to rival a small army. The Devil's own cousin, Minadora von Zarovich, commanded the company. I cannot say whether it was out of trust that he later charged Mina with holding Tsolenka Pass, but it certainly removed a claimant to his throne as the years passed without an heir. As far as I know, she and her five maidens died up there in the winter after the Devil poisoned his soul with the blood of his brother Sergei."

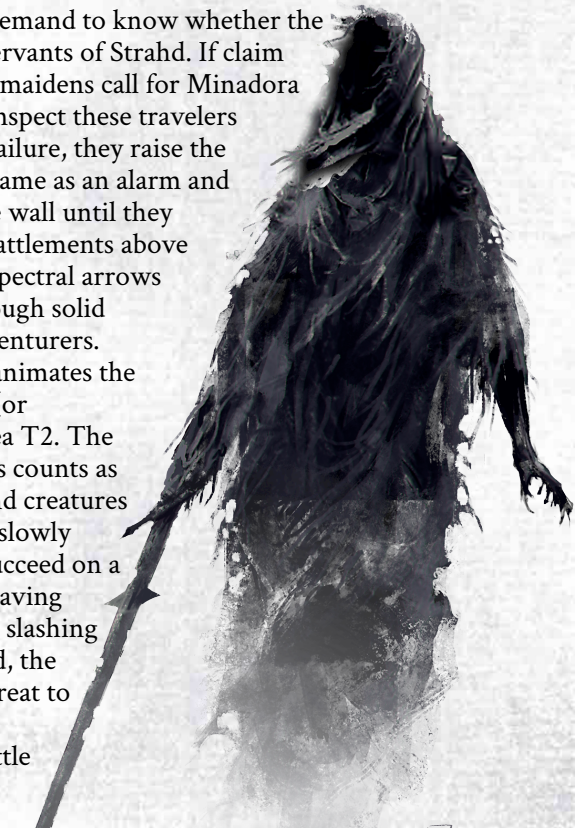
Declare Yourselves!

The snow grows even heavier as the adventurers approach the Gatehouse (Area T1) suggesting an incoming blizzard (which can be confirmed with a *druidcraft* spell or a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check). As the trail winds up the mountain, Tsolenka Pass comes into view. Read the following description—which replaces the text in Area T1. Notably, the portcullis is not closed (and does not open for the adventurers), but is mangled instead; further, the curtain of green fire is not yet aflame; and the **vrocks** have been replaced with **gargoyles**.

> The shelf of rock on which the mountain road clings grows narrow. To your left, the icy cliffs rise sharply toward dark, rolling clouds. To your right, the ground falls away into a sea of fog. Ahead, through the wind and snow, you see a high wall of black stone lined with spikes and topped by gargoyles. On the other side of the dark wall, gripping the mountain's edge, is a guard tower of white stone topped by golden statues of mighty warriors. Set in the center of the wall is a mangled portcullis, bent in such a way that one could crawl underneath it.

When the adventurers approach the portcullis, two snow maidens appear. Read the following:

> As you approach the portcullis, the wind grows sharp and cold, slicing at your exposed skin. The snow takes the form of two ghostly women, both blue and furious specters. "Who goes there?" demands one. "Declare yourselves!" demands the other.



These two Snow Maidens—Dame Alena and Dame Jarzinka—demand to know whether the adventurers are servants of Strahd. If claim as such, the snow maidens call for Minadora von Zarovich to inspect these travelers personally. On a failure, they raise the curtain of green flame as an alarm and phase through the wall until they reappear on the battlements above the wall to loose spectral arrows (which phase through solid matter) at the adventurers. Skirting the wall animates the petrified **vrocks** (or **gargoyles**) in Area T2. The mangled portcullis counts as difficult terrain and creatures that do not move slowly beneath it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 slashing damage. If harmed, the snow maidens retreat to Area T6.

Minadora. A battle hardened commander, Minadora von Zarovich handles any and all negotiations with travelers, inspecting them each and exacting a pledge of loyalty to her cousin Strahd. She identifies herself with barbed arrogance, expecting others to kneel before her as they would her cousin Strahd. Failure to do so provokes her ire. Implying Strahd stationed her here to remove her from his court provokes her wrath.

The Curtain of Green Flame. If the adventurers claim loyalty to Strahd, Mina says, "Prove it, then," and raises the Curtain of Green Flame. The fire, Mina assures them, does not harm minions of the Devil, or those that truly love, respect, or obey him as their liege. If the adventurers enter, they burn. If they refuse, or attempt to dispel the magic, Minadora orders her forces to attack.

Kasimir Velikov. If Kasimir is present, he casts *dispel magic* on the curtain of green flame but his declaration thereto attracts the snow maidens' ire; they must keep him alive until his turn. He makes his Intelligence check to break the enchantment with a +6 bonus.

Tsolenka Tower

Should the adventurers triumph over the Gatehouse, the snow maidens release volley after volley of spectral arrows from the tower rooftop. Meanwhile, the weather worsens even more, imposing strong winds and heavy precipitation on the battlefield. Because the Snow Maidens' arrows are spectral, their ranged attacks ignore the disadvantage ordinarily imposed by strong wind.

Read the following:

> Through the ever-thickening snow, you see six ghostly women on the battlements above. Of these soldiers, one stands tallest, her ferocity clear even from this distance. "Volley!" she shouts, knocking a ghostly arrow to her own bow.
>
> "For Barovia!" the soldiers shout, releasing a storm of blue, spectral arrows. "For Zarovich!"
>
> A hail of ghostly arrows come whistling down, ignoring the heavy winds!

While the **snow maidens** are acting together on the same initiative, they release volleys. Choose a 10-foot-wide, 60-foot-high cylinder. Creatures therein must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 necrotic damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Storming the Tower. If the party storms the tower, they must first contend with the barred door (requiring a DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check to force open). Meanwhile, the Snow Maidens drift down through the ceiling to harry the adventurers as they clamber up the stairs.

Kasimir Velikov. If Kasimir is present, he casts *fly* on two characters (preferring a cleric or paladin) attempting to reach the tower's rooftop so that they may bring the fight to the spirits.

The Blizzard

Soon after the adventurers take, abandon, or press on from Tsolenka Tower, a blizzard begins to rage. The adventurers have the opportunity to push through at the risk of becoming lost and delaying their journey, or they may retire to Tsolenka Tower to wait it out. The blizzard rages until noon, tomorrow. The adventurers are safe inside, so long as they have kindling for the hearth.

Truly Extreme Cold. Whilst the blizzard rages, the DC against extreme cold is increased to 15 and affects even a creature in cold weather gear (and raises it to 20 for those bereft) unless the creature has resistance or immunity to cold damage. On a failure, a character gains a level of exhaustion.



III. Lugdana's Legacy

As previously mentioned, the *Companion* extends the distance between Area T6 and T7 by several miles so that the encounters at Tsolenka Tower and the Tsolenka Bridge occur on separate days. At about noon, the blizzard outside subsides, allowing the adventurers to safely trek onwards. The wind and snow prove strong, but not enough to outright stop any travel. Flakes of ice are coming down; a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check confirms that there will be hail later that day.

Read the following text when the adventurers approach the bridge:

> The trail has come to a gorge spanned by a crumbling, stone bridge, each end decorated with two statues of knights on horseback, charging towards one another with lances. Far, far below rages a river of glacial run-off, as clear as the skies of better lands than Barovia.

The Shadow in Heaven

The **roc** dives from the heavens when the adventurers first cross the bridge. Read the following:

> The wind has grown claws, cutting at you, driving tears from your eyes that quickly freeze in the cold. The snow has hardened into hail that rains down on the stonework, leaving the crumbling bridge slick and treacherous.
>
> And then the Sun grows dark.
>
> A shadow crosses overhead, darker than any cloud you've yet seen in this dismal country. And then it reaches you—a corvine shriek louder than the fiercest thunderstorms!
>
> A creature of unearthly size dives from the heavens—a raven so monstrous that its wings blot out the sky!

Death and the Roc

If a character dies in the encounter with the roc without any hope whatsoever of resurrection—and the adventurers specifically do not gain the power of resurrection from the Amber Temple—the adventurer somehow survives. In a later session, "cut to" the adventurer waking inside the roc's nest in Mount Ghakis—just before being thrown to its ravenous hatchlings.

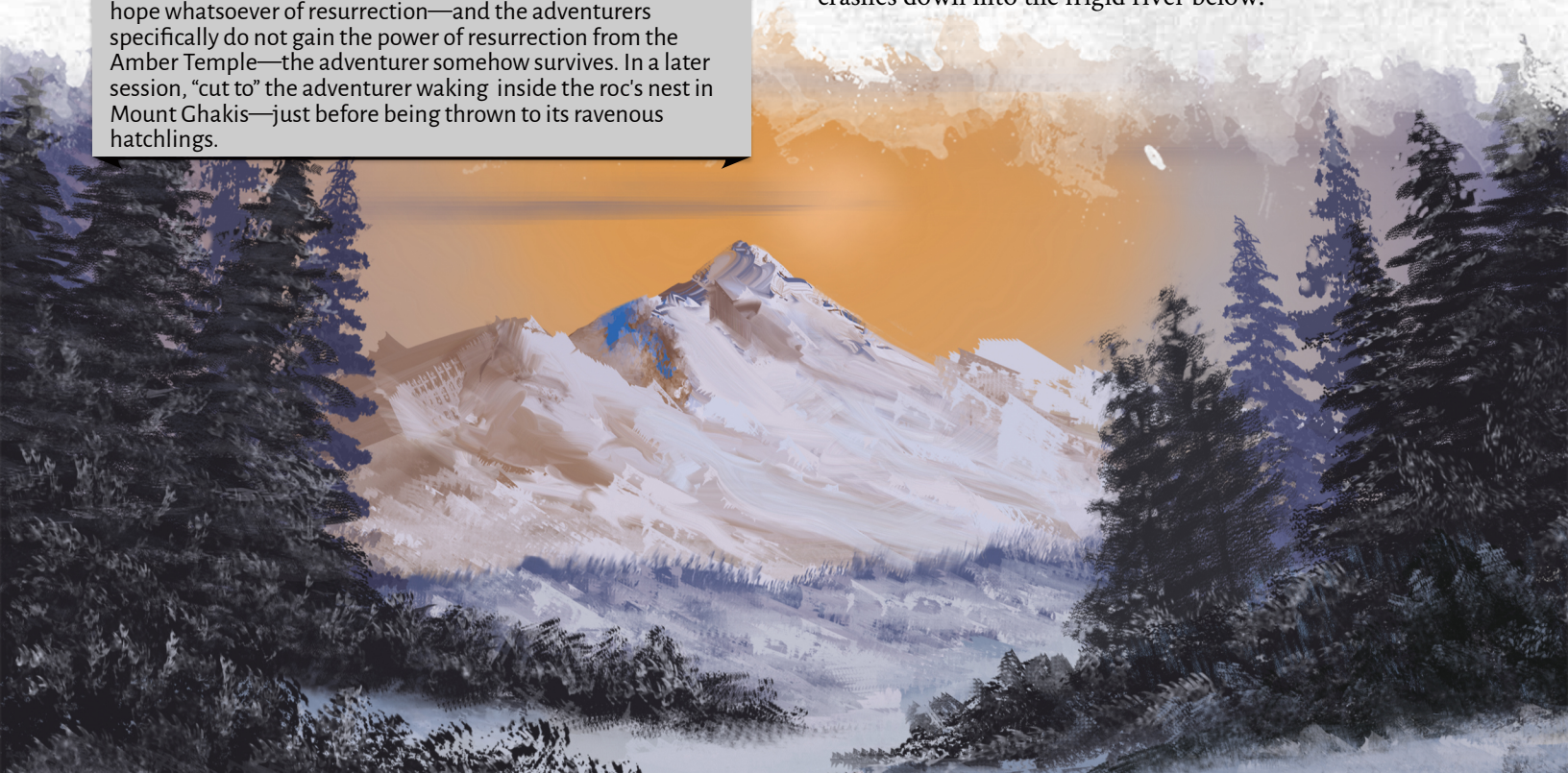
Weather. As usual, this encounter suffers from strong winds and heavy precipitation. The roc is too strong and too large to be bullied by the strong winds, allowing it to fly unabated. Worse, the area is hammered by hail large enough to harm the adventurers but not the roc. For the duration of this encounter, whenever a character other than the roc steps out into the open for the first time on a turn, or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, losing concentration on a failure.

Tactics. The roc prefers to snatch up creatures, making a Talon attack. If the adventurers hide in Areas T7 or T9, the roc makes a flyby. For each round they continue to hide there, the roc returns to crash into a random archway, destroying one side. Creatures therein must succeed against a Dexterity saving throw, taking 3d10 bludgeoning damage on a failure; on a success, they get out in time, but are left out in the open for the roc.

Kasimir Velikov. Kasimir Velikov even proves ignorant to the existence of the roc. As the adventurers huddle inside, he blabbers, "I only ever heard rumors! Rumors, mind you, from mountain men and wildlings! But that cry—it was too corvine! This roc, I am certain, is none other than a living myth of Ravenloft! They say in ancient days, the paladin Lugdana received a holy symbol from a giant raven, but where it went, none know. The creature must have been sealed in by the Mists just like us!"

Avalanche!

The roc flees once it is reduced to 50 hit points or fewer. In its pain and haste, it crashes against a mountain ledge, triggering an avalanche that consumes either Area T7 or T9—whichever is more cinematic for your party. The avalanche damages the bridge's foundations, making it treacherous to cross on the journey back home. Each 10-foot-square can take only 3d10 x 10 pounds before breaking away; if four of these seven tiles crumble, the entire bridge crashes down into the frigid river below.



IV. On the Summit of Ghakis

If you embrace *The Redemption of Sir Godfrey*, and the adventurers were seen by Strahd's swarm of bats, the revenant teleports into the Tsolenka Tower from Castle Ravenloft to hunt down the adventurers. Relentless and tireless, Godfrey makes up for any lost ground by trekking through the night, despite the weather. He intercepts the party on the fourth day, just before the party reaches the Amber Temple. Ever chivalrous, he does not ambush the adventurers but instead walks into their camp or meets them at the doors. When he does, read the following:

> A cloud of hatred falls over your eyes, as easily drowned as a seashell at high tide. Rage finds its way to your fingers. Loathing takes your lips, twisting them into a scowl. With a start, you find the source of such emotional manipulation—a corpse clad in armor with eyes bright and red with hate. Sir Godfrey Gwilym once again, in a new corpse. The hatred rolls off him like heat.
>
> In that raspy voice, the corpse knight calmly declares, "Long ago, my brethren and I swore ourselves to the Dragon. We swore to protect this temple from the weak, the hungry, the venal. It matters not which lord I serve—today, I keep my most sacred vow. You shall go no further. You stand upon the brink of ruin, upon a nest of evil beyond the ken of mortal men. None may wake these evil halls."
>
> Sir Godfrey draws his sword and charges!

Sir Godfrey Gwilym attacks, well acquainted by now with the adventurers' tactics. He makes full use of his paladinic powers and fights not just out of his oath to Strahd, but with actual zeal. In life, Godfrey swore himself to the Order of the Silver Dragon, which was dedicated to safeguarding the Amber Temple from those who would abuse the evils therein. Godfrey does not trust these adventurers to wield such power with honor or justice.

If Godfrey is reduced to 0 hit points, he warns the adventurers, "This is not yet over."

V. Aftermath

The journey back to Barovia from the Amber Temple takes three days, provided they take the same route as before. Any threats the party did not dispatch on their way up the summit lie in wait for their return. Sangzor swears vengeance, the Snow Maidens reclaim the Tsolenka Tower, and the roc haunts the skies above once more.

If the roc destroyed the bridge, and the party cannot cross the gorge, they must add two days (or one day, with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check) to their trip.

Areas of Note

The following areas are of note:

T1. Gatehouse Portcullis

Per the *Companion*, the portcullis is mangled and does not magically open for whomever attempts to cross. Instead, it is considered a 5-foot-square of difficult terrain for creatures of Medium or larger size, who must squeeze through. Creatures that do not move slowly beneath it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 slashing damage.

T2. Demon Statues

Consider replacing the **vrocks** with **gargoyles**, given the increased difficulty of this chapter.

T3. Curtain of Green Flame

The Gauntlet of Mount Ghakis

Per the *Companion*, the curtain of flame is a defensive measure raised by the Snow Maidens. If Kasimir Velikov is present, he casts dispel magic on the curtain of flame. Further, the curtain does not harm agents truly loyal to Strahd.

T4. Guard Tower, Ground Floor

A creature with levels in the wizard, sorcerer, or warlock class (or a **mage** like Kasimir Velikov) can instinctively sense something amiss in this area. A detect magic spell reveals that the room is soaked in conjuration magic. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) suggests that this place is a frequent teleportation destination.

T8. Stone Bridge

The Redemption of Godfrey

If you include Sir Godfrey in this chapter, *he* is the rider seen on the bridge. Instead of viewing this image while approaching the bridge, one adventurer sees the rider when they glance over their shoulder, whilst on a ledge overlooking the Tsolenka Bridge that took many miles and hours to reach.



Chapter X: The Ruins of Berez

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 193
Chapter Progression 193
Quick Notes 193
Running the Chapter 194
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 194
Dramatis Personae 194
Variants & Revisions 196
Ending the Cycle 196
I. Ghost Town 196
II. Confronting the Past 197
III. A Mother Scorned 198
Approaching the Ruins 200
Areas of Note 201
U1. Abandoned Cottages 201
U2. Ulrich Mansion 201
U3. Baba Lysaga's Hut 201
U5. Marina's Monument 201

In the ruins of Berez, the past is very much alive, even if its residents died over three centuries ago. The drowned village is a testament to Strahd's wrath; to reveal Barovian history to the players, the *Companion* makes Berez into a literal ghost town.

Berez was but a humble village unfortunate to birth the first reincarnation of Tatyana's soul, now housed in a peasant girl named Marina. As shown in the novel *I, Strahd: The Memoirs of a Vampire,* Strahd saw the opportunity to at last win Tatyana without the meddlesome love of his brother Sergei. He cradled, for the first time since her death and his ascension to vampiredom, a spark of hope. And when that hope was snuffed out by the actions of men, Strahd sealed himself away to darkness. This story is at the heart of Berez and must be learned of by the players–not simply told by Burgomaster Ulrich, who slew Marina before Strahd could take her blood and damn her soul. Alas, Strahd is the Ancient and Strahd is the Land. When, in his rage, Strahd drowned Berez, he exercised his first true command over Barovia–becoming, as the cultists of Death House chant, "the Land." He swelled the river and flooded Berez, killing its inhabitants.

Ending the Cycle. In *Curse of Strahd*, only Burgomaster LazloUlrich languishes here as a ghost; the *Companion* extends that horrid fate to all of Berez' last inhabitants, sans Tatyana. A literal ghost town, the Berezites repeat the last day of their lives: performing mundane chores, shopping at the market, fishing from the river. Only Ulrich is aware the village is trapped in a Groundhog's Day-esque cycle.

Any objects and buildings the ghosts interact with, such as their homes or market stalls, are misty setpieces (i.e., misty walls on the very real foundation of a destroyed cottage). Because Ireena Kolyana yet lives, Tatyana's soul cannot play a part in this cycle; instead, Marina is represented by a misty silhouette. Strahd's part in this tragedy is represented by "the Shadow of Strahd," an echo, a construct forged by the Dark Powers to torment the dead each night. If destroyed by the adventurers, the ghosts of Berez find rest. Unfortunately, Baba Lysaga will not allow that to pass. This witch haunts Berez. The midwife that delivered him into this world, Lysaga believes herself to be Strahd's true mother, and even performed profane rituals at his cribside to imbue Strahd with the spark of magic. Alas, she does not dare confront him; his rejection would shatter her. And so, Lysaga treats the Shadow of Strahd as her son. That its existence prevents the ghosts of Berez from finding rest (or whatever passes for it in Baroia) matters little to her. For Lysaga, every day is Mother's Day.

As midnight draws near, the Shadow of Strahd begins to stalk the ragged streets of Berez until it comes upon Marina's bedroom, floating outside her window. When the ghosts of Brother Grigor and Burgomaster Ulrich slay Marina, the Shadow of Strahd floods the Ruins of Berez with choking mists that strikes at the party's very souls.

Ireena Kolyana. If Ireena is present, just about everything goes out the window. Baba Lysaga immediately recognizes Ireena as the reincarnation of Tatyana and becomes hellbent on delivering her to Strahd to win over his love. See the *Ireena Kolyana* variant for details.



Chapter Overview

Without the *Companion's Ending the Cycle* storyline, this chapter is largely exploratory in nature. The adventurers might even come here as a mistake, though if they know they must find the Amber Temple, you could conceive of another path to Mount Ghakis that goes through Berez; this might allow them to skip Tsolenka Pass entirely, at the cost of crossing paths with Baba Lysaga.

Chapter Progression

Without *Ending the Cycle*, Baba Lysaga becomes the focal point of this chapter.

Act I spans the initial exploration of Berez, likely in the day, when Baba Lysaga is asleep. The adventurers will meet Burgomaster Lazlo Ulrich and sight the monument to Marina, which bears an undeniable resemblance to Ireena Kolyana, suggesting she is a reincarnation.

Act II begins at dusk, when Baba Lysaga wakes and investigates reports from her simple-minded constructs that newcomers were seen in Berez today.

In Act III, Lysaga is on the warpath. If *Ending the Cycle* is run, she begins a ritual similar to the *tsunami* spell to drown Berez in her own grief and rage over the Shadow of Strahd's death.

In the Aftermath, Berez sleeps easy if Baba Lysaga is destroyed. The ghost of Lazlo Ulrich thanks the party.

Quick Notes

- Berez was destroyed approximately 300 years ago, in Y400~, when Strahd discovered Tatyana had been reborn as a peasant girl named Marina. To save her soul, the burgomaster and a rancid priest named Brother Grigor murdered her. In his grief and rage, Strahd flooded the village.
- **Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut** is powered by a Wizard of Wines gemstone, which, if removed from the hut's guts, disables the construct. The rules for disabling the hut are found in its statistics in *Curse of Strahd*, but to summarize: the gem is beneath the hut's floorboards, which must be ripped away with either a successful DC 14 Strength check or by 10 damage. If the hut is alive, the cavity housing the gem sprouts wooden teeth and bites the would-be thief, requiring a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, dealing 3d6 piercing damage on a failure, and no damage on a success. A creature that fails this saving throw fails to retrieve the gem.
- At Area U5 stands a monument to Marina, which bears a striking and undeniable resemblance to Ireena Kolyana, all but confirming her to be a reincarnation of Tatyana.
- Per *Ending the Cycle*, Berez is populated by harmless spirits; only Burgomaster Lazo Ulrich has statistics (a **ghost**). Only Ulrich can remember the past or acknowledge the adventurers. If other spirits are attacked, they fade away and return the next night.

- Muriel Vinshaw, a **wereraven** agent of the Keepers of the Feather, can be met in Area U6 to shed light on Berez and Baba Lysaga—or she's a raven Lysaga has captured and caged. See the *Vinshaw Captured* variant.
- There is a *spell scroll of revivify* in Baba Lysaga's hut, likely written into the adventure because Lysaga is such a powerful witch.

Checklist

- Review the rules on Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut: the rules governing how to retrieve the gem are outlined above, but also found in its description in Appendix D of *Curse of Strahd*—not in its description in Area U3.
- Review Baba Lysaga's spells, as she's entirely a spellcaster.

Running the Chapter

The chapter should feel sticky and suffocating as the adventurers explore the drowned, fly-infested marshland. Remind them periodically of the constant buzzing made by the clouds of flies and the frequent attacks by mosquitoes. With Lysaga's scarecrows watching, also tell the adventurers that they cannot help but feel as if they're being watched—but when they peer out into the mists, they find nothing and no one.

Baba Lysaga. With Baba Lysaga, it's not a question of whether she'll win, but a question of how much damage she'll do on her way out. Lysaga is a glass cannon capable of 8th-level spells. A *finger of death* on the next turn will likely see one adventurer dead, zombified, and ineligible for resurrection. You as the Dungeon Master must decide on what *you* want out of this villain and chapter. Do you commit yourself to fully roleplaying Lysaga, even if it results in the death of a player character so late into the adventure? Do you instead accept that Lysaga will do great harm on her way out, permanently crippling or scarring an adventurer? The worst choice you can make as a Dungeon Master here is choosing neither; you cannot play Baba Lysaga without teeth. She must either scar the party permanently or be roleplayed to the best of her ability, which all but guarantees a dead player character.

- If you go for blood, Baba Lysaga's ultimate spell is *finger of death*. Baba Lysaga would first soften the target up with *blight* or *fireball* and follow with *finger of death* to permanently turn the character into a zombie.
- If you choose to scar the party, the best way is with a *geas* spell with the instructions of "Love and loyally serve Strahd and slaughter his enemies on sight." (Such an instruction is not suicidal for the adventurer's companions might offer mercy so don't let a player try to worm their way out of this; this is *Curse of Strahd*.) Because *geas* has a duration of 30 days–and does not require concentration to maintain–the spell persists whether Lysaga is alive or not. With one failed saving throw, a player character might be forcefully set against the party for the next month, taking them out from the party until the duration is up, or a *remove curse, greater restoration*, or *wish* spell is cast upon the target. Creative players might temporarily blind the target instead.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *+1 Sling Bullets* (U3)
- *Amulet of Health* (U3)
- *Oil of Sharpness* (U3)
- *Pipes of Haunting* (U3)
- *Spell Scroll of Mass Cure Wounds* (U3)
- *Spell Scroll of Revivify* (U3)
- *Stone of Good Luck* (U3)

Creatures

- Baba Lysaga
- Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut
- Ghost
- Giant Poisonous Snake
- Goat
- Scarecrow
- Shadow of Strahd
- Specter
- Swarm of Poisonous Snakes
- Swarm of Ravens
- Swarm of Wasps
- Wereraven

Effects

- *Glyph of Warding*
- *Tsunami*

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Baba Lysaga

Central to Berez, Lysaga is a living piece of history and a merciless antagonist. The adventurers must avoid alerting her to their presence. The witch possesses one of the three gemstones that gave vitality to the Wizard of Wines, and is at war with the wereravens. If Ireena is present, Lysaga recognizes her as Tatyana reborn, and will not stop until she has delivered Ireena to Strahd in some mad bid to at last win his love.

Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut

Built upon the stump of a felled, great tree, Lysaga's Creeping Hut is both an enemy and a set piece. It is easily one of the most memorable characters of *Curse of Strahd* without even having any lines. You're doing yourself a disservice if you do not include it in the chapter. Even if Lysaga gets caught outside her hut, you should run a "cutscene" where a great upheaval is heard in the distance as the hut uproots itself, the ground begins to shake, and its roots creep out from the mist to assail the adventurers and snatch away Baba Lysaga.

Revision. Though the adventurers are unlikely to learn or care, consider changing it so that the great tree Lysaga felled was a treant instead. A druid can converse with the stump, learning it is a tortured creature bent to Lysaga's will, kept alive only by the gemstone in its heart.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Baba Lysaga	Unique	H	U3	Strahd's witch-midwife.
Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut	Unique	H	U3	Lysaga's mobile, malicious home.
Brother Grigor	—	—	U2	A priest that slew Marina to save her soul.
Lazlo Ulrich	**Ghost**	F	U2	A ghost unable to find rest.
Marina	—	—	U2	The first reincarnation of Tatyana.
Muriel Vinshaw	**Wereraven**	F	U6	A wereraven agent of the Keepers of the Feather.
Shadow of Strahd	Unique	H	U2	The living echo of Strahd's grief and rage.

Brother Grigor

Brother Grigor is a filthy but devout holy man that frequented the village of Berez. Strahd himself met him under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, and was repulsed by Grigor's odor and state. In *I, Strahd: The Memoirs of a Vampire*, Strahd charmed Grigor with his vampiric gaze and compelled the holy man to leave Berez behind, adding, at the last second, to "bathe daily." *Curse of Strahd* has retconned this fate for Grigor, instead having him die by Strahd's hand immediately after the murder of Marina.

Lazlo Ulrich

Burgomaster Lazlo Ulrich is the only Berezite ghost aware of the Groundhogs Day-esque cycle the village is trapped in. Daily he finds himself having the same conversation. If he attempts to stray from history, the Dark Powers force him to obey the chronology of his last day alive, meeting with other ghosts like Brother Grigor. He openly explains Berez's history and Baba Lysaga's presence. Pointedly, however, he does not know that Marina is Tatyana reborn or that Ireena is her latest reincarnation. If Ireena is present, however, Ulrich gasps and says, "Is that you, Marina?"

Marina

Marina was the first reincarnation of Tatyana Federovna after her death at Castle Ravenloft. Strahd chanced upon her while bookshopping in Berez under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, approximately twenty years into undeath. Strahd courted her at night, as he did with Ireena Kolyana, and it was only the murderous intervention of Burgomaster Ulrich and Brother Grigor that her soul was not damned for all eternity as a vampire thrall.

Marina's spirit is not present during *Ending the Cycle*, for it is still in use by Ireena Kolyana. Instead, an echo (much like the Shadow of Strahd) represents her part in the massacre in the form of a misty silhouette with no distinguishable features. This is so the adventurers do not see her as a twin of Ireena yet–the monument to her memory built by Strahd in Area U5 proves that.

Muriel Vinshaw

Muriel Vinshaw, a wereraven, is an agent of the Keepers of the Feather that can (per the *Companion's* many storylines) be repeatedly met throughout the adventure. In this chapter, she lurks at the menhirs of Area U6 and can explain that Baba Lysaga has declared war on the Keepers of the Feather. Per the *Vinshaw Captured* variant, she was taken by Baba Lysaga whilst in her raven form and stuffed into one of the cages hanging off Lysaga's hut. It falls to the adventurers to save her.

The Shadow of Strahd

A construct conceived of by the Dark Powers, the Shadow of Strahd is a figure of shadowy mists meant to torment the ghosts trapped in the Berezite cycle. At midnight, it manifests on the northern outskirts of Berez, where Baba Lysaga meets it to prattle on as if the construct were indeed Strahd. It pays her no heed and continues its long routine of visiting the Ulrich Manor just to have Tatyana ripped away again. In its anguish, it conjures a flood of mist that "kills" the Berezite ghosts and washes away their misty homes, leaving only the ruined foundations behind.

The Shadow has no discernible features, only the silhouette of Strahd. It cannot speak, except for repeating the words the true Strahd spoke centuries ago, as described in *Ending the Cycle*. It follows its programming the best it can, but *will* defend itself. If there is an opportunity to slip away from its attackers and continue to the Ulrich Manor, the Shadow takes it; it has no thirst for vengeance, only for Marina.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- If you do not wish to run *Ending the Cycle* you may still stock Berez with undead like nonhostile **skeletons** that complete strange tasks, like folding tattered laundry, push wheelbarrows, and water pots of weeds.
- Lysaga's hut is warded with an *alarm* spell that wakes and alerts her when someone enters her home uninvited.
- The Wizard of Wines gemstone functions as an *amulet of health* if it is touching the wearer's skin.

Ireena Kolyana

If the adventurers were foolish enough to bring Ireena Kolyana to Berez, this entire chapter is turned on its head. Baba Lysaga recognizes Ireena as the reincarnation of Tatyana immediately, and also recognizes this as the only chance she will have to win over Strahd's love and be accepted as his true mother. Lysaga becomes hellbent on capturing Ireena and taking her to Castle Ravenloft, relying on her scarecrows (and possibly a *polymorph* spell) to apprehend her. If apprehended, Ireena is held prisoner in Lysaga's hut, or, even better—if you allow Lysaga to bypass the normal rules of *polymorph*—turned into a dove and kept in one of the cages outside Lysaga's hut.

At dawn, Lysaga will venture to Ravenloft in her flying skull, with Ireena in tow as a dove trapped in a gilded cage. If you remove her flying skull (per the variant below), Lysaga uproots her hut and slowly travels by land, giving you a far more cinematic rescue opportunity—the adventurers clambering up the creeping hut's roots to storm Lysaga as she hurls spells from her porch.

The Skull Removed

Baba Lysaga has made the skull of a hill giant into a flying mount. Frankly, it's ridiculous, and makes any battle with her all the harder. According to *Curse of Strahd*, only she can command it to fly, so the adventurers would have to eavesdrop on it or cast identify to learn its command word—which really means you've given your party the ability to fly, which invalidates almost all the danger in *Curse of Strahd*, leaving you with only the witches astride broomsticks from Castle Ravenloft, swarms of bats, and Strahd on Beucephalus to attack the party from here on out.

It's far simpler to remove the flying skull, which the *Companion* does. For those using the Berez map included in *Curse of Strahd*, leave the skull there; it's merely a nonmagical trophy of Baba Lysaga's.

Vinshaw Captured

Muriel Vinshaw, the wereraven, can be met in Area U6 to shed light on Berez and Baba Lysaga's war against the Keepers of the Feather. This variant instead has her already captured by Lysaga and, in the form of a raven, stuffed into one of the cages outside her hut. Trapped in such a small cage, Muriel cannot revert to her true form. It falls to the adventurers to rescue her. The ghost of Lazlo Ulrich in Area U3 can inform the adventurers of Muriel's plight.

Ending the Cycle

The Berezite ghosts are trapped in an endless cycle of destruction, forced to relive their last day alive before succumbing to Strahd's wrath. These spirits cannot find rest so long as the Shadow of Strahd persists; if the adventurers wish to free the Berezites, they must destroy the Shadow, which drives Baba Lysaga into a murderous, grief-induced rage.

The Shadow of Strahd materializes in the northern outskirts of Berez at midnight where Baba Lysaga meets it to prattle on as if it were truly Strahd. Until then, it is up to the adventurers to hide from Lysaga's scarecrows and her arcane eye-like construct. Once the Shadow reaches the Ulrich Mansion (Area U3), history replays itself: just as the Shadow is about to bite the silhouette of Marina, Ulrich and Brother Grigor burst in and murder her. The Shadow cries out in grief, rousing a great flood of mist that destroys the village until dawn, when the ghosts wake again to start their cycle anew.

Aslumber. Lysaga sleeps during the day unless woken by her scarecrows, a loud noise, or an intruder walking into her hut, which she has warded with an *alarm* spell.

The Skull Removed. This storyline incorporates the *The Skull Removed* variant, which removes Lysaga's giant flying skull, because it's frankly ridiculous and difficult to balance a battle with her riding around in it.

I. Ghost Town

Act I is exploratory in nature. The adventurers encounter the many ghosts of Berez, all milling about in their business. Few ghosts pay them any heed, and those that do urge these newcomers to declare themselves to Burgomaster Ulrich at his manor, for "we Berezites welcome newcomers but not strangers."

Read the new narration text provided in *Approaching the Ruins* below to present Berez as homes of mist and ghosts of the past.

Scarecrows. While exploring the village, the adventurers must contend with Baba Lysaga's seven scarecrows, which can't tell the difference between the living and the undead by sight alone. See *The Scarecrows* in *Approaching the Ruins* below for more information.

Groundhog Burgomaster

Like other buildings, the Ulrich Mansion is painted over with a misty illusion, depicting it not as a ruin but in its former grandeur, albeit with walls and bricks of fog. Upon the second story, which is incorporeal, Burgomaster Lazlo Ulrich is discussing what to do with Marina with Brother Grigor. Their conversation can be overheard; read the following:

The mansion before you is proud, regal, and composed almost entirely of mist. The foundation alone exists as its true form. Squinting through the fog, you can make out two figures on the second floor: a disheveled, dirty priest, and a huge, mutilated nobleman whose entrails hang like frayed robes from his open belly. Their discussion echoes out from above:

"It is as I feared, Burgomaster," says the rancid priest. "The Devil visits her nightly, knocking at her window, she says. Twice–"

"Yes, yes, I get it–" interrupts the presumable burgomaster.

The other ghost continues as if never interrupted: "and, I fear, she shall not live long after the third."

"Grigor, gods above, yes, I get it. If only I could skip through this."

Again, the priest continues, unperturbed. "We must act swiftly and–"

The burgomaster mirrors the priest's words, speaking over him: "–decisively if we are to spare her from the Devil's deprivations–jinx, Grigor! You owe me an ale!"

The priest begins with a non sequitur, clearly not hearing the burgomaster: "Prayer," the priest admits with a shrug, "shall not be enough."

The burgomaster sighs, clearly having heard it all before.

Burgomaster Ulrich is the only self-aware ghost, forced to live out his torment day after day, impotent and all-knowing. If the adventurers make their presence known, he leaves Grigor to continue talking to himself and greets the adventurers with a cringing light in his eyes, demanding, "Why do you invade my home? Begone, I beseech you!"

See *Dramatis Personae* for roleplaying Ulrich Lazlo, who is able to explain in lurid detail Berez' destruction and the infestation of Baba Lysaga. He is too kind to ask the adventurers to destroy the Shadow of Strahd, and instead advises them to leave Berez with their lives rather than risk Baba Lysaga's wrath. He also warns them to avoid the scarecrows, and that those constructs have difficulty differentiating ghosts from the living. If they insist on staying, he mentions that the Shadow will arrive exactly at midnight, along the northern outskirts of the village.

Vinshaw Captured. If you're running the *Vinshaw Captured* variant, Ulrich also notes that a visiting young woman was recently captured by Baba Lysaga and that "the witch must have cursed her into a crow and stuffed into a cage." He refers to Muriel Vinshaw, the wereraven, who, per this variant, is trapped in a cage at Area U3. Ulrich also explains that she has been torturing the woman for days, plucking feathers and drawing blood from the crow.

II. Confronting the Past

Baba Lysaga wakes at dusk and begins her night by praying loudly to Mother Night and taking a bath in goat's blood (ordinarily she waits for a new moon, which might not occur in your campaign for several weeks, and what better way to introduce her character?). Until midnight, the adventurers must hide from Baba Lysaga and her scarecrows. See *The Scarecrows* under *Approaching the Ruins* for more information.

At midnight, the Shadow of Strahd appears at the northern border of Berez. Other ghosts cry and cringe away at its approach, but do not understand why. It pays the living no heed unless attacked. Baba Lysaga goes to meet the Shadow, conversing with it as if the Shadow were sentient. If the adventurers spy from nearby, read the following:

Below cold and distant stars, the crone wanders toward the village outskirts, a lantern floating above her shoulder. Her voice is like acid. "Strahd?" she calls out. "Honey? Are you there? Strahd, dear, where are you?"

A shadowy cloud of mist–somehow blacker than the night surrounding it–creeps into the village outskirts and coalesces into the shape of a man–a shadow burning with the cold fury of dead stars. The crone's floating lantern rises, shedding light on the figure. She giggles, "Ah, there you are, dear!"

The Shadow of Strahd pays the crone no heed. It takes slow, patient steps towards the village ruins, its posture bent in excitement, in anticipation, in thirst for some greener pasture.

As Lysaga and the Shadow walk into the village, she continues to speak to Strahd about:

- The Keepers of the Feather ("Just last night I found a seventh crow and stuffed his feathers into my newest construct. May all your enemies soon taste dust and dirt, dear.")
- A witch in Castle Ravenloft, who Lysaga thinks would be a "great match" for Strahd. ("Matilda is truly wondrous woman, dear, not like that trollop Tatyana, oh no. She's no Patrina, of course, but don't *dare* hold that against her! I swear, Matilda will one day rival even my spellcraft.")
- A recent sighting of Rudolph Van Richten or Ezmerelda d'Avenir by one of Lysaga's minions. ("A crow I tortured told of a strange traveler recently, seen up near Lake Baratok…")
- A recent development related to the adventurers, such as upheaval in Vallaki, the defeat of the druids at Yester Hill, or the drama in Krezk.

The Shadow, of course, does not reply to Lysaga's news and incessant fussing. It continues to creep into the village, silent and foreboding. Lysaga retires to her hut shortly before the Shadow reaches the Ulrich Mansion (Area U2). Once there, the Shadow floats up twelve feet to hover outside Marina's bedroom window. Read the following:

> The Shadow moves towards the manor, blacker than the void between worlds. It looks upward, narrowing its nonexistent eyes. Like a spider, it crawls upward along the wall, deft and silent, to knock at a bedroom window. Moments later, the window opens, revealing a maiden made of white mist. "It's you again," she coos.
>
> "And I thirst once more," replies the Shadow, its voice as smooth and dark as the sunless sands on the ocean's floor. You hear the Shadow lick its lips. Power swells nearby and the world trembles, as if the very air you breathe is the world's skin sent crawling by that command.
>
> "Please," the maiden of mist says slowly, her voice dulled, "do come in."

The Cycle Continues. Moments after the Shadow enters Marina's bedroom, Brother Grigor bursts in to murder her with a stake and hammer. Burgomaster Lazlo Ulrich looks on embarrassedly from the doorway, impotent and resigned.

Breaking the Curse

The Shadow of Strahd can be destroyed by reducing it to 0 hit points or if it is affected by a dispel magic spell. Harming the Shadow provokes the Dark Powers' umbrage, unleashing a curse. See the Malison of the Shadowslayer sidebar for details on this curse. Once destroyed, Berez' curse is lifted quite violently. The Shadow's scream is a noise of shattered glass and rage and it echoes out across the entire village, alerting Baba Lysaga. However, if the Shadow is in an area effected by a *silence* spell, the scream is silenced, sparing the adventurers from Lysaga's wrath. She'll know by tomorrow night that the Shadow has been destroyed when it fails to appear in the outskirts, after which she'll use all her spellcraft to divine what happened and who slew her surrogate-son.

The Flood

If the Shadow of Strahd survives to witness the murder of Marina's Echo, it cries out with same the grief and fury Strahd unleashed long ago. A flood rises up from the south in a sudden tsunami of mist that crashes over Berez. If the adventurers are on the streets, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or take 11 (2d10) force damage as the flood crashes over the village, leaving the adventurers wet and frigid and their souls aching. Its work complete, the Shadow of Strahd soon dissipates after eighteen seconds (three rounds). If the adventurers do not destroy it in that time, it will return again tomorrow night to start the cycle anew.

Malison of the Shadowslayer

Whomever personally destroys the Shadow of Strahd (either by reducing it to 0 hit points or casting dispel magic on it) suffers this malison—a greater curse that cannot be removed by a remove curse spell, only suppressed until dusk. This malison can only be permanently removed by the deity Mother Night or her disciple, Madam Eva; a Barovian witch; the hags of Old Bonegrinder; Baba Lysaga; or by touching the Icon of Ravenloft magic item found in Castle Ravenloft, Area K15.

The cursebearer loses their shadow, which becomes a shadow controlled by the DM and the Dark Powers. At night, the shadow wakens. It knows the exact distance and direction to its owner and harasses them at night. If destroyed, the shadow coalesces again the next night within 1 mile of the cursebearer. To enter a brightly lit area, the shadow must first succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw; on a failure, it must wait another night.

Without their shadow, sunlight is painful to the cursebearer, who also gains the Sunlight Sensitivity trait: while in sunlight, the cursebearer has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

III. A Mother Scorned

Unless great pains are made to silence the Shadow of Strahd, Baba Lysaga immediately knows her surrogate son has been destroyed. Just as Strahd himself did so years ago in his own grief and rage, Baba Lysaga intends to wipe away the ruins of Berez with a flood of her own making. First, she uproots her creeping hut so that it stands far above the waterline. Next, she conducts a ritual that draws upon the Wizard of Wines winery gem's power to tap into the land, allowing her to cast a spell similar to *tsunami* (see Appendix C) but with reduced height and damage: the wall of water is only 50 feet high and deals only 1d10 bludgeoning damage to creatures, but the force of it is enough to wipe away the last evidence that Berez ever even existed. The water conspicuously builds up on the south side of town in a suspended, frothing wave, growing in size and power with every passing minute (and amassing 50 more feet of water and 1d10 damage). This gives the party the time to flee or take the fight to Lysaga in her hut.

The Stage. **Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut** is on the move, and the adventurers must climb up its 15-foot-long roots, which count as difficult terrain. Once per round, the hut can attempt to shake off creatures clambering onto it by subjecting them to a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature falls off and lands prone at a space within 10 feet.

Tactics. Review the Baba Lysaga section of *Running the Chapter* above; you must decide whether you're roleplaying Baba Lysaga with the intent to kill or scar the party, as it influences her tactics. Don't cast *finger of death* unless you're prepared to permanently zombify a player character. She follows these tactics in battle:

- If Lysaga is out for blood, she casts fireball at 6th-level on her first turn to soften up the party, and follows up with *finger of death* next on the most injured enemy.
- If Lysaga is out to scar the party, she casts *geas* on her first turn, instructing the enemy to "Love and loyally serve Strahd and slaughter his enemies on sight." If the target falls prey to the spell and does not immediately attack their companions, they take 5d10 psychic damage.
- Baba Lysaga prioritizes killing healers and spellcasters first with spells of *blight*, knowing that a *power word stun* or *polymorph* spell will probably disable a warrior.
- If the adventurers are forcing their way into her hut, she casts *Evard's black tentacles* on her porch.

Minions. Unless surprised, Baba Lysaga has no shortage of minions to draw upon with even just six seconds of preparation:

- At a minimum, Lysaga should have already used her Summon Swarms of Insects ability just prior to combat to surround herself with 1d4 **swarms of wasps** (not **swarms of insects**).
- If Lysaga has a few minutes to recall her **scarecrows**, she stations them on her porch and in the interior, and perhaps even uses them to blockade the door.
- If Lysaga is in dire need of minions and your party is moderately healthy, she might conjure and bind the **ghost** of Lazlo Ulrich and the **specter** of Brother Grigor to her will.

The Nursery

When Baba Lysaga is reduced to 80 hit points or fewer, she screeches in maddened agony. The ghostly illusion depicting a vibrant and living Berez instead vanishes; the world around the adventurers shifts to emulate the very nursery that Baba Lysaga tended Strahd in. This living memory plays out before the adventurers before combat continues. Read the following:

> With an anguished cry, Baba Lysaga rips away the world as you know it, replacing it with an illusion. All at once, she disappears, and you find yourselves in a cramped nursery with stone walls and a burning hearth. The embers are faint, the coals low. Outside, a storm rages. A misty silhouette leans over a crib in which a toddler laughs and giggles. The silhouette is of a woman–Baba Lysaga, no doubt, and the toddler an echo of Strahd von Zarovich.
>
> While baby Strahd coos and giggles, unaware of his bloody destiny, Baba Lysaga's echo performs a ritual, her hands aglow, her brow furrowed, her hair ragged and sweaty as lights lace over Strahd.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check confirms that Baba Lysaga is placing protective spells over Strahd, but cannot confirm if they had any true effect on his health or life… until little Strahd giggles, and the coals in the hearth explode with newfound fire. Baba Lysaga's echo praises him, shouting, "Yes, baby! Like that! May the world burn for you and you alone!"

Once this plays out, Baba Lysaga appears near the adventurers, still the same distance she was before the illusion painted over the world, and snarls "I've given him everything and more! More than his wretched mother ever could!" The battle then resumes.

The Altar

When Baba Lysaga is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, the illusion shifts again, painting the nearby world as a mildewy cave. There, under dripping stalactites, a misty silhouette of Baba Lysaga prays before a gruesome altar dedicated to Mother Night. Read the following:

> In a dark, wet cave the misty memory of Baba Lysaga kneels before a grisly altar decorated with the corpses of two young men, their throats slit and their entrails dangling.
>
> "Mother Night, I come to you humble and desperate," Lysaga whispers, her voice bouncing off the cold stone, echoing "humble and desperate, humble and desperate."
>
> "I am your faithful servant."
>
> "Servant," echo the stones.
>
> "Vex Ravenia. Free my child of that rapacious mother. I pray for illness. I pray for misery. I pray for death. She does not deserve love."
>
> "Love," intone the stones. "Love, love, love, love…"
>
> "Take from her the vitality she does not deserve… I will be his true mother, long-lived, ancient, always looking after him. Please, goddess, from mother to another… There is no price I will not pay, no sacrifice…"
>
> "Sacrifice," the stones repeat, suddenly sharp and hungry. You watch as Baba Lysaga draws a knife and brings it to her lower abdomen–as if to cut out her womb, and offer it to Mother Night.

If the adventurers have been to the Werewolf Den, they recognize it as the very same cave where the werewolves have set up their own grisly altar to Mother Night.

Like before, Baba Lysaga materializes near the adventurers in the same space she previously occupied once this cutscene is over. She cackles, "Long life, Mother Night gave me! Long life your blood will sustain!" before attacking again.

When Baba Lysaga is reduced to 0 hit points, her illusion shatters, revealing Berez again. Her dying words are, "All I have done was… for him…" When she dies, she rapidly crumbles into dust as the many years catch up to her.

Approaching the Ruins

The Village of Berez deserves to be more than a handful of cottages; to expand on the village, and showcase its ghosts, the *Companion* overhauls the approach to the ruins. Read the narration text provided in *Curse of Strahd* but as the adventurers go further south, add the following:

> The farther south you venture, the more the ruins seem to crowd your vision. Cottages loom out from the mist, far cleaner than the rotten abodes you've encountered in the north. Laundry hangs from lines, still drying. A wheelbarrow of apples lies nearby. It's as if the village is simply abandoned in the middle of the day.
>
> A figure lurches out of the mist–a child running after a small, leather ball bouncing across the road. The little boy does not pause to gawk at you, but instead shouts, "I've got it! I've got it!" in a heavy but high-pitched Barovian accent. You look to your right–the mists part, revealing a handful of children amidst some sort of game using potato sacks and leather balls. They too do not seem to notice you.
>
> As you sweep your gaze across the marsh, you now notice more and more figures, villagers all consumed with their daily lives. Vibrant, alive, and ignorant to your presence.

A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check confirms that these are all ghosts–and probably harmless–and their collective presence is causing the environment to reflect the past. The cottages are still ruined, the objects immaterial, but the ghosts' activities paint over these ruins.
As the adventurers continue on, describe what the ghosts are up to. You may roll on the *Lives of Yesteryear* table for inspiration.

Lives of Yesteryear

d12	Activity
1	A woman hanging up laundry.
2	Three children playing tag.
3	A man that looks suspiciously like Gadof Blinsky making toys at a workbench.
4	Two old men smoking on a bench.
5	A pair of women walking down the misty road, holding hands before the taller one snatches a kiss from her lover and departs.
6	A father patiently teaching his son how to skin a deer.
7	A handful of patrons on the porch of a bar playing cards.
8	A priest preaching the virtues of leeks and celibacy, and warning if the village does not change its way, a great flood will "come to wash away our sins."
9	A constable investigating a broken window.
10	A dog nursing six puppies.
11	A mule kicking a teenager dumb enough to harass it.
12	A villager arguing with a fishmonger over the price of his fish until the fishmonger slaps the man with a trout.

The Scarecrows

Baba Lysaga has stationed seven **scarecrows** throughout Berez. When she wakes at dusk, these minions report whether any intruders were in Berez today through a simple, one-way telepathic conversation that must occur within 10 feet of her. (If the adventurers are eavesdropping, they might hear her say, "What is it now? Hmm? Intruders in the village? Delightful!").

Ending the Cycle. If you run *Ending the Cycle*, these simple constructs struggle with differentiating ghosts from the living. Once whilst the adventurers are roaming the village, a scarecrow creeps closer through the mist to inspect them. It is cunning enough to move only when no one is looking at it. To ascertain that it has moved, a creature must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check or a DC 15 Dexterity (Perception) check.

The scarecrows understand that ghosts are incorporeal, and check whether the adventurers are solid. If the scarecrow gets within 30 feet, it attacks. Thanks to its False Appearance trait, it surprises the adventurers. If it cannot make physical contact with an adventurer within 1 round (i.e., it misses with all its attacks and all attacks made against it miss), it assumes the adventurers are ghosts and stalks away.

Later, another scarecrow tosses a rock at an adventurer (making a +3 ranged attack with disadvantage); on a hit, it sees that the adventurer is solid and not a ghost. It then lurches away.

Lysaga's Lazy Vivil

When Baba Lysaga wakes at dusk, her scarecrows report that they have seen intruders (or new faces amongst the ghosts today) in their own simple, telepathic way. Ever paranoid, she uses a spell similar to *arcane eye* to find these intruders (see below).

Ending the Cycle. "New faces among the ghosts" is an oft-repeated claim made by Lysaga's simple constructs, who aren't intelligent enough to keep an accurate catalog of faces. Lysaga half-heartedly investigates the claim.

Lysaga's Eye. Baba Lysaga casts a spell similar to arcane eye to look for the adventurers, who must hide from this sensor as it lazily looks throughout the ruins. Like an arcane eye spell, it has normal vision and darkvision out to a range of 30 feet. Contest **Baba Lysaga's** Wisdom (Perception) checks (she has a +3 bonus) against the adventurers' Dexterity (Stealth) checks if the eye comes into view; it can see in all directions. Casting dispel magic on it instead blinds the eye-construct without alerting Lysaga; if she peers through it, it shows the world without showing living creatures.

If Lysaga detects the adventurers, she sends a **scarecrow** and speaks through it—all while mustering her forces and preparing for an attack. See *A Mother Scorned* for details on Lysaga's tactics.

Areas of Note

The following areas are touched on by the *Companion*:

U1. Abandoned Cottages

Ending the Cycle

The cottages are two-parts: the very real, ruined foundations, and the walls and roofs of mist that continue onward from that base. Ghosts congregate in this area. Continue rolling on the *Lives of Yesteryear* table at your discretion.

U2. Ulrich Mansion

The Skull Removed

If you remove Baba Lysaga's flying skull, there is a gate in this fence.

U3. Baba Lysaga's Hut

If the adventurers creep up to Baba Lysaga's hut while she's awake, they can peer through the small windows or through cracks in the ramshackle walls and witness her playing with "baby Strahd" in his crib. Read the following after describing the hut interior:

> The hut is clearly lit by magic, golden and green. You watch with rapt attention as the wizened crone approaches the crib and conjures a crib mobile of bats, which levitates above. The lintel is carved with "Is No Fun, Is No Blinsky!"
>
> The crone produces a doll with a shrunken head–a real shrunken head attached to a wooden body–and coos, "Hi, Strahd! Look who Mama has!" She shakes the doll. "It's Randal Ghast! Say hi, Randal!" Then, by magic, the crone speaks in a brusque, man's voice, "Hello, Strahd! Have you fed today? Mama Lysaga has blood for you! Yes she does! She has my blood! Does Mama Ravenia give you blood? No! No, she doesn't! Mama Lysaga loves you more than she ever could!"

Randal Ghast is the name of an adventurer the adventurers might know long ago from their past, who went missing years and years ago. If you'd like to show that Baby Strahd is an illusion, add the following:

> As you watch, the crone's hand begins to tremble–a violent spasm that rocks up her arm. The doll falls from her grasp and lands on the angelic child, passing through him and the crib as if he were not solid. The baby and the crib are illusions both.

Toys, Toys, Toys. Over the years, Baba Lysaga has amassed several ghastly toys for the illusory Strahd. All of them are from Gadof Blinsky's shop in Vallaki. Baba Lysaga, it seems, has been keeping Blinsky afloat for years and is, in fact, his biggest customer.

Revision. Baba Lysaga has warded her hut with an audible *alarm* spell that wakes her if someone enters uninvited. If alerted, she attacks. See *Ending the Cycle* for Lysaga's tactics.

Vinshaw Captured

Muriel Vinshaw is trapped in the left hand cage with a **swarm of ravens**, herself in her raven form. When the adventurers approach, Muriel scrambles for a piece of tattered blue cloth (the remains of her cloak), holding it in her beak so that the adventurers might identify her. If her cage is unlocked, the ravens burst out with enough noise to alert Baba Lysaga.

U5. Marina's Monument

If the adventurers were foolish enough to bring Ireena Kolyana to Berez, she inevitably gravitates to this monument, just as she does to the pool at the Shrine of the White Sun in Krezk.

Revision. If you *really* need to drill it into your players' heads that Ireena Kolyana is the reincarnation of Tatyana, replace the epitaph with the one below. It eschews all but the barest subtlety to clue the adventurers in.

> MARINA
>
> The Rose of Berez
>
> Once Tatyana
>
> The Rose of Ravenloft Taken by the Mists
>
> May She Flower Again
>
> In Loving Soil Soon

Fortunes of Ravenloft

Revision. If the adventurers disturb the monument, undead rise. These seven undead should have the statistics of **zombies**, not commoners. They still each expel a swarm of poisonous snakes when killed.

A battle with seven **zombies** and seven **swarms of poisonous snakes** can be lengthy and boring. Consider giving each creature only 1 hit point to speed up combat.





Chapter XI: Van Richten's Tower

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 203
Chapter Progression 203
Quick Notes 203
Running the Chapter 204
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 204
Dramatis Personae 204
Variants & Revisions 206
The Shadow of Khazan 207
I. A Gift from the Dark 207
II. Khazan Unleashed 208
III. Aftermath 211
Areas of the Tower 212
V1. Ezmerelda's Magic Wagon 212
V2. Tower Door 212
V3. Rickety Scaffolding 213
V4. Tower, First Floor 213
V5. Tower, Second Floor 213
V6. Tower, Third Floor 214
V7. Tower, Fourth Floor 215
Special Events 215
Battered by the Winds of Fate 215
In the Wake of Defeat 216

Van Richten's Tower (hereafter "the Tower of Khazan" as it should have been named) is an opportunity to delve into Barovia's secrets. The tower, built and inhabited by the mysterious wizard Khazan, can also be taken as a base of operations by the adventurers. This chapter of the *Companion* is devoted to fleshing out the tower, improving its wards, and adding an actual story to it, all without bloating the chapter. This is largely achieved through a simple change: Khazan is dead but not gone; trapped in a shadowy realm, the undead wizard hungers to escape but can only do so by mortal recklessness.

Chapter Overview

The Tower of Khazan was once the sanctum of Barovia's foremost wizard, Khazan. Khazan, according to *Curse of Strahd*, perished in his attempts to project his spirit beyond Barovia… but not after plumbing the secrets of the Amber Temple and achieving lichdom. Given that Khazan did not maintain a workshop or sanctum in the Amber Temple, or have a wing of Castle Ravenloft to call his own, it can be assumed most of his research was performed here in the tower—a tower left barren by *Curse of Strahd* when *something* should remain. Little, however, remains of this crumbling lair. What has not been sanded off by years of neglect was already taken by Rudolph van Richten.

Van Richten inhabited the tower for several months before moving onto Vallaki for undisclosed reasons. The *Companion* provides a reason: Van Richten detected Khazan's trapped spirit and, failing to safely destroy or banish the wizard, left. In his wake came Ezmerelda d'Avenir, his wayward protegé. She is currently absent when the adventurers first arrive, giving them the opportunity to take the tower as their base of operations—and what a wonderful base it can be. With Khazan's Spell Drain, the adventurers cannot be scried upon by Strahd. For the sake of the campaign, assume that even almighty Strahd is unaware of the Spell Drain and is puzzled as to why he can no longer spy on the adventurers from afar. In this, the Tower of Khazan becomes the only true haven in Barovia… unless Strahd or his minions later discover their whereabouts.

Without the *Companion's* additions, the Tower of Khazan is only a place of consequence when the chapter's two special events are utilized. A wounded Ezmerelda returns from an attempt on Strahd's life during the *Ezmerelda's Retreat*, event and Kiril Stoyanovich investigates the explosion of her wagon. The *Companion* combines these events: a wounded Ezmerelda is being tracked by Kiril and his wolves.

Although the Tower of Khazan is well protected, it is not invulnerable. The wards that protect it can also spell its doom: if the trap placed upon the doorway is triggered thrice, the entire tower collapses. If Strahd ever learns of this haven and decides to siege the tower, he is apt to send a minion to bring the tower down, regardless if his playthings are inside it or out. In this regard, even a minion as brainless as a zombie can be used to topple the tower.

Chapter Progression

Unlike other chapters, the Tower of Khazan does not have a story progression. It is not, however, diminished for it. When running this chapter, simply space events out to allow the adventurers to breathe. Ezmerelda's return can occur whenever is appropriate in the campaign.

Quick Notes

- The tower is warded with a permanent *antimagic field* spell known as Khazan's Spell Drain. Magical functions of the tower bypass this ward, but the adventurers and other creatures are restricted by it.
- Because of Khazan's Spell Drain, Strahd cannot spy upon the adventurers through magical means while they are in the tower, making this a haven for secrecy. For the sake of fairness, assume Strahd does not know about the spell drain; never interested in Khazan's trash, the vampire never bothered to investigate his crumbling abode. Thus, Strahd does not automatically understand that his scrying spells are failing because the adventurers are in the Tower of Khazan.
- The doorway to Khazan's tower is trapped. If triggered, it summons a **young blue dragon** (replaced by various undead by the *Companion*). Triggering the trap thrice causes the tower to collapse.
- Prepare elevator music for when the adventurers ascend or descend the tower.
- The weather is always fair around the Tower of Khazan, thanks to a permanent *control weather* spell (added by the *Companion*).
- Ezmerelda's wagon is the possible source of a TPK—total-party-kill—if her trap is triggered. The trap alerts werewolves, led by Kiril Stoyanovich, who come to investigate.
- If the adventurers never break into Ezmerelda's wagon, move the page from Van Richten's journal to Area V7. Discovering it should be an inevitability.
- Khazan's *staff of power* can be recovered from his crypt in Castle Ravenloft. See Chapter 4, Area K84, Crypt 15 for details.

Checklist

- Naturally inform the adventurers of the tower's true name: the Tower of Khazan.
- Ensure the adventurers find the page from Rudolph van Richten's journal in Ezmerelda's wagon (or in Area V7 if they never investigate the wagon).

Running the Chapter

This chapter is one of the easiest to run in *Curse of Strahd*; the locale is interesting and pleasantly thin. Other than Ezmerelda's trapped wagon and the **young blue dragon** summoned by Khazan's wards, there exist no snags for the Dungeon Master to worry about. Even with the *Companion*'s additions, it largely focuses on the Exploration pillar. With so few combatants to face, it becomes a refreshing episode in the campaign.

Allow the adventurers to explore—to breathe—and then slowly add in the elements described below. Once the tower is secured, encourage the players to rest. Let them root through the library, hunt for nearby game in the woods, or make plans in relative safety. Start with the first act of The *Shadow of Khazan* to get the *wand of secrets* in their hands (see below) early on. If the adventurers seem inclined to stay in the tower, or return to it, begin *In the Wake of Defeat* (which combines the *Pack Attack* and *Ezmerelda's Retreat* special events described in *Curse of Strahd*).

Time

To motivate exploration, it should be near dusk by when the adventurers reach the tower. With night falling and wolves howling in the distance, it becomes imperative to shelter inside the tower or Ezmerelda's wagon.

Weather

Per the *Companion's* revision, the weather is always warm—sometimes suffocatingly so—around the Tower of Khazan, thanks to a spell laid by the wizard centuries ago. The skies are still overcast, but the weather is otherwise pleasant.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Charlatan's Die*
- *Driftglobe*
- *Enduring Spellbook*
- *Libram of Soul and Flesh*
- *Shadowfell Shard*
- *Spell Scroll of Major Image*
- *Spell Scroll of Remove Curse*
- *Wand of Secrets*

Creatures

- Animated Armor
- Clay Golem
- Ezmerelda d'Avenir
- Ghast
- Ghoul
- Khazan
- Kiril Stoyanovich
- Riding Horse
- Shadow
- Skeleton
- Swarm of Animated Books
- Werewolf
- Wolf
- Wraith
- Young Blue Dragon
- Zombie

Effects

- Antitoxin
- Climber's Kit
- Disguise Kit
- Healer's Kit
- Holy Water
- Manacles
- Poisoner's Kit
- Spyglass

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

The Custodian

Upon the fourth floor of Khazan's tower stands an animated armor that the *Companion* names. The Custodian, as it is referred to, is an attendant left behind by Khazan. The Custodian obeys whoever first utters "Khazan." When this occurs, it animates and salutes the speaker with a thump of its metallic fist on its metallic breast. The Custodian is magically bound to the island and can't leave.

Roleplaying the Custodian. The Custodian cannot speak but can answer binary questions by saluting or by stomping its foot. It is an otherwise chatty construct that expresses itself through physical gestures—particularly shrugs, frustrated hand gestures, and "finger guns." It cups the chin of its helmet or strokes its metallic cheeks when contemplating an answer.

The construct is quite knowledgeable of its late master and is willing to share those secrets—as Khazan wishes intruders to utilize his wards and thereby set him free. Through its limited communicative abilities, the Custodian can direct the adventurers to Khazan's wards.

If asked whether its master is alive, the Custodian stomps its foot. If asked if Khazan is dead, it stomps its foot. If asked if Khazan is present right now, the Custodian turns to wherever Khazan is lurking in his shadowy realm, and stares.

The Staff of Power. The Custodian kneels before a character wielding Khazan's *staff of power* like a knight before its liege. At your discretion, the wielder of the staff has telepathy with the Custodian, allowing a full dialogue.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

Featuring Ezmerelda in this chapter is optional through the *Ezmerelda's Retreat* special event, which the *Companion* folds into its *In the Wake of Defeat* special event. The Tower of Khazan is a chance to show Ezmerelda at her lowest. It is even better if the adventurers have already met Ezmerelda in more heroic circumstances.

Normally gregarious, Ezmerelda proves laconic while wounded. Her eyes are hollow, her voice quiet, and her wounds great. She explains in as few words as possible that she infiltrated Castle Ravenloft and made a (failed) attempt on the Devil's life. Knowing of Khazan's Spell Drain, this tower is the perfect place to recover without worrying about Strahd scrying upon her.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
The Custodian	**Animated Armor**	N	V7	A servile construct that animates once Khazan's name is uttered.
Ezmerelda d'Avenir	Unique	F	SE	Vistana monster hunter and protege of Rudolph van Richten.
Jakarion	—	—	—	A wizard that recently inhabited the tower and left for the Amber Temple and will be dead by when the party reaches the temple.
Khazan	Unique	H	V7	The long-dead wizard that oversaw the construction of Castle Ravenloft and achieved lichdom only to destroy himself.
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	H	SE	The Children of Mother Night's brutal werewolf alpha.
Rudolph van Richten	Unique	F	—	Legendary monster hunter and nemesis of Strahd.
Vilnius	—	—	—	Jakarion's apprentice, to be met in the Amber Temple.
Yan the Dead	—	N	V7	A dead Vistana whose head has been magically preserved by Van Richten. Yan can be conversed with using a *speak with dead* spell.

Jakarion

The *Companion* features Jakarion in this chapter by revising the Tower's history. Determined to uncover Khazan's secrets, Jakarion stayed here long before Van Richten arrived. He has since left on an expedition to the Amber Temple. Evidence of his stay can be found in tower, hinting at future quests.

Khazan

Per the *Companion*, Khazan wasn't destroyed in his attempt to achieve demilichdom, but was reduced to a **boneclaw**. Seizing an opportunity to torment and humiliate Khazan, the Dark Powers imprisoned him in a shadowy realm attached to his tower. Strahd is unaware of Khazan's fate and had Khazan's "remains" entombed in Castle Ravenloft. His legacy and machinations are the focal point of Chapter 11. Whomever wields his *staff of power* becomes the "Heir Apparent of Khazan" and can command the tower's magic.

Kiril Stoyanovich

Kiril is featured in this chapter by the *Pack Attack* special event, which the *Companion* folds into *In the Wake of Defeat* event, in which Kiril is hunting Ezmerelda.

Rudolph van Richten

Although Van Richten inhabited this tower for some months (or weeks, if that timeline better suits you), he is not present in this chapter. If Vallaki falls to Lady Wachter in the aftermath of *St. Andral's Feast*, he might retreat to this tower, provided he can get past the town gates. If the party is when he returns, he keeps up his facade, claiming to have slipped away from Vallaki.

Boneclaws

Boneclaws a special type of undead described in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*. In short, when a wizard fails to achieve lichdom, they might become a boneclaw—a being of darkness, fierce hate, and unending pain. The wizard is humiliated in undeath, becoming a slave to the closest necromancer. While its new master lives, the boneclaw cannot truly die.

In the context of *Curse of Strahd*, Khazan is enslaved to Strahd von Zarovich, the most powerful wizard in Barovia at the time of his death. Alas, Strahd is unaware of this minion, for the Dark Powers sequestered Khazan to a shadowy realm. If freed, Khazan must serve Strahd—a duty the boneclaw rejoices in. Thereafter, Strahd selectively sends Khazan out to meddle with the party. While Khazan is not on their trail, he remains in Castle Ravenloft's torture chambers, eagerly flaying prisoners.

Vilnius

Jakarion's apprentice, Vilnius is also rewritten to have inhabited this tower before leaving for the Amber Temple. His possessions are added to Area V5. Of note is his journal, which briefly describes his experience as Jakarion's apprentice, their planned expedition, and his "thick, luxurious locks of ebony hair" that Barovia's women are allegedly enchanted with. (That Vilnius is so obsessed with his hair is a bit of dark humor included by the *Companion*; by when he is met in the Amber Temple, most of Vilnius' hair has been burned off by a flameskull's *fireball* spell).

Yan the Dead

Magically preserved by Van Richten's embalming oils, Yan has essentially been rendered into a magic item that can be conversed with whenever a *speak with dead* spell is cast on his head. Information he divulges helps the adventurers learn that Rictavio is not all that he seems.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The chapter's two special events—*Ezmerelda's Retreat* and *Pack Attack* have been woven together. See *In the Wake of Defeat* in *Special Events* below.
- Thanks to a permanent *control weather* spell, the weather is always warm and fine around the Tower of Khazan. While the wizard's spell can't pierce Barovia's perpetually overcast skies, it does stabilize the local weather.
- The tower holds several secrets from Khazan's research and travels that shed further light on the Amber Temple and the nature of Barovia.
- The tower was inhabited by Jakarion and Vilnius, the wizards that can be met in the Amber Temple, shortly before Van Richten moved in. An investigation of the tower yields notes they left behind detailing their expedition.
- The **young blue dragon** summoned by Khazan's warded doorway has been replaced with more thematic creatures: the damned souls (**shadows**) and corpses of the masons that built Khazan's tower. See Area V2.

Additional Loot

Additional treasures have been added to the Tower of Khazan. Given that Khazan was a wizard, these treasures are mainly catered to characters of the same class. Assume that the previous occupants of the tower did not find some treasures and did not care for others. Van Richten, for instance, is a cleric-based spellcaster and found no use for the arcana he *did* encounter. Ezmerelda did not deign to remove the arcana either. Meanwhile, the wizards Jakarion and Vilnius chose to pack light for their expedition to the Amber Temple.

The following items have been added by the *Companion*:

- *Charlatan's die*
- *Driftglobe*
- *Enduring Spellbook*
- *Libram of Souls and Flesh*
- *Shadowfell Shard*
- *Wand of Secrets*

The Heir Apparent

Whomever is attuned to Khazan's *staff of power* commands the tower's constructs and wards, and can bypass Khazan's Spell Drain. The staff can accomplish everything the wand of secrets included in the storyline The Shadow of Khazan can, but (at your discretion) without the risk of releasing Khazan. Additionally, the Heir Apparent can establish a telepathic dialogue with the Custodian (see above) and draw upon its vast and previously muted knowledge.

See Castle Ravenloft, Area K84, Crypt 15, for details on the staff of power.

The Shadow of Khazan

Khazan is a towering figure of Barovian history with great potential—potential that *Curse of Strahd* throws away. The *Companion* is not so keen on relegating Khazan to the annals of history, and instead rewrites his character to include him in the campaign. Rather than destroying himself in an attempt to become a demilich, Khazan instead became a boneclaw sequestered to a shadowy dimension attached to his tower. For centuries, he has languished in this dark realm, waiting for the opportunity to be freed. Once Van Richten became aware of this dark entity—an entity he could not destroy but left safely trapped in its prison—he moved on to Vallaki.



The Shadow of Khazan

The tower is haunted by a spirit that Rudolph van Richten himself would not dare traffick with. Khazan himself, the archmage that achieved lichdom and earned even Strahd's admiration, is trapped in a shadowy realm attached to the tower—and he hungers for freedom. This storyline requires the implementation of the variant *The Shadow of Khazan* described above.

Khazan's freedom is tied to the state of his tower. As his wards are powered, so too do his chains weaken. If the adventurers utilize the tower's amenities, wards, and treasures, they will inadvertently loose the boneclaw, who returns to the material world.

What Khazan doesn't know, and Van Richten suspected, is that the Dark Powers themselves have imprisoned Khazan. They did not cause his self-destruction and degradation into a boneclaw, but sequestered him to that shadowy realm for their own amusement. It amused such malefic forces to humiliate such a mighty wizard.

Khazan's Abilities

Khazan is effectively incorporeal, but unable to directly harm living creatures or severely manipulate physical objects. He is similar to a ghost in this regard, but one that can't escape the Ethereal Plane. A Dungeon Master does not need ironclad rules to run him in this storyline, only respect the following guidelines:

- For the purposes of magic, items, and other features, Khazan is effectively on the Ethereal Plane but unable to leave it or interact with other creatures on the Ethereal Plane.
- Khazan can see and hear anything upon the island.
- Khazan can manipulate light objects as if by a mage hand spell.
- Khazan can teleport to any space on the island.

I. A Gift from the Dark

Khazan is just as surprised to find new visitors to his tower; after failing to fool Van Richten into freeing him, the undead settled for another century of isolation. Khazan is, in essence, slumbering when the adventurers arrive, and only wakes when they triumph over the magical trap placed over his door. Having gone through this charade before, the spirit patiently entices the adventurers into freeing him.

It starts with a wand—a *wand of secrets* added by the *Companion* to Area V7. The secrets the wand is meant to divine, of course, are the shackles that keep Khazan bound. The wand also can be used to repair the rotted floorboards and shattered wall; it can be used to raise and lower the tower's wards; it can be used to clean the tower, to restore the library (see the variant in Area V6), and even start the oven. The more it is used—and the more trivial the reason—the weaker Khazan's bonds become.

Finding the Wand

From the very moment the adventurers enter the tower, Khazan shunts his wand out of his shadowy prison. The wand appears on the desk in Area V7. A spell of *detect magic* reveals an aura of divination surrounding it, with faint hints of conjuration—a sign that Khazan has sent it to the material world. That the wand is free of dust when so many other objects are coated in it should be another sign that it was only recently left in the tower. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check suggests this.

When the party looks at the desk, read the following text:

> Upon the desk lies what can only be a wizard's wand, free from the dust that plagues the surrounding chamber. It is an exquisite piece: a length of intricately woven rosewood, brocaded in a twisting pattern that narrows to the tip—a wand, an actual wand. Its handle is capped with a knob engraved with a squiggly sigil resembling a lowercase "Y."

If the wand is taken from the tower, it is teleported back to the desk of Area V7. If Khazan is destroyed, the wand becomes an ordinary wand of secrets that can be removed from the tower.

Secrets of Khazan

With the *wand of secrets*, one can divine unseen gifts and areas created by Khazan's undead spirit. These traps and doors can only be detected by the wand, ensuring its use as Khazan wills. These objects were added only after Khazan's destruction to guarantee his release. While in the tower, the wand vibrates whenever near a secret.

Extradimensional Larder. Beside the stove exists an invisible trapdoor, cold to the touch. If opened, it reveals a frigid, airless 3-feet-long, 2-feet-wide, 3-feet-deep extradimensional space stocked with frozen meats and milk. The food amounts to sixteen rations in all. All food rapidly deteriorates if taken from the tower.

The Driftglobe. Near the rafters floats a deactivated, invisible *driftglobe*—the perfect lamplight for a studious wizard.

Khazan's Instructions. After using the *wand of secrets* twice, it flares up and vibrates with such strength, it moves its wielder's hand (or points automatically) to the wall. Using the last charge of the wand reveals instructions drawn in now-visible soot. Read the following text:

> Words fade into existence upon the wall, seemingly written in soot. In a moment, several paragraphs appear, which start with, "To thee that hath found the wand: restore my tower to its former grandeur and take it as thy own. There must always be an heir to Khazan."

The Library Restored

If the library is restored through Khazan's wand, the adventurers are awarded with notes detailing Khazan's research into lichdom, the Amber Temple, and Barovia itself. As any wizard would do, these notes are encrypted. The cipher must be cracked first, which proves to be a long and laborious process, best done during short or long rests. To break the cipher, a creature must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check over the course of 1 hour. The notes hold the following information:

- The existence of the Amber Temple, which is carved into Mount Ghakis. The notes reveal that the Order of the Silver Dragon took it upon themselves to guard the sanctum from all those that would abuse its dark powers or make contact with the "vestigial spirits" trapped therein.
- Khazan's research into lichdom, the true gift of which he admits can be found in the Amber Temple. It describes all the lore found in the lich's entry in the Monster Manual, including the necessity of a phylactery. These notes are, collectively, a *libram of souls and flesh* (see Appendix A).
- That Barovia has been sequestered from "the rest of the world, as if it had become its dismal own reality, its own demiplane," as Khazan puts it. This separation is linked to some sinister force that permeates the land and coincided with Strahd's dark rebirth as a vampire.

Below this message are the instructions (such as the right arcane words, the correct gestures with the wand) on how to use the wand to repair the tower and access its amenities. Spells cast by the wand bypass Khazan's Spell Drain. At a minimum, the following effects can be achieved:

- If a Fortune of Ravenloft artifact is in Area V7, the wand reveals the hidden compartment containing it.
- The wand can be used to cast *unseen servant*.
- The wand can be used to repair the floors and the hole in the wall, clean up the mildew and mold, and restore the library to its former glory.
- The wand can be used to activate or deactivate the magical trap placed on the tower's door, as well as name creatures to be immune to triggering it. The wand can also be used to command the undead, if you use the *Companion's* alternative to the **young blue dragon**. (Under no circumstances should the wand be able to command the dragon.)
- The wand can be used to erect a permanent *alarm* spell that alerts the wand-wielder whenever someone crosses the island's causeway while the wielder is on the island.
- The wand can be used to change the local weather, à la a *control weather* spell.
- The wand can be used to conjure wine (that spoils if taken from the tower).
- The wand can be used to conjure—and this is the most trivial, luxurious use of it—an embroidered, silk pouch containing 100 gp and 1d3 diamonds worth 300 gp apiece (which can be used for *revivify* spells). This can only be done once.

Omens. Whenever the wand is used, it emits a flash of light that gradually brightens the closer Khazan is to breaking free. Whenever this light is emitted, a burst of shadows cuts it short, giving the impression that the use of the wand is "banishing" the darkness, when in fact it represents Khazan's growing power.

The Wards Weaken. The more Khazan's wand is used, the more likely he is to escape. Whenever Khazan's wand is used (beyond its capabilities as a *wand of secrets*), roll 1d100. On a roll of 10 or lower, Khazan is released. There is a collective 10% chance that Khazan is unleashed, until at last it becomes inevitable.

II. Khazan Unleashed

Once Khazan's shackles have been undone, a doorway appears in the wall of Area V7. This is but one last test: to open it is to unleash **Khazan** and provoke a three-phase battle with the boneclaw. So many other gifts have been furnished upon the adventurers that they might open it without hesitation. When the door appears, read the following, which assumes the adventurers are in Area V7 and have the *wand of secrets*:

> The wand emits one last flash of light—this one almost blinding in its luminosity—before growing dark and releasing a gust of wind that weaves its way through the tower, extinguishing any and all firelight. In the gloom, you become aware of a new door painted onto the wall. It did not exist there before… or perhaps it always did, and your mind would not dare look at it? There is no material realm it could lead to, but already before have you found extradimensional spaces in this wizard's sanctum. Already you have been rewarded for your curiosity. What could lay beyond?

Opening the Door. If the adventurers open the door of their own accord, read the following:

> The knob yields to your touch—and suddenly the door is slammed open by an unnatural force! It nearly catches you before smashing into the nearby wall. The doorway opens upon a realm of darkness, of teeming shadows that quickly give shape to a skeletal abomination whose very presence decays the tower. The bricks crack, the windows cloud up with grime, and mold… mold creeps everywhere. From the abomination's feet boils out a strange darkness that does not blind you, but reduces your vision to mere feet as if it were a black mist.
>
> "Free at last," the skeleton murmurs. Its very voice causes you to ache with abject pain, as if your very flesh could not abide its syllables. "Free… after so many, many years! Ha! Hahaha!" Its shrill laughter rips at your insides! Blood trickles from your nose, from your ears, from the corners of your mouth! The abomination expresses its foul gratitude with an unnerving and impossibly wide smile that reveals far too many teeth. "I do trust you have enjoyed my sanctum?"

Discretionary Inevitability. Whether Khazan is released is truly up to you. If the adventurers refuse to open that door, Khazan can force his way through. Read the following:

> Wise enough to leave the door alone, that deathly portal goes unopened… and still the tower decays into its sepulchral state. Grime grows upon the windows, giving birth to black mold that creeps across the walls, sinking into the mortar. Darkness begins to bubble out from beneath the door, spreading like an ebon gas. The lights around you dwindle, smothered by the growing shadows.
>
> The door ages and rots before your very eyes… and worse yet, scratching can be heard from behind that unopened portal. Shivers dance up and down your spine as that dreadful, intolerable scratching grows frenzied. Whatever lives on the other side of reality clearly wants out. The scratching grows louder—and like an egg shell, the door cracks! Through the widening gap, you sight a foul, skeletal creature whose black eyes burn with hate. Its claws alone are as long as a man's arm and as thin and sharp as a shard of glass. It attacks the wood with the desperation of a newborn chick, entering this world in boiling shadows that rapidly close in around you.
>
> Another crack! Another claw! The shattered wood clatters to the floor, where it dissolves into the darkness. More and more is torn away as that skeletal abomination rips its way into the mortal world. "I *LIVE*!" it cackles in a voice so foul it causes your skin to ache!

Khazan's Spell Drain. During this battle, combatants bypass Khazan's Spell Drain. Magic cast from outside the tower still cannot target creatures or objects therein, depriving any diviners (such as Strahd) from scrying on the adventurers in the meantime.

The Custodian. If the **animated armor** is present, it has no choice but to obey Khazan and attacks the adventurers. If it has had affection for the adventurers before, its attacks seem sluggish and begrudging.



A Slave to Darkness

Shadows gather during the first phase of Khazan's assault. This phase lasts until Khazan is reduced to 64 hit points or fewer. When it begins, all natural light sources are snuffed out. If it is daytime, no light enters the tower.

Living Shadows. A special, magical darkness fills the interior that reduces visibility to 5 feet. Creatures with truesight can see ordinarily, as can Khazan. On initiative count 10 each round (losing initiative ties), the shadows claw at a creature of Khazan's choice. Make a melee spell attack (+6 to hit, dealing 4 (1d8) necrotic damage on a hit).

Roleplaying Khazan. Khazan is in a unique position: both mad and liberated, the boneclaw is not yet bound to Strahd von Zarovich's will and expresses his longing for power. Consider any of the following dialogue:

- "Centuries in darkness… does much to the mind."
- "Know my name and despair!"
- "Even Zarovich would not face me! What hope have you?"

A Slave to Hatred

Once reduced to 64 hit points or fewer, the second phase begins. Khazan reabsorbs the darkness (nullifying the Living Shadows effect above) and repurposes it as an aegis. The tower becomes a place of dim light (with exception to areas lit by magical light), even if it is bright outside.

Armor of Shadows. The magical darkness is absorbed into Khazan, granting him 5d10 + 20 temporary hit points. These temporary hit points are represented by shadowy armor that glides onto Khazan's skeleton. While Khazan has these temporary hit points, his AC is increased by 2 (to a total of 18).

Psychic Torment. At the start of this phase, Khazan cackles horrifically (no action required). Humanoids and beasts that can hear him and are within 30 feet of him must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of Khazan for the next minute. A creature can repeat its saving throw at the end of its turns, ending this turn on a success.

Roleplaying Khazan. With every ounce of pain Khazan endures and inflicts, the boneclaw grows frenzied. Here the sadomasochist revels in battle. Consider any of the following sample dialogue:

- "My name is power!"
- "See how the shadows bend to my command?"
- "We are but slaves to torment!"



A Slave to Pain

Once Khazan's temporary hit points from the phase before are reduced to 0, or after one round (whichever happens latest), the battle moves into its third and final phase. The adventurers are transported into the very heart of Khazan's shadowy prison. The tower walls topple over, revealing an infinite demiplane of darkness. Above these darkened vistas stand four sites: Castle Ravenloft to the east; the Abbey of Saint Markovia to the west; an opulent mansion upon a mountainside to the north (a representation of the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok's extradimensional abode); and the face of Mount Ghakis to the south, where an amber light spills out from a temple portico carved into the mountainside (a representation of the Amber Temple). Read the following:

> Darkness erupts from Khazan's abominable corpse, devouring all of existence. Reality itself wavers! The walls topple over with thunderous appeals, revealing a realm of utter darkness. Surely, you are no longer in Barovia, or any true form of it.
>
> High above the roiling, black fog tower four distant monuments. In what you believe is the east perches a castle, its battlements lit by bouts of lightning. Opposite to this is an abbey clinging to a mountain, its grace illuminated with a sterile light. To what can only be the north is Mount Baratok, upon whose face is an opulent mansion lit with dazzling lights… And to the south? To the south, on what is surely Mount Ghakis? A temple from whose portico spills out amber light.
>
> Khazan howls again, but in that jagged cry you hear fear. "No!" the undead cries. "No! I will not be sequestered again!" His crimson eyes focus on you. "The powers-that-be demand a prisoner, and I have done my time! Do you understand, mortals? I have done my time!"

Khazan's Prison. Khazan's prison is dimly lit and functions as an extradimensional space limited by the same restraints Barovia is. A spell of *blink* or similar magic can be used to escape the prison. Otherwise, the only path to freedom is destroying Khazan. If the adventurers fall unconscious here, some are saved by the Dark Powers. While Khazan is at last freed to leave his prison, the adventurers spared by these sinister forces face a far grimmer choice. See Aftermath below.

Agony Manifest. Whenever Khazan takes 10 or more damage, his bones splinter off and form a **skeleton** at an unoccupied space within 30 feet of Khazan's choice. The skeleton is armed with a shadowy blade and shortbow, the attacks of which deal necrotic damage instead of piercing damage. On the turn a skeleton is created, it may use its reaction to make a single weapon attack against a creature of Khazan's choice. Thereafter, a skeleton shares the same initiative count (losing ties) as when it was created.

Roleplaying Khazan. As Khazan faces defeat, he grows desperate. The boneclaw suddenly understands that his destruction here will bind him to Strahd von Zarovich's will or possibly return him to his prison. Consider the following dialogue:

- "I will not go back! I will not wither again! The Powers shall not have me!"
- "I have done my time! I deserve nothing but sweet oblivion!"
- "Consecrate my remains, or vengeance shall plague you 'til the end of days! Do you understand, mortals? I shall never die!"
- "Zarovich… no! No! I will not be his slave! *NO*!"

III. Aftermath

Khazan's release can drastically alter the campaign:

Khazan Destroyed

If Khazan is reduced to 0 hit points, his body crumbles into dust—but unless his remains are consecrated, he will reform in Castle Ravenloft 1d10 hours later, a slave to Strahd von Zarovich.

Heart of Darkness. If you have a sorcerer player character, Khazan's soul condenses into a shadowfell shard (see Appendix A). If Khazan's remains are purified by holy water (see below), his sentience is shunted into the shard, whereafter he can telepathically communicate with the sorcerer it is attuned to. See Appendix A for details on this magic item.

Consecration. If the adventurers sprinkle holy water on Khazan's remains within the next 10 minutes, this dark cycle of rebirth is aborted, depriving the Devil Strahd from another undying minion.

Khazan Victorious

If Khazan proves victorious, he is still bound to Strahd's will—a fate he howls with rage against before becoming subdued. Immediately, Khazan leaves for Castle Ravenloft. His journey is marked by utter savagery: Barovian and Vistani travelers unfortunate enough to cross paths with the boneclaw are found later, eviscerated. Khazan spares no creature it encounters, be it man, beast, or revenant.

Once Strahd learns of his new minion, he sends Khazan out to harass the adventurers or battle against the revenants of Argynvostholt—though neither side can truly die. Throughout the campaign, the adventurers can come across evidence of these pointless, Sisyphean battles. While Khazan is not out on a mission, he can be found in Area K76, Castle Ravenloft's torture chamber, satisfying his sadistic urges on prisoners.

Destruction Imminent. At your discretion, Khazan also destroys the tower by triggering the ward thrice. The adventurers have 1d6 + 4 rounds to escape the tower before it collapses.

The Heroes Trapped

The Dark Powers spare some (or all) the adventurers that are reduced to 0 hit points in the final phase of the battle with Khazan. The Dark Powers silently communicate through emotions that all but one mortal may leave this place—one must be left behind as a prisoner for the Powers' amusement, essentially replacing Khazan. Read the following text:

> You wake to darkness—agonizing darkness that assaults your eyes, your nostrils, even your pores, as if it were a vengeful miasma seeking to worm its way inside your body. Your lungs begin to ache, and you realize mechanically that you are suffocating. But death does not come, oh no. Death would be a mercy. There are sinister forces in this dismal realm, and you understand innately that it wishes to be entertained. You feel them all around you, watching, caressing your very soul. In your heart, you understand that these dark powers will extend your life as long as you remain in this prison, and you will suffocate in their embrace forever.
>
> Ah, but there is another way. A way out. The entities out in that limitless void promise you and your companions escape… You can almost hear it as a voice in your head: "There need only be one." And you can sense them out in that darkness, your companions, equally as lost and agonized as you are. Through the darkness, you can hear them. They must be shouting, screaming, as the silence of the void seeks to crush out all noise of life.
>
> There is a decision to be made. There need only be one to suffer in eternal isolation. There need only be one, but who?

The trapped adventurers must come to an agreement as to who should remain behind to suffer as the plaything of the Dark Powers. The Dark Powers will accept a majority ruling; the trapped do not need to come to a unanimous decision. Both Ezmerelda d'Avenir and Rudolph van Richten, if present, would volunteer to stay behind.
To the character left behind, read:

> The decision has been made. You alone are to bear the weight of centuries, to suffocate forever, to lose yourself in this darkness for the entertainment of those sinister forces—as titanic as whales in blackened depths, swimming about you unseen. One by one, your companions disappear, shunted back to the realm of the living. And when they are gone, when it is only you, the darkness surges forth, shoving its black fingers into your mouth, eyes, ears, and nostrils as cruel laughter echoes out like thunder in the distance.

Rescuing the Abandoned. Rescuing the Dark Powers' newest plaything is a quest in and of itself. Through the same emotional communication, the Dark Powers' promise that the abandoned will be released if Khazan is forced back into his eternal prison. To do so, the boneclaw must be conjured in the tower or dragged back. Rudolph van Richten alone knows an exorcist's ritual to conjure Khazan back to his place of power (a ritual that can, for the sake of the plot, bypass Khazan's Spell Drain); Ezmerelda d'Avenir knows of the ritual but cannot perform it and would encourage the adventurers to find her wayward master. Other individuals may also be able to help without needing to capture Khazan: the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok (if his sanity is restored), the hags of Old Bonegrinder, the Abbot of Saint Markovia, and, of course, the Devil Strahd von Zarovich himself.



Areas of the Tower

The *Companion* further fleshes out the areas below, or has advice to offer in some regard:

V1. Ezmerelda's Magic Wagon

The adventurers can hear the clucking of Ezmerelda's chicken if they strain their ears to listen into the wagon. If the wagon explodes, singed feathers fall from the air.

Difficulty. If the adventurers are 5th-level or lower, reduce the damage to 4d10 damage. If they are 7th-level or lower, reduce it to 6d10 instead. It is very easy to achieve a total-party-kill from this trap.

V2. Tower Door

Provided you do not adopt the revision below, read the following text when the **young blue dragon** is summoned:

> The signs and sigils begin to glow with a fierce, blue light that brightens by the second. The air cracks and fizzles as the smell of ozone floods the island. Slowly, you become aware of a mass behind you. A mass beating its wings upon the pregnant air. It hovers behind you—blinding blue light in the shape of a dragon that is quickly becoming solid. With a fearsome roar, the conjured creature becomes real—and very irate.

Revision: the Cheated Damned

When the trap is triggered, a **young blue dragon** is summoned. This is rather out of place for Barovia and unbefitting of the necromancer that was Khazan. Per this revision, several undead are roused from the darkness. These tortured undead were the laborers and masons that erected Khazan's tower, rewarded for their efforts with eternal servitude. The necromancer bound their spirits to this place, depriving them of rest and returning to the Barovian cycle of reincarnation. The corporeal undead dig themselves out of the earth. The trap resets daily at dusk. If triggered again, the very same undead, corporeal or otherwise, are conjured again to ravage intruders, even if they were previously destroyed.

Read the following text when the first undead are roused:

> The signs and sigils begin to glow with an unsettling, bright, black light that darkens the island. The shadows gather 'round you, reducing your vision to your immediate vicinity… and in that inky blackness, you hear the earth churn. You hear ghoulish cries of joy and the moans of the ravenous dead as they dig themselves from the earthen sepulcher below.

Magical Darkness. Magical darkness covers the island, reducing visibility to 5 feet. Unlike an ordinary *darkness* spell, however, bright light cast by any spell or magic item shines the darkness, albeit with a reduced radius of 5 feet. A spell of *dispel magic* cast upon the tower door ends this effect. The summoned undead can see through this magical darkness. The darkness dissipates after the undead are slain or the correct dance is performed for ward's. tower's trap.

Tactics. The undead employ these tactics in the battle:

- On the first round of combat, the earth churns as the corporeal undead dig themselves from their graves; the undead can't be targeted. On the second round of combat, enough earth has been moved to target the undead, who effectively have half-cover. On the third round, these four **zombies**, three **ghouls**, and one **ghast** are free to attack the adventurers. Driven by hunger, the zombies target the nearest creatures, whereas the ghouls command enough intelligence to flank the backline or unarmored.
- On the second round of combat, two **shadows** step forth from the shadow cast by the tower to accost the adventurers.
- On the third round of combat, a **wraith** emerges from the darkness, howling, "We built this place! We laid the first and final stones! And our reward? Our reward for a job well done? Cheated and bound! Damn the wizard, damn Khazan!"

Once all the undead are destroyed, evidence of their existence vanishes, courtesy of Khazan's wards. Read the following:

> An ill wind sweeps across the island, its very touch turning the dead to ash. By when the gust is gone, no traces of the undead remain. The earth from which they crawled has been neatly swept up and smoothed over with grass… as if this place was not a grave for the damned.

V3. Rickety Scaffolding

The scaffolding creaks and whines in the wind—a fact that should often be brought to the adventurers' attention in times of silence.

The scaffolding just *begs* to be destroyed. If the tower door's trap is triggered, the **young blue dragon** (or the undead suggested by the *Companion*) can and should crash into the scaffolding. Creatures that are within 20 feet of the scaffolding must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be struck with debris, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failure.

V4. Tower, First Floor

Your focus as the narrator should be upon the elevator, which can be a source of humor in an otherwise humorless campaign. The elevator moves at a glacial pace of 5 feet per round. Whilst being winched, cheerful but cloying music fills the tower. With sixty feet to the top floor, the song quickly becomes unbearable. You, as the Dungeon Master, would be remiss not to torture your players with cheerful, nauseating elevator music.

Read the following when the elevator is first activated:

> As you step upon the platform, the golems animate. One gargles a word that can only mean "Heave!" and together the four pull down on the chains to raise the platform up. The unoiled chains squeak and squeal as the tower is filled with cheerful music that quickly loses its charm. "Heave!" the golem cries; the chains squeal and the music repeats. "Heave!" the golem groans! The chains complain of their heavy burden and the music hits a high note that buries itself in your brain and incites your heart to hate! "Heave!" goes the golem and at last, after a dreadful minute, you find yourself on the second floor… with two more to go.

Revision: Amber Golems

While these golems are statistically clay golems, they are instead made of amber. Khazan stole these very constructs from the Amber Temple and bent them to his will. Read the following description in addition to what is provided in *Curse of Strahd*:

> The statues are not made of clay, as you first thought, but instead of a glassy, orange-ish material. Amber—that's it. The statues are made of amber. Though identical in build and body, each statue sports a different head. One of a jackal, one of a crocodile, another with the head of a hawk, and the last being that of an owl's.

V5. Tower, Second Floor

The elevator automatically stops at the second floor. Provided you read the previous narration boxes, read the following text once the adventurers return to the elevator or when it continues upward:

> Back to the elevator. For a moment, you wonder if that nauseating music will repeat. It comes as no surprise when it does—this is Barovia, after all, a land of perpetual misery. The upbeat jingle rings out in the silence, sharply contrasting the state of decay this tower has fallen to.

Variant: Vilnius' Chamber

Per the *Companion*, Jakarion and Vilnius inhabited the tower for some time before striking out for the Amber Temple. Seeking some privacy, Vilnius took this chamber as his own, despite the widening hole in its floor. The area has been renovated to reflect this nature. It contains a small cot, several crates Vilnius used for storage, and a shoddy table Vilnius assembled himself to use as a desk.

If you adopt this variant, read the following text:

> The purpose of this dusty, cobwebbed room is unknown, but it is clear that someone took it as a bedchamber, despite the hole gaping in its floor. It sports a cot covered in yellowed sheets, several crates, a sturdy chair, and a rickety table made from planks. Old tomes and scattered papers, some almost transparent from long exposure to oxygen, lay on the desk.

Crates. There are four scratched, rotting crates, all of which show signs of travel and foul weather:

- The first crate contains Vilnius' spare clothing, which amounts to two sets of fine clothes, six sets of common clothes, a set of traveler's clothes, and four simple but decorative wizard robes embroidered with starry patterns. Searching the crate reveals a sock with 1d4 + 3 gp and 1d12 + 9 sp stuffed inside.
- The second crate reeks of salted meats but is otherwise empty.
- The third crate contains sundries: a simple toothbrush, thick hairbrushes for Vilnius' thick hair, an ointment for blisters, a sewing kit, three torches, and a tinderbox.
- The fourth crate contains dirty dishware stained by frequent use and infrequent cleaning.

Vilnius' Journal Entry. On the desk are illegible papers, three tomes relating to magical theory and Vilnius' journal. The journal has few entries, suggesting its missing author wrote sparingly or replaced a lost journal. The journal has not been spared the mold that infects the tower. Legible entries describe Vilnius' harrowing but rewarding education as Jakarion's apprentice. Vilnius also frequently mentions his "thick, luxurious locks of ebony hair," which Barovian ladies are allegedly enchanted with.

Read the text below to a character that reads the last entry, which makes a reference to the permanent *control weather* spell added to the tower by the *Companion*, as well as Khazan's ethereal presence. Adjust accordingly if you are not adopting these changes.

> The last entry in this journal has been hastily written, its words scratched fiercely into the page by a frenzied author. It reads:
>
> "The day has come at long last. Having sorted through all possible futures, Master Jakarion has divined this date as the most fortuitous. The weather beyond the tower's magic is fair. The autumn chill has not yet blown, and the roads will not yet turn to mud. Master Jakarion insists we move now and I, for one, cannot wait to put behind this dismal tower… There is a darkness here Jakarion refuses to speak of. My dreams of late have become troubled and visceral, and yet I can never remember them upon waking. But such concerns are soon to be behind me.
>
> "We set out at dawn. I have packed lightly, per the master's instructions. He has foreseen much game between here and Mount Ghakis—as if he knows how to hunt! And so my stomach grumbles and shall continue to grumble. That curmudgeon will not allow us to eat the jerky, the salted pork, nor the blood sausages; such are to be gifts to the mountain folk to gain safe passage through their lands. Likewise, master has bought—or rather, I have bought as his reluctant surrogate—a bull to sacrifice to Tsolenka Pass' dreadful guardian. May it take that beast instead of our mules—and if it doesn't, may we happen to not be astride those pitiful steeds when the guardian attacks.
>
> "Even now I tremble with fear and excitement. The Temple of Amber… A legend of this land. Many have tried and failed to find the sanctum. Many have died in the cold, buried by snow, haunted by dreams of power. And power is what I shall have. Master has warned me from trafficking with the spirits therein, but I know the truth. I know that he fears I will surpass him! That I will find my destiny in the temple and see that it is not to be his whipping boy until I am old and grey! But I am no pawn. I will seize for myself that which has been so far denied. I will wield the powers Archmage Khazan too held! And there will come a day soon where Barovians everywhere, even the Devil himself, will know and fear the name Vilnius."

The "guardian" referenced in the entry is the roc of Mount Ghakis, which the *Companion* has rewritten to be the giant raven that delivered the holy symbol of Ravenkind to the paladin Lugdana—or rather, the corruption of that raven.

V6. Tower, Third Floor

The elevator automatically stops at the third floor. Provided you read the previous narration boxes, read the following text once the adventurers return to the elevator or when it continues upward:

> Were the gods kinder, this would be the tower's final floor… but such gods have been absent from this world for far too long. It is with cold resignation that you return to that glacial elevator, bracing for that blasted music.

Variant: Moldy Library

The *Companion* adds a ruined library to this area, despite the lack of any such bookshelves on the map. Many books have been destroyed or taken over the years, such as by Van Richten, Ezmerelda, Jakarion and Vilnius—but not Strahd. Khazan's *control weather* spell has prevented rain from falling upon the tower, but humidity and fog have had centuries to nurture mildew in what books remain.
If this variant is adopted, read the following text when the adventurers first reach this floor, instead of what is provided by *Curse of Strahd*:

> What was once a grand library has now been ruined by years of humidity and neglect. The northwest wall has all but collapsed; a gash in the stonework gapes open like a surprised mouth from which black mold has grown like gum rot. The mold has spread to the shelves and the books, many of which have fallen to the floor. The floor itself has rotted away, leaving jagged holes that would surely cut whomever fell through them. From what you can see, some tomes are still salvageable.

Khazan's Catalog. The following tomes of note still survive the library's decay:

- *The Fool's Guide to Alchemy.* A creature that reads this 8-hour-length tome and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies gains proficiency with alchemist's supplies and learns how to make *potions of healing* from herbs native to Barovia and similar climates.
- An enduring spellbook of Gralmore Nimblenobs, the so-called "Wizard Ordinaire" buried in Castle Ravenloft's catacombs. Gralmore inscribed a ludicrous title on the spine of the book: In the Pursuit of Power. The first page reads, "Let it be known that I too, Gralmore Nimblenobs, master of magic and author of this grimoire, started as a mere apprentice. May this tome be a lesson in the necessity of humility." The spellbook contains the following spells: *cone of cold, counterspell, detect magic, fireball, fly, greater invisibility, ice storm, mage armor, magic missile, misty step, shield,* and *suggestion.*
- *Kings Without Courage*, a biased treatise by the Barovain historian Tarnos Aldirovich that faults the dusk elven monarchs that Strahd and King Barov crushed.
- Several dozen well-thumbed romance novels, including the bestselling series, *The Lusty Lizardfolk Maid.*

Additional Loot. A character that succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) checks sights a *charlatan's die* hidden between two moldy tomes.

V7. Tower, Fourth Floor

When the elevator descends, read the text below:

> With sickening horror, you realize that you must survive that crucible of squealing chains and awful music to descend this godforsaken tower. You can't help but look to yonder window and wonder if it would be less painful to hurl yourself from the sill.

Variant: Jakarion's Notes

Jakarion hid the last of his notes in a secret compartment along the wall—the same compartment that is included in the campaign if your tarokka reading indicates a Fortune of Ravenloft being here. The wand of secrets included in The Shadow of Khazan also reveals this hidden compartment, otherwise it requires a successful DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) to find, by analyzing the stonework.

Jakarion's notes are largely uninteresting. Many are so stained by wine that they are illegible. Whereas Jakarion's notes concern the expedition to the Amber Temple, Jakarion's focus on Khazan himself. Jakarion mentions Khazan's leftover artifacts, such as his staff of power, thereby giving the adventurers a hint to what lies in his crypt in Castle Ravenloft. Jakarion wrongly believes the staff would be buried there. The most recent entry, written on the eve of Jakarion's expedition to the Amber Temple, can be found. Read the following text:

> Of the many wine-stained notes, you find a recent and legible musing by its wayward author:
>
> "Khazan. His name is power. Such was told to me as an apprentice, and now, as a master, I know it to be true. The tower itself yields to the mention of his name. To design your ancient wards to waken upon the utterance of wizard's name is trivial. No, there is more to "Khazan." I know it. I know it, but it will not be until I see his crypt in Castle Ravenloft that I can be sure. Ah… the crypt of Khazan. I know very well that he is not buried there, but something else is. His sudden death and disappearance has left behind many an artifact. Artifacts that would resurface in Barovia. A wizard does not perish to the elements and his possessions are not buried with him. That means Khazan buried them himself. But where? His crypt? I would not believe for a second he could be so careless to leave behind his instruments of power in a place so accessible. Surely, it must be the map to the treasure there.
>
> "Let it be known now that I have failed. I have failed to delve the mysteries of this tower's creator. To speak true, I do not want to know. There is a sinister force nested here, but I have found no ley lines underneath the tower. Why, then, did he choose this foreboding place to erect his sanctum? For many years, I have wondered if there was a shadowy equivalent to the ley line, but have no evidence to support this theory. I will be glad to leave this place for the one last known sanctum of Khazan. The new moon cannot come quickly enough."

A Summary of Additions

The *Companion* has made several additions to Area V7:

- A page from Rudolph van Richten's journal (if the adventurers never entered Ezmerelda's wagon). See the handout in Appendix F of *Curse of Strahd*.
- Jakarion's notes on the Tower of Khazan, which are hidden in a secret compartment along the wall (the same place a Fortune of Ravenloft artifact would be).
- Additions included in the The Shadow of Khazan storyline: the wand of secrets on the desk, the invisible extradimensional larder next to the stove, and the invisible driftglobe floating up in the rafters. Additionally, the wand can reveal instructions written on the walls by Khazan.

Special Events

The *Companion* includes the following special events:

Battered by the Winds of Fate

This special event hinges upon the destruction of the Tower of Khazan. If its trap is triggered thrice, the tower collapses. This is the perfect opportunity to shake up the campaign with wild magic. If the adventurers are on the island when this occurs, the magic unleashed teleports them across Barovia—possibly even into the bowels of Castle Ravenloft.

Imminent Destruction. When the trap is triggered thrice, read the following:

> Thrice has the tower's ward been triggered—and instead of belching lightning, the magic releases varicose veins of energy that ripple outward and upward through the stonework. The air pressure mounts, popping your ears and driving pitons of pain into your mind. Thunder builds, but not in the clouds. Reality itself begins to waver as those crackling veins grow to a blinding luminosity.
>
> And all at once, it explodes! A supernova of energy explodes from the tower's top floor, flattening the trees that ring the lake's shore! Bricks fall like hail! The force of the explosion hurls you into the sky! Battered by the winds of fate, your world goes black! And when you wake some time later, bruised and weary, you see that you are no longer at the Tower of Khazan.

The adventurers awaken in one of the following areas:

- The adventurers are teleported to the spires of Castle Ravenloft, specifically to Area K47, where Strahd's **guardian portrait** and **rug of smothering** lie in wait. The tower's explosion is heard across Barovia, drawing Strahd from afar and leaving the adventurers the run of the castle until his return. They must escape through the front gates or through the Brazier Room (Area K78).
- The adventurers are teleported into the Ruins of Berez. Baba Lysaga senses the magic at play and sends forth her scarecrows to scour the ruins for these interlopers.

- The adventurers are teleported to the far side of Tsolenka Pass, on the frigid slopes of Mount Ghakis. With such deadly cold creeping in, the adventurers must quickly hunt game to fashion pelts. Their thunderous arrival alerts nearby mountainfolk hunters, including Helwa, (see Area X15 of the Amber Temple).

Mortals Divided. Under no exception should the party be split when teleported. However, other NPCs can be separated by the blast. Below are suggested locations for teleported characters to wind up.

- The character is teleported into the clutches of Baba Lysaga in the Ruins of Berez. The witch uses this wayward soul as a source of blood to fuel her foul magicks.
- The character is teleported straight into the extradimensional mansion of the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, who reacts with confusion if his sanity still has not been restored.
- The character is scattered to the winds and caught by Victor Vallakovich's teleportation circle and soon imprisoned by whomever currently rules Vallaki.
- The character is teleported to the foot of the Gulthias Tree at Yester Hill. The devilish tree traps this victim by stabbing its thinnest roots directly into the character's body. It then uses their body to nurture blight sprouts.

In the Wake of Defeat

This special event combines Chapter 11's events: *Ezmerelda's Retreat* and *Pack Attack*. **Ezmerelda d'Avenir** limps back to the Tower of Khazan after a failed attempt on Strahd von Zarovich's life. Though insulted, Strahd himself does not pursue Ezmerelda and instead sends his pet werewolves to track her down. Ideally, this encounter occurs at dusk on the adventurers' second day at the tower.

Wounded and Weak

Bloodied and haggard, Ezmerelda d'Avenir limps her way up the island's causeway. While in Castle Ravenloft, she was beset upon by ghouls, wights, diseased bats, and even Vistani servants. Her wounds are deep and require dressing. Her tightly bandaged and swollen left arm hangs limply at her side and her knees are bruised from a fall down the stairs. In this state, Ezmerelda has only 20 hit points and suffers from three levels of exhaustion.

Ezmerelda makes immediately for her wagon, desperate to get her hands on the healer's kit stashed there. If she notices lights on in the tower, she makes an attempt for stealth (suffering disadvantage, thanks to her three levels of exhaustion). With her wounds, however, and the clucking of her startled chicken, the adventurers are sure to hear her.

Roleplaying Ezmerelda. If Ezmerelda has never met the adventurers before, she acts with hostility and suspicion, despite her alarming wounds. If she has met the adventurers, she breaks down and sobs, knowing that her harrowing ordeal has come to an end and she is finally in the company of friends. See *Dramatis Personae* for sample dialogue and tips on how to roleplay Ezmerelda in this chapter.

Blood Hounds

The Children of Mother Night arrive one hour after Ezmerelda's return, having tracked her scent to the Tower of Khazan. These six **werewolves** and nine **wolves** are led by **Kiril Stoyanovich**. The werewolves are unaware of the tower's history, other than the rumors that it has been frequented by wizards over the years.

Wolves at the Gate. The lupine marauders lope down the causeway. Read the following:

> As dusk deepens into night, the wolves of the Svalich Woods take up a fierce and hungry howl. The howls roll across the treetops, growing closer and closer—and soon the lupine howls are complemented by a feral chorus, the ravenous snarls and cries of werewolves. Out from the mists lope lupine monsters—seven werewolves on all fours, flanked by nine wolves. The beasts lope across the island's causeway, fanning out across the tower.
>
> A werewolf stands and sniffs the air. "She's here," he snarls in a guttural voice strained by his lupine transformation. "Her blood is perfumed like wine and, I suspect, just as sweet." The werewolf looks about the tower and shouts, "Come forth, wench! One cannot hide from the Devil or his wolves! Come forth and I promise to make it—" The werewolf bears its fangs in a cruel smile. "—to make it quick."

If the adventurers do not deign to meet Kiril in combat, he first sends a werewolf to force open the door—thereby triggering the lightning of Khazan's trap. The werewolf is reduced to ash, inciting panic in the other werewolves and wolves—panic that Kiril quickly tames with howls and roars. He snarls, "Fine. But they cannot winter in this tower. They cannot live here forever. The sheep must come out to graze some time." Kiril withdraws his forces but calls upon more werewolves to patrol the lake's banks, thereby ensuring a lengthy siege.

If Kiril Stoyanovich is reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, he flees. There is no comrade he is not willing to sacrifice to save his own hide. If he is near the shore, Kiril leaps into the darkened waters to break the adventurers' line of sight, sparing him from most ranged attacks.





Chapter XII: The Wizard of Wines

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 218
Chapter Progression 218
Quick Notes 218
Running the Chapter 219
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 219
Dramatis Personae 219
Variants & Revisions 220
Blood and Wine 221
I. Clipped Wings 221
II. Reclaiming the Winery 224
III. The Ravens Taken 225
Approaching the Winery 226
Areas of Note 226
W1. Stables 226
W2. Loading Dock 226
W6. Well 226
W7. Outhouse 227
W9. Fermentation Vats 227
W14. Wine Cellar 227
W15. Brown Mold 227
W16. Loading Wench 227
W18. Kitchen and Dining Room 227
W20. Printing Press 227

The loss of the Wizard of Wines winery is a blow felt by Barovians everywhere. The wine must flow, lest Barovians lose their last comfort in this dismal realm. This plot, identified by the *Companion* as *The Lifeblood of Barovia* in Chapter 1, has its hooks throughout the realm. For some time now, Barovians have wondered why the wine has ceased to flow. From Krezk to the Village of Barovia, the lack of wine has not gone unnoticed.

Ordinarily, the adventurers are sent here to reclaim some wine before being permitted into Krezk. The *Companion* suggests otherwise, if the adventurers still have Ireena Kolyana with them. The *Companion* also urges you to consider Chapters 12 and Chapter 14 to be the same congruent story through a simple trick: the Martikovs, already wounded and debilitated by an anti-wereraven incense, will be abducted and taken to Yester Hill to be sacrificed.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 12 concerns the fate of the Martikov family, the truest and most powerful allies the adventurers could hope for in their fight against Strahd. In the module, reclaiming the winery proves to the Martikovs that the Keepers of the Feather can trust the adventurers—or at least owe them. Ultimately, however, the winery is an opportunity for the adventurers to score a well-needed victory—at least on the surface, for most of the wine the adventurers can recover is poisoned, and the Martikovs are abducted during the *Blood and Wine* storyline described below.

The *Companion* dedicates this chapter to the dark side of druidism. It presents the winery and vineyard as an overgrown nightmare, a riot of bloodthirsty, black vines that move of their own volition—vines that grow from the Gulthias Tree at Yester Hill itself. The druids prove fierce and savage, and the blights innumerable. All hope relies on seizing the *Gulthias staff* wielded by one of the druids and snapping to kill all blights. Per the *Companion*, Davian Martikov knows of this staff and demands the adventurers destroy it. Destroying the staff kills all blights at the winery, in the vineyard, and surrounding woods (up from the ordinary 300 feet the staff usually ranges). It becomes the clear objective, thoroughly communicated by the chapter's quest giver.

Chapter 14 is a direct sequel to this chapter, one that should follow immediately afterwards. To that end, the *Companion's Blood and Wine* storyline sees the surviving Martikovs abducted in the adventurers' absence to be sacrificed at Yester Hill.

Author's Criticisms

Chapter 12 is just about the most lazily written chapter in all of *Curse of Strahd*, and its structure is riddled with holes. The *Companion* does its best to address these issues:

- The Martikovs, being wereravens, are immune to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks—guess what damage blights (and Baba Lysaga's scarecrows) do? It has always boggled my mind that the Keepers of the Feather fell to such mundane attackers. Sure, the druids are armed with spellcraft, but the wereravens can *fly* away from the blights. Further, their holdings are guarded by the watchful eyes of ravens, whom the Martikovs clearly can communicate with in some fashion. It makes no sense that the Keepers were caught unawares and then harmed, when one wereraven can reliably destroy countless blights without being harmed. Hence, the "Crowpoison" revision in *Variants & Revisions*.
- The horde of blights outside are meant to drive the adventurers inside, but here are the sour truths: 1) if it has hit points, players will kill it; 2) mass combat in 5th Edition is slow at best and agony at its worst. From the very moment the horde of blights received numbers and statistics, it was defeated. A single *fireball* spell can wipe out the entire horde and, with it, the tension. To have any narrative effect, the horde must be infinite but restrained: harming it is futile, fighting it is futile, but as long as the adventurers remain on the move, it won't harm them, only drive the story along. It deserves only to be a set piece.
- That only four nameless druids and a handful of blights inhabit the winery is a joke. The module could only be bothered to describe their appearances. The Dungeon Master is given no names, no roleplaying advice, no dialogue, and no better story hooks to Yester Hill. The designers chose to give no salt or identity to these druids, and simply treats them as the expendable mooks the adventurers have been so long denied in this difficult campaign.

Chapter Progression

This chapter loosely follows a short, three-act story, provided *Blood and Wine* is run:

Act I spans meeting the Martikovs and learning what ails the winery.

Act II involves the adventurers striking out against the winery in full force and braving a gauntlet of druidic attacks, until the reclamation of the winery.

Act III has the adventurers return victorious, only to learn that the Martikovs were taken to Yester Hill to be sacrificed.

In the Aftermath, the adventurers must venture to Yester Hill to save the Martikovs.

Quick Notes

- Assume the Martikovs know of the adventurers already, thanks to the Keepers of the Feather and ravens stationed elsewhere in Barovia.
- Assume that the druids and blights can overcome a wereraven's immunity to nonmagical attacks, otherwise this chapter of *Curse of Strahd* makes utterly no sense. See *Variants & Revisions* for details.
- If the *Evil's Bride* storyline was run in Krezk prior to this chapter, pin a wedding invitation from Strahd somewhere in the winery, preferably the first door the adventurers reach.
- Most wine has been poisoned, which will lead to many deaths throughout Barovia.
- The *Companion* has added quite a lot of lore to this chapter and Chapter 14:
  - Davian Martikov's great grandmother was a "wildling" that left the tribe when the druids began to worship Strahd as a god.
  - The Gulthias Tree at Yester Hill was first watered with the blood of Strahd, freely given.
  - The Gulthias' druids leader is, allegedly, a dhampir bastard of Strahd's, born from the then-dead womb of Volenta Popofsky and left to die in the Svalich Woods. Found by wolves and wildlings, the dhampir druid rose to prominence and is responsible for the worship of Strahd as a god; he is referred to as "the Prophet." (This is false, however; the Prophet is no son of Strahd's.)

Checklist

- Have the adventurers encounter Dag Toranescu or a Martikov before they reach the winery.
- Through Davian Martikov, clearly communicate that the *Gulthias staff* can destroy the nearby blights if broken.
- Do not just reveal to the players that the wine has been poisoned.

Running the Chapter

Once the adventurers commit to breaching the winery, this chapter becomes a rush of combat. There is almost no way to sneak into the winery; the blights outside notice any visitors and accost the doors and walls. A single spell or shout made by the druids therein will alert all other foes. The winery is no dungeon whose rooms are muffled by cold, stone walls; once one combatant is alerted, all will be—and they will come towards the adventurers. Thus, this chapter truly comes down to a battle between the adventurers and the druids with their blight minions. The *Companion* has overhauled the druids' identities, statistics, and spell lists to provide for a memorable battle.

Once this battle ends, the adventurers stand victorious. Snapping the *Gulthias staff* slays all blights nearby. Thus, outside of meeting with the Martikovs (see *Blood and Wine*), this entire chapter is concluded within ten in-game minutes.

Time

If the adventurers were sent to the winery before gaining access to Krezk, assume it is dusk. If the adventurers managed to enter Krezk without wine, and *Evil's Bride* (see *CMP* Ch. 8) was run, assume it is midday when the adventurers arrive.

Weather

It is lightly raining when the adventurers approach the winery. The weather grows worse the closer they are to Yester Hill. In this sense, the weather acts as an overture for that chapter.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Gulthias Staff*

Creatures

- Brown Bear
- Dire Wolf
- Draft Horse
- Drekht
- Druid
- Esmardeus
- Needle Blight
- Rat
- Revyr
- Swarm of Ravens
- Tree Blight
- Twig Blight
- Vine Blight
- Wereraven

Effects

- Brown Mold
- Crowpoison
- Madness

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Davian Martikov

Davian, central to this chapter, is a font of necessary lore. Weave the following sample dialogue in naturally.

- Davian explains the recent attack, conveniently omitting the magical gemstone: "For decades now, the druids of Yester Hill have coveted our fertile lands. They know that seldom in Barovia does soil as rich as ours exists."
- Davian further explains why the druids so sadistically tormented the Martikovs: "Know this: our family hails from those damned druidfolk. My grandmother's mother danced there under the moonlight beside the wildlings. She worshiped the same gods, obeyed the same traditions, and partook in the same rituals as they did. But when the druids began to worship the Devil himself—for it is known that he is the Ancient, they said, he is the Land—she left. And they've forgiven her, or us, for it." (While the *Companion* revises the Martikov history to make this true, it conveniently leaves out the Wizard of Wines gemstones, which is the true motive for the druids; generational revenge is just an added bonus.)
- The winery has become covered in vines. When mentioned, Davian explains, "I should have excised those black vines years ago, but oft did I and my brothers brush them off for signs of rot or enrichment. At first, we would clear them away by axe and by fire, but when the harvest proved just as ripe year after year, we consigned them to memory. We grew lazy. We accepted the vines as a feature of our fertile lands. This, I now know, is a reckoning sixty years in the making. The Morninglord alone knows how far those vines have traveled and who they trouble."
- Davian explains what he knows about Yester Hill: "To the south rises Yester Hill, named so for the wall of fog that dances beside it—a fog within which the memories of the past are reflected. Since time immemorial, the wildlings have laid their greatest kin to rest there; we've likely some ancestors there ourselves. A tree grows there, a tree that should not be, a tree that thirsts for the blood and flesh of men. A tree whose seed, as my great grandmother confided, was first watered with the blood of the Devil Strahd himself! Blood, freely given! It is said that the archdruid that commands this cult is the bastard of Strahd, born from the dead womb of his vampiric bride and left to die to the wolves of the Svalich Woods!"

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Adrian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Davian's eldest son.
Claudiu Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Stefania & Dag's eldest son.
Dag Tomescu	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Stefania's husband.
Davian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Martikov patriarch and grandmaster of the Keepers of the Feather.
Drekht	Unique	H	W14	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Elvir Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Davian's youngest son.
Esmardeus	Unique	H	W16	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Martin Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	F	B&W	Stefania & Dag's son.
Nala	Unique	H	W9	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Revyr	**Wereraven**	H	W20	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Stefania Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	B&W	Davian's daughter.
Viggo Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	F	B&W	Stefania & Dag's son.
Yolanda Martikov	—	F	B&W	Stefania & Dag's infant daughter.

Esmardeus

Invented by the *Companion*, Esmardeus is a wildling druid and grandson of "the Prophet" of Yester Hill. Believing his grandfather's lies—that the blood of Strahd runs through his veins—Esmardeus has the honor of leading the raid and wielding the *Gulthias staff*.

Esmardeus speaks in Druidic, but can manage half-fluency in Common. In Druidic, however, he spills several secrets alongside his taunts, which any fluent character could then learn:

- "Nature bows to my every whim, for I have the vampire's staff!"
- "He is the Ancient! He is the Land! Praise be!"
- "The Prophet shall see this world in ruins! Let the vines grow old on the stone and the people know we laid them low!"
- "I am heir to the Devil's throne!"



Roleplaying Blights

The blights, while not true characters, can be roleplayed. When in doubt, assume twig blights cackle like little devils and the "flesh" of needle blights writhe with needles when they are upset. Vine blights alone can speak, and they all croak out the same phrase: one begins with, "The seed has borne bitter fruit!" and the nearest vine blight adds, "We are that fruit!" The vine blights otherwise just mutter about seeds and fruit (e.g., "But the fruit..." when they are slain).

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The Martikovs are hiding in a cabin a few miles from the winery, instead of a grove.
- Davian Martikov's great grandmother was a wildling druid, but left once the tribe began to worship Strahd. This, coupled with the desire for Wizard of Wines gemstones, have propelled the druids to attack.
- The four druids featured inside the winery (but not the horde outside) have all received unique statistics and roles in the inevitable battle.

Blood Feud

Per the *Companion*, the Martikovs are in a decades-long feud with the Gulthias druids. Davian Martikov's grandmother was born to the druids years ago and left after many began to worship Strahd as a god. This alone adds a more personal motivation for the druids.

The Briarthorn Riot

The *Companion* gives the winery a makeover that better presents the dark side of druidism. The entirety of the winery has become overgrown with black, bloodthirsty vines that lead back to the Gulthias Tree itself. For decades now have those roots crept underground, reaching out to feed on its future enemies. Some vines are as thin as a finger; others are thick enough to choke a horse to death. The winery's well (Area W6) is the source of these vines, which have ruptured out from below to strangle the winery.

Crowpoison

Just how the Gulthias druids can overpower lycanthropes—beings with immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks—is never addressed in *Curse of Strahd*. Spellcraft, of course, can overcome a lycanthrope's natural defenses, but any attack made by a blight would fail to even scratch a wereraven. The Keepers of the Feather could, even if surprised, tear apart any unharmed. So long as they aren't struck down with magic, the wereravens ought to triumph over mere druids too.

The solution it has come to is simple: crowpoison. Crowpoison is to a wereraven what wolfsbane is to a werewolf. Wyatt Trull, the *Companion's* author, came up with it when writing *Van Richten's Treatise on Lycanthropy*, in which all thirteen lycanthrope phenotypes required some harmful herb or agent, such as belladonna for werebears or ginseng for weretigers.

Through crowpoison, the Gulthias druids overpowered the wereravens by depriving the wereravens of their lycanthropic resilience and shapeshifting. The wolfsbane carried by the Vistani earlier in the campaign (see *CMP* Ch. 2) foreshadows crowpoison. An astute character that identifies crowpoison comes all that closer to proving the Martikovs are wereravens. Crowpoison is scattered throughout this chapter and Chapter 12 in the form of herbs and incense.

The Prophet

The Gulthias leader—known as the Prophet—is believed by the wildlings to be the dhampir son of Strahd, born from Volenta Popofsky's dead womb on the night of her vampiric turning and abandoned by Strahd in the woods. As the legend goes, the son was found and raised by wolves and wildlings. Because the Gulthias Tree itself was watered with the blood of a vampire—if it was not tainted by the evil of the *Tome of Strahd*, if your tarokka reading indicated Yester Hill as the site of that Fortune of Life—the myth has been cemented.

This all, of course, is nonsense. As will be revealed in Chapter 14, the Prophet is nothing more than a charlatan, a druid whose advanced power has slowed his aging, and a follower of Kavan's example (the blood-drinking chieftain of yore).

Crowpoison: Ravenbane

Known as *nothoscordum bivalve* by herbalists and "false garlic" by peasants, crowpoison is a wild, scentless flower frequented by butterflies. It can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Consumption. A wereraven that consumes a sprig of crowpoison is poisoned for 1d6 hours, and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 41 (7d8 + 10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The wereraven is also poisoned for 1d6 hours.

Incense. The druids of Yester Hill have found crowpoison and devised a noxious incense that sickens wereravens and deprives them of their ability to shapeshift. A wereraven that starts its turn within 60 feet of the incense, or enters within that range for the first time on its turn, must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. While poisoned, the wereraven loses its immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks and can't use its Shapechanger feature to transform.

Blood and Wine

This storyline streamlines Chapter 12 without bloating it by following a simple three-act structure for an extremely quick chapter. The adventurers encounter Dag Toranescu of the Martikovs prior to reaching the winery; provided they play ball, Dag leads them to where the Martikovs are sheltering. There, the adventurers learn a wealth of information, most importantly that the druids carry a magical staff that, if snapped, should kill all nearby blights. With a clear objective in mind, the adventurers can then strike out for the winery, where a short but highly tactical battle will be waged. Having secured a sorely needed victory in Barovia, the adventurers return to find their actions were for naught: the Martikovs have been abducted and taken to Yester Hill.

I. Clipped Wings

The adventurers are on a collision course with the Martikovs, who are sheltering in a crumbling cabin some miles away from the winery (rather than a nearby grove in *Curse of Strahd* only a few hundred feet from a horde of blights). The Martikovs are a proud and paranoid folk—two aspects heightened by the curse of the wereraven. In less dire situations, they would not sink to asking outsiders for aid—not when they have political influence, financial clout, goodwill, and a *retinue* of wereravens to call upon. Alas, this is the Martikov family at its lowest: driven from home, deprived of their funds, cut off from their allies, and *robbed* of their lycanthropic birthright.

Poisoned by crowpoison incense, the Martikovs cannot shapeshift or enjoy lycanthropic resilience. Losing their affinity for mundane ravens is also in the realm of possibility. At any rate, the family is confined to this rotting shack without even a scrap of paper to their name. Even still, it takes Dag Torenscu—a husband that married into the family and not bound by its stricter attitude—to seek aid.

Dag Seeks Help

Davian, as patriarch, has forbidden soliciting outside assistance, just as the Keepers of the Feather have done so for years. The other Martikovs are similarly shackled by pride and paranoia. Only Dag Tomescu, raised elsewhere and freed from this generational attitude, dares to seek aid. It is he who approaches the adventurers on their way to the winery.

When Dag makes himself known to the adventurers, it's in his true form. Read the following:

> The road meanders further to the south. At a crossroads of trails, you spot a signpost covered with mud. As you swipe away the muck to read the sign, you hear a voice pipe up behind you: "Go no further, my friends."
>
> You whirl about to see a pale man with bright eyes. Half his face is covered with a damp bandage in sore need of changing. The smile he tries to muster only causes him to wince. "Go no further," he repeats. "If it is wine you seek, you'll find only blood at the winery. Creatures of the forest…creatures with no earthly business being alive…stormed our home two nights hence. We barely escaped with our lives. If you wish to keep yours, I suggest you turn back."
>
> The man pauses and furrows his brow, as if to study you. "However," he concedes, "if you wish to aid the Martikov family, and Barovia itself, if you are no friend of the Devil's or the darkness, come with me. And, gods above, if you are capable of divine healing, we are in sore need of a priest."



Dag introduces himself and elaborates on the state of the winery and the recent attack. As with all wereravens, Dag never reveals his wereraven curse, nor the existence of the Keepers of the Feather. Instead, he offers a very sanitized and rehearsed explanation: "wildling" druids jealous of the fertile Martikov lands attacked with a horde of "chlorofiends" two days ago. Recognizing the strangers and relating them to reports by other Keepers of the Feather, he requests they follow him to the Martikov's refuge to offer aid and healing.

Dag carries with him a small pouch of berries and a dead rabbit. He explains that he has been foraging and hunting to feed the family: "Skilled at buschcraft they may be," Dag says, "but the family has grown soft. Too used to the comforts of a noble's life. And wounded they are as well. It falls to dear old Dag to find food."

Blighted Scouts. Knowing their foes must still lurk out in the woods, the druids sent forth a scouting party of two vine blights, which accost the adventurers as they near the cabin. Read the following:

> Following Dag through the darkened woods, you notice how wild this corner of the Svalich Woods is. The forest floor is a riot of black vines, some as thin as a finger and others able to strangle a horse. Your eyes follow a vine that stretches up a tree to a bloodied bird's nest.
>
> "These damned vines!" Dag snarls, glaring at a black vine as thick as an oar wrapped around a tree trunk. Shaking his head, he explains, "It was at the roots this morning. There are more, all growing out from the winery… from our well."

The adventurers are given the opportunity to respond to Dag, but their conversation is cut short. The two **vine blights** attack, one rising from the first floor near the least armored adventurer and another slinking down the trees. Thanks to their False Appearance trait, the blights were completely hidden and, as such, surprise the party. When the blights attack, one croaks, "The seed has borne bitter fruit!" while the other adds, "We are that fruit!"

Dag assists in the fight as best he can with his dagger (+4 to hit, 1d4 + 2) but he has one level of exhaustion and only 15 hit points left. When the blights are defeated, Dag mutters, "Close. A scouting party, perhaps. Or an infestation. Davian knows how to defeat them. Come, we must hurry. I worry over what monsters may have found my family in the meantime."

Martikov Wounds

Character	HP	Exhaustion	Wound Description
Adrian	25	0	Adrian is relatively unscathed, but tends to Claudiu.
Claudiu	8	2	Claudiu is concussed. Adrian constantly snaps his fingers or tousles Claudiu's hair to keep the boy awake.
Dag	15	1	Dag suffered a vicious slash that ran from his neck to his ear. The right half of his face has been wrapped with a bandage that needs imminent changing.
Davian	15	0	Davian is wheezing and nearly feeble. A massive needle has punctured his lung. Only his lycanthropic regeneration has kept it from killing him. The most powerful lycanthrope, Davian's regeneration is slowly triumphing over the poison, but is inhibited also by the frailty of his advanced age.
Elvir	13	1	Elvir has a broken arm, which has been bound in a rough sling made from his torn shirtsleeve.
Martin	1	2	Martin is unconscious, his young lungs damaged from the crowpoison.
Stefania	6	2	Stefania took several needles to her left shoulder. The largest ones have been removed, but numerous infected splinters remain. She winces whenever she must move her left arm.
Viggo	1	0	Viggo refuses to speak and rocks back and forth in the fetal position.
Yolanda	1	1	Yolanda is cold, hungry, and upset, and continues to cry despite her mother's wishes.

The Martikov Refuge

The Martikovs shelter in a rotting cabin that has been slated for demolition for years now. After ten minutes of quiet, careful trekking through

After ten minutes of quiet, careful trekking, Dag leads the adventurers to a rotting cabin. Read the following:

> Dag leads you to a gray and rotting cabin that has, to put it politely, seen better days. More of a shack, it slumps to the right. Its roof has given in at one corner, and it's clear by the gaps in the walls that the cabin can keep out neither the rain nor cold. From within you hear a wheezing, a baby crying, and, curiously enough, the snapping of fingers.
>
> "It's ironic really," says Dag, "Davian complained about this cabin for years. Slated it for demolition several times, but never got around to it."
>
> A cantankerous voice bursts from the cabin, all but shouting, "Dag? Dag? Who by all the bloody gods are you talking to? Get in here, you fool! Get in here and be silent!"
>
> Dag looks to you and sighs, "Fathers-in-law, am I right?"

The Family Wounded. All the Martikovs have been wounded in some fashion, as shown on the *Martikov Wounds* table. Some were already wounded during the Keepers of the Feather's failed counterattack on Yester Hill five days ago.

- All Martikovs are suffering from the poisoned condition for breathing in crowpoison incense. For the time being, none can use their Shapechanger trait and can be harmed by nonmagical, nonsilvered weapon attacks.
- The Martikovs all have some levels of exhaustion and have lost some hit points.
- The family has been rendered vulnerable by crowpoison.

The Family in Turmoil. Even the greatest of friends and most loving of families can snap during times of stress and crisis. Throughout Act I, the Martikovs vacillate between tense, worried silence, and bursts of frustration:

- Yolanda won't cease crying. Elvir snaps at Stefania, demanding, "Can't you get [Yolanda] to shut up?" Stefania snaps back with, "She's a child, for gods' sake!"
- Adrian must keep the concussed Claudiu from falling asleep and vents his growing frustrations until at last he shakes the boy by the shoulders and shouts, "Stay awake! Stay awake, or you might never wake, Claudiu!"
- Davian is convinced that the family must reclaim the winery, but Stefania shouts at him, "It's lost! It's been lost! Give it up, father! We've worse troubles to face now! We have to reach Krezk—maybe Krezkov will give us safe harbor, maybe—" Davian cuts her off by snarling, "Without the winery, we are not the Martikovs."

Laid Low. His pride bruised, and his family endangered, Davian inevitably gets to the meat of the matter. Rely heavily on the advice in *Dramatis Personae* to roleplay him, but when he officially offers the adventures their quest, read the following:

> Wheezing in his chair, Davian Martikov places his hands on his knees and pushes. Immediately, the old patriarch hunches over with the ache and toll of years. "It pains me to say this," he says, "but we, the Martikovs, must turn to strangers in this dark hour. On behalf of Barovians everywhere, I ask you this: reclaim our ancestral lands and return the winery unharmed, lest our people at last fall prey to utter despair."
>
> "We have known of our assailants for some time," Davian explains. "Wildling druids, with whom we share ancestry. But these 'chlorofiends' as Dag so eloquently calls them, are new. Plants that thirst for blood! By all the gods! Alas, I know a thing or two of druidism. My Nan taught me, and her mother before her. As we fled our home, I saw a red-painted fool brandishing a staff carved from wood that should not be. It is clear that the chlorofiends fear and obey it. They shuddered as he waved it about, and when it dropped from his grasp, they hissed. Even a comrade of his said—in their Druidic tongue, and though it has been years since my Nan conversed with me in it, still I know enough to understand that that staff is the key. Destroy that staff and all," says Davian Martikov, "will be well."

II. Reclaiming the Winery

The battle for the winery is swift and fierce. It will be won or lost within five minutes, perhaps even one. The winery is no soundproof dungeon; once any denizen notices the adventurers, they all will. One shout alone is enough to draw attention. There is only one possible solution to stay reinforcements: fool the druids in Druidic. As the battle rages on, the horde outside approaches, adding tension to the scene and driving home the necessity of snapping the Gulthias staff. Victory is assured when the adventurers snap the *Gulthias staff* in two, slaying all blights plaguing the winery, vineyard, and surrounding lands.

There are four zones within the winery inhabited by foes, and it is from these characters we draw the combatants from for this encounter:

W9. Twenty-four (or four, per the *Companion*) **twig blights** and **Nala**.
W14. Five **needle blights** and **Deklht**.
W16. Esmardeus with the *Gulthias staff.*
W20. Two **vine blights** and **Revyr**.

Terrain. As mentioned before, the *Companion* drapes the winery with bloodthirsty, black vines—some as thin as a finger, some able to choke a horse to death. The vines turn the winery floor into difficult terrain for everyone but the blights and Gulthias druids.

Overall Tactics. The encounter is more enumerated below, but the chief combatants follow these tactics:

- Esmardeus, grandson of the Gulthias Prophet, is a true believer and fights until the bitter end. As the druids' striker, he hurls hard-hitting spells. If he is reduced to 10 hit points or fewer and Revyr is no longer shapeshifted, he tosses her the *Gulthias staff* so that she might change shape again and absorb the staff into her new form.
- Nala is the druids' controller, relying on spells of *hold person* or *spike growth* to hamper the party. Like Esmardeus, she is too fanatical to choose her own life over the cause.
- Revyr fights until death—which might very well take a while, for she can shapeshift twice—unless Esmardeus orders her to leave with the *Gulthias staff*. She at first shapeshifts into a **brown bear**. The second time, she chooses a **dire wolf** or shapeshifts into an **owl** to flee.
- Drekht, the druids' supporter and healer, proves to be a coward. He is the last to join the fray and first to flee. After Esmardeus dies, Drekht must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC = 10 + (number of adventurers - number of druids alive)) at the end of each of his turns or flee the winery.

Phase I. Battle Begins

Nala and Esmardeus begin on the balcony. The **twig blights** start in the empty vat on the floor. Knowing that allies lie just around the corner, **Nala** and **Esmardeus** attempt to hold back the adventurers until then.

- At initiative count 20 (losing ties), a vine from the ceiling lashes out at one adventurer, who must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be restrained, and lifts the target 20 feet into the air. The target can repeat its saving throw at the end of its turns, ending this effect on a success. Doing so, causes the target to fall.
- Nala casts *hold person* (at 2nd level if there are more than four enemies present, otherwise it is cast at 1st level). She also casts *shillelagh* as a bonus action.
- Esmardeus casts *tidal wave*, but draws on the wine in the fermentation vat instead of conjuring water. An enemy struck by this wave of wine is left with a bitter taste on their lips—a hint that the druids have poisoned it. He also casts *shillelagh* as a bonus action.
- The **twig blights** take position at the top of the stairs to harry anyone who would climb them, or assault the least armored foes.

Phase II. Ursine Fury

The second phase begins on the third turn of combat. **Revyr** arrives with two **vine blights** from Area W20. Revyr has already cast *jump* on herself.

- Esmardeus uses a bonus action to destroy any twig blights left on the battlefield, gaining 1d6 temporary hit points per destroyed blight. On that same turn, he casts *erupting earth*, marring the Martikovs' floor.
- Nala continues to concentrate on *hold person* or attempts to cast it again if the spell failed before.
- Revyr casts *faerie fire*, then uses a bonus action to transform into a **brown bear**, leaping down onto the workshop floor if the adventures are still below. On Round 4, Revyr focuses her melee attacks on any paralyzed or restrained targets.
- The two **vine blights** stalk the balcony; with their 10 ft. reach, the blights can attack creatures directly below them. If the vine blights can't reach their foes from the balcony, they sink to the floor in a mass of vines. One uses its Entangling Plants ability.

Phase III. Red Tide

Phase III begins with Nala's death, or on the fifth round of combat (at initiative count 20, losing ties). With her dying breath, Nala destroys a fermentation vat with an errant thunderwave spell. The explosion releases a flood of poisoned wine. Any creatures on the ground floor must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one. On a failure, a creature is also thrown back 20 feet. The flood instantly kills any blights on the floor. The wine has a bitter taste, once again foreshadowing that it has been poisoned.

Drekht joins the fight in this round, opening the door to Area W10just in time to be struck by the flood. He makes his saving throw as normal but takes only half damage. Five **vine blights** are lumbering up the stairs behind him, but are too slow to enter the fray before Round 6. Both cautious and craven, Drekht has already warded himself with a *barkskin* spell. If his allies are wounded, he spends his turns snapping out *healing word* spells and dragging enemies towards his blights with a *thorn whip* cantrip.

The Druids Defeated

When slain, the druids offer some cryptic nonsense. If any of the adventurers speak Druidic, say it in that language; otherwise, it's broken Barovian Common.

- Esmardeus says, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land. And we are his heirs."
- Nala says, "You are too late… Wintersplinter will walk this earth…"
- Revyr says, "Death to the ravens!"
- Dekht says, "It will be… a cruel winter."

The Staff Destroyed. If the *Gulthias staff* is broken, all blights plaguing the winery and outlying lands die. Even the vines shiver with agony and die. Read the following:

> As you snap that black staff in twain, the world itself seems to scream with the hundreds-deep death outside. It's as if you were stabbed right in the ear canal—and as sure as the sun rises in better lands than Barovia, blood trickles out your ears and down your neck. Outside, hundreds of chlorofiends have just died an unceremonious, and hopefully painful, death. Even the black vines that plague this place shudder and writhe with agony before finally growing still.

III. The Ravens Taken

When the adventurers return victorious, they find that the Martikovs have been abducted by the druids. Only Davian remains, bound against the wall by vines that feed on his blood and tighten whenever other creatures approach. If you utilized the *Companion's* changes to the Village of Barovia during Chapter 3, this mirrors the Cabin of Mourning and thereby calls the adventurers back to their first days in Barovia.

Read the following when the party approaches the cabin:

> Still ecstatic over your victory, you trudge back into the woods—and find that the vines have reached here too in your absence. The vines are everywhere. They strangle tree trunks and snake across the wet earth like black veins. The cabin itself has been reduced to a thorned prison, and as you burst inside, you see that the Martikovs are missing. The air is thick with that pungent odor you found in the winery, and fresh blood pools upon the floor—at least for now. Tiny vines have reached out to drink at the sanguine pool.
>
> "H-help…" comes a voice at the far end. "H-help… my family. T-t-taken, they were."
>
> As you squint into the gloom, past the mass of vines, you spot him: Davian Martikov. The vines have him bound to the wall, three feet from the ground, every limb shackled. A vine has bit deep into his neck to feed upon his lifeblood.

Davian is still alive, but will die within an hour if not freed from the vines, which can be severed by dealing 10 damage. He implores the adventurers to follow the druids to Yester Hill. Read the following:

> Davian Martikov crashes to the floor. Sensing his weakness, the vines curl up like snakes. With a snarl, the old man whips out an arm at the empty air, as if to condemn the entire world. He pounds his fist against what remains of the wooden floor and seems to gather himself.
>
> With great effort, Davian rises and slumps into a half-rotten chair. His breathing is faint and troubled. It is clear there's little time left on this earth for the Martikov patriarch.
>
> "My family… Gone. They come with more of that noxious incense. There is but one place the druids would take them: Yester Hill. Something foul stands on that hill. A tree whose existence I did not wish to believe, but…" Davian gestures to the mass of vines around him. "A tree that thirsts for the blood of men, a tree whose seed was first watered by the blood of the vampire, freely given."
>
> Davian shivers. "There can only be one reason my family would be taken… to feed that godsdamned tree and fuel some foul plot. Go. Go, save my family. Please."

Davian elaborates on the Yester Hill, sharing all secrets except his family's wereraven curse. If the crowpoison was successfully identified, and Davian is confronted over its use, he still refuses to reveal the truth and instead says, "There are secrets that I will take to my grave. Secrets that go beyond me and my loved ones. Secrets that must remain unspoken, lest the ears and eyes of this realm at last learn a truth and—in one fell swoop—snuff out our last hope." When Davian has grown tired of the adventurers, he shouts, "Go! Leave me! These vines will no longer trouble me. They prey only on weakness, and I have none left in my heart! My family is in peril and I must act, and you must leave!"

If freed, Davian musters his strength and, with a titanic effort of will, overcomes the crowpoison to transform into his raven form after the adventurers leave. Read the following:

> As you leave the cabin and Davian Martikov behind, you hear—distantly—a thud chased by a snarl. Before you can even return to help the curmudgeon up, you spot a raven flit through the gaping roof and flutter off into the dusk.

If the adventurers check the cabin, they find Davian gone, with several bloodied feathers—black, but streaked with silver—surrounding the chair he was last seen in.

Approaching the Winery

If you're running *Blood and Wine* and using the *Briarthorn Riot* variant, replace the narration text in *Curse of Strahd* with the text below:

> The road weaves through the woods until at last it opens up upon an unsettling sight: upon a hill sits a large two-story stone building choked with vines so dark the building underneath can barely be seen against the gray sky.
>
> The vast vineyards that surround the winery have found no better treatments. The black vines ebb down the hill, invading those green rows.

Areas of Note

The following areas are of note; others don't warrant your attention unless combat occurs therein.

Entrances to the Winery

It is important to note the entrances into the winery, as the adventurers must rush inside to escape the blight horde. See the *Winery Entrances* table.

Barricades. When the druids invaded the winery, they did not do so gently. Scrap wood and planks and broken equipment is everywhere. A character with carpenter's tools can use an action to barricade a window or door from the blights. Assume only druids and vine blights can burst through a barricade;

- Druids can triumph over barricades by succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check (or 20, if the character spent 1 minute fortifying the barricade) or by a *thunderwave* spell.
- Vine blights simply grow their tendrils beneath the door over the course of 1d4 rounds to remove the barricades from inside. A growing tendril (AC 10, HP 5) can be severed.

Windows. There is no special protection for the winery's windows, which are locked but can still be broken by dealing 5 points of non-poison, non-psychic damage to the glass. An action can then be made to clear the broken glass from the frame. Characters that clamber through a window with glass still in it take 1d4 slashing damage unless they succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Areas W10-12 are the only rooms on the ground floor with windows.

Winery Entrances

Entrance	Status
W2	The door is broken, ajar, and can't be closed unless a *mending* cantrip is cast on it, but it can be barricaded.
W3	The door is barred from the inside.
W5	Both doors are locked and require a DC 20 Strength check to break open.
W8	The door is open and can be barricaded.
W10	The door is barred from the inside. A window can be broken to gain entrance.
W11	A window can be broken to gain entrance.
W12	A window can be broken to gain entrance.

W1. Stables

The Briarthorn Riot

The two draft horses stabled here were not spared from the druids. Vines coil about each beast, drawing blood to feed the Gulthias Tree many miles away. By when the adventurers arrive, one horse has already been sucked dry. The other has 4 hit points remaining and bucks against its thorned bonds in vain.

The vines here have an AC of 10 and 15 HP. If severed, the horse can be saved. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check is required to calm the beast. On a failure, it bursts from the stables. Creatures in front of it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The horse is also calmed if it receives 6 hit points or more of magical healing.

W2. Loading Dock

A druid (Esmardeus per the *Companion*) lurks above this room in Area W16. If he spots the adventurers, he will shout out and alert his comrades to the intrusion. He then backs away immediately to break the adventurers' line of sight.

W6. Well

The Briarthorn Riot

Per this variant, the black vines that choke the winery spill out from this well. Read the following when the adventurers near it:

> From this bruised and swollen well pulses a nest of snake-like vines, inching forward from deep below ground. The sight is sickening. The black vines that choke the winery have clearly originated from this recess. As you approach, the vines pause, as if caught in an embarrassing act—like a child reaching into a sweets jar or an animal that suddenly detects a predator. After several moments of stillness and silence, the vines begin to inch forward again, their troubles forgotten.

Crowpoison Incense
As described in Variants & Revisions above, the druids resorted to crowpoison incense to poison the Martikovs. The entire winery reeks with the scent of the incense, which can be described like garlic, lemon, and rot—scents alien to a winery. As the adventurers explore the winery, remind them of this stench and scatter half-burned incense sticks (made of crowpoison, and hurled by the druids like grenades) here and there. Crowpoison can be identified with a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

W7. Outhouse

A **needle blight** sits here, waiting to ambush whomever uses the outhouse. Though the Martikovs have already been driven off, no druid has bothered to fetch the blight.

W9. Fermentation Vats

A **druid** (**Nala**, per the *Companion*) has poisoned the wine here. To hint at this, put an empty vial in her robes. If she is knocked prone or slain, the vial shatters. It is up to the adventurers to rationalize what the vial once contained.

Blood and Wine

Per the *Blood and Wine* storyline, this area becomes the stage for a pitched battle between the adventurers and all four druids, plus their **vine blights**. As such, twenty of the twenty-four **twig blights** have been removed. The four **swarms of raven**s above have also been removed from the fight.

W14. Wine Cellar

A **druid** (**Drekht**, per the *Companion*) lurks here with five **vine blights**. As described in W15, he has the potential to launch a devastating trap.

W15. Brown Mold

If the party has proven too troublesome for the druids, they use a **twig blight** to lure the adventurers into this area. A **druid** (taken from Area W14 or lurking nearby in the shape of a rat) then hurls a *produce flame* cantrip into the room to cause the brown mold to all expand. The druid then attempts to shut the door, lock it, and barricade it with vines. If the adventurers fail to escape, they freeze to death.

Trap. To run this encounter smoothly, follow the guidelines below. Admittedly, it requires a bit of rule-bending to achieve the desired outcome.

- As the adventurers explore Area W14, a **twig blight** giggles loudly and scampers into W15. It takes the Dodge action if attacked and otherwise enjoys enough plot armor to enter the darkened room unscathed.
- Once the adventurers give chase, roll initiative. At the start of the round, the **druid** uses a bonus action to revert back to his true form and then uses his action to hurl a *produce flame* cantrip past the adventurers. Only a *counterspell* can stop this. Using his one object interaction that turn, the druid then shuts the door (no action required) and locks it. The druid does not get to take his turn, given the tomfoolery he performed at the start of the round.
- For the remainder of the first round, the door is easily busted open: a DC 13 Strength check is all that's necessary.
- At the start of the next round, the ten patches of brown mold expand. All adventurers inside the room must make a DC 22 (up from 12, given the ten patches of mold) Constitution saving throw, taking 4d10 cold damage on a success, or half as much on a failure. A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies this as brown mold and recalls the solution to destroy it: dealing cold damage.
- The druid acts on his initiative. As an action, he expends a 2nd-level spell slot to barricade the door with vines, concentrating as if on a spell. The vines vanish if his concentration is broken. For every round the vines exist, the DC to break open the door increases by 2, up to a maximum of 25. After 1 minute of concentrating, the spell ends and the vines become permanent. At any point, the vines can be destroyed (AC 10, HP 5 + (5 x each round since the vines were conjured).
- The druid flees once the vines are permanent, or after he has been reduced to 12 or fewer hit points.

W16. Loading Wench

A **druid** (**Esmardeus** per the *Companion*) lurks here. In *Curse of Strahd*, he proves to be a coward. If you run *Blood and Wine*, he instead fights with surprising fervor. Regardless, he backs away to break the adventurers' line of sight if they are below him in Area W2.

W18. Kitchen and Dining Room

If you're feeling particularly sadistic, a **twig blight** hides in one of the pantry cabinets. Once opened, it leaps onto the opener's face with a maddened giggle. To remove the blight, a character must successfully contest their Strength (Athletics) check against the blight's Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. While on the character's face, consider the blight to have three-quarters cover, granting it a +5 bonus to its AC and Dexterity saving throws. It savages the character's head until death—its own, or its victim's, after which the blight hops off, giggles and runs out from the room.

W20. Printing Press

The **druid** here (**Revyr**, per the *Companion*) is with two **vine blights**. Unless alerted to intruders, she is trying to figure out Davian Martikov's printing press.



Chapter XIII: The Amber Temple

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 229
- Chapter Progression 229
- Quick Notes 230
- Running the Chapter 230
- Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 231
- Dramatis Personae 231
- Variants & Revisions 233

The Ecstasy of Amber 236
- I. Into the Heart of Darkness 236
- II. In Vaults of Amber 238
- III. It Tolls for Thee 240

Areas of Note 243
- X1. Temple Facade 243
- X5. God of Secrets 243
- X6. Southeast Annex 243
- X7. Secret Scroll Repository 243
- X9. Lecture Hall 243
- X10. Northeast Annex 243
- X14. North Staircase 244
- X17. Upper West Hall 244
- X19. Potion Storage 244
- X22. Northwest Annex 244
- X27. Lich's Lair 244
- X30. Preserved Library 244
- X32. Lower East Hall 244
- X33. Amber Vaults 245
- X39. Plundered Treasury 247
- X40. Sealed Treasury 247
- X42. Amber Vault 247

The Amber Temple was once founded to safeguard the world from evil, but instead exists as a tomb for the good-intentioned. With its many paranormal and extraplanar inhabitants, the temple is a harrowing dungeon in its own right—but the *Companion* puts a different spin on it. The Amber Temple is not a test of the adventurers' mettle, but of their souls. It's easy to walk in. It's easy to find the vestiges. It's all so very, very easy—for the true monster is temptation. Sure, there's dangerous enemies that must be fought, but the lich Exethanter welcomes all visitors, and so his minions stand aside. So too do the vestiges welcome visitors, as does the Amber Temple itself—for under the *Companion*, it is now *alive*.

Genius Loci. The *Companion* heavily changes the Amber Temple, treating it as a place of utter danger but without suffocating your players with numerous battles—for the Amber Temple is *alive*. With its wardens long dead, the dark seed at its heart has born bitter fruit: a sapient malevolence. The Amber Temple is a genius loci, ever welcoming of visitors. Like Death House, the Temple is alive and it hungers for entertainment.

Author's Criticisms

The Amber Temple is far too crowded. So crowded, it cannot be a place of horror. Its halls are filled with golems, flameskulls, vampire spawn, specters, poltergeists, witches, wildlings, a lich, a mage, and an arcanaloth. The emptier the temple, the quieter, the far more terrifying it is. Further, at this point in the campaign—the penultimate chapter before delving into Castle Ravenloft—any good DM should be loathe to kill off a player character and wreck the party's cohesion so late into the campaign.

Where I believe *Curse of Strahd's* designers got it wrong is designing the Amber Temple as a traditional dungeon, instead of focusing on its pervasive evil and the risk of turning evil yourself. Combat is unnecessary here. The true danger of the Amber Temple is not nothics or slaad, but the evil already lurking deep in the hearts of our heroes, and—when faced with certain death—whether they will abandon their petty ideals for a chance to cling to life.

By simply being in the Amber Temple, neutral- and good-aligned characters risk death, accruing Death saving throws (that cannot be undone by healing or any magic but a greater restoration spell) at the following intervals: after ten minutes inside its dark halls, after one hour, and after eight hours. But the Temple is no glutton, oh no. Each and every time it preys upon its visitors' souls, the Temple offers them the opportunity to accept the evil already lurking in their hearts. Should such a creature accept, they become evil and are spared the Temple's wrath.

Enemies Revised. With the above variant in play, the Amber Temple has no need for so many hostile inhabitants. The *Companion* thereby cuts down on the many creatures in this chapter, focusing instead on fewer and more impactful battles. Neferon the arcanaloth is outright removed, judged to be an unnecessary and unfitting character with Exethanter and the Amber Temple itself in the mix. So deep into your campaign, you're loathe to kill off a player, and so, this chapter should have little to no combat. Most battles should be avoidable.

Skill Challenge. Like Death House, leaving the Amber Temple is no simple task. The *Companion* provides a Skill Challenge to escape the temple. Spellcasters—a wizard or sorcerer player character, the Barovian witches, Vilnius, or Kasimir Velikov—can harness the latent conjuration magic of Strahd's teleportation network to teleport out from the temple to the Tower of Khazan, or the menhirs at the Ruins of Berez, Yester Hill, or Old Bonegrinder. Doing so, however, enrages the Amber Temple. For this to work, you must have a spellcaster (even Exethanter as a last resort) facilitate the ritual to teleport out, so keep one alive.

Chapter Overview

The Amber Temple is the second-most gothic chapter in the campaign and concerns the temptation of power. Will the righteous sacrifice their morals to wield the power necessary to defeat the Devil Strahd? Will they turn on their more venal companions who dare accept the Dark Gifts? What happens if someone turns evil?

Ultimately, the greatest danger in the Amber Temple is the party's own desire for power. The Dungeon Master needs only to present these opportunities; the players will take it from there, possibly destroying their own camaraderie.

Chapter Progression

The Amber Temple is a sandbox, but some order can be applied to its story in the form of the *The Ecstasy of Amber* storyline:

Act I spans the initial exploration of the Amber Temple and the presentation of its immediate characters: Exethanter, Helwa, and Vilnius. Here, hints are made to the genius loci's existence when it preys upon the souls of good- and neutral-aligned characters.

Act II reveals the chapter's ticking clock: the Amber Temple *will* prey again on the adventurers' souls. Now with urgency, the adventurers must quickly explore the Amber Vaults on the bottom floor, thereby introducing the vestiges, Barovian witches, and Vilnius' treachery.

Act III concerns whether Kasimir receives his Dark Gift, and whether the adventurers erupt into an internecine battle over also accepting Dark Gifts of their own. It also spans attempts to leave the Amber Temple, which is a Skill Challenge in and of itself.

In the Aftermath, Rahadin—off-screen—may visit the Amber Temple to pray and find that the vaults have been opened. He then warns Strahd that the party may have secured new and dangerous powers.

Vestiges

Name	Area	Gift Summarized
Dahlver-Nar	X33C	*Reincarnate* (1x)
Delban	X33D	*Cone of Cold* (7x), cold resistance
Drizlash	X33C	Spider Climb
Fekre	X33A	*Contagion* (3x)
Great Taar Haak	X33E	25 Strength for 10 days
Khirad	X33D	*Scrying* (3x)
Norganas	X33F	*Finger of Death* (3x)
Savnok	X33B	*Mind Blank*
Seriach	X33F	2 **hell hounds**
Shami-Amourae	X33B	*Suggestion* (3x)
Sykane	X33A	Flight
Tarakamedes	X33B	Lichdom
Tenebrous	X42	Vampirism
Vampyr	X42	Secrecy & evasion
Vaund	X33F	+30 HP
Yog	X33E	Truesight
Zantras	X33E	+4 Charisma
Zhudun	X42	*Resurrection* (1x)
Zrin-Hala	X33A	*Lighting bolt* (3x)

Quick Notes

- Per the *Companion*…
  - The Amber Temple is alive, sentient, and malevolent, and good- or neutral-aligned creatures risk death the longer they remain in these evil halls. Periodically, it "tolls" for these characters, offering them the opportunity to change their alignment to evil, and inflicting a Death saving throw failure (that cannot be erased by any means until they leave the temple) if they refuse.
  - Several characters and most enemies have been removed from this chapter, namely Neferon, Rahadin, and the flameskulls.
  - The vestiges and their Dark Gifts have been revised and condensed, reducing the number from twenty to nine (one per vault, plus the three greater vestiges in X42).
  - Vilnius knows the password to three of the locked Amber Vaults.
- The *Companion* advocates for the theft or loss of one of the party's artifacts, preferably the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, which is then deposited in the Amber Temple, specifically Area X40.
- The *Companion* has added a spell scroll, *potions of greater healing*, and three diamonds (for the *revivify* spell) in Areas X7, X19, and X40, respectively.
- To open an Amber Vault one must succeed on a DC 25 Strength check or destroy the door (AC 15, 30 HP), which releases necrotic energy in a 30-foot-cube, inflicting 22 (4d10) necrotic damage to creatures within this cube, turning any creature reduced to 0 hit points to dust and bones.

Checklist

- Familiarize yourself with the vestiges, especially the ones that have stirred if you use the *Companion's* changes. See the Vestiges table.
- Ensure the adventurers achieve a short rest outside the Amber Temple, as this gives them a chance to spend their Hit Dice.
- When in doubt, always refrain from combat and inflicting damage, reducing the number of enemies even further, as you see fit. You do not want the adventurers to die to combat, but to the Amber Temple's "tolls."

Running the Chapter

Ordinarily, the Amber Temple is treated as a dungeon with many disparate threats all eager to murder the adventurers, but the *Companion* treats it as a horror. The strongest type of fear is the fear of the unknown, and when a character peers into the Amber Temple, all they should see is overwhelming darkness. That is why most enemies, notably Neferon, have been stripped from the chapter and darkvision has been denied. We want our adventurers to be alone in the vast, empty dark as a ravenous spirit watches on. This fear and tone can be ruined by even speaking to the flameskulls, hence their removal.

The genius' loci's deprivations are crucial to this horror. Simply entering the Temple provokes fear and agony. The overwhelming darkness and silence provides suspense. You invoke body horror whenever the Amber Temple preys upon good- and neutral-aligned characters. As the bell continues to toll, you want these adventurers to scramble from the temple, to scream at their companions—like Kasimir Velikov—that wish to delve deeper that now is the time to flee.

Resting & Damage. At most, the adventurers can achieve a short rest, which they will need after the events of Tsolenka Pass. As such, refrain from inflicting damage and forcing combat.

Advancement

If the adventurers are 8th level, and there are no more challenges in the campaign after this chapter but Castle Ravenloft, they advance to 9th level.

Time

The Amber Temple is an opportunity to play with time in your campaign. Though the adventurers would stay less than 24 hours, you could reveal that days or even a week have passed.

Weather

Thanks to the machinations of the Dark Powers, the weather outside worsens into a blizzard meant to drive the adventurers into the Amber Temple and keep them there until someone accepts a Dark Gift or the entire party goes mad.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
The Amber Temple	—	H	—	The temple's evil genius loci.
Barovian Witches	**Barovian Witch**	H	X32	Three witches searching for power.
Exethanter	Unique	F	X27	An amnesiac lich.
Helwa	CE **Gladiator**	H	X15	A Balinok wildling.
Jakarion	—	—	X17	The late master of Vilnius.
Kasimir Velikov	Unique	F	—	The dusk elf wizard responsible for his people's genocide.
Neferon	**Arcanaloth**	N	X5	An arcanaloth masquerading as a frail, old, human wizard.
Rahadin	Unique	H	—	Strahd's chamberlain.
Vilnius	NE **Mage**	N	X9	A scorched, terrified, opportunistic wizard.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Potion of Greater Healing* (X19)
- *Robe of Useful Items* (X5)
- *Spell Scroll of Remove Curse* (X17)
- *Spell Scroll of Wall of Fire* (X38)
- *Staff of Frost* (X17)
- *Tome of Understanding* (X20)
- *Wand of Secrets* (X2B)

Creatures

- Arcanaloth
- Barovian Witch
- Berserker
- Broom of Animated Attack
- Death Slaad
- Dire Wolf
- Exethanter
- Flameskull
- Ghast
- Gladiator
- Hell Hound
- Kasimir Velikov
- Mage
- Nothic
- Poltergeist
- Quasit
- Rahadin
- Shield Guardian
- Specter
- Stone Golem
- Vampire Spawn

Effects

- *Antipathy/Sympathy*
- Blizzard
- Covenant of…
  - …the Grave Wyrm
  - …Poxes
  - …the Corpse Star
  - …the Destroyer
  - …the Houndmaster
  - …the Kingmaker
  - …the Lich
  - …the Vampyr
- Dark Gift of…
  - Yrrga
  - Dahlver-Nar
  - Delban
  - Drizlash
  - Fekre
  - Great Taar Haak
  - Khirad
  - Norganas
  - Savnok
  - Seriach
  - Shami-Amourae
  - Sykane
  - Tarakamedes
  - Tenebrous
  - the Vampyr
  - Vaund the Evasive
  - Yog
  - Zantras
  - Zhudun
  - Zrin-Hala
- Extreme Cold
- Incants of Exethanter
- Spellbook of Vilnius

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

The Amber Temple

Per the *Companion's Genius Loci* variant, the Amber Temple alive, sapient, and malevolent. Its only purpose—is to corrupt mortals. The Temple cares nothing for the vestiges therein, giving them the same attention a dog pays to its fleas. Throughout the chapter, the spirit watches from afar, attempting to drive the adventurers to the brink.

Abilities. Except for Its ability to impose death saving throw failures, the Amber Temple is largely powerless. It has minor telekinetic abilities, can whisper to Its inhabitants, and cause the entire temple to shiver or shatter. It can also control the undead in its halls, to a degree, sending them after the adventurers, which it does if they attempt to leave before It's had its fun.

Roleplaying the Genius Loci. The Amber Temple seldom speaks (and can only do so telepathically), but its attention can often be felt—as if a warm knife is scraping against one's flesh. The sensation always leaves the victim feeling as if someone is behind them, and there is nothing the Temple likes more than someone looking over their shoulder and into the overwhelming darkness. Personify its darkness as "overwhelming," "ravenous," and "amused." The God of Secrets statue in Area X5 is the closest thing It has to a face, which it can reshape to grin in the magical darkness.

Barovian Witches

Three **Barovian witches** from Castle Ravenloft are exploring the temple. Expanded upon by the *Companion*, they've already made contact with Delban from Area 33D.

Revision. The witches don't attack the adventurers on sight and they recognize both Kasimir Velikov and Vilnius.

Members. These witches are:

- Gretchen, the youngest witch with toadlike eyes. She has accepted the Dark Gift of Delban, the Star of Ice and Hate. She can cast *cone of cold* (spell save DC 15) seven times, and has resistance to cold damage. As part of her Dark Gift, fire now terrifies her.

- Matilda, a miserly old crone destined to accept the Dark Gift of Tarakamedes if given the chance. She loudly complains that she deserves the next Dark Gift.
- Meredith, a warty voyeur and ruthless gossiper, destined to take the Dark Gift of the Kingmaker if given the chance. If you ran the Death in the Dead of Night storyline for Chapter 6, Meredith is the one that shepherded the small horde of zombies that accosted the adventurers; perhaps they recognize her, having caught a glimpse of her.

Roleplaying the Coven. The witches are craven opportunists, and unlike in *Curse of Strahd*, they do not attack the adventurers outright. Instead, they first reach for words until a silent understanding comes between the three—the desire to test out Delban's icy powers. Only then do they attack the party. Alternatively, they may manipulate the party into breaching vaults for them, attacking when someone is about to take a Dark Gift. The witches spill all their secrets if threatened with death (especially the last one standing), including that they teleported here from Castle Ravenloft, and can teleport the adventurers to the Tower of Khazan, or some other locale other than the castle, which is warded against intruders.

Exethanter

Exethanter has lost his memory, but welcomes guests to the Amber Temple. He does not remember his own name, nor where his spellbook is (his ancient, bronze-plated spellbook is on a rotted divan nearby, and his phylactery is hidden in Area X28; it can only be destroyed by taking 20 or more radiant damage from a single source).

Roleplaying Exethanter. Exethanter is cordial and passive until harmed. He is aware that his moth-eaten memory is failing, but cannot do anything to stop it. A spark of his old personality is visible whenever he answers questions about the Amber Temple, otherwise his eyes burn dully, and he soon forgets to whom he is speaking.

- He first asks the adventurers, "Do I know you?" and collects their names, remarking to one adventurer, "Perhaps I knew your great-great-grandsire… long have been the centuries… You look just like him, you know…" (Exethanter makes this remark even if it is impossible that the character's ancestors were in Barovia or met Exethanter, even before the Mists closed in and removed Barovia from the world).
- If Kasimir Velikov is present, Exethanter remarks, "Ah, Master Velikov… It was just yesterday that your sister came calling. I see you have followed in her footsteps. Wonderful. She found particular delight in the Vaults of Maverus—Shami-Amourae found herself a new disciple that day." At the adventurers' urging, Kasimir can ask Exethanter to lead them to Area X42; the lich obliges.
- If the adventurers admit their desire to explore the Amber Vaults, Exethanter eagerly shares the passwords (Shalx, Maverus, Harkotha, Thangob—as well as "Geistmoore" and "Bendrelt" as the names to the Breached Vault and Ghastly Vault, implying that Exethanter is unaware they have been exposed).
- Exethanter explains how to make contact with the Amber Sarcophagi, but does not share the consequences of accepting a Dark Gift, nor can he remember which vestige is where. If you use the *Vestiges Revised*, he also explains that the vestiges slumber for eons, that only a handful stir at a time, and that a vestige may only grant its Dark Gift once a decade or so.

Revisions. How you implement the *Companion's* revisions can drastically change Exethanter:

- If you use the *Genius Loci* variant, the Amber Temple has been feeding off of Exethanter and is responsible for his amnesia. The lich is somewhat aware of it and rambles on, "Long have I languished here as my mind collects dust and my magic fades… and the evil grows stronger. Is that my legacy? To be cattle? The insult is unbearable… but then again… do I know you?"
- If you wish to keep the flameskulls in the chapter, they can still be made passive, for Exethanter raised these long-dead wizards as his servants. Wishing to share the Amber Temple with all, the flameskulls would only attack those that harm their master or the temple itself.
- If you reject both the *Genius Loci* and *Enemies Revised* variants, attribute Exethanter's memory loss to Neferon—upset that Exethanter would share the Amber Temple's knowledge with all, the arcanaloth cursed the lich so that it could hoard this arcana itself.

Helwa

Helwa is the leader of a band of Balinok wildlings using the Amber Temple for shelter as the blizzard rages outside. Her forces include five human **berserkers** and a **dire wolf** (which is immune to being charmed or frightened). All are servants of Strahd that attack the adventurers on sight.

Revision. Helwa and her men are no longer servants of Strahd, but souls already corrupted by the Amber Temple (per the *Genius Loci* variant). Never before have she and her men stayed in the temple this long, but the blizzard outside has forced them to remain, rendering them vulnerable to the Temple's deprivations. After nearly dying to the temple's evil, Helwa and two of her three berserkers accepted the genius loci's offer, becoming chaotic evil and attacking their companions.

Jakarion

Jakarion's charred corpse is found in Area X17, alongside his accursed *staff of frost* that twists the first person to touch it, imprinting on them the flaw, "I crave power above all else, and will do anything to obtain more of it."

Revision. With the *Enemies Revised* variant and *The Ecstasy of Amber* storyline, Jakarion was murdered by the wildlings, not incinerated.

Kasimir Velikov

Kasimir is central to this chapter, as described in Chapter 9. If excluded by the adventurers, Kasimir follows them to Amber Temple anyway—perhaps even with six, sickly dusk elf **guards**. With the *Genius Loci* variant, these guards begin dropping like flies as the Amber Temple preys on their souls; for them, the bell tolls even earlier than it does for the adventurers, thereby demonstrating the danger of the genius loci.

Patrina's Past. By speaking with Exethanter, Kasimir learns that his sister Patrina came here and accepted the Dark Gift of Shami-Amourae but did not accept the Dark Gift of the Vampyr (for reasons left unknown; perhaps she did not wish to be undead).

Kasimir's Dark Gift. Inevitably, Kasimir hears the whisper of Zhudun the Corpse Star and is drawn to Area X42, where he accepts the vestige's Dark Gift. At your discretion, he becomes evil, without making a Charisma saving throw. Simply becoming evil does not mean Kasimir will attack the party—it would not be in his best interest to alienate Strahd's greatest enemies. At most, he defends himself.

Neferon

Neferon hungers for arcana, especially magic items. He can be bribed with a magic item, but hungers especially for the *Sunsword*, *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, and the *Tome of Strahd*. Similarly, he is loath to part with any of these items, should they already be in the Amber Temple. If you use *The Symbol Stolen* (see *Companion*, Chapter 1) and have the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* deposited here by Rahadin, Neferon deserves to remain in the chapter so the adventurers can slaughter the arcanaloth and retrieve the artifact from its corpse.

Revision. The *Companion* outright removes Neferon from this chapter, judging him to be an unnecessary and unfitting character with Exethanter in the temple, along with the added personification to the Amber Temple itself.

If you wish to still include Neferon, tie it to Exethanter: the yugoloth is responsible for Exethanter's failing memory. Over the course of many years, Neferon has whispered sickness into Exethanter's ear, wearing down his mind as wind makes stone into sand. Neferon's motivation is purely selfish. It has always disagreed with Exethanter's philosophy of openly sharing the Amber Temple's arcana with visitors. By poisoning Exethanter's mind, Neferon has secured its place as the sole guardian, owner, and arbiter of the temple's forbidden knowledge, and is able to deny such arcana to outsiders. Slaying Neferon frees Exethanter's mind and earns the lich's gratitude.

Rahadin

Rahadin irregularly visits the Amber Temple to pray for the salvation of his lord, as described in the *Rahadin's Prayer* special event.

Revision. The *Companion* removes Rahadin from this chapter, requiring him to remain alive for the *Wedding at Ravenloft* or any incursion into Castle Ravenloft.

Vilnius

Vilnius came to the Amber Temple with his late master, was incinerated by flameskulls (or butchered by Helwa, if you remove the flameskulls from this chapter). Vilnius has been surviving off vermin for days now, aided by his invisible quasit familiar.

Roleplaying Vilnius. Vilnius is treacherous; he will use the adventurers for as long as he can, until he secures power from a vestige and can find a way safely down from Mount Ghakis. He has no intention of sharing power, and cannot resist the offer of a Dark Gift. If left to his own devices, Vilnius accepts the Dark Gift of Seriach, the Hell Hound Whisperer. Inevitably, he turns on the adventurers, petrified that the secrets of the Amber Temple will be shared with others.

Revisions. Some revisions are made to Vilnius' character:

- He has only been in the temple for a day or two.
- Vilnius and his late master stayed in the Tower of Khazan (also known as Van Richten's Tower); the adventurers may have found his journal.
- With the flameskulls removed from this chapter, Vilnius' burns can be attributed to a *fireball* spell he cast at the amber golem; Vilnius was caught in the spell.
- Thanks to his late master, Vilnius knows the passwords to three of the four unopened amber vaults: the Vault of Thangob, the Vault of Shalx, and the Vault of Harkotha.
- An evil soul, he has been spared from the Temple's deprivations—alas, Vilnius was not always evil, but instead a neutral-aligned soul that accepted darkness instead of death. He is aware that the Amber Temple is alive (per the *Genius Loci* variant) and preys upon good- and neutral-souls that remain in these wicked halls for too long—a fact he is quick to share with the adventurers.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

Additional Loot

The Amber Temple was once stocked with potions and spell scrolls, but in *Curse of Strahd*, all provisions have disappeared over the long years. If there is any place in this campaign the players ought to find potions, scrolls, and diamonds for the *revivify* spell, it would be the Amber Temple. The *Companion* has added a surviving spell scroll to Area X7, *potions of greater healing* to Area X19, and three diamonds for *revivify* to Area X40. Acquiring these items are not without their own challenges.

Darkvision Denied

So great is the Amber Temple's evil that the darkness therein obscures the darkvision mortal characters—humanoids and beasts specifically. Humanoids must wield torches or rely on magic to light these depths.

Enemies Revised

The Amber Temple is not a test of mettle, but a test of the soul. There is no need to stock this dungeon with enemies—in fact, it should feature the least amount of combat in the game. As such, many enemies have been removed from this chapter, or at least made neutral:

- Neferon the **arcanaloth** has been removed, judged it to be an unnecessary and unfitting inhabitant of the Amber Temple, what with Exethanter already there. However, if you wish to still include Neferon, tie it to Exethanter: the arcanaloth is responsible for Exethanter's failing memory. Slaying Neferon frees the curse on Exethanter.
- belonged in the first place.
- The six **flameskulls** have been removed, chiefly because they can speak of the temple's lore and history, and such knowledge would undermine horror's greatest foundation: the fear of the unknown. If you wish to keep the flameskulls, they should be passive—for Exethanter intended to share the Amber Temple's secrets with all, and would have ordered his servants to leave visitors alone, so long as they do not attempt to harm or seal the temple.
- **Rahadin** does not visit the temple while the party's here.
- The **vampire spawn** in Area X42 have been removed, as has the **death slaad** in X33E.
- The number of **specters** and **poltergeists** has been greatly reduced.

Escaping the Temple

With the aid of Vilnius, Kasimir Velikov, Exethanter, the Barovian witches (who teleported here from Castle Ravenloft), or even Neferon, the adventurers may access Strahd's teleportation network in Area X42 to teleport out of the Amber Temple. Strahd has warded his teleportation network against incursions into his castle—except the accident described in the Vallaki chapter—so the adventurers are instead teleported to Khazan's Tower (or the menhirs at Yester Hill, the Ruins of Berez, or Old Bonegrinder). This is conducted via a Skill Challenge. See *The Ecstasy of Amber* for details.

Genius Loci

The Amber Temple is alive. With its wardens long dead, a dark seed has taken root, watered by the blood of visitors and warmed by the evil vestiges. This seed has borne bitter fruit: a sapient malevolence. The Amber Temple has become a genius loci, self-aware and self-important. It welcomes the evil-hearted as long lost children at last coming home. For others, merely stepping foot in the Amber Temple is enough to spark terror and drive a scream from their lips as they weep tears of blood.

Entering the Temple. Merely stepping foot in the Amber Temple is enough to spark terror and agony.

- Good-aligned characters are struck with fear and nausea, and begin to taste bile at the back of their throats.
- A whimper is forced out of any neutral-aligned characters as they begin to cry tears of blood—for though the Amber Temple detests the good-hearted, even that contempt pales for middling souls. It's through this body horror that you communicate how dangerous even stepping foot into this sanctum of evil is for all those not already consumed by such darkness.
- Evil-aligned characters feel at ease—even at home—and find the temple's otherwise suffocating aura warm and welcoming.

Tolls. The genius loci upon the souls of good- and neutral-aligned characters that enter its dark halls. Simply being in the Amber Temple puts one's soul at hazard. These are known as "tolls" and are a mechanic of tension, terror, and time management. At appropriate intervals, the Amber Temple gnaws at these characters, presenting them a choice: change their alignment to evil or suffer a Death saving throw (these special Death saving throws cannot be erased by any means except leaving the temple; even receiving magical healing fails to erase a failure). Accepting this offer erases previous Death saving throws and inures the character to extreme cold while within the Temple.

Pacing the Tolls. It is notoriously difficult or frustrating to track time in 5th Edition. By no means should you ever count by round, as it will grind your game to a halt. Instead, a toll occurs when appropriate. Follow these guidelines:

- As described in *The Ecstasy of Amber*, the tolls should come after certain milestones are reached in the chapter, like meeting its characters or exploring some vaults. The third and final toll can be sensed coming, setting the stage for a desperate escape from the temple through a Skill Challenge, much like the one from Death House.
- If left solely up to time, the first toll should come within the first hour, or even 10 minutes; the second comes within another hour; the third occurs within six hours or when the adventurers are attempting to leave.
- If left solely up to exploration, the first toll should come after half the Amber Temple is explored, the second after another half has been explored, and the third as the adventurers are attempting to leave.
- If the adventurers attempt to rest, they risk tolls. If they attempt a short rest, the toll occurs immediately afterwards. Any attempt at a long rest will prove deadly.

Describing the Tolls. The tolls grow in severity:

- Victims suffer nausea and heartburn during the first toll as ulcers bloom in their stomach, their fingernails fall off, and they weep tears of blood.
- Victims faint (becoming unconscious for a few minutes) during the second toll, as if some great and wretched beast has blown upon the torch of their soul. This fainting spell is not without a nightmare—the victim dreams of becoming dust. They wake sweating, shaking, and screaming, covered in bloody vomit.
- The third and final toll leaves a victim paralyzed. They begin to convulse, choking on their own vomit and blood. While still conscious, they gradually crumble, starting at the extremities, into bloody viscera. After dying, this viscera slowly evaporates into a red fog that snakes out of the temple and adds itself the Mists of Ravenloft. A victim has one hour to be resurrected by a *resurrection* spell, otherwise they are lost forever.

Vestiges Revised

The Amber Temple holds twenty vestiges, each eager to grant their Dark Gift to a mortal and thereby sow further evil in the world. Twenty is far too many and investigating each and every one grinds your game down to a halt. Indeed, it is a common complaint that the Amber Temple is "too crowded" or "too loud," and touring it is close to touring a zoo. Worse, many Dark Gifts are redundant (i.e., Sykane's *raise dead* and Zhudun's *resurrection* and Dahlver-Nar's *reincarnation* are all very similar) or hardly gothic enough for Ravenloft (e.g., Zrin-Hala's *lightning bolt* spell). The *Companion* heavily revises the vestiges.

Charisma Save. When a character accepts a Dark Gift, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw (up from 12) or become evil, if they were not already. This DC increases by 2 for every additional Dark Gift the same character accepts.

Spell Save DC. An oversight in *Curse of Strahd*, the module does not specify the spell save DC that a spell granted by a Dark Gift is cast at. The *Companion* chooses a nice, round DC 15.

Zero Sum. Per this variant, a vestige can only grant its Dark Gift once a decade, after which it becomes dormant. Any attempts to contact the vestige, even by touching its sarcophagus, fails to stir the spirit. This spares you from the redundancy of the entire party barraging Strahd with *lightning bolt* spells. As such, a Barovian witch (see *Dramatis Personae*) has already claimed Delban's Dark Gift.

Conscious Vestiges. Under this variant, the *Companion* slims the number of vestiges down from twenty to nine, one of which has already been claimed by a recent visitor. The following vestiges have stirred:

- The three greater vestiges (Tenebrous, Zhudun, and the Vampyr) in Area X42.
- Fekre the Queen of Poxes in the Vault of Shalx (Area X33A). Tarakamedes the Grave Wyrm in the Vault of Maverus (Area X33B).
- Zantras the Kingmaker in the Ghastly Vault (Area X33C).
- Delban the Star of Ice and Hate in the Breached Vault (Area X33D). Notably, Delban's Dark Gift is unavailable, having already been claimed by Gretchen, a **Barovian witch** met in Area X32.
- Great Taar Haak the Five-Headed Destroyer in the Vault of Harkotha (Area X33E).
- Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer in the Vault of Thangob (Area X33F), which will be claimed by Vilnius.

Revised Dark Gifts. The Dark Gifts have been revised and overhauled how similar and ungothic many of the Dark Gifts are. For these new Dark Gifts, see "Covenants" in Appendix C (i.e., *Covenant of the Corpse Star* for Zhudun's overhauled Dark Gift). The old Dark Gifts are included in Appendix C as well. The changes to these Gifts are explained below, which now require the beneficiary to fulfill a covenant with the vestige or suffer a punishment.

- Fekre's Dark Gift (*Covenant of Poxes*) now also makes the beneficiary immune to disease. They must infect others with your bodily fluids, however, or become a leper.
- Great Taar Haak's Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Destroyer*) is changed from granting the beneficiary a Strength of 25 for 10 days to permanently raising their Strength score by 4 (up to 22). However, if the beneficiary does not entertain Great Taar Haak, their Strength score is reduced, possibly killing them. Further, the covenant cannibalizes Yog the Invincible's Dark Gift (+30 hit point maximum).
- Tarakamedes' (*Covenant of the Grave Wyrm*) now imposes a Charisma saving throw to avoid feasting on corpses and grave dirt while the beneficiary is not in immediate danger.
- Tenebrous' Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Lich*) cannibalizes Norganas' gift, granting the *finger of death* spell, which must be used on humanoids to begin the path to lichdom. Becoming a lich no longer makes you an NPC under the DM's control because the beneficiary must still become a 17th level wizard, which is beyond the scope of this campaign. Until lichdom is achieved, the beneficiary must sacrifice magic items or spells to Tenebrous or become a nothic.
- The reward of Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer's Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Houndmaster*) remains the same, but now requires the monthly sacrifice of meat and hounds to Seriach, and causes canines to detest the beneficiary.
- The Vampyr's Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Vampyr*) turns the beneficiary into a dhampir. To become a full vampire, they must also murder and drink the blood of a true vampire (e.g., Strahd). Becoming a full vampire does not render them an NPC under the DM's control, but spares the DM the headache of having a vampire in the party, since the beneficiary must now murder and drink Strahd's blood, which would end the campaign anyway.
- Zantras the Kingmaker's Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Kingmaker*) cannibalizes Shami-Amourae's Dark Gift (casting *suggestion* thrice). Further, the Kingmaker requires regular and growing tribute for its power.
- Zhudun the Corpse Star's Dark Gift (*Covenant of the Corpse Star*) cannibalizes the gift of Sykane (casting *raise dead*) and also now allows the beneficiary to cast *revivify* thrice, *raise dead* twice, and *resurrection* once, all as an action and without material components. However, every time someone is raised from the dead, the beneficiary must murder an innocent stranger and dedicate their soul to Zhudun by carving the victim's name into their flesh under starlight—otherwise they and every person they've raised from the dead dies.

The Ecstasy of Amber

The Amber Temple is both a sandbox and a story unto itself, one written by the players. With its open, nonlinear layout, it is both difficult and unnecessary to provide a structured narrative. Instead, the adventurers are allowed to explore the sanctum at their leisure, all while the shadows close in. Their only limit is time—for the Amber Temple preys upon their souls soon enough, as described in the *Genius Loci* variant.

Though this chapter is a sandbox, some narrative is still applicable, divided by when the Amber Temple's genius loci preys upon the souls of the good- and neutral-aligned.

I. Into the Heart of Darkness

A sense of evil pervades the temple, a sense so strong it confronts the adventurers as they enter Area X1. Non-evil-aligned characters must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for the next minute (the source of fear being the darkness lurking at the bottom of the stairs), and are unable to enter the temple while frightened. On a 15 or lower, the character flees the Temple screaming, out into the blizzard. A frightened character may repeat their saving throw at the end of their turn, ending the effect early on a success. After 1 minute, or on a success, a character is immune to this effect until they leave the temple.

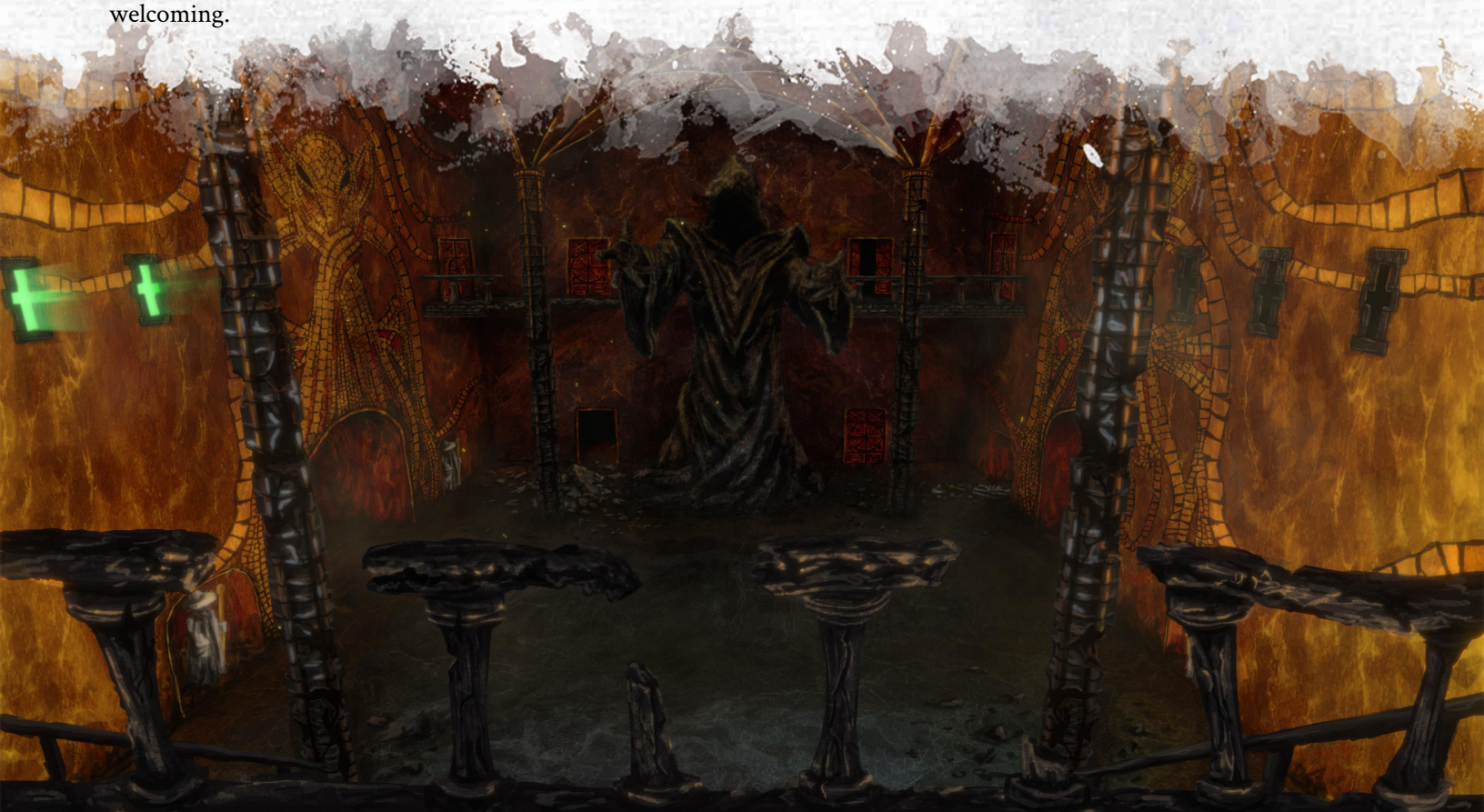
- Good-aligned characters are struck with fear and nausea, and begin to taste bile at the back of their throats.
- A whimper is forced out of any neutral-aligned characters as they begin to cry tears of blood that evaporate into red mist—for though the Amber Temple detests the good-hearted, even that contempt pales for middling souls.
- Evil-aligned characters feel at ease—even at home—and find the temple's otherwise suffocating aura warm and welcoming.

It's through this body horror that you communicate how dangerous even stepping foot into this sanctum of evil is for all those not already consumed by such darkness.

Darkvision Denied. As described in Variants & Revisions above, mortal humanoids lose their natural darkvision whilst in the Amber Temple. Torches lit by continual flame spells burn in sconces along the wall, able to be picked up by visitors. The party quickly sees that these torches light what their failed darkvision cannot. Read the following:

> The darkness is overwhelming. Those of you blessed with better sight find yourself just as blind and helpless as a human. Only the torches burning in sconces along the wall manage to push back the darkness. Torches—gods above, what have you been reduced to?

Fleeing Wildlings. When the adventurers at last begin to descend the steps, they hear several screams. Out from the darkness sprints three Balinok wildlings—**berserkers** ordinarily met in Area X5 whose alignments are not CE, as dictated by *Curse of Strahd*, but N-aligned. Helwa and her two other men gave into the evil of the Amber Temple and turned on their brethren. The first barrels past the adventurers, screaming, no weapons drawn, and flings himself into the blizzard outside. The second suffers a heart attack—his third Death saving throw failure imposed by the Amber Temple itself—at the foot of the stairs. When the third wildling turns back to rescue his companion—in vain, of course—a handaxe is hurled out from the darkness, striking him dead. The lead adventurer sees Helwa's bloodstained face fade back into the darkness.



If the adventurers go back for the wildling that escaped the Amber Temple, they find him on his knees outside, loudly praying to the ancestor spirits for forgiveness. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check is required to interrogate him, in which case he blabbers on about "the Evil," shouting "It is alive! Alive! Too long did we stay! It preyed upon our very souls, but always did it offer mercy! Mercy from death to those who embraced the darkness of their hearts." Before sprinting into the blizzard, the wildling urges the adventurers to turn back.

As part of this encounter, reduce the number of **berserkers** found with Helwa the gladiator from five to two. They continue to roam the Amber Temple, now driven to bloodlust and evil. They and their **dire wolf** might strike at any moment.

Helwa's Charge

The Amber Temple demands blood, and Helwa is all too eager to oblige. She (a **gladiator**) and her forces (two **berserkers** and a **dire wolf**) soon boil out of the darkness, charging the adventurers—likely in Area X5. These barbarians detest subterfuge and rush out to meet the adventurers head-on in glorious combat. Helwa, for her part, is astride the dire wolf. Read the following:

> Barbarians boil out from the overwhelming darkness—two screeching men wielding greataxes, and a woman astride a dire wolf, armed with spear and shield!

When Helwa is slain, read this to the character that scored the killing blow:

> You cut down the wildling woman. Her dying screech echoes throughout these dismal halls, full of pain and hate. As the light leaves her eyes, you are filled with sudden warmth… and on the heels of that warmth, a wave of sick, sadistic, alien satisfaction originating not in your heart but somewhere out in the overwhelming darkness.



If the character is in sight of the God of Secrets statue in Area X5, add: "Your eyes and heart are drawn instinctively to that statue, whose face is cloaked in swarming darkness. Though your eyes cannot pierce those shadows, you somehow know that the statue is grinning now, when moments ago its face was blank."

Vilnius Emerges

Shortly after Helwa's men have been slain, Vilnius emerges from Area X9 (if he was not already met) and attempts to join the party. Tailoring the details to fit the party's current location, read the following:

> A badly scorched human appears in the darkness. His robes are scorched and soiled, his unkempt hair has been half burned away, and his face and arms are covered with blisters.
>
> "Thank the gods you've dealt with those brutes. They cut down my master and almost got me as well!" As if ignorant to his disastrous appearance, the man sweeps an arm out in a gesture somehow both self-aggrandizing and cringing. "I am Vilnius, wizard and explorer, and I… require your help."

Vilnius explains his predicament: his late master, Jakarion, brought him here to the Amber Temple in the search for knowledge—knowledge Vilnius, of course, would never use!—but encountered an "amber golem." Vilnius hurled a fireball at it, but was caught in the blast. "My grand mistake," he bitterly laughs, straining to appear jovial, "the first thing we are taught upon learning that spell is to ensure there's enough space for it." The next day, the "wildlings" arrived, taking shelter from the blizzard raging out. "They were quite peaceful—at first," Vilnius explains, "we shared bread and wine and stories." However, within a day of staying in the Temple, several of the wildlings began to show signs of illness—fingernails falling off, vomiting blood. Several changed. They slew Jakarion and turned on each other. "And then you arrived—my great saviors."

Vilnius is clearly frazzled. The invisible **quasit** perched on his shoulder can be detected with a successful Wisdom (Perception) check (contested against the quasit's Dexterity (Stealth) check, which is made with advantage). On a success, a character can discern small movements on the **mage's** shoulder: cloth being ruffled, nearby hair being blown back, etc.

Vilnius proposes they explore the vaults together. If the adventurers refuse, Vilnius explains that he knows several of the passwords to open such vaults. He is unaware of the three Barovian witches below, as is he ignorant of the temple's many other dangers.

For Whom the Bell Tolls I

With Helwa defeated, Vilnius met, and the temple somewhat explored, the genius loci at last preys upon the souls of good- and neutral-aligned characters. Read the following to the characters:

> A seizure rocks your body. Your blood howls in your ears. Your heart feels as if it is about to burst. There could be no good in coming to a place so utterly evil, you know that now, and that evil hungers… It hungers for you. You feel your soul tremble and wither like a lone flower staring down a long, harsh winter.
>
> Alas… a voice… a sense… how easy it would be to abandon your petty ideals, your fantasies of honor, to embrace the evil in your heart, the evil that has always lurked there, seeds begging for just a little more water, water that you have denied them. All at once, your mind enters a state of clarity: the evil of this place is offering you salvation, if you are but willing to embrace the darkness.

If an adventurer chooses to embrace the darkness, their alignment changes to evil. If they refuse, they suffer a Death saving throw failure that cannot be erased until they leave the Amber Temple.

Evil Embraced. If an adventurer chooses to embrace the darkness, their alignment changes to evil and they become immune to the temple's extreme cold. Read the following:

> So easily do you give in. You absolute coward. Disappointment washes over you, a wave from outside your heart, as if you have attracted the dark attention of some greater being, a being that has judged you, has found you lacking. You embrace the evil you have nursed in your heart—as if you needed an excuse.
>
> All at once, the foreboding, suffocating air of this place becomes a welcome source of warmth in these bitterly cold mountains. The Temple welcomes you, indeed.

Toll the Dead. If an adventurer refuses to embrace evil, they suffer a Death saving throw failure that cannot be erased until they leave the Amber Temple. Read the following:

> Agony drives you to your knees and the world flickers, as if your soul was but a candlelight menaced by a merciless draft. The heartburn in your chest hints at freshly blossomed ulcers. Your tears are bright red, and when you blink away the blood, your vision has a crimson tinge and you dimly realize that your fingernails have fallen off, the soft underflesh screaming in the bitter cold.
>
> There is no doubt in your mind that this place is pure evil, and a soul as bright as yours cannot last here much longer.

Others. If Vilnius is present, he shows no sign of pain, for he is already evil. Kasimir, however, doubles over with pain.

II. In Vaults of Amber

Act II oversees the exploration of the Amber Vaults (Area X33) on the bottom half of the temple. It is here where the adventurers are tempted with power. See Area X33 in *Areas of Note* below for details on how to present each vestige (whether all are awake, or only a select few have stirred, per the *Vestiges Revised* variant).

Act II is divided into two events, ending with another Toll. On the eastern half of the temple, a coven of witches are met in Area X32. On the western half, Vilnius opens the Vault of Thangob (Area X33F), accepts Seriach's Dark Gift, and turns on the adventurers. These events unfold naturally as the adventurers explore the vaults. However, it is recommended that the witches are dealt with first.

A Pox Upon Your House!

A coven of three **Barovian witches**—Gretchen, Matilda, and Meredith—are bickering loudly in Area X32 as they attempt to breach the vault of Area X33A. The adventurers may sneak up on them. The witches do not attack the adventurers on sight. Read the following:

> On the far end of this amber, dusk-choked hall are three women in tattered black gowns, armed with brooms and pointed, black hats. Witches, straight out of the fables. They are bickering loudly, and flinging strange words at a vault door. One is ancient, another is middle aged and covered in warts, and the third is a young, frog-eyed woman.

If the adventurers parley, the witches entertain them with simple questions ("And from where did you come, pretties?") and answering basic lore about the Amber Temple that they have gleaned from years in Castle Ravenloft.

Kasimir Velikov. If Kasimir is present, the witches recognize and mock him ("Oh, and look who it is!" says Matilda, "Kasimir Velikov! Kinslayer, we name you! By what bargain have you made your way here? Do you seek redemption in these blasted halls, Kasimir? You will find nothing of the sort. There exists no tide that can wash away your sins, murderer!"). Kasimir replies, "And what would the Devil's housecats know of this place? Back to Castle Ravenloft with you, before my companions realize you are better eliminated now than later."

Vilnius. If Vilnius is present, the Barovian witches do not recognize him but the dying remnants of his master's aura ("Oh, and behold!" says Meredith, "The apprentice of Jakarion, that jackal! For all his spells, your master died screaming, did he not? He is a lesser mage and you are by far the worst of his apprentices, you scorched, slack-jawed, fool!" Gretchen then adds, in a coy voice, "It need not be this way… You have lost a master, but always have need of a thrall. Join us, boy, and you may lick the scraps of our magic from the floor. A better education than that fool Jakarion could have ever offered you!"). Vilnius, a craven, looks to the floor in shame, clenching his fists in impotent anger.

Betrayal. If the adventurers appear weak, the witches look at each other and seem to come to an unspoken agreement. Gretchen, the putrid witch, turns and shouts, "By the Star of Ice and Hate, I condemn you to a frigid death!" and begins to cast cone of cold. Roll for initiative—Gretchen's spell does not finish until her first turn.

Tactics. The witches are likely to die in a single round. They follow these tactics:

- The witches' **brooms of animated attack** launch themselves at the adventurers.
- Gretchen casts *cone of cold* (spell save DC 15) on her first turn. However, if she is slain before that, she twists in her death throes and unleashes the spell on an Amber Vault door, destroying and releasing its necrotic energy, possibly killing her companions as well.
- Matilda casts *sleep* as a 2nd level spell, targeting a smaller clump of individuals.
- Meredith casts *Tasha's hideous laughter* on the party's warrior, assuming them to be the least wise.

Last Witch Standing. When the last witch remains, she shouts, "Mercy! Mercy! The secrets I keep are well worth my life, so mercy, and I shall share them!" If the adventurers relent, she explains that she and her sisters teleported here from Castle Ravenloft and she can teleport the party from the Amber Temple before the genius loci preys upon them a third time. "Not back to Castle Ravenloft, mind you, for the Devil's wards are too strong, but I can get us to other locales! The Tower of Khazan! The menhirs of Berez or Bonegrinder! Yester Hill, even!"

Cry Havoc

Vilnius' late master told him the password to the Vault of Thangob ("Thangob"). If Vilnius reaches Area X33F, he opens the vault and immediately accepts the Dark Gift of Seriach, the Hell Hound Whisperer. Read the following:

> "At last," murmurs Vilnius, "the arcana I was promised. The Vault of Thangob…"
>
> At this last word—"Thangob"—the door fades away, leaving an opening to the amber-glazed chamber beyond.

Now imbued with what he believes to be power far greater than he has received, Vilnius summons his two **hell hounds** and betrays the adventurers. Read the following:

> "Yes! Yes!" Vilnius cries, as he touches his hand to the amber sarcophagus. The stench of brimstone fills the room but you know not from where—until the wizard turns back, his eyes aflame. In a fiendish tongue he cries out, sulfurous smoke issuing from his every pore.
>
> A foul heat warms the chamber as the smoke gather and erupt into twin flames. Out from this haze leap two hounds raised up from Hell itself. Vilnius points at you and shouts a command in that fiendish tongue. The hell hounds growl and bark, magma dripping from their maws like saliva. The beasts pounce!

Tactics. Vilnius (a **mage**), his **quasit** and his **hell hounds** roll for initiative separately. On the first round, a hell hound breathes fire at the adventurers. The second hell hound follows suit on the second turn. For the sake of balancing this encounter, Vilnius' action for his first turn is spent on commanding the hell hounds. On his second turn, he casts *fireball*.

For Whom the Bell Tolls II

With the vaults (mostly) explored, the Amber Temple once again takes its toll from good- and neutral-aligned characters. Read the following to these characters:

> It's happening again. You feel the seizure coming on. Foam spits its way to your lips, and your eyes roll backwards as you crash to the floor, your heart screeching. Bile works its way up your throat.
>
> "Give in," the voice urges you, soft and concerned, a mother's voice, a mother desperate to save her child. "Give in…"
>
> It would be so easy, would it not? So easy to abandon your petty ideals… To admit the truth… To admit that always have you been a monster, too craven to water the seed of your darkness. The Amber Temple is offering you freedom… the freedom to be yourself at long last. Dare you take it?

If an adventurer chooses to embrace the darkness, their alignment changes to evil. If they refuse, they suffer a Death saving throw failure that cannot be erased until they leave the Amber Temple.

Evil Embraced. If an adventurer chooses to embrace the darkness, their alignment changes to evil, they become immune to the temple's extreme cold, and their first Death saving throw failure is erased. Read the following:

> The pain snaps off like a broken bone, leaving you screaming, screaming, screaming in agony until at last that agony vanishes and you are left with a warm, alien satisfaction. Its the temple. You know it in your heart. The Amber Temple is satisfied. It has broken you in ways you never thought possible…
>
> And of possibilities, there are now many as you look upon this world, at last unshackled by the burdens of morality.

Toll the Dead. If an adventurer refuses to embrace evil, they suffer another Death saving throw failure that cannot be erased until they leave the Amber Temple. These characters fall unconscious for several minutes and cannot be woken up by any means. Read the following:

> The agony swells until at last your mind flickers, as if a great and wretched beast has blown upon the very torch of your soul just to see it quaver. Your consciousness gives out, as if an expended muscle, and you fall into nightmarish slumber.
>
> You're not certain for how long you were there, twitching and whimpering in the dark, only that in your nightmares you slowly disintegrated into bloody viscera that would soon evaporate into red fog, joining the Mists of Ravenloft.
>
> That is the fate that awaits you, should you fail to leave this wretched place before the bell tolls once more.

III. It Tolls for Thee

Act III begins after the adventurers have spent substantial time in the Amber Temple (over an hour, or when they attempt to rest) or after three or more Amber Vaults have been explored. Good- and neutral-aligned characters suffer their second Death saving throw, if they do not accept evil into their hearts—and on the heel of those terrifying seizures comes a sense of doom that there will be a third and final toll to extinguish their lives.

As a mirror to the *Escaping Death House* Skill Challenge presented by the *Companion* at the start of the adventure, the party must now escape the Amber Temple before it ushers in its third and final toll.

Kasimir's Dark Gift

Kasimir Velikov seeks the power of resurrection, the power to reverse the sororicide he committed long years ago, and the Amber Temple knows it. The genius loci reaches out to the wizard, directing him to Area X42. Read the following:

> "The architecture of this place is like nothing I have ever seen," says Kasimir Velikov, admiring the amber walls. "Amber cannot be made, only found from antiquity, so how these architects—"
>
> A fell breeze wafts through the sanctum, and all at once, Kasimir falls silent. His hands flex, and slowly, so slowly, he looks off into the gloom.

If asked what the matter is, Kasimir shakes his head and murmurs, "This way, quickly." He leads them to Area X42, as if familiar with the route, discovering secret doors as needed. Once therein, he quickly finds the sarcophagus of Zhudun the Corpse Star. Read the following, reminding yourself that the *Companion* removes the *vampire spawn* in Area X42:

> Of the three amber sarcophagi in this chamber, only one radiates warmth. The vestige therein stirs as Kasimir Velikov approaches it. Even looking upon the sarcophagus fills your mind with images of friends and family you have lost over the long, bloody years. If only you could see them again, if you could liberate them from the shackles of death, if you could raise them from the grave… To have mastery over life, if you were only brave enough to defy Death.
>
> "The gift of Zhudun," Kasimir Velikov murmurs, "the Corpse Star… the power of resurrection. At long last, may my people be redeemed…"

Examples have already been set with Helwa and Vilnius; the Amber Temple and its evils can break even the most noble heroes. If the adventurers intend to stop Kasimir from taking Zhudun's Dark Gift, now is their only opportunity. Kasimir cannot be convinced not to accept the Dark Gift, only be deprived of it. Roll initiative. On his first turn, Kasimir uses his action to touch the amber sarcophagus and accept Zhudun's gift—and becomes lawful evil in the process. Despite this shift in alignment, Kasimir does not turn on the party unless they are already violent.

Essence of a Skill Challenge

A Skill Challenge boils down to these tenets:

- The characters encounter a series of obstacles that can't be solved solely by combat, but by utilizing their skills (and possibly tools and spells and other features). Only one character makes an ability check for an obstacle (i.e., making a Stealth check to guide the entire party; or making a Deception check to beguile the guard).
- The goal of a challenge (think of it as a montage) is to reach X number of successful checks before hitting three failures. X is determined by how difficult the challenge is and is not told to the players.
- Skill challenges are about collaborative, creative storytelling. You present the obstacle to your players and allow them to suggest solutions that utilize skills.
- Failure is not a wall; failure is represented by dawdling or struggling, but inevitably, the adventurers push past the obstacle to continue onward but at the cost of accruing a failure.

Rules. A Skill Challenge is bound by these rules:

- Players never know the number of successes necessary to win the challenge, but it is always weighed against three failures.
- Skills can only be used once per each character. If Rendar the barbarian uses his +8 Athletics to leap a chasm, he can't use Athletics again to lift a boulder later in the challenge to contribute to its success. He must find a different solution with a different skill. Other characters, however, can still use Athletics for obstacles.
- Movement doesn't matter, so don't bother tracking it.
- Cantrips can be used, but an issue arises in that they're infinite. So, like a skill, it can only be used once by that character, and isn't an automatic success: have the spellcaster make an ability check with their spellcasting ability modifier, adding their proficiency bonus, and compare it against the DC of whatever obstacle they're facing.
- Spells of 1st level or higher are automatic successes, so long as they can logically be used to surpass an obstacle is an instant success.
- Tool checks can be in lieu of skills if a character is proficient in them. Just attach it to the appropriate ability score and make the ability check.

Escaping the Temple

The seizures are coming again, worse than ever before, warning the adventurers that they must leave the Amber Temple immediately or die. However, should they return upstairs, they find that both exits are sealed with stone. The Amber Temple will not let its prey escape so easily. At this point, a spellcaster (Vilnius, Kasimir, a Barovian witch, even Exethanter) should remark on utilizing the magic of Strahd's teleportation network in Area X42 to teleport out before the temple reaps its final due. Even evil spellcasters wish to leave this wretched place, fearing that the Amber Temple will entertain itself by preying on them next.

Skill Challenge. Escaping the Temple is a Skill Challenge of a "Hard" difficulty—the party must accrue five successes before accruing a third failure to succeed. The DCs should range from between 15-20. The Challenge is centered on Area X42. If they fail, the Amber Temple reaps its third and final toll from good- and neutral-aligned characters (see *For Whom the Bell Tolls III*).



If the adventurers triumph, they are teleported from the Amber Temple seconds before the third bell is tolled, sparing them from certain death and an arduous trip back to civilization.

When the adventurers attempt this ritual, the Amber Temple unleashes its fury, flinging objects around the room and drawing upon poltergeists from elsewhere in the temple, which come howling through the walls (do not run combat for this).

Ability Checks. The following checks are suitable for this Skill Challenge. Suggest these to your players if they cannot come up with appropriate solutions.

Arcana can be used to swiftly identify the incantations required to access the teleportation network (if the spellcaster is a player character) or assist the spellcaster in their ritual.

The temple quakes, causing debris to fall onto someone or the teleportation circle. An **Athletics** check can be made to lift the debris or an **Acrobatics** check might allow someone to squirm out from the debris.

If the spellcaster is treacherous, such as Vilnius, an **Insight** check reveals that they intend to teleport only themself. Once called out on this, the spellcaster widens their magic to also include the adventurers.

As the Amber Temple vents its rage, the spellcaster is frightened or demoralized, requiring an **Intimidation** or **Persuasion** check to rally.

An **Investigation** check is highly circumstantial, but can be used to deduce whom the Temple might attack next, what debris it might hurl, where enemies may come from, etc.

The spellcaster must decide on a location to teleport the party to, a place of power in Barovia. A **History** check ascertains that the Tower of Khazan is the safest bet, but other areas might include Tser Pool (or wherever Madam Eva is), the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok's mansion, the menhirs at the Ruins of Berez, Yester Hill, or Old Bonegrinder, or even Castle Ravenloft's Brazier Room, if the adventurers are aware of it.

The spellcaster is struck with flying debris and impaled by a length of wood, requiring a **Medicine** check to be patched up well enough so they may continue the ritual.

A **Perception** check might betray the approach of a poltergeist or movement suggesting that the Amber Temple is about to fling something—or even that its dark attention is focused on a single character.

With a **Performance** or **Religion** check, one may sing a hymn or recite an exorcism meant to hold back the poltergeists or even mollify the Amber Temple, if only temporarily.

The teleportation circle must be drawn, requiring a **Sleight of Hand** to draw the runes correctly under duress.

For Whom the Bell Tolls III

Having failed to escape the Amber Temple, the genius loci reaps its final due from good- and neutral-aligned characters. Read the following to these characters, who become paralyzed:

> The seizure strikes like a cold knife worming its way out of your stomach. You begin to convulse, your heart aching under the strain. The first gout of vomit is streaked with blood and black bile. You muster the strength to turn, first onto your side, then onto your hands and knees, just as more vomit bursts from your lips and paints the marble floor black and green and red. Your muscles seize and you collapse into your own filth.
>
> That familiar voice floats back into your mind, naked in its satisfaction. "Give in… Seize your destiny… Would you truly die for your ideals? Give. In."
>
> The choice is yours: to die a hero or live as a villain.

Evil Embraced. If an adventurer chooses to embrace the darkness, their alignment changes to evil, they become immune to the temple's extreme cold, and the previous Death saving throw failures are erased. Read the following:

> At last you have reached your breaking point… and as you stare down death, you understand ideals like honor and honesty, truth and justice, are all just chains. With an exultant cry, you free yourself from these petty bonds, nourishing the darkness in your heart!
>
> All at once, the agony ceases. The color returns to your skin. Your fingernails regrow. The frigid air of this place becomes strangely warm and welcoming, as if at last you are home. The Amber Temple welcomes you into its warm embrace like a prodigal child returned.

One Last Chance. If an adventurer refuses to become evil, read the following text. The Amber Temple gives them one last chance.

> Agony lances through your belly. You flop onto your back, foaming at the mouth, convulsing. Blood streaks down your lips. You're choking on your own vomit now. Through the haze of pain, you can just feel your toes, see your fingertips.
>
> They're crumbling.
>
> Paralyzed, you watch in horror as your fingertips begin to dissolve into bloody viscera. The pain is unimaginable. All over, your skin tingles and seethes as if the air of this wretched place has become acidic. As if the Amber Temple itself is devouring you, bit by bit.
>
> The voice! The voice again, husky and amused! "Give in…" it whispers, and you know in your heart that this is your last chance to save yourself.

Toll the Dead. If an adventurer still refuses to become evil, they suffer their third and final Death saving throw. Read the following:

> You refuse the temptation, the excuse. Better to die a hero than live as a coward! You fling these thoughts, this fury, at the darkness—and the Amber Temple replies by shattering your heart. Blood bursts from your eyes, your ears. It weeps from your very pores.
>
> But you do not die, oh no. Not yet. The Amber Temple is not yet done with you. Rapidly you dissolve into bloody viscera, starting at your extremities and within your arteries. The agony is indescribable—but you would never have a chance to describe it anyway. Your viscera is already evaporating into scarlet fog, and in your dying heart you know that your life's essence will be added to the Mists of Ravenloft, doomed to eternal agony.
>
> Dying a hero was admirable… suffering as one for eternity, not quite as much.
>
> So ends your legacy.

A character that dies in this manner cannot be resurrected by anything but a *resurrection* spell, and they have only 1 hour until their remains have evaporated and joined the Mists of Ravenloft.

Leaving the Temple. After the third and final toll, the stone sealing the Amber Temple's entrance evaporates into mist, allowing the survivors to descend Mount Ghakis and return to civilization.

Areas of Note

The following areas of the Temple are of note:

X1. Temple Facade

Genius Loci

As described in *The Ecstasy of Amber*, even stepping foot in the Amber Temple is harrowing. Good- and neutral-aligned souls are terrified, and undergo acute agony.

X5. God of Secrets

The Ecstasy of Amber

This is likely where Helwa and her forces attack the party in Act I.

Enemies Revised

With Neferon removed, the God of Secrets statue becomes the closest personification of the Amber Temple's genius loci. When the adventurers enter, they can sense the statue grinning—even though it is carved from unmoving stone, and cloaked in magical darkness.

X6. Southeast Annex

Enemies Revised

The three **flameskulls** that may float up from Area X33A have been removed.

X7. Secret Scroll Repository

Additional Loot

The *Companion* adds a *spell scroll of remove curse* here that is noticeably pinned beneath rubble. When a creature reaches for it, they must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to ease it out. On a failure, the scroll is ripped and releases a burst of wild magic—notably, a more gothic take on wild magic, given Barovia's alterations to magic. See the *Gothic Wild Magic* table.

Gothic Wild Magic

d6	Effect
1	The character's skin melts away, exposing the flesh underneath. A *remove curse* spell ends this effect.
2	The character switches bodies with a nearby character (their statistics remain the same). A *remove curse* spell ends this effect.
3	The character is now permanently haunted by every person they have slain, directly or indirectly. They can see and hear these spirits, who (harmlessly) hound them forevermore.
4	From henceforth, all food and drink tastes of ash, all scents smell noxious, and bright colors hurt the character's eyes. Over long years, this perpetual distaste wears at the character's will to live. Each year, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or their natural lifespan is shortened by 10%.
5	The character's left hand rots away, becoming a treacherous **crawling claw** attached to the character's wrist. It will not directly harm the character or one of their allies in battle, but is liable to strangle a nearby lover in their sleep, kill a beloved pet, or commit other crimes. Only by plunging the hand in holy water (and taking 2d10 radiant damage in the process) can the hand be recovered, otherwise the character is better off cutting it off.
6	A creature's eyes evaporate, leaving them permanently blinded. A *remove curse* spell ends this effect.

X9. Lecture Hall

See *Vilnius Emerges* in *The Ecstasy of Amber* above, tailoring the speech therein for when he meets the adventurers.

X10. Northeast Annex

The golem here is better buried under rubble, unable to move. If you use this revision, read this instead of the text in *Curse of Strahd*:

> This annex has collapsed. Beneath the rubble squirms a jackal-headed statue chiseled from amber. Seeing you, the construct reaches out feebly, smashing its fists against the floor as it attempts to snatch you up like ragdolls.

The golem is half-buried and prone, with only its upper torso free. It can attack creatures within its 10-feet reach with disadvantage. When met, the golem attempts to extricate itself from the rubble but fails, feebly pushing against the floor. However, if it is attacked, it makes a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check as an action to free itself; the DC drops by 5 for each failed attempt. Once freed, the golem goes on the warpath, satisfied only when the adventurers are pulverized into viscera.

If the adventurers instead leave the golem to its lonesome, it eventually frees itself. Throughout their exploration of the north- and eastern portions of the temple, be it on the top or bottom floor, they can see it shifting rubble. Its escape is loud enough to be heard from across the temple, giving the adventurers at least 1 round to prepare.

To foreshadow this event, call to mind the golem as the adventurers explore the north- and eastern portions of the Amber Temple, be it on the top or bottom floor. Bricks clatter, amber shatters, stone grinds on stone as the golem inches forward.

Roleplaying the Golem. Though limited in its emotional capabilities, the golem demonstrates frustration, resentment, and even a fetal-like rage as it misses with attacks and takes damage. Throughout the encounter, describe how the construct's fingers curl into fists, how it stomps the floor in frustration—cracking the stone underfoot—and pursues the first person to harm it with murderous vengeance.

X14. North Staircase

The **ghasts** in Area X33C may boil out from the darkness from here, attacking creatures in adjacent areas, even leaping from Area X11 into X5.

X17. Upper West Hall

Enemies Revised

The three **flameskulls** have been removed. Jakarion's corpse is not charred, but butchered. Helwa and her wildlings cut him down.

X19. Potion Storage

Additional Loot

Under this variant, the potion storage is nearly empty, save for eight *potions of greater healing*. However, a visible poltergeist is hurling these potions from the shelves one by one, wasting them. If the adventurers want their potions, they must attack the **poltergeist** or succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, who otherwise ignores them. Each round, the poltergeist destroys one potion.

X22. Northwest Annex

Enemies Revised

Seven **specters** is far too many. At most, three materialize and first warn the adventurer to leave the ewer behind.

X27. Lich's Lair

See *Dramatis Personae* for details on Exethanter. His spellbook has been codified as The Incants of Exethanter in Appendix C.

X30. Preserved Library

Genius Loci

Under this variant, any non-evil wizard that dares transcribe spells into their own spellbook must take a risk in staying too long in the Amber Temple, lest they suffer a third and final Death saving throw.

Malevolent History. An open journal is found on a chair. This account, written by a long-dead guardian of the temple, details the birth of the Amber Temple's genius loci.

Much of the journal has succumbed to the damage of time, its opening pages crumbled or outright missing. The first preserved page you find reads, "...it has erased the temple gate from existence, as a painter daubs a mistake, and yet we cannot leave. A force holds us back. Our duty is unending, this we swore, and it has bound us to our oath. Truly—"

A sudden breeze blows into the chamber, turning several pages to a new section:

"It grows day by day and year by year. Half our number are gone, driven to madness or heart failure… and those of us that remain understand that the Amber Temple is now alive. It is alive. A genius loci. When or how no longer matter. The Temple has fed upon the evil of this place, has grown fat and sadistic, preying on the living. It gnaws upon our souls. Twice now have I heard Its whisper… urging me to abandon my ideals and to embrace the darkness if I wish to be spared.

"Maverus and Shalx went last night. The former to his grave, the latter to evil. We slew him with spells of frost and storm, but not before Thangob fell to a spell of blight. I am the last. Seven of us, and six now dead. The genius loci stands victorious, but the last laugh is mine. For how many long centuries will it go without entertainment? I shall die but It must endure the long ages ahead. But know this… if you lay eyes on my account…"

Another sudden breeze blows the journal to its last, perfectly preserved page, which reads, "...It wants you to read this."

You feel as if a creature, unseen and gargantuan, is grinning over your shoulder.

X32. Lower East Hall

See *A Pox Upon Your House* in *The Ecstasy of Amber* above for details on meeting the three Barovian witches here. At the start of combat, Gretchen begins to cast *cone of cold* but, if she is slain before her first turn (when she can get the spell off), she twists and blasts the sealed door to Area X33A, destroying it and triggering its necrotic blast, and possibly killing herself and her sisters.

X33. Amber Vaults

Exethanter remembers the passwords to the vaults and is eager to share them.

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only one vestige stirs in each vault, the others slumbering too deeply to be roused. Further, the DC of the Charisma saving throw against becoming evil is raised to 15.

X33A. Vault of Shalx

The vestiges in this vault are suffused with discomforting energies that visitors can feel just from the entrance—static from Zrin-Hala,the silence of a cemetery, and, thanks to Fekre, the sick air of a battlefield hospital.

- Fekre proves gregarious, eager to make contact. Upon even looking at her sarcophagus, one feels her slimy touch and smells her fetid odor. Should they place their hand on her sarcophagus, she whispers, "No disease shall harm you henceforth… you shall be… perfect."
- Sykane draws the adventurer's attention to their most injured comrade or for whom they care for the most, whispering, "They are not long for this world… but that which Death takes can be stolen back…"
- Zrin-Hala invigorates whomever touches its sarcophagus, as if a harmless bolt of lighting ran through them. "The power of the storm, I offer you," Zrin-Hala whispers.

Enemies Revised. The three **flameskulls** have been removed; adjust the narration text for this subarea to reflect this.

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Fekre has stirred and her Dark Gift has been overhauled into the *Covenant of Poxes*. If you still wish to include other vestiges, be aware that Sykane's Dark Gift has been folded into the *Covenant of the Corpse Star*, given their similarities.

X33B. Vault of Maverus

Ever arrogant, the vestiges in this vault find most mortals reprehensible and make naked their disgust for those they consider lacking. Each vestige respects a particular trait:

- Savnok the Inscrutable respects only the intelligent, promising to make a fortress of their mind. Should someone reprehensible make contact with it, the vestige whispers, "Your mind is a gully that no wall or palisade may protect. I would sooner see a pig raised to lordship than have you wield a shred of my power, fool."
- Shami-Amourae respects only those who weaponize their charms and beauty to seize what they want in life. Should someone reprehensible make contact with her, the Lady of Delights sneers, "Only by my power shall you find any adoration in this world, cretin."
- A dragon at heart, Tarakamedes respects only those strong of will and conviction—conquerors with great gravitas. Should someone reprehensible make contact with him, the Grave Wyrm snarls, "You have no right to the skies. Your destiny is to crawl about with the other worms, blinded by your own waste."

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Tarakamedes has stirred and instead of its usual Dark Gift, it offers the *Covenant of the Grave Wyrm* (see Appendix C).

X33C. Ghastly Vault

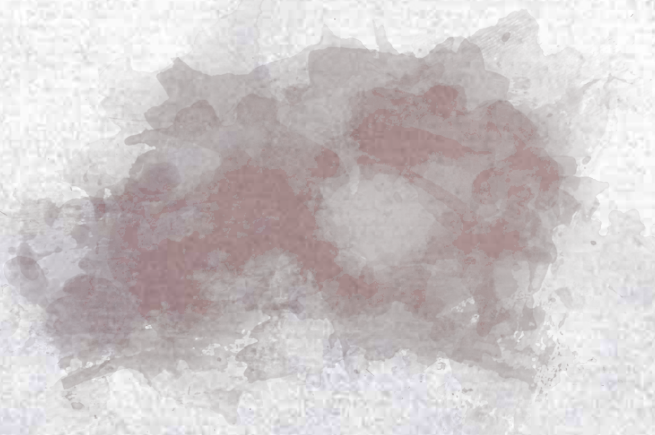
The vestiges in this vault are all too eager to offer their Dark Gifts.

- Dahlver-Nar gives the adventurer a vision of themselves living long, full lives only to reincarnate into a new body. The vestige touches upon a fear of death and one's love for the living, promising that through its gift, the adventurer will get to experience all the love and wanderlust they've been cheated out of in life. "There is too much in this world, too much light and love, to experience in just one lifetime," Dahlver-Nar whispers.
- Drizlash, most pathetic of the remaining vestiges, appeals to the thief, the voyeur. In a vision, Drizlash shows the adventurer clinging to ceilings, thieving from kings, and watching ex-lovers with their new beaus, all the while promising that with its gift, the adventurer shall enjoy a long and confounding career. In this, Drizlash also capitalizes on greed and a hunger for vengeance. "To witness. To take. That is the gift, I offer… the gift of the spider," Drizlash coaxes.
- Zantras appeals to one's vanity and ideals, promising a throne and righteous—or not—dynasty that will right all the wrongs the adventurer has witnessed and committed. The vestige promises them not only power, but redemption. "It can all be yours—everything—should you only be strong enough to take it," Zantras promises.

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Zantras has stirred and instead of its usual Dark Gift, it offers the *Covenant of the Kingmaker* (see Appendix C).

Enemies Revised. The number of **ghasts** in this vault are reduced from seven to three.

Roleplaying the Ghasts. The ghasts, all blessed by Drizlash, extoll its virtues as they glide over the ceiling and fling themselves at the adventurers, screeching, "Glory to the Spider! The Nine-Eyed Spider! Glory to Drizlash!" They have all received an extra, ever-open eye from Drizlash: on a shoulder, on a neck, and on a cheek. When a ghast dies, thousands of spiderlings burst from their pores and skitter



out into the darkness to provide Drizlash with fresh eyes in this world.

X33D. Breached Vault

The vestiges in this vault are aloof and distant, unimpressed by visitors.

- If a torch or other flame is brought to Delban's sarcophagus, the wisp therein shrinks away; the fire bearer's hands turn cold and numb, forcing them to drop the torch. Delban momentarily shares its gift with the adventurer, inuring them to the Amber Temple's pervasive chill. For that moment, the adventurer can hear the winds wailing outside, can feel the bite of frost and hail, and can even see—by looking into Delban's sarcophagus—a blizzard coming down the Balinok Mountains. "I offer you life," Delban promises. "I offer you the strength to weather the cold that will one day swallow this world. All will be crowned and shod in frost. All but you," Delban whispers.
- Khirad demonstrates its power by spying on the adventurer's loved ones from afar. Ask the adventurer for whom they miss the most. In a vision, they see that individual engaged in some mundane task, wiping their hands on an apron or the sweat from their brow—anything that reminds the adventurer of home. "Would you not like to see them once more?" Khirad asks in a low whisper. Then the vision shifts, revealing Strahd in his study. "Or would you like to spy upon your most hated enemies instead?"

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Delban has stirred and has already granted its Dark Gift to Gretchen, the Barovian witch; Khirad cannot be contacted.

Roleplaying the Nothics. The nothics pry out damning secrets from the adventurers using their Weird Insight, airing out any juicy gossip, old lies, or shameful secrets an adventurer has kept hidden until now. Alternatively, they say "one hungers for the gifts of Amber."

Eager to gossip, the nothics inform the adventurers that "conjuration magic" lingers nearby (in Area X42) and that strange visitors continue to teleport into the temple from time to time. One nothic wonders aloud, "Perhaps we could reverse the magic and leave this awful place?" to which another replies, "Leave? Why would we leave? You would forsake heaven?"

X33E. Vault of Harkotha

This vault pulses with a dark heartbeat, matching the red veins set into its black floor. The vestiges here watch visitors with great and overpowering interest.

- Great Taar Haak seethes in the presence of the strong, as if wishing to duel. It sizes up all those that make contact with it, belittling the weak and insisting the strong will never be as great as Great Taar Haak—but they can come close if they accept his Dark Gift. Those that touch his sarcophagus feel invigorated and powerful, as if they could shatter the walls of this prison with ease.
- When a character touches Yog the Invincible's sarcophagus, they feel as if their hand is touching oily fur. The sensation spreads to the rest of their bodies, after which they feel arrows and blades glance off their hide, giving them insight to Yog's invincibility. Yog says nothing more, letting its gift speak for itself.
- Those that make contact with Yrrga, the Eye of Shadows, feel a cold attention ripple across their flesh and in their bones, as if scrutinized—and found lacking. A sudden seizure rocks the character's body, and as they shake, they momentarily receive not only truesight, but the ability to see through stone and earth and amber (similar to a *ring of x-ray* vision) and glimpsing what lies in nearby areas of the Temple: sarcophagi, other creatures, etc. Yrrga whispers, "This is but a shred of what truths I see… truths that would shatter your mortal mind… but for you, a lesser gift greater than any sight mortals may attain… the power to discern all lies within your sight."

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Great Taar Haak has stirred and instead of its usual Dark Gift, it offers the *Covenant of the Destroyer*, which is described in Appendix C. Further, Yog's Dark Gift is folded into the Covenant of the

Destroyer.

Enemies Revised. The **death slaad** has been removed from this chapter.

X33F. Vault of Thangob

The vestiges here are strangely silent, as if asleep.

- Norganas stirs lazily, making mental contact with its visitor, whose body feels as if it is rapidly decaying into a corpse. They behold a vision in which a lone woman unleashes a *finger of death* spell, turning a raging berserker into an obedient zombie. Norganas murmurs, "All coins have two sides… life… death… but the third side of the coin… that is where true power lies."
- It proves better to let sleeping hell hounds lie, for whomever contacts Seriach is snarled at. They instantly receive a vision of being bloodied and prostrated before two slavering, hellish dogs whose fanged maws drip lava-like saliva. A jagged voice demands, "You would command *them*?"
- Vaund's vestige visibly twists away when its sarcophagus is touched, which opens a dialog in which the visitor may ask questions. True to his own flaw, Vaund does not give a straight answer to any question. At best it says, "My secrets are my own, my flesh leagues away. These gifts I may grant but to be evasive is to live with lies."

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, only Seriach, the Hell Hound Whisperer, has stirred, and instead of its usual Dark Gift, it offers the *Covenant of the Houndmaster*, which is described in Appendix C. Notably, Norganas' gift has been folded into the *Covenant of the Lich*, as the *finger of death* spell is a tool in the long road to achieve lichdom.

X39. Plundered Treasury

Enemies Revised

The **poltergeists** have been removed.

X40. Sealed Treasury

Additional Loot

Three diamonds worth 300 gp apiece are added here, notably for the *revivify* spell.

X42. Amber Vault

This place seethes with evil. The vestiges here radiate menace. As masters of death, their pity for such mortal creatures is palpable.

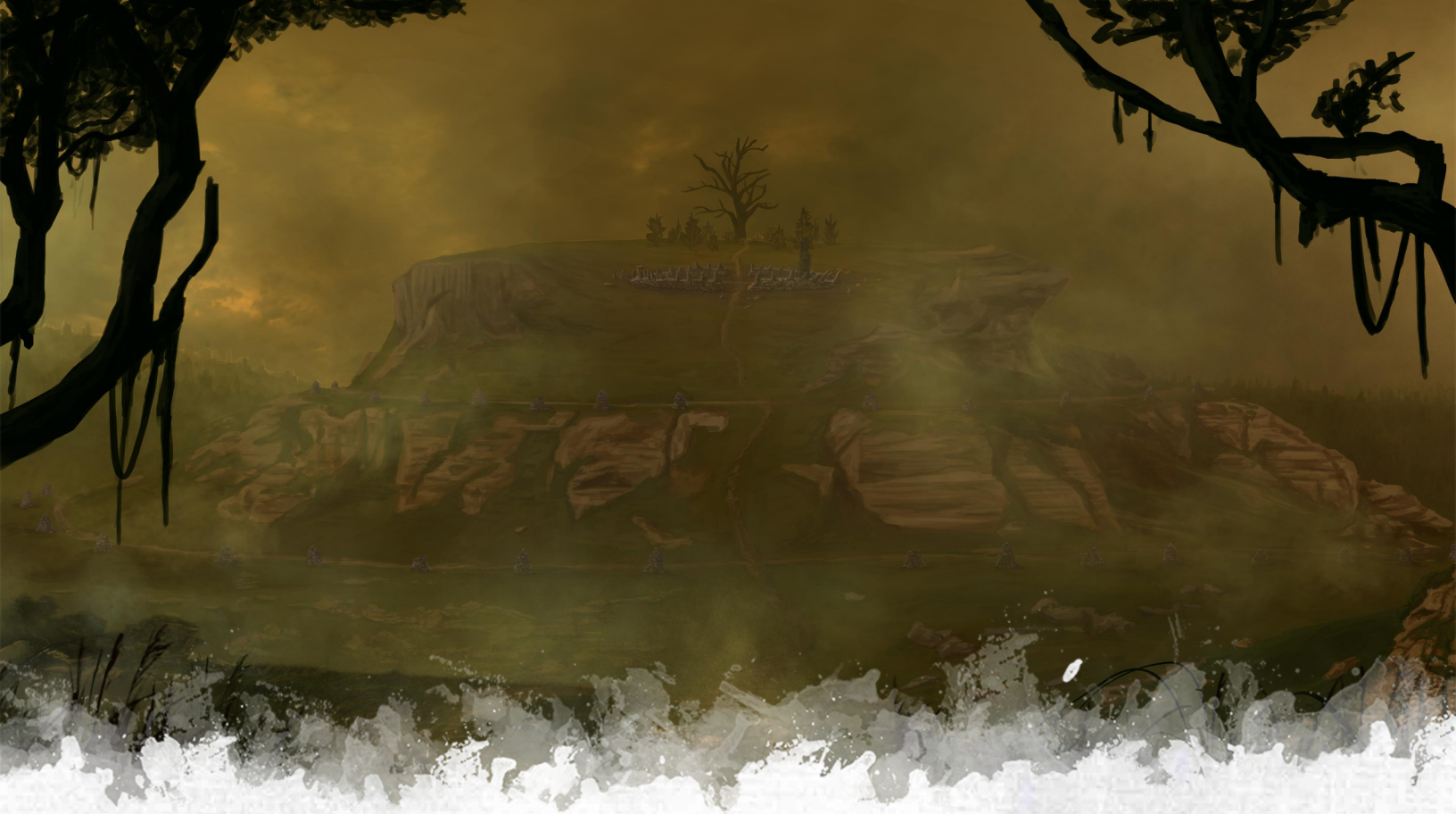
- Tenebrous appeals to one's hunger for knowledge and the fear that they will never achieve true wisdom before Death reaps its toll. "All secrets ever forged, all truths forgotten, and never the yoke of Death to flee from," Zhudun whispers. "They are the mortar," the vestige continues, drawing the character's attention to their companions, "their souls the mortar to the monument of your own immortality. No mortal has the right to life unending—it must be taken. Lichdom requires no less."
- The Vampyr's smirk can be felt upon a character's neck, its ephemeral fangs gently scraping their flesh. The vestige appeals to one's hunger for love, respect, and control, and their overwhelming fear of rejection and loneliness. "All will be yours," the vestige whispers, "for we of the Blood are the true monarchs of this savage world. All will love you and obey. And so too shall they fear you. Strength, beauty, immortality… it can all be yours if you only feed."
- Zhudun the Corpse Star's cold attention pierces the flesh and kindles the soul. It appeals to selflessness and altruism. "Death shall come for you one day," it promises, "but you may stay that tyrant's hand from others. They shall flock to you, the desperate and terrified. They shall bring their loved ones, embalmed or burned, in caskets and urns, praying for your favor, for your mercy… Your own life is forfeit. It is inevitable. Is it not your duty to shield others from this doom?"

Enemies Revised. The six vampire spawn here have been removed; the crates are filled with grave dirt, as if for new vampires or whomever accepts the Dark Gift of Tarakamedes. If you wish to include them, do so only as a punishment for accepting the Dark Gift of the Vampyr. Because the Dark Gift of the Vampyr has been overhauled into the *Covenant of the Vampyr*, it is far more difficult to become a vampire, thereby lessening the pressure on Strahd to guard this vestige.

Vestiges Revised. Under this variant, the three Dark Gifts offered here have been overhauled. See the *Covenants of Tenebrous, the Vampyr,* and *the Corpse Star* in Appendix C. If someone has accepted the Covenant of the Grave Wyrm, they smell the grave dirt in the crates and must make their DC 15 Charisma saving throw against immediately feasting on it.

Escaping the Temple

Strahd's teleportation network touches upon this area, allowing residents of Castle Ravenloft to teleport to the Amber Temple. As described in *The Ecstasy of Amber*, a veteran spellcaster can use this latent conjuration magic to teleport out of the Amber Temple to the Tower of Khazan, or the menhirs at Berez, Yester Hill, or Old Bonegrinder. Kasimir Velikov, Vilnius, Exethanter, or a Barovian witch could all orchestrate this ritual, as could a wizard. This ritual is conducted as a Skill Challenge, in which the Amber Temple itself seethes at its prey escaping.



Chapter XIV: Yester Hill

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview....249
Chapter Progression....249
Quick Notes....249
Running the Chapter....249
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects....249
Dramatis Personae....250
Variants & Revisions....251
The Bastard of Zarovich....252
I. The Raven Caws....252
II. The Spirit of Kavan....253
III. The Root of All Evil....254
Areas of Yester Hill....256
Y1. Trail....256
Y2. Berserker Cairns....256
Y3. Druids' Circle....256
Y4. Gulthias Tree....256
Y5. Wall of Fog....256

Upon Yester Hill convene the wildlings that worship Strahd as a deity—for, after all, he is the Ancient, and he is the Land. As a storm rages on, the druids conduct a foul ritual to give life to a **tree blight** called Wintersplinter, who shall usher in a new age of destruction. Questions abound. By whose vampiric blood was the Gulthias Tree first watered? Who has led the tribe in turning their backs upon the Old Ways? For what purpose would the druids unleash such a monstrosity, if not for a mere hatred for civilization? The *Companion* attempts to answer such questions through its *The Bastard of Zarovich* storyline.

Chapter Overview

The *Companion* considers Yester Hill the immediate sequel to Chapter 12—in that the Dungeon Master must immediately move the story there. Pursuant to this goal, the *Companion* has the Martikovs captured by the Gulthias druids in the final act of its *Blood and Wine* storyline in Chapter 12. Thus, the adventurers are compelled to follow immediately.

Notably, Strahd is slated to appear in this chapter, for along the western edge of the woods stands a wall of fog within which memories of the past can be viewed. The Dark Powers use these images to torment Strahd and remind him of his homeland. Strahd's next visit, which is mere coincidence, prompts the druids to begin their ritual. The *Companion* removes any appearance by Strahd in this chapter, and for several reasons:

- The *Companion* advocates for fewer, but more impactful, appearances by Strahd. This chapter also functions perfectly fine without his appearance.
- If you ran *Evil's Bride* in Krezk before this, Strahd ought to be preoccupied with wedding preparations in Castle Ravenloft.
- The *Companion* has the Martikov family abducted from the winery and brought here to be sacrificed. Strahd might not be so keen on letting a noble vassal die so ignominiously. Further, if the Martikovs reveal their wereraven curse, the Keepers of the Feather are done for.

Chapter Progression

Though *The Bastard of Zarovich* storyline is organized into three phases, Chapter 14 is truly a one Act chapter, provided the adventurers complete it in one venture.

Quick Notes

- The druids perform a ritual to birth a **tree blight** known as Wintersplinter. The druids are led by **The Prophet**, who falsely believes himself to be the dhampir son of Strahd.
- The Martikov family has been kidnapped and used to power the druidic ritual. The adventurers must choose between fighting the ritualists to prevent Wintersplinter's birth, or saving the Martikovs and guaranteeing the tree blight is born. By when the adventurers reach Y3 or Y4, there are only 1d6 + 4 rounds until the ritual is complete. Only by splitting their forces, attacking the ritual site and the Gulthias Tree, can they achieve a true and utter victory.
- Strahd has been removed from the chapter.
- If the *Tome of Strahd* is found in this chapter, it is buried in the roots of the Gulthias Tree and is the source of its blood and evil.

Checklist

- Foreshadow the growing storm with foul weather that worsens the closer the adventurers come to Yester Hill.
- Have Muriel Vinshaw meet the adventurers at Area Y1 to debrief them on the ritual, and clearly communicate that the adventurers must choose between fighting the ritualists or saving the Martikovs.

Running the Chapter

This chapter is short and bloody. The adventurers must interrupt the druidic ritual. Throughout the chapter, mention the storm raging overhead, bringing attention to the sharp winds that circle Yester Hill and the lightning that often strikes the stones marking the bounds of Area Y3. Every flash of lightning illuminates the Gulthias Tree and the wicker statue of Strahd.

Time

If this chapter immediately follows the events of Chapter 12, it has been only 1d4 hours. If not, it would be appropriate for the ritual to be conducted at dusk or midnight.

Weather

The weather worsens into an all-out storm as the adventurers approach Yester Hill. The skies darken and the trails are turned to mud. Lightning arcs across the sky and thunder rumbles across Barovia.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Blood Spear* (Y2)
- *Treantfeller* (Y4)

Creatures

- Berserker
- Dire Wolf
- Druid
- Dryad
- Kavan's Blood
- Kavan's Skeleton
- Kavan's Spirit
- Needle Blight
- Nightmare
- Prophet, The
- Strahd von Zarovich
- Tree Blight
- Twig Blight
- Vine Blight
- Wereraven

Effects

- Crowpoison

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Adrian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Davian's eldest son.
Beucephalus	**Nightmare**	H	SE	Strahd's nightmare steed.
Claudiu Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Stefania & Dag's eldest son.
Dag Tomescu	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Stefania's husband.
Davian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Martikov patriarch and grandmaster of the Keepers of the Feather.
Elvir Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Davian's youngest son.
Kavan	—	F	—	The restless spirit of a bloodthirsty chieftain of yore.
Martin Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	F	Y3	Stefania & Dag's son.
Muriel Vinshaw	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	A wereraven agent of the Keepers of the Feather.
The Prophet	Unique	H	Y3	A deranged druid that believes himself to be Strahd's son.
Stefania Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Y3	Davian's daughter.
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	H	SE	Lord of Barovia, visiting as part of the *Druid Ritual* special event.
Viggo Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	F	Y3	Stefania & Dag's son.
Wintersplinter	**Tree Blight**	H	Y3	A tree blight born from the druid's ritual to wage war on civilization.
Yolanda Martikov	—	F	Y3	Stefania & Dag's infant daughter.

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Davian Martikov

As part of *The Bastard of Zarovich*, Davian arrives to free his family—previously kidnapped at the Wizard of Wines—from the bloodthirsty Gulthias Tree. He has been poisoned by crowpoison incense, bludgeoned and fed upon by blights, and suffers from the frailties of age.

Kavan

Kavan offers the strongest adventurer the opportunity to win his legendary *blood spear,* if they succeed against his animate blood, bones and spirit. This weapon, he promises, can kill the Gulthias Tree.

Muriel Vinshaw

Muriel assists Davian in rescuing the Martikovs in *The Bastard of Zarovich*. She falsely believes that the Martikovs' lives will be spent to animate the giant wicker man.

The Prophet

Invented by the *Companion*, the Prophet is Chapter 14's main antagonist. Raised by Baba Lysaga, the Prophet believes he is the illegitimate, dhampir son of Volenta Popofsky, born in her dead womb on the night of her vampiric turning. He leads the Gulthias druids in their ritual atop Yester Hill. Thanks to Baba Lysaga, he and his followers have an undying hatred for the Martikov family, whose own lineage (altered by the *Companion*) includes wildling druids. When Wintersplinter the tree blight is born, he intends to cleanse Barovia with ash and shadow.

Roleplaying the Prophet. The Prophet is fond of grandiose statements that pay homage to Strahd and himself. He might say any of the following:

- "You are too late! The ravens bleed! Long dead will our feud be and soon Barovians everywhere will know we are not the scum of the earth, but the salt!"
- "I shall do my father proud!"
- "The Son of Strahd bows to none!"
- "He is the Ancient… He is the Land… and I am the future."
- "It shall be a cruel winter!"
- When the Prophet is slain, he gawps and stammers, "But, but… Baba Lysaga… promised… the future."

Strahd von Zarovich

When longing for home, Strahd comes to gaze at the Wall of Fog astride Beucephalus. The druids take his arrival as a sign to begin their dark ritual.

Revision. The *Companion* removes Strahd from Chapter 14, as his presence would only detract from *The Bastard of Zarovich* . Further, with the Martikovs being present, it would threaten to reveal their existence as wereravens. If you include Strahd, he mocks the adventurers.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- Ordinarily, the Gulthias Tree can only be killed by completely uprooting the stump, or by casting a *hallow* spell, which is firmly out of the adventurers' hands. In *The Bastard of Zarovich*, Kavan's spirit reveals that the *blood spear*—if earned—can be used to suck out the vampiric blood used originally to water the Gulthias Tree. Thus, the adventurers can destroy the tree after all, if they prove themselves to Kavan.
- Per the *Companion*, the Martikovs are in a decades-long feud with the Gulthias druids. Davian Martikov's grandmother was born to the druids years ago and left after many began to worship Strahd as a god. This alone adds a more personal motivation for the druids.
- The magic battleaxe buried in the Gulthias Tree has been reformatted as an actual magic item: the *Treantfeller*. See Appendix A.

Crowpoison

Just how the Gulthias druids can overpower lycanthropes—beings with immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks—is addressed in *Curse of Strahd*. Spellcraft, of course, can overcome a lycanthrope's natural defenses, but any attack made by a blight would fail to even scratch a wereraven. The Keepers of the Feather could, even if surprised, tear apart any unharmed. So long as they aren't struck down with magic, the wereravens ought to triumph over mere druids too.

The events of Chapter 14 require that the wereravens be rendered impotent—their shapeshifting stymied and their lycanthropic immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks muted. To this end, crowpoison has been planted all around Yester Hill. The wereravens have been bound by vines and draped with crowpoison garlands that burn the flesh and emit a pungent odor, rendering the wereravens conveniently powerless.

Crowpoison, as elaborated on in Chapter 12, is an herb lethal to wereravens, just as wolfsbane is to werewolves. See the sidebar for details.

Crowpoison: Ravenbane

Known as *nothoscordum bivalve* by herbalists and "false garlic" by peasants, crowpoison is a wild, scentless flower frequented by butterflies. It can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Consumption. A wereraven that consumes a sprig of crowpoison is poisoned for 1d6 hours, and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 41 (7d8 + 10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The wereraven is also poisoned for 1d6 hours.

Incense. The druids of Yester Hill have found crowpoison and devised a noxious incense that sickens wereravens and deprives them of their ability to shapeshift. A wereraven that starts its turn within 60 feet of the incense, or enters within that range for the first time on its turn, must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. While poisoned, the wereraven loses its immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks and can't use its Shapechanger feature to transform.

The Prophet

The Gulthias leader—known as the Prophet—is believed by the wildlings to be the dhampir son of Strahd, born from Volenta Popofsky's dead womb on the night of her vampiric turning and abandoned by Strahd in the woods. As the legend goes, the son was found and raised by wolves and wildlings. Because the Gulthias Tree itself was watered with the blood of a vampire—if it was not tainted by the evil of the *Tome of Strahd*, if your tarokka reading indicated Yester Hill as the site of that Fortune of Life—the myth has been cemented.

This all, of course, is nonsense. As will be revealed in Chapter 14, the Prophet is nothing more than a charlatan, a druid whose advanced power has slowed his aging, and a follower of Kavan's example (the blood-drinking chieftain of yore).

Strahd's Absence

Ordinarily, Strahd is due to arrive at Yester Hill—his arrival even signals to the misguided rituals that they ought to begin their ritual. The *Companion* removes this, so as not to distract from the chapter. Strahd's presence is far more trouble than it's worth. However, for the sake of hilarity, the Prophet spots a bat flying across the sky and claims that the Devil Strahd has come.



The Bastard of Zarovich

This storyline covers all of Yester Hill and assumes that the Martikovs were abducted during the *Blood and Wine* storyline covered in Chapter 12. It also requires the *Companion's* revisions to the Gulthias druids, in which the Gulthias' leader—hereafter known only as "the Prophet"—claims to be the dhampir son of Strahd. This storyline spans the entirety of Chapter 14 and has Kavan, the blood-drinking chieftain of yore described in *Dramatis Personae*, reach out to the adventurers. It also incorporates the *Strahd's Absence* variant; thus, Strahd is not meant to arrive here, as it opens up too many possibilities and allows the Martikovs to exercise their lycanthropic abilities without betraying their identities to Strahd.

The Choice. This storyline boils down to a choice: end the druids first and risk losing the Martikovs, or rescue the Martikovs and guarantee the birth of Wintersplinter. The adventurers can, of course, go for both simultaneously if they are willing to split the party, which is the only way to ensure a true victory, for if the Martikovs are saved, Wintersplinter is born weakened; if the ritualists are slain, Wintersplinter is not born, but the Gulthias Tree bleeds the Martikovs dry.

I. The Raven Caws

A storm rages above and the ritual has already commenced by when the adventurers reach Area Y1. Each flash of lightning silhouettes the druids, the wickerman from which Wintersplinter shall be born, and the Gulthias Tree. Read the following:

> Through the woods you go, the weather worsening as you approach the place known as Yester Hill. Lightning splits the skies and thunder rattles the world. With every flash, you can see the obscenities taking place there: figures wreathed in auroral light dance around a huge man-shaped object—likely made of wicker. On the far side of the hill stands a crooked tree whose evil you can feel from even this vast distance.
>
> As you watch this ritual from afar, it grows more frenzied, more intricate. Lighting strikes at shorter and shorter intervals… and that evil grows. You feel it on your skin like mist.

As the adventurers approach Yester Hill, they risk being sighted by sentries. A sharp, feminine voice calls: Muriel Vinshaw (a wereraven; see Dramatis Personae) calls out to them from the trees just before they enter a sentry's line of sight. She then warns them of the ritual: specifically that to save the Martikovs, the adventurers must either stop the ritual in Area Y3, or liberate the Martikovs from the roots of the Gulthias Tree in Y4 beforehand.

Read the following:

> The woman is dressed in simple attire, but her eyes are keen and hardened. She points to the hill and tells you, "I've scouted the area from on high. A ritual is underway; the druids stand around a huge wicker man whose heart glows green with magic. They require blood for this ritual, I know that at least, but their victims are not at the ritual site. That devilish tree drinks from their veins at its roots, lending power to the ritualists from afar. And it is crawling with those blighted fiends.
>
> "It is a good two hundred paces between that wretched tree and the ritual site. We must either end that ritual first—risking the lives of its sacrifices—or gamble on a swift liberation. Perhaps a swift liberation will end the ritual… Perhaps it will guarantee its completion. I cannot truly say. Davian and I will, however, move in on the tree once you arrive and deal with its disgusting children."

Once the adventurers are finished speaking with Muriel, she openly shapeshifts into a raven and flies off to fetch the wounded Davian from nearby.

II. The Spirit of Kavan

So long as the wildlings worship Strahd, the spirits of the dead cannot find peace. Chief amongst these restless spirits is Kavan, the legendary chieftain of yore, who reaches out to the strongest of adventurers, preferably a barbarian, ranger, fighter, or druid. This event effectively eclipses the *Blood Spear of Kavan* special event described in *Curse of Strahd*.

As the adventurers begin to mount Yester Hill, Kavan's spirit reaches out. Read the following:

> You hear a whisper, a deep voice carried on the wind. "Long have I waited," it says, "For one who may bring honor back to our people." As lightning rends the sky, you see several ghostly spirits standing before the cairns of Yester Hill. They are gone with the flash, but still, that voice continues: "The druids have turned our people away from the gods and ancestors of yore. They worship the Nightfiend, the Vampire, for well is it known that he is the Ancient, he *is* the Land."
>
> Another flash of lightning—and before you stands a ghostly warrior draped in wolf furs and painted red. In his hands is an ethereal spear from whose tip drips ghostly blood. Again, gone in a flash, but his voice thunders, "Behold my spear, the Spear of Kavan, drinker of blood. Retrieve it from amidst my bones and use it to correct these blasphemies. Long have I waited for someone who is worthy. With this weapon, exsanguinate that godless tree. Draw the vampiric blood that sustains it and rule these mountains in my stead!"
>
> A vision is pressed upon your mind: a particular cairn upon the hill, overgrown with red-tinged moss. Your mind delves through the stone to behold a skeleton whose hand still grips the same bloodied spear.
>
> "Go forth, my warrior," thunders the spirit. "Return our people to the Old Ways!"

Wildling Vanguard
If the adventurers are spotted and identified as enemies, the wildlings send out a vanguard of two **berserkers**, one **druid**, and a **vine blight**.

To the Cairn

Kavan's cairn is the southernmost cairn of Yester Hill; Kavan's chosen instinctively knows where to find it. The path, however, is fraught with danger. On the eve of Wintersplinter's birth, the wildlings are out in full force. If the adventurers follow the path around Yester Hill, they must contend with several patrols. The fierce winds snatch away any shouts the wildlings might make to alert their brethren.

Sentries. The wildlings have posted four **scouts** along Yester Hill to watch for danger. A scout sits upon a cairn on the higher ring. They are arranged in ordinal directions, with the northeast-stationed scout able to see Area Y1. The scouts are human and, without darkvision, have trouble seeing in the dark until lightning illuminates Yester Hill and the surrounding areas.

Thus, scouts have a passive Perception of 10 while it is dark and 15 whenever lightning flashes. Assume lightning flashes every 1d6 rounds. Scouts that spot enemies open fire and then go to alert the nearest scout or druids.

A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check notices that there is some order to the lightning and can begin to measure the time between flashes, thereby allowing the adventurers to sneak by in semi-accurately measured darkness. Without a result of 18 or higher, however, two of the **eight** scouts see the adventurers.

Lupine Patrol. A **dire wolf** (with Intelligence 12, 15, and 11) patrols the upper ring. This is a shapeshifted **druid**, who assumes its true statistics after the dire wolf is reduced to 0 hit points.

Wisps. The druids' cruelty has attracted the patronage of two **wisps**, each of which meander through the hill's paths, one clockwise, the other clockwise. The wisps linger at the cairns of wildlings that died truly agonizing deaths, as if to drink in that pain. A wisp completes a circuit of the hill once every ten minutes and can be seen from afar as moving torches.

Kavan's Chosen

To prove their worth, Kavan's chosen must battle his animated remains: **Kavan's blood, Kavan's skeleton,** and **Kavan's spirit.** This battle, as Kavan declares, must be fought solely by his chosen champion; any outside interference by the party, including spellcraft, will disqualify the champion. This decision is intentionally unforgiving; interfering removes any possibility of acquiring the *blood spear*—and with it, any chance of easily killing the Gulthias Tree. When the adventurers reach the cairn, read the following to Kavan's chosen:

That voice thunders once again, and in another flash of lightning, you see him standing before you: Kavan. His name is fresh on your tongue, your mind. He is as familiar to you as your own family, a long dead mentor that has watched you grow and strive and fail, and now on the eve of your graduation, stands ready to offer you one last rite of passage.

"Behold the cairn of Kavan, whose every stone was dragged from the white and frigid peak of Mount Ghakis by mortal hands. Long have I waited for one who is worthy… One who is worthy to battle my blood, my bones, and my very spirit. There shall be no mercy. On this day, at this hour, under this storm-shattered sky, you and I shall battle. No dogs, no minions, no champions. Only you and I. Defeat me, and you shall rise greater than ever before. Die, and your bones will be left alone for the wind and rain."

The stones begin to rumble, to boil and shiver away, revealing a moldy skeleton gripping a spear that weeps blood. Before them appears a ghostly warrior clad in animal furs, his fists wreathed in violet energy.

"Carve your name into history, my champion!" thunders Kavan as his bones animate and the blood boils itself into a viscous monstrosity!

Unworthy. If Kavan's chosen is defeated, or if they allow any outside interference, Kavan's spirit telekinetically pulls the *blood spear* away and causes the stone to roll back over onto his grave. Creatures in his grave must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone and pushed 5 feet away, out of the grave. The stone cannot be moved again for another ten years, except by a *wish* spell.

Worthy. If Kavan's chosen emerges victorious, Kavan's spirit kneels and presents the *blood spear*. Read the following:

The bones at last fall silent, and the living blood evaporates. Kavan's spirit, bleeding a ghostly ichor, struggles to its feet. "You have proven… worthy."

Agony strikes your hand, as if it were bereft of any and all blood, as if it ached for a familiar weight. As you cast your eyes upon the spear, you feel its devotion radiate outward like the love of a warm sun. Instinctively, you know it will obey you, a humble servant and faithful confidant in your war to come.

Kavan's voice is but a whisper, as if every syllable was exhausting. "Wield this weapon in our name, if not your own. Use it to restore our people to honor. Shove it deep into the heart of that black tree and let the Blood Spear drink its fill."

Armed with the *blood spear*, the adventurers now have a chance to end the Gulthias Tree without uprooting it or casting a *hallow* spell.



III. The Root of All Evil

Quite conveniently, the ritual atop Yester Hill nears completion once the adventurers reach Area Y3. As described above, the adventurers must choose between going for the Martikovs and guaranteeing Wintersplinter's birth, or risking the Martikovs to end the ritual prematurely.

By when this act begins, there are 1d6 + 4 rounds until the ritual is complete, after which Wintersplinter is born and any victims still attached to the Gulthias Tree die. Area Y3, the Druid Circle is 250-feet-in-diameter, and the distance between the circle and the tree is 200 feet. For once, you must have your players count vast distances, as every round is precious.

Failure. If the party slays the ritualists, they prevent Wintersplinter's birth. In spite, the Gulthias Tree bleeds the remaining Martikovs dry. If the party instead focus on saving the Martikovs, Wintersplinter is born, albeit in a weakened state: it has 5 fewer hit points for each of the eight would-be sacrifices that is freed.

The Ritual

Atop this wretched hill, druids dance under the stormy sky, their hands aglow, their tongues twisted with foul syllables, their powers bent towards a towering effigy of wicker. The five druids stand in a pentagram, devoted to a ritual whose evil you can feel upon your skin and behind your eyelids. With every lance of lightning, the effigy seems to grow… realer, more solid, its authority grander, as if a spirit were being crammed inside it.

A shadowy figure lands before you—a massive bat that quickly turns itself into another druid, a white-bearded codger crowned in bloodied antlers. "You face the Son of Strahd!" he snarls! "By rights, your blood is mine!"

Ritualists. The ritualists are composed of five **druids** arranged in a pentagram around the wooden statue at whose feet stands **the Prophet**. The ritualists must use their actions to channel the ritual, but only one must survive to complete the ritual, even if it is the Prophet. Consider the following:

- The druids are fifty feet from one another.
- The druids each have 27 hit points; you can simplify this by weaving a spell into the mix: the druids all share damage equally and, for the sake of simplicity, have 100 hit points in total. Thus, if these hit points are reduced to 0, all druids die simultaneously. To communicate this magic to the players, the druids are all linked together by a black-and-green web of light that flares up whenever one druid is hurt.
- The druids, for the sake of simplicity, all have *barkskin* cast upon themselves and do not influence the battle until the ritual is complete; their entire turns are spent channeling the ritual. The Prophet alone can spend his turns not contributing to the ritual.
- The ritualist guardians to act on initiative count 10 (losing ties) and the ritualist druids (whose turns are effectively skipped while channeling the ritual) to act on initiative count 1. Roll initiative for the Prophet and Wintersplinter as normal.
- After the ritual is complete, the surviving druids join the fray; assume they each have only 1 hit point remaining. The Prophet retains his hit points.

Guardians. The ritualists are protected by a **berserker**, a **druid**, and two **vine blights**, that rush out to meet the adventurers before they enter within 100 feet of the nearest druid. The druid opens up first with an entangle spell. These forces replace the six **berserkers** and six **druids** ordinarily here.

Wintersplinter. After 1d6 + 4 rounds, Wintersplinter bursts from the effigy and attacks, provided the ritualists are not slain prematurely. Wintersplinter has 5 fewer hit points for each victim saved from the Gulthias Tree's root in Area Y4 (leaving it with a minimum of 52 hit points, if all are freed).

The Scale of Yester Hill

If the adventurers are spotted and identified as enemies, the wildlings send out a vanguard of two **berserkers**, one **druid**, and a **vine blight**. The map in *Curse of Strahd* has a scale of 50 feet per square. Thus, the Gulthias Tree is approximately 200 feet from Area Y3, which itself is a 250-diameter-circle.

The Gulthias Tree

In the darkness, you sense a brooding malice. The air becomes greasy, foul. Cockleburs, floated on by a sharp wind, stick to your clothes and bite at your flesh like ravenous ticks. The evil swells. It sighs, it moans wetly. You feel that evil beneath your feet, coursing like hateful blood through the arteries of some self-loathing titan whose disdain for itself is dwarfed only by its disgust for all other life.

Lightning flashes, revealing a crooked, bleeding tree with a battleaxe buried in its trunk. Foul creatures born of bark and vine crawl along its trunk like lice. Among the roots, pale human faces shine out—the Martikovs, reduced to cattle to be fed upon by bloodthirsty vines. "Help us!" they cry, "save us!" but is it too late? An infant cries out. *Is it too late?*

The lightning fades away, spent, and when all returns to darkness, you can't help but feel relieved you no longer must stare upon such naked evil.

Revision. The number of blights has been reduced for this encounter, as enumerated below. Additionally, two corrupted **dryads** have been added to this location. These "blight-sisters" (as the druids call them) are fey spirits trapped in Barovia by the Dark Powers, and corrupted by and bound to the Gulthias Tree. The number of **needle blights** has been reduced from six to three, the **twig blights** to six, and**vine blights** from three to one.

The Ravens Return. On the first round of combat, the **wereravens** Davian Martikov and Muriel Vinshaw descend from the sky to free the Martikovs. Davian, still weakened from the events of Chapter 12, can hardly fly in his raven form. Muriel, unhampered, remains in her hybrid form. Davian has 15 hit points and is suffering from one level of exhaustion, and thereby suffers disadvantage on ability checks (such as those made to free his family).

Sacrifices. The Gulthias Tree in Area Y4 powers the druids' ritual from afar. The Martikov family is entangled in its boughs, their blood being fed upon by invasive roots. At the end of every round, a random member of the Martikovs dies, exsanguinated by the tree. These sacrifices can be freed from the boughs, sparing the victim a terrible death; however, the Gulthias Tree doubles down as more victims are freed, making it harder to save all the Martikovs. As an action, a creature can attempt a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15 + (1 per each sacrifice already freed) to free a creature. Davian Martikov and Muriel Vinshaw also use their actions to free victims.

Lair Actions. The Gulthias Tree itself is alive with a malevolent sentience. At initiative count 20 and 10 (losing ties), the tree can choose one of the following lair actions:

- The Gulthias Tree explodes a **twig blight** within 300 feet, releasing a storm of woody shrapnel and writhing shadows. Creatures within 5 feet of the explosion must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d6 piercing damage and 2d6 necrotic damage on a failure, or half as much on a successful saving throw.
- The Gulthias Tree reaches out with a vine or root, targeting a creature within 60 feet, who must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be pulled 20 feet along the ground in a direction of the Gulthias Tree's choice.
- The Gulthias Tree rakes its branches against a target, making a melee attack, (+6 to hit, reach 15 ft. 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a hit, and the target is either knocked prone or knocked by 10 feet).
- The Gulthias Tree targets one creature within 60 feet of it that is on the ground; the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become restrained until the start of the next round. A DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check made as an action ends the effect.
- The Gulthias Tree exudes poisonous pollen. Non-plants within 60 feet that can smell the pollen must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for the next minute. A creature can repeat their saving throw at the end of its turns, ending this effect on a success.

Areas of Yester Hill

Much of the *Companion's* advice for this chapter is presented in *The Bastard of Zarovich* above, such as **scouts** being positioned along Yester Hill and advice on how to run a combat with the Gulthias Tree.

Y1. Trail

The adventurers risk being spotted by a **scout** when they approach Yester Hill. The scout is positioned along the northeast rim of the upper path that rings Yester Hill. Assume he is 200 feet away when the adventurers first spot him; if the adventurers manage to hit him with a ranged attack, he dies instantly.

Y2. Berserker Cairns

With every flash of lightning, the spirits of the restless dead—the heroes of yore whose bones lie buried beneath the cairns of Yester Hill—can be seen, their disapproval for the Gulthias cult clear. Read the following text, which assumes the druids are already performing their ritual:

> The stone cairns tower above and lie below you, each mound no doubt dedicated to a hero of yore whose bones lie buried. You can't help but shake the feeling that you're… growing colder. Just as one bakes under the Sun's attention, so too, do you feel a chill grow inside your guts. Another flash of lightning paints Yester Hill in blue—and in that instant, you catch sight of another figure floating above a cairn. There and gone, there and gone in a flash. Another apparition, another glimpse of the restless dead.
>
> You can feel their disapproval and disgust on your skin. This entire hill is steeped in that jagged disdain, and instinctively, you understand that it is not towards you, but the wildlings atop the hill, who dance beneath the howling wind, their ritual underway.

Y3. Druids' Circle

Per *The Bastard of Zarovich*, the six **berserkers** and six **druids** hiding in graves here have been replaced with a single **berserker**, a single **druid**, and two **vine blights**, who instead guard the ritualists and **the Prophet**. If you do not run this storyline, restore the areas' original inhabitants.

Y4. Gulthias Tree

Fortunes of Ravenloft

If your tarokka reading indicated that an artifact is found here, the artifact should be none other than the *Tome of Strahd*, in which case this is the source of the Gulthias Tree's evil. The ink in the diary is red—written in the blood of Strahd's victims—and has bled off the page, nourishing the Gulthias Tree.

Y5. Wall of Fog

The Wall of Fog is an opportunity to remind your adventurers of their homeworld. Moments after the adventurers see Strahd's ancestral home in the mists, the image shifts. Each adventurer then sees their own homeland, family, friends, or wants. Through the Wall of Fog, the Dark Powers torture these heroes by showing them what their hearts yearn for most.

You can either tailor these images for each adventurer, if you know their backstory well enough, or simply ask your players, "In the fog, you catch a glimpse of your homeland, as if the Wall of Fog were taunting you. What in that white miasma do you see?"



Chapter XV: The Werewolf Den

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 258
Chapter Progression 258
Quick Notes 258
Running the Chapter 258
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 259
Dramatis Personae 259
Variants & Revisions 260
For the Love of Mother Night 260
I. The Vision 261
II. The Svalich Woods 262
III. Die Kinder Die 264
Approaching the Werewolf Den 267
Areas of Note 267
Z1. Cave Mouth 267
Z2. Guard Post 267
Z3. Wolf Den 267
Z5. Deep Caves 267
Z7. Shrine of Mother Night 267
Z8. Ring of Stone 267

The Werewolf Den overlooks Barovia, its caves pregnant with lupine howls and the cries of children. The "Children of Mother Night," as the werewolves style themselves, make a routine of abducting children to infect with lycanthropy. To determine who receives this dreadful curse, the children are forced to fight to the death.

Unfortunately, this chapter is just as disconnected from the campaign as the den is from Barovia at large. Without personal motivation or foreknowledge of the abducted children, it is a chapter without much relation to *Curse of Strahd*. Ordinarily, the adventurers can side with Zuleika Toranescu over the sadistic Kiril Stoyanovich, but still—the werewolves are evil through and through, bound by their curse and encouraged by years of bloodshed to be monsters. There are no heroes here, only villains.

The *Companion* makes no changes to that dismal truth, but instead emphasizes why the adventurers should come here: to eradicate the werewolf menace, save its still uncursed victims—children!—and recover any existing Fortunes of Ravenloft. The *Companion* will not redeem a single werewolf or add any gray to what is clearly a black-and-white chapter.

Thus, it is in Chapter 15 where the adventurers at last get their moment to be big, damn heroes—to stand shoulder to shoulder against the lupine menace, to for once have victory within their grasp, and do unequivocal good in the dismal realm of Barovia.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 15 is relatively short. There is little roleplaying nuance and instead a true dungeon to be stormed. It is incredibly straight forward: slay the werewolves, save the children. The *Companion* considers the werewolf schism to be of little consequence—they're evil, sadistic, bloodthirsty beasts regardless of who leads the pack. With the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, there is far more narrative to interact with.

Chapter Progression

Without the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, the chapter is divided between the adventurers' arrival and the return of Kiril Stoyanovich, if he yet leaves. With that storyline, the chapter is divided into these three acts:

Act I has the adventurers receive Mother Night's vision, which then leads them to Luvash.

Act II covers the trek through the Svalich Woods, including Zuleika Toranescu's appearance, followed up by Kiril's most savage lupine sycophants. A battle erupts.

Act III involves delving the werewolf den and stopping the vile tournament at play.

In the Aftermath, Mother Night and Luvash both express their gratitude, provided the children are saved.

Quick Notes

- There are a total of five hostile **werewolves** and nine **wolves** in the den ordinarily (with Zuleika as a possible sixth hostile). Kiril returns with six additional werewolves, raising the total to twelve.
- As noted by the *Companion*, werewolves can attack each other; their fangs and claws ignore lycanthropic immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks.
- The werewolves have abducted eight children. The *Companion* makes six of them Vistani and names all eight. See *For the Love of Mother Night.*
- The *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline places all the werewolves in the Den and moves them around quite a bit while the tournament is occurring. Kiril's six unnamed werewolves encounter the adventurers en route to the den.
- Any who take treasure from the statue of Mother Night are cursed: they gain no benefit from finishing a short or long rest at night. The curse is dormant from dawn to dusk, allowing them to rest in the daytime.
- If an artifact is present in this chapter, it is at the feet of the Mother Night's statue and similarly cursed.

Checklist

- Consult with your personal calendar to determine if it's been long enough for a full moon to rise in Barovia. The *Companion* originally suggested scheduling a full moon for two weeks after the adventurers started the campaign.
- Review your notes to see if Arabelle was rescued from Lake Zarovich, and if Freek and Myrtle were rescued from Old Bonegrinder.

Running the Chapter

This chapter is visceral. You should describe in hideous detail the savagery the werewolves commit with their attacks. Your goal is to move through the encounters swiftly, describing the werewolves as a relentless and overwhelming force. The adventurers should succeed by the skin of their teeth, surrounded by the corpses of wolves and werewolves. If an adventurer is bitten by a werewolf, make their Constitution saving against lycanthropy in secret to add to the tension.

Encounters. With the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, this chapter boils down to 4.5 encounters:

- Encountering Zuleika Toranescu in Act 2, whom the Vistani mistake for hostile. In a sense, this counts as half an encounter, since Zuleika means no harm.
- The six savage **werewolves** hunting Zuleika in Act 2.
- Skennis and his nine **wolves** in Area Z3.
- The possible battle over Kellen, wherein the Vistani wish to kill the werewolf whelp, and Zuleika comes to his aid.
- The battle in Area Z8 against Kiril Stoyanovich, Bianca, Aziana, Davanka, and Wensencia.

Advancement

For slaying the werewolves, rescuing the children, and defeating Kiril Stoyanovich, the adventurers ought to advance from 7th to 8th level.

Time

It is crucial that this chapter takes place at night. In daylight, the chapter loses what little charm it had, for the least it can do is appeal to our gothic appetite. If the adventurers set out for the den during the daytime, it takes them until dusk to reach it.

Weather

The moon cycle, of course, is important to this chapter. The *Companion* recommended setting the next full moon to three weeks after the adventurers came to Barovia. Reckon this with your calendar, but do not make adjustments to the current moon cycle. When the adventurers enter Castle Ravenloft, Strahd demonstrates his power over the land by *forcing* a full moon, so you might wind up kneecapping yourself if your players experience a full moon here in this chapter and are about to enter Castle Ravenloft shortly thereafter. If, however, you have been on top of your own personal calendar, a full moon in this chapter is a great source of drama… as infected children begin to rave and howl with their first ever transformations.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Abductees	—	F	Z8	Abducted children forced to fight to the death for the "gift" of lycanthropy in Kiril's tournament.
Arabelle	LN **Commoner**	F	Z8	The descendant of Madam Eva and heir to the throne of Ravenloft.
Aziana	**Werewolf**	H	Z2	A woman on guard duty.
Bianca	**Werewolf**	H	Z5A	The mate of Kiril Stoyanovich.
Davanka	**Werewolf**	H	Z2	A woman on guard duty.
Emil Toranescu	**Werewolf**	—	—	The mate of Zuleika, now imprisoned in Castle Ravenloft.
Freek & Myrtle	—	F	Z8	Saved from Old Bonegrinder only to be captured by werewolves.
Kellen	—	N	Z7	A young child infected with lycanthropy.
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	H	SE	The vicious pack of the werewolves.
Luvash	CE **Bandit Captain**	F	—	Father of Arabelle and brother of Arrigal.
Mother Night	—	F	—	The patron goddess of the werewolves.
Skennis	**Werewolf**	H	Z3	Too old to hunt, the former pack-leader has retired to a life of awful music.
Wensencia	**Werewolf**	H	Z5B	A surrogate mother to Kellen.
Zuleika Toranescu	**Werewolf**	N	Z7	A malcontent werewolf eager to see Kiril dead.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

No magic items are featured in Chapter 15, other than potential Fortunes of Ravenloft.

Creatures

- Bandit
- Bandit Captain
- Commoner
- Kiril Stoyanovich
- Werewolf
- Wolf

Effects

- Mother Night's Curse
- Oil (Flask)
- Werewolf Lycanthropy

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Abductees

In *For the Love of Mother Night*, the *Companion* details the werewolves' victims, forced to compete in Kiril's brutal tournament. (Arabelle, Freek, and Myrtle are all described elsewhere; if Freek and Myrtle are not present, they replaced by Anton and Tanya, two nondescript Barovians.) The other children, all Vistani, are:

- Alek, a ten-year-old boy
- Dezdrelda, a twelve-year-old girl
- Livius, an eleven-year-old boy
- Mathilda, a nine-year-old girl
- Nimira, a seven-year-old girl

Arabelle

Added to this chapter by the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, Arabelle has been stolen by the werewolves. As the heir of Madam Eva—and therefore Strahd—Arabelle is dear to both Eva and Eva's patron goddess, Mother Night.

Freek

If Freek was taken by the werewolves outside Vallaki, he is present in this chapter and must fight for his life.

Kellen

Kellen, a ten-year-old werewolf (AC 10, 2 HP), is the latest victor of Kiril's sick tournaments. Kellen struggles under his new curse and wishes only to be rid of it. In *For the Love of Mother Night*, he can be found petitioning Mother Night for a cure.

Kiril's Savage Beasts
Six unnamed **werewolves** accompany Kril Stoyanovich in the *Leader of the Pack* special event (and thus utilized in *For the Love of Mother Night*). These six are the most savage werewolves the Pack has to offer; so far gone into bloodlust are these beasts that they have shed their human names and instead refer to themselves by lupine titles: Nighthowler, Moonscar, Gloomwader, Rend, Bloodfang, and, creatively, Beast.
Roleplaying the Beasts. These werewolves are hardly people anymore, spending all their time in their hybrid or bestial forms. They react with howls, snarls, and barks of pain, sparing you the trouble of having to voice them. The beasts see only red and never retreat, even in the face of certain death. With little impulse control, they go after the weak and bloodied, even if it is a clear trap.

Kiril Stoyanovich

Ordinarily present in this chapter only during the *Leader of the Pack* special event, Kiril is here by default for the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, wherein he runs his brutal tournaments.

Luvash

Added to this chapter by *For the Love of Mother Night*, Luvash joins the adventurers to rescue the Vistani children, including his daughter, from the werewolves. Though terrified, Luvash proves his courage and leads his men admirably.

Mother Night

Mother Night is one of Barovia's deities. She is worshiped by frightened Barovians after dusk, and the werewolf pack. A cold and distant deity, Mother Night was content to patronize the self-styled "Children of Mother Night" until—per the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline—they abducted Arabelle. Without this storyline, Mother Night is all but absent from this chapter. A statue of her can be found in Area Z7.

Myrtle

If Myrtle was taken by the werewolves outside Vallaki, she is present in this chapter and must fight for her life.

Zuleika Toranescu

Zuleika is the mate of Emil, who languishes in the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft. Zuleika shares Emil's disgust with Kiril's foul tournaments and seeks his demise. Ordinarily, she can be found in Area Z7, praying to Mother Night. In *For the Love of Mother Night*, she betrays the pack by leading the adventurers and Vistani to the werewolf den to finally end Kiril's reign.

Variants & Revisions

This chapter of the *Companion* is one massive revision to the Werewolf Den. All changes are covered in the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline.

For the Love of Mother Night

Ordinarily, the adventurers come to the Werewolf Den during an otherwise boring night. Kiril is out hunting, Skennis is badly playing his lute, and the children are whimpering. Nothing of note is happening. Under this storyline, the Den is in a clamor for tonight the children will battle for the "gift" of lycanthropy. The adventurers arrive in time to spare these innocents such a gruesome end. The icon of this tragedy is none other than Arabelle—daughter of Luvash, descendant of Madam Eva and distant relative of Strahd von Zarovich—who has been, for the sake of this storyline, abducted by werewolves.

Die Kinder. The werewolves have eight children captured, six of which, per this storyline, are Vistani. The other two are Barovians: they might be Freek and Myrtle, the two children taken by Morgantha in Chapter 3 and held in Old Bonegrinder. Otherwise, they are Anton and Tanya, two nondescript Barovians. Arabelle has also been forced to fight.

The Tournament. The children are due to fight this night. Kiril has styled it in a tournament-style bracket, with two children facing off, one-on-one. By when the adventurers arrive, two matches have already been held and two children already dead.

Leader of the Pack. This storyline cannibalizes the Leader of the Pack storyline; Kiril and his six **werewolves** and nine **wolves** are already back in the Den. These additional combatants have been included in Act 2: The Svalich Woods.

Zuleika. At long last, Kiril has decided to remove the thorn that is Zuleika from his paw. She has been violently exiled from the den; his most savage sycophants are hunting her down. She is on a collision course with the adventurers, but make no mistake: she too, as a werewolf, deserves only death. At best, she can inform the adventurers of Kiril's ghastly game.

Mother Night Torn. Mother Night is a grim goddess now torn between disciples. As the werewolves' patron, she enjoys prayer, paean, and sacrifice. As the patron of Madam Eva, Mother Night has an obligation to spare Arabelle from an early death or a life of lupine hunger.

Mysteries of Ravenloft. Through the vision given by Mother Night, the adventurers learn that Arabelle is the descendant of Madam Eva and that Madam Eva is thus related to Strahd.

I. The Vision

Mother Night visits a vision upon one adventurer, beseeching them for aid. Choose the most religious, the most sympathetic, or the most gothic character. The vision reveals the location of the Werewolf Den and warns of the imminent death of nine children. There is no doubt in the authenticity of this vision, except for any manufactured by the player character themself; The deity herself has truly reached out to a mortal in this dire hour. The vision might come hours or days in advance, depending on what best suits your campaign or how far the party is from the Den. When describing the vision, read the following, changing the status of the moon to better fit your lunar calendar:

You crumble to your knees as a vision assails your mind:

The world is dismal, dark. The crescent moon hangs high above Barovia. You are looking upon a mountainside—upon a cave whose maw is shaped like the jaws of a wolf, all the stalactites and stalagmites standing out like fangs. Torchlight burns therein and the sickly sweet scents of rot and blood and wolf stains the air like incense.

Your mind hurtles forward, through the caves, past the wolves and werewolves, past the bloodstained stone, past the cages full of filth, until at last you behold a ledge jutting from the mountainside. Werewolves are gathered around the ring, howling in sadistic triumph as mere children battle each other in a ring of stones, armed with spears and armored only in rags.

A voice rings out across your mind: the voice of a mother, weary and disappointed:

"The Children of Mother Night… my children, damned as they may be. Cursed with lupine hunger, they seek to grow their ranks, but only the strongest are given the 'gift.'"

Your vision beholds a pale, raven-haired girl whose dark eyes sweep across the makeshift battlefield to analyze her adolescent enemies.

"Arabelle," whispers the voice, "first of her name, heir of Eva, my chief hierophant. Stolen from her father Luvash by the wolves to fight and perhaps die in this arena. Gone too far have my children; I can tolerate it no longer. Slaughter the wolves and save the Blood of Barov from a lifetime of lupine hunger. Save these poor souls and my favor you shall win."

Background

For the Love of Mother Night is contingent on—or at least sweetened by—a few details that should have occurred earlier in your campaign. Arabelle was rescued from Lake Zarovich (see Chapter 2). If she has not yet, scrub that from your campaign; she has been taken by werewolves instead of Bluto Krogarov. Vallaki has undergone political upheaval: Lady Wachter has seized control after Baron Vallakovich's demise. Luvash, father of Arabelle, brother of Arrigal, and co-captain of the Vallaki Vistani, has decided to leave Vallaki, if not Barovia itself, behind, taking Arabelle with him. If these details do not match, fret not. This storyline can still work, just bend the details around. As long as Arabelle is alive, it functions. Luvash is unnecessary, but a grand addition to the plot.

The Ruined Caravan

Luvash and his ruined expedition can be found along the stretch of highway between Krezk and the Raven River Crossroads (Areas S and R). Luvash is a CE **bandit captain**, and all that remains of his soldiers are four CN **bandits**, all male. About eight more Vistani **commoners** (five women, three men) are there as well. The expedition consists of seven vardos, one of which is on its side, pinning a dying man whom the Vistani are comforting. Several more corpses litter the scene, all visceral and savaged by werewolves. It's a red scene; parents rave over their lost children—six Vistani, including Arabelle.

When the party arrive to the scene, read the following:

From round the bend in the road you hear cries and screams, the unmistakable wails of childless mothers and fresh widowers. A man, his voice thick with drink, is shouting, "Alexi shall break northeast with three others; I myself will take five."

Someone protests, their voice as sharp and thin as glass: "It is hopeless, Luvash! Without silver, you are sending us to certain death!"

"Without us, our children are certainly dead."

You come upon a scene you cannot unsee: bodies torn to shreds, viscera draped over wagons like Yuletide decorations. Your eyes find one horse in eight pieces, one haunch missing. Vistani—mothers, fathers, adolescents—are clumped together around six barrel-topped wagons, shivering in the cold. A seventh has been overturned, almost shattered into kindling, its sides splashed with red.

Like soldiers, nine armed men stand in a row alongside the road, ignoring the carnage all around them as a dark brute of a man continues to muster their courage in the face of what can only be certain death. The men are terrified, trembling, the sweat on their face gleaming in the torchlight. One bends over, graceful as a dancer, and vomits his dinner out onto the ground, never bothering to wipe the bile from his mouth.

Luvash, the ringleader, continues, "It is true that without silver, our blades are mere suggestions! Alas, the gods saw fit to allow Vistani curses, and tonight we shall avail ourselves of that gift! Let the wolves contend with magic!"

Read the following shortly after the adventurers converse with Luvash:

> Luvash reaches for the bottle and finds it empty. He casts his gaze down the Svalich Road, wistful in momentary sobriety. "Long have we walked these roads, unmolested by lupine marauders. I was a fool not to pack further wolfsbane, but never have we needed it. The Devil… the Devil himself blesses our passage to the lands beyond the Mists. Unless… Unless…"
>
> Luvash grows pale. When he speaks, his voice is hardly a whisper: "Unless he knows we are leaving for good."

Luvash is right to be paranoid; Strahd is loath to give up his playthings. The Vistana is incorrect, however. The caravan was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time when the most ravenous of wolves were nearby. Kiril, barely able to control his most savage beasts, did all he could not to slaughter the Vistani, lest he anger Strahd whose authority is all that stops his enemies from killing Kiril in his sleep.

Roleplaying Luvash. Though he is mustering men to brave the wilderness, Luvash himself is visibly shaken to his core. He relies on rage and wine to overcome the mortal fear of facing the werewolves, and the stress is evident in how tightly his hands clutch the blade and bottle. His men are equally terrified, but Luvash's resolve is enough to tide them over. Luvash might say any of the following:

- "This land is too dangerous for my daughter and I want out. I wanted better for her."
- "If we are not willing to die for our children, by what grace did we raise them?"
- "The moon is not yet full; there is still hope."
- "Tonight the Children of Mother Night shall know a father's scorn."
- If asked why Arrigal, his brother, is not here, Luvash grows quiet and claims, "Arrigal has an attachment to Barovia I will never share. He is loath to leave. Luck has he wished us, and promises he has made to visit, but…" Luvash is unwilling to admit that Arrigal is a servant of Strahd.

The Plan. Loathe to split his forces and be picked off by the wolves, Luvash appoints Alexei and his contingent (the Zsolts) to act as the vanguard. If the adventurers offer to help, he has them join Alexei. The other bandits stay back in a closely guarded circle. If combat erupts, they arrive on the second round of combat. Luvash knows his men lack silvered weaponry and is gambling on Vistana curses to bypass the lycanthropes' immunity to nonsilvered attacks.

Luvash's Men. Luvash has assembled eight **bandits**. These men are chiefly fodder doomed to die to the werewolves, for without silvered steel that can hardly harm anything but the pack's **wolves**. Among them is Alexei, the whipped Vistana met in Chapter 5. The man, though terrified, is determined to rescue Arabelle, not only to redeem himself for his past failure, but for an outright attachment to her; after she was returned by the adventurers, Alexei swore himself as her guardian. The other Vistani are:

- Balthazar, the catatonic uncle and only surviving relative of Nimira.
- Boris, the resolute father of Alek and Mathilda.
- Hantestolt, a half-Barovian burning with the need to prove himself as if any Vistana cared about the drunken escapades of his father.
- Olegiver, a cautious huntsman.
- Yesper, a proud bladedancer on the brink of madness; it is he who protested against Luvash's plan and insisted they march only to their deaths.
- Tall Zsolt, the tallest of the Zsolts and the most morose.
- Young Zsolt, the youngest of the Zsolts and the most cheerful. He is the older brother of Dezdrelda and Livius. His chipper attitude is a clear defense mechanism for the horror he is living through.
- Dead Zsolt, the eldest of the Zsolts and the most laconic. Famously, he has already been pronounced dead four times in this life alone: once in battle, twice to illness, and once from falling off a cliff into a pond.

Die Kinder. It is crucial that the adventurers know the names of the werewolves' victims. The six children are:

- Alek, a ten-year-old boy
- Arabelle, the seven-year-old daughter of Luvash
- Dezdrelda, a twelve-year-old girl
- Livius, an eleven-year-old boy
- Mathilda, a nine-year-old girl
- Nimira, a seven-year-old girl

II. The Svalich Woods

Before the adventurers set out into the Svalich Woods, they can attempt to inspire the Vistani. There is only one opportunity to do so; one player character can attempt a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, each group of Vistani (see the Vistani Versus (Were)wolves sidebar) gain 10 temporary hit points.

As the adventurers and Vistani brave the Svalich Woods, read the following, which assumes it is already past dark:

> Out into the stolid dark you venture, the night heavy and the chill sharp. You hear every crow caw, every snapped twig, every shifting in the wind. The men behind can't help but breathe as if dying for air. Their panic is palpable, perhaps even infectious. In the distance, a wolf howls its mournful song:
>
> "What's that?!" someone shouts, and the formation is broken as steel rasps against sheathes and torches burn away the darkness!
>
> "I saw it! I saw it!" someone screams, backing up into another man.
>
> Luvash's voice cuts through the din, "Hold fast! Hold fast, gods damn you, hold—!"
>
> "They're here! Morninglord's Light! They're here, gods save us!"
>
> It's too late, you understand. Chaos blooms in all its colors as men driven to the brink of terror are allowed to run their mouths.

Panicked, the men mistake nearby movement for werewolves. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals this, and a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check quells their fears. Otherwise, a momentary panic spreads throughout the group. If the adventurers do not intervene, two bandits will run off and another will start an accidental fire by dropping his torch when he collides with someone else.

Zuleika Bloodied

Exiled by Kiril, Zuleika is being hunted by his most savage sycophants. Escaping the den alone was a harrowing challenge, and now she lopes through the Svalich Woods in her wolf form, wounded and bloodied. In this form, she cannot speak. Alarmed, the Vistani attack her, assuming this wolf to be a werewolf in disguise. Read the following:

> Twigs snap in the nearby brush! A wolf loping out from the thicket! Luvash shouts, "Hold fast, men! The first of the wolves is on us!"

Open Fire! Roll initiative. Wounded, the **werewolf** has 29 hit points remaining. On her turn, Zuleika uses an action to assume her human form and sue for a temporary peace. If Zuleika survives that long, read the following:

> The wolf twists in pain, its limbs elongating, its fur disappearing. It transforms into a dark skinned, human woman. Nude, there is no hiding the gaping wound in her side. The blood pours slowly and stubbornly from the wound. "Wait!" she shouts, throwing up her hands. "Wait! Of your children, I know where they went and the fate that awaits them!"
>
> This gives Luvash pause. "Hold your blows!" he yells, before turning to the woman and raising his blade. "Speak, wolf, and speak quickly."
>
> The woman's eyes are glazed over, as if she's fighting unconsciousness… or something far, far worse. "I am Zuleika Toranescu, and I belong not to the wolves that stole your children. I argued for their lives. Our vicious pack leader seeks to add a new member tonight, but believes only the strongest deserves lycanthropy. At midnight, he will force your children to fight to death, armed with spear and knife. Whomever lives will be bit."
>
> Zuleika's bloody hands curl into fists, her ragged nails pressing deep into her palms. "Long have I argued against this ghastly contest—that all the children ought to join the pack. Tired of this thorn in his paw, Kiril, our tyrant, exiled me. His most savage followers almost tore me to shreds on the way out from the den."
>
> The woman shakes her head. "I am no monster. I will lead you to the Den, and with your aid we might rid this land of Kiril Stoyanovich, that wretched cur."

Zuleika's Hunger. In this bloodied state, Zuleika is at war with herself. The Beast Within—the personification of her lycanthropic curse that demands blood, flesh, and moonlight—is eager to feed so that Zuleika might heal from her wounds. Every so often, she must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 12 + the number of times she's attempted this saving throw) or assume her hybrid form or rampage. The Beast Within is cunning enough to target Vistani over the more formidable adventurers. A *calm emotions* spell ends this rampage.

The Wolves Arrive

Kiril's most savage sycophants arrive soon after Zuleika: Nighthowler, Moonscar, Gloomwader, Rend, Bloodfang, and Beast. These six **werewolves** know no mercy and live only for the thrill of the hunt. As fellow lycanthropes, their claws, and fangs can harm Zuleika. They fall upon the party and Vistani from the right flank of their formation.

The werewolves sneak up upon the party, contesting their Dexterity (Stealth) check (with advantage) against the adventurers' passive Perception. When they attack, a werewolf, one outright kills Olegiver, the huntsman. Read the following, choosing one adventurer to smacked in the face with a torn off arm:

> "Wait," someone says, "I hear—"
>
> A beast leaps out from the brush, pouncing on Olegiver, the cautious huntsman! He goes to his end screaming, his arms ripped from their sockets like a marionette! One bloodied limb smacks you straight in the gob, leaving a red smear along your cheek!
>
> "To arms!" Luvash screams, "To ar—!"
>
> "The trees!" Zsolt the Younger screeches, "They're in the trees!"
>
> Another beast leaps into the fray, leaving behind a swaying pine! A torch falls, igniting the carpet of dead leaves resting on the forest floor! And in the firelight, you see them: four more eyes gleaming, gilded and ravenous!

Zuleika leaps at Nighthowler, commanding his attention; as fellow lycanthropes, their attacks still deal damage to one another. Moonscar, Gloomwader, Rend, and Bloodfang attack the party, leaving the Vistani to contend with Beast. The werewolves fight to the death, driven by rage, hunger, and hatred.

Read the following once the last werewolf is slain:

> At last the final beast falls to spell and silver! When the din of battle fades, you become aware of screaming, though it is hard to tell who amongst the survivors has yet to keep a sane mind in the wake of such utter carnage.
>
> Zuleika pants, her eyes deep with hunger, the slaver on her lupine jaw shining in the torchlight. "There is little… time left. Die kinder… the children… Before…"
>
> Zuleika's hands curl into fists, her claws digging deep into her palms. Blood drips to the forest floor as the werewolf shakes, desperate to restrain herself in the face of such a feast.



Zuleika's Hunger. Make another Wisdom saving throw (DC 12 + the number of dead Vistani + the number of times she's made this saving throw against hunger) with disadvantage. On a failure, she rampages.

III. Die Kinder Die

The adventurers reach the Werewolf Den just at the opening of the games. In a tournament-style bracket, the children are squaring off to fight to the death. There are mere minutes before the first battle begins.

Choices & Consequences. As they delve the den, the adventurers must make ugly choices in order to save the children in time.

- If the adventurers stop to deal with Skennis, the first match is already over by when they reach Area Z8. If they don't kill Skennis and his wolves all-in-one round, the only other option is to leave the Vistani behind to handle it. If so, all the Vistani but Luvash die.
- If the adventurers stop to deal with Kellen, the second match is already over by when they reach Area Z8. The correct choice is leaving Kellen alone, at the risk of him infecting other Barovians.

Revision. Enraptured by the tournament, the pack has left no guard for the cave. In their hubris, the werewolves could never believe they would be attacked—not with the patronage of Strahd von Zarovich and Mother Night—and if they were, what steel could harm them? Therefore, Aziana and Davanka are not on watch in Area Z2, but are in Z8, where the tournament is being held. Essentially, all werewolves but Skennis and Zuleika (who should be with the party or dead) are in Area Z8.

Arrival. With the tournament underway, sounds of cheer and lupine howls can be heard as the adventurers approach the Werewolf Den. Read the following:

> The cave yawns before you, carved by providence or a deeply humorous god to resemble a wolf's mouth. Its throat is lit with sputtering torches, and the sweet scents of death and decay welcome you. In the distance, you hear sporadic and discordant notes of a flute. And if you strain your ear, high above you can hear lupine howls and sadistic cheers, as if spectators at a tournament were cheering on their favored gladiators.
>
> "Kill him!" a monstrous voice shouts, echoed by a lupine wolf.
>
> "To the death! To! The! Death!" another voice demands, until all spectators begin to chant, "Death! Death! Death!"
>
> Time is short. You must act and now. The den yawns before you, an abattoir that must be braved to save the children from a fate far worse than death.

Note that, as reiterated in *Approaching the Werewolf Den* below, it is impossible to scale up the cliff towards Area Z8 without a climbers' kit or magic, thereby forcing the adventurers to navigate the den.

Storming the Den

With Aziana, Davanka, Bianca, Wensencia, and Kiril in Area Z8, all that guards the den is Skennis, a **werewolf**, and his nine **wolves**. As mentioned in *Curse of Strahd*, the elderly Skennis has all but 36 hit points.

Like the other werewolves, Skennis is not expecting invaders. However, he and his wolves still possess a keen sense of smell. Contest the adventurers' Dexterity (Stealth) checks against Skennis' and the wolves' passive Perception (ordinarily 14 and 13, respectively, but since they are using their Keen Hearing and Smell traits, they have advantage, and thus passive Perceptions of 19 and 18, respectively). Skennis sends his wolves to investigate any suspicion rather than holding back to call for reinforcements—the old wolf is still too arrogant to believe the den invaded or himself too feeble to defend it against unlucky visitors.

If any character fails their contest with Skennis and the wolves' perception, read the following:

> In the distance, the flute continues to wail its discordant notes, coaxed on by bad fingering. And then it stops. In the sudden silence, you hear a man sniff… followed by curious, canine noises. The music picks up again.

Skennis feigns ignorance to the adventurers' presence and sends his wolves to investigate. He himself is not far behind—only one round, if combat erupts. The wolves attack the adventurers (or Vistani); the sounds of battle are loud enough to alert Skennis, who uses that time to transform into his hybrid form. He carefully leaves his electrum flute (worth 250 gp) on the floor in Area Z3.

Roleplaying the Werewolves. Once Skennis enters the fray, he shouts in a strangled, monstrous voice: "It is too late! The whelps battle upstairs, four already dead! The Children of Mother Night welcome a new member tonight—and we shall feast on your flesh!" Zuleika, if present, replies, "This has gone on for too long, Skennis! What have we become?" The old man replies, "Who we've meant to be—wolves in a world of sheep!" Skennis' dying words are "We are the future. We are the next evolution of all mankind."

The Vistani. Unable to distinguish ordinary wolves from lycanthropic ones, the Vistani believe Skennis' wolves are werewolves and act in great panic until one is slain by ordinary steel. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check can prematurely confirm that these are ordinary wolves.

Zuleika's Hunger. Make another Wisdom saving throw (DC 12 + the number of dead Vistani + the number of times she's made this saving throw against hunger) with disadvantage. On a failure, she rampages.

At the Shrine of Mother Night

If the adventurers enter Area Z7, they see Kellen praying at the foot of the effigy to Mother Night. Per the *Companion*, Kellen wishes to be rid of his curse, as evident in his overheard prayers. This becomes a point of contention: the Vistani, especially Luvash, demand that *all* werewolves be eradicated, including young Kellen. If Zuleika is present, this causes her to turn on the adventurers, or at least side with Kellen. Per the *Companion's* changes to the den, no children are here; instead Kellen is.

The chamber is soundproofed, thanks to the effigy of Mother Night. As noted below in *Areas of Note*, the two corpses hanging on the wall could be individuals the players recognize. Read the following when the adventurers enter Area Z7:

> As you enter this wide-mouthed chamber, the world's noises fall away, clearly smothered by magic. And you behold a bizarre sight: wooden cages, sized for children, all facing a crude wooden statue of a wolf-headed woman draped in garlands of vines and night flowers. Treasure is heaped around the statue's feet: thousands of coins, within whose piles glitter gems and jewelry. Behind the statue, two maggot-ridden corpses hang from iron shackles bolted to the wall.
>
> A young boy kneels at the statue's feet, his hands clasped together. His prayers echo throughout the chamber: "—by your grace, Mother Night, rid me of this hunger… Blessed Mother, dark as night, lovely as the moon, save me from myself. By your grace, Mother Night, rid me of this—"
>
> At your approach, the boy's prayers break off. He turns to face you—hardly ten years old. At the sight of you, his lips curl into a strained smile. His teeth are all fangs. The boy visibly shudders, flexing his hands, which begin to elongate into claws. Groaning, the boy pulls the transformation back, suppressing his great hunger. And yet you cannot help but notice the slaver that drips from the corner of his mouth.

Kellen, the ten-year-old werewolf, has 2 HP, 10 AC, and a werewolf's damage immunities. Provided Zuleika and the Vistani are still present (including Luvash, replacing him if he is dead), read the following:

> "Another wolf!" a Vistana cries, reaching for his sword.
>
> "Wait!" Zuleika snarls. "Wait! Kellen is but a boy!"
>
> Luvash shakes his head. "He is no boy, but a monster. He is cursed. With but one bite, the cycle starts anew as surely as the next moon will rise. He must be slain."
>
> "Zuleika?" young Kellen asks, still shuddering with hunger.
>
> "He is in control!" Zuleika snarls. "See how he already reins in his ravenous hunger? Spare him the blade, for there is hope for him yet!"
>
> "No, woman," replies Luvash. "It is hopeless. I cannot have this beast at my back."
>
> Zuleika steps back, her human hands already ending in vicious claws. "You must walk over my corpse first if you wish to harm him."
>
> Luvash twists his hand into the telltale sign of a Vistana curse. "So be it, then."

Without the adventurers' intervention, it becomes a bloodbath as the Vistani fall upon Kellen and Zuleika. A swift word to Luvash about his daughter is enough to convince him, otherwise a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check is necessary to stay his blade.

Aftermath. Kellen lacks the discipline to control his appetite for long. Without Zuleika to mentor him, Kellen inevitably begins attacking other Barovians.

To the Victor, the Spoils

By when the adventurers arrive to Area Z8, two matches may have already been held. Consult the Tournament table for details, noting again that Freek and Myrtle are replaced by Anton and Tanya, two Barovians, if they are not present in this chapter. Without the adventurers' intervention, the tournament continues to seven rounds, with Arabelle emerging victorious. Kiril and his four **werewolves** are here (Aziana, Bianca, Davanka, and Wensencia), cheering on this travesty.

Assuming the adventurers arrived on the third match and that Freek and Myrtle are present, read the following:

> Amongst the werewolves, one monster steps out: a dark-coated beast with a scar racing through his left eye. "Next we witness the battle between Freek and Myrtle! Might Mother Night grant her chosen strength! Begin!"
>
> You watch in horror as the two children you rescued from the hags of Old Bonegrinder are thrown out into the ring of stones, armed each with bloody spears too long for their arms. Myrtle sobs relentlessly as Freek says, "Don't worry, Myrtle… It will… It will be okay."

Tournament Matches

Match	Combatants
1	Livius* v. Dezdrelda
2	Mathilda v. Nimira*
3	Freek v. Myrtle*
4	Arabelle* v. Alek
5	Nimira* v. Myrtle
6	Arabelle* v. Livius
7	Arabelle* v. Nimira

If the adventurers do not intervene immediately, Freek guides Myrtle's spear into his heart and pulls on the shaft. The werewolves erupt into disgusted jeers at this "lack of sportsmanship."

Inevitably, the werewolves smell the adventurers or Vistani. Read the following:

> A ripple passes through the crowd of wolves, as conspicuous as a crashing wave. The beasts wrinkle their noses… and begin to slaver.
>
> "Lambs," murmurs a woman in a low voice, her hackles raised and her teeth gleaming in the torchlight. "Lambs come fresh to the slaughter."
>
> All at once, the wolves descend into ravenous lunacy, howling and scraping their claws against the gravel and stone, slavering with bloody hunger.

Tactics. When combat erupts, roll separately for each werewolf's initiative. The werewolves, children, and Vistani (if present) follow these tactics:

- All **werewolves** have 12 AC, 58 HP, and +4 to hit with attacks. Most eschew spears, preferring to rend with fang and claw.
- The werewolves are sadistic, ravenous, and ruthless. Unable to control their hunger, they attack unconscious characters, ripping at flesh and accruing extra Death saving throw failures.
- Aziana, Davanka and Wensencia gang up on the same target, preferring the weakest enemies.
- Bianca and Kiril fight side by side, with Bianca focusing on knocking enemies prone so that Kiril has advantage on his attacks.
- The Vistani clump up to attack Aziana, Davanka and Wensencia.
- Luvash goes for the children, spiriting them back to the mouth of the cave.
- Zuleika focuses on fighting and restraining Kiril. As noted before, her fangs and claws can harm other werewolves.
- The children, stricken with fear, scream and huddle together.



- If Bianca is slain, Kiril flies into a rage, gaining 5d10 temporary hit points and dealing +2 extra damage with every attack.
- If reduced to 15 hit points or fewer, Kiril takes a hostage—Arabelle. He backs up to the ledge, ready to leap off. Aided by a vision, Arabelle remains calm and knows just when to worm out of his grasp. He then flees like the miserable dog he is, leaving behind his mate Bianca.

Aftermath

If Arabelle is rescued, Mother Night is pleased. She lifts her curse from the treasure heaped at her statue and even cures an adventurer if they're infected with lycanthropy. Alternatively, the adventurers can petition her to cure Kellen of his lycanthropy.

Luvash proves his gratitude in warning the adventurers that his brother is an agent of Strahd. Lamenting that the adventurers cannot leave Barovia with him, Luvash promises to take messages back to the party's loved ones in their own homeland.

Additionally, you may run the *Die Kinder* special event described in *Curse of Strahd* once this storyline is complete. The adventurers must transport the surviving children to safety.

Approaching the Werewolf Den

If you are running *For the Love of Mother Night,* the children and werewolves are already gathering at Area Z8, the ledge above the cave. To ensure the adventurers must brave the Den proper, a climber's kit is required to scale the slope to reach Area Z8 (unlike in *Curse of Strahd* where the slope can be easily scaled).

Areas of Note

The following areas of the Den are at note:

Z1. Cave Mouth

For the Love of Mother Night

If you are running *For the Love of Mother Night,* Aziana and Davanka are not on guard duty.

Z2. Guard Post

For the Love of Mother Night

See Z1.

Z3. Wolf Den

For the Love of Mother Night

Instead of what is written in *Curse of Strahd*, Skennis says the following when he dies:

> The old man cackles, "We are the future. We are the next evolution of all mankind."

Z5. Deep Caves

For the Love of Mother Night

Bianca, Wensencia, and Kellen are no longer present here.

Z7. Shrine of Mother Night

The corpses hanging on the wall should be minor characters that the adventurers recognize. Review your campaign's history to find any minor characters on this side of Barovia that may have been attacked by the wolves: a Vistana, a Barovian hunter, a Krezk guard, et cetera. Perhaps even a member of Anna Krezkov's party if she ventured to Vallaki to get a wedding dress for the Abbot.

For the Love of Mother Night

If you are running *For the Love of Mother Night,* Zuleika is not here, nor are the eight children (who are instead upstairs, battling for their lives). Instead, Kellen is here, petitioning Mother Night to cure him of lycanthropy.

If the storyline is completed, with Arabelle saved, Mother Night lifts her curse on the treasure heaped around her effigy.

Z8. Ring of Stone

For the Love of Mother Night

If you are running *For the Love of Mother Night,* Aziana, Bianca, Davanka, Wensencia and Kiril Stoyanovich are present here for the tournament.





Chapter XVI: Death House

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 269
Chapter Progression 269
Quick Notes 269
Running the Chapter 269
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 271
Dramatis Personae 271
Variants & Revisions 272
On the Shadow's Shoulder 273
I. Before the Slaughter 274
II. Werewolves in the Mist! 275
III. Into the Svalich Woods 276
Escaping Death House 278
Stages of the Skill Challenge 279
Endings 280
Approaching the Manor 281
Areas of the Manor 282

Curse of Strahd begins with Death House, a lethal 1st-3rd level prologue designed to teach players that they are not heroes, but victims. True to its name, Death House lives in infamy as an abattoir through-out the D&D community. It isn't unusual for most parties to perish, if the prologue is ran as written. It has faced much criticism since its release and many a DM must seek outside remedies or risk a TPK—a Total Party Kill.

The issue at hand, however, isn't that Death House is dangerous, but that it's unbalanced. Death should always be a possibility in any D&D campaign, especially *Curse of Strahd*, but in this case, the odds are hilariously stacked against the players, who begin at 1st-level. Therefore, the Dungeon Master must practice restraint and exhibit grace, all while maintaining an atmosphere of suspense and horror—so how is that done? This chapter of the *Companion* is devoted to ensuring a fair but horrific time for your adventurers. It rebalances encounters, replaces some monsters, and guides you on how to achieve the same result—terror—without wiping out your players unfairly.

Incorporated Supplements. Wyatt Trull's bestselling *Death House Script* and *Escaping Death House* supplements have been incorporated into this chapter.

Chapter Overview

Death House is, first and foremost, a horror story—so how do you run a horror story?

Death House is a slow burn that sets the tone for *Curse of Strahd*. It teaches the adventurers that horror lurks in plain sight and they are fools to trust anyone. It proves to them they are not heroes, but victims; not saviors brought to a strange new land, but Barovians born abroad. Death House welcomes them home.

Starting the Adventure. You have your choice of adventure hooks to start the campaign with, but a new one has been written for you: *On the Shadow's Shoulder*, which is described in its own section below. It combines the *Creeping Fog, Mysterious Visitors,* and *Werewolves in the Mist!* adventure hooks. Through its antagonists, the werewolves, it forces the party into the Durst Manor, which—per the *Companion*—has been removed from the Village of Barovia to a secluded hill to the east. With the wolves at their heels, the party has no choice but to enter the only available shelter: the Death House.

Chapter Progression

Consider this chapter as a three-act storyline:

Act I concerns the adventurer's flight into the woods and arrival to Barovia. The Durst Manor is the only shelter they can find in the ever-present mists. Tasked by two children, Rose and Thorn, to slay the monster in the basement, and recover Baby Walter, they must comb an eerie and empty manor.

Act II sees the adventurers in the dungeon below Durst Manor, up until they reach the sacrifice chamber and are faced with a grim ultimatum.

Act III is when the adventurers must flee Death House, if they failed to satiate it with a sacrifice. See *Escaping Death House* below for details.

In the Aftermath, the adventurers find that the mists have cleared, revealing a village in the distance. Its streets are dark and empty; curtains twitch as villagers sneak a glance at what new victims have come from beyond the Mists. In the square, light spills forth from a tavern, promising warmth and wine… and inside sits Ismark Kolyanovich, who welcomes them to Barovia.

Quick Notes

- Death House has been moved out of the village, far to the east, thereby sparing you from the embarrassment of having to railroad your players away from other houses.
- Rose and Thorn are illusions used by Death House to lure in unsuspecting victims. The true Rose and Thorn, or rather the ghosts thereof, are met in Area 20 on the third floor. Only by laying their skeletons in Area 23 can their spirits find rest.
- None of the rooms in the manor are lit; however, the *Companion* changes a few to make it seem like people are actually living in the manor.
- To advance the story, the party must continue upwards. Do not let them dally on the first or second floor.
- Remember, you, as the DM, are Death House itself. It sees all and it hears all, and it is armed with illusions to achieve its ultimate goal: drawing victims to the ritual chamber below the manor.
- The adventurers can find a silvered shortsword in Area 25E. This weapon is a game-changer, as it allows a warrior to battle werewolves.

Checklist

- Introduce Stanimir of the Vistani to the adventurers and share the tale of Strahd's ancient debt to their people. Do not mention Strahd's name.
- Reach the Gates of Barovia (Area B) and find the letter on Dalvan Olesnsky's corpse in the Svalich Woods (see Area C for details).
- Guide the adventurers to the library's secret room where the adventurers find a letter penned by Strahd himself.
- Provoke an encounter with the nursemaid's specter, who attacks (but doesn't wipe out) the adventurers in Area 15 and 18.

Running the Chapter

Death House typically lasts for two three-hour sessions, if the adventurers prove as cautious as the module demands. As they explore the manor, you must balance suspense with intrigue. It's actually remarkably easy for the game to slow to a crawl, for every door is a choice in a game of D&D, and Death House has many, many doors. The party *will* be cautious, and they will be paranoid, especially if they do know they're playing *Curse of Strahd*.

As the Dungeon Master, you can't let the players realize they are in a horror story until it's too late. Be conservative with Death House; it must seem legitimate, albeit eerie. If you're worried some ominous features, like the sinister images hidden in the wall paneling, will blow the ruse, don't present it to your players. Remember that you are Death House in this chapter; the manor is intelligent and sadistic; it *wants* to keep its victims on edge but can't risk letting them escape early.

Suspense vs. Boredom

There is a fine line to walk between suspense and inaction. The Death House, with its lack of inhabitants to interact with, can easily become one boring conversation between the players and the DM: "Do you (dare) open this door?" "Yes" "It's an empty room. What about the next door?"

If you aren't careful, this dull interaction will kill your first session. You don't want your game to become a door-opening simulation. To keep the suspense up and action rolling, rely upon distant noises. The grim curios found throughout the manor will entertain the players for a bit, but noise drags them upstairs—and all of Act I is about reaching Areas 15, 18, and 20, where the spirits of the dead await. When in doubt try these noises:

- While on the ground floor, music plays from Area 10, the conservatory.
- While on the second floor, crying can be heard from the third floor. This is "Baby Walter" mewling in his dark crib in Area 15B. A woman, the nursemaid, sings him a lullaby.
- Additionally, once the adventurers rouse the spirit of the nursemaid in Area 15B, the secret door to the attic flies open, revealing the staircase. You do not want to leave this up to chance by gating it behind an ability check. The secret door simply thunders open.

Death House Relocation

As described in *Variants & Revisions* below, the Durst Manor has been removed from the village. Therefore, disregard the directions in *Curse of Strahd* that compel you to guide the adventurers to the village first and block any attempts to interact with other inhabitants with the Mists of Ravenloft. That's a cop-out and it just leads to a bottleneck in your campaign. Likewise, it's too obvious of a railroad for your players to not notice. They won't trust Rose and Thorn if they're forced back towards the house, and it is that trust you need.

Selling the Ruse: Life in a House of Death

Death House is furnished with everything but life. All its rooms are unlit, all its staff are missing. If the Death House is truly devoted to suckering in poor souls, then we must add a splash of life to the manor. We can achieve that through these additions and revisions:

- Several rooms are already lit, to give the semblance of actual activity in the house. Still, assume a room is dark unless mentioned in *Areas of the Manor* below.
- Rose and Thorn claim that "Miss Ferecha" is watching them while their parents are away, but the "monster" has taken her.
- Two unfinished, child-sized meals are left in the dining room, each prepared by "Miss Ferecha" for the children. The food has gone cold.
- Music and laughter can be heard throughout the manor.

On the Wall Paneling

The walls of several rooms are sculpted with beautiful and seemingly innocuous figures, vines, flowers, nymphs, and more. Upon closer inspection (through a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check), someone notices more sinister markings are hidden within the images.

The purpose of these sinister marks is obvious: to hint that the house is sinister, and evil lurks in plain sight. That's great. That's wonderful. However, you can't blow the surprise too early. Do not prompt characters for an ability check to see the sinister markings until the adventurers at least reach the balcony, Area 11.

As the adventurers attempt to escape the manor, they see the other sinister markings in rooms they've already been in. As the DM, you can narrate:

> …and only now, as the horrors unfold, do you see that more sinister markings lurked like wolves amongst the sheep!

Leaving Early

If the adventurers try to leave early, try these methods to keep them inside:

- If they haven't reached the third floor or provoked the specter (i.e., they don't yet know the house is haunted), they find that the mists have closed in. Death House uses "Rose" and "Thorn" to guide the adventurers back into the house ("You can't go yet! What about Walter? Our baby brother is still in there!"). If the adventurers are still adamant on leaving, they next hear werewolves in the distance (another trick by Death House). Failing that, Death House manifests the illusion of a werewolf that attacks the fence.
- If the adventurers have learned that the house is haunted, they find that all doors outside are locked and the windows are bricked up behind the curtains.

On the Sacrifice

Once in the depths of the dungeon below the manor, the party is faced with an atrocious choice: ritual sacrifice or denial of a ghostly cult. This, without a doubt, is Death House's greatest moment—and many seek to cheat it. Players usually seek to first spill blood on the altar or even sacrifice something as lowly as a worm. Many a DM supplies the party with a scapegoat—an animal, an NPC, or even another player character who joins the party at the manor and was a ghost all along. Ideas abound on how to cheat the sacrifice.

To tolerate these ideas is to rob your players of Death House's greatest gift: sin. The adventurers are *meant* to emerge from the profane depths having murdered another person—or risk death altogether by denying the cult.

The advice is this: force the players into an impossible decision: the death of one, or the possible death of all. You owe this harrowing experience to them, yourself, and the genre in general.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Damia	CN **Spy**	F	OSS	Stanimir's daughter.
Death House	—	H	—	A malevolent genius loci.
Elisabeth Durst	**Ghast**	H	34	Cult leader, now undead, and mother to Rose and Thorn.
Ferecha	**Specter**	H	15B & 18	The maid, murdered by the cult, after giving birth to Walter.
Gustav Durst	**Ghast**	H	34	Cult leader, now undead, who had an affair with the maid.
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	H	OSS	The despotic alpha of the Children of Mother Night.
Rosavalda Durst	LG **Ghost**	N	20	10-year-old daughter of the Dursts.
Ratka	CN **Bandit Captain**	F	OSS	Stanimir's son.
Stanimir	CN **Mage**	F	OSS	Vistana storyteller that describes Strahd's past.
Thornbolt Durst	LG **Ghost**	N	20	7-year-old son of the Dursts.
Walter Durst	—	—	—	Stillborn bastard of Gustav & Ferecha's.

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter features the following magic items, creatures, and effects, all of which are detailed in Appendices A-C:

Magic Items

- *Cloak of Protection* (Area 34)
- *Potion of Healing* (Area 34)
- *Spell Scroll of Bless* (Area 9)
- *Spell Scroll of Protection from Poison* (Area 9)
- *Spell Scroll of Spiritual Weapon* (Area 9)

Creatures

- Animated Armor
- Bandit
- Bandit Captain
- Broom of Animated Attack
- Commoner
- Ghast
- Ghost
- Ghoul
- Gibbering Mouther
- Grick
- Guard
- Kiril Stoyanovich
- Mage
- Mimic
- Shadow
- Shambling Mound
- Specter
- Spy
- Swarm of Centipedes
- Swarm of Rats
- Werewolf

Effects

- Werewolf Lycanthropy

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

Death House

Death House is alive—a sadistic genius loci, a spirit born from a place of power and suffering. It hungers for visitors and is loath to let them leave. Death House can project illusions to draw in prey, as it does with the illusions of Rose and Thorn.

Ferecha

Rousing Ferecha's wrath marks a dramatic shift in this chapter, as Death House reveals its true nature once the specter has attacked the party.

Gustav Durst

Gustav's sins—adultery, murder—are responsible for the Hell he and his family now languish in. Throughout the prologue, the party is likely to search for the manor's master, but meeting him is likely to be their doom.

Kiril Stoyanovich

In this chapter, Kiril solidifies himself as a villain in your campaign. His distinct scars and fur can be recognized later, thereby proving that it was he who victimized the party.

Stanimir

Stanimir is a great boon to your campaign:

- Stanimir provides information on Strahd's background.
- Through Stanimir, the adventurers see proof that not all Vistani are evil or untrustworthy—before they are inundated with Barovian bigotry.
- In *On the Shadow's Shoulder,* Stanimir dies a violent death to the werewolves, becoming the first casualty in a long, heartbreaking campaign.

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* recommends the following variants and revisions to *Curse of Strahd*, in an effort to better your campaign and achieve a greater atmosphere of horror. The biggest change is the relocation of Death House. Disregard the immediate text in the Rose and Thorn section of *Curse of Strahd*, which describes Death House as being in the village of Barovia.

Location of the Manor

Death House has been relocated to a secluded hill east of the village. From its stoic perch, it has a commanding view of the Svalich Woods and the village below, both enshrouded in mist. This revision offers several benefits:

- By being the only locale to explore, you don't have to worry about the adventurersexploring the village of Barovia or anything else. The players will see the main objective of the session and understand they must enter inside to keep the plot moving.
- With the manor relocated, you avoid any awkward moments in which the adventurers hammer on doors that won't open in a seemingly dead village.
- The Village of Barovia suffers under Death House's dark legacy, but can still function. Its presence chokes too much life from the populace.

Revised Timeline

The Durst's cult operated and died out centuries ago, making it ancient history in Barovia, a country that has existed for less than four centuries.

Death House is instead a far more recent memory that you can link to the village's current occupants. The cult began its dark efforts seventeen years ago and were wiped out twelve years ago. As nobles, the Dursts knew and dined with Kolyan Indirovich and his children. Ireena and Ismark, as teenagers, had even babysat Rose and Thorn throughout the years or had dinner at their manor. The two siblings still remember Rose and Thorn—and are haunted by the thought of the atrocities they suffered at the hands of their mad parents.

Enemies Revised

Death House is stocked with far too many creatures. Some detract from the house's dreadful atmosphere and others are just too out of place or powerful for 2nd-level adventurers to face. The *Companion* suggests removing or altering the following foes:

- The **broom of animated attack** in Area 14 is not a true creature; instead, imagine it as the implement used by a spirit in an attack against a living person. It makes only one attack and then becomes inanimate.
- The **grick** in Area 28 is removed, as there's little here for it to feed upon, especially if Death House is moved.
- The **mimic** of Area 33; it will incite such paranoia that your entire campaign will slow down to a crawl. Also, like the grick, there's nothing for the creature to feed on.
- The **ghouls** of Area 29 are now spread out across the dungeon instead of being concentrated in one area, as four ghouls will murder even the strongest 2nd-level parties.
- Lorghoth the Decayer, the **shambling mound** found in Area 38, has been rewritten as a **gibbering mouther**—an amalgam of the cultist's former victims

Lifting the Curtain

The adventurers shouldn't learn that the manor is haunted until they reach the third floor. Really, they shouldn't have the barest inkling until they meet the specter of Miss Ferecha, the nursemaid in Area 15 or 18.

The *Companion* proposes a bold new solution: instead of the third floor being drab and dusty, everything is clean and polished *until* the adventurers rouse the spirit of Ferecha or Rose and Thorn in Area 20. Immediately thereafter, all floors take on an aged appearance. This sudden shift in décor is a classic horror trope that will not go unappreciated. It demonstrates to the players that they truly are in the belly of the beast, and that any suspicions they had were warranted.



On the Shadow's Shoulder

You can take the adventurers from their native world to Barovia with this optional start—a prologue to the prologue, if you will. The adventurers are on a caravan headed east with over fifty other individuals; they may have booked passage as fellow travelers, fell in with the train, or been hired as guards. Soon, however, the Mists of Ravenloft will find these poor souls—and with it come the werewolves. This optional start has several benefits:

- It offers an action-packed and terrifying start to the campaign which introduces the party to both the Vistani and the werewolves while also testing their morality.
- If an adventurer ever dies, the player's next character could have also been in the caravan. The other adventurers will at least be familiar with this new arrival.
- An adventurer might contract lycanthropy, allowing you to set up a personal storyline in which they must kill the werewolf that infected them—Kiril Stoyanovich, Alpha of the Children of the Night.

Combined Hooks. *On the Shadow's Shoulder* combines three of the module's adventure hooks: *Creeping Fog, Mysterious Visitors* and *Werewolves in the Mist.* These hooks, when woven together, provide an explosive start to your campaign that truly makes the adventurers feel helpless.

Mysterious Visitors. Several Vistani have followed the caravan out of convenience and added safety; they have proven to be amiable companions on the road. Led by the greybeard Stanimir, they share a tale of an ancient prince their people once saved… Little that that blood debt does to save them when the wolves attack.

Werewolves in the Mist! As the *Companion* advocates, werewolves are the solution to nearly every problem in *Curse of Strahd.* Until the adventurers acquire silvered or magical weapons, the werewolves remain an insurmountable force from which one can only flee. These five werewolves are led by the pack alpha, Kiril Stoyanovich, whose distinct scars and coat can be recognized later in the campaign.

Creeping Fog. As the adventurers flee from the wolves, a foul fog snatches them up and delivers them to Barovia. They stumble upon the Old Svalich Road, which leads them to Death House.

Overview

The adventure begins along a darkened road that winds through a deep and ancient forest. The adventurers are part of a caravan headed east. They may have been hired as guards for the trip or may have booked passage like so many other travelers. The caravan began at Daggerford, along the Sword Coast (or whatever world the party may hail from) and swelled as it followed the dawn. There have been few incidents along the road, and many travelers have struck up a new friendship or picked up a new tale that they will share for years to come—or would, if they were to survive the wolves.

On Werewolves

The werewolves are more of a force of nature than actual enemies meant to be bested in combat. Being immune to non-silvered, nonmagical attacks, the adventurers (as 1st-level characters) will have few means to actually fight the beasts. This is intentional. The adventurers are meant to feel helpless and outmatched, which is just the sort of warning they need when at the cusp of Barovia. One werewolf should be enough to scare adventurers into the woods. If any are foolish enough to attack the beasts, they deserve a wolf's wrath.

The werewolves, for their part, aren't meant to fight the adventurers either. They are meant to drive survivors into the wilds so that the Mists of Ravenloft may snatch them up. To avoid unfairly butchering the adventurers try these methods:

- The werewolves attack NPCs before PCs
- The werewolves start at least 20 feet from PCs.
- Stanimir casts hold person to paralyze werewolves before they attack an adventurer; he shouts, "Go! Run!"

On Bites. Should an adventurer be bit by a werewolf and survive, do not have them roll a Constitution saving throw against lycanthropy. Use that to build suspense in your campaign. By the time the adventurers enter Barovia, there are still two weeks until the first full moon. Casually mention how the bite wound aches or continues to bleed through its bandage. Let the player drown in suspense.

As the caravan heads east, so too does it head towards the realm of Barovia, for the Mists of Ravenloft hunger yet again for new playthings. A troupe of Vistani joined the caravan two nights ago, unaware the Mists would creep into the Material Plane once again—and unaware that Barovian werewolves, the Children of Mother Night, have come to abduct children and feast on travelers. These lupine savages attack from the brush and treetops.

All is well and good before the wolves attack, who do not spare the Vistani. During the carnage, the adventurers are presented with choices that determine their heroism or cowardice. Ultimately, they are driven deeper into the woods where they are caught by the Mists of Ravenloft.

Summary. The prologue is summed below:

- The caravan is bound for Mordentshire. It consists of 12 families, 21 **commoners**, 17 children and 8 **guards**. Two nights ago, 12 Vistani joined the caravan. They have proven friendly and amenable.
- The Vistani are led by Stanimir, who shares the story of Strahd being saved by the Vistani. This is not the same tale in *Mysterious Visitors*; the Vistani here don't call Strahd their "prince" nor do they mention that he has fallen to darkness. Strahd isn't named during the story.
- An adventurer can choose to have been hired as a guard. They begin with an extra 10 gp.
- Although the adventurers are attacked by werewolves, it's heavily recommended you don't subject them to saving throws against lycanthropy during the prologue. Once it is concluded, you can slyly call for Constitution saving throws for characters that sustained several bites, thereby hinting at the infection.

I. Before the Slaughter

The caravan has been traveling for a fortnight, staffed by eight guards plus whichever adventurers signed on as guards. The trip has been plagued with foul weather, but the addition of a dozen human travelers (the Vistani) has brought renewed excitement into the camp.

To begin the adventure, read the following text:

> The caravan has been at the road for over a fortnight now, having left Daggerford in the west. Bound for Mordentshire, you have another two weeks to go.
>
> Two long weeks… and except for brigands and bad weather, you have found no foes on the eastward road. It has been dull. You have passed by bogs and forests choked with silence, suffered grueling rains that left you wanting for warmth and better wages, but other than the occasional broken wagon wheel, there have been no incidents. The most excitement you've had this week was when a group of cheerful humans joined the caravan. They identify as "Vistani." Despite the foul weather, they have maintained great spirits. Their colorful wagons have tailed the convoy each night. Without them, the caravan would have drowned in tedium.
>
> It is this night, when the moon above is bright and pregnant, that you find yourself on guard duty… and as others dine on buck and hare, you hear sweet music drift out from the Vistani's fire…

The adventurers are given time to interact as they see fit until they visit the Vistani or the wolves attack. If they do not already know each other, this gives them the chance to become acquainted. To better facilitate roleplay, say that two or more adventurers are engaged in a topic as they watch the woods or sit by the fire. Consider these topics:

- The last town the caravan passed had recently hanged an enchanter who manipulated the minds of others. How do the adventurers feel about spellcasters and magic?
- What do they think about Elvish Presley, the renowned elven singer that has taken the Sword Coast by storm?
- Is necromancy moral if the deceased give consent for the use of their bodies after death?
- How did an adventurer's parent embarrass them?

The topic at hand may be serious or lighthearted. If you choose the latter, it serves only to contrast the horrors to come. What is chosen, however, matters little.

The Vistani

On the western edge of the camp, twelve Vistani (nine **bandits,** Ratka, Damia, and Stanimir) are preparing dinner. Most are doomed to die tonight. Stanimir welcomes the adventurers. Consider the sample dialogue below:

- "Come forth, come forth! Share our warmth and wine. Speak your name, sip your fill, and become a friend of the Vistani."
- "We are travelers or refugees, perhaps. We hail from a beautiful land to which we dare not return. The roads are the only kingdom we have left and to wander them is our birthright."
- "We too are headed east. Perhaps not to Mordenshire, as so many here are, but if there is coin to be made, we will gladly soldier on."
- "We all have our parts. I am eldest, so I must speak for our people here. My son, Ratka, is strongest, so he must face the wilds; my daughter, Damia, is quite the sentry: clever, perceptive."

Stanimir. The Vistana normally has the statistics of a **mage** but such power is unnecessary in this module. At the most, he can cast *hold person* as a 3rd-level spell to paralyze two werewolves in the next scene, which he does to save his children (and the adventurers). For the sake of cinema, the werewolves automatically fail their saving throws.

Prince of the Vistani. Stanimir can share the following tale that explains just why the Vistani can leave Barovia:

> Stanimir tosses another log upon the fire. "Allow me to share with you a tale... A tale in which the Vistani saved the life of a prince. He was tall, regal, handsome... and disgraced. His family had suffered insult after insult and his great and genial father was too wary of war to discipline his vassals or silence his foes. He forbade his son from war... and yet when King Barov passed, it was his eldest that took up the sword and the banner, and set out to conquer his foes.
>
> "He was merciless. He gathered his vassals and executed those who would not bend the knee. He set forth, his levies raised to raze the holdings of all those who stole or disparaged his noble house those past three decades. Yet for all his tactical brilliance and rapacity, he was only a mortal man.
>
> "After one disastrous defeat, he staggered into a vistana's camp, bloodied but not broken. Our people treated his wounds and shared with him our wine. We took him in as one of our own. We promised to take him home… and his enemies? They hunted him, but we refused to give him up, for he had shared with us bread and wine and mirth. Even when their assassins fell upon us, we did not yield! We did not, for a vistana's heart is of amber and her courage is steel!"
>
> "After many weeks, we delivered the prince home. Together, we shed blood and shared love. He thanked us and said, 'I owe you everything. For as long as I rule, you may come and go as you please. Stay for as long as you wish, leave when you choose, and know that you will always have a place in Barovia."
>
> Stanimir gives you a smile. "Ah, but that is ancient history. I have spoken too long, and I wish to slake my thirst with wine and new tales. Tell me of your own people, travelers. Share as the prince did."

Once Stanimir has spun his yarn, his daughter passes out bowls of rabbit stew. Before the adventurers have time to dig in, or ask Stanimir any follow-up questions, the werewolves attack. During the attack, Stanimir is slain. These Vistani are no friends of the Children of the Night.



II. Werewolves in the Mist!

Six **werewolves** attack from brush and treetops. A fire is quickly loosed, setting much of the forest alight. Innocents succumb to fang and claw while the adventurers watch.

This scene is quite free form. The adventurers are free to flee or fight. Do not bound yourself to the rules of combat, initiative, and turn orders. Allow the adventurers to help innocents, react to werewolves, and more. Stanimir can leverage his magic to paralyze werewolves and buy the adventurers' time to flee. Ultimately, however, Stanimir is ambushed by a werewolf and has his throat ripped out.

The Carnage Begins. When you're ready to begin the encounter, read the text below. A sudden fog rolls into the camp, lightly obscuring the area. Choose one adventurer, positioning them at a fire with at least two commoners or any of the Vistani. Read the following:

> As the moon climbs ever higher, a cold mist rolls into the camp, clinging to your ankles like a frightened child. Its cold caress leaves a shiver upon your spine. Tucking yourself deeper into your cloak, you notice the trees begin to shake—but there is no wind tonight. As you gaze at the tree line, a leaf flutters down from above. You look up—and stare deep into the yellow eyes of a slavering beast!
>
> The first howl freezes your blood! The second, unleashed by another beast on the opposite side of camp, sends you into flight. The screams are already loosed now, the howls are the backbone of this new chaos. Travelers scream and guards rush to the frontlines but the beasts have already found purchase! The werewolf above pounces!



Attacking the Wolves. The adventurers may choose to attack the werewolves. Determine which adventurers are close enough to be involved; those that aren't continue to grapple with the challenges below. A good ratio is one werewolf to three adventurers. If the adventurers are heavily armed with magic or magic weapons, increase the ratio to two werewolves for every three adventurers but exercise caution and be wary of adventurers actually slaying a werewolf—you do not want them to feel like heroes..

Roleplaying Werewolves. With the werewolves, less is more. Although they can speak in their hybrid forms, they are better left mute (except for howls, growls, and roars). They must be seen as a force of nature, as feral beasts, not something to be negotiated with.

The Camp Overrun. Inevitably, the werewolves overwhelm the camp and drive the survivors into the woods where the Mists of Ravenloft snatch them up.

III. Into the Svalich Woods

With nowhere else to go, the adventurers are driven into the woods and brought to Barovia by the Mists. During this section, consider mixing up the Barovia map to streamline your campaign. Normally, adventurers begin in Area A (the Old Svalich Road), walk five hours towards Area B (the Gates of Barovia) and wind up in Area C (the Svalich Woods), where they find the corpse of Dalvan Olensky. Without changing where the party is geographically, consider this order instead, as they head from east to west:

- The Svalich Woods encompass the areas beyond the Gates of Barovia. The party first finds Dalvan Olensky's corpse. They then emerge onto the Old Svalich Road.
- The party heads east for an indeterminable amount of time, reaching the Gates of Barovia. Werewolves then burst from the tree line, chasing after innocents.
- After fleeing from the werewolves, the adventurers reach the Death House, which is east of the Village of Barovia (instead of in the village).

Entering Barovia

When the adventurers enter Barovia, they first notice that it is dusk—when the world they left behind was already inching closer to midnight. This is their first hint that they have crossed into another realm. Read the following:

> Deeper into the mists you go, driven forth by distant beasts whose howls continue to haunt the forest. Every so often, you hear another sob, scream, or prayer as yet another victim falls prey to the wolves. On you go, unable to know just how many have died and how many of the beasts are still tracking your scent. The mists swallow you whole, delivering you to a dreary white realm steeped in dusk—and such a sight stops you in your tracks, for was it not closer to midnight when the wolves first attacked?

Give the adventurers a chance to catch their breath and allow the players the opportunity to roleplay. Once you've tired of this, they hear the distant howl of a werewolf and the scream of an innocent traveler being ripped to shreds. As the howls grow closer, the adventurers should prepare to move on.

Hail Thee of Might & Valor

Now that they are firmly in Area C of Barovia, the adventurers encounter the corpse of Dalvan Olensky, the servant of the late Kolyan Indirovich, who sought to plant a letter at the Gates of Barovia. Ordinarily, Dalvan died *before* he reached the gates, but with the *Companion* switching up the geography, it's clear that he was dragged beyond them. Read the following:

> You catch the scent of death in the air. The foul scent leads you to a human corpse half-buried in the underbrush about fifteen feet from the road. The young man appears to be a commoner. His muddy clothes are torn and raked with claw marks. Crows have been at the body, which is surrounded by the paw prints. The man has obviously been dead for several days. He holds a crumpled envelope in one hand.

The letter reads:

> Hail thee of might and valor:
>
> I, the Burgomaster of Barovia, send you honor—with despair.
>
> My adopted daughter, the fair Ireena Kolyana, has been these past nights bitten by a vampyr. For over four hundred years, this creature has drained the life blood of my people. Now, my dear Ireena languishes and dies from an unholy wound caused by this vile beast. He has become too powerful to conquer.
>
> So I say to you, give us up for dead and encircle this land with the symbols of good. Let holy men call upon their power that the devil may be contained within the walls of weeping Barovia. Leave our sorrows to our graves, and save the world from this evil fate of ours.
>
> There is much wealth entrapped in this community. Return for your reward after we are all departed for a better life.
>
> — Kolyan Indirovich, Burgomaster

At the Gates of Barovia

The party soon happens across the Old Svalich Road and follow it to the Gates of Barovia. Read the following text:

> The fog spills out of the forest to swallow up the road behind you. Ahead, jutting from the impenetrable woods on both sides of the road, are high stone buttresses looming gray in the fog. Huge iron gates hang on the stonework. Dew clings with cold tenacity to the rusted bars. Two headless statues of armed guardians flank the gate, their heads now lying among the weeds at their feet. They greet you only with silence.

As the adventurers near the gate, four innocents from the caravan burst from the tree line:

- Ratka and Damia, the children of Vistana Stanimir.
- The dwarf jeweler Torg Ironhide.
- A human mother with her teenage son whose names escape the adventurers' tongues.

The adventurers must make a horrid choice: taking the fight to the werewolves, waiting for the innocents, or save themselves by closing the gates of Barovia altogether. The gates, already ajar, are heavy but can be hauled close and locked with iron bars that lay on the wayside. To haul a door requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) group check. On failure, the door jams, leaving enough room for people to squeeze in. On a success, the doors are shut and the adventurers can quickly slide the iron planks through the lock. The werewolves are thwarted and must travel through the mountains to reach Barovia proper, a trek that takes several days.

If the adventurers choose to wait for innocents, they must time the closing of the gate perfectly. One character must succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check or Dexterity (Athletics) check to time the maneuver. On a failed save, the innocents are either locked out or scramble inside with the wolves at their heels. Magic can be used to quicken the innocents or an adventurer can attempt to hold the line against the werewolves with a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, Damia alone manages to squeeze through the gate. The other innocents perish to the wolves.

At the Death House. The adventurers must continue along the road. A chilling wind sweeps through the vale and on its heels come a sea of mists that obscure everything in sight. Inevitably, the adventurers arrive at the Death House and you can start the prologue proper.

Damia, for her part, knows nothing about the Death House. It is up to you if she accompanies the adventurers; she can simply become lost in the mist if you don't want to include her in the prologue. Including her lets you soak up a fatal blow from one of the manor's many monsters. She might also be sacrificed at the altar, sparing the player characters from a death.

Escaping Death House

If you've ever ran Death House before (or peeked at the possible ending "The Cult is Denied") then you might already know that to escape the manor is a dull series of rolls. Every character rolls to avoid being poisoned by smoke from the various fireplaces, ovens, and stoves throughout the house. Every character rolls to get past a doorway, lest they be carved up by scythes. While these are thrilling and terrifying the first few times, it quickly becomes dull. To repeatedly roll dice against the same obstacle isn't fulfilling gameplay.

Enter the Skill Challenge—an addition made by 4th Edition D&D. A skill challenge is a series of non combat solutions to issues, such as chasing a fleeing thief across rooftops, or conniving your way through a nobles' ball. They rely, as the name suggests, on skill checks ("ability checks" in Fifth Edition's nomenclature).

From the moment the adventurers refuse to sacrifice a person on the altar, the spirits rouse Lorghoth the Betrayer. The adventurers must contend with the Skill Challenge regardless if the creature is slain. However, if the adventurers do engage with Lorghoth, the Skill Challenge is paused until combat is finished.

Difficulty. This is a Hard Skill Challenge that requires five accrued successes. Failures represent wasted time.

- After accruing five successes, the characters escape Death House. Narrate their daring escape from such a grisly abattoir.
- The adventurers fail after accruing three failures—however the challenge still continues! The adventurers continue to contend with the manor. Upon reaching the courtyard, they see the gates closing and all characters must roll initiative! If the party accrued three or four failures, the adventurer with the lowest initiative is trapped behind the gates. If they've accrued five failures, the slowest two adventurers are trapped. The Mists then cloak the Death House, trapping those lost companions… forever.

Revisions to Death House. For the sake of the Skill Challenge, the following changes have been made to the Durst Manor:

- A wrought-iron fence encloses the manor grounds to facilitate the final encounter: Rose and Thorn.
- Only the doorways to Areas 12 and 15 have the scythes mentioned in the module.
- Rooms with ovens and fireplaces do not spew out poisonous smoke.
- The front doors (Area 1) have been bricked up, just like all the windows. The only way out is by leaping from the balconies (Areas 12C and 15C).

Essence of a Skill Challenge

A Skill Challenge boils down to these tenets:

- The characters encounter a series of obstacles that can't be solved solely by combat, but by utilizing their skills (and possibly tools and spells and other features). Only one character makes an ability check for an obstacle (i.e., making a Stealth check to guide the entire party; or making a Deception check to beguile the guard).
- The goal of a challenge (think of it as a montage) is to reach X number of successful checks before hitting three failures. X is determined by how difficult the challenge is and is not told to the players.
- Skill challenges are about collaborative, creative storytelling. You present the obstacle to your players and allow them to suggest solutions that utilize skills.
- Failure is not a wall; failure is represented by dawdling or struggling, but inevitably, the adventurers push past the obstacle to continue onward but at the cost of accruing a failure.

Rules. A Skill Challenge is bound by these rules:

- Players never know the number of successes necessary to win the challenge, but it is always weighed against three failures.
- Skills can only be used once per each character. If Rendar the barbarian uses his +8 Athletics to leap a chasm, he can't use Athletics again to lift a boulder later in the challenge to contribute to its success. He must find a different solution with a different skill. Other characters, however, can still use Athletics for obstacles.
- Movement doesn't matter, so don't bother tracking it.
- Cantrips can be used, but an issue arises in that they're infinite. So, like a skill, it can only be used once by that character, and isn't an automatic success: have the spellcaster make an ability check with their spellcasting ability modifier, adding their proficiency bonus, and compare it against the DC of whatever obstacle they're facing.
- Spells of 1st level or higher are automatic successes, so long as they can logically be used to surpass an obstacle is an instant success.
- Tool checks can be in lieu of skills if a character is proficient in them. Just attach it to the appropriate ability score and make the ability check.

Collective & Personal Successes. For the most part, a successful check made by one character counts as a success or failure for the entire group. However, self-serving characters might rush off on their own. For example, the resident gnome might realize they alone can fit in the kitchen dumbwaiter, getting farther ahead. In moments like these, you'll need to record both collective and personal successes, and use your best judgment.

Starting the Skill Challenge. The skill challenge begins the moment that the Cult is denied and rouses Lorghoth the Decayer. The adventurers do not need to fight Lorghoth; in fact, the portcullis remains drawn up, suggesting they can flee. Your players first intuition will likely be to fight Lorghoth—surely a lethal fight—but they'll soon learn the first lesson of *Curse of Strahd*: fleeing is sometimes the right and only option. To stress this to your players, describe in lurid fashion the quaking of the chamber, the bricks falling from the ceiling, and the teeming, hungering vines of Lorghoth. Once it's clear that the party is fleeing, you need to explain the concepts of the skill challenge to them, beginning with the goal: escaping the manor.

Stages of the Skill Challenge

The Skill Challenge is organized into several stages. The adventurers progress from stage to the next by making choices and advancing through the manor. See *Areas of the Manor* below for the individual challenges of each area involved in the Skill Challenge.

Area-Independent Checks. Normally, ability checks can only be made in certain areas where obstacles are presented. However, some can be made regardless of where the adventurers are. These checks, count as successes or failures, contribute to the party's overall effort. If the players are lost, you can call for these checks yourself. These DC 14 checks are:

An **Insight** check to recall one's path through the manor. A character with the Keen Mind check automatically succeeds on this check; for taking such a rare feat, they deserve to be rewarded with a success.

An **Investigation** to ascertain the optimal route: the dumbwaiter, the front doors, and—after learning they're trapped—the balconies.

An **Intelligence check using carpenter's tools** to recall the traditional layout of a rowhouse.

I. One Must Die!

Death marches upon the party! The adventurers must escape the Ritual Chamber before Lorghoth devours them, or the ceiling comes crashing down!

In this forgiving stage, you explain the Skill Challenge to your players. They have but one obstacle to face, allowing them to get their creative juices flowing.



Areas of the Skill Challenge

Area	Stage	DC
0. Courtyard	5	15
3. Den of Wolves	2	12
6. Upper Hall	4	13
10. Conservatory	3	20
11. Balcony	4	14
12. Master's Suite	5	15
12C. Master's Balcony	5	15
15. Nursemaid's Suite	5	15
15C. Nursemaid's Balcony	5	15
21. Secret Stairs	3	14
25. Well & Cultist Quarters	2	13
26. Hidden Spiked Pit	2	15
27. Dining Hall	2	13
29. Ghoulish Encounters	2	12
38. Ritual Chamber	1	11

II. Where the Hell To Go?

The adventurers thunder upstairs to Area 30, where they must decide their path. This path determines the rest of the Skill Challenge. The goal is to escape the dungeon. Three paths are available in this stage:

Path A involves Areas 27 & 29.
Path B involves Area 25 and either Area 26 or 29.
Path C involves Area 3 via the trapdoor.

III. Get Out!

The adventurers just can't catch a break. Although they've escaped the dungeon, the manor proves no less deadly. The front doors are trapped and now the Death House's grisly nature is fully apparent. Two paths are available:

Paths A & B merge together and sees the adventurers descending from the attic. It begins in Area 16. If the adventurers intend to go to Area 1 and try the front doors, wait until they return upstairs to spring the trap in Area 11. It's only if the party goes straight to Areas 12 or 15 that they face that obstacle, in which case you skip to Stage 4.

Path C sees the adventurers emerging from Area 3 only to find out that the front doors are trapped and all windows are bricked up. They must ascend to the third floor to escape.

IV. Duped!

Having learned that the entrance is trapped, the adventurers have but one choice: to leap from the balconies above. Two paths are available:

Paths A, B, & C are merged into one but allow the adventurers the choice of tackling Areas 12 or 15.

Path D becomes available to Small creatures, who can use the dumbwaiter in Area 4 to bypass several obstacles and arrive in Area 12.

V. The End Draws Nigh

The adventurers are near freedom! However, to escape, the adventurers must contend with the spinning scythes described in *Curse of Strahd* and a powerful *phantasmal force* spell. Succession brings them to the courtyard, where the final obstacle remains.

Upon entering Stage 5, read the following:

> The spirit has no intention of letting you leave alive, but surely—surely—there must be a way out. You just have to find it!

In the Courtyard. Once the adventurers leap from Areas 12C or 15C, they reach the courtyard. Per this supplement, the Durst Manor is surrounded by a wrought iron fence. The Death House has increased the fence's height and tipped it with razor-sharp spear-tips. The only way forward is through the front gates. Alas, the true ghosts of Rose and Thorn await them in the mists. The spectral children are desperate for companionship and adult guidance; they will not allow the adventurers to leave. Read the following:

> The mists cling to your every stride. In the moaning wind, you hear the squealing of metal: the gate is closing shut, and with it, your only chance of salvation! As you rush through the courtyard, two figures appear—Rose and Thorn. The girl shouts out, "You can't leave us! You can't!"

Obstacle (DC 15). The adventurers must soothe or fool the ghosts. On a failure, Rose or Thorn attempts to possess a character, bringing them back into the manor. Any character already possessed by the children from earlier refuses to leave the manor grounds.

The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Deception or **Persuasion** can be used to beguile or persuade the children (although any parent can tell you that logical arguments are useless on children).

Intimidation can be used to convince the children to relent or give up a possessed victim.

Performance can be used by a character equipped with a musical instrument or a talent for singing to lull the ghosts with a lullaby, giving their companions a chance to slip by.

Spells such as *protection from evil and good* can be used to prevent the children from possessing a character or freeing a character from possession.

The Children at Rest. If Rose and Thorn's bodies were laid to rest in their crypts, their souls are at peace. The Death House, however, still uses illusions of the two as a last-ditch effort to entrap the characters as the gates swing shut. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Insight can be used to recall the difference in mannerisms between these children and the ones met before.

Investigation can be used to discern that the illusions are just that: illusions.

Religion can be used to ascertain, by a character versed in religious rites, that the spirits certainly have been laid to rest.

Spells such as *detect magic* can reveal that the children are but illusions.

Endings

By now, the adventurers will have accrued five successes or three failures. If the party has failed, the gates begin to close shut and they must roll initiative to determine who is left behind. No magic or feature can rescue an adventurer that falls behind. However, a character can swap with a slower one, thereby sacrificing themselves to the Death House. One adventurer is left behind if the party fails; two are left behind if they accrued five failures.

Survival!

For any adventurers that make it off the manor grounds, read the following:

> You dash through the mist, the manic shrieks and demands of the dead thundering across the gloom. With one final push, you hurl yourself through the gates, landing on the gravel streets outside. You're bleeding, aching. Your heart feels as if it's about to burst, and you taste bile at the back of your throat—but you're alive! By all the Gods, you're alive! You look back at that house of utter death and shiver, putting as much distance between you and it as you can... though on the sleepless nights ahead you'll come to find that no amount of distance will ever rid you of that nightmare.

Doomed to the Death House

If the adventurers fail the Skill Challenge, the character(s) slowest in the initiative order fail to escape before the gates close shut. The Mists of Ravenloft creep into the courtyard, forcing these adventurers back inside, lest they be choked to death. To these adventurers, read the following:

> The gates are closing—closing! You push yourself into a sprint, but it's too late. You begin to flag; your wounds, your aches, they're just too much. There wasn't enough time. There's never enough time.
>
> The gates slam shut with ominous thunder—and that's when the mists roll in. Gone is the gate and, with it, any hope you may have sheltered in your heart. The mist slips down your throat like a lover's tongue. Pain blooms in your lungs.
>
> You can't breathe. These blighted mists are choking the very life from you—and with no other choice, you look back to the manor, knowing full well in your heart that you'll never leave its grounds again.

Approaching the Manor

The manor has been removed from the village, making it the only shelter available to the adventurers. Disregard the narration text in the Rose and Thorn section on page 211 of *Curse of Strahd* in favor of the directions below.

Following the Old Svalich Road, the adventurers come upon a lone manor perched upon a hill, rising gently like an island in a sea of mist. They can hear children playing in the failing light of day. Read the following:

> Crushing silence thunders as you chase the day's dying light westward, the last fingers of the sun pulling behind distant mountains. The mist is everywhere, depriving you any vision. You're lucky enough to catch sight of your boots as they crack against the gravel road.
>
> A distant sound gives you pause: laughter. Children's laughter. It comes more distinctly: a young boy shouting "Give it back!" in fetal rage. His cries are answered by a girl taunting, "Jump for it, Thorn! Jump!"
>
> "No fair!" the boy fumes, as what can only be his sister continues to laugh.

The children are, of course, Rose and Thorn. Death House knows it is easier to lure in victims with mirth. True to a child's nature to purposely ignore danger and unsettling truths, "Rose" decided to placate her little brother with games while waiting for their parents to return. Once the adventurers appear, Rose lets "herself" be vulnerable. As the adventurers continue towards the manor, read:

> Pushing through the mists, you see it: a lone manor of whitewashed brick. Its windows are dark but the portico's lamps illuminate a pair of young children busy rough-housing. They freeze at the sight of you.
>
> With the little boy clutching her sleeve, the girl croaks, "Hi. Are… Are you lost?"

Rose introduces herself as "Lady Rosavalda of House Durst" just as her father always taught her. Thorn coughs up, "I'm Thorn," just as Rose is introducing the boy as "Young-Lord Thornboldt of House Durst."

Almost awkwardly, Rose tries to hear each adventurer's name, but Thorn breaks in with, "Can you help us with the monster?"

What the "Children" Share

Rose and Thorn—solid illusions projected by the Death House—relate the following information:

- Their parents are Lord Gustav and Lady Elisabeth "of House Durst."
- Their parents are away: "Our father had business in the village and Mother is away in Vallaki."
- Their parents left the nursemaid, Miss Ferecha, to watch the children: "Father told Miss Ferecha to make us fish for dinner," says Rose. Thorn adds, "Mommy doesn't like Miss Ferecha." Rose then hushes him; if asked why Elisabeth dislikes Ferecha, Rose, all too bright for her age, says, "Because she laughs at all of father's jokes."
- Their baby brother Walter is upstairs with Miss Ferecha.
- There is a monster in the basement: "I hear it gibbering at night," Rose says, "through the pipes."
- The monster has gotten loose—"it has to," Rose says. "Miss Ferecha wouldn't just disappear like that."
- The monster's name is Lorghoth. Its name came to Thorn in a dream, he explains. Now the entire family refers to it as Lorghoth.
- Their parents don't believe in the monster. "They say that Lorghoth is just a figment of Thorn's imagination," says Rose, "but I know what I've heard at night. I know it's out there. And… and I asked… I asked Miss Ferecha to look in the basement." Rose is clearly riddled with guilt.

Insight Checks. Your players are sure to press for an Insight check, believing the skill is a lie detector. If they do, successful DC 13 checks reveal that Rose is trying to be strong for her brother. She's standing up straight, but far too stiffly. Her right hand, the hand opposite to Thorn, is clenching nervously. Death House has practiced this ruse countless times and on far more insightful victims. It is unerring in this act.

On Werewolves. If you use the *Companion's* optional hook for the campaign, *On the Shadow's Shoulder,* the adventurers may try to usher the children into the house. You can't allow this to happen, and neither can Death House. It wants the adventurers alone; having a guide will ruin the suspense.

Into the Manor

Rose and Thorn must become separated from the adventurers; having guides to the house will ruin the suspense. Use either of these excuses:

- The children refuse to go back inside. However, if told there are werewolves about, the "children" really have no excuse. They enter the house but refuse to leave the foyer.
- The children do not invite the adventurers inside and instead go look for Miss Ferecha. After waiting for far too long, the adventurers should head inside, perhaps motivated by the distant howls of werewolves.

Areas of the Manor

The manor's areas are described below with the addition of narration text.

1. Entrance

A rusted, wrought iron gate rattles in the wind, lit by two hanging oil lamps that flicker in the dark. Although the wind moans like a neglected child, all you hear within the manor is swollen silence. On the lintel above the door, you spot an inscription written in a barbed but regal script.

Rose and Thorn turned on the oil lamps before leaving the house. If the adventurers turn back, they see the children standing at the edge of the light. If they hesitate, Rose visibly tries to look strong, while Thorn clutches at her sleeve. The girl gulps and says, "F-find my baby brother. His crib is on the third floor. And Miss Ferecha. Find her too. The monster…" Gripped with fear, she deigns not to end that sentence.

The inscription above the door is written in Draconic, which Barovian nobility carve onto lintels when they wish to feel educated. It translates to "Enter and Be Welcome."

To any Barovian, this would be a matter of alarm—even a written invitation allows creatures of the night to enter unbidden, but it is unlikely for any of the adventurers to know that. This message was not written by the Dursts in life, but Death House after it awoke.

Into the Foyer. Once the party enters the manor, read:

Ignoring a shiver, you escape the clinging mists and cross the stone portico into the house. A chill hangs in the air. Oaken doors stand before you, silent and brooding. You find yourself in an immaculate foyer, decorated with portraits and heraldries. A family of stony-faced aristocrats watch you with disinterest; the plaque on the frame reads "the Dursts" in dull, gold lettering.

On one wall you find a shield emblazoned with a coat-of-arms: a golden windmill on a red field and beside it, two oil lamps.

Draw attention to the oil lamps and that lighting exists in general. It's all too often that DMs and players forget that the world is often dark. They find sufficient lamp oil—but later in the adventure (when the adventurers rouse the nursemaid's spirit in Area 15 or 18), the lamps suddenly go out, plunging the adventurers into darkness.

Escaping Death House

Death House lays a trap here for its prey, which can be sprung during the *Escaping Death House Skill Challenge* or after the adventurers deny the Cult their bloody due (see Area 38). To their horror, the adventurers discover that the front doors are bricked up—and the doors to Area 2 swing shut. Characters that succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw hurl themselves back into Area 2. Those who fail are trapped here. Read the following:

The mahogany doors slam shut with ominous thunder. You look about the room, desperate to escape—and when you look back, the bottom half of the door has been replaced by brick. Defying all logic, the wood has melded into the rows of moldy brick. You blink—and to your mounting horror, in that span of a second, more of the door has been converted. You keep your eyes wide open so as not to cast away your chance at breaking down the door... And that's when a fetid cloud of filth rolls in, stinging your eyes and drawing tears. The walls are brittle now, rotten. The wallpaper hangs in slivers, and behind the plaster, you hear the scurrying of rats.

The doors are slowly replaced by bricks whenever no humanoid is looking at them. Every blink guarantees destruction.

The characters can break down the door with a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check if they have appropriate weapons or tools. For every round the characters are here, they must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw as the rats' stench (whether they've been released yet or not) causes them to blink. If all characters blink, three-fourths of the doors are replaced by brick, increasing the DC by 4. The second time, the entirety of the doors become brick, raising the DC to 22.

The characters can instead destroy the newly-rotten, brittle walls (AC 5, 5 hit points, vulnerable to a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check) separating them from the Main Hall (Area 2), but that causes a **swarm of rats** to pour out of the hole. A Medium creature can squeeze through the hole, possibly provoking an opportunity attack by the swarm.

2. Main Hall

It's almost breathtaking. In the gloom beyond the foyer, the main hall glitters. Its wood-paneled walls are ornately carved with idyllic scenes of frolicking nymphs and satyrs. At one end of the hall, a sweeping red marble staircase climbs to unknown heights; at the other is a black marble fireplace, cold and unlit. Mounted above the mantelshelf is a longsword, a windmill cameo worked into its hilt.

The longsword above the mantle can be taken from the Durst Manor without crumbling to dust. From the moment the adventurers enter the Main Hall, they hear music from the Conservatory (Area 10) on the second floor. The music stops once the adventurers are halfway up the stairs. Read the following:

Music floats down the stairs—a harpsichord. It's all right. It starts and stops. Sections are oft repeated, this time with gusto. Whomever is playing the instrument clearly is a novice.

3. Den of Wolves

Out from the darkness loom wolves, their snarls frozen forevermore. A stag's head is mounted above the unlit fireplace. Fine chairs draped in furs face the hearth, with a cask of wine and a pipe rack on the table between them, the goblets dry and empty, the candelabrum gleaming in your lamplight. The wax has melted over, leaving little white islands on the table. Cabinets line the walls. In one darkened corner of the room, a chandelier hangs over a cloth-covered table.

The den is lined by glass-paneled cabinets, one of which has a light crossbow, heavy crossbow, and hand crossbow (as well as three quivers of twenty crossbow bolts apiece). Unlike most objects in the house, these weapons don't crumble into dust when taken from the manor. Read the following to characters who inspect the cabinets:

Armed with your lamplight, you squint through the glass-paneled cabinets. In one, you find an assortment of wine glasses, and a small wooden box. The other is locked, sporting behind its glass three crossbows: one of heavy oak, one of a lighter frame, and the other shaped to fit into a single hand. Three cases of bolts lean against the frame.

Escaping Death House

To utilize this area, the adventurers must have first detected the trapdoor before beginning the Skill Challenge. Provided they have, read the following as they emerge into Area 3:

You push open the trapdoor. The den is smothered by smoke—and in the darkness of this place, you hear the snarling of wolves.

Obstacle (DC 12). Death House has animated the stuffed wolves in the den and flooded the room with blinding smoke. The wolves (which count as constructs) can overpower creatures but are otherwise harmless. Failure here represents struggling to overpower or disentangle from the wolves while poisonous smoke fills one's lungs. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

By dint of the same magic Death House used to animate wolves, one can call out to the long-lost spirits of the same beasts whose stuffed corpses now slaver here. **Animal Handling** can be used to influence the beasts long enough to escape the room.

Stealth can be used to slip past the wolves undetected. Some spells can be used to distract or subdue the wolves (such as *minor illusion* or *animal friendship*).

4. Kitchen and Pantry

The kitchen, gloomy as it might be, is tidy. The shelves are neatly stocked with dishware. The worktable has been wiped clean, a cutting board left behind as the only oversight. The iron pipes of the oven snake out like a willow tree caught in a windstorm, twisting up and into the ceiling. The door to the pantry hangs ajar, and a dumbwaiter sits in the corner, its gate yawning open.

To a character that inspects the pantry, read:

The pantry is cramped, and well-stocked. Casks labeled as "wheat" and "ale" sit at the far-wall, next to a sack of old potatoes. There are pouches with dried jerky, nuts, and seeds. An entire shelf is devoted to spices, with three racks. The Dursts, you notice, are out of salt.

The food is kept fresh, but stale, by Death House; the jerky, as you might guess, is human flesh and chock-full of protein.

To a character that inspects the dumbwaiter, read:

The dumbwaiter yawns before you. Craning your neck upward, you can see that its narrow stone shaft leads upward to two floors—the hinges on the hatches above gleam in your lamplight. It works, you see, via a simple rope-and-pulley mechanism. A nest of cables lines the shaft, connecting to a brass bell in the kitchen. The entire thing is too cramped for anything but a child to fit into.

Escaping Death House

Death House lays a trap here for its prey. As a character clambers into the dumbwaiter, the oven animates and spits fire. The character in the dumbwaiter must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) fire damage. A success represents the character shutting the dumbwaiter and working the rope-and-pulley in time to escape the heat. The explosion shakes the entirety of the manor. This trap can only be triggered once.

5. Dining Room

To sell its ruse, Death House has laid cold, unfinished meals at three places on the dining table. This corroborates Rose and Thorn's story of having dinner. Two meals have portions fit for children, the third was sized for Miss Ferecha. Read the following when the adventurers enter the room:

Three meals sit cold and unfinished upon the lavish dining table, two with portions fit for children. Above the table, a chandelier glitters in the gloom, drawing your attention to a tapestry of nobles hunting wolves from horseback. Combined with the velvet chairs and silken drapes, you are certain this is privilege at its finest. The Durst Family lives large and lives well.

If your players ask, the meals consist of mashed potatoes, a roasted turnip, and lamb chops.

6. Upper Hall

A cold draft sweeps down the marble staircase as it delivers you to a darkened hall. Above the mantelpiece hangs another portrait of the Durst family: Rose and Thorn smile down on you. Their mother, her face darkened with a hint of scorn, cradles a swaddled baby. Two mahogany doors are intricately carved with dancing youths. Suits of armor flank these doors, clutching spears, their gazes empty beneath wolf-shaped visors. A third, thin door stands to the right of the stairs, which continue climbing upward.

Wailing Walter. An infant's cries echo out from the floor above once the adventurers finish exploring the second floor and its adjacent rooms. Read the following:

It starts slow at first, but soon a baby begins its wailing. After a few moments, you hear feet on the floor above, and a door creaking open.

Escaping Death House

Death House animates the suits of armor here, which can wound or harry the adventurers (although they deal no damage). If the adventurers decide to fight, each suit of armor is an animated armor with 1 hit point and wielding rusty spears (+4 to hit, 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing); these constructs do not benefit from their Multiattack feature.

Read the following:

Metal footfalls crash against the wood, then ring out on the marble staircase. The four wolf-helmed suits of armor, you see, walk with a life of their own, and in that arcane camaraderie they join together, shield with shield, forming a two-rank deep phalanx to block the staircase, and in one chorus they rasp, "One must die! One must die! One must die!" You pull back just before being impaled on the spears!

Obstacle (DC 14). The constructs form a phalanx with the intent of delaying the adventurers' escape. They must be circumvented without a fight. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics can be used by a character wielding a shield or similar protection to charge the ranks, hoping to topple the statues.

Acrobatics or **Athletics** can be used to leap to the other end of the spiraling staircase.

One can use **Investigation** or **History** to ascertain the formation's weaknesses or the historical remedies soldiers used when facing enemy phalanxes. Characters with the Soldier background have advantage on such a check.

7. Servants Room

The room is dusty and undecorated. Two lumpy, straw-filled mattresses sit on worn out bed frames, from under which footlockers loom. Servants' uniforms hang in an open closet. The dumbwaiter yawns like a tired youth with no knowledge left in his head.

Escaping Death House

The kitchen dumbwaiter links Areas 4 and 12 and may allow the adventurers to bypass an obstacle. A character might also use it to enter Area 6 to circumvent the phalanx of animated armors stationed at the top of the stairs. This positioning can grant advantage to ability checks made by other adventurers to thwart the phalanx.

8. Library

Read the text below instead of what is provided in *Curse of Strahd:*

Here is a place of great study. A wealth of knowledge sits on floor-to-ceiling bookshelves: weighty tomes of untold worth—novels, treatises, encyclopedias, poetry, histories. So vast is this library that a rolling ladder is necessary to reach the high shelves. An exquisite desk faces the hearth, upon the mantelpiece thereof hangs a framed portrait of a windmill perched atop a rocky crag. Two reading chairs flank the fireplace, stuffed and lovely and inviting.

The adventurers are sure to dig through the Dursts' library. They pull the following titles from the shelves:

- *Doom of the Dusk Elves,* a historical but highly political treatise on the destruction of the dusk elf kingdom at the hands of King Barov and his son, Strahd von Zarovich. It relates the story of Rahadin, "the Great Betrayer" who was adopted by Barov as an honorary von Zarovich. The title does not mention the genocide of the elves here in Barovia, which occurred centuries after Strahd destroyed their kingdom.
- *Alchemical Secrets Best Left Unknown,* a grimoire concerning alchemy, anatomy, and necromancy. A character that reads the entire treatise and has proficiency with alchemist's supplies learns how to brew potions of healing and potions of poison for half the usual cost.
- *Greaves of Brass* by Walt Whitdwarf, a collection of dwarven poems.
- *Ways of the Wildfolk,* a treatise on Barovia's native mountainfolk tribes. The tome describes local legends of the tribe, such as Sangzor (the "Devil Goat") and the roc of Mount Ghakis. An ominous passage has been underlined by a previous reader: "The Ghakis tribes seem to guard a hidden font of terrible truths—a dark sanctum to be scorned by mortal men. The wildlings cut down any and all who seek out this 'Amber Temple.'"
- *Political Theory in Dismal Days,* a musing on Barovian politics in the early days of Strahd's reign—before he became a vampire.

9. Secret Room

When the door to this secret chamber is opened, read:

> The bookshelf swings open, hidden hinges squealing in the gloom. Dusty shelves line the walls of a cramped room, packed with tomes decorated only in eldritch runes and ominous symbols. You spot a heavy chest at the end of the hall, squatting as if it harbors some coveted secret—a secret worth dying for, apparently, if the skeleton in rotting leathers is any clue to the insidious danger you've all found yourself in.

10. Conservatory

Music originates from this room but halts when the adventurers begin to ascend the stairs to the second floor. Read the following text when they enter the room:

> A harpsichord looms out from the dark, facing a nearby standing harp. The brass-plated chandelier casts a dull sheen in your lamplight, as if to half-heartedly warn you away. The fireplace lies cold, decorated by alabaster figurines of dancers neatly placed on the mantelpiece. Velvet upholstered chairs line the walls for those that would be serenaded with what would no doubt be beautiful music. It's lonely here. A chill hangs in the air.

The figurines on the mantelpiece risk ruining Death House's secret nature. However, if they are inspected, read the following:

> Now that you stand near the fireplace, you see that some of the figurines are actually skeletons carved from alabaster. Art truly makes ascetics of us all.

Escaping Death House

This area is an optional obstacle; one of the adventurers might be foolish enough to think they can lull Death House to sleep by playing music. If they try it, Death House will appreciate the music before killing them.

Obstacle (DC 20). At your discretion, this can be an obstacle. Failure here represents wasting one's time during the escape. A success rouses the spirits of the cult's past victims, who devote their ethereal power to inhibiting Death House's dark will, thereby aiding the adventurers. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Performance represents an adventurer playing under pressure. Alternatively, a **Charisma check using an instrument** can be made.

Religion represents an adventurer singing a hymn or playing choral music.

11. Balcony

The adventurers should have heard the wails of baby Walter while on the second floor. Read the following once the adventurers reach the third floor:

> The red marble staircase delivers you to its full height: the third floor. The air is choked with dust. The walls—carved with autumn woodland scenes—are mounted by unlit oil lamps. An infant's cries cut the silence into tattered chunks while a cobwebbed suit of armor stands in eternal vigilance, facing the balcony railing. Facing you.

Animated Armor. The animated armor here normally attacks creatures that harm it or enter within 5 feet of it. This, however, ruins the surprise of Death House. It is recommended that you delay both its attack and its sentience. Death House only twists it into an **animated armor** later, after the adventurers have reached the third floor or otherwise discovered the manor's true nature. It is far more alarming for a piece of seemingly-harmless armor to come alive during the chaos later.

When the construct attacks, read the following:

> Metal scrapes against wood—a fist suddenly seizes you by the hair and slams its offhand into your jaw! You look about the room and see no other person, only a shifting suit of armor—and it draws back its scaled fist for another blow!

Escaping Death House

A flood erupts from the bathroom, crashing down upon the adventurers and threatening to send them three floors down towards the cold, unforgiving floor. Read::

> The door to the bathroom bulges, buckling in its frame! There comes a crack—the wood splinters! A flood of filth comes crashing out, threatening to throw you down the stairs!

Obstacle (DC 14). The adventurers must withstand the flood or circumvent it. On a failure, the characters topple down the stairs, landing between the first and second floors. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics can be used to stand one's ground and resist the flood.

Nature or **Survival** can be used to call on past experiences or knowledge of flash floods, allowing a character in that split second to take necessary precautions (hang on the other side of the balcony, leap for a nearby door, et cetera). Characters with the Outlander background have advantage on such a check.

Sleight of Hand can be used to snatch at the balcony or the oil lamps mounted on the wall before being swept away.



12. Master's Suite

You squint at a pair of double doors, paned with stained glass. Wiping away some of the dust, you can see it depicts windmills. The hinges squeal at your touch, revealing a magnificent suite choked with dust and neglect. A rotting tiger-skin rug lies before the ashen fireplace, watched over by a wilting portrait of the Durst parents. The four-poster bed's curtains hang open, revealing yellowing sheets while the wind rattles a door leading out towards a balcony.

Where are the servants? you can't but wonder, demand, even. Where are the Dursts? How might the first two floors be so immaculate, while the third is such a rotting travesty?

If the adventurers inspect the room further, add the following:

The wardrobes are empty. Completely empty; everything gone. Not even a single hanger remains. Elisabeth's vanity is caked in grime and dust. A greasy jewelry box sits on the desk. The dumbwaiter yawns half open, the gate almost stuck in its frame. You find a dusted mirror set upon a closet door, and beyond your confused, disgusted expression you see in the reflection only the gloomy neglect of the suite.

Escaping Death House

The memories of the past have come alive; on the eve of Walter's birth, the Dursts are engaged in a cold war. The suite is as frigid and unforgiving as their marriage; while Gustav paces the room, Elisabeth fumes in mute disdain at her vanity. Every so often the two burst into a new round of arguments—and the scythes spin ever faster.

The scythes described in *Curse of Strahd* are active here, but only at the doorway leading into Area 12C. The scythes can be tackled as an obstacle or a trap (see below). Read the following:

The master suite has grown deadly cold: a well-dressed man paces the room while a woman stares at herself in the vanity, her eyes scornful as if to wonder why she wasn't enough for her husband. You recognize the Dursts alive and in the flesh—how or why doesn't matter. The two fall between bouts of silence and explosive rage, arguing over Gustav's infidelity.

You look to the corner of the room, to the balcony, that sweet, sweet balcony, the gate to getting the hell out of this accursed manor—and in the doorway spin rusted scythe-blades. You look back: Elisabeth is glaring at you, and she snarls, "Servant! Get out! Get out! Come back only when the bastard's been born!"

You notice with mounting frustration that while Elisabeth snarls at you, the scythe-blades spin pick up speed, spinning ever quicker.

Obstacle (DC 15). Not quite ghosts, yet not quite illusions, the Dursts are representative of the emotional carnage of the manor. The scythes on the doorway are connected to the two's temperament. And to escape, the party must make it through those scythes.

If the party does not make an ability check for this obstacle, they accrue a failure, and each creature that passes through the doorway must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d10 slashing damage. Regardless, they pass through the doorway and onto Area 12C. If the party attempts an ability check but fails, no Dexterity saving throws are necessary. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Acrobatics or **Investigation** can be used to make it through the doorway unscathed; the adventurer making the check takes a leadership role in guiding their companions through the blades. This check is made only once for all characters present.

Insight can be used to gauge Elisabeth or Gustav's emotions, finding the best possible moment to make the leap.

Persuasion can be used to calm the Dursts, even if for a moment.

Area 12C. The adventurers are close to freedom. Death House puts its remaining willpower into a spell similar to phantasmal force. To the adventurers, the balcony has turned into a cliff that drops a thousand feet below. (Incidentally, the cliff is identical to Tser Falls). Because of the nature of the spell, victims take psychic harm for perceived harm incurred by the illusory cliff. Read the following:

> You escape onto the balcony—a sharp wind blows, and the world itself falls to misty depths a thousand feet below. With the wails of the damned and depraved behind you, and the cliff dropping into the void below, what do you do?

Obstacle (DC 15). The spell must be thwarted through courage, skill, or mental acuity. Otherwise, their minds are paralyzed by the perceived death. Failure here does not inflict any damage to an adventurer, it only renders them catatonic long enough to contribute to the failure of the Skill Challenge.

However, if the adventurers simply leap off the cliff without attempting an ability check (or similar solutions), they risk psychic damage. The adventurers accrue a failure and each creature that leaped must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage does not die but is lost to the illusory mists—and is magically sequestered into the bowels of the Death House. Such a character has, effectively, been taken by the dark spirits. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics can be used to scale the cliffs or catch someone that falls.

Arcana can be used to understand the powerful *phantasmal force* spell at work, that their psyches stand to be torn apart if caution is thrown to the wind and that perhaps the best way to survive is to play along. Armed with this knowledge, the adventurers may carefully contend with the cliff.

Investigation can be used to shatter the illusion by harnessing the strength of the mind. Once one character succeeds on this check, the illusion shatters for all other victims.

Survival can be used to guide the party down the cliffs. Spells that would naturally assist in scaling a real cliff can aid in the descent. Such spells include *feather fall* and *heroism* (which imbues the most frightened among the adventurers with the courage to tackle this deadly drop). By casting these spells, the adventurers' psyches are put at ease, thereby conquering the spell.

Once the adventurers descend from the balcony, they enter the courtyard. Refer to Stage V of the *Escaping Death House* section above for this final obstacle.

13. Bathroom

As written in the Death House module, the pipes in the bathroom are dry, the cistern empty. Read:

> As you approach this door, you hear water dripping from a spigot. It's the mold that hits you first, assailing your senses, twisting its tongue down your throat like a rabid lover. The wooden tub of this bathroom is furry with moss. The hand towels hanging from a rod—once embroidered with golden windmills, you see—are now tattered rags. You look for the source of water, that slow thundering, and find that the spigot is dry.

14. Storage Room

> The door creaks open onto a cramped storage closet. Rotted sheets and moldy bars of soap sit on the shelves. A cobwebbed broom leans against the far wall.

Revision. The **broom of animated attack** is unnecessary and ought to be removed. However, if the nursemaid's spirit has been disturbed, it is she who swings the broom. You still use the **broom of animated attack's** statistics, but is otherwise an ordinary broom brandished by a vengeful spirit. Read the following:

> As you turn to leave, something tickles the nape of your neck. Bristles. Rough bristles. You look back—and freeze in shock as a broom rears back, free of any earthly hands, and swings at your skull!

15. Nursemaid's Suite

The adventurers can hear "Miss Ferecha" inside the suite, attempting to comfort Walter. This is not the Death House's handiwork but the **specter's**. She is reliving the past—and there will be hell to pay for whomever interrupts her. Read the following when the adventurers approach the suite:

> Just as you reach for the door, you pause, craning your ear. The wailing of a newborn echoes throughout the suite. A young woman tries to quiet the child, poorly singing a lullaby. Gently, you tease open the door, finding no one inside. Instead, the cries come from behind a thin door to your right.
>
> "Hush little baby," the woman sings, "don't say a word. Mama's gonna buy you a Blinsky toy... And if that toy don't work... Walter, stop crying. Please, stop crying. Morninglord's light, please just stop crying."

Upon entering the suite, the adventurers find no woman, no light—only gloom, neglect, and a closed door to Area 15B. Read the following:

> Cobwebs are everywhere in this room: along the windows, between the posts of the bed, stretched across the wardrobe. Even the mirror set into the wall is draped in the eerie silk. Stained glass doors lead to the balcony you saw from outside, and gloomy, dust-choked air haunts this place like a distant memory. Walter's wails come from behind a door to your immediate right.

Revision. The nursemaid's **specter** stands over Walter's crib. The nursemaid appears as a solid, slender woman wearing a cream-colored nightgown. If the adventurers open the door and call out to her, she does not answer. If they dare to enter the room, she turns around, the flesh falling from her face and revealing the spectral anatomy below. Read the following:

> The door creaks open to reveal a nursery. A slender woman dressed in a nightgown stands over a crib, humming softly while the baby therein continues to wail.
>
> The woman pauses—and the baby's cries cease. Slowly she looks over her shoulder—and her mouth widens into a gaping void from which roars a bloodcurdling screech! Her flesh splinters and falls in bloodied pieces, revealing a violet, spectral face contorted by utter rage! Only now do you notice that the woman hovers above the floor, a ghost gripped in the moment of her worst memories! With a scream, the specter surges forth, her ethereal hands ending in wicked claws!

Roll initiative. The specter chases the adventurers out of Area 15 altogether, attacking only those that do not immediately leave. This revision allows the adventurers one chance to avoid a deadly confrontation. Per the *Lifting the Curtain* variant, the entire manor becomes decrepit after this encounter.

Escaping Death House

The memories of the past have come alive to play out the tense birth of Walter. The scythes described in *Curse of Strahd* are active here but only in the far doorway—the doorway to salvation. The scythes can be tackled as an obstacle or a trap (see below). Read the following:

> As you rush towards the door, you hear a woman shout out, "Tell me to push, one more time, Inala! One more time, I swear to the Morninglord!" but her curses are quickly consumed by cries of pain.
>
> You peek into the room: women crowd around a young girl laying in the bed, her feet up. Her face twists with pain while a midwife says, "The baby's crowning, but… Gods, it's ankles first."
>
> The balcony—the only way out of this accursed manor—lies nearby, and with frustrated horror, you see that the door has been replaced with bloodied scythe-blades that seem to spin even quicker whenever the girl's contractions peak.

Obstacle (DC 15). Several assistants crowd the room while the baby is crowning—but he's coming out ankles-first. The scythe-blades spin so long as the nursemaid is in labor, spinning faster and faster during her contractions. To escape the manor, the adventurers must make it through that deadly doorway.

Author's Advice: The Nursemaid's Specter

Believe it or not, my very first D&D campaign as a player was *Curse of Strahd*. None of the fellow nerds I recruited to join me in this endeavor had ever played a TTRPG either, so we had no idea what to expect when the DM at our local game store ran us through Death House. When we roused the nursemaid, my best friend moved back from the specter—provoking opportunity. Her very first hit was a crit. So went our ranger, slain instantly. I still remember my best friend shouting in a game store "Wait, am I dead? I died! Holy—"

The nursemaid is a powerful but deadly creature to hurl at 1st-level adventurers. I learned this lesson again when I ran *Curse of Strahd* for the first time as a DM. The resident cleric also provoked the spirit and was struck with a critical hit, killing her instantly. If I had continued the combat, the entire party would've died—and while that is in Death House's nature, I really couldn't afford a TPK and no one would have wanted to Death House again. So, after the cleric died, the specter disappeared. My advice to you is this: once the specter lands a hit, have her fade into the floor or wall or have her terrible wail send the adventurers into flight. The specter can materialize throughout the manor to further swipe at the adventurers, but she should miss with most attacks.

If the party does not make an ability check for this obstacle, they accrue a failure, and each creature that passes through the doorway must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d10 slashing damage. Regardless, they pass through the doorway and onto Area 15C, the Nursemaid's Balcony. If the party attempts an ability check but fails, no Dexterity saving throws are necessary. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Acrobatics or **Investigation** can be used to make it through the doorway unscathed; the adventurer making the check takes a leadership role in guiding their companions through the blades. This check is made only once for all characters present.

Insight or **Medicine** can be used to gauge when the nursemaid's contractions are about to begin or end.

Medicine can be used to assist in the birth: Walter is coming out ankles-first, posing significant risk to him and the mother. The scythe-blades stop spinning altogether if this ability check succeeds.

Area 15C. The adventurers are close to freedom. Death House puts its remaining willpower into a spell similar to *phantasmal force*. To the adventurers, the balcony has turned into a cliff that drops a thousand feet below. (Incidentally, the cliff is identical to Tser Falls). Because of the nature of the spell, victims take psychic harm for perceived harm incurred by the illusory cliff. See Area 12C above, which is also affected by this same spell; the obstacle is identical and has a DC of 15.

Once the adventurers descend from the balcony, they enter the courtyard. Refer to the *Escaping Death House* section above for this final obstacle.

16. Attic Hall

The attic is choked with dust and cobwebs. A padlocked door stands nearby, from which the sounds of children at play float.

Escaping Death House

If the adventurers use the stairs to descend to the third floor during the Skill Challenge, they find that the southern door to the Nursemaid's Suite has been bricked up. Thus, they are forced into Area 11, the balcony. Read the following:

Dust chokes the attic; where once were windows are now bricks. Whatever spirit that haunts this wretched house clearly has no intention of letting you leave.

17. Spare Bedroom

The door squeals open onto a spare bedroom choked with dust. The wardrobe lies open and empty. The desk is stained red—wine, perhaps?. A rocking chair rocks slightly with the draft you've created, while a doll in a lacy, yellow dress smiles at you. Webs drape her head like a wedding veil.

18. Storage Room

The chamber is packed with old furniture draped in yellowing sheets—chairs, coat racks, coaches dappled with mold, standing mirrors, mannequins that loom out from the shadows like forgotten widows and witnesses to ruin. A wooden trunk sits nearby, its cover slightly ajar.

If the adventurers disturb the nursemaid's remains, the **specter** attacks. Read the following text:

You swing open the trunk and almost recoil at your newfound treasure: a frail, bleached skeleton, wrapped in a bloodstained bedsheet. You hear a rustling sound behind you. The sheet of a mannequin falling to the ground in a windless room—and in that moment a hand seizes onto your wrist! A scream shatters the silence! A woman's face *phases through* the trunk, her entire body coming through the floor, flesh falling from her bones in tattered chunks!

19. Spare Bedroom

You open upon a spare bedroom smothered by cobwebs. Spiders crawl from the wardrobe in droves to greet their new visitor.

20. Children's Room

The voices of children can be heard from behind the locked door to this room. The key is found in the desk drawer in Area 8. The door can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. The lock can be picked using thieves' tools if the character doing so succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity check. Read the following once the adventurers breach the room:

From behind the door float Rose and Thorn's voices. "Rock! Paper! Scissors! Shoot!" little Thorn shouts. The padlock clinks noisily as you work on its lock, then clatters to the ground. The children hush as you open the door. The gloom strangles this place. You spot two child-sized beds, a toy chest, and a dollhouse—it's a perfect replica of the Durst Manor, you realize. What's most unsettling is that the room's sole window is bricked up—that is until you spot the small skeletons dressed in tattered but familiar clothing. The smaller of the two cradles a doll as if it alone could've changed the future.

The children are nowhere to be found. Once the adventurers disturb the dollhouse or chest, or when they attempt to leave, the ghosts of Rose and Thorn materialize Read the following:

A sudden chill seizes your spine. Two children appear on a nearby bed. Rose and Thorn. Cradling her little brother, Rose scowls and asks, "Are you here to play with us?"

21. Secret Stairs

The secret door to this area materializes if the adventurers find Strahd's letter in Area 9 or peered into the dollhouse in Area 20. However, it still doesn't materialize until after the adventurers meet the ghosts of Rose and Thorn.

Upon discovering the secret door, read the following:

Where once there was nothing now stands a thick, black door that leads only down into darkness.

Add the following as the adventurers descend the staircase:

The tight staircase spirals down into darkness between walls of mortared stone. Cobwebs and dust are everywhere, the citizens of this cramped passage. Down and down into the depths you go, the shaft growing tighter and tighter. The air is stale, bitter even. Just as you can handle it no longer, just as your lungs are fit to burst, you find yourself before an archway that leads to a tunnel of carved earth and cold stone.

Escaping Death House

Death House has conjured a horde of spiders, as well as one giant spider that can harry the adventurers but otherwise proves harmless. Read the following:

You thunder up the stairs, the wails of the dead all around you. The mortared walls pulsate with hordes of spiderlings, all fleeing downward… to mother. Out from the abyss climbs a spider the size of a boar, all its mandibles gnashing. The beast unleashes a glob of web!

Obstacle (DC 14). The giant spider hurls a web at an adventurer and begins to draw them into the squirming darkness below. Failure here represents struggling to free the victim. Inevitably, the victim is freed, but at a great cost to time. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Animal Handling or **Intimidation** can be used to scare off the spider, especially if fire is used or an attack is made.

Athletics can be used to wrench the character out of the web or to keep the spider from dragging the character away.

Spells of fire can be used to burn the web (i.e., *produce flame*). Others, like *animal friendship*, can subdue the beast.

22. Dungeon Level Access

The tunnel forks left and right, both leading into darkness. And then? Floating out from that utter blackness, from the nighted depths? Chanting. Ethereal chanting by a score of souls, chanting that echoes off every stone and corner of this wretched place, rising and falling in intonation, the words too distant, too faint to discern, but eerie and incessant. The chanting caresses you like an old lover, too far gone to be touched, but too close to be forgotten.

23. Family Crypts

Crypts have been hewn from the earth, some sealed by slabs, some left ajar. The dirt and grime is too thick to read the names engraved upon the slabs, until finally curiosity gets the best of you.

Elisabeth's Crypt. If the adventurers enter Area 23D, they are attacked by a **swarm of centipedes**. Read the following:

Groaning, you haul the stone coffin lid from its frame… and find nothing but dust and dark air inside. Something rustles behind the clay wall—crumbled heaps drop to the floor as a teeming mass of insects boil out from the earth!

The Children At Rest. If the adventurers lay Rose and Thorn's skeletons to rest in these crypts, the spirits shield the party from future harm. Each adventure gains 1d10 + 4 temporary hit points that last until the adventurers leave the manor. Read the following:

Laying the children's skeletons to rest, you feel a warmth wash over you. Two voices ring out in the darkness, soft and sweet: "Thank you," they murmur. The warmth soothes your wounds and steels your hearts.

In the gloom, you hear Rose. "At last we may sleep, free from the horrors of our home. We never asked for this… We never asked for this. Beware, heroes… Beware the monsters below."

The Singing Ghouls

No 2nd-level party can survive an ambush by the four hidden **ghouls** of Area 29. The *Companion* scatters these undead across the dungeon. One is found in Area 24, another in Area 25, and two are ambling about in Area 29. The ghouls can be heard shuffling and snarling about from Area 22.

24. Cult Initiate's Quarters

Alcoves line this filthy room, each stocked with a moldy straw pallet. At the end of the hall, a wooden table leans on uneven legs, its surface scratched and stained. A slender hallway crawling with insects leads to a short set of stairs.

One of the **ghouls** from Area 29 has been relocated here, its guttural snarls echoing out as a macabre song. The corpse rushes out from the darkness to pounce on the first living creature it perceives. The other ghoul in Area 25 can join the fray too, but only arrives after 1d4 rounds. Read the following:

The stench of rot taints the air. Something shuffles about in one of the nearby alcoves, snarling in a guttural language better left unknown by the men of this world.

25. Well & Cultist Quarters

Past curious worms and roaches you go, down the stone-carved steps. A bucket hangs atop a well in the center of the room. Alcoves line the walls—no doors, no privacy—with moldering straw mattresses and padlocked chests inside.

After a moment, you realize guttural noises bounce off the stones of the well, ringing out across the room in a rhythm.

A **ghoul** removed from Area 29 dwells in the well, chanting "He is the Ancient. He is the Land" in a guttural tongue. A character that hears the ghoul and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check deciphers the ghoul's accent and learns what it is saying. If a character passes within 5 feet of the well, the ghoul attempts to seize them, making a grappling check. Read the following:

Fingers tickle your wrist—then seize onto your arm! From the black waters a rotted face splits into a fanged, yellow smile! "He is the Ancient," it croaks. "He is the Land."

Escaping Death House

An unnatural, black mist has rolled out from the well and heavily obscured the room. Meanwhile, a **skeleton** that laid at the bottom of the well has almost managed to clamber out. Read the following:

> You rush through the room—your lamplight is thrown back by a black mist that boils out from the well in the center of the room. With the wails of the outraged dead thundering in your ears, you have no choice but to blindly navigate the mist.
>
> As you shamble through the darkness, something closes around your wrist—a hand. You shout but it's already too late. Wet, bone-fingers wrench you towards the well; you slam against the lip, yet the creature still seeks to drown you in the unseen waters.

Obstacle (DC 13). The skeleton snatches at one character from the well and the black fog must be navigated. On a failure, the skeleton's target is pulled into the well where it almost succeeds in drowning them. Ultimately, however, the victim clambers out of the well. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Acrobatics or **Athletics** can be used to break the skeleton's grip or squirm from its touch.

Perception can be used to navigate the darkness, hear the skeleton before it strikes, or find its victim.

Insight can be used to recall one's steps from earlier, if the adventurers explored this room beforehand.

26. Hidden Spiked Pit

> You follow the tunnel, its packed-earth walls crawling with insects. They seem to move only in between syllables of that eerie chanting.

Escaping Death House

At your discretion, this can serve as an obstacle. A player might request—scream out, even—for the chance to stop a character from falling into the pit. If so, it counts as a success or failure for the skill challenge; otherwise, treat this area as a non-obstacle.

Obstacle (DC 15). The pit must be detected or crossed, or an adventurer might need to be rescued. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Through an **Intelligence** or **Wisdom check using carpenter's tools** or **woodcarver's tools**, a character can notice how rotted the planks are and, in that instant, understand how dangerous the area is—just before someone walks over the pit.

Perception can be used to detect the pit.

Sleight of Hand can be used to prevent one's own fall or to save someone by snatching at their belt.

Athletics can be used to help a character out of the pit in a timely manner.

27. Dining Hall

> Long benches flank a scratched, wooden table. Bones litter the floor like ripped up chunks of carpet. You accidentally kick one, sending it sailing through the darkness. The chanting grows louder, ringing off every edge until finally infesting your teeth like vagrants. You try to get it out of your head, but can't... and find yourself humming to it instead.

Escaping Death House

Read the following:

> Screams rend the nighted depths. Screams for mercy, for help, for a quick end. You come across a man chained to the wooden table, thrashing, screaming. A gash runs the length of his belly, from which blood pulses out to the beat of his heart! How or where he came from doesn't matter, but in the distance, you hear them: the cultists, chanting, hungering! Can you silence him before those ravenous cannibals come upon you?

A ghost of Death House's red past has been made flesh once again, and mad babbling threatens to draw the ghostly cultists upon the adventurers. He has the statistics of a restrained **commoner** with 1 hit point remaining and is bound by chains. If the characters linger here, five cultists (**shadows**) arrive in 2 rounds and descend upon the man if he remains. If freed, he stumbles down the darkened corridors, babbling madly before fading from being. If slain, he does not die quietly.

Obstacle (DC 13). The ghost be silenced or freed. On a failure, the adventurers are slowed by this distraction if not rattled by the horror of it all. A success here means that this lone spirit, weak as he may be, devotes all his unearthly power to aiding the adventurers. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics can be used with a weapon to break the man's chains, while thieves' tools can unlock them.

Deception or **Persuasion** can be used to deceive the man into calm to help the man.

Medicine can be used to dress his wounds, if the character has a healing kit.

Spells such as healing word or *protection from evil and good* can be used to heal the spirit (even though he is undead) or put him to rest.

28. Larder

A **grick** inhabits this area, but the *Companion* suggests removing it. Not only do the adventurers have enough dangers to contend with in the manor, but the grick is out of place. It does not fit the manor's undead themes.

If you decide to keep the grick, read the following when it attacks:

> Something stirs—wet flesh rasping against dry stone. Something seizes your arm! Something sharp, something slimy, and wet and ravenous. A beast with four fanged tentacles for a mouth lunges for you!

29. Ghoulish Encounter

As noted above, the four **ghouls** that guard this area have been reduced to two. Despite being buried beneath the dirt, the ghouls' incessant singing betray their locations. Thus, they can't surprise the adventurers and start their first turns in combat prone. With these changes, the adventurers have a fighting chance to survive this ordeal. The ghouls can be heard from afar. When the adventurers near this area, read the following:

> As you creep throughout the dark, the tunnels close in. Dust smothers the crossroads of the passageway. The stench of rot and filth invades your throat like a would-be conqueror—and in the distance come echoing guttural snarls as foul creatures shamble throughout the depths.

Once the ghouls attack, read the following:

> The air is thick with rot and filth. Your steps sound... hollow. Dust chokes the four-way tunnel, harshly throwing back your lamplight. As you venture further into the dark, the earth begins to churn! Rotted limbs burst from the clay: two corpses shamble toward you, their howls rending the nighted depths!

Escaping Death House

Read the following:

> The corridors snake about. A rabid snarl echoes off the stones of this place. The stench of rot assails your senses.

Obstacle (DC 12). One ghoul lurks in this area (even if all before were dispatched earlier). On a failure, the ghoul attempts to grapple a character, but inevitably they free the companion (no further rolls required). That character can be abandoned, however, by the party if they so wish. If so, that character and ghoul enter combat while the others escape. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics can be used to rush and shove the ghoul to the floor, allowing others to run by.

Stealth can be used to lead the party into sneaking past the ghoul.

A *minor illusion* can be used to distract the ghoul or obscure its vision.

30. Stairs Down

> Stairs fall before you—and it's in those black depths that that wretched chanting comes. Your instincts warn you away, beg you to leave this place... but there is only one way but forward. Dare you?

Escaping Death House

There are no traps or obstacles here, but the adventurers' choice determines the rest of the skill challenge. Either the characters go through the dungeon and up the Secret Stairs (Area 21) or they take the trapdoor (Area 32) to the Den of Wolves (Area 3), if they already found it before. Read the following:

> You come barreling up the stairs. The walls are alive with roaches, centipedes that fall onto your heads, all getting twisted in your hair. You come to the fork in the path: straight ahead, or to the right. Where will you go?

31. Darklord's Shrine

> Skeletons hang from rusty shackles. The chanting echoes dismally in this place. At the far end of the hall stands a painted statue carved in the likeness of a gaunt man dressed in a black cloak, his hand on the head of the faithful wolf at his side. In his right hand, the statue holds a smoky-gray crystal orb that casts a pale sheen across the floor.

Ordinarily, five **shadows** materialize in the gloom and attack the adventurers if they take the orb. Since that is a death sentence, you must give the adventurers an opportunity to correct their mistake. After taking the orb, the shadows appear and demand that the relic be returned. Failure to do so incites their wrath.

Read the following when the orb is taken:

> A foul wind sweeps this place—one by one, shadows amass into thin figures, each hissing, shrieking, demanding, "Return the orb! Return the orb!"

If the orb is returned, the shadows walk back into the gloom.

32. Hidden Trapdoor

To notice the secret door to this area from Area 31 requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, as noted in the module. If the adventurers enter the room and open the trapdoor, read the following:

> Behind the clay-layered door, stairs climb to a cramped platform from which a ladder ascends... and above it, a trapdoor, bolted shut from this side. With an acrid taste in your throat, you steel yourself, undo the bolt, and throw open the door. First you notice the paws of a wolf—and you soon realize you're back in the den on the first floor of the manor. Curious, since you never spotted even the hint of a trapdoor earlier.

33. Cult Leaders' Den

The southwest door is a **mimic** in disguise. However, the *Companion* vehemently suggests removing the creature from the campaign. One mimic incites enough paranoia to slow down your gaming sessions from now until the campaign's end. Furthermore, the adventurers still have too many dangers to contend with in the manor; the mimic is overkill.

Read the following text when the adventurers enter the room. The text assumes the mimic was removed or the adventurers entered in from the north.

> The chamber is barren but for a rusting chandelier suspended over a table flanked by two high-backed chairs. The candlesticks standing in the corners of the room have long since melted away. Two doors lead to nearby halls.

Foul Mimicry. If you decide to keep the **mimic**, read the text below when a creature touches the "door."

> You reach out for the door—it doesn't budge. You try again, failing, and when you find that you can't pull away your hand is when the panic sets in. The door shivers, sprouting a pair of glossy eyes and far too many fangs. Snarling, this, this thing closes its jaws on your arm!

34. Cult Leaders' Quarters

> A spacious but dinghy chamber sweeps out before you. A bedroom. The moldy feather mattress rots atop its bed frame. A wardrobe leans against the earthen wall. At the foot of the bed sits a footlocker.

If the adventurers steal from the footlocker, Elisabeth and Gustav Durst (two **ghasts**) burst from the wall and attack. Read the following when this occurs:

> The footlocker is unlocked, and full of assorted possessions—a cloak, a yellowing leather book, a flask of strange liquid, four scarlet vials. As you're digging through it, you hear something shift behind you. Nothing but the earthen wall. You turn back to your loot, pulling out a chainmail shirt. Then comes the sound again. Just as you turn back, the wall crumbles in a great clatter! Two ghastly black-robed figures burst from the wall, snarling, their claws long and yellow! These undead crouch, then leap forward, shrieking out a dirge—a dirge for you. "You were fools to come here!" one shouts, its voice as sharp as glass!

Running the Ghasts. You must exercise restraint with the ghasts. The adventurers can't be surprised; the ghast's emergence from the wall is betrayed a few seconds beforehand. You should also roll initiative separately for each ghast (and, if your adventurers are already wounded, with disadvantage on each roll). If the ghasts both operate on the same turn, the damage output is too great to out-heal or outmaneuver. Do not block the exit with a ghast; the adventurers deserve the option to flee.

Roleplaying the Ghasts. Ghasts can still speak a language; the Dursts speak Common. They cackle and snarl throughout the battle. You can voice the Dursts with this dialogue:

- "The Darklord will forgive us!"
- "Our redemption is at hand!"
- As a ghast claws an adventurer, it shouts, "There truly is no place like home." The other shouts, "Our home is yours!"

35. Reliquary

> Alcoves stocked with grisly trophies line the chamber—a severed finger, a mummified hand, the shrunken head of a halfling, and more. The chanting has swollen into one great song that shakes the very stones of this wretched place, and at last you can discern its lyrics: "He is the Ancient" a legion voice sings, "He is the Land. He is the Ancient. He is the Land. He is the Ancient. He is the Land."

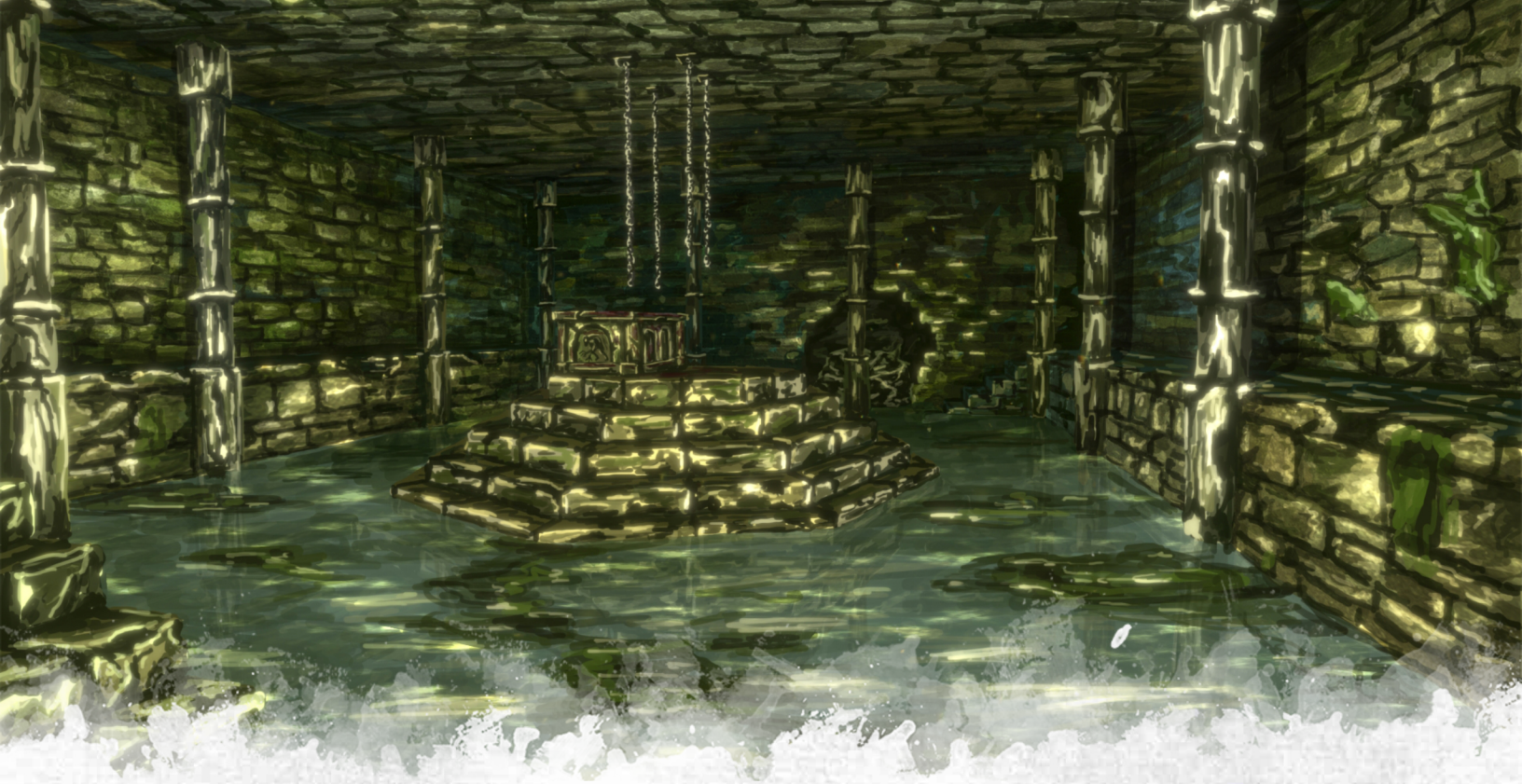
36. Prison

> A prison yawns before you in a dismal gloom. You almost even hear the creak of long undisturbed shackles. The walls and floors are stained a dull red. A macabre trail leads to a lone skeleton at the far end of the hall. Something gleams on its finger. Something gold.

37. Portcullis

> The stairs descend to murky water, ending at a rusty iron portcullis. Beyond your reach, you spot the edge of a wooden wheel embedded into the wall, and beyond that lies only darkness. Darkness and chanting: "He is the Ancient. He is the Land."





38. Ritual Chamber

The ritual chamber is the crux of this entire chapter. If the adventurers make an appropriate sacrifice, they may leave Durst Manor unscathed (see *The Cult is Appeased* in the *Aftermath* section below). If they do not, the adventurers either begin the Escaping Death House Skill Challenge or must flee from the manor as they normally do in *Curse of Strahd* (in which case, go to *The Cult is Denied* in the *Aftermath* section below).

When the adventurers enter this chamber, read the following text instead of what is provided in *Curse of Strahd*:

> The waters lap hungrily at your ankles, sending ripples throughout its black surface. The chanting, that insidious, wretched, incessant, unforgiving chanting falls short. All's quiet. All. A ledge lines this chamber, overlooking a dais that rises from the dark water. Chains suspended from the ceiling swing above a bloodstained altar carved with gruesome depictions of grasping ghouls.

Revision. As noted above, it is highly recommended that the spirits only accept the sacrifice of a humanoid—not a beast, not a bug, only a living person. Additionally, Lorghoth the Decayer, the **shambling mound**, has been replaced with a **gibbering mouther**.

"One Must Die!"

Once a character climbs the dais, read the text below, which replaces what is provided by *Curse of Strahd:*

> You climb the dais. The bloodstained altar stands before you, whispering its tales to you. Red tales. At the far end of this vile chamber, a mound of refuse—bones, detritus—molders in a small alcove.
>
> Shivers dance up your spine. It's as if the entire chamber awaits you with bated breath... And just as you reach the final step, an ill wind blows throughout the depths—thirteen shadowy figures manifest on the ledge, wielding black torches that seem to swallow light. Their faces are but voids, and in one great union they chant, "One must die! One must die! ONE MUST DIE!"

Lorghoth the Decayer. If the adventurers refuse to make a sacrifice, the spirits shout, "Lorghoth! Lorghoth! Lorgoth!" awakening the **gibbering mouther**. The aberration shudders in its alcove and begins to babble its maddening song. Read the following:

> The spirits scream that infernal name, rousing a creature that the mortal mind dares not truly look upon—a mass of melted flesh pitted with free-swimming eyes and itinerant mouths. In the gloom, you hear its maddening song, a legion of voices screaming for flesh and pleading for death. This crimson creature lurches forward with surprising speed, spreading its amorphous form across the water's surface.
>
> The creature's song assaults your ears and worms its way into your mind where it begins to wreak true havoc. You hear yourself screaming internally. You feel the blood freeze in your veins. You feel the smile creep to your lips as you are lulled into madness. It's approaching and there is a part of you that yearns to join it—to become one of many voices in one blasphemous chorus.

Escaping Death House

The Skill Challenge begins in this area. The adventurers do not need to fight Lorgoth the Devourer and can flee instead. Read the following text to present this choice:

> The manor shivers with rage! Stone and brick drop from the ceiling like broken dreams, shattering on the dais or sending up plumes of fetid water. As that mound of utter death, that abomination, shambles towards you, the blood pounds in your ears; your heart thunders! Will you fight, or will you flee?

Once one character crosses the portcullis, it slams shut, separating that person from the party. The wheel that operates the portcullis is jammed by Death House's will. Read the following:

> As if willed by some vengeful spirit, the portcullis slams shut, separating you from your companions! What do you do to escape from this wretched house of utter death?

Obstacle (DC 11). The ritual chamber must be escaped. On a failure, the adventurers wallow in indecision or struggle to unjam the wheel. Inevitably, they force the portcullis open and proceed, albeit with one Skill Challenge failure. The following skills are appropriate for this obstacle:

Athletics, thieves' tools or **tinker's tools** can be used to force open the portcullis or unjam the wheel.

Through **Insight** or **Investigation**, a character can rationalize that, given the nearby corridor to Area 36 lies on the other side of the chamber, there might be a way out of the ritual chamber. **Perception** can also be used to detect the secret door to Area 36.

Aftermath

The adventurers are due for a mad-dash through benighted halls or a solemn trek made in grave silence.

The Cult is Appeased

If the adventurers sacrifice someone on the altar, Death House harries them no longer. Read the following:

> And just like that... All is quiet. Where once the hall thundered with cries of ritual sacrifice, there is only brooding silence. The blood streams down the altar, running through the cracks of the dais. The full weight of what you've done has yet to be realized—it is instead to manifest in your dreams for months and years to come, to haunt your every move like a shadow, to rest in your bones like a sickness, never quite excised.
>
> In deafening silence, you and your remaining companions leave this wretched place. The halls are eerily quiet, but no danger abounds. The spirits that haunt this place seem... satisfied. Smug, even. The air is thick with it. As you leave this house of death behind, you know deep in your secret heart that here you'll stay forever. That no matter where you go on this earth, the Death House goes with you.

The Cult is Denied

If the adventurers deny the cult, read the following if you don't run the *Escaping Death House Skill Challenge*:

> "Run!" one of you cries, but you'll go to your grave never really knowing who said it first—but as one, you flee like dogs before a storm! Through the halls you thunder as the very manor quakes, as if it has woken to finally take what it is owed: Blood! Life! The house will not be denied—Death House will not be denied!
>
> And still the spirits chant, "One must die! One must die! One must die!" relentless and unsatisfied! Now, in the distance, you hear them: the ghouls, the undead marauders, the ravenous corpses bounding through the halls after the scent of living flesh!

As the adventurers rush through the manor, you can describe the various effects described in *Curse of Strahd* with the sample text below.

Windows. When a character first tries for a window, they find that it has been replaced with brick. Read:

> You peel back the curtains, and with a mounting horror find that the glass has been replaced with brick. Whatever spirits haunt this wretched house have no intention of letting you leave.

Doors. The doors are replaced by swirling scythes. Read:

> Where there were once doors are now slashing scythes, stained red in the blood of past victims. Doors to something new, then. Doors to death.

Smoke. The oven, stove, and fireplaces spit out poisonous smoke. Read:

> The room boils with smoke black as night and poisonous as a viper's kiss. Pain blooms in your very lungs, your guts. You taste bile at the end of your throat and know that the End is on Its way.

Rats in the Walls. Breaking the walls releases a swarm of rats. Read the following:

> The wall crumbles beneath your strike, brittle as glass! Swarms upon swarms of rats surge out from the walls like arterial blood, gnashing their yellow teeth, squealing together in one deafening chorus.

Escaping the Manor

Once the adventurers escape the manor, read:

> Death surrounds you. Through those blasphemous halls you run, the wails of the dead chasing you down like rabid dogs, thundering about in this endless gloom until finally—finally—you hurl yourself out from that accursed manor and into the mist.
>
> Now, and only now, can you appreciate the living trap that has been laid for you. Only now do you understand the full scope of this horror—the debauchery committed in those benighted depths.
>
> You've escaped this house of death... at a cost. Paid in either blood or sanity or shattered dreams. Will you ever truly escape the Death House? Or shall it shadow you from these days and on, forevermore?



Chapter XVII: The Wedding at Ravenloft

Triumphant in his centuries-long pursuit of his beloved Tatyana, Strahd von Zarovich cannot help but gloat. Wedding invitations have been sent out across Barovia, and all are expected to witness this unholy union. In his arrogance, he has invited his greatest enemies to humiliate them one last time before draining Ireena Kolyana of her life's blood and damning her soul for eternity. May the gods watch over these wayward souls. Might the strength of their sword-arms and the courage of their hearts be enough to stand boldly against the devil's shadow—for here, in Barovia, all is not well. It can never be well so long as this valley and its people live under the Curse of Strahd.

The Wedding at Ravenloft is intended as the opening salvo to the titanic conclusion of *Curse of Strahd.* With Ireena captured, Strahd invites his allies and enemies to Castle Ravenloft. True to Ravenloft's nature, the deck is stacked heavily against the adventurers—either they triumph and live forevermore as heroes or join the legion of fools that fell before the Devil's claws. They are joined, however, by several allies, as described below, to almost even the scales. The wedding spans four acts, but can be interrupted at any time, advancing straight to the fourth and final act: *The Devil's Wedding Night.*

This chapter is intended to be in used in conjunction with Chapter 4, which describes Castle Ravenloft as a whole and provides guidance for the Final Confrontations. This chapter focuses specifically on events that occur during the wedding. Once the adventurers enter Act IV, consult your party's Final Confrontation in *Areas of Note* in Chapter 4.

Table of Contents

Chapter Overview 297
Chapter Progression 297
Quick Notes 297
Wedding Attendees 298
Running the Wedding 300
Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects 301
Dramatis Personae 302
Variants & Revisions 307
I. All Will Be Well 307
II. The Ceremony 314
III. The Reception 319
IV. The Devil's Wedding Night 324
A Wolf Among Sheep 325
Blood of the Innocent 326
Brother to Evil 328
Daughter of Dusk 328
The Devil's Bride 329
The Heart of Sorrow 330
Wachtercult 331
Endings 332
The Devil Triumphant 332
The Devil Defeated 333

Chapter Overview

This chapter is, ultimately, a humiliation—Strahd mocking the adventurers one last time, on the eve of his greatest triumph or well-deserved destruction. Always do the adventurers have the chance to choose violence but they are outgunned and outnumbered. Strahd's inevitable betrayal may even come as a relief.

Because *The Wedding at Ravenloft* is a pre-written conclusion to a months-long campaign, the details herein might not align with the events that have transpired in your own campaign. This module assumes that most characters have lived to see the wedding, even Father Lucian Petrovich who is the likeliest to die in a given *Curse of Strahd* campaign. If a character is dead or indisposed, you must improvise. Many characters are versatile (e.g., if Father Lucian died but his corpse was not burned, he could still officiate the wedding as a vampire burn; if not, Strahd forces Donavich or a nondescript priest to officiate).

Chapter Progression

The Wedding at Ravenloft spans four acts:

In **Act I,** the adventurers arrive at Castle Ravenloft, swear an oath to hospitality, and mingle with the guests. They also have the opportunity to sneak about the castle.

Act II, the ceremony, is the shortest act, featuring the wedding ceremony between the devil and his bride. If he still lives, the Abbot crashes the wedding to object, offering his flesh golem, Vasilka, instead.

Act III comprises the reception, the calm before the storm. Strahd enjoys his victory lap and, after leaving for his marital bed, has his minions betray the adventurers.

Act IV is a modular act offering several side quests for the adventurers to complete, up until they face Strahd at the location determined by their tarokka card reading.

In the Aftermath, the adventurers either free Barovia from the curse of Strahd or awaken in the dungeons as Ireena Kolyana's first meal as a vampire. Ireena's life can only be saved if they break guest right and attack Strahd; however, her soul can be saved if Strahd is slain.

Quick Notes

- Rahadin is the face of Strahd's operation and is backed up by wights, werewolves, Vistani, and vampire spawn.
- The party's confiscated gear is left in the dungeons.
- Strahd's five consorts (Anastrasya, Volenta, Ludmilla, Sasha, and Escher) are heavily utilized in the wedding.
- The adventurers have one opportunity to speak to a closely-guarded Ireena before Strahd charms her into submission.
- Strahd inevitably betrays the party, sparking Act IV.
- Ireena is doomed to die, killed by Strahd off-screen, and left in his tomb to turn.

Checklist

Before you run the wedding, ask yourself these questions:

- Has Rahadin, Ismark Kolyanovich, or Ireena Kolyana been slain? Have any other characters mentioned in this module?
- Was *St. Andral's Feast* thwarted? If not, did Father Lucian die to Strahd? Was his body burned? Who officiates the wedding, if not him?
- Are invitees, such as Arrigal, the party's Destined Ally? Does this conflict with their role in the module?
- Is the party's Destined Ally even invited to the wedding? If not, how can they arrive to assist the party?
- Were the Vallakoviches executed?
- Does Lady Fiona Wachter reign over Vallaki?
- Was the Abbot met? Does he yet live? Does Vasilka?
- Were the Keepers of the Feathers helped by the adventurers in any way?
- Has Kasimir Velikov received the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star—the power to resurrect his sister—from the Amber Temple?
- Does Kiril Stoyanovich yet live? Has the werewolf pack been annihilated?
- Must the adventurers still secure the last Fortunes of Ravenloft? Are any hidden in the castle?

Wedding Attendees

Strahd's wedding is a momentous affair:

The Host

Strahd plays the role of a triumphant lord that has at last vanquished his most rebellious vassals. Throughout the Wedding, he routinely grins, sneers, smiles, and smirks at the adventurers as he applauds their heroism in one breath and mocks their tenacity in another. He does not harm the adventurers until they draw first blood.

The Devil's Bride. Strahd takes every precaution possible to guard Ireena from the adventurers, surrounding her with vampire spawn. During Act I, Strahd vampirically charms Ireena into obedience.

The Devil's Avatar. In Area K10, a non-sentient illusion of Strahd is ordinarily met in Area K10. *The Wedding at Ravenloft* utilizes this concept, turning it into an avatar of Strahd's that appears only twice in this module: during a pre-ceremony drink in Area K10, and when the adventurers march on the Heart of Sorrow during Act IV. The avatar is an extension of Strahd's consciousness that he may puppet even when engrossed in other activities or conversations. It cannot cast spells but can be destroyed by a *dispel magic* spell. It is not used to spy on the adventurers, only preoccupy them from afar with a conversation.

The Devil's Guards. Strahd commands a retinue of **wights** that act as his castle guard. For every **wight** used, subtract one from the pit of wights in Crypt 14 of Area K84.

The Guests

Guests have come from all across Barovia. In addition to the characters named on the *Guest List* table, several unnamed guests have been invited as well:

- In the "elf" party come three dusk elf **guards**.
- In the Krezkite party come eight Krezkite **nobles**.
- In the Vallakian party come five Vallakian **nobles**, plus four **cult fanatics** of Lady Fiona Wachter's.
- In the Vistani party come four Vistani **thugs**.
- In the "Balinok" party come four **werewolves**.

The unnamed nobles are invited to the reception only, if you use a grid in your campaign and can't spare them the room in Castle Ravenloft's chapel.

The Wedding Party

These characters have parts to play in the wedding:

The Best Man is Rahadin, the adopted brother of Strahd and his greatest champion.

The Maid of Honor is determined by you: Ireena asks one of the adventurers to serve as her Maid of Honor; without suitable candidates, Strahd forces her to choose Sasha Ivliskova.

The Groomsmen consist of Ismark, Escher, and potentially one adventurer.

The Bridesmaids consist of Strahd's brides: Anastrasya, Ludmilla, Sasha, and Volenta.

The Officiator is Father Lucian Petrovich, whether he is living or undead; otherwise Donavich serves as the Offiicator.

The Flower Girl is Arabelle, daughter of Luvash, who could not refuse Strahd's request.

The Ringbearers are Brom and Bray Martikov, much to their parents' horror.

The Harpist is Clovin Belview, summoned from the Abbey of Saint Markovia; as Vasili von Holtz, Strahd often appreciated Clovin's talents.

The Vampire Hunters

Neither Rudolph van Richten (disguised as Rictavio) nor his protegé Ezmerelda d'Avenir are invited to the wedding. They would, however, capitalize on the Devil's distraction. The fate of Ireena Kolyana's soul is of little consequence to either vampire hunter; instead, their priority is to at last murder the Devil Strahd von Zarovich. The module intentionally leaves their status vague, so as to best fit your campaign.

Ezmerelda sneaks into the castle and can be found via a Random Encounter. She intends to ambush Strahd in his bedchamber as the Devil consummates his marriage. If Ezmerelda was raised as a vampire spawn, Strahd has her serve as a bridesmaid.

Provided his disguise as the bard Rictavio has not been blown, **Van Richten** might connive his way into being hired as the wedding's musician if Clovin Belview is unavailable. If Van Richten was raised as a vampire spawn, Strahd humiliates him by forcing him to be the ringbearer, instead of the Martikov boys.

Factions

This is not a quiet affair, but a ceremony for all nobles of the realm and loyalists of the Devil Strahd. In his arrogance, the vampire has brought friend and foe alike here to gawk at his triumph. If a faction does not make sense for you, change it. You can also change the number of agents they have to better fit your party's capabilities.

These factions include:

Comrades. These individuals stand against the Devil and include Ismark Kolyanovich or Donavich.

Cultists. Eager to demonstrate her ability to Strahd, as well as pilfer arcane secrets from his study, Fiona Wachter has brought four **cult fanatics** and Ernst Larnak, her righthand man.

Dusk Elves. Kasimir Velikov has been invited as yet another sleight against his people; he has brought a retinue of three **dusk elf guards**.

Innocents. These characters are noncombatants that flee from carnage. Some, like the Wachter brothers, can be elevated to Comrade or Loyalist status at your discretion.

Keepers of the Feather. As nobles, the Martikovs have been invited to the wedding. Strahd is unaware of their lycanthropic nature. They've stationed six other **wereraven** agents and 2d4 **swarms of ravens** outside the castle walls to assist the adventurers. Brom and Bray Martikov only have 7 hit points each and are considered Innocents. This faction is described as "Wereravens" on the Guest List and other sections.

Loyalists. These individuals include Rahadin, **vampire spawn**, and other characters loyal to the Devil Strahd.

Vistani. Strahd has need of minions unafflicted by sunlight or silver and has brought his Vistani servants. Led by Arrigal, these four **Vistani thugs** are the main instruments of Strahd's betrayal of the adventurers. Any number of additional Vistani thugs, bandits, or spies are at your disposal.

Werewolves. The pack, led by Kiril Stoyanovich, attend the wedding as enforcers. These five **werewolves** hide amongst the sheep in their human forms and roam the halls during Act I. Unless the adventurers have previously met them, they're none the wiser that the wolves have come to dine.

Guest List

Character	Faction
Adrian Martikov	Keepers of the Feather
Anastrasya Karelova	Loyalists
Anna Krezkova	Innocents
Arabelle	Innocents
Arrigal	Vistani
Bray Martikov	Keepers of the Feather
Brom Martikov	Keepers of the Feather
Clovin Belview	Innocents
Danika Dorakova	Keepers of the Feather
Davian Martikov	Keepers of the Feather
Dmitri Krezkov	Innocents
Donavich	Comrades
Ernst Larnak	Cultists
Escher	Loyalists
Fiona Wachter	Cultists
Henrik van der Voort	Innocents
Ismark Kolyanovich	Comrades
Karl Wachter	Innocents
Kasimir Velikov	Dusk Elves
Kiril Stoyanovich	Werewolves
Lief Lipsiege	Innocents
Ludmilla Vilisevic	Loyalists
Luvash	Vistani
Lydia Petrovna	Innocents
Nikolai Wachter	Innocents
Rahadin	Loyalists
Sasha Ivliskova	Loyalists
Urwin Martikov	Keepers of the Feather
Vargas Vallakovich	Innocents
Victor Vallakovich	Innocents
Volenta Popofsky	Loyalists

Running the Wedding

The wedding is a test of the adventurers' resolve and restraint. Because your partnership with your players is not adversarial, you should flat out ask them when or if they intend to attack. Make it clear that this is not to best them—Strahd will already have contingencies in place, as provided by this module and your own creativity—but simply so that you can provide a swift, well organized, and fun experience. Upon arrival, guests are required to swear an oath of hospitality. They promise no disrespect or violence to Strahd, his minions, or his guests unless they are attacked first. In truth, however, this fragile peace is merely a ploy by Strahd to ensure his scheme comes to fruition. Once Ireena has been married and slain, Strahd will betray the adventurers—for they are intended to be Ireena's first meal come the hour of her dark rebirth.

Further, nearly every important character the adventurers have met throughout the campaign has been invited to the wedding. Prepare dialogue for these characters that reflects their relationship and history with the party, and remind the players of their past exploits with these characters.

The Fortunes of Ravenloft

The campaign's Tarokka Reading can affect this module in many ways:

Artifacts. If an artifact lies within the castle, the best opportunity to search for it is during Acts I or III, when their absence is least glaring, and guests have the most freedom.

Destined Ally. The guest list includes Strahd's vassals and foremost sycophants and enemies. Unless he is well aware of their involvement with the adventurers, Strahd would not invite the destined allies below, leaving it to the party to sneak their ally into the castle.

- The Mad Mage
- Pidlwick II
- Sir Godfrey Gwilym
- Sir Klutz Tripalotsky
- Vasilka

Final Confrontation. Per the Tarokka Reading, there is one location in Castle Ravenloft where the party will fight Strahd, and where destiny dictates he will not flee from. This promise of the campaign might clash with the module's events, so there's but one rule: the Final Confrontation only becomes true in Act IV. For example, if the party is destined to battle Strahd at his throne (Area K25, the audience hall), this is only true after Act III concludes.

On Lycanthropy

Should any character succumb to lycanthropy, inform them that the full moon is still days or weeks away—but Strahd is the Ancient. Strahd is the Land. In Act IV, he reaches out to hurl the moon from its lofty bed and into the Barovian sky so that in this newfound bloodlust, these wolves turn their fangs and claws on those that once were friends. See Act IV for details.

Ambiance

To appeal to your players' senses and emotions, embrace the following:

Mood. There is an atmosphere of fear shared by the innocents—the vassals and victims that could hardly refuse an invitation from Strahd—and a charged sense of anticipation shared by the Devil's minions. Allies of the party repeatedly ask, "So, what is the plan?" assuming the adventurers can and will stop Strahd.

Music. You should prepare music and sound effects for this module, with gothic and baroque or Victorian themes befitting Castle Ravenloft. Further, with a storm raging against the castle walls, rain sound effects would not go amiss.

Visuals. Strahd has spared no expense for the wedding, but even the most regal decorations contrast Castle Ravenloft's dismal, crumbling state. Call attention to this: bouquets wilting in their vases, cobwebs in the corners of a hall, the rust or wear on a statue, whilst

Damage, Healing, and Resting

The Wedding is a marathon, not a sprint. You want the adventurers arriving to their Final Confrontation bloodied and wounded, but not on the brink of death.

Damage. Through quests, random encounters, ambushes by Strahd, and the perils already present in Castle Ravenloft, you whittle down (and humble!) your adventurers.

Sources of Healing. The adventurers might receive healing from Donavich or Father Lucian, and the Keepers of the Feather may smuggle in some *potions of healing*.

Resting. During Act I, the adventurers have enough time to find their confiscated gear in the dungeons and complete a short rest before the ceremony (Act II) begins. Do not bother tracking minutes; there is always enough time. Acts II and III together comprise enough time for another short rest, just before Strahd inevitably betrays the party.

Quests

Act IV features several quests the adventurers can and should embark on as they move towards their Final Confrontation. Try to foreshadow these quests beforehand or broach the subject through other characters, such as the Martikovs warning the party about the Heart of Sorrow.

Random Encounters

Random Encounters largely go unused in this module, which is already so heavily scripted. If you wish to include random encounters, do so during Act I or Act IV only. The following random encounters, included in *Curse of Strahd*, are thematically appropriate for the Wedding:

Barovian Witch. A witch encountered is subtracted from Area K56 carries the *potion of healing* she brewed (as described in Area K56). Because the witches are so fragile, you can include more than one and use this as a means to deliver *potions of healing* to your party.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir. If you include Ezmerelda, this is the most convenient way to present her. Alternatively, you may also include Rudolph van Richten this way.

Unseen Servant. With *unseen servants* already carrying platters of wine and hors d'oeuvres, this encounter is very appropriate for the Wedding and is a very convenient way to deliver potions of healing to the adventurers—perhaps Strahd provided them to toy with his prey or the Keepers of the Feather smuggled them in. However, you should reduce the poison damage inflicted by the silver goblet to 2d10.

Vistani Thugs. These thugs are the remnants of Arrigal's entourage or were simply not invited to the actual ceremony.

Wights. For every wight encountered, subtract a **wight** from Crypt 14 in Area K84.

Strahd

Strahd, and therefore you, are treating the night as if he already won—especially after he offers the adventurers the chance to leave Barovia tomorrow. Amplify his arrogance, especially when he offers the adventurers freedom in Act I—promising them the opportunity to leave Barovia at dawn, provided the wedding proceeds as planned. This is, of course, a lie.

Encountering Strahd. Once the peace is shattered, the adventurers should encounter Strahd twice before reaching their Final Confrontation. You can attach him to any of the quests above, using the notes of a Final Confrontation that you won't ordinarily be using. Strahd ambushes the party for one-to-three rounds then phases through a wall to lick his wounds. These encounters should exhaust Strahd of his minions (such as vampire spawn, Rahadin, or some other significant minion) or other tools of his arsenal (such as his spell slots or any magic items you've equipped him with).

Final Confrontation. Once in Act IV, the adventurers' ultimate goal is to reach the Final Confrontation, where Strahd is bound by fate not to flee. Your story suffers if the adventurers cut immediately towards their Final Confrontation, hence why quests and other distractions are included in this module. You're encouraged to take the party throughout Castle Ravenloft, ambushed periodically by Strahd or his minions.

Preparations by the Players

The players are not just mute witnesses to a wedding in this module; they have their own opportunities to become involved and express their creativity, all while plotting Strahd's demise. The players are encouraged to:

Write Toasts. Each adventurer should have a toast prepared for the happy wedding couple. Incendiary toasts are either met by Strahd's mocking smile, or Rahadin's glare.

Give Gifts. Each adventurer is expected to bring a wedding gift and will present it during the reception. It would be a great insult to not present their host with a gift for such an important event.

Scheme. The adventurers are encouraged to have a battle plan ready. You can guide them through this with a Socratic method by asking these questions:

- "Will you object during the wedding?"
- "How would you stop Strahd from killing and turning Ireena Kolyana?"
- "What do you intend to do after it all goes to hell?"

Arcana, Bestiary, and Effects

This chapter, as an event, features many of the same magic items, effects, and creatures of Castle Ravenloft. The creatures below are specifically present for or relevant to *The Wedding at Ravenloft*:

- The Abbot
- Acolyte
- Arrigal
- Banshee
- Bandit Captain
- Commoner
- Cult Fanatic
- Emil Toranescu
- Fiona Wachter
- Flesh Golem
- Gargoyle
- Gray Ooze
- Guardian Portrait
- Imp
- Kasimir Velikov
- Kiril Stoyanovich
- Mongrelfolk
- Noble
- Patrina Velikovna
- Priest
- Rahadin
- Red Dragon Wyrmling
- Rug of Smothering
- Shadow
- Skeleton
- Specter
- Spy
- Strahd von Zarovich
- Strahd Zombie
- Strahd's Animated Armor
- Swarm of Bats
- Swarm of Ravens
- Vampire Spawn
- Veteran
- Wereraven
- Werewolf
- Wight
- Wolf
- Zombie

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Faction	Act I	Act II	Act III	Act IV
The Abbot	Unique	N	—	—	Area K15	—	—
Adrian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Anastrasya Karelova	**Vampire Spawn**	H	Loyalists	Area K50	Area K15	Area K25	Area K86
Anna Krezkova	LG **Noble**	N	Innocents	Area K8	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Arabelle	**Commoner**	N	Innocents	Area K19	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Arrigal	Unique	H	Vistani	Area K19	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Bray Martikov	—	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Brom Martikov	—	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Clovin Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	N	Innocents	Area K28	Area K28	Area K25	Area K25
Cyrus Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	H	Loyalists	Area K1	Area K62	Area K62	Area K25
Danika Dorakova	**Wereraven**	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Davian Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Dmitri Krezkov	LG **Noble**	N	Innocents	Area K8	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Donavich	Varies	F	Comrades	Area K8	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Emil Toranescu	Unique	N	—	Area K75A	Area K75A	Area K75A	Area K75A
Ernst Larnak	LE **Spy**	H	Cultists	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K37
Escher	**Vampire Spawn**	H	Loyalists	Area K49	Area K15	Area K25	Area K49
Fiona Wachter	Unique	H	Cultists	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K37
Gertruda	NG **Commoner**	N	—	Area K42	Area K42	Area K42	Area K42
Henrik van der Voort	LE **Commoner**	N	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	F	—	Area K50	Area K15	Area K25	K86
Ismark Kolyanovich	LG **Veteran**	F	Comrades	Area K8	Area K15	Area K74	Area K74
Karl Wachter	N **Noble**	F	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Kasimir Velikov	Unique	F	Dusk Elves	Area K8	Area K15	Area K25	Area K84
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	H	Werewolves	—	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Lief Lipsiege	CE **Commoner**	N	Innocents	Area K30	Area K15	Area K25	Area K30
Lucian Petrovich	Varies	—	Varies	Area K15	Area K15	—	—
Ludmilla Vilisevic	**Vampire Spawn**	H	Loyalists	Area K50	Area K15	Area K25	Area K86
Luvash	CE **Bandit Captain**	N	Vistani	Area K19	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Lydia Petrovna	LG **Commoner**	F	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Nikolai Wachter	N **Noble**	F	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Patrina Velikovna	Varies	—	—	Area K84	Area K84	Area K84	Area K84
Rahadin	Unique	H	Loyalists	Area K7	Area K15	Area K25	Area K84
Sasha Ivliskova	**Vampire Spawn**	H	Loyalists	Area K50	Area K15	Area K25	Area K42
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	H	Loyalists	Area K10	Area K15	Area K25	Tarokka Card
Urwin Martikov	**Wereraven**	F	Keepers of the Feather	Area K9	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Vargas Vallakovich	NE **Noble**	N	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K25
Vasilka	**Flesh Golem**	N	—	—	Area K15	—	—
Victor Vallakovich	NE **Mage**	N	Innocents	Area K14	Area K15	Area K25	Area K37
Volenta Popofsky	**Vampire Spawn**	H	Loyalists	Area K50	Area K15	Area K25	Area K86

Dramatis Personae

This chapter's major characters are detailed below and elaborated upon further in Appendix D.

The Abbot

The Abbot crashes the wedding in Act II, objecting to this unholy union. He presents Vasilka as Strahd's "perfect" bride in one last, desperate bid to justify his sins. Ultimately, Strahd cajoles the Abbot, claiming he does not want perfection, he wants only Tatyana. Humiliated, the Abbot quietly leaves Castle Ravenloft.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Description
The Abbot	An angel of the Morninglord fallen from grace.
Adrian Martikov	Wereraven and eldest son of the Martikov family, fated to die tonight.
Anastrasya Karelova	Strahd's most anxious vampire bride.
Anna Krezkova	Wife of Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov.
Arabelle	A Vistana child, daughter of Luvash, descendant of Madam Eva, and secret heir to Castle Ravenloft.
Arrigal	A Vistana assassin loyal to Strahd, and instigator of his inevitable betrayal.
Bray Martikov	A wereraven, son of Urwin Martikov, and ring bearer.
Brom Martikov	A wereraven, son of Urwin Martikov, and ring bearer.
Clovin Belview	A perpetually drunk mongrelfolk violist serving as the harpist.
Cyrus Belview	Strahd's mongrelfolk manservant.
Danika Dorakova	A wereraven, wife of Urwin, mother of Bray and Brom.
Davian Martikov	A wereraven and cantankerous patriarch of the Martikovs and Keepers of the Feather.
Dmitri Krezkov	The Krezk burgomaster and father to four dead children.
Donavich	The wayward priest of the Village of Barovia and possibly the wedding officiator.
Emil Toranescu	An imprisoned werewolf and nemesis of Kiril Stoyanovich.
Ernst Larnak	Fiona Wachter's personal spy and confidant.
Escher	Strahd's most insolent paramour.
Fiona Wachter	A Vallakian noble and leader of the Wachtercult, devoted to demonology.
Gertruda	The missing, loony daughter of Mad Mary, charmed by Strahd.
Henrik van der Voort	The Vallakian coffin maker involved in the theft of St. Andral's bones.
Ireena Kolyana	The reincarnation of Tatyana, Strahd's (unrequited) beloved.
Ismark Kolyanovich	The brother of Ireena Kolyana and de facto burgomaster of the Village of Barovia.
Karl Wachter	The mischievous middle child of Fiona Wachter.
Kasimir Velikov	A dusk elf wizard responsible for his people's genocide.
Kiril Stoyanovich	The vicious alpha of the Children of Mother Night werewolf pack.
Lief Lipsiege	Strahd's accountant.
Lucian Petrovich	The Vallakian priest, possibly undead.
Ludmilla Vilisevic	Strahd's angriest vampire bride.
Luvash	A Vistana, a mean drunk, brother of Arrigal, and father of Arabelle.
Lydia Petrovna	The perpetually anxious wife of Burgomaster Vargas Vallakovich.
Nikolai Wachter	The eldest, mischievous child of Fiona Wachter.
Patrina Velikovna	The dead, but restless, sister of Kasimir awaiting resurrection.
Rahadin	The chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft and Strahd's adopted, dusk elf brother.
Sasha Ivliskova	Strahd's eldest and most jealous vampire bride.
Strahd von Zarovich	The lord of Barovia.
Urwin Martikov	The estranged son of Davian Martikov and proprietor of the Blue Water Inn.
Vargas Vallakovich	The brittle, egotistical burgomaster of Vallaki.
Vasilka	A flesh golem fashioned by the Abbot.
Victor Vallakovich	The son of Vargas Vallakovich and a reckless, fledgling mage.
Volenta Popofsky	Strahd's most sycophantic vampire bride.

Adrian Martikov

Adrian has almost no part to play in the wedding. A quiet man, he is quick to remind the adventurers that the hopes of Barovians everywhere are in their hands. He dies to the werewolves in Act II or III, raising the stakes for his family and the Keepers of the Feather.

Anastrasya, Ludmilla, & Volenta

Strahd's earlier brides begrudgingly share the same mission: protect Ireena. In Act I, they guard her in Area K50. In Act IV, they guard her corpse in Strahd's tomb to ensure that she turns into a vampire. The brides are all afraid that they will be sealed away or discarded now that Strahd has his beloved "Tatyana."

Anna Krezkova

Anna and her husband have no desire to be collateral damage and keep their distance from the adventurers. Ultimately, she escapes Castle Ravenloft with her life, weathering yet another tragedy. She vows to never speak of this nightmarish night again.

Arabelle

If she was saved by the adventurers earlier in the campaign, Arabelle serves as the flower girl, much to her father Luvash's dismay. If blood is shed at the wedding, she flees from the castle with her father, possibly during the *Blood of the Innocent* quest.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If Arabelle is the adventurers' Destined Ally, she feels compelled to follow them to hell and back, much to Luvash's outrage. Arabelle loudly replies, "It is as Madam Eva said, father! I must play my part!" Luvash, for his part, refuses to leave his daughter's side. When Luvash is later cut down, she screams "Papa!" and rushes to his aid.

Arrigal

Arrigal has come to Castle Ravenloft with four Vistani **thugs**. Unless he is the adventurers' Destined Ally, he instigates Strahd's inevitable betrayal at the cusp of Act IV. If he survives the wedding, his ambitions of ruling Barovia get the better of Arrigal.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If Arrigal is the adventurers' Destined Ally, he betrays Strahd—not out of loyalty to the party, but so he might seize the throne for himself. In Act III, he plunges his poisoned dagger not into an adventurers' heart, but that of Kiril Stoyanovich whose lycanthropy does not protect against poison. Arrigal's Vistani allies follow suit, betraying Strahd's forces.

Bray & Brom Martikov

Urwin's sons, Bray and Brom are forced to serve as Strahd's ringbearers. Neither are combatants. If combat erupts, they shapeshift into ravens and fly outside to warn the Keepers of the Feather that blood has been shed.

Clovin Belview

Having heard his music while visiting the Abbey under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, Strahd summons Clovin to Castle Ravenloft to serve as the harpist. Ultimately, Clovin, an alcoholic, steals away to the wine cellar to drink himself to near death, after which he has an epiphany. He swears off drinking for good, only to slip on some rubbish and crash into the cask containing the **black pudding.** The ooze devours him alive.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If Clovin is the adventurers' Destined Ally, he is spared from his grisly fate, instead following them into the very depths of Castle Ravenloft with only his viol for comfort.

Cyrus Belview

Cyrus serves as Strahd's monstrous butler. Ultimately, he tries to lead the adventurers to the elevator trap. If Strahd dies, Cyrus refuses to leave Castle Ravenloft, sweeping the floors and surviving off vermin.

Danika Dorakova

Danika fights alongside her fellow wereravens if blood is shed at the wedding, provided her sons do not need defending.

Davian Martikov

Davian has stationed his wereravens nearby, on the castle rooftops, in the event blood is shed. Ultimately, Davian survives the wedding, but his eldest son, Adrian, does not. If Strahd dies, Davian still withers away, soon succumbing to heartbreak and old age.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If Davian is the adventurers' Destined Ally, he leaves his family early in Act I to wander the castle alone, drawing Strahd's attention elsewhere and giving the party a better chance to explore without discovery, rendezvous with them later.

Dmitri Krezkov

Dmitri does not want to be here at all. Begrudgingly, he attends the wedding with his foremost vassals (eight unnamed Krezkite **nobles**). He gives the adventurers a wide berth, so as to avoid Strahd's inevitable wrath. Dmitri is not coy about this—he outright tells the adventurers to leave him and his be.

Donavich

Donavich attends the wedding as either the officiator or Ismark's plus-one. Roused now with a fiery spirit, Donavich seeks to avenge his son Doru by standing against Strahd. Ultimately, Donavich helps spirit the innocents away during the *Blood of the Innocent* quest in Act IV. He also advocates for Ismark's liberation in Act III and IV.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If Donavich is the adventurers' Destined Ally, he follows them to the bitter end, savoring justice for his son and Kolyan Indirovich.

Statistics. Donavich's statistics vary: ordinarily, he is an LG **acolyte**, but, given his newfound zeal, you have license to upgrade him to the statistics of a **priest** so that he may provide better healing for the party. If Lucian Petrovich is alive, however, Donavich should remain an **acolyte**.

Emil Toranescu

Strahd offers Emil a deal: guard Ismark Kolyanovich in return for his freedom. Emil eagerly accepts the deal, and masquerades as a prisoner for when the adventurers come to liberate Ismark. Ultimately, he escapes Castle Ravenloft and reunites with his wife Zuleika.

Ernst Larnak

Brought by his mistress, Ernst hardly strays from Lady Wachter's side—unless she dispatches him to trail the adventurers as they explore the castle in Act I or III.

Escher

Escher serves as a groomsman in the wedding. Like Strahd's other consorts, Escher is worried that Strahd will seal him away now that "Tatyana" is in Strahd's grasp. If Strahd dies, Escher leaves Barovia behind to carve out his own legacy as a newly freed vampire.

Fiona Wachter

Fiona Wachter has brought four **cult fanatics**, her **imp** Majesto, and her **spy**, Ernst Larnak to Castle Ravenloft, as well as her two sons, Nikolai and Karl. Fiona proves loyal to Strahd if blood is shed, but she and her minions soon steal away to the Study to plunder it of arcane knowledge. Fiona's ultimate fate is determined by the adventurers; if they pursue her in Act IV as part of the *Wachtercult* quest, they can end her once and for all. Otherwise, she returns to Vallaki with more power, extinguishing any hope that better souls—like the Martikovs—can usurp her.

Gertruda

Strahd uses Gertruda as a decoy in Act IV. Dressing her in a wedding dress, he leaves the girl in his bedchamber so that the adventurers, hellbent on rescuing Ireena, mistake her for the devil's bride. See *The Devil's Bride* quest.

Henrik van der Voort

For his part in stealing the bones of Saint Andral, Henrik has been given the "honor" of a wedding invitation. Alas, Henrik wants nothing more than to leave this accursed place. Ultimately, he dies in the *Blood of the Innocent* quest of Act IV, after being dropped by a gargoyle in Area K8.

Ireena Kolyana

Ireena is being held and prepared in Area K50 until the ceremony. Only one adventurer is allowed to see her and they are asked for by name. This adventurer is asked to serve as either her Maid of Honor or as a groomsman. Strahd later charms Ireena off-screen so she does not raise a fuss during the wedding. She is later killed off-screen and left to turn inside his coffin (see *The Devil's Bride* in Act IV). If her corpse goes unburned and Strahd defeats the adventurers, she is sicced upon the heroes as her first meal. If Strahd dies, her soul is free to reunite with Sergei. See *Endings* for both possibilities.

Ismark Kolyanovich

Ismark begrudgingly serves as a groomsman and draws a blade to object to the wedding during Act II, thereby breaking guest right. Strahd arrests Ismark and sends him to languish in the dungeons. Later in Act III, Ismark is hauled back up for his fate to be decided upon.

Karl & Nikolai Wachter

Fiona's sons are always up to no good. Shielded from consequence and common sense by dint of their privileged birth, the Wachter brothers soon venture down to the wine cellar. There, they may accidentally release the **black pudding**—but as usual, they are neither harmed nor held accountable.

Kasimir Velikov

As one last act of spite and humiliation, Strahd has summoned Kasimir to Castle Ravenloft. Obliging, Kasimir has brought a retinue of three, loyal dusk elf **guards**.

Kasimir's actions during the wedding are determined by whether he acquired the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star in the Amber Temple:

- If bereft of this power, Kasimir's priority is slaying Strahd and avenging his people. If combat erupts, he and his guards oppose Arrigal's Vistani—known to Kasimir as the cruelest of their people.
- If possessing this power, Kasimir's foremost priority is reaching Patrina's crypt (Crypt 21, Area K84), as described in *Daughter of Dusk* in Act IV. Alas, he is intercepted there by Rahadin.

Kiril Stoyanovich

To bolster his allies, Strahd has summoned Kiril and his four fiercest werewolves to Castle Ravenloft, dressing them in ill-fitting suits and dresses. If combat erupts, Kiril takes the fight directly to the adventurers, possibly infecting someone with lycanthropy, and thereby allowing Strahd to employ the *A Wolf Among Sheep* quest in Act IV.

Lief Lipsiege

As the royal accountant, Lief has been tasking with planning and financing the wedding. His other role is more nefarious: locking the door to his office during the reception to box the adventurers in when Strahd's minions attack in Act III. Lief is, understandably, a nervous wreck.

Lucian Petrovich

If he survived *St. Andral's Feast*, Lucian is tasked with officiating the wedding—and if he did not, Strahd may have raised him as a vampire spawn or as a zombie that can speak, thereby desecrating his legacy.

Lucian's fate is determined by whether he's undead:

- If alive, he grudgingly officiates, reading the speech Strahd has written with furious undertones. In Act IV, he leads the innocents in the *Blood of the Innocent* quest.
- If undead, he must obey his dark master and oppose the adventurers, appearing as a Random Encounter or as any of the unnamed vampire spawn in Act IV (particularly during *The Heart of Sorrow*). In the aftermath of Strahd's demise, Lucian is freed from the vampire's yoke; he retains enough willpower to burn himself alive, to cleanse himself of the taint of undeath, by starting a pyre (if he is a zombie) or walking into Barovia's newfound sunlight (if he is a vampire spawn).

Roleplaying Lucian. Lucian's personality is determined by whether he is alive or undead:

- If alive, Lucian remains a fierce and faithful priest, full of life and zeal; he heal others with *cure wounds* spells.
- If undead, Lucian acerbically blames the adventurers for *St. Andral's Feast*, citing "their failure."

Statistics. Father Lucian might be a **vampire spawn**, a **zombie** (with an Intelligence of 13, a Wisdom of 16, and the ability to still speak), or an LG **priest**.

Luvash

Luvash is a brute loyal to Strahd and his sinister brother, and is all too eager to attack the adventurers. However, if the adventurers saved his daughter Arabelle earlier in the campaign, Luvash has a change of heart. Bearing the party no ill will, he implores them to keep the peace; Arrigal, recognizing his brother's new soft spot, neglects to inform Luvash of Strahd's inevitably betrayal.

If blood is shed, Luvash's first priority is fleeing with his daughter. Thus, he might be present for the *Blood of the Innocent* quest in Act IV.

Lydia Petrovna

Lydia has been dragged to this dreadful affair with manic glee. She nervously giggles at just about everything that comes out of her husband's mouth. After witnessing her husband die in Act IV, she returns to Vallaki completely insane.

Patrina Velikovna

Patrina's restless spirits awaits her brother Kasimir in the catacombs below. If he has acquired the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star, she factors into the wedding—Kasimir attempts to resurrect in Act IV in the *Daughter of Dusk* quest.

Statistics. Until her resurrection, Patrina languishes as a **banshee** in her crypt. If resurrected, **Patrina Velikovna** assumes unique statistics.

Rahadin

During the wedding, Rahadin is the face of Strahd's army of darkness, the adventurers' liaison to the Devil. He first greets them at the castle entry to swear them to an oath of hospitality. His foremost duty in any potential battle is to spirit Ireena to safety. Thereafter he collects their weapons and any gifts they brought. He is featured in the Act IV quest, *Daughter of Dusk*.

Sasha Ivliskova

Strahd's oldest bride has been dug up to serve as Ireena's Maid of Honor—provided she is not inclined to ask an adventurer. Like the other consorts, Sasha guards Ireena in Act I and is both fiercely jealous of her and afraid that Strahd has no use for her now that Tatyana is in his grasp. In Act IV's *The Devil's Bride,* Sasha awaits the party in Strahd's bedchamber, should they attempt to rescue Ireena.

Strahd von Zarovich

Strahd von Zarovich stands at the brink of utter victory. All he has ever desired is at last within his grasp. Alas, it is his pride that shall prove Strahd's undoing. Were it not for that pride, Ireena would already be dead and raised as a vampire spawn. The Devil's vanity demands that his victory be seen and incontestable, that he humiliate his foes and remind his followers of his invincibility.

Strahd distracts the adventurers in Act I by using his avatar whilst he personally goes to charm Ireena. He promises that, if the adventurers allow his wedding night to go as planned, he will let them leave Barovia at dawn. In Act II, Strahd verbally disarms the Abbot when the fallen angel objects to this unholy union. In Act III, Strahd decides the fate of Ismark Kolyanovich before retiring to consummate his wedding. While Strahd publicly claims to be taking Ireena to his bedchamber, the vampire is actually taking her to his tomb. Once gone, Strahd's treachery unfolds: his minions attack the adventurers, breaking guest right.

Roleplaying Strahd. Strahd plays the magnanimous host in *The Wedding*, ignoring slights and challenges. He acts as if he has already won this game of his, that Ireena's death is already foregone and the adventurers will be humbled. With fanged smiles, he simultaneously mocks and placates the adventurers, claiming them to be the greatest heroes he has ever met.

Urwin Martikov

As a noble, Urwin has no choice but to answer Strahd's wedding invitation, and much to his horror, his boys are to serve as the ringbearers, putting them all the closer to Strahd's lethal reach. As an agent of the Keepers of the Feather, Urwin is ready to ensure Strahd's demise, provided his family remains safe. Ultimately, however, Urwin is fated to die—barring intervention by the adventurers, Fiona Wachter kills Urwin with a spell during any blood shed that might erupt, thereby removing the last threat to her reign.



Vargas Vallakovich

If Vargas has survived this far in the campaign, he at last meets his end in Act IV. Throughout the wedding he proclaims that, now that Strahd has his bride, "all will at last be well." Ultimately, Vargas will be rousted alive during the *Blood of the Innocent* quest when he encounters the red dragon wyrmlings guarding Area K7.

Vasilka

The Abbot presents Vasilka to Strahd during Act II. She quickly proves her imperfection by making strange, incorrect gestures that no real person would.

Variants & Revisions

The Wedding (through Strahd and Rahadin) makes a few revisions to Castle Ravenloft:

- The Chapel (Area K15) has been cleaned up and renovated: Gustav Herrenghast and his *mace of terror* have been removed; the broken pews have been replaced so guests may sit; and the **Strahd zombies** in the King's Balcony (Area K28) do not attack Clovin Belview as he plays the harp during the ceremony.
- The Audience Hall (Area K25)'s windows have been repaired; tables are set up along the wall, full of food and adequate seating; wedding presents are set up on a table in the southwest corners; Strahd's throne faces the hall, not the wall; and *unseen servants* carry platters of wine and finger foods for guests.
- If the adventurers' Final Confrontation is fated to occur in the Chapel or Audience Hall, this holds true only after Acts II and III, respectively. The adventurers are meant to return to these places to trigger their last battle with the Devil Strahd.

I. All Will Be Well

Upon arrival to Castle Ravenloft, the adventurers are met by Rahadin, who demands they swear themselves to guest right and surrender their weapons, under the pain of expulsion or even death. There's just little over an hour before the ceremony begins—long enough to mingle with guests, appraise their foes, recover their belongings and sneak in a short rest.

Overview. Act I covers these events, in order:

- The party is met by Cyrus Belview at the gates, and Rahadin in the Entry.
- The party must swear to nonviolence and surrender their weapons.
- The party may mingle with guests, surveying the many allies and enemies of Strahd.
- Strahd summons the party for an audience in the Dining Hall. Meanwhile, Ireena asks for one adventurer to see her before the wedding.
- The party has a little more than an hour to recover their confiscated gear from the dungeons.

Dramatis Locis. Act I initially includes Areas K1, K7-K10, K14. When an adventurer is sent to speak with Ireena in the South Tower, the Act expands to include Areas K21, K47, and K49. When the adventurers go into the dungeons to retrieve their confiscated gear, it expands to also include Areas K73-K76.

I. Arrival to Ravenloft

A storm gathers as the party travels to Castle Ravenloft, the rain grueling, sharp, and frigid. No trouble plagues the Svalich Road; no wolves harry them and no amount of rain turns the road to mud. The land itself has bent to Strahd's will, and it is the Devil's desire that his greatest foes arrive on time for their humiliation.

Read the following text, which assumes the party uses the Black Carriage (see *Curse of Strahd* Chapter 2, Area I).

> The road that has been so fraught with peril is eerily quiet on this last journey as you venture towards Castle Ravenloft. Many have come before you—this you can see by the deep ruts in the Svalich Road. And as the day darkens into dusk, the wind picks up, howling like a neglected child. A cold and dismal rain begins to pelt Barovia, swelling from mere tears to a storm that thunders across the entire valley.
>
> But the roads, you notice, do not turn to mud. They do not worsen. You make good time. The closer you draw to Ravenloft, the quicker the wheels turn, the faster your horses move. Castle Ravenloft, the belly of the beast, looms in the east, as if welcoming you. Its tallest spires hail you; its drawbridge is down, and its gates are open.
>
> And so, it has come to this, heroes: the darkest hour of your quest. You stand in the shadow of the Devil himself. The road here has been paved with blood and broken hopes. Will you triumph over Strahd? Or will you join the legion of fools buried beneath his heel?
>
> May the gods watch over you. Might the strength of your arms and the courage in your hearts be enough to overcome this final challenge—for here in Barovia, all is *not* well. It can never be well so long as this valley and its people suffer under the curse of Strahd. Dare you end it?

Because guests are invited to Castle Ravenloft, the drawbridge is no longer trapped; there is no risk of falling over or being preyed upon by green slime.



Our Most Anticipated Guests

The party is greeted at the gates by **Cyrus Belview**, Strahd's faithful mongrelfolk servant. His voice is gravelly, his tone wicked. Read the following:

> Over the drawbridge and through the gates. The courtyard is thick with cold fog, the flagstones slick. A lance of lightning reveals a hunched figure nearby, sheltering from the rain and nursing a lantern. His monstrous face comes into view. His left cheek is naught but scales and his ears belong to a panther and only one of his feet are human, the other is bare and webbed like a duck's. His voice is no less hideous as his face, grating and gravelly:
>
> "Ah, it's you! Yes, yes! Welcome to Ravenloft! Your arrival is most anticipated, most anticipated indeed! First invited, last to arrive! I am the master's servant, Cyrus of Belview. Welcome!" The beast of a man chuckles, rubbing his hands together. "Your horses, oh your horses! I will take your horses! You, yes, into the keep with you! Most anticipated, oh yes!"
>
> That beast reaches out for your horses' reins. Even they seem repulsed. Cyrus Belview points you toward the keep. The great doors of Ravenloft are slightly ajar, spilling light out into the foggy courtyard.

The adventurers are the last guests to arrive. Cyrus hints at a greater plot afoot, but he knows nothing of Strahd's inevitable betrayal, only that these "most anticipated guests" are doomed to die like all other visitors to Barovia. Limping, Cyrus leads the party's horses to the Carriage House (Area K4).

II. The Oath of Hospitality

Rahadin awaits the adventurers in the castle entry (Area K7) and six **wights** to bind Strahd's most dangerous guests to the laws of hospitality. Read the following text, which assumes the party has made Rahadin's acquaintance, are aware of his status and his crimes, and familiar with the ghostly wailing that surrounds him at all times.

> As you step out from that dismal rain, Castle Ravenloft welcomes you with cold arms and corpses clad in armor. Six wights, each armed and armored, watch you from the corners of the castle entry. Slowly, the doors open to reveal a smartly dressed dusk elf: Rahadin, the chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft, mad dog of the Devil Strahd. Deeper in the castle, music is playing, soft and mournful, but here in this cramped hall, all you can hear is wailing—Rahadin's many victims wailing from beyond the grave.
>
> As if already bored and disappointed with you, the chamberlain intones, "Our most anticipated guests. Step forward and be recognized in the House of Zarovich."

Rahadin wastes little time on pleasantries, viewing the adventurers as curs and vagrants. After the adventurers step forward, read the following:

> Rahadin's lips are pressed into a flat line. "As honored guests of Count Strahd, there are expectations to be had. Guest right will not be ignored, and you must swear to the oath of hospitality. Tonight, we celebrate this union. No harm shall come to you in these halls unless you provoke it—and the lord of this house promises the same.
>
> "Swear to me, here and now, at this hour. Swear to me, as brother and servant of Strahd of House von Zarovich, lord of this house, lord of Barovia. Swear to spill no blood, unsheathe no sword, respect our host, and obey his laws. Swear to this, all of it, or begone."

Any character familiar with guest right (such as someone with the Noble background) can find no tricks in Rahadin's language; the demand is fairly standard. Any successful Wisdom (Insight) checks reveal that Rahadin is earnest and honest, and seemingly *hopeful* that the adventurers break guest right so that he may spill their blood. If called out on this, Rahadin admits it freely, even going as far as to say that if he had it his way, Rahadin would present their heads to Strahd as a wedding gift.

If the party refuses to affirm the laws of hospitality, Rahadin threatens to expel them; he has no shortage of allies to call upon. Within two rounds, the Vistani, werewolves, and other allies arrive from Areas K8 and K9 to prove their loyalty to Strahd. Further, Rahadin can wake the four **red dragon wyrmlings** perched above in K7.

Disarmament

Before they may continue, Rahadin demands the party relinquish their arms and armor. Read the following:

> With the oath sworn, you move toward the grand entry—but Rahadin blocks your way. His eyes narrow. "This is not yet done, guests." He throws this last word as if it were an insult. "Given your history," the elf says, "I must insist that you disarm yourselves. It is, after all, a wedding. Your belongings will be returned to you at evening's end, and our lord has promised that no harm will come to you and yours tonight should you... behave."

This demand is non-negotiable; Rahadin won't tolerate even the smallest chance the adventurers could disrupt his brother's wedding. To refuse now would be to break guest right, as Rahadin is quick to remind them. Should they acquiesce, the wights frisk the adventurers. A character can attempt to hide palm sized objects—daggers, the hilt of the *Sunsword*, et cetera—by succeeding on a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Ever clever, Rahadin has the wights collect any spellbooks, spellcasting foci, and obviously magical items (but not the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, which Rahadin does not recognize). The wights then leave for the dungeons by way of the South Tower Stair (Area K21) to scatter the adventurers' belongings in the zombie-infested waters of the Torture Chamber (Area K76). Any friend of the party can point out which staircase the wights took down before disappearing from view.

Wedding Gifts

If the adventurers brought any wedding gifts, Rahadin takes this opportunity to collect them, even saying, in his stony voice, "If you've brought gifts—like any sensible guest would—I shall see that they're delivered. I do hope you've scrounged up *something* worthwhile for our gracious host." The gifts are collected by the *unseen servants* that serve guests in Area K8.

The Best Man's Warning

Rahadin has one last warning for the party. Once done, Rahadin excuses himself to oversee wedding preparations, heading towards the audience hall (K25) via the Grand Landing (K19). Read the following:

> Rahadin straightens. His hands curl into fists. From beyond the grave, his legion of victims howl.
>
> "No doubt, you have some plans," the elf says. "Some delusions of grandeur. A scheme up your sleeve, and doomed hope in your hearts. Listen to me, and listen to me well," he says. "This is the day of my brother's wedding, a wedding four centuries in the making. For Strahd, I slaughtered my own people—cutting them down to the very last mother holding her very last child. Should you endanger this wedding, I promise you an even worse fate. Have we reached an understanding?"



III. Mingling

The hallway opens into a great entry supported by ancient columns scarred and cobwebbed. Under the eyes of gargoyles, Strahd's guests huddle, trading hushed whispers while distant organ music competes with the storm raging outside. Throughout the hall float platters of wine and hors d'oeuvres, borne by invisible hands, mostly untouched. The mood is somber, strained, and all eyes, you can't help but notice, are on you, the Devil Strahd's most anticipated guests.

Strahd's guests congregate in the Great Entry, the Guest Hall, and the Hall of Faith (Areas K8, K9, and K14), served by unseen servants (created by the spell of the same name) holding platters of wine and hors d'oeuvres. It becomes quickly apparent that Strahd's allies have not been disarmed, nor have Barovian nobility like Dmitri Krezkov. With so many eyes watching the party, it will prove difficult to sneak off, but they must.

Announcements. An enchantment in the form of a disembodied voice announces guests as they enter Area K8. This enchantment is not omniscient, and only announces recognized guests, such as the adventurers; any other person is tacked as simply "...and guest." The enchantment flatters some guests with pompous titles and mocks others (e.g. "Victor of House Vallakovich, heir apparent to the barony of Vallaki" or "Kasimir Velikov, Wizard Impotent and Doom of the Dusk Elves." The adventurers are not spared this ridicule.

Our Gathered Guests

The guests are all, more or less, in plain view of the adventurers, giving them the freedom to approach whomever they wish.

The Dusk Elves. As one last affront to the dusk elves, Strahd has demanded their presence, citing it as the least they can do since they stoned his last bride to death. Three guards stand beside **Kasimir Velikov** in Area K8. If Kasimir has attained the power to resurrect his sister Patrina, he wrings his hands together and whispers, "We're prepared to move onto the catacombs during the festivities… to Patrina's crypt. Will you join us?"

The Martikovs. The Martikovs huddle together in Area K9, the largest family in attendance. Davian and Adrian maintain a frosty distance from Urwin, Danika and their two sons, Brom and Bray. Much to the family's "great honor," Strahd has selected Brom and Bray as his ring bearers. If the party is allied with the Keepers of the Feather, Davian or Urwin whispers conspiratorially, "I have six of my finest birds outside. They have seen something in the central tower… Some crystal *thing*, utterly massive. And on the wind, they hear it: a heartbeat." He is referring to the Heart of Sorrow in Area K20. If Muriel Vinshaw, a wereraven agent, gathered intelligence from Baba Lysaga in the Ruins of Berez, the Keepers know the Heart of Sorrow shields Strahd from harm.

Behave Yourselves!
Signs are posted in Areas K9 and K19 that read, "All guests are asked to remain on the main floor. Trespassers will be punished accordingly, guest rights revoked."

The Krezkites. In Area K8, Dmitri Krezkov and his wife Anna are clustered with eight timid, petty Krezkite nobles. Visibly jumpy, they keep the adventurers at arm's-length. His hand trembling, Dmitri says, "I want only to leave this wretched place and return to where things might not be well, but at least make sense. Do not rope us into your schemes."

The Vallakians. The Vallakian party has claimed Area K14. They are the largest party by far, consisting of:

- Baron Vargas Vallakovich and Baroness Lydia Petrovna, if they yet live. Vargas trades pleasantries while his wife giggles like a shrieking hawk.
- Lady **Fiona Wachter** and her five minions: **Ernst Larnak** and four **cult fanatics**, all members of her cult.
- Nikolai and Karl Wachter, who are sharing a bottle of wine. Grinning, Nikolai propositions the party for an adventure: "Somewhere in the wine cellar lies Champagne du lu Stomp. The winery hasn't made that vintage in years. Every ounce is gold. This is a once in a lifetime chance to taste the finest wine of all Barovia. Will you join us on this caper, friends?" The vintage is in Area K63; these idiots are ready to move now or during Act III.
- For his part in the theft of the bones of Saint Andral, Henrik van der Voort has also been invited. Sweaty and manic, he wishes only to quit this affair and return to his quiet life as a pariah.

The Vistani. The Vistani sit on the stairs connecting Areas K8 and K19, loud and boisterous and dressed in elegant but bright attire. They regard the adventurers with grins and great interest. **Arrigal** and **Luvash** command these four **Vistani thugs**, all of whom are loyal to Strahd. They alone feel safe enough to let down their guard and enjoy the amenities at hand, making it easy to escape their attention, should the party sneak downstairs. The Vistani know the suits of armor in Area K19 are trapped and will cackle madly when someone triggers them.

The Villagers. In Area K8, Ismark Kolyanovich and his plus one, Donavich, lean against the wall, brooding in silence. Ismark is desperate to hear how the adventurers intend to save his sister from damnation. With a hand on the hilt of his sheathed longsword, Ismark asks, "My father is rolling in his grave as we speak, friends. I ask you only once: what is the plan?" Ismark's sword-arm is strong, and his heart is true. He will not accompany the adventurers around the castle in Act I, for he must give Ireena away at the start of the ceremony, but he promises his strength later on.



The Devil's Enemy Charmed
While the party is distracted, Strahd himself intends to isolate and charm the party's Destined Ally. Later in battle, Strahd "activates" the ally, turning them against the party. Strahd accomplishes this through his Charm ability (DC 17 Wisdom saving throw), approaching the ally before the ceremony. Once reunited with their ally, the adventurers can notice something's off; with a DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check, they ascertain the ally seems dazed.

Most allies have a relationship with other guests (e.g., Arabelle and her father, Victor Vallakovich and either his father of Lady Wachter), which is the most opportune moment for Strahd to strike.

IV. The Bride and Groom

Before the adventurers can launch their own caper, Rahadin reappears. Ireena has asked to see one adventurer, whilst Strahd demands a word with the others. Two events unfold, each occurring concurrently, as described below. Rahadin will escort Ireena's chosen adventurer up to the Guest Room (Area K50) via the South Tower Stair (K21) and direct the rest of the party to the Dining Hall (Area K10). No refusal is accepted.

Read the following when Rahadin approaches:

> Ghostly wails crowd your mind—Rahadin approaches, his presence betrayed by the long dead. "Most honored guests… Count Strahd would like a word over wine—one last toast before the ceremony. He expects you in the dining hall. The bride has asked to see one of you in her boudoir, though I cannot fathom why. Quickly now, for the ceremony draws close."

A Drink with the Groom

Strahd invites the adventurers to a glass of wine in the dining hall (Area K10). Throw out the encounter as it is presented in *Curse of Strahd* and instead read the following description:

> This chamber is opulence manifest. For too long now have you scraped through Barovia, witnesses to famine and poverty, and yet here the table is laden with delectable food: roasted beast in a savory sauce that intrigues the nose and waters the mouth; roots and herbs of every taste; sweet fruits and glazed vegetables; goblets of fragrant wine. Strahd's people have starved and yet here, a feast grows cold. Despicable.
>
> The scene is lit by no less than three crystal chandeliers, shedding soft light on an organ at the far end of the hall. It is from here the music you've heard originates, its pipes blaring out a thunderous melody that speaks of greatness and despair. A floor-to-ceiling mirror reflects the scene, but the figure sat there on the bench produces no reflection—Strahd von Zarovich, playing the keys with the sort of perfection one can only attain after four centuries of undeath. He stops, and as a deep silence falls over the dining hall, he slowly turns towards you.

Unlike in *Curse of Strahd*, this illusory Strahd acts as an avatar through which he speaks (even while consumed with other tasks). Strahd's avatar speaks about the adventurers' triumphs and mistakes, but with a fanged smile, he inevitably includes, "You truly are the greatest foes I have ever faced—and that is why at dawn tomorrow, you may leave Barovia forever. Whatever blood there is between us, consider it washed away. So long as I have Tatyana, I need nothing more in this life. We met as enemies so let us part, perhaps not as friends, but as equals."

No matter what the Devil promises, it's a lie. This is Strahd's ultimate hour: the feast for his arrogance. To have Tatyana and humiliate his greatest foes is far too great to pass up. All this serves to distract the adventurers while the true Devil moves in on their fated ally (see *The Devil's Enemy Charmed* sidebar above).

The Bride Asks a Favor

Ireena asks one adventurer to serve as a bridesmaid or groomsman. Choose the character closest to her, or the one she most wants next to her during the ceremony. Rahadin leads this character up through Areas K21, K47, and K49 until at last arriving at Area K50, in the South Tower.

Rahadin proves to be in an uncharacteristically good mood—so much so he is willing to entertain a conversation with the adventurer. It's his brother's wedding, after all, and should it unfold, Strahd will never be happier. Outside, the storm rages, thunderclaps bursting, rain pattering the windows. Inside, Rahadin's many victims wail from beyond the grave in a deathly choir. The climb is exhausting, enough to make most athletes sweat and pant, but Rahadin remains stoic. Finally, after many minutes of climbing, they arrive at a darkened landing. Read the following:

> The stairs seem to go on forever, one after another, winding up into darkness. Sweat springs out across your scalp, but Rahadin seems unmoved and unaffected, slowly taking each step without slowing. Twice you pass a landing, each barred by a shut door; you make note, lest you need to find these places later.
>
> After many minutes of climbing, Rahadin leads you into a drafty chamber furnished with an immaculate rug and a portrait of Strahd von Zarovich himself, handsome and arrogant.

The Portrait. The rug and portrait are both constructs (a **rug of smothering** and **guardian portrait**, respectively). So long as the adventurer behaves, the constructs remain dormant, but will attack if Ireena is taken from her boudoir or Rahadin is harmed. With a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, the adventurer catches the portrait following them, before the eyes of Strahd look away.



The Lounge. Rahadin gives the adventurer no time to investigate, leading them into Area K49, where Escher (a **vampire spawn**) keeps guard duty over Ireena. Rahadin leaves the room to check on Ireena privately in Area K50, leaving the adventurer alone with Escher for a moment. Read the following:

> Rahadin pushes on, leading you into a lounge furnished with bookcases and old, faded couches. Outside, the storm rages. A peal of thunder shakes the ancient tomes on their shelves, but the young man stretched out along the couch pays no mind. He is utterly beautiful, elegantly dressed, sipping at wine. Rahadin gives him a contemptuous glance.
>
> "Escher," he says, "How is our bride?"
>
> The man sneers, "Heart's still beating."
>
> Rahadin rolls his eyes and knocks at a nearby door. "Madam Kolyana? You've a guest." After a moment, Rahadin enters the suite, leaving you alone with Escher.
>
> Escher smiles, revealing two sharp fangs. Only now do you notice how faded his elegant attire is, the fabric ancient. Long has Escher lived, it seems, another vampire thrall of Strahd's. "Enjoy this last word with her," Escher tells you. "Eternity as Strahd's plaything awaits… if only some of us could be so lucky, no?"

With a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check, the adventurer can ascertain that Escher is anxious and frightened—what use will Strahd have for him after he's at last reunited with his beloved "Tatyana"? Will he discard Escher, confining him to the catacombs like so many other of his past playthings? Escher would like nothing more than to murder Ireena, delaying the wedding by another generation or two, but knows he would face eternal punishment if he dared.

The Guest Room. Rahadin returns shortly afterwards ("The bride will see you now," he says), holding open the door to Area K50 where five women await:

- Ireena Kolyana, gussied up in her wedding dress; she is putting on a brave face but is terrified.
- Strahd's four **vampire spawn** brides: Anastrasya, Ludmilla, Volenta, and even Sasha, who has been freed from her crypt (see Crypt 20 in Area K84) and cleaned off to serve as a bridesmaid. Like Escher, the brides serve as another layer to Ireena's security. They are fiercely jealous of her, having listened to Strahd prattle on about his "beloved Tatyana" for centuries. There is also an undercurrent of tension amongst the brides who, like Escher, fear that Strahd will seal them away in the crypts for eternity now that he has his precious Tatyana.

Upon entering the room, read the following:

> In this lavishly furnished bedchamber, Ireena Kolyana sits on a divan fussing with her hair. She is, in a word, immaculate. Her wedding dress is the most pristine white you have ever laid eyes on. The Devil Strahd has lavished upon his bride no shortage of gems and jewelry. Her smile is radiant, unfolding as you enter the room. "You came," she whispers. "You actually came."
>
> Ireena's smile falters. She glances behind you. Sitting in the corner is a woman in a scarlet bridesmaid's dress. Her eyes are ravenous, her smile fanged. Another of Strahd's thralls.
>
> "Do not mind her," floats a voice from behind the bed curtains. Gazing through the gloom, you notice three women sprawled out on the bed in matching dresses. A pale woman in a bejeweled handscarf, a darker skinned woman fettered with gold, and a short, raven-haired woman wearing a metal, skull-shaped mask. It is this last woman that spoke, and she continues, "Sasha here is just jealous—our dear husband unearthed her just to watch him marry another woman."
>
> Strahd's brides number four, it seems, and they all stare at you with naked contempt.

The Favor. Ireena asks the adventurer to serve either as a groomsman (for Rahadin is Strahd's Best Man) or the Maid of Honor. Rahadin then clears his throat and insists the adventurer depart. Ireena embraces the adventurer and asks her *true* favor:

> As she embraces you, Ireena Kolyana whispers in your ear, "Do *not* let me marry that monster. I would rather die a thousand deaths than be his. He calls me… Tatyana. Promise me—promise me you will cut my throat before he can sink into it his fangs."

Bad Luck, Indeed. As Rahadin escorts the adventurer down the South Tower Stair, Strahd appears (the true Strahd, not the illusory avatar currently speaking with the rest of the party downstairs). Though it is bad luck to see the bride in her dress before the ceremony, Strahd is on his way to go speak with her—to vampirically charm her into obeisance before the wedding. Read the following:

> Footsteps ring out from the darkness below as you descend the tower. A peal of thunder tears across the sky outside. The spiral staircase twists and twists until at last you lay eyes on Strahd von Zarovich himself. The Devil offers you a grin. "Good evening. I am ecstatic that you could make it. Your stay, I hope, has been pleasant so far. I'd stay, but I've other matters to attend to."

To the players, this hints that the encounter with Strahd in the Dining Hall is a farce—and all but confirming it for any players that are watching the scene unfold. What, they might wonder, was Strahd up to while they were speaking with an illusion?



V. Last Stop Before Oblivion

At last, the adventurers have their opportunity to explore the castle, to slip away and recover their confiscated gear, or perhaps find a Fortune of Ravenloft. There is little more than an hour left until the ceremony—how long does not matter; the players have enough time for a short foray and a short rest. They cannot, however, afford to be absent for the ceremony, otherwise Strahd assumes the worst, revokes guest right, and sends his minions to hunt the party down. Rahadin's wights left the adventurers' gear in the Torture Chamber (Area K76), conspicuously taking the South Tower Stair (Area K21).

The Elevator Trap. The Elevator Trap is the South Tower's first stop. Run it as described in *Curse of Strahd* (see Area K61).

The Dungeons. The wights left no guards but the zombies are already in the Torture Chamber. Should the adventurers venture into the Dungeons of Ravenloft to recover their equipment, run Areas K73-76 as described in *Curse of Strahd*; the six **Strahd zombies** attack whilst the party roots around in the brackish waters. The wights did not bother emptying the adventurers' bags either.



II. The Ceremony

Act II is relatively short, both within the story and at your table. It features not one but two dramatic, clichéd objections. If at any point the adventurers provoke a conflict, skip to *Development: Red Wedding* below, then proceed directly into Act IV, skipping over Act III entirely.

Overview. Act II covers these events, in order:

- The adventurers are led to their seats and find that they are both split up and surrounded by enemies.
- The flower girl and ringbearers walk down the aisle.
- Ismark walks Ireena down the aisle.
- The Abbot arrives with Vasilka, objecting to this union but leaves.
- Ismark objects to the union, blade in hand, only to be arrested and sent to the dungeons.
- Strahd and Ireena exchange vows.

Revisions. Some changes have been made to the chapel:

- The corpse of Gustav Herrenghast and his mace of terror have been removed.
- The broken pews have been replaced.
- The Strahd zombies in the King's Balcony (Area K28) do not bother Clovin Belview, as he plays the harp above.

Dramatis Locus. Act II unfolds entirely in the chapel (Area K15).

Characters. There are approximately forty-four characters present during the wedding, excluding the adventurers. Consult the Wedding Seating graphic for their seating. Strahd has notably assigned the adventurers to disparate seats, so as to spread out their ranks should they turn to violence. Additionally, see the *Wedding Roles* table, replacing dead or missing characters as your campaign requires. Notably, Clovin Belview plays from the King's Balcony (Area K28).

I. The Ceremony Begins

As the ceremony unfolds, read the following description of the chapel instead of the one provided in *Curse of Strahd*. The text assumes the adventurers know the fate of Sergei von Zarovich's wedding long ago.

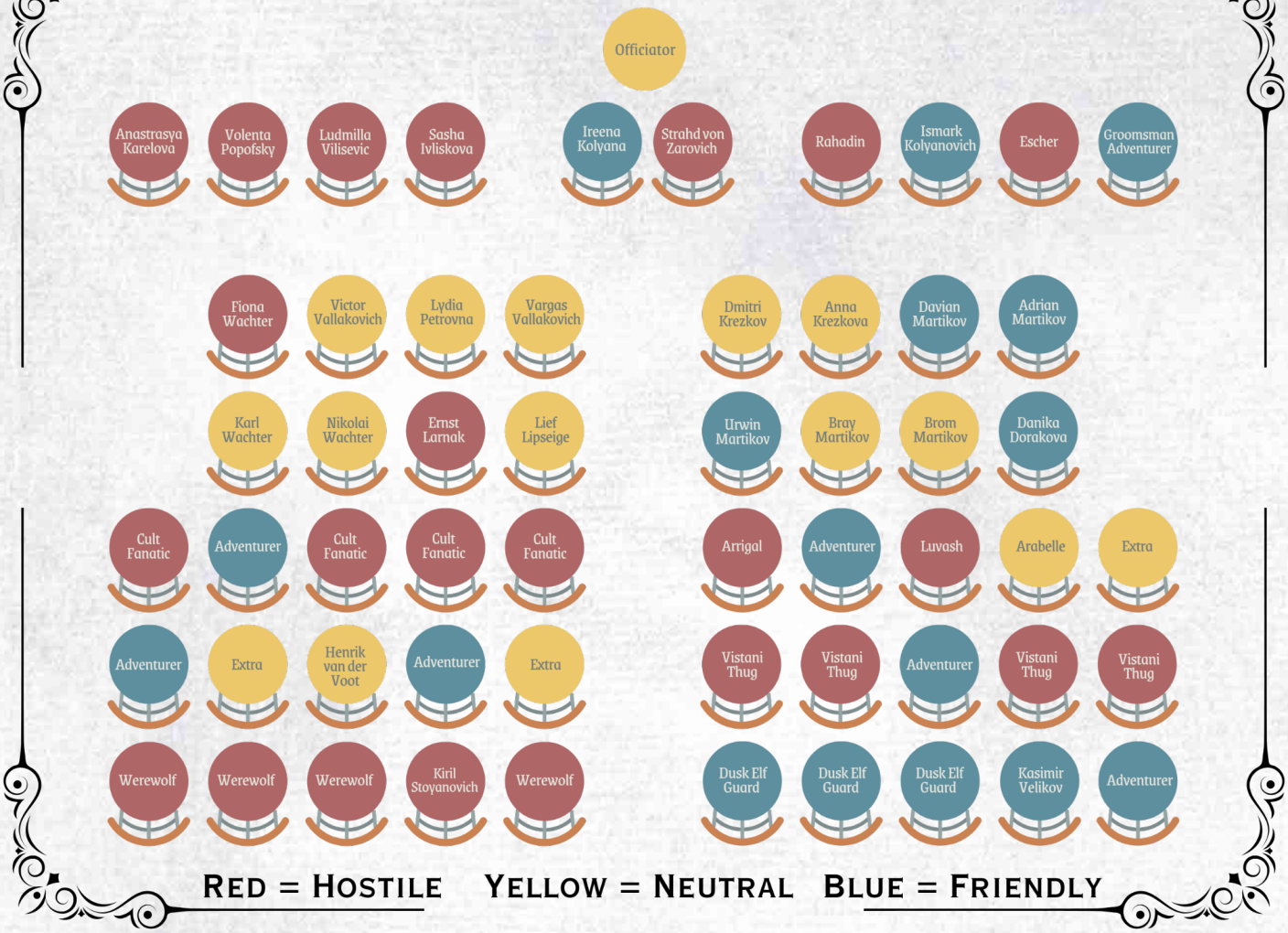
> The chapel is awash with torchlight and whispers as the guests sit along the pews. Soft harp music floats down from the balcony, competing with the storm raging outside. Lightning flashes every so often, riling up the many bats clinging to the ceiling. Strahd stands at the right side of the altar, Rahadin at his side. On the left, Ireena's bridesmaids are gathered.
>
> No expense has been spared to beautify the chapel, but no amount of scrubbing can scour the tiles of its ancient bloodstains. It was here, centuries ago, that Strahd von Zarovich murdered his own brother and attempted to seize Tatyana, before she fled and threw herself from the cliffs outside. The altar is chipped and stained, ancient and weatherworn, except for a silver statuette carved in the likeness of a priest kneeling in supplication.
>
> Strahd catches your eye and offers you a fanged smile.

If the adventurers show up armed and armored, Strahd just smirks from across the chapel and gives them a nod that reads, "Fair enough, fair enough."

The Wedding Party. Strahd von Zarovich stands with the wedding party at the altar, sans Ireena and Ismark. Clovin Belview is playing the harp from above.

The Icon. The silver statuette is the *Icon of Ravenloft* described in *Curse of Strahd*, Appendix C. The *Icon* smites any evil creature and Strahd could find no minion that could move the icon without being reduced to ash, and he did not dare ask a non-evil guest to move it for him, lest word somehow reach the adventurers.

Wedding Seating



Places. The adventurers are led to their seats by a Vistana servant—and to their horror, they find that Strahd has split the party up and surrounded them by foes. The most dangerous ones, such as paladins or clerics, are placed farthest from the altar. The weak and vulnerable are seated next to Arrigal or even Strahd himself, so that they may crumble under any physical assault. It's possible to change seats, but time is short. The music has already started and Arabelle, the flower girl, is about to spread dead posies down the aisle. The adventurers have two rounds at most to persuade other characters to swap seats, and to do so requires a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, for few are those who would rebuke the Devil.

Wedding Roles

Role	Character
Best Man	Rahadin
Bride	Ireena Kolyana
Bridesmaids	Anastrasya Karelova, Danika Dorakova, Ludmilla Vilisevic, Sasha Ivliskova (if not Maid of Honor) and Volenta Popofsky
Flower Girl	Arabelle
Groom	Strahd von Zarovich
Groomsmen	Ismark Kolyanovich, Escher
Officiator	Father Lucian or Donavich
Maid of Honor	Adventurer or Sasha Ivliskova
Musician	Clovin Belview
Ring Bearers	Brom & Bray Martikov



Flowers and Rings

Arabelle scatters posies down the aisle. The flowers wilt the moment they touch the floor, indicating the chapel's desecration. Luvash loudly gushes over his daughter's performance.

Brom and Bray Martikov, the ring bearers, follow Arabelle. Together they cradle a scarlet, satin pillow holding two golden rings, each encrusted with a ruby, diamond, and onyx (the colors of House Zarovich). The Martikovs grow tense as the ring bearers near Strahd, Danika especially.

Here Comes the Bride

Clovin Belview begins to play the Bridal Chorus, but Ireena does not appear. Outside the chapel, Ismark is loudly attempting to snap Ireena out of her daze, to flee with him now, right now, but Strahd's vampiric charm proves too strong. Six **wights** watch with disinterest, ready to seize Ireena should she flee. Whilst this occurs, Rahadin's ever-present scowl deepens, but Strahd remains undisturbed, grinning.

An adventurer can walk out to speak to Ireena and Ismark—who are growing increasingly distraught, demanding to know why they ("you 'heroes'") are allowing this tragedy to unfold. Ireena is clearly charmed and nothing short of a *protection from evil and good* spell or similar magic can free her mind. Rahadin walks out to join if necessary, offering a stern rebuke to Ismark. Ultimately, Ismark gives up and begrudgingly walks his sister down the aisle; Clovin awkwardly repeats the Bridal Chorus.

Isn't She Lovely. Once the ceremony continues, read:

> Out from flickering torchlight and dancing shadows comes Ireena Kolyana, escorted down the aisle by her brother Ismark. The Devil's bride is radiant, her auburn hair like fire in the torchlight. The flames dance in the ruby pendant hanging around her neck.
>
> The crowd hushes. Men leer, women glower. Rahadin claps Strahd on the shoulder and the two brothers share a smile.
>
> But who isn't smiling?
>
> Who amongst this flock of fools and sycophants bears no expression? Ireena Kolyana. Her eyes are dull and distant, glazed over, her lips lax. She marches down the aisle without fear, without effort, every step light, every motion as graceful as a braindead doe.
>
> Ismark is grimacing as he holds his sister for what might be the last time, grimacing as he delivers her to the very monster that stopped his father's heart. Yet when Ismark glances at you, dear heroes, hope burns bright in his eyes.
>
> Rahadin tells Strahd, "She's beautiful, brother."
>
> "So she is," the Devil agrees. "My beautiful Tatyana returned after all these years apart."

Dearly Despised... The officiator begins once Ireena takes her place to the left side of the altar. Read the following:

> The officiator begins a strained, and well-rehearsed speech:
>
> "Dearly beloved… Dearly despised… We are gathered here tonight to witness the wedding of Count Strahd von Zarovich, son of Barov, and Ireena, daughter of Kolyan. We are here today to witness the culmination of a courtship that has spanned four centuries and several lives—but this is not the final chapter, oh no.
>
> "The warmth of His Grace's love shall nourish Barovia, shall thaw its stony heart, and ring out across our fair country like the thunder of a just god. Their love is a beacon of hope.
>
> "If only Ireena's late father could see her—her joy this day. She comes as an orphan, just as our Lord Strahd has lived for so many years. From their shared sorrow the seed of a new family will bloom.
>
> "Count Strahd von Zarovich—he is the Ancient, he is the Land, and his joy is our joy. His hope is our hope. His love is our love. All is not well in Barovia—but starting today, it shall. With our liege's shattered heart mended, so too shall we as one people, as one country, heal. All will at last be well."

II. Objections

No wedding is complete without a dramatic objection, and Strahd's is no different—except that it threatens a slaughter. Read the following:

> The officiator clears his throat and asks—with much trepidation—"If there is any amongst you that have just cause for why these two ought not be wed, speak now, or forever hold your peace."

The Abbot Objects

The Abbot arrives just in time to object to the wedding—before any of the adventurers get their chance. As one last desperate bid to justify his sins, the fallen angel has dragged his flesh golem Vasilka (a flesh golem) to Castle Ravenloft. He offers no violence, except to perhaps kill Ireena during a conflict. Read the following text, which assumes the party is acquainted with the Abbot and Vasilka:

> On the heels of the officiator's words, before the last syllable dies off, the chapel doors swing open. Warm light floods the entry, not the guttering torchlight of before. Shielding your eyes, you make out two figures: a young man in a simple monk's robe and a woman in a wedding dress—the Abbot and his horror, the flesh golem Vasilka.
>
> "You will find," intones the Abbot, "that I object to this union."
>
> Like lesions from a plague, whispers burst out amongst the guests. Rahadin glares from across the chapel, but Strahd's easy smile could mean anything.
>
> The Abbot steps into the chapel, the dead posies on the floor suddenly regaining life and color at his feet. "This vapid noble," the Abbot calls out, "is by no means the perfect bride. Look at her—weak of mind and body, uncultured and brash, barely above a peasant. She is flawed, and I offer to you, Lord Strahd, the perfect bride. The bride that will light your heart and set you free. I offer the cure to Barovia's disease. Cast this trollop aside and embrace *Vasilka*."

The adventurers can exploit this distraction to mount their defense. Otherwise, Strahd disarms the Abbot with his silver tongue. Read the following:

> The Devil smiles at the angel from afar, but there is little warmth in it. Strahd takes Ireena's hand and says, "It is true that you've fashioned for me the perfect bride—look at her, such beauty, such elegance with which none can compete… but I do not desire perfection. I desire only Tatyana, and with her at my side, I will never be happier. Can you not see that? Is it not your mission to end this curse, my curse, over Barovia? Is it not your duty now to trust my heart, not yours?"

If the adventurers do not act *now*, the Abbot is mollified into acquiescence. Read the following text, which assumes the adventurers know the Abbot was sent by the Morninglord to free Barovia from Strahd:



> The Abbot seems to shrink away, as if ashamed, as if broken. The light he sheds dwindles and the posies at his feet wilt once more. His hands are shaking, trembling. In a quivering voice the angel replies, "Very well, then. Vasilka, follow."
>
> The Abbot leaves—the angel sent by the Morninglord to free this land its people from the curse of Strahd *leaves*, the chapel doors swinging shut on his receding light, leaving you all in the shadows. All eyes turn back to the altar, to the Devil's fanged grin.
>
> "Well, Father," Strahd says, "let us go on, eh?"

Ismark's Objection

Ismark objects to the wedding—with a blade in hand. Dismayed by the Abbot's departure and the adventurers' inaction, Ismark takes matters into his own hands.

> Ismark catches your eye from the right of Rahadin. The tension in his face dissolves into fury. "No," he growls, hardly heard. Then, fiercer now, he shouts, "No! You cannot have my sister, Strahd! I will cut you down myself before I see her stolen by you, monster!"
>
> Ismark draws his blade and charges!

If the adventurers still do not act, Rahadin subdues Ismark and calls the wights lurking in the Hall of Faith (Area K14) to arrest him. No blood is shed for his transgression, but Ismark is sent to languish in the dungeons below for breaking guest right. "Let him stew in a cell for a long while," Rahadin says; Strahd shakes his head, places a hand on Ismark's shoulder and says, "We are family now, Ismark. I know the absence of your father has deprived you of wisdom, but I am here for you now. I will always be here for you." Ireena, meanwhile, is unfazed.

Ismark's punishment will be decided during Act III. The wights take him downstairs through the Dungeon through Area K21, the South Tower Stair.

III. The Kiss of Promised Death

If the ceremony has not yet devolved into bloodshed, the officiator calls for the vows. Strahd, of course, goes first:

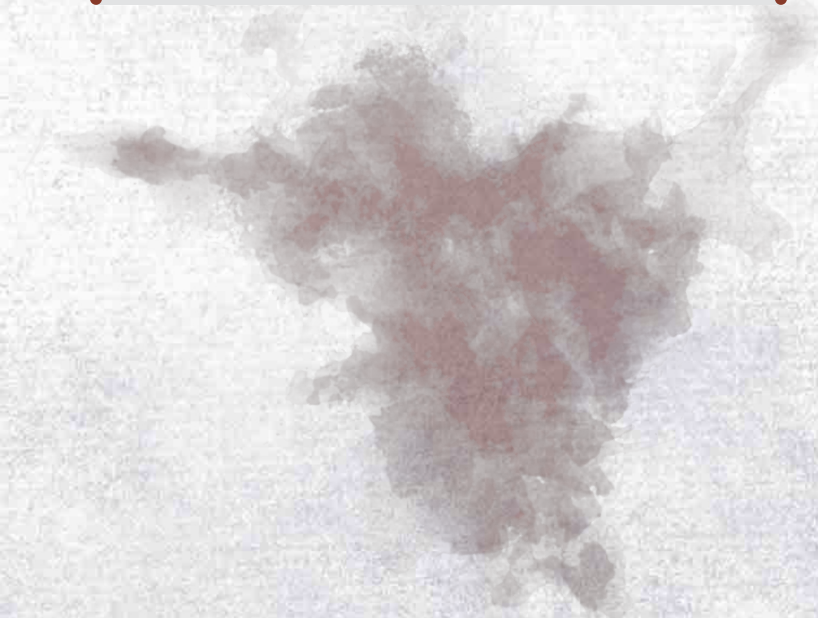
> "My dearest Tatyana… for so long have I chased you through this nightmare. Never again shall we be apart. I will love and cherish you forever, this I vow. You are mine evermore."

Unfazed by this threat, Ireena begins to recite her vows. These vows, however, are a lie—a script forced upon her by Strahd's vampiric charm. Outwardly, Ireena smiles, but in her heart, the poor woman is screaming into a silent void. A character close to Ireena can make a DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check. On a success, they see through charm and notice the fury and fear raging behind Ireena's eyes.

> The officiator nods at Ireena. "And now the bride's vows."
>
> A dreamy expression drifts across Ireena's face, and after a long and awkward silence, it is interrupted by a sudden smile. "Strahd, my love… From the very night you visited our home, I knew I would one day be yours, and you mine. I vow to never leave your side, to hold you and your counsel. Evermore, in this life or the next, I vow to love, honor, and obey."

Thereafter, the officiator utters those long-awaited words. The guests grow uneasy, but Strahd is not so uncouth that he would exsanguinate Ireena here and now—that's what their marital bed is for.

> The priest announces, "Before gods and men, I pronounce you husband and wife. My lord, you may kiss your bride."
>
> Unease ripples through the chapel—will there be blood? Will Strahd kill his bride here and now? But when Strahd dips Ireena and plants his lips on hers, a collective sigh rises from the guests. Those sickened by this travesty can only smile and politely clap, impotent witnesses to this kiss of promised death. Strahd and Ireena von Zarovich rise and present themselves to the guests while the storm outside rages on.
>
> You've failed.



Automating *Red Wedding*

This battle features far too many combatants for the DM to control; ultimately, the adventurers must concern themselves with Arrigal, Kiril Stoyanovich, and Strahd—as well as Lady Wachter and Rahadin if the adventurers try to seize Ireena. All other NPCs are merely set pieces; do not take their turns, but instead describe what they do:

- The civilians like the Krezkovs cower under the pews or flee from the chapel altogether. Lief Lipsiege gets cut down by mistake.
- The werewolves and wereravens shapeshift into their hybrid forms and battle each other. Brom and Bray Martikov transform into ravens and flee to warn the other Keepers of the Feather of what has transpired. Ultimately, the werewolves prevail, and Adrian Martikov is killed and, on her way out, Fiona Wachter kills Urwin with a spell, so as to finally remove the local Martikovs from Vallaki, ensuring her sovereignty.
- Luvash takes Arabelle away from the slaughter via Area K17, taking the stairs up.
- Kasimir Velikov and his dusk elves face the Vistani and ultimately fail. If Kasimir has the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star, he instead leaves immediately for the catacombs via Area K17, taking the stairs down.

Development: Red Wedding

Should the adventurers attack, the wedding devolves into a bloodbath. Strahd immediately orders Rahadin and Sasha Ivliskova to take Ireena upstairs to his bedchamber (Area K42). Read the following:

> The Devil Strahd throws back his head and laughs, his fangs bright in the torchlight. "I knew you could not uphold guest right for long, fools," Strahd says, before shouting, "Soldiers and servants of Barovia! Children of the Night! Kill these 'heroes'!"

Tactics. Though the chapel teems with combatants, the only characters you must run are: **Strahd**, **Rahadin**, **Fiona Wachter**, **Arrigal**, Escher (**vampire spawn**), and **Kiril Stoyanovich**, and possibly **Kasimir Velikov**, **Donavich**, and **Ismark** (if he was not taken to the dungeons earlier). See *Automating Red Wedding* for details.

- The pews count as difficult terrain to overcome, as does the crowd.
- Creatures have half cover (+2 to AC and Dexterity saving throws) if there is another creature interposed between them and attackers; assume every combatant has this bonus, unless they are adjacent to each other.
- Strahd fights until Ireena is safe, then phases through a wall. He casts *polymorph* or *gust of wind* to control and stymie the adventurers.
- Escher fights at Strahd's side, giving his life for his master if necessary.
- Arrigal fights at Strahd's side but retreats if he is reduced to 25 or fewer hit points.
- On the first round, Rahadin and Sasha Ivliskova leave with Ireena via Area K17; Lady Wachter and her cultists follow, defending Ireena from the adventurers as needed. On her way out, Wachter casts *hold person* at 2nd level (DC 13) on two adventurers.



III. The Reception

Act III spans an hour or so and is centered in Strahd's throne room, the audience hall (Area K25). The reception is the Devil's last hour of triumph before he betrays the adventurers. Better that his prey eat their fill and grow plump before the hunt. The adventurers have permission to leave the hall, but it is impossible for their absence to go unnoticed.

Overview. Act III covers these events, in order:

- The guests are ushered to the audience hall via Areas K14, K8, and K19—back to the Great Entry and up the grand staircase. This is the adventurers' first opportunity to slip away.
- Strahd and Ireena enter the hall to great and bitter applause. The guests mingle, giving the adventurers the opportunity to scheme or socialize.
- Toasts are made to the bride and groom and gifts are presented.
- Ismark Kolyanovich is brought in to be punished for breaking guest right—or, if he did not, he challenges Strahd to a duel. Regardless, Ismark's life hangs in the balance.
- Strahd and Ireena retire for the evening, leaving his minions to betray the adventurers.

Dramatis Locis. Act III includes Areas K13, K25, and K26. **Wights** are posted in Areas K19 and Area K26 (four apiece) to confine guests to the reception. Signs are also posted in nearby areas that read, "All guests are asked to remain at the reception. Trespassers will be punished accordingly."

Revisions. These changes have been made to Area K25:

- The broken windows have been fixed.
- Tables have been set up along the walls, full of food and adequate seating.
- Wedding presents are on a table in the southwest corner.
- *Unseen servants* serve the guests, carrying platters of wine and finger foods.
- Strahd's throne faces the room, instead of the wall.

I. The Procession

With their eternal vows exchanged, the guests are swept out from the chapel and led up to Strahd's throne room.

Their eternal vows exchanged, and the kiss of promised death, Strahd and Ireena join hands and rush down the aisle. The guests rise into a tide, quick to follow in a procession. Were you to slip away—a challenge, to be sure—now would be the time.

From the chapel, the adventurers have their pick of exits: Areas K16 or K17 or even K21 in the Great Entry. With a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) check, a character can slip away from the throng, buying a handful of minutes before their absence is discovered. Otherwise, the party is led up the grand staircase (Area K19) and into the audience hall (Area K25).

The procession marches up the steps and into a great hall sporting a huge, stained-glass window peering into the west where the storm rages. The hall is bitterly cold, lit by guttering torches that fail to warm its interior. Tables have been set for the guests, the wine and appetizers already served, flowers already wilting in their vases. In one corner of the hall, a table teems with wedding presents, immaculately wrapped. And at the far end of the hall stands a crimson throne.

Strahd leads Ireena to the throne, but his new bride has no chair of her own. Instead, Strahd settles her on his lap, stroking her hair, his claws bent and ready to pull back her head so that he may sink his fangs into her delicate throat.

The Devil surveys the masses and smiles, "My beloved servants, my people, I welcome you to this grand night. Your presence is dearly appreciated. I have waited long centuries for this day, to at last be reunited with my long-lost love. Already I feel the pit in my heart scabbing over. Feast and be merry, for this night will be one to remember."

And with those last words, he is looking at you directly.

II. Toasts to the Happy Couple

With the bride and groom seated, guests are free to feast and socialize. Soon, however, the toasts will be made, the first being Rahadin's, as the Best Man, then the Maid of Honor's. The adventurers are free to toast as well.

The Best Man's Toast. Rahadin starts things off:

Brandishing a full chalice, Rahadin calls out in his crypt keeper's voice, "Silence yourselves; I've words to speak for our lord." The elf turns to Strahd and smiles. "Brother, I still remember the day long ago when Tatyana was brought to the castle. How your face lit up. How you warmed to her. 'She is beyond beauty.' Those were your words. Castle Ravenloft was dark and cold before then. You were dark, brother, and your love lit these halls—and I trust it shall again." Rahadin looks at Ireena. "—and for that, my new sister, I will always be grateful. Father would be proud, Strahd. I wish only he could be here today to see you whole at last."

Rahadin turns to the hall and raises his chalice. "To Strahd! To Tatyana! To a union that shall weather eternity!"

The crowd goes wild with fake cheer.

The Maid of Honor's Toast. If Sasha Ivliskova is Ireena's Maid of Honor instead of an adventurer, she offers a venomous, sarcastic toast:

Sasha Ivliskova follows Rahadin, waiting for the awkward and sycophantic applause to die down. She looks visibly disgusted, as if toasting through her teeth. "Ireena, I'm *so happy* you've joined our ranks, that you've found such a devoted husband. Our Lord Strahd worships you, the very thought of you, and none can deny that. I'm sure your father rests easy in his grave knowing that you'll be warm with our lord's love evermore." She raises her chalice. "To our newest sister!"

The applause, this time, is painful.

Other Toasts. Aside from the adventurers, the following characters make a toast:

- Davian Martikov toasts, "To our lord and liege; we watch your success with great interest."
- Dmitri Krezkov toasts, "May your mercy prove everlasting."
- Fiona Wachter toasts, "Eternity is too short a term for your reign, my lord. You are the torch in the darkness, the only dawn in this dismal land to which we march."
- Kasimir Velikov darkly toasts, "Better her than my sister, my lord. Better, indeed."
- Vargas Vallakovich toasts, "My Lord Strahd, forgive my optimism, but I do believe all is at last well."

The Giving of Gifts

After the toasts have been made, it is time to present gifts. The adventurers ought to have brought a gift and are encouraged now to present it.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If the party lost or has yet to claim one of the three artifacts, you can replace any of the gifts below with that artifact (e.g., Lady Wachter presents the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* if she somehow has it).

Gifts. The following characters publicly present gifts to Strahd at the reception:

- Davian Martikov, on behalf of his family, presents the winery's last cask of Champagne du le Stomp.
- Dmitri Krezkov presents an elaborate carving of Strahd's family tree, carved into mahogany bought from Vistani travelers. The diagram includes "Tatyana" and every other former bride of Strahd, including Sasha Ivliskova, Ludmilla Vilisevic, Anastrasya Karelova, and Volenta Popofsky. (Read these names out to the players and make it clear that they are all Strahd's brides, foreshadowing the former three's appearance in his tomb).
- Fiona Wachter, on behalf of her family, presents the bones of Leo Dilisnya, the traitorous guard that peppered Strahd four centuries ago on the day of Sergei's wedding, saying, "I present to you, my lord, the bones of the traitor Leo Dilisnya. Long have you entrusted us with this fiend's bones, and now I bring them back to your feet to grind into flour."
- Rahadin presents a commissioned portrait of Tatyana standing at Strahd's side in baroque attire. "I had this commissioned long, long ago in secret, by the famous Artista DeSlop—for never did I give up hope that you and Tatyana would be reunited, brother," Rahadin says.
- Vargas Vallakovich presents a sycophantic history entitled *Lord of the Night*, which details Strahd's long regime.



II. The Punishment of Ismark

For drawing his blade against Strahd during the wedding ceremony, Ismark broke guest right. Strahd is all too eager to see Ismark punished, citing his responsibility to the law as Barovia's master. All of this is just another ploy to antagonize the adventurers; Strahd cares nothing for Ismark or his crime. In fact, Strahd is even impressed by Ismark's courage.

Read the following:

> From down the stairs, chains rattle and squeal. Two corpse-knights drag Ismark Kolyanovich into the hall. His attire is soaked, his face bruised, but his eyes are full of fury.
>
> On his throne, Strahd smiles. "Ah, my newest brother." His eyes sweep the crowd. "My honored guests… my dearest vassals. I asked but one thing of you all tonight: to respect the oath of hospitality, and Kolyanovich has pissed all over it. The law is clear. The law is iron. How can I rule this realm if I absolve my kin and hang others? Should my family not be held to the highest standards? It pains me, but justice must be met. Ismark Kolyanovich, for breaking your oath, there is but one punishment: death."

Ireena, still charmed by Strahd, watches on as silent and dreamy eyed as a doll. The vassals erupt into whispers. Negotiations are possible:

- With a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion), a plea for amnesty can be made. This plea is made not only to Strahd but to all his vassals. Strahd tasks his vassals with voting. The Wachters vote nay, the Martikovs yea, and the Krezkovs and Vallakoviches are swayed by the ability check to vote yea. If a tie somehow occurs, Strahd votes nay.
- With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion), a plea for imprisonment can be made; Strahd confines Ismark to the dungeons for a decade-long sentence.
- Strahd outright agrees to a Trial by Combat; per the laws of Barovia, Ismark can appoint a champion to fight on his behalf, as can Strahd. With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Strahd can be persuaded to allow the duel to last until "First Blood," rather than to the death (i.e., until either combatant is reduced to half their hit point maximum or lower). The two combatants duel here in the reception, each rolling initiative. Any outside interference whatsoever invalidates the duel, the punishment of which is death. If Strahd's champion is defeated, Ismark's life and freedom are won.

Strahd's Champion
If Ismark undergoes a Trial by Combat, Strahd appoints a champion to fight on his behalf—for it is far beneath his status to fight such an upjumped peasant. His choice of champion is influenced by the history of your campaign thus far:

- Rahadin is Strahd's first choice, and the elf is eager to defend his brother's honor, but if Kasimir Velikov has attained the Dark Gift of Zhudun, you need Rahadin alive for the *Daughter of Dusk* event in Act IV. Thus, Strahd has the duel last only to First Blood; he is loath to lose his adopted brother and greatest ally.
- If no adventurer has contracted lycanthropy, Kiril Stoyanovich is a great pick, as it allows you to set up the *A Wolf Among Sheep* event in Act IV.
- If Strahd is truly sadistic, he chooses an adventurer to fight Ismark—Strahd is their liege, by all laws.
- If no other character is suitable, Strahd appoints a **wight** to fight instead.

Variant: A Desperate Bid

If Ismark never objected during the wedding, his desperation and dismay boils into outrage. He draws his blade and challenges Strahd to a duel for his sister's freedom—better to die trying than live in regret, he decides.

At your side, Ismark sucks in a breath, his hands trembling. When his eyes open, they're hard and cruel, his knuckles white and his hands still. You see the desperation in his eyes, the rage, the hate, the grief. The son of Kolyan shouts, "No more! No more will my family suffer under your shadow, Strahd! You cannot have my sister, monster!"

Steel sings! Ismark draws his blade! "Duel me, Devil! Blade to blade, lest you be marked a coward and a thief evermore!"

The crowd watches with bated breath. Strahd breaks out into an easy grin and rises, scooting Ireena from his lap. "So be it. Rahadin, a blade."

Rahadin himself is smiling. "Of course, my lord." He draws a scimitar and kneels, presenting it to Strahd. Ireena, eyes still glazed over, murmurs something to herself.

Strahd duels Ismark with a scimitar (+9 to hit, 1d6+4 slashing damage), abstaining from his spellcrafting and claws. Ismark knows he has little chance against Strahd's vampiric fortitude, but he can ill afford to stand idly by any longer. Win or lose, live or die, he can go to his grave knowing he has at last stepped out from his father's shadow.

Any outside interference invalidates the duel and breaks the law of hospitality, as Rahadin makes clear. Strahd attacks nonlethally. When Ismark is defeated, the adventurers can plead for his life by attempting a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a failure, Strahd simply says, "No," and slices Ismark's throat. If the adventurers intervene, roll initiative, and skip to Development: Early Blood below. With a battle underway, Strahd reserves his turn for something better than killing Ismark, giving the party the opportunity to save Ismark.

III. Red Reception

If the adventurers behave throughout the entire wedding, Strahd and Ireena retire for the evening—and his inevitable betrayal unfolds. His minions have orders to slaughter the adventurers, guest right be damned.

Strahd rises; the guests quiet immediately and look to the throne. With Ireena at his side, the Devil announces "My friends, my vassals, I thank you once more for attending this night. My bride grows weary and I…" Strahd flashes a fanged smile and looks at you directly. "I wish you the best and look forward to many more years together. Good night."

The guests rise with their lord, offering halfhearted applause as the Devil leaves to consummate his marriage. His harem of vampiric brides follows, staring daggers into Ireena's back.

Though Strahd implies he will be taking Ireena up to his bedchamber, he is actually taking her to his tomb below. It is his hope that the adventurers take the bait and walk into the trap he has set in his bedchamber (see *The Devil's Bride* in Act IV for details).

Betrayal

The Devil's minions make their move shortly after Strahd leaves:

- First, Arrigal presses a drink into an adventurer's hand ("Truly, I expected you to ruin this night, but I must admit, we're all very impressed with your restraint. Here, let us toast to peace.") He intentionally singles out the most vulnerable adventurer, for he has a poisoned dagger up his sleeve, which can be revealed with a *detect poison and disease* spell.
- Second, Lief Lipsiege retires for the evening. His orders are to retreat to his office (Area K30, adjacent to the audience hall) and lock the door. Lipsiege, a noncombatant, is visibly distressed, as can be gleaned with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. If confronted, he blubbers about needing to assess the "damage" this wedding has done to Strahd's coffers. He then hurries to his office and audibly locks the door.
- Third, the four **Vistani thugs** congregate at the stairs.
- Fourth, the four **wights** stationed in Area K26 slide planks through the handles of the door, barring it from the outside. Nearby characters that succeed on a Wisdom (Perception) check of 17 or higher can hear the planks being slid into place. Describe this as "the sound of something heavy scraping against the door."

These clues altogether imply a massacre is about to occur, and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms it, giving the adventurers the chance to prepare.

A Vistana thug approaches Arrigal to let him know that everything is ready. Read the following:

> A Vistana man approaches Arrigal as he works on his second chalice of wine, whispering in his ear. "Uh huh," Arrigal nods. He finishes his wine, sets down his glass on a floating platter, and, in one swift motion, draws a dagger from his sleeve and lunges for your throat!

Strahd's minions spring into action. The werewolves rip their lent attire as they transform into most monstrous forms. Rahadin draws his scimitars and Escher crawls upon the ceiling. Innocents cower and scream from beneath their tables.

Tactics. Though the hall teems with combatants, the only characters you must run are: **Arrigal, Rahadin, Kiril Stoyanovich,** Escher (a **vampire spawn**), four **Vistani thugs**, and possibly **Fiona Wachter** and her imp, **Majesto**. Allies might also participate, such as **Donavich**. See *Automating Red Reception* for details.

- If Rahadin is reduced to 67 hit points or fewer, he flees by: *misty stepping* past the Vistani into Area K19, taking the secret door to Area K13, or even hurling himself out the stained-glass window.
- Arrigal flees when reduced to 39 hit points or fewer by picking the lock to the door to Area K30, promptly locking the door behind him.
- Escher and Kiril Stoyanovich fights to the death, focusing solely on one adventurer each.
- The Vistani thugs at the staircase Ready their actions to attack any adventurer that attempts to leave. None are willing to die for Strahd and flee at 16 hit points or fewer.
- If Kasimir Velikov stays to fight against Strahd's minions, so too does Fiona Wachter, at least until an exit becomes clear.
- At the start of the third round, six **wereravens** in hybrid form burst through the window to aid the adventurers, effectively ending the encounter.

Automating *Red Reception*

This battle features far too many combatants for the DM to control; ultimately, the adventurers must concern themselves with Arrigal, Escher, Kiril Stoyanovich, Rahadin and potentially Fiona Wachter. All other NPCs are merely setpieces; do not take their turns but instead describe what they do:

- The civilians like the Krezkovs cower under their tables.
- The werewolves and wereravens shapeshift into their hybrid forms and battle each other. Brom and Bray Martikov transform into ravens and flee to warn the other Keepers of the Feather of what has transpired. Ultimately, the werewolves prevail, and Adrian Martikov is killed and, on her way out, Fiona Wachter kills Urwin with a spell, so as to finally remove the local Martikovs from Vallaki, ensuring her sovereignty.
- Luvash takes Arabelle away from the slaughter via Area K19, taking the stairs down.
- Kasimir Velikov and his elves push past the Vistani.

Escaping. Every exit is guarded or blocked, except one—the secret door to Area K13, which can be discerned with a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. A DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check is required to open the doors to Area K26, and the door to Area K30 can be unlocked with a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or broken down with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If they triumph over the Vistani blocking the stairs to Area K19, they must still contend with the four **wights** Strahd has stationed there

Aftermath. Once the carnage quells, the adventurers enter Act IV: The Devil's Wedding Night. All niceties and hospitalities are cast away: the Devil Strahd will crush his greatest foes and conquer his greatest love at long last.





IV. The Devil's Wedding Night

Act IV is modular, and bends to the adventurers' goals in Castle Ravenloft, be it saving Ireena, finding a Fortune of Ravenloft, or racing to their Final Confrontation. Many side quests have been written, and it is recommended that you run at least two of them before the adventurers reach their Final Confrontation (see Chapter 4 for details).

Overview. In addition to detailing each possible Final Confrontation, Act IV offers these side quests:

A Wolf Among Sheep can be run if an adventurer, their Destined Ally, or a close friend has succumbed to lycanthropy, no matter how recent. As the Ancient, as the Land, Strahd rips the full moon into the sky, causing the lycanthrope to undergo their first transformation and momentarily turn against the party.

Blood of the Innocent concerns the welfare of Strahd's innocent guests, such as the Krezkovs.

Brother to Evil involves freeing Ismark from the dungeons, if he yet lives, so that he can stand with them against the Devil.

Daughter of Dusk occurs only if Kasimir Velikov has gained the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star. With such power, Kasimir goes to resurrect his evil sister in the catacombs.

> **The Keepers of the Feather**
> If the adventurers have an alliance with the Keepers of the Feather, the order can be sent to deal with one of Act IV side quests, such as *Blood of the Innocent*, *Brother to Evil*, and *The Heart of Sorrow*. Whether they succeed, however, is up to you.

The Devil's Bride concerns rescuing Ireena Kolyana from Strahd's bedchamber—but this is a ruse. Strahd has truly taken Ireena to his crypt, dressed Gertruda up in a wedding gown, and left vampire spawn to ambush any would-be liberators.

The Heart of Sorrow is a mission given by the Keepers of the Feather, who have discovered a magical artifact that protects Strahd.

Wachtercult deals with Fiona Wachter and her cultists, who seek to plumb Strahd's library for arcana and power. If she is allowed to leave with these secrets, Barovia might later find itself under the tyranny of Countess Wachter once Strahd is deposed.

Advancement. At your discretion, these side quests can level your players from 9th to 10th if three are completed. It's assumed that, like in all of *Curse of Strahd*, milestone leveling has been used. They do not gain the benefits of a rest, however.

A Wolf Among Sheep

This quest can only unfold if one of the adventurers, their Destined Ally, or a dear friend has contracted lycanthropy, even if from a bite suffered tonight. This new victim rests assured that the full moon is weeks away—except it's not. Strahd is the Ancient, Strahd is the Land. The Sun and stars and moon obey him. In the most terrifying display of his power over this demiplane, Strahd reaches into the night sky and turns the new moon into a full moon, forcing the new lycanthrope to undergo their debut transformation.

Dramatis Locis. This quest can be attached to any area or other quest, so long as there is a window with a view of the sky. Ideal locations are: the Heart of Sorrow, the Tower Roof, or the Bridge (Areas K20, K57, and K58, respectively).

The Moon Full and Bloody. When Strahd rips the full moon into view, read the following text:

> Strahd barks out a laugh. "Fools. You rely on the position of the Sun and stars to protect you? *I am the Sun! I am the stars!* I am the Ancient and I am the Land, and I alone control the tides of the moon! *Watch*!"
>
> Strahd thrusts a clawed hand out to the night sky, gripping at something unseen. His muscles tense, his eyes flood with black blood. Straining, he claws at the skies! Thunder cracks! And between the storm clouds shines the full moon, early and ripped into view.
>
> "So it begins," the Devil laughs.

To player character lycanthropes, read the following:

> You drop to the floor, convulsing as fur erupts from your flesh, your nails become claws, and your teeth sharpen into fangs! Your tortured cries become one long, ravenous howl, and when your eyes at last open, they bulge with hate and hunger.

Ravenous and enraged, the new lycanthropes turn on their allies. A player character must ravage the nearest, most vulnerable humanoids. Werewolves are strong and cunning, and the player must reflect that in their roleplay and tactics. Spells of *calm emotions*, *remove curse*, or *greater restoration* end this bloodlust and reverse their curse. Otherwise, the werewolves rage until knocked unconscious or slain.

At your discretion, Strahd leaves or just stands by to watch the spectacle unfold.



Blood of the Innocent

This quest concerns spiriting the noncombatants to safety. However, with Act IV unfolding, the Entry and Great Entry are both trapped with (with four **red dragon wyrmlings** and eight **gargoyles**, respectively) as is the drawbridge. Without protection this gaggle of fools will surely die. If Act IV was jumpstarted from Act II, these innocents start in the chapel (Area K15) instead of the audience hall (K25), in which case a Krezkite noble accidentally triggers a trapped statue in Area K19 and likely bludgeoned to death.

Dramatis Locis. This quest concerns Areas K1, K7, K8, K19, and even Area J: the Gates of Ravenloft.

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> So many guests have been invited to the Devil's wedding, and so many will perish in these black halls if left unguarded. Will you escort these innocents to the gates, or leave them to fend for themselves?

The gaggle consists of approximately seventeen **nobles**, all unarmed and unarmored, including Dmitri Krezkov and Anna Krezkova; Vargas Vallakovich and Lydia Petrovna, and Nikolai and Karl Wachter. It also includes Henrik van der Voort (a **commoner**), perhaps Donavich, and even Luvash and Arabelle.

If the adventurers are on good terms with Luvash—for saving Arabelle earlier in the campaign—Luvash can be convinced to lead the gaggle to safety with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, so long as they can get the innocents to the drawbridge. Luvash warns them that the castle, even the areas the guests have already congregated in, are trapped.



Hazard: Green Slime

This acidic slime devours flesh, organic material, and metal on contact. Bright green, wet, and sticky, it clings to walls, floors, and ceilings in patches.

A patch of green slime covers a 5-foot square, has blindsight out to a range of 30 feet, and drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement below it. Beyond that, it has no ability to move. A creature aware of the slime's presence can avoid being struck by it with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Otherwise, the slime can't be avoided as it drops.

A creature that comes into contact with green slime takes 5 (1d10) acid damage. The creature takes the damage again at the start of each of its turns until the slime is scraped off or destroyed. Against wood or metal, green slime deals 11 (2d10) acid damage each round, and any nonmagical wood or metal weapon or tool used to scrape off the slime is effectively destroyed. Sunlight, any effect that cures disease, and any effect that deals cold, fire, or radiant damage destroys a patch of green slime.

Great Entry

The innocents must make it through the Great Entry (Area K8), which is guarded by eight **gargoyles**. When the adventurers enter this area, read the following:

> The great entry has been plunged into darkness, every torch from before, dead and dark. A foul wind sweeps the vaulted hall, and in it you hear the beating of wings and the scrape of stone on stone. Many wings. Grating and cruel voices cry out in a language not of this world.

The gargoyles here are sadistic. All night have they watched the guests from on high, forbidden to kill or even maim a single one of them. They would like nothing more than to choke a few throats or break legs by dropping victims from the ceiling (the ceiling is 30 feet high, inflicting 3d6 bludgeoning damage in a fall—a lethal drop for these innocents). Throughout the combat, the innocents cower at the stairs or attempt to rush through the entry. Ultimately, one innocent—preferably Henrik van der Voort—is snatched up by a gargoyle and dropped from the ceiling.

Revision. Eight **gargoyles** is overkill. It is recommended you reduce their number to three; five of the gargoyles are just inanimate statues. You achieve the same tension with only three, without dragging out a long and unfun fight.

Entry

The Entry (Area K7) is guarded by four **red dragon wyrmlings** Strahd has somehow cajoled or enchanted into serving him. When the gaggle reaches this area, someone—preferably Vargas Vallakovich—rushes out, abandoning all caution and ignoring any instructions given by the adventurers. His fiery death alerts them to the wyrmlings' presence. Read the following:

> The storm rages on outside, ever louder this close to the castle entry. With safety in sight, a man races out ahead of you into the hallway, desperate to leave Ravenloft behind. And that's when a gout of flame bursts from overhead, bathing the hall in screams and hellish amber.

The Gates of Ravenloft

The storm is harsh and ruthless, but the cold rain pattering your cloaks is a godsend like no other, a reprieve from the claustrophobia of Castle Ravenloft. Lightning lances the sky, chased by thunder so loud that the stones of this place tremble. The gates of Ravenloft loom in the gloom like the mouth of some great beast on whose teeth you're the wrong side of.

Breaking into the courtyard, the innocents retrieve their horses and carriages from the Carriage House (Area K4). Only two dangers remain in their escape: the Green Slime (see the sidebar) that haunts the portcullis, as described in Area J, and the aging drawbridge itself.

The Portcullis. A patch of green slime clings to the portcullis. Ordinarily, it drops on the first character to enter Castle Ravenloft, but this simple creature subconsciously obeyed the will of Strahd, sparing the guests as they arrived. Now, leaving, it is free to feast. It drops on the first character to leave the castle. If a horse is the first to pass underway, the beast goes wild and falls off the edge, dragging its rider with it; if the horse is part of a team dragging a carriage, the adventurers may attempt a DC 20 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to quell the other beasts. On a failure, the carriage goes over; the party can save only a handful of inhabitants as they flee the carriage.

The Drawbridge. The drawbridge is old and growing more frail with every passing year. Ordinarily, there is a 5% chance that a board breaks as a character crosses the bridge. Now, with so many horses and carriages crossing at once, a break is inevitable. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence check using woodcarvers' tools, or a Wisdom (Perception) check of the same DC, an adventurer can hear the groaning bridge and warn a party just before they pass over that spot. On a success, the party prevents them from falling to their doom.

Success. Once the innocents have escaped, read:

You've done it. You can go to your graves knowing that you at least spirited away these innocent souls. They shall live, to return to Castle Ravenloft only in their nightmares. To leave with them now is so, so tempting but there is yet work for you to do. The gates of Ravenloft loom like great fangs, and it's back into the belly of beast with you.



Brother to Evil

This quest can only occur if Ismark somehow still rots in the dungeons (such as if the party successfully argued for imprisonment in Act III). If present, Donavich insists Ismark be freed, and will gladly accompany them on this quest. Otherwise, he joins the gaggle of guests in the *Blood of the Innocent* quest.

Dramatis Locis. This quest concerns the Dungeons: Areas K73-K75. To reach the Dungeons, the adventurers must take the South Tower Stair (Area K21), a familiar trek if they went to recover their confiscated weaponry in Act I.

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> Ismark Kolyanovich languishes in the dungeons below. His sword-arm is strong, and his heart is true. You shall find no ally further committed to saving Ireena and ending Strahd than him. Should you liberate him, he will surely stand with you against the Devil's shadow. Dare you rescue him from the benighted depths?

Ismark rots in the North Dungeon (Area K74), guarded by three **wights** and **Emil Toranescu**, the werewolf. Ordinarily, the werewolf languishes in his own cell, but Strahd has offered Emil amnesty if Ismark remains chained until dusk, tomorrow.

Once the adventurers descend to the Dungeon Hall (Area K73), read:

> The dungeon is a sea of filth and darkness. The air is foul and sour and sweetened by mold. In the distance, you hear Ismark's outrage: "Free me, fiends! Free me, at once!" His voice is hoarse from yelling at his presumable jailers.
>
> An unfamiliar, undead voice answers him, growling, "Will you cease your incessant prattling? I like my orders no more than you, so let us languish in silence!"

The unfamiliar voice belongs to a wight. The other two wights lie in wait in the South Dungeons (Area K75), prepared to exploit any confusion the adventurers suffer with the teleportation traps. Emil Toranescu lurks in his cell, warned already by Strahd, pleads for help when he hears the adventurers. If they oblige, he transforms into his hybrid form, kicks open his secretly unlocked cell door, and attacks.

While this occurs, the **gray ooze** in Cell G of Area K74 awakens and slowly gnaws on Ismark. Read the following:

> "Hey!" shouts Ismark. "Hey! There's something—something's here!" His shouts turn to sudden screams. "It burns! Oh gods, it burns! It's—it's eating me!"

The gray ooze spends its turns attacking Ismark. The wight, ordered to keep Ismark alive until Ireena reawakens as a vampire spawn tomorrow night, unlocks the cell and attempts to deal with the oozeling. If liberated, Ismark immediately insists on finding Ireena and pledges himself to ending Strahd.

Daughter of Dusk

This quest is only available if Kasimir Velikov acquired the Dark Gift of Zhudun the Corpse Star—the power of resurrection—in the Amber Temple. He and his three **dusk elf guards** breach the catacombs in search of Patrina's crypt. The quest also relies heavily on the presence of Rahadin, who is assumed to have survived until now. If the party's Final Confrontation is somewhere in the catacombs, this quest directly precedes their final encounter with Strahd.

Dramatis Locis. This quest concerns the catacombs (Area K84), specifically Crypt 21.

Revision. Ordinarily, Patrina Velikov already languishes as a **banshee** in her crypt. For the sake of balance, her spirit cannot materialize in this realm, thereby preventing her from joining in the battle before her resurrection. A banshee's wail will otherwise derail your campaign.

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> In the benighted depths of Ravenloft, the ghost of Patrina Velikovna stirs, whispering to her brother from beyond the grave. In life, she demanded the Devil's hand in marriage. In undeath, her hunger for power has surely grown all the sharper. Armed with Zhudun's gift, Kasimir intends to resurrect his sister and redeem his greatest crime. Even he, however, doubts Patrina, once a powerful wizard, has his doubts, but she is the sole means of saving his people from extinction… a hideous prospect, no doubt.
>
> Dare you stand with Kasimir and risk an ancient evil returning to this world? Or shall you deny him redemption and condemn the dusk elves to genocide?



Rahadin lurks in the darkness and intercepts the elves outside Patrina's crypt. Read the following text:

> The catacombs are alive with bats, entire legions of 'em. Over the noise of their wings and squealing, Kasimir Velikov calls out to his men, "Patrina's tomb is over—"
>
> A familiar voice thunders out from the dark: Rahadin's. The chamberlain's growl cuts through the din like steel. "This ends here, you miserable cur."
>
> "Rahadin!" Kasimir shouts. "Stand aside, kinslayer! My sister will live again! Our people will live again!"
>
> Rahadin laughs, loud and vicious. "You vermin deserve extinction. History will not be undone this day." He draws closer, and now you can just barely hear the faint wails of his many victims, all screeching for justice, for an end to their agony.
>
> Kasimir tenses. His hands curl into fists, wreathed in arcane fire. "After all these long years," he asks, "how can you still harbor such hate for your own people?"
>
> "My people forsook me, Velikov! Threw me to the wolves for not bending the knee to their corrupt princelings!"
>
> "You bent over for King Barov easily enough," Kasimir growls.
>
> "Enough," Rahadin snarls, drawing his blade.
>
> Footfalls echo out from the dark, heavy footfalls booted in steel. Out from the darkness emerge corpses clad in armor—wights, occupying every passage near you. Rahadin has you cornered.

Rahadin's brought six **wights**, each marching two abreast between crypts, boxing the adventurers and the elves in. If the adventurers are allied with **Kasimir Velikov**, the elf fights at their side. If they are against raising Patrina, or otherwise his enemy, Kasimir casts *wall of stone* on his first turn, separating him and the crypt entrance from everyone else so that he may resurrect his sister in peace. On his second turn, he casts knock on her crypt door—the sound is deafening and rings throughout the catacombs. On the third, he lays his hand on his sister's skeleton and casts *resurrection*.

If Kasimir is successful in his efforts, read the following:

> As your hearing returns, ears ringing, you hear Kasimir Velikov cry out, "Come back to me, sister! Come back from beyond your earthly grave! Live! Live again, Patrina!"
>
> A sickly violet light spills out into the catacombs and thunder cracks again as the veil between this world and the next is ripped open. A shrill voice calls back, "I *live*!" Patrina Velikovna, the Devil's last bride, has been reborn.

Patrina Velikovna is weakened from her resurrection, has none of her spells prepared, and suffers a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks. She is reborn in the flesh, unarmored, and nude. Kasimir gives her his cloak, collects her spellbook, and carries her from the crypt. His next goal is to make it to the Brazier Room (Area K78) so that he may teleport back to Vallaki.

The Devil's Bride

Ireena Kolyana's life hangs in the balance. Strahd intends to consummate his marriage with blood, killing Ireena so she may rise as a vampire. Ostensibly, Strahd has sent her to his bedchamber by either retiring there with her at the end of Act III or by ordering Rahadin to take her if the adventurers sparked an earlier conflict. Ultimately, however, this is a ruse. Strahd cares nothing for the bed he frequented in life and instead wants to kill Ireena in his very coffin. Should the party venture to Strahd's bedchamber, they blunder into a trap. And worse, upon reaching his tomb, they find that Ireena is already dead.

Dramatis Locis. This quest unfolds in the King's Bedchamber (Area K42) and Strahd's Tomb (Area K86). From Area K25, the most direct route to Area K42 is the South Tower Stair (K21) via Lief Lipsiege's office (Area K30); the most direct route to Area K86 is Area K18, the High Tower Stair, through the Chapel (Area K15).

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> It's a match made in Hell. Ireena Kolyana languishes in her husband's bed, awaiting the fatal bite that will damn her soul to an eternity as his thrall. Only you can save her from this fate!

The Count's Gambit

As part of his trap, Strahd has dressed Gertruda in a wedding dress and left her in his bed, charmed into obeying his commands. Her orders are to remain silent, so that her voice does not betray her identity, no matter who calls for her. When the party enters the bedchamber, read the following:

> The bedchamber is fragrant and lit by candelabras set upon the table. Rose petals litter the floor, leading to a canopied bed as large as some peasants' bedrooms. Lying amidst the velvet and satin sheets, just beyond the silk curtains, is a woman in a wedding dress. She does not move—were you too late to stop Ireena's murder?

Four **vampire spawn** (including Sasha Ivliskova) lurk in the bedchamber: one under the bed, one crouching on the ceiling, one behind the secret door to Area K45, and another in the Bath Chamber (Area K43), hiding under the surface of the illusory blood in the bathtub. They attack the moment the adventurers investigate the bed.

After learning they've been duped, a character can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to confirm, beyond any doubt, that if he would not consummate his marriage in his bed, Strahd would surely do so in his coffin, in the catacombs below.

Dark Consummation

Ireena Kolyana lies dead in her husband's coffin, the blood drained from her throat and her soul festering beyond the pale. Already the curse of the vampyr is working through her, preparing her to rise as the newest minion of Strahd.

Upon opening the coffin in Strahd's Tomb (Area K86), read the following:

> The mist in this tomb clings to you, cold and damp. You slide back the coffin's lid… and in there, you find Ireena Kolyana—dead, with two bloody pinpricks in her neck. You've failed. You've failed Ismark, his father, and Ireena herself. Every sacrifice and bitter defeat you've suffered to get here has been in vain. Some heroes you are.

The adventurers can hardly be surprised—wouldn't Strahd take every precaution to ensure he at last had Ireena? After chasing her for so many generations, would he not send her to an early grave than repeat it all again?

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character ascertains that Ireena's body must be burned before the next dusk lest she rise as a vampire.

Strahd's Brides. Strahd's three **vampire spawn** brides—Anastrasya, Ludmilla, and Volenta—guard Ireena, pouncing from their earthly graves before her corpse can be burned.

The Heart of Sorrow

The Keepers of the Feather have discovered the Heart of Sorrow hanging from the High Tower's ceiling. Through spying on Baba Lysaga or questioning Barovian witches, they have learned that this crystalline heart shields Strahd from harm. They might even suspect that it is powered by one of the life-giving gemstones stolen from the Wizard of Wines winery. They take this grim news to the adventurers as early as Act I. While the Heart of Sorrow shields Strahd with only 50 hit points-worth of damage, it should be presented as a demanding obstacle in your campaign that must be destroyed to kill the Devil. Strahd doubles over in agony when the Heart of Sorrow is destroyed.

Other Quests. If you also run *A Wolf Among Sheep*, the Heart of Sorrow makes an excellent stage for that quest.

Dramatis Locis. This quest is centered upon the Heart of Sorrow (Area K20), which is most easily accessible from Strahd's Study (Area K37), which itself is easily reached via Area K21 from Area K25. This quest might also unfold across the Spires of Ravenloft, adding in:

- Area K20—if someone fails their DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, they fall to the base of the tower.
- Area K53, the Rooftop, where characters must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to traverse the roof, falling to Area K46 on a result of 10 or lower.
- Area K46; should a character fall to the parapets, **Strahd's animated armor** joins the fray.
- Area K57, where the battle might spill out to.
- Area K58, the bridge connecting the South Tower and the North Tower where the Heart of Sorrow hangs. Characters on the bridge must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw whenever they receive damage or fall 60 feet to the Rooftop (K53) and take 6d6 bludgeoning damage.

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> The Keepers of the Feather have heard a heartbeat on the wind and discovered an artifact most foul. Hanging from the North Tower's ceiling is a heart-shaped crystalline sculpture that, according to the wereravens" sources, magically protects the Devil from harm. Will you deprive him of this aegis or dare to battle Strahd with your blows blunted by this shield?

The Avatar. When the party first sights the Heart of Sorrow, Strahd's avatar appears to warn them off. This is the very same magic he used to cavort with the party during Act I. A *dispel magic* spell destroys the avatar, which cannot harm the adventurers except by mimicking a *gust of wind* spell (spell save DC 13) by redirecting the storm"s winds.

> You emerge onto the battlements, into the very fury of the storm. The wind howls like a neglected child. The icy rains stab at you, sharp as knives. And underneath it all, the howling winds, the crash of the rain, you hear it—you feel it. A dark heartbeat that echoes across the night, through your ears, your mind, your very blood and filling you with both dread and sorrow.
>
> A flash of lightning illuminates it: a massive crystalline heart, pulsating with light. Across the bridge connecting this tower to the next, it hangs suspended by magic, beating, and beating, and beating, seen from a gaping awning that seems to welcome you, dare you to approach this Heart of Sorrow.
>
> Thunder cracks its titanic whip above, and a swarm of bats burst forth from the awning. As the swarm clears, Strahd von Zarovich is suddenly standing before you. "Turn back, fools," the vampire snarls, "or be thrown from this bridge like broken dreams."

Guards. Destroying the Heart of Sorrow is no easy task; Strahd has stationed here the four vampire spawn that ordinarily investigate any harm to the artifact. The vampires linger out of sight (on the underbelly of the Area K58 bridge, or crawling along the tower walls), ready to protect the artifact, which is already guarded by ten **animated halberds**.

Revision. Even without the addition of the vampire spawn and Strahd's avatar, ten animated halberds is too many and will drag out the battle. You should either reduce their hit points to 5 apiece or reduce their numbers from ten to five.

Weather. This scene is accosted by strong winds and heavy precipitation, disadvantaging ranged attacks that use ammunition, and encouraging the party to fight the vampires head-on.

Falling. If the adventurers fall from Area K58 or are blown off by Strahd's mimicked *gust of wind* spell, they fall to the Rooftops (Area K53), attracting the attention of another **vampire spawn**. If they fall again to parapets (Area K46), **Strahd's animated armor** also joins the fray.

Wachtercult

Above all else, Lady Fiona Wachter hungers for power over the arcane, and except for the Amber Temple, there is no greater library available to her than Strahd's study. Capitalizing on her invitation to Castle Ravenloft, Wachter and her cultists leave for the study at the first sign of trouble. Her absence is particularly glaring.

Dramatis Locis. This quest unfolds entirely in Area K37, Strahd's study.

Final Confrontation. If the party's Final Confrontation unfolds in the study, Strahd is present, lounging in a chair while the Wachtercult pilfer his tomes. Strahd is unmoved by their theft, even impressed by it, and intends to puppeteer the cult through Wachter herself.

Presentation. Read the following text when you present this quest to the adventurers:

> Lady Fiona Wachter and her cultists have gone missing, and there is but one place that power hungry cur would go: wherever Strahd has stored his tomes of magic. As a wizard of great renown, secure in the faith of his own security, you can think of no other place he would so arrogantly store his arcana than out in the open, in his study. It's clear Wachter is capitalizing on the wedding to advance her cult's agenda. Should Strahd die tonight, Barovia might fall under the tyranny of a new ruler, lest you cut off the head of this villainous snake here and now.

Fiona Wachter's entourage consists of Ernst Larnak (a **spy**), four **cult fanatics**, and her **imp** Majesto. They've warded the surrounding areas with alarm spells to alert them should anyone approach. Upon reaching the study, read the following:

> A blazing hearth fire fills this room with rolling waves of red and amber light. The walls are lined with ancient books and tomes, their leather covers well oiled and preserved through careful use. All is in order here. The stone floor is concealed beneath a thick, luxurious rug. In the center of the room is a large, low table, waxed and polished to a mirrored finish. Even the poker in its stand next to the blazing fireplace is polished. Large, overstuffed divans and couches are arranged about the room. Two chairs of burgundy-colored wood with padded leather seats and back cushions face the hearth. A huge painting hangs over the mantelpiece in a heavy, gilded frame. The rolling firelight illuminates the carefully rendered portrait. It is an exact likeness of Ireena Kolyana.
>
> Throughout the study are eight figures: Lady Wachter and her followers, their noses deep in books decorated with glowing glyphs, or stuffing their bags with ancient tomes.

Wachter cares little for the adventures and does not draw first blood; instead, she and her cult fanatics use the Ready action to cast spells on the party, should violence erupt. Wachter makes it clear that she has no stake in their antics and is willing to let bygones be bygones. If the party is on their way to retrieve Ireena, or just passing through, Wachter lets them go. If her sons are held hostage, however, she will order her forces to retreat in exchange for their safe release.





Endings

The Wedding at Ravenloft is intended to be your campaign's titanic conclusion. Consult *Curse of Strahd's* Epilogue and incorporate these additions:

The Devil Triumphant

Should Strahd best the heroes, Barovia scattered its shattered hope and falls back to black despair. To come so close to freedom just for it to be torn away is far too much. A new Dark Age befalls the country, rife with suicides and despair.

Here Comes the Devil's Bride

If the adventurers fail to slay Strahd during *The Wedding at Ravenloft*, Strahd turns Ireena into a vampire. Surviving adventurers wake later wake later in the dungeons, stripped of their gear and chained to the wall, 1 hit point apiece, and three levels of exhaustion. No less than ten **wights** stand guard. Escape is not an option.

At dusk the next evening, Strahd returns to sic Ireena on those who failed to save her. Read the following text, which is focused on one character of your choice:

> You awaken in utter darkness, stripped to your smallclothes and chained to the wall. Fetid water laps at your knees and the manacles bite at your wrists. A chill hangs in the foul air of these dungeons. Memories trickle in slowly, until at last some mental dam splits and it all comes rushing back: the blood, the bodies, the Devil standing triumphant. With a shiver, you realize he's left you for last.
>
> A voice in the dark startles you. The Devil's voice, cold and delighted. "You're awake. Good. It's as I promised, my love. Treachery is truly the sweetest nectar. Now drink deep and emerge… more than mortal. Emerge perfect in undeath."
>
> The door to your cell creaks open. The torches burst into flame, revealing Ireena von Zarovich, bloody and pale and fanged. She shivers at the sight of you, licks her newfound fangs, and whispers, "You failed… and yet I thank you. Always will I remember your efforts."
>
> The Devil's bride hurls herself forward, driving her fangs deep into your neck. Your screams go unheard, your prayers unanswered… and Strahd von Zarovich assures you that, "All will be well."

Aftermath of the Wedding

- If the *Blood of the Innocent* quest was not completed in any fashion, most of the innocents are kept as cattle for Ireena. Every night, Strahd releases a few captives, armed with rapiers, from the dungeons only to be hunted down by him and Ireena. Only Strahd's foremost vassals are spared from this carnage. After a week of listening to the screams, they are sent back home.
- Armed with the knowledge pilfered from Strahd's study, Lady Wachter closes her grip around Vallaki at long last, turning it into a bastion of fiend worship. Weekly rituals and parades devoted to praising Strahd replace Baron Vallakovich's dismal festivals.
- If the Martikovs aided the adventurers, they are destroyed. Strahd strips them of their lands and titles and takes their children as prisoners ("wards") of Ravenloft. He keeps the family alive only to suffer humiliation and fear. The Keepers of the Feather flee into the populace, but with the Martikovs ruined, leadership falls to Muriel Vinshaw.

The Devil Defeated

Strahd's reign has at last drawn to its bloody close, and all of Barovia will remember this as the night the Devil was hurled into the depths of Hell.

Aftermath of the Wedding

- If Rahadin lives, he does not attack the adventurers (as ordinarily written in *Curse of Strahd*) but teleports to the Amber Temple from the Brazier Room (Area K78) to pray for Strahd's return.
- If Kasimir resurrected his sister and escaped, the dusk elves initially rejoice but find that Patrina Velikovna has no desire to be their broodmare, even if it might reverse their genocide. The dusk elves take this opportunity to leave Barovia and rejoin their distant kin in the lands beyond Ravenloft.
- Unless aided by the adventurers, only a quarter of the innocents escape Castle Ravenloft on their own. Notably, Anna Krezkova survives—but not her husband Dmitri, whose skull is crushed by gargoyles, leaving her to bury him alongside her children.
- The Keepers of the Feather fly the adventurers from Castle Ravenloft down to the burgomaster's manor in the Village of Barovia to recuperate.
- The Vistani set about securing Castle Ravenloft for their own purposes; Arrigal intends to take the throne of Barovia, but falls to a mutiny later. Vistani across the country leave in a mass exodus, fearing retribution by the Barovians.
- If Kiril Stoyanovich is slain, any surviving werewolves free Emil Toranescu from the dungeons and elevate him to packleader. The attacks on the Sword Coast in the Forgotten Realms comes to an end.

Tatyana and Sergei Reunited

If Strahd is slain before Ireena rises as a vampire, her soul breaks free from the bonds of this earth, of Strahd's curse, and of the Dark Powers. Saved from eternal damnation and the vicious cycle of reincarnation, Tatyana thanks the adventurers herself, with Sergei at her side.

If the party burns Ireena's corpse, read the following text:

> As you set fire to Ireena's corpse, a wisp appears amongst the brightest embers, a wisp whose light warms your bones and soothes your souls. The wisp soars from the fire and hangs at your periphery, as if beckoning for you to follow.
>
> You follow the wisp through the benighted halls of Ravenloft, past blood and corpses, past the relics of a nightmare not long dead, until at least you emerge outside, on the perch that overlooks the east.
>
> The wisp flies out to just beyond the edge, hovering in the air, until it takes the shape of two figures: Ireena Kolyana in a dress of gold, and a stately man in shining armor. Their names on your lips: Tatyana and Sergei von Zarovich.
>
> Tatyana smiles and with Sergei's hand in hers, she says, "The cycle is broken. Our people, our souls, are free. And we have you to thank."
>
> "The sins of my brother," says Sergei, "are too great to ever atone for, but Barovians will not bear that burden. You have won us justice, and for that you will live in our legends as heroes, evermore."
>
> Tatyana bows her head in gratitude, and says, "Many have sought to aid me in lives past, and they too welcome you as kin and kith. At last, we bid bye to our lives and move into the loving arms of the Morninglord. Goodbye, my friends. Come, my love. Rest awaits."
>
> Tatyana and Sergei turn and ascend towards the sky, their glow illuminating the clouds and mist, until at last they breach the heavens—
>
> The Sun.
>
> Together, Tatyana and Sergei breach the heavens and reveal the Sun. It burns in the east. It burns away the mists that have choked this land since time immemorial. It burns in the east with the Morninglord's love, and its beauty is enough to drive tears to your eyes. And from here, you see across the Svalich Roads the Village of Barovia, the Durst Manor, and beyond that, the road back home. Barovia is free.
>
> *You* are free.

The Return of Strahd

Strahd's return is inevitable, for the Dark Powers are not so easily vanquished. If you decide to reveal this dark truth to your players, read the following:

All is at last well. The souls of Barovia are free to pass over to the heavens. All is well at last, and it is thanks to you.

But do you wish to know the truth? Dare you ask for truth, though it might break your heart? So be it.

Months would pass in Barovia. Months of peace. Months in which the Barovians rediscovered joy and hope. And all would be well… until it wasn't. And hope dwindled, for men can sense the ill wind when it blows. They can hear it. They can feel it in their very souls.

The days shorten. The skies grow grayer. The rains kick up a foul mist in the morning that clings until dawn. And there finally comes a day when the Sun does not shine over Barovia, its light failing.

Like a creeping claw, the Mists rise again to snatch Barovia by the throat… for the curse of Strahd cannot be so easily ended, you see? The Dark Powers that watch from below cannot be so easily thwarted. They will not allow Strahd rest. They will never allow it, for Strahd is the darkness that sustains them, feeds them, nourishes them, warms them, entertains them. Strahd von Zarovich is their plaything evermore, cursed to run the gauntlet of time again and again and again. His return is but another dark chapter for Barovia.

And the Devil? The Devil does not forgive. His vengeance is swift and savage. Those that saw to his end go screaming to theirs. Some escape, hiding amongst the sheep as the wolves draw near.

And for those that left? For those heroes that left Barovia? There comes a day when they wake to a letter at their doors, no matter the distance, no matter the country, no matter the world. A letter sealed in a familiar wax. A letter inviting them to dine at Castle Ravenloft once more.

With Strahd's dark rebirth, the Mists surround the valley once more, carving it away from the worlds of men. The souls of the dead never find an ever-after, forced instead to live and die and live again in this hell. The Vistani return to the valley, Madam Eva at the helm. The beasts of the land fall under Strahd's spell. And the villagers pray.

They pray to a dead god that someone—anyone—can once again spare them from the Curse of Strahd.



Appendix A: Magic Items

The following magic items are featured in *Curse of Strahd* or added by the *Companion.*

+1 Rod of the Pact Keeper 337
+1 Shortsword of the Lost Crusader 337
+1 Sling Bullets 337
+2 Greatsword 337
+2 Plate Armor 337
+2 Shield 337
Alchemy Jug 337
Amulet of Health 337
Amulet of Proof Against Detection and Location 337
Ba'al Verzi Dagger 338
Bag of Tricks (Gray) 338
Berserker's Axe 338
Blood Spear 338
Charlatan's Die 338
Cloak of Protection 338
Daern's Instant Fortress 339
Driftglobe 339
Elixir of Health 339
Enduring Spellbook 339
Gulthias Staff 339
Hat of Disguise 339
Hat of Wizardry 339
Helm of Brilliance 340
Holy Symbol of Ravenkind 340
Icon of Ravenloft 340
Instrument of the Bards, Doss Lute 341
Lantern of Revealing 341
Libram of Souls and Flesh 341
Luck Blade 341
Mace of Terror 341
Manual of Bodily Health 342
Oil of Sharpness 342
Oil of Slipperiness 342
Philter of Love 342
Pipes of Haunting 342
Potion of Flying 342
Potion of Greater Healing 342
Potion of Healing 342
Potion of Heroism 342
Potion of Invulnerability 342
Potion of Necrotic Resistance 343
Potion of Poison 343
Potion of Superior Healing 343
Potion of Water Breathing 343
Ring of Mind Shielding 343
Ring of Regeneration 343
Ring of Warmth 343
Robe of Useful Items 343
Saint Markovia's Thighbone 344
Scroll of Protection From Fiends 344
Scroll of Protection From Undead 344
Shadowfell Shard 344
Spell Scrolls 344
Staff of Frost 344
Staff of Power 344
Statuette of Saint Markovia 345
Stone of Good Luck 345
Sunsword 345
Tome of Strahd 345
Tome of Understanding 345
Treantfeller 345
Walloping Ammunition 345
Wand of Secrets 345

Magic Items

Magic Items	Chapter(s)	Magic Items	Chapter(s)
+1 Rod of the Pact Keeper	4	*Potion of Heroism*	4
+1 Shortsword of the Lost Crusader	4	*Potion of Invulnerability*	7
+1 Sling Bullets	10	*Potion of Necrotic Resistance*	5
+2 Greatsword	7	*Potion of Poison*	5, 6
+2 Plate Armor	4	*Potion of Superior Healing*	8
+2 Shield	4	*Potion of Water Breathing*	5
Alchemy Jug	4	*Ring of Mind Shielding*	5
Amulet of Health	10	*Ring of Regeneration*	8
Amulet of Proof Against Detection & Location	2	*Ring of Warmth*	5, 9, 13
Ba'al Verzi Dagger	4	*Robe of Useful Items*	13
Bag of Tricks (Gray)	5	*Saint Markovia's Thighbone*	4
Berserker's Axe	6	*Scroll of Protection from Fiends*	5
Blood Spear	14	*Scroll of Protection from Undead*	5
Charlatan's Die	11	*Shadowfell Shard*	11
Cloak of Protection	DH, 3	*Spell Scroll of Bless*	DH
Daern's Instant Fortress	4	*Spell Scroll of Cone of Cold*	4
Driftglobe	11	*Spell Scroll of Fireball*	4
Elixir of Health	5	*Spell Scroll of Heroes' Feast*	8
Enduring Spellbook	3, 11	*Spell Scroll of Lightning Bolt*	4
Gulthias Staff	12	*Spell Scroll of Magic Circle*	4
Hat of Disguise	5	*Spell Scroll of Major Image*	11
Hat of Wizardry	3	*Spell Scroll of Mass Cure Wounds*	10
Helm of Brilliance	4	*Spell Scroll of Protection from Evil & Good*	2
Holy Symbol of Ravenkind	Random	*Spell Scroll of Protection from Poison*	DH
Icon of Ravenloft	4	*Spell Scroll of Remove Curse*	11, 13
Instrument of the Bards (Doss Lute)	4	*Spell Scroll of Revivify*	10
Lantern of Revealing	3	*Spell Scroll of Spiritual Weapon*	DH
Libram of Soul and Flesh	11	*Spell Scroll of Wall of Fire*	13
Luck Blade	4	*Staff of Frost*	13
Mace of Terror	4	*Staff of Power*	4
Manual of Bodily Health	4	*Statuette of Saint Markova*	8
Oil of Sharpness	10	*Stone of Good Luck*	10
Oil of Slipperiness	5	*Sunsword*	Random
Philter of Love	6	*Tome of Strahd*	Random
Pipes of Haunting	10	*Tome of Understanding*	13
Potion of Flying	2	*Treantfeller*	14
Potion of Greater Healing	4, 13	*Walloping Ammunition*	3
Potion of Healing	DH, 4, 5, 6	*Wand of Secrets*	11, 13

+1 Rod of the Pact Keeper

Rod, uncommon (requires attunement by a warlock)
While holding this rod, you gain a +1 bonus to spell attack rolls and to the saving throw DCs of your warlock spells. In addition, you can regain one warlock spell slot as an action while holding the rod. You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.

+1 Shortsword of the Lost Crusader

Shortsword, uncommon
This magic weapon was the previously unnamed *+1 shortsword* found in the Dungeons of Castle Ravenloft. The sword is sentient and lawful good (Intelligence 11, Wisdom 13, Charisma 13). It has hearing and normal vision out to a range of 120 feet. It communicates by transmitting emotion to the creature carrying or wielding it. The sword's purpose is to fight evil. The sword has the following additional properties:

- The sword continually sheds bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. Only by destroying the sword can this light be extinguished.
- A lawful good creature can attune itself to the sword in 1 minute.
- While attuned to the weapon, the sword's wielder can use the sword to cast the *crusader's mantle* spell. Once used, this property of the sword can't be used again until the next dawn.

+1 Sling Bullets

Ammunition, uncommon
You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this piece of magic ammunition. Once it hits a target, the ammunition is no longer magical.

+2 Greatsword

Greatsword, rare
You have a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

+2 Plate Armor

Armor (plate armor), very rare
You have a +2 bonus to AC while wearing this armor.

+2 Shield

Armor (shield), rare
While holding this shield, you have a +2 bonus to AC. This bonus is in addition to the shield's normal bonus to AC.

Alchemy Jug

Wondrous item, uncommon
This ceramic jug appears to be able to hold a gallon of liquid and weighs 12 pounds whether full or empty. Sloshing sounds can be heard from within the jug when it is shaken, even if the jug is empty.

You can use an action and name one liquid from the table below to cause the jug to produce the chosen liquid. Afterward, you can uncork the jug as an action and pour that liquid out, up to 2 gallons per minute. The maximum amount of liquid the jug can produce depends on the liquid you named.

Once the jug starts producing a liquid, it can't produce a different one, or more of one that has reached its maximum, until the next dawn.

Alchemy Jug

Liquid	Patch
Acid	8 ounces
Basic Poison	1/2 ounces
Beer	4 gallons
Honey	1 gallon
Mayonnaise	2 gallons
Oil	1 quart
Vinegar	2 gallons
Water (Fresh)	8 gallons
Water (Salt)	12 gallons
Wine	1 gallon

Amulet of Health

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)
Your Constitution score is 19 while you wear this amulet. It has no effect on you if your Constitution score is already 19 or higher without it.

Amulet of Proof Against Detection and Location

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)
While wearing this amulet, you are hidden from divination magic. You can't be targeted by such magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

Ba'al Verzi Dagger

Weapon (dagger), legendary (requires attunement by a creature of evil alignment)

The Ba'al Verzi anoint and dedicate their daggers for murder. This dagger is infamous for murdering Strahd von Zarovich himself. It was wielded by Leo Dilisnya, who took Strahd's life on the night of his brother's wedding and thereby ushered him into undeath.

The *Ba'al Verzi Dagger* is a platinum-hilted dagger with a ruby set into its pommel. Having drank the blood of Strahd von Zarovich, it gleams with an unsettling crimson light that runs down blade's fuller.

When you attack with this magical dagger, it deals an extra 3d6 necrotic damage on a hit, ignoring resistance to necrotic damage. You also score a critical hit with a roll of 19 or 20.

Sentience. The dagger is a lawful evil weapon with an Intelligence of 16, a Wisdom of 14, and a Charisma of 19. It has hearing and normal vision out to a range of 60 feet. The weapon communicates by transmitting emotions to the creature carrying or wielding it.

Personality. The dagger hungers to finish the dark work that birthed it into being: murdering Strahd von Zarovich. Until it is driven deep into his heart, the dagger remains sentient. The weapon wishes only to be free from thought existence.

Bag of Tricks (Gray)

Wondrous item, uncommon

This ordinary bag, made from gray cloth, appears empty. Reaching inside the bag, however, reveals the presence of a small, fuzzy object.

You can use an action to pull the fuzzy object from the bag and throw it up to 20 feet. When the object lands, it transforms into a creature you determine by rolling a d8 and consulting the table. The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 hit points.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions, and it acts on your turn. You can use a bonus action to command how the creature moves and what action it takes on its next turn, or to give it general orders, such as to attack your enemies. In the absence of such orders, the creature acts in a fashion appropriate to its nature.

Once three fuzzy objects have been pulled from the bag, the bag can't be used again until the next dawn.

Bag of Tricks (Gray)

d8	Creature
1	Weasel
2	Giant rat
3	Badger
4	Boar
5	Panther
6	Giant badger
7	Dire wolf
8	Giant elk

Berserker's Axe

Battleaxe, rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic battleaxe. In addition, while you are attuned to this weapon, your hit point maximum increases by 1 for each level you have attained.

Curse. This axe is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the axe, keeping it within reach at all times. You also have disadvantage on attack rolls with weapons other than this one, unless no foe is within 60 feet of you that you can see or hear.

Whenever a hostile creature damages you while the axe is in your possession, you must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or go berserk. While berserk, you must use your action each round to attack the creature nearest to you with the axe. If you can make extra attacks as part of the Attack action, you use those extra attacks, moving to attack the next nearest creature after you fell your current target. If you have multiple possible targets, you attack one at random. You are berserk until you start your turn with no creatures within 60 feet of you that you can see or hear.

Blood Spear

Weapon (spear), uncommon (requires attunement)

When you hit with a melee attack using this magic spear and reduce the target to 0 hit points, you gain 2d6 temporary hit points.

Any creature can wield the spear, but only the character chosen by Kavan to wield it gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

Charlatan's Die

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement)

Whenever you roll this six—sided die, you can control which number it rolls.

Cloak of Protection

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws while you wear this cloak.

Daern's Instant Fortress

Wondrous item, rare

You can use an action to place this 1-inch metal cube on the ground and speak its command word. The cube rapidly grows into a fortress that remains until you use an action to speak the command word that dismisses it, which works only if the fortress is empty.

The fortress is a square tower, 20 feet on a side and 30 feet high, with arrow slits on all sides and a battlement atop it. Its interior is divided into two floors. with a ladder running along one wall to connect them. The ladder ends at a trapdoor leading to the roof. When activated, the tower has a small door on the side facing you. The door opens only at your command, which you can speak as a bonus action. It is immune to the *knock* spell and similar magic, such as that of a *chime of opening*.

Each creature in the area where the fortress appears must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In either case, the creature is pushed to an unoccupied space outside but next to the fortress. Objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried take this damage and are pushed automatically.

The tower is made of adamantine, and its magic prevents it from being tipped over. The roof, the door, and the walls each have 100 hit points, immunity to damage from nonmagical weapons excluding siege weapons, and resistance to all other damage. Only a *wish* spell can repair the fortress (this use of the spell counts as replicating a spell of 8th level or lower). Each casting of *wish* causes the roof, the door, or one wall to regain 50 hit points.

Driftglobe

Wondrous item, uncommon

This small sphere of thick glass weighs 1 pound. If you are within 60 feet of it, you can speak its command word and cause it to emanate the light or daylight spell. Once used, the daylight effect can't be used again until the next dawn. You can speak another command word as an action to make the illuminated globe rise into the air and float no more than 5 feet off the ground. The globe hovers in this way until you or another creature grasps it. If you move more than 60 feet from the hovering globe, it follows you until it is within 60 feet of you. It takes the shortest route to do so. If prevented from moving, the globe sinks gently to the ground and becomes inactive, and its light winks out.

Elixir of Health

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, it cures any disease afflicting you, and it removes the blinded, deafened, paralyzed, and poisoned conditions. The clear red liquid has tiny bubbles of light in it.

Enduring Spellbook

Wondrous item, common

This spellbook, along with anything written on its pages, can't be damaged by fire or immersion in water. In addition, the spellbook doesn't deteriorate with age.

Gulthias Staff

Staff, rare (requires attunement)

Made from the branch of a Gulthias tree, a *Gulthias staff* is a spongy, black length of wood. Its evil makes beasts visibly uncomfortable while within 30 feet of it. The staff has 10 charges and regains 1d6 + 4 of its expended charges daily at dusk. If the staff is broken or burned to ashes, its wood releases a terrible, inhuman scream that can be heard out to a range of 300 feet. All blights that can hear the scream immediately wither and die.

Vampiric Strike. The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff. On a hit, it deals damage as a normal quarterstaff, and you can expend 1 charge to regain a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt by the weapon. Each time a charge is spent, red blood oozes from the staff's pores, and you must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with short term madness.

Blight Bane. While you are attuned to the staff, blights and other evil plant creatures don't regard you as hostile unless you harm them.

Hat of Disguise

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing this hat, you can use an action to cast the *disguise self* spell from it at will. The spell ends if the hat is removed.

Hat of Wizardry

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement by a wizard)

This antiquated, cone-shaped hat is adorned with gold crescent moons and stars. While you are wearing it, you gain the following benefits:

- You can use the hat as a spellcasting focus for your wizard spells.
- You can try to cast a cantrip that you don't know. The cantrip must be on the wizard spell list, and you must make a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If the check succeeds, you cast the spell. If the check fails, so does the spell, and the action used to cast the spell is wasted. In either case, you can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.

Helm of Brilliance

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This dazzling helm is set with 1d10 diamonds, 2d10 rubies, 3d10 fire opals, and 4d10 opals. Any gem pried from the helm crumbles to dust. When all the gems are removed or destroyed, the helm loses its magic. You gain the following benefits while wearing it:

- You can use an action to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18), using one of the helm's gems of the specified type as a component: *daylight* (opal), *fireball* (fire opal), *prismatic spray* (diamond), or *wall of fire* (ruby). The gem is destroyed when the spell is cast and disappears from the helm.
- As long as it has at least one diamond, the helm emits dim light in a 30-foot radius when at least one undead is within that area. Any undead that starts its turn in that area takes 1d6 radiant damage.
- As long as the helm has at least one ruby, you have resistance to fire damage.
- As long as the helm has at least one fire opal, you can use an action and speak a command word to cause one weapon you are holding to burst into flames. The flames emit bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. The flames are harmless to you and the weapon. When you hit with an attack using the blazing weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 fire damage. The flames last until you use a bonus action to speak the command word again or until you drop or stow the weapon.

Roll a d20 if you are wearing the helm and take fire damage as a result of failing a saving throw against a spell. On a roll of 1, the helm emits beams of light from its remaining gems. Each creature within 60 feet of the helm other than you must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or be struck by a beam, taking radiant damage equal to the number of gems in the helm. The helm and its gems are then destroyed.

Holy Symbol of Ravenkind

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a cleric or paladin of good alignment)

The holy symbol is a platinum amulet shaped like the sun, with a large crystal embedded in its center. The holy symbol has 10 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 4 charges daily at dawn.

Hold Vampires. As an action, you can expend 1 charge and present the holy symbol to make it flare with holy power. Vampires and vampire spawn within 30 feet of the holy symbol when it flares must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a target is paralyzed for 1 minute. It can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns to end the effect on itself.

Turn Undead. If you have the Turn Undead or the Turn the Unholy feature, you can expend 3 charges when you present the holy symbol while using that feature. When you do so, undead have disadvantage on their saving throws against the effect.

Sunlight. As an action, you can expend 5 charges while presenting the holy symbol to make it shed bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. The light is sunlight and lasts for 10 minutes or until you end the effect (no action required).

Icon of Ravenloft

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a creature of good alignment)

The Icon of Ravenloft is a 12-inch tall statuette made of the purest silver, weighing 10 pounds. It depicts a cleric kneeling in supplication. The icon was given to Strahd by the archpriest Ciril Romulich, an old family friend, to consecrate the castle and its chapel.

While within 30 feet of the icon, a creature is under the effect of a protection from evil and good spell against fiends and undead. Only a creature attuned to the icon can use its other properties.

Augury. You can use an action to cast an *augury* spell from the icon, with no material components required. Once used, this property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Bane of the Undead. You can use the icon as a holy symbol while using the Turn Undead or Turn the Unholy feature. If you do so, increase the save DC by 2.

Cure Wounds. While holding the icon, you can take an action to heal one creature that you can see within 30 feet of you. The target regains 3d8 + 3 hit points, unless it is an undead, a construct, or a fiend. Once used, this property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Instrument of the Bards, Doss Lute

Wondrous item, Instrument, uncommon (requires attunement by a bard)

An instrument of the bards is an exquisite example of its kind, superior to an ordinary instrument in every way. Seven types of these instruments exist, each named after a legendary bard college. A creature that attempts to play the instrument without being attuned to it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 2d4 psychic damage.

You can use an action to play the instrument and cast one of its spells. Once the instrument has been used to cast a spell, it can't be used to cast that spell again until the next dawn. The spells use your spellcasting ability and spell save DC. You can play the instrument while casting a spell that causes any of its targets to be charmed on a failed saving throw, thereby imposing disadvantage on the save. This effect applies only if the spell has a somatic or a material component.

All instruments of the bards can be used to cast the following spells: *fly, invisibility, levitate,* and *protection from evil and good.* In addition, the Doss lute can be used to cast *animal friendship, protection from energy* (fire only), and *protection from poison.*

If you have proficiency with a given musical instrument, you can add your proficiency bonus to any ability checks you make to play music with the instrument. A bard can use a musical instrument as a spellcasting focus. Each type of musical instrument requires a separate proficiency.

Lantern of Revealing

Wondrous item, uncommon

While lit, this hooded lantern burns for 6 hours on 1 pint of oil, shedding bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. Invisible creatures and objects are visible as long as they are in the lantern's bright light. You can use an action to lower the hood, reducing the light to dim light in a 5-foot radius.

Libram of Souls and Flesh

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a wizard)

With covers made of skin and fittings of bone, this tome is cold to the touch, and it whispers faintly. When found, the book contains the following spells, which are wizard spells for you while you are attuned to the book: *animate dead, circle of death, false life, finger of death, speak with dead, summon undead,* and *vampiric touch.* It functions as a spellbook for you. While you are holding the book, you can use it as a spellcasting focus for your wizard spells. The book has 3 charges, and it regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. You can use the charges in the following ways while holding it:

- If you spend 1 minute studying the book, you can expend 1 charge to replace one of your prepared wizard spells with a different spell in the book. The new spell must be of the necromancy school.
- As an action, you can expend 1 charge to take on a semblance of undeath for 10 minutes. For the duration, you take on a deathly appearance, and undead creatures are indifferent to you, unless you have damaged them. You also appear undead to all outward inspection and to spells used to determine the target's status. The effect ends if you deal damage or force a creature to make a saving throw.

Luck Blade

Longsword, legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While the sword is on your person, you also gain a +1 bonus to saving throws.

Luck. If the sword is on your person, you can call on its luck (no action required) to reroll one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you dislike. You must use the second roll. This property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Wish. The sword has 1d4 - 1 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 charge and cast the *wish* spell from it. This property can't be used again until the next dawn. The sword loses this property if it has no charges.

Mace of Terror

Mace, rare (requires attunement)

This magic weapon has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to release a wave of terror. Each creature of your choice in a 30-foot radius extending from you must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute. While it is frightened in this way, a creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from you as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of you. It also can't take reactions. For its action it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If it has nowhere it can move, the creature can use the Dodge action. At the end of each of its turns, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. The mace regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Manual of Bodily Health

Wondrous item, very rare

This book contains health and diet tips, and its words are charged with magic. If you spend 48 hours over a period of 6 days or fewer studying the book's contents and practicing its guidelines, your Constitution score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score. The manual then loses its magic, but regains it in a century.

Oil of Sharpness

Potion, very rare

This clear, gelatinous oil sparkles with tiny, ultrathin silver shards. The oil can coat one slashing or piercing weapon or up to 5 pieces of slashing or piercing ammunition. Applying the oil takes 1 minute. For 1 hour, the coated item is magical and has a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Oil of Slipperiness

Potion, uncommon

This sticky black unguent is thick and heavy in the container, but it flows quickly when poured. The oil can cover a Medium or smaller creature, along with the equipment it's wearing and carrying (one additional vial is required for each size category above Medium). Applying the oil takes 10 minutes. The affected creature then gains the effect of a freedom of movement spell for 8 hours.

Alternatively, the oil can be poured on the ground as an action, where it covers a 10-foot square, duplicating the effect of the grease spell in that area for 8 hours.

Philter of Love

Potion, uncommon

The next time you see a creature within 10 minutes after drinking this philter, you become charmed by that creature for 1 hour. If the creature is of a species and gender you are normally attracted to, you regard it as your true love while you are charmed. This potion's rose-hued, effervescent liquid contains one easy-to-miss bubble shaped like a heart.

Pipes of Haunting

Wondrous item, instrument, uncommon

You must be proficient with wind instruments to use these pipes. They have 3 charges. You can use an action to play them and expend 1 charge to create an eerie, spellbinding tune. Each creature within 30 feet of you that hears you play must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute. If you wish, all creatures in the area that aren't hostile toward you automatically succeed on the saving throw. A creature that fails the saving throw can repeat it at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw is immune to the effect of these pipes for 24 hours. The pipes regain 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

If you have proficiency with a given musical instrument, you can add your proficiency bonus to any ability checks you make to play music with the instrument. A bard can use a musical instrument as a spellcasting focus. Each type of musical instrument requires a separate proficiency.

Potion of Flying

Potion, very rare

When you drink this potion, you gain a flying speed equal to your walking speed for 1 hour and can hover. If you're in the air when the potion wears off, you fall unless you have some other means of staying aloft. This potion's clear liquid floats at the top of its container and has cloudy white impurities drifting in it.

Potion of Greater Healing

Potion, uncommon

You regain 4d4 + 4 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

Potion of Healing

Potion, common

You regain 2d4 + 2 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

Potion of Heroism

Potion, rare

For 1 hour after drinking it, you gain 10 temporary hit points that last for 1 hour. For the same duration, you are under the effect of the *bless* spell (no concentration required). This blue potion bubbles and steams as if boiling.

Potion of Invulnerability

Potion, rare

For 1 minute after you drink this potion, you have resistance to all damage. The potion's syrupy liquid looks like liquefied iron.

Potion of Necrotic Resistance

Potion, uncommon
When you drink this potion, you gain resistance to necrotic damage for 1 hour.

Potion of Poison

Potion, uncommon
This concoction looks, smells, and tastes like a *potion of healing* or other beneficial potion. However, it is actually poison masked by illusion magic. An *identify* spell reveals its true nature.

If you drink it, you take 3d6 poison damage, and you must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. At the start of each of your turns while you are poisoned in this way, you take 3d6 poison damage. At the end of each of your turns, you can repeat the saving throw. On a successful save, the poison damage you take on your subsequent turns decreases by 1d6. The poison ends when the damage decreases to 0.

Potion of Superior Healing

Potion, rare
You regain 8d4 + 8 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

Potion of Water Breathing

Potion, uncommon
You can breathe underwater for 1 hour after drinking this potion. Its cloudy green fluid smells of the sea and has a jellyfish-like bubble floating in it.

Ring of Mind Shielding

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)
While wearing this ring, you are immune to magic that allows other creatures to read your thoughts, determine whether you are lying, know your alignment, or know your creature type. Creatures can telepathically communicate with you only if you allow it.

You can use an action to cause the ring to become invisible until you use another action to make it visible, until you remove the ring, or until you die.

If you die while wearing the ring, your soul enters it, unless it already houses a soul. You can remain in the ring or depart for the afterlife. As long as your soul is in the ring, you can telepathically communicate with any creature wearing it. A wearer can't prevent this telepathic communication.

Ring of Regeneration

Ring, very rare (requires attunement)
While wearing this ring, you regain 1d6 hit points every 10 minutes, provided that you have at least 1 hit point. If you lose a body part, the ring causes the missing part to regrow and return to full functionality after 1d6 + 1 days if you have at least 1 hit point the whole time.

Ring of Warmth

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)
While wearing this ring, you have resistance to cold damage. In addition, you and everything you wear and carry are unharmed by temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Robe of Useful Items

Wondrous item, uncommon
This robe has cloth patches of various shapes and colors covering it. While wearing the robe. you can use an action to detach one of the patches, causing it to become the object or creature it represents. Once the last patch is removed, the robe becomes an ordinary garment.

The robe ordinarily has two of each of the following patches:

- Dagger
- Bullseye lantern (filled and lit)
- Steel mirror
- 10-foot pole
- Hempen rope (50 feet, coiled)
- Sack

In addition, the robe has 4d4 other patches. The DM chooses the patches or determines them randomly.

In This Chapter. The *robe of useful items* is worn by Neferon the arcanaloth in Area X5 with only the following eight patches remaining:

- Bag of 100 gp
- Iron door
- Wooden ladder
- Riding horse
- Pit
- Rowboat
- Spell scroll (moonbeam)
- Mastiffs

Robe of Useful Items

d100	Patch
01-08	Bag of 100 gp
09-15	Silver coffer (1 foot long, 6 inches wide and deep) worth 500 gp
16-22	Iron door (up to 10 feet wide and 10 feet high, barred on one side of your choice), which you can place in an opening you can reach; it conforms to fit the opening, attaching and hinging itself
23-30	10 gems worth 100 gp each
31-44	Wooden ladder (24 feet long)
45-51	A **riding horse** with saddle bags
52-59	Pit (a cube 10 feet on a side), which you can place on the ground within 10 feet of you
60-68	4 *potions of healing*
69-75	Rowboat (12 feet long)
76-83	Spell scroll containing one spell of 1st to 3rd level
84-90	2 **mastiffs**
91-96	Window (2 feet by 4 feet, up to 2 feet deep), which you can place on a vertical surface you can reach
97-00	*Portable ram*

Saint Markovia's Thighbone

Mace, rare (requires attunement)
If Saint Markovia's thighbone scores one or more hits against a **vampire** or a **vampire spawn** in the course of a single battle, the thighbone crumbles into dust once the battle concludes.

When you hit a fiend or an undead with this magic weapon, that creature takes an extra 2d6 radiant damage. If the target has 25 hit points or fewer after taking this damage, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be destroyed. On a successful save, the creature becomes frightened of you until the end of your next turn. While you hold this weapon, it sheds bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet.

Scroll of Protection From Fiends

Scroll, rare
Using an action to read the scroll encloses you in an invisible barrier that extends from you to form a 5-foot-radius, 10-foot-high cylinder. For 5 minutes, this barrier prevents fiends from entering or affecting anything within the cylinder. The cylinder moves with you and remains centered on you. However, if you move in such a way that a fiend would be inside the cylinder, the effect ends. A creature can attempt to overcome the barrier by using an action to make a DC 15 Charisma check. On a success, the creature ceases to be affected by the barrier.

Scroll of Protection From Undead

Scroll, rare
Using an action to read the scroll encloses you in an invisible barrier that extends from you to form a 5-foot-radius, 10-foot-high cylinder. For 5 minutes, this barrier prevents undead from entering or affecting anything within the cylinder. The cylinder moves with you and remains centered on you. However, if you move in such a way that an undead would be inside the cylinder, the effect ends. A creature can attempt to overcome the barrier by using an action to make a DC 15 Charisma check. On a success, the creature ceases to be affected by the barrier.

Shadowfell Shard

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer)
This dull, cold crystal sits heavy and leaden, saturated by the Shadowfell's despair. As an action, you can attach the shard to a Tiny object (such as a weapon or a piece of jewelry) or detach it. It falls off if your attunement to it ends. You can use the shard as a spellcasting focus while you hold or wear it.

When you use a Metamagic option on a spell while you are holding or wearing the shard, you can momentarily curse one creature targeted by the spell; choose one ability score, and until the end of your next turn, the creature has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws that use that ability.

Spell Scrolls

Wondrous object, rarity varies
A spell scroll bears the words of a single spell, written as a mystical cipher. If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires the spell's normal casting time. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost.

If the spell is on your class's spell list but of a higher level than you can normally cast, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting ability to determine whether you cast it successfully. The DC is 10 + the spell's level. On a failed check, the spell disappears from the scroll with no other effect. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and the scroll itself crumbles to dust.

In Curse of Strahd. The following spell scrolls are present in *Curse of Strahd: bless, cone of cold, fireball, heroes' feast, lightning bolt, magic circle, major image, mass cure wounds, protection from evil and good, protection from poison, remove curse, revivify, spiritual weapon, wall of fire.*

Staff of Frost

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)
You have resistance to cold damage while you hold this staff. The staff has 10 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *cone of cold* (5 charges), *fog cloud* (1 charge), *ice storm* (4 charges), or *wall of ice* (4 charges).The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1. the staff turns to water and is destroyed.

Staff of Power

Staff, weapon, very rare (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)
This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you gain a +2 bonus to Armor Class, saving throws, and spell attack rolls. The staff has 20 charges for the following properties. The staff regains 2d8 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +2 bonus to attack and damage roll but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regain 1d8 + 2 charges.

Power Strike. When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 force damage to the target.

Spells. While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: *cone of cold* (5 charges), *fireball* (5th-level version, 5 charges), *globe of invulnerability* (6 charges), *hold monster* (5 charges), *levitate* (2 charges), *lightning bolt* (5th-level version, 5 charges), *magic missile* (1 charge), *ray of enfeeblement* (1 charge), or *wall of force* (5 charges).

Retributive Strike. You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it. You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to a random plane of existence, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid the effect, you take force damage equal to 16 × the number of charges in the staff. Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin, as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

- If within 10 feet: 8 x the number of charges in the staff
- If 11-20 feet: 6 x the number of charges in the staff
- If 21-30 feet: 4 x the number of charges in the staff

Statuette of Saint Markovia

Wondrous item, uncommon
This alabaster-carved statuette of Saint Markovia grants a +1 bonus to saving throws to a good-aligned character that is carrying or holding it.

Stone of Good Luck

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)
While this polished agate is on your person, you gain a +1 bonus to ability checks and saving throws.

Sunsword

Longsword, legendary (requires attunement)
This item appears to be a longsword hilt. While grasping the hilt, you can use a bonus action to cause a blade of pure radiance to spring into existence, or make the blade disappear. While the blade exists, this magic longsword has the finesse property. If you are proficient with shortswords or longswords, you are proficient with the sun blade.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, which deals radiant damage instead of slashing damage. When you hit an undead with it, that target takes an extra 1d8 radiant damage.

The sword's luminous blade emits bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. The light is sunlight. While the blade persists, you can use an action to expand or reduce its radius of bright and dim light by 5 feet each, to a maximum of 30 feet each or a minimum of 10 feet each.

Sentience. The *Sunsword* is a sentient chaotic good weapon with an Intelligence of 11, a Wisdom of 17, and a Charisma of 16. It has hearing and normal vision out to a range of 60 feet. The weapon communicates by transmitting emotions to the creature carrying it or wielding it.

Personality. The *Sunsword's* special purpose is to destroy Strahd, not so much because it wants to free the land of Barovia from evil but because it wants revenge for the loss of its crystal blade. The weapon secretly fears its own destruction.

Tome of Strahd

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by an artificer, bard, sorcerer, warlock or wizard)
The *Companion* has revised the *Tome of Strahd* into a magic item. The tome has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *fog cloud* (1 charge), *misty step* (1 charge), *pass without trace* (2 charges, with a limited duration of 1 minute), or *silence* (1 charge). It regains 1d3 charges daily at dawn.

Spellbook. The tome contains the following spells: *animate dead, animate objects, blight, comprehend languages, detect thoughts, fireball, fog cloud, greater invisibility, gust of wind, mirror image, nondetection, polymorph, scrying, sleep.*

Tome of Understanding

Wondrous item, very rare
This book contains intuition and insight exercises, and its words are charged with magic. If you spend 48 hours over a period of 6 days or fewer studying the book's contents and practicing its guidelines, your Wisdom score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score. The manual then loses its magic, but regains it in a century.

Treantfeller

Weapon (battleaxe), uncommon
This axe's handle is carved with leaves and vines, and the weapon weighs half as much as a normal battleaxe. When the axe hits a plant, whether an ordinary plant or a plant creature, the target takes an extra 1d8 slashing damage.

When a creature of non-good alignment wields the axe, it sprouts thorns whenever its wielder makes an attack with it. These thorns prick the wielder for 1 piercing damage after the attack is made, and this damage is considered magical.

Walloping Ammunition

Ammunition, common
This ammunition packs a wallop. A creature hit by the ammunition must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Wand of Secrets

Wand, uncommon
The wand has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges, and if a secret door or trap is within 30 feet of you, the wand pulses and points at the one nearest to you. The wand regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Appendix B: Bestiary

The following creatures are featured in *Curse of Strahd* or added by the *Companion.*

The Abbot 347
Acolyte 347
The Angry 347
Animated Armor 348
Animated Halberd 348
Arcanaloth 348
Argynvost the Reanimated 349
Arrigal 349
Assassin 350
Baba Lysaga 350
Baboon 351
Bandit 351
Bandit Captain 351
Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut 351
Banshee 352
Barovian Witch 352
Berserker 352
Black Pudding 352
Broom of Animated Attack 353
Brown Bear 353
Choker 353
Clay Golem 354
Commoner 354
Crawling Claw 354
Cult Fanatic 354
Cultist 355
Death Slaad 355
Dire Wolf 355
Draft Horse 355
Drekht 356
Dretch 356
Druid 356
Dryad 357
Emil Toranescu 357
Esmardeus 358
Exethanter 358
Ezmerelda d'Avenir 359
Fiona Wachter 359
Flameskull 359
Flesh Golem 360
Flying Sword 360
Gargoyle 360
Ghast 361
Ghost 361
Ghoul 361
Giant Poisonous Snake 362
Giant Spider 362
Giant Wolf Spider 362
Gibbering Mouther 363
Gladiator 363
Goat 363
Gray Ooze 364
Grick 364
Green Hag 364
Guard 364
Guardian Portrait 365
Hell Hound 365
The Hungry 365
Imp 365
Invisible Stalker 366
Iron Golem 366
Izek Strazni 366
Kasimir Velikov 366
Kavan's Skeleton 367
Kavan's Blood 367
Kavan's Spirit 367
Khazan 368
Kiril Stoyanovich 368
The Lonely 369
The Lost 369
The Mad Mage 369
Madam Eva 370
Mage 370
Mastiff 370
Milivoj 370
Mimic 371
Mongrelfolk 371
Mule 371
Needle Blight 372
Nala 372
Night Hag 372
Nightmare 373
Noble 373
Nothic 373
Patrina Velikovna 373
Phantom Warrior 374
Pidlwick II 374
Poltergeist 374
Priest 375
The Prophet 375
Quasit 376
Rahadin 376
Red Dragon Wyrmling 376
Revenant 377
Revyr 377
Riding Horse 377
Roc 377
Rudolph van Richten 378
Rug of Smothering 378
Saber-toothed Tiger 378
Sangzor 378
Scarecrow 379
Scout 379
Shadow 379
Shadow Demon 380
The Shadow of Strahd 380
Shambling Mound 380
Shield Guardian 381
Silver Dragon Wyrmling 381
Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire 382
Sir Godfrey Gwilym 382
Skeleton 383
Smoke Mephit 383
Snow Maiden 383
Spy 384
Stone Golem 384
Specter 384
Strahd von Zarovich 385
Strahd Zombie 386
Strahd's Animated Armor 386
Swarm of Animated Books 386
Swarm of Bats 387
Swarm of Centipedes 387
Swarm of Poisonous Snakes 387
Swarm of Rats 387
Swarm of Ravens 388
Swarm of Spiders 388
Swarm of Wasps 388
Thug 388
Tree Blight 389
Twig Blight 389
Vampire Spawn 389
Vladimir Horngaard 390
Veteran 390
Vine Blight 390
Vrock 391
Wereraven 391
Werewolf 392
Wight 392
Will-o'-Wisp 393
Wolf 393
Wraith 393
The Wretched 394
Young Blue Dragon 394
Zombie 394

The Abbot

Medium celestial, lawful evil
Armor Class 17
Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)
Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wis +9, Cha +9
Skills Insight +9, Perception +9
Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Angelic Weapons. The Abbot's weapon attacks are magical. When The Abbot hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 radiant damage (included in the attack).
Innate Spellcasting. The Abbot's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). The Abbot can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:
At will: *detect evil and good*
1/day each: *commune, raise dead*
Magic Resistance. The Abbot has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The Abbot makes two melee attacks.
Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage.
Healing Touch (3/Day). The Abbot touches another creature. The target magically regains 20 (4d8 + 2) hit points and is freed from any curse, disease, poison, blindness, or deafness.
Change Shape. The Abbot magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating equal to or less than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (The Abbot's choice). In a new form, The Abbot retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and special senses are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that it lacks.

Acolyte

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spellcasting. The acolyte is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The acolyte has following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (3 slots): *bless, cure wounds, sanctuary*

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

The Angry

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil
Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 255 (30d8 + 120)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +5

Rising Anger. If another creature deals damage to the Angry, the Angry's attack rolls have advantage until the end of its next turn, and the first time it hits with a hook attack on its next turn, the attack's target takes an extra 19 (3d12) psychic damage. On its turn, the Angry has disadvantage on attack rolls if no other creature has dealt damage to it since the end of its last turn.
Two Heads. The Angry has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, or knocked unconscious.

Actions

Multiattack. The Angry makes twohook attacks.
Hook. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) piercing damage.

Animated Armor

Medium construct, unaligned
Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The armor is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
False Appearance. While the armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

Actions

Multiattack. The armor makes two melee attacks
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Animated Halberd

Small construct, unaligned
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 17 (5d6)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	5 (-3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +4
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The sword is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the sword must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
False Appearance. While the sword remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal sword.

Actions

Halberd. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage.

Arcanaloth

Medium fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil
Armor Class 17
Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +7
Skills Arcana +13, Deception +11, Insight +11, Perception +7
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities acid, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Innate Spellcasting. The arcanaloth's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The arcanaloth can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: *alter self, darkness, heat metal, invisibility* (self only), *magic missile*
Magic Resistance. The arcanaloth has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The arcanaloth's weapon attacks are magical.
Spellcasting. The arcanaloth is a 16th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The arcanaloth has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, shield, Tenser's floating disk*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, phantasmal force, suggestion*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fear, fireball*
4th level (3 slots): *banishment, dimension door*
5th level (2 slots): *contact other plane, hold monster*
6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*
7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*
8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
Teleport. The arcanaloth magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Argynvost the Reanimated

Huge undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 175 (14d12 + 84)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +10
Skills Athletics +8, Perception +6
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages —
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Argynvost fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. Argynvost makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Shadowfrost Breath (Recharge 6). Argynvost exhales an icy, shadowy blast in a 30-foot-cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) necrotic damage and 14 (4d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Actions

Argynvost can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Argynvost regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Detect. Argynvost makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Claw. Argynvost makes a claw attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). Argynvost beats his wings. Each creature within 10 feet of Argynvost must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. Argynvost can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Arrigal

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil
Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +4
Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +3, Perception +3, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances poison
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Thieves' cant
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Assassinate. During its first turn, Arrigal has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit Arrigal scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If Arrigal is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, Arrigal instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Arrigal deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Arrigal that isn't incapacitated and Arrigal doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. Arrigal makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Curse (Recharges After a Long Rest). Arrigal targets a creature he can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be cursed with one of the effects below. The curse lasts until ended with a *greater restoration*, *remove curse*, or similar spell. Once the curse ends, Arrigal takes psychic damage.

- The target cannot cast spells that have somatic components (1d6 psychic damage).
- The target gains vulnerability to a damage type of Arrigal's choice (3d6 psychic damage).
- The target has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws tied to one ability score of Arrigal's choice (3d6 psychic damage).
- The target's attunement to one magic item (chosen by the DM) ends, and the target can't attune to the chosen item until the curse ends (5d6 psychic damage).
- The target is blinded, deafened, or both (5d6 psychic damage).

Evil Eye (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Arrigal targets a creature within 10 feet that he can see, choosing to duplicate one of the following spells: *animal friendship*, *charm person*, or *hold person* (spell DC 11). On a success, Arrigal is blinded until the end of his next turn, and the target is immune to the Evil Eye of all Vistani for 24 hours.

Assassin

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment
Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 44)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +4
Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +3, Perception +3, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances poison
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Thieves' cant plus any two languages
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Assassinate. During its first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.
Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.
Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The assassin deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The assassin makes two shortsword attacks.
Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Baba Lysaga

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +7
Skills Arcana +13, Religion +13
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Giant
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Shapechanger. Baba Lysaga can use an action to polymorph into a swarm of insects (flies), or back into her true form. While in swarm form, she has a walking speed of 5 feet and a flying speed of 30 feet. Anything she is wearing transforms with her, but nothing she is carrying does.
Blessing of Mother Night. Baba Lysaga is shielded against divination magic, as though protected by a *nondetection* spell.
Spellcasting. Baba Lysaga is a 16th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Baba Lysaga has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, magic missile, sleep, witch bolt*
2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness, enlarge/reduce, misty step*
3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *blight, Evard's black tentacles, polymorph*
5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill, geas, scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *programmed illusion, true seeing*
7th level (1 slot): *finger of death, mirage arcane*
8th level (1 slot): *power word stun*

Actions

Multiattack. Lysaga makes three attacks with her quarterstaff.
Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.
Summon Swarms of Insects (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Baba Lysaga summons 1d4 swarms of insects. A summoned swarm appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of Baba Lysaga and acts as her ally. It remains until it dies or until Baba Lysaga dismisses it as an action.

Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut

Gargantuan construct, unaligned
Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 263 (17d20 + 85)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	7 (-2)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +0, Cha +0
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone
Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Antimagic Susceptibility. The hut is incapacitated while the magic gem that animates it is in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the hut must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
Siege Monster. The hut deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The hut makes three attacks with its roots. It can replace one of these attacks with a rock attack.
Root. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. Hit: 30 (4d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage.
Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Baboon

Small beast, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 3 (1d6)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Pack Tactics. The baboon has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the baboon's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 1) piercing damage.

Bandit

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment
Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.
Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Bandit Captain

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment
Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +5, Wis +2
Skills Athletics +4, Deception +4
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any two languages
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Multiattack. The captain makes three melee attacks: two with its scimitar and one with its dagger. Or the captain makes two ranged attacks with its daggers.
Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.
Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The captain adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the captain must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Banshee

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 58 (13d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +2, Cha +5
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Detect Life. The banshee can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.
Incorporeal Movement. The banshee can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Actions

Corrupting Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) necrotic damage.
Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the banshee that can see her must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the banshee is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the banshee's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours.
Wail (1/Day). The banshee releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

Barovian Witch

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +4, Perception +2
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spellcasting. The witch is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The witch has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *ray of sickness, sleep, Tasha's hideous laughter*
2nd level (2 slots): *alter self, invisibility*

Actions

Claws (Requires Alter Self). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage. This attack is magical.
Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Berserker

Medium humanoid (any race),
Armor Class 13 (hide armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the berserker can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Actions

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

Black Pudding

Large ooze, unaligned
Armor Class 7
Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, lightning, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amorphous. The pudding can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Corrosive Form. A creature that touches the pudding or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood that hits the pudding corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to –5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal or wood that hits the pudding is destroyed after dealing damage. The pudding can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.
Spider Climb. The pudding can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Reactions

Split. When a pudding that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new puddings if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new pudding has hit points equal to half the original pudding's, rounded down. New puddings are one size smaller than the original pudding.

Broom of Animated Attack

Small construct, unaligned
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 17 (5d6)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	5 (-3)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone
Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The broom is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the broom must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
False Appearance. While the broom remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal broom.

Actions

Multiattack. The broom makes two melee attacks.
Broomstick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Animated Attack. If the broom is motionless and a creature grabs hold of it, the broom makes a Dexterity check contested by the creature's Strength check. If the broom wins the contest, it flies out of the creature's grasp and makes a melee attack against it with advantage on the attack roll.

Brown Bear

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 34 (4d10 + 12)
Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3
Senses passive Perception X13
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Choker

Small aberration, chaotic evil
Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Deep Speech
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Aberrant Quickness (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The choker can take an extra action on its turn.
Boneless. The choker can move through and occupy a space as narrow as 4 inches wide without squeezing.
Spider Climb. The choker can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. The choker makes two tentacle attacks.
Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the choker can't use this tentacle on another target. The choker has two tentacles. If this attack is a critical hit, the target also can't breathe or speak until the grapple ends.

Clay Golem

Large construct, unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities acid, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 9
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Acid Absorption. Whenever the golem is subjected to acid damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the acid damage dealt.
Berserk. Whenever the golem starts its turn with 60 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the golem goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the golem attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the golem goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.
Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks
Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. The target dies if this attack reduces its hit point maximum to 0. The reduction lasts until removed by the greater restoration spell or other magic.
Haste (Recharge 5–6). Until the end of its next turn, the golem magically gains a +2 bonus to its AC, has advantage on Dexterity saving throws, and can use its slam attack as a bonus action.

Commoner

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 4 (1d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Crawling Claw

Tiny undead, neutral evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 2 (1d4)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 0 (0 or 10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Turn Immunity. The claw is immune to effects that turn undead.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning or slashing damage (claw's choice).

Cult Fanatic

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment
Armor Class 13 (leather armor)
Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Dark Devotion. The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.
Spellcasting. The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*
2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

Actions

Multiattack. The fanatic makes two melee attacks.
Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Cultist

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment
Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Death Slaad

Medium aberration (shapechanger), chaotic evil
Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +6, Perception +8
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Slaad, telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Shapechanger. The slaad can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.
Innate Spellcasting. The slaad's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The slaad can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: *detect magic, detect thoughts, invisibility* (self only), *mage hand, major image*
2/day each: *fear, fireball, fly, tongues*
1/day each: *cloudkill, plane shift*
Magic Resistance. The slaad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The slaad's weapon attacks are magical.
Regeneration. The slaad regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The slaad makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws or greatsword.
Bite (Slaad Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.
Claws (Slaad Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.
Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Dire Wolf

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception X13
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Draft Horse

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 +4) bludgeoning damage.

Drekht

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 14 (hide armor; 16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +4
Skills Medicine +4, Nature +5, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception X14
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+4 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Spellcasting. Drekht casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *spare the dying, thorn whip*

2/day each: *barkskin, earth tremor*

1/day each: *enhance ability, thunderwave*

Bonus Actions

Spellcasting. Drekht casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *shillelagh*

3/day: *healing word*

Reactions

Dampen Elements. When Drekht or a creature he can see within 30 feet takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage, he grants resistance to that creature against that instance of damage.

Dretch

Small fiend (demon), chaotic evil
Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft. (works only with creatures that understand Abyssal)
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Multiattack. The dretch makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) slashing damage.

Fetid Cloud (1/Day). A 10-foot radius of disgusting green gas extends out from the dretch. The gas spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. It lasts for 1 minute or until a strong wind disperses it. Any creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. While poisoned in this way, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both, and can't take reactions.

Druid

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class X11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Druidic plus any two languages
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spellcasting. The druid is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh*

1st level (4 slots): *entangle, longstrider, speak with animals, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *animal messenger, barkskin*

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+4 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Dryad

Medium fey, neutral
Armor Class 11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Elvish, Sylvan
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Innate Spellcasting. The dryad's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The dryad can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: *druidcraft*
3/day each: *entangle*, *goodberry*
1/day each: *barkskin*, *pass without trace*, *shillelagh*

Magic Resistance. The dryad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Speak with Beasts and Plants. The dryad can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language.

Tree Stride. Once on her turn, the dryad can use 10 feet of her movement to step magically into one living tree within her reach and emerge from a second living tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be large or bigger.

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+6 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Fey Charm. The dryad targets one humanoid or beast that she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see the dryad, it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature regards the dryad as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the dryad's control, it takes the dryad's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can.

Each time the dryad or its allies do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the dryad dies, is on a different plane of existence from the target, or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the dryad's Fey Charm for the next 24 hours.

The dryad can have no more than one humanoid and up to three beasts charmed at a time.

Emil Toranescu

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic evil
Armor Class 11 in humanoid form, 12 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form
Hit Points 72 (11d8 + 22)
Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common (can't speak in wolf form)
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. Emil can use his action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf, or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. Emil has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Emil makes two attacks: two with his spear (humanoid form) or one with his bite and one with his claws (hybrid form).

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spear (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Esmardeus

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 14 (hide armor; 16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +6
Skills Medicine +6, Nature +3, Perception +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Special Equipment. Esmardeus wields a *Gulthias staff*.

Actions

Multiattack. Esmardeus makes two attacks with his *Gulthias staff*.

Gulthias Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage, or 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack. The staff has 10 charges. When he hits a creature, Esmardeus can expend 1 charge to regain a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt.

Spellcasting. Esmardeus casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

3/day each: *barkskin*, *entangle*

2/day each: *tidal wave*

1/day each: *erupting earth*

Bonus Actions

Spellcasting. Esmardeus casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

At will: *shillelagh*

Exethanter

Medium undead (lich),
Armor Class 17
Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9
Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9
Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, plus up to five other languages
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Exethanter fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed lich gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Spellcasting. Exethanter is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). Exethanter has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

Turn Resistance. Exethanter has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Legendary Actions

Exethanter can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Exethanter regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. Exethanter casts a cantrip.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). Exethanter uses its Paralyzing Touch.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Exethanter fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Exethanter's gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Exethanter must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good
Armor Class 17 (*+1 studded leather armor*)
Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +3
Skills Acrobatics +7, Arcana +6, Deception +9, Insight +3, Medicine +3, Perception +6, Performance +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, Survival +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Special Equipment. In addition to her magic armor and weapons, Ezmerelda has two *potions of greater healing*, six vials of holy water, and three wooden stakes.

Spellcasting. Ezmerelda is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Ezmerelda has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *protection from evil and good, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *darkvision, knock, mirror image*
3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance, lightning bolt, magic circle*
4th level (1 slot): *greater invisibility*

Actions

Multiattack. Ezmerelda makes three attacks: two with her *+1 rapier* and one with her *+1 handaxe* or her silvered shortsword.

Rapier +1. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Handaxe +1. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Silvered Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Curse (Recharges after a Long Rest). Ezmerelda targets one creature that she can see within 30 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be cursed. While cursed, the target has vulnerability to one type of damage of Ezmerelda's choice. The curse lasts until ended with a greater restoration spell, a remove curse spell, or similar magic. When the curse ends, Ezmerelda takes 3d6 psychic damage.

Evil Eye (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Ezmerelda targets one creature that she can see within 10 feet of her and casts one of the following spells on the target (save DC 14), requiring neither somatic nor material components to do so: *animal friendship, charm person,* or *hold person*. If the target succeeds on the initial saving throw, Ezmerelda is blinded until the end of her next turn. Once a target succeeds on a saving throw against this effect, it is immune to the Evil Eye power of all Vistani for 24 hours.

Fiona Wachter

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Infernal
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, Fiona can expend a spell slot to cause her melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If Fiona expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. Fiona is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Fiona has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *command, purify food and drink, sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *augury, gentle repose, hold person*
3rd level (2 slots): *animate dead, create food and water*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Flameskull

Tiny undead, neutral evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 40 (9d4 + 18)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Perception +2
Damage Resistances lightning, necrotic, piercing
Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Illumination. The flameskull sheds either dim light in a 15-foot radius, or bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. It can switch between the options as an action.

Magic Resistance. The flameskull has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation. If the flameskull is destroyed, it regains all its hit points in 1 hour unless holy water is sprinkled on its remains or a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell is cast on them.

Spellcasting. The flameskull is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It requires no somatic or material components to cast its spells. The flameskull has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*
1st level (3 slots): *magic missile, shield*
2nd level (2 slots): *blur, flaming sphere*
3rd level (1 slot): *fireball*

Actions

Multiattack. The flameskull uses Fire Ray twice.

Fire Ray. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Flesh Golem

Medium construct, neutral
Armor Class 9
Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Aversion of Fire. If the golem takes fire damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.
Berserk. Whenever the golem starts its turn with 40 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the golem goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the golem attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the golem goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.
The golem's creator, if within 60 feet of the berserk golem, can try to calm it by speaking firmly and persuasively. The golem must be able to hear its creator, who must take an action to make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the check succeeds, the golem ceases being berserk. If it takes damage while still at 40 hit points or fewer, the golem might go berserk again.
Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
Lightning Absorption. Whenever the golem is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.
Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Flying Sword

Small construct, unaligned
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 17 (5d6)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	5 (-3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +4
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The sword is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by dispel magic, the sword must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
False Appearance. While the sword remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal sword.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage.

Gargoyle

Medium elemental, chaotic evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Terran
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the gargoyle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an inanimate statue.

Actions

Multiattack. The gargoyle makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Ghast

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistances necrotic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ghast must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghast's Stench for 24 hours.
Turn Defiance. The ghast and any ghouls within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Ghoul

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Ghost

Medium undead, Any Alignment
Armor Class 11
Hit Points 45 (10d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attack
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft.,, passive Perception 11
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.
Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage.
Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.
Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the ghost that can see it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also ages 1d4 × 10 years. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this ghost's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours. The aging effect can be reversed with a *greater restoration* spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.
Possession (Recharge 6). One humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Giant Poisonous Snake

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Perception +2
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Giant Spider

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Stealth +7
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.
Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Giant Wolf Spider

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +7
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.
Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Gibbering Mouther

Medium aberration, neutral
Armor Class 9
Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)
Speed 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8(-1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities prone
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Aberrant Ground. The ground in a 10-foot radius around the mouther is doughlike difficult terrain. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

Gibbering. The mouther babbles incoherently while it can see any creature and isn't incapacitated. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the mouther and can hear the gibbering must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and rolls a d8 to determine what it does during its turn. On a 1 to 4, the creature does nothing. On a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action or bonus action and uses all its movement to move in a randomly determined direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach or does nothing if it can't make such an attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The gibbering mouther makes one bite attack and, if it can, uses its Blinding Spittle.

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (5d6) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is killed by this damage, it is absorbed into the mouther.

Blinding Spittle (Recharge 5–6). The mouther spits a chemical glob at a point it can see within 15 feet of it. The glob explodes in a blinding flash of light on impact. Each creature within 5 feet of the flash must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the mouther's next turn.

Gladiator

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Brave. The gladiator has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the gladiator hits with it (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The gladiator makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Parry. The gladiator adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the gladiator must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Goat

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 4 (1d8)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 0 (0 or 10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Charge. If the goat moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sure-Footed. The goat has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Actions

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Gray Ooze

Medium ooze, unaligned
Armor Class 8
Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)
Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

Skills Stealth +2
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amorphous. The ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Corrode Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the ooze corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to –5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the ooze is destroyed after dealing damage. The ooze can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical metal in 1 round.
False Appearance. While the ooze remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oily pool or wet rock.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage, and if the target is wearing nonmagical metal armor, its armor is partly corroded and takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Grick

Medium monstrosity, neutral
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 27 (6d8)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Stone Camouflage. The grick has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

Actions

Multiattack. The grick makes one attack with its tentacles. If that attack hits, the grick can make one beak attack against the same target.
Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.
Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Green Hag

Medium fey, neutral evil
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +3
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amphibious. The hag can breathe air and water.
Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: *dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery*
Mimicry. The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.
Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.
Invisible Passage. The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell, or until her concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, so she can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.

Guard

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Guardian Portrait

Medium construct, unaligned
Armor Class 5 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, plus up to two other languages
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The portrait is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the portrait must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or become unconscious for 1 minute.

Constructed Nature. An animated object doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. The magic that animates an object is dispelled when the construct drops to 0 hit points. An animated object reduced to 0 hit points becomes inanimate and is too damaged to be of much use or value to anyone.

False Appearance. While the figure in the portrait remains motionless, the portrait is indistinguishable from a normal painting.

Innate Spellcasting. The portrait's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12). The portrait can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *counterspell*, *crown of madness*, *hypnotic pattern*, *telekinesis*

Hell Hound

Medium fiend, lawful evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5
Damage Immunities fire
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages understands Infernal but can't speak it
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Smell. The hound has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
Pack Tactics. The hound has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the hound's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.
Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The hound exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The Hungry

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 225 (30d8 + 90)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Life Hunger. If a creature the Hungry can see regains hit points, the Hungry gains two benefits until the end of its next turn: it has advantage on attack rolls, and its bite deals an extra 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a hit.

Actions

Multiattack. The Hungry makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) necrotic damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 16) and is restrained until the grapple ends. While grappling a creature, the Hungry can't attack with its claws.

Imp

Tiny fiend (devil), lawful evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)
Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Infernal, Common
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20 ft.), a raven (20 ft., fly 60 ft.), or a spider (20 ft., climb 20 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.
Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.
Magic Resistance. The imp has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Sting (Bite in Beast Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.

Invisible Stalker

Medium elemental, neutral
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)
Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +10
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Auran, understands Common but doesn't speak it
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Faultless Tracker. The stalker is given a quarry by its summoner. The stalker knows the direction and distance to its quarry as long as the two of them are on the same plane of existence. The stalker also knows the location of its summoner.
Invisibility. The stalker is invisible.

Actions

Multiattack. The stalker makes two slam attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Iron Golem

Large construct, unaligned
Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +5

Fire Absorption. Whenever the golem is subjected to fire damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the fire damage dealt.
Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two melee attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.
Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) slashing damage.
Poison Breath (Recharge 5–6). The golem exhales poisonous gas in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Izek Strazni

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)

Skills Intimidation +8, Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Izek hits with it (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. Izek makes two attacks with his battleaxe.
Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) when used with two hands.
Hurl Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it catches fire.

Kasimir Velikov

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral
Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 40 (9d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +6, History +6
Damage Resistances cold (*ring of warmth*)
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Fey Ancestry. Kasimir has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.
Special Equipment. Kasimir wears a *ring of warmth*.
Spellcasting. Kasimir is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*
4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*
5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Kavan's Blood

Small ooze, lawful evil
Armor Class 8
Hit Points 26 (4d6 + 12)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	9 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

Saving Throws Dex +1
Damage Resistances slashing from nonmagical attacks except by Kavan's chosen
Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius(, passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amorphous. Kavan's blood can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Bloodthirsty. Kavan's blood has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.
Spider Climb. Kavan's blood can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the target takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns.

Kavan's Skeleton

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 16 (breastplate)
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +4
Skills Athletics +4
Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning
Damage Resistances poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Fragrance of the Grave. Any creature other than Kavan's spirit or Kavan's blood that starts its turn within 5 feet of Kavan's skeleton must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the stench of Kavan's skeleton for 1 hour.
Reknit (3/Day). If Kavan's skeleton is slain but is within 20 feet of Kavan's spirit, it rises again at the start of its next turn with 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. Kavan's skeleton makes two attacks.
Blood Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, Kavan's skeleton gains 7 (2d6) temporary hit points.

Kavan's Spirit

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 11
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +5
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks except by Kavan's chosen
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Ethereal Sight. Kavan's spirit can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.
Incorporeal Movement. Kavan's spirit can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) necrotic damage.
Cairn Stones (Recharge 5-6). Kavan's spirit telekinetically hurls 1d4 + 1 stones from his cairn, each hitting a creature of his choice within 60 feet that he can see. A stone deals 1d4 + 1 bludgeoning damage to its target. The stones all strike simultaneously, and he can direct them to hit one creature or several.

Khazan

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 127 (17d10 + 34)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +6, Wis +6
Skills Perception +6, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception X16
Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Rejuvenation. While Strahd lives, Khazan gains a new body in 1d10 hours if destroyed, with all its hit points, reappearing in Castle Ravenloft.

Actions

Multiattack. Khazan makes two claw attacks.

Piercing Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, Khazan can pull the target up to 10 feet toward himself, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Khazan has two claws. While a claw grapples a target, the claw can attack only that target.

Shadow Jump. If Khazan is in dim light or darkness, each creature of Khazan's choice within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 34 (5d12 + 2) necrotic damage. Khazan then magically teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. He can bring one creature he is grappling, teleporting that creature to an unoccupied space he can see within 5 feet of his destination. The destination spaces of this teleportation must be in dim light or darkness.

Bonus Actions

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, Khazan takes the Hide action.

Reactions

Deadly Reach. In response to a visible enemy moving into his reach, Khazan makes one claw attack against that enemy. If the attack hits, Khazan can make a second claw attack against the target.

Lair Actions

While in the Tower of Khazan, Khazan can take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Khazan takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- Khazan teleports to an unoccupied space within the tower.
- Khazan casts *cloud of daggers* (spell save DC 14) without providing material components or concentrating on the spell. The daggers resemble bony claws. The spell lasts until the start of the next round. Khazan can't choose this effect two rounds in a row.
- The stove in Area V7 belches shadowy fire in a 15-foot-cone. Creatures in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one. Khazan can only choose this effect once per triggering of his Rejuvenation trait.
- The books in Area V6 animate, taking the statistics of a swarm of animated books that obey his commands. The books become inanimate at the start of the next round.
- Khazan targets a 5-foot-wide space he can see, causing the floor to cave in. A creature standing in this space must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the creature leaps to a space within 5 feet. On a failure, it falls. Khazan can't choose this effect two rounds in a row.

Kiril Stoyanovich

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 in humanoid form, 12 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form
Hit Points 90 (14d8 + 28)
Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common (can't speak in wolf form)
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. Kiril can use his action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf, or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. Kiril has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Kiril makes two attacks: two with his spear (humanoid form) or one with his bite and one with his claws (hybrid form).

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spear (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

The Lonely

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil
Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Psychic Leech. At the start of each of the Lonely's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage.
Thrives on Company. The Lonely has advantage on attack rolls while it is within 30 feet of at least two other creatures. It otherwise has disadvantage on attack rolls.

Actions

Multiattack. The Lonely makes one harpoon arm attack and uses Sorrowful Embrace.
Harpoon Arm. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15) if it is a Large or smaller creature. The Lonely has two harpoon arms and can grapple up to two creatures at once.
Sorrowful Embrace. Each creature grappled by the Lonely must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. A creature takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In either case, the Lonely pulls each creature grappled by it up to 30 feet straight toward it.

The Lost

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Skills Athletics +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages Common
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Multiattack. The Lost makes two arm spike attacks.
Arm Spike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.
Embrace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d10 + 3) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the target is frightened, and it takes 27 (6d8) psychic damage at the end of each of its turns. The Lost can embrace only one creature at a time.

Reactions

Tightening Embrace. If the Lost takes damage while it has a creature grappled, that creature takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral
Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6
Skills Arcana +13, History +13
Damage Resistances damage from spells; nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from stoneskin)
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any six languages
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Magic Resistance. The Mad Mage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Spellcasting. The Mad Mage is an 18th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He can cast disguise self and invisibility at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *mirror image, misty step, web*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *Mordenkainen's faithful hound, polymorph, stoneskin*
5th level (3 slots): *Bigby's hand, cone of cold, scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *true seeing*
7th level (1 slot): *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*
8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*
9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Madam Eva

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 88 (16d8 + 16)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +5
Skills Arcana +7, Deception +8, Insight +13, Intimidation +8, Perception +9, Religion +7
Senses passive Perception 19
Languages Abyssal, Common, Elvish, Infernal
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Spellcasting. Madam Eva is a 16th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Madam Eva has the following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *bane, command, detect evil and good, protection from evil and good*
2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, protection from poison, spiritual weapon*
3rd level (3 slots): *create food and water, speak with dead, spirit guardians*
4th level (3 slots): *divination, freedom of movement, guardian of faith*
5th level (2 slots): *greater restoration, raise dead*
6th level (1 slot): *find the path, harm, true seeing*
7th level (1 slot): *fire storm, regenerate*
8th level (1 slot): *earthquake*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Curse (Recharges after a Long Rest). Madam Eva targets one creature that she can see within 30 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be cursed. While cursed, the target is blinded and deafened. The curse lasts until ended with a greater restoration spell, a remove curse spell, or similar magic. When the curse ends, Madam Eva takes 5d6 psychic damage.

Evil Eye (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Madam Eva targets one creature that she can see within 10 feet of her and casts one of the following spells on the target (save DC 17), requiring neither somatic nor material components to do so: animal friendship, charm person, or hold person. If the target succeeds on the initial saving throw, Madam Eva is blinded until the end of her next turn. Once a target succeeds on a saving throw against this effect, it is immune to the Evil Eye power of all Vistani for 24 hours.

Mage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 40 (9d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +6, History +6
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages any four languages
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*
4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*
5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Mastiff

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 5 (1d8 - 1)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages —
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Smell. The mastiff has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Milivoj

Medium humanoid (human), neutral
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 4 (1d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Shovel. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Mimic

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +5
Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities prone
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Mongrelfolk

Medium humanoid (mongrelfolk), any alignment
Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Deception +2, Perception +2, Stealth +3
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Extraordinary Feature. The mongrelfolk has one of the following extraordinary features, determined by rolling a d20 or chosen by the DM:

1–3: Amphibious. The mongrelfolk can breathe air and water.

4–9: Darkvision. The mongrelfolk has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.

10: Flight. The mongrelfolk has leathery wings and a flying speed of 40 feet.

11–15: Keen Hearing and Smell. The mongrelfolk has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

16–17: Spider Climb. The mongrelfolk can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

18–19: Standing Leap. The mongrelfolk's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

20: Two-Headed. The mongrelfolk has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, or knocked unconscious.

Mimicry. The mongrelfolk can mimic any sounds it has heard, including voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Multiattack. The mongrelfolk makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claw or dagger.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Mule

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Beast of Burden. The mule is considered to be a Large animal for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity.

Sure-Footed. The mule has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Nala

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +5
Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +5
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

Spellcasting. Nala casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *thorn whip*
2/day each: *barkskin*, *hold person*, *thunderwave*
1/day each: *heat metal*, *spike growth*

Needle Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Needles. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Night Hag

Medium fiend, neutral evil
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +6, Insight +5, Perception +5, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*
2/day each: *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Claws (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. The hag magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Etherealness. The hag magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

Nightmare Haunting (1/Day). While on the Ethereal Plane, the hag magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a magic circle. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in the hag's soul bag. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.

Nightmare

Large fiend, neutral evil
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Damage Immunities fire
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages understands Abyssal, Common, and Infernal but can't speak
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Confer Fire Resistance. The nightmare can grant resistance to fire damage to anyone riding it.
Illumination. The nightmare sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.
Ethereal Stride. The nightmare and up to three willing creatures within 5 feet of it magically enter the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Noble

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 15 (breastplate)
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any two languages
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The noble adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the noble must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Nothic

Medium aberration, neutral evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Arcana +3, Insight +4, Perception +2, Stealth +5
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Undercommon
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Sight. The nothic has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The nothic makes two claw attacks.
Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.
Rotting Gaze. The nothic targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw against this magic or take 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.
Weird Insight. The nothic targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must contest its Charisma (Deception) check against the nothic's Wisdom (Insight) check. If the nothic wins, it magically learns one fact or secret about the target. The target automatically wins if it is immune to being charmed.

Patrina Velikovna

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6
Skills Arcana +13, History +13
Damage Resistances damage from spells
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Elvish, and four other languages
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put Patrina to sleep.
Magic Resistance. Patrina has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Spellcasting. Patrina is an 18th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Patrina can cast *disguise self* and *invisibility* at will.
Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Phantom Warrior

Medium undead, any alignment
Armor Class 16
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages any languages it knew in life
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Ethereal Sight. The phantom warrior can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.
Incorporeal Movement. The phantom warrior can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Spectral Armor and Shield. The phantom warrior's AC accounts for its spectral armor and shield.

Actions

Multiattack. The phantom warrior makes two attacks with its spectral longsword.
Spectral Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) force damage.
Etherealness. The phantom warrior enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Pidlwick II

Small construct, neutral evil
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 10 (3d6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Performance +2
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages understands Common but doesn't speak and can't read or write
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Ambusher. During the first round of combat, Pidlwick II has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't had a turn yet.

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.
Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage..

Poltergeist

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Incorporeal Movement. The poltergeist can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Invisibility. The poltergeist is invisible.
Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the poltergeist has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Forceful Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) force damage.
Telekinetic Thrust. The poltergeist targets a creature or unattended object within 30 feet of it. A creature must be Medium or smaller to be affected by this magic, and an object can weigh up to 150 pounds. If the target is a creature, the poltergeist makes a Charisma check contested by the target's Strength check. If the poltergeist wins the contest, the poltergeist hurls the target up to 30 feet in any direction, including upward. If the target then comes into contact with a hard surface or heavy object, the target takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet moved. If the target is an object that isn't being worn or carried, the poltergeist hurls it up to 30 feet in any direction. The poltergeist can use the object as a ranged weapon, attacking one creature along the object's path (+4 to hit) and dealing 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage on a hit.

Priest

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages any two languages
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.
Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*
3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

The Prophet

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 12 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +7
Skills Acrobatics +5, Arcana +5, Insight +7, Nature +5, Perception +7
Senses passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Quickened Spell (1/Day). When the Prophet casts a spell with a casting time of 1 action, he can instead change the casting time to 1 bonus action.
Rooted to the Earth. While standing on the ground, the Prophet has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made against being knocked prone.
Spellcasting. The Prophet is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared:
At will: *shillelagh, produce flame, thorn whip*
3/day each: *barkskin, gust of wind*
2/day each: *call lightning, mass cure wounds, shield, wind wall*
1/day each: *blight, mass healing word*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Shadow Crash (2/Day). The Prophet shapeshifts into a massive bat of shadowy energy. The Prophet flies to an unoccupied space on the ground within 60 feet of him that he can see. Creatures within 10 feet of this space must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails this saving throw is also frightened until the start of the Prophet's next turn.

Quasit

Tiny fiend (demon), chaotic evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 7 (3d4)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +5
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lighting; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Abyssal, Common
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The quasit can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a bat (speed 10 feet fly 40 ft.), a centipede (40 ft., climb 40 ft.), or a toad (40 ft., swim 40 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Magic Resistance. The quasit has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Claw (Bite in Beast Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Scare (1/Day). One creature of the quasit's choice within 20 feet of it must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the quasit is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Invisibility. The quasit magically turns invisible until it attacks or uses Scare, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the quasit wears or carries is invisible with it.

Rahadin

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil
Armor Class 18 (studded leather)
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +7
Skills Deception +8, Insight +7, Intimidation +12, Perception +11, Stealth +14
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Deathly Choir. Any creature within 10 feet of Rahadin that isn't protected by a mind blank spell hears in its mind the screams of the thousands of people Rahadin has killed. As a bonus action, Rahadin can force all creatures that can hear the screams to make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. Each creature takes 16 (3d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Fey Ancestry. Rahadin has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Rahadin's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:
3/day: *misty step, phantom steed*
1/day: *magic weapon, nondetection*

Actions

Multiattack. Rahadin attacks three times with his scimitar, or twice with his poisoned darts.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Poisoned Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage plus 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Red Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, chaotic evil
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5, Wis +2, Cha +4
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities fire
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Draconic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Revenant

Medium undead, neutral
Armor Class 13 (leather armor)
Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +&
Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Regeneration. The revenant regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the revenant takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the revenant's next turn. The revenant's body is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.
Rejuvenation. When the revenant's body is destroyed, its soul lingers. After 24 hours, the soul inhabits and animates another humanoid corpse on the same plane of existence and regains all its hit points. While the soul is bodiless, a wish spell can be used to force the soul to go to the afterlife and not return.
Turn Immunity. The revenant is immune to effects that turn undead.
Vengeful Tracker. The revenant knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which it seeks revenge, even if the creature and the revenant are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by the revenant dies, the revenant knows.

Actions

Multiattack. The revenant makes two fist attacks.
Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which the revenant has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the revenant can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.
Vengeful Glare. The revenant targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it and against which it has sworn vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until the revenant deals damage to it, or until the end of the revenant's next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of the revenant for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see the revenant, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

Riding Horse

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 13 (2d10 + 2)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Revyr

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 13 (hide armor)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4
Skills Athletics +5, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Lovers' Rampage. Revyr enrages if she sees Esmardeus slain. For the next minute, Revyr's AC increases by 2, she becomes immune to the charmed and frightened conditions, and her melee attacks, be they in her human form or while shapeshifted into a beast, deal +3 damage on a hit.

Actions

Multiattack. Revyr attacks twice with her maul.
Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.
Spellcasting. Revyr casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):
1/day each: *entangle, faerie fire, jump*

Bonus Actions

Wildshape (2/Day). Revyr magically transforms into a Beast with a challenge rating of 1 or less, remaining in that form for up to 2 hours. Revyr's equipment melds into her new form. She reverts to her true form if she dies or falls unconscious. Revyr also can revert to true form using a bonus action. While shapeshifted, Revyr's statistics are replaced by the statistics of that beast, except Revyr keeps her Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and this bonus action.

Roc

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 248 (16d20 + 80)
Speed 20 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +3
Skills Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Keen Sight. The roc has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The roc makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.
Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d8 + 9) piercing damage.
Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d6 + 9) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the roc can't use its talons on another target.

Rudolph van Richten

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good
Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 77 (14d8 + 14)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +7
Skills Arcana +9, Insight +7, Perception +7, Religion +6, Sleight of Hand +4
Senses passive Perception 17
Languages Abyssal, Common, Elvish, Infernal
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Special Equipment. Van Richten wears a *hat of disguise* and a *ring of mind shielding*, and he carries a *spell scroll of raise dead*.
Spellcasting. Van Richten is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, mending, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, detect evil and good, protection from evil and good, sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *augury, lesser restoration, protection from poison*
3rd level (3 slots): *magic circle, remove curse, speak with dead*
4th level (3 slots): *death ward, freedom of movement*
5th level (1 slot): *dispel evil and good*

Undead Slayer. When van Richten hits an undead with a weapon attack, the undead takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage of the weapon's type.

Actions

Multiattack. Van Richten makes two attacks with his sword cane.
Sword Cane. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage (wooden cane) or piercing damage (silvered sword).

Rug of Smothering

Large construct, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 33 (6d10)
Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Antimagic Susceptibility. The rug is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the rug must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
Damage Transfer. While it is grappling a creature, the rug takes only half the damage dealt to it, and the creature grappled by the rug takes the other half.
False Appearance. While the rug remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal rug.

Actions

Smother. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, blinded, and at risk of suffocating, and the rug can't smother another target. In addition, at the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Saber-toothed Tiger

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 52 (7d10 + 14)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Smell. The tiger has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.
Pounce. If the tiger moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the tiger can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.
Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Sangzor

Large beast, chaotic evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 33 (5d10 + 5)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Charge. If Sangzor moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.
Deft. Sangzor doesn't provoke opportunity when it moves out of an enemy's reach.
Sure-Footed. Sangzor has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Actions

Multiattack. Sangzor makes two attacks.
Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Scarecrow

Medium construct, chaotic evil
Armor Class 11
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the scarecrow remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary, inanimate scarecrow.

Actions

Multiattack. The scarecrow makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the scarecrow's next turn.

Terrifying Glare. The scarecrow targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the scarecrow, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of the scarecrow's next turn. The frightened target is paralyzed.

Scout

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 13 (leather armor)
Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Sight. The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Shadow

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 16(3d8 + 3)
Speed 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills +4
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Bonus Actions

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow takes the Hide action. Its Stealth bonus is improved to +6.

Shadow Demon

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +4
Skills Stealth +7
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, lightning, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Incorporeal Movement. The demon can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the demon has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.
Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the demon can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage or, if the demon had advantage on the attack roll, 17 (4d6 + 3) psychic damage.

Shambling Mound

Large plant, unaligned
Armor Class 15
Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)
Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2
Damage Resistances cold, fire
Damage Immunities lightning
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 3
Languages —
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the shambling mound is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Actions

Multiattack. The shambling mound makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the shambling mound uses its Engulf on it.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.
Engulf. The shambling mound engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the mound moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The mound can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

The Shadow of Strahd

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 15
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Cha +5
Skills Stealth +4
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common (can only speak phrases Strahd historically spoke)
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Armor of Shadows. The shadow's AC includes its Charisma modifier.
Death Throes. When reduced to 0 hit points, the shadow screeches, which can be heard from 10 miles away. All creatures within 90 feet of the shadow must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be deafened for 1d6 minutes.
Habits Die Hard (3/Day). When reduced to 0 hit points, the shadow instead drops to 25 hit points.
Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action. Its stealth bonus is also improved to +6.
Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Shield Guardian

Large construct, unaligned
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands commands given in any language but can't speak
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Bound. The shield guardian is magically bound to an amulet. As long as the guardian and its amulet are on the same plane of existence, the amulet's wearer can telepathically call the guardian to travel to it, and the guardian knows the distance and direction to the amulet. If the guardian is within 60 feet of the amulet's wearer, half of any damage the wearer takes (rounded up) is transferred to the guardian.
Regeneration. The shield guardian regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.
Spell Storing. A spellcaster who wears the shield guardian's amulet can cause the guardian to store one spell of 4th level or lower. To do so, the wearer must cast the spell on the guardian. The spell has no effect but is stored within the guardian. When commanded to do so by the wearer or when a situation arises that was predefined by the spellcaster, the guardian casts the stored spell with any parameters set by the original caster, requiring no components. When the spell is cast or a new spell is stored, any previously stored spell is lost.

Actions

Multiattack. The guardian makes two attacks
Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Shield. When a creature makes an attack against the wearer of the guardian's amulet, the guardian grants a +2 bonus to the wearer's AC if the guardian is within 5 feet of the wearer.

Silver Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, lawful good
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5, Wis +2, Cha +4
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities cold
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Draconic
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.
Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.
Cold Breath. The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
Paralyzing Breath. The dragon exhales paralyzing gas in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +7, Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +7
Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Regeneration. Sir Ancelin regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If Sir Ancelin takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. Sir Ancelin's body is destroyed only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. When Sir Ancelin's body is destroyed, his soul lingers. After 24 hours, his soul inhabits and animates another humanoid corpse in Barovia and regains all his hit points. While his soul is bodiless, a wish spell can be used to force his soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Spellcasting. Sir Ancelin is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following wizard spells:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, light, mage hand*
1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*, detect magic, shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, scorching ray*, see invisibility*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, sending*
4th level (2 slots): *fire shield*, wall of fire**
*deals cold damage only

Turn Immunity. Sir Ancelin is immune to effects that turn undead.

Vengeful Tracker. Sir Ancelin knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which he seeks revenge, even if the creature and Sir Ancelin are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by Sir Ancelin dies, he knows. Sir Ancelin regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If Sir Ancelin takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. Sir Ancelin's body is destroyed only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which Sir Ancelin has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Sir Ancelin can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.

Vengeful Glare. Sir Ancelin targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it and against which he has sworn vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until Sir Ancelin deals damage to it, or until the end of his next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of Sir Ancelin for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see Sir Ancelin, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

Sir Godfrey Gwilym

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 13 (broken chainmail)
Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +7
Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Regeneration. Sir Godfrey regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If Sir Godfrey takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. Sir Godfrey's body is destroyed only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. When Sir Godfrey's body is destroyed, his soul lingers. After 24 hours, his soul inhabits and animates another humanoid corpse in Barovia and regains all his hit points. While his soul is bodiless, a *wish* spell can be used to force his soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Spellcasting. Sir Godfrey is a 16th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, divine favor, thunderous smite*
2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, magic weapon*
3rd level (3 slots): *blinding smite, dispel magic*
4th level (2 slots): *staggering smite*

Turn Immunity. Sir Godfrey is immune to effects that turn undead.

Vengeful Tracker. Sir Godfrey knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which he seeks revenge, even if the creature and Sir Godfrey are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by Sir Godfrey dies, he knows.

Actions

Multiattack. Sir Godfrey makes two longsword attacks or two fist attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature against which Sir Godfrey has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) slashing damage.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which Sir Godfrey has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Sir Godfrey can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.

Vengeful Glare. Sir Godfrey targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it and against which he has sworn vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until Sir Godfrey deals damage to it, or until the end of his next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of Sir Godfrey for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see Sir Godfrey, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

Skeleton

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Smoke Mephit

Small elemental, neutral evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d6 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Auran, Ignan
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Death Burst. When the mephit dies, it leaves behind a cloud of smoke that fills a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on its space. The sphere is heavily obscured. Wind disperses the cloud, which otherwise lasts for 1 minute.
Innate Spellcasting (1/Day). The mephit can innately cast *dancing lights*, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.
Cinder Breath (Recharge 6). The mephit exhales a 15-foot cone of smoldering ash. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the mephit's next turn.

Snow Maiden

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 20 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages the languages she understood in life
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Incorporeal Movement. The snow maiden can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the snow maiden has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The snow maiden makes two Spectral Arrow attacks or one Life Drain attack.
Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.
Spectral Arrow. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Specter

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft.,, passive Perception 10
Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Incorporeal Movement. The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the specter has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Spy

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 27 (6d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages any two languages
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.
Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The spy makes two melee attacks.
Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Stone Golem

Large construct, unaligned
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.
Slow (Recharge 5–6). The golem targets one or more creatures it can see within 10 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. These effects last for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Strahd von Zarovich

Medium undead (shapechanger), lawful evil
Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 144 (17d8 + 68)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +15, Perception +12, Religion +10, Stealth +14
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elvish, Giant, Infernal
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +5

Shapechanger. If Strahd isn't in running water or sunlight, he can use his action to polymorph into a Tiny bat, a Medium wolf, or a Medium cloud of mist, or back into his true form.

While in bat or wolf form, Strahd can't speak. In bat form, his walking speed is 5 feet, and he has a flying speed of 30 feet. In wolf form, his walking speed is 40 feet. His statistics, other than his size and speed, are unchanged. Anything he is wearing transforms with him, but nothing he is carrying does. He reverts to his true form if he dies. While in mist form, Strahd can't take any actions, speak, or manipulate objects. He is weightless, has a flying speed of 20 feet, can hover, and can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. In addition, if air can pass through a space, the mist can do so without squeezing, and he can't pass through water. He has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and he is immune to all nonmagical damage, except the damage he takes from sunlight.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Strahd fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Misty Escape. When Strahd drops to 0 hit points outside his coffin, he transforms into a cloud of mist (as in the Shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious, provided that he isn't in running water or sunlight. If he can't transform, he is destroyed.

While he has 0 hit points in mist form, he can't revert to his vampire form, and he must reach his coffin within 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in his coffin, he reverts to his vampire form. He is then paralyzed until he regains at least 1 hit point. After 1 hour in his coffin with 0 hit points, he regains 1 hit point.

Regeneration. Strahd regains 20 hit points at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 hit point and isn't in running water or sunlight. If he takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn.

Spellcasting. Strahd is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *comprehend languages*, *fog cloud*, *sleep*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *gust of wind*, *mirror image*
3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *fireball*, *nondetection*
4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *greater invisibility*, *polymorph*
5th level (1 slot): *animate objects*, *scrying*

Spider Climb. Strahd can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without having to make an ability check.

Vampire Weaknesses. Strahd has the following flaws:

- *Forbiddance.* He can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.
- *Harmed by Running Water.* He takes 20 acid damage if he ends his turn in running water.
- *Stake to the Heart.* If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into his heart while he is incapacitated in his coffin, he is paralyzed until the stake is removed.
- *Sunlight Hypersensitivity.* While in sunlight, Strahd takes 20 radiant damage at the start of his turn, and he has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Multiattack (Vampire Form Only). Strahd makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Unarmed Strike (Vampire or Wolf Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, Strahd can grapple it (escape DC 18) instead of dealing the slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Strahd, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Strahd regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if its hit point maximum is reduced to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn under Strahd's control.

Charm. Strahd targets one humanoid he can see within 30 feet of him. If the target can see Strahd, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed. The charmed target regards Strahd as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. The target isn't under Strahd's control, but it takes Strahd's requests and actions in the most favorable way and lets Strahd bite it.

Each time Strahd or his companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until Strahd is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

Children of the Night (1/Day). Strahd magically calls 2d4 **swarms of bats** or **swarms of rats**, provided that the sun isn't up. While outdoors, Strahd can call 3d6 **wolves** instead. The called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds, acting as allies of Strahd and obeying his spoken commands. The beasts remain for 1 hour, until Strahd dies, or until he dismisses them as a bonus action.

Legendary Actions

Strahd can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Strahd regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. Strahd moves up to his speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Unarmed Strike. Strahd makes one unarmed strike.

Bite (Costs 2 Actions). Strahd makes one bite attack.

Lair Actions

While Strahd is in Castle Ravenloft, he can take lair actions as long as he isn't incapacitated. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Strahd can take one of the following lair action options, or forgo using any of them in that round:

- Until initiative count 20 of the next round, Strahd can pass through solid walls, doors, ceilings, and floors as if they weren't there.
- Strahd targets any number of doors and windows that he can see, causing each one to either open or close as he wishes. Closed doors can be magically locked (needing a successful DC 20 Strength check to force open) until Strahd chooses to end the effect, or until Strahd uses this lair action again.
- Strahd summons the angry spirit of one who has died in the castle. The apparition appears next to a hostile creature that Strahd can see, makes an attack against that creature, and then disappears. The apparition has the statistics of a **specter**.
- Strahd targets one Medium or smaller creature that casts a shadow. The target's shadow must be visible to Strahd and within 30 feet of him. If the target fails a DC 17 Charisma saving throw, its **shadow** detaches from it and becomes a shadow that obeys Strahd's commands, acting on initiative count 20. A *greater restoration* spell or a *remove curse* spell cast on the target restores its natural shadow, but only if its undead shadow has been destroyed.

Strahd Zombie

Medium undead, unaligned
Armor Class 8
Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Loathsome Limbs. Whenever the zombie takes at least 5 bludgeoning or slashing damage at one time, roll a d20 to determine what else happens to it:

1–8: One leg is severed from the zombie if it has any legs left.
9–16: One arm is severed from the zombie if it has any arms left.
17–20: The zombie is decapitated.

If the zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, all parts of it die. Until then, a severed part acts on the zombie's initiative and has its own action and movement. A severed part has AC 8. Any damage it takes is subtracted from the zombie's hit points.

- A severed leg is unable to attack and has a speed of 5 feet. The zombie's speed is halved if it's missing a leg. If it loses both legs, it falls prone. If it has both arms, it can crawl. With only one arm, it can still crawl, but its speed is halved. With no arms or legs, its speed is 0 feet, and it can't benefit from bonuses to speed.
- A severed arm has a speed of 5 feet and can make one claw attack on its turn, with disadvantage on the attack roll. Each time the zombie loses an arm, it loses a claw attack.
- If its head is severed, the zombie loses its bite attack and its body is blinded unless the head can see it. The severed head has a speed of 0 feet. It can make a bite attack, but only against a target in its space.

Actions

Multiattack. The zombie makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Strahd's Animated Armor

Medium construct, lawful evil
Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +3
Damage Resistances cold, fire
Damage Immunities lightning, poison
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 13
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Antimagic Susceptibility. The armor is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
Constructed Nature. An animated object doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. The magic that animates an object is dispelled when the construct drops to 0 hit points. An animated object reduced to 0 hit points becomes inanimate and is too damaged to be of much use or value to anyone.
False Appearance. While the armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

Actions

Multiattack. The armor makes two melee attacks or uses Shocking Bolt twice.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning damage.

Shocking Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit (with advantage on the attack roll if the target is wearing armor made of metal), range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) lightning damage.

Swarm of Animated Books

Medium swarm of tiny constructs, unaligned
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Objects. If the swarm is motionless at the start of combat, it has advantage on its initiative roll. Moreover, if a creature hasn't observed the swarm move or act, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to discern that the swarm is animate.
Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a 1-foot-tall, 8-inch-wide, 2-inch-thick object. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Book Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d4 +1) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

Swarm of Bats

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Echolocation. The swarm can't use its blindsight while deafened.
Keen Hearing. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.
Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny bat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage, or 2 (1d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Swarm of Centipedes

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by a swarm of centipedes is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Swarm of Poisonous Snakes

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny snake. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Swarm of Rats

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 24 (7d8 -7)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.
Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Swarm of Ravens

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 24 (7d8 - 7)
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny raven. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Beaks. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Swarm of Spiders

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spider Climb. The swarm can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.
Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the swarm knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.
Web Walker. The swarm ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Swarm of Wasps

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Thug

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment
Armor Class 11 (leather armor)
Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Pack Tactics. The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The thug makes two melee attacks.
Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.
Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Tree Blight

Huge plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 92 (8d12 + 40)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages understands Common and Druidic but can't speak
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead tree.
Siege Monster. The blight deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The blight makes one Branch attack and one Grasping Root attack.
Branch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.
Grasping Root. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature not grappled by the blight. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target takes 9 (1d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns. The root has AC 15 and can be severed by dealing 6 slashing damage or more to it at once. Cutting the root doesn't hurt the blight, but ends the grapple.

Bonus Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature grappled by the blight. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Twig Blight

Small plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 4 (1d6 + 1)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Skills +3
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead shrub.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Vampire Spawn

Medium undead, neutral evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +3
Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Regeneration. The vampire regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.
Spider Climb. The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
Vampire Weaknesses. The vampire has the following flaws:
Forbiddance. The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.
Harmed by Running Water. The vampire takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water.
Stake to the Heart. The vampire is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place.
Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Multiattack. The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 13).

Vladimir Horngaard

Medium undead, lawful evil
Armor Class 17 (half plate armor)
Hit Points 192 (16d8 + 64)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +7
Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Special Equipment. Vladimir wields a *+2 greatsword*.
Regeneration. Vladimir regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If he takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. Vladimir's body is destroyed only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.
Rejuvenation. When Vladimir's body is destroyed, his soul lingers. After 24 hours, the soul inhabits and animates another corpse on the same plane of existence and regains all its hit points. While the soul is bodiless, a wish spell can be used to force the soul to go to the afterlife and not return.
Turn Immunity. Vladimir is immune to effects that turn undead.
Vengeful Tracker. Vladimir knows the distance to and direction of Strahd, even if Strahd and Vladimir are on different planes of existence. If Strahd is destroyed, Vladimir knows.

Actions

Multiattack. Vladimir makes two fist attacks or two attacks with his *+2 greatsword*.
Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Strahd, the target of Vladimir's sworn vengeance, takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Vladimir can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.
Greatsword +2. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (4d6 + 6) slashing damage. Against Strahd, Vladimir deals an extra 14 (4d6) slashing damage with this weapon.
Vengeful Glare. Vladimir can target Strahd within 30 feet provided he can see Strahd. Strahd must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. One a failure, Strahd is paralyzed until Vladimir deals damage to him, or until the end of Vladimir's next turn. When the paralysis ends, Strahd is frightened of Vladimir for 1 minute. Strahd can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of his turns, with disadvantage if he can see Vladimir, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success..

Veteran

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class 17 (splint armor)
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.
Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.
Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.
Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Vine Blight

Medium plant, lawful evil
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +1
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a tangle of vines.

Actions

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and a Large or smaller target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the blight can't constrict another target.
Entangling Plants (Recharge 5–6). Grasping roots and vines sprout in a 15-foot radius centered on the blight, withering away after 1 minute. For the duration, that area is difficult terrain for nonplant creatures. In addition, each creature of the blight's choice in that area when the plants appear must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check, freeing it self or another entangled creature within reach on a success.

Vrock

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 104 (11d10 + 4)
Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +4, Cha +2
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Magic Resistance. The vrock has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The vrock makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Spores (Recharge 6). A 15-foot-radius cloud of toxic spores extends out from the vrock. The spores spread around corners. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way, a target takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Emptying a vial of holy water on the target also ends the effect on it.

Stunning Screech (1/Day). The vrock emits a horrific screech. Each creature within 20 feet of it that can hear it and that isn't a demon must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the vrock's next turn.

Wereraven

Medium humanoid (any race, shapechanger), lawful good
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 31 (7d8)
Speed 30 ft. (fly 50 ft. in raven and hybrid forms)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Insight +4, Perception +6
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons
Senses passive Perception X16
Languages Common (can't speak in raven form)
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The wereraven can use its action to polymorph into a raven-humanoid hybrid or into a raven, or back into its human form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its human form if it dies.

Mimicry. The wereraven can mimic simple sounds it has heard, such as a person whispering, a baby crying, or an animal chittering. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Multiattack (Human or Hybrid Form Only). The wereraven makes two weapon attacks, one of which can be with its hand crossbow.

Beak (Raven or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage in raven form, or 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage in hybrid form. If the target is humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wereraven lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Human or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow (Human or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Werewolf

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 in humanoid form, 12 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common (can't speak in wolf form)
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The werewolf can use its action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The werewolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The werewolf makes two attacks: two with its spear (humanoid form) or one with its bite and one with its claws (hybrid form).

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spear (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Wight

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wight has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The wight makes two longsword attacks or two longbow attacks. It can use its Life Drain in place of one longsword attack.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a zombie under the wight's control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. The wight can have no more than twelve zombies under its control at one time.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Will-o'-Wisp

Tiny undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 19
Hit Points 22 (9d4)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	28 (+9)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities lightning, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Consume Life. As a bonus action, the will-o'-wisp can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points and is still alive. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the will-o'-wisp regains 10 (3d6) hit points.
Ephemeral. The will-o'-wisp can't wear or carry anything.
Incorporeal Movement. The will-o'-wisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Variable Illumination. The will-o'-wisp sheds bright light in a 5 to 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of ft. equal to the chosen radius. The will-o'-wisp can alter the radius as a bonus action.

Actions

Shock. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage.
Invisibility. The will-o'-wisp and its light magically become invisible until it attacks or uses its Consume Life, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

Wolf

Medium beast, unaligned
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Wraith

Medium undead, neutral evil
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.
Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

The Wretched

Small monstrosity, lawful evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 10 (4d6 - 4)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Wretched Pack Tactics. The Wretched has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Wretched's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated. The Wretched otherwise has disadvantage on attack rolls.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage, and the Wretched attaches to the target. While attached, the Wretched can't attack, and at the start of each of the Wretched's turns, the target takes 6 (1d10 + 1) necrotic damage. The attached Wretched moves with the target whenever the target moves, requiring none of the Wretched's movement. The Wretched can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement on its turn. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach a Wretched.

Young Blue Dragon

Large dragon, lawful evil
Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 152 (16d10 + 64)
Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +5, Cha +7
Skills Perception +9, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities lightning
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +4

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Lightning Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales lightning in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Zombie

Medium undead, neutral evil
Armor Class 8
Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Appendix C: Effects

The following effects and items are featured in *Curse of Strahd* or added by the *Companion.*

Antipathy/Sympathy (Abridged) 396
Antitoxin 396
Avalanche 396
Brown Mold 396
Blizzard 397
Cackle Fever 397
Climber's Kit 397
Covenant of the Corpse Star 398
Covenant of the Destroyer 398
Covenant of the Grave Wyrm 398
Covenant of the Houndmaster 398
Covenant of the Kingmaker 398
Covenant of the Lich 399
Covenant of Poxes 399
Covenant of the Vampyr 399
Crowpoison 399
Dark Gift of Dahlver-Nar 400
Dark Gift of Delban 400
Dark Gift of Drizlash 400
Dark Gift of Fekre 400
Dark Gift of Great Taar Haak 400
Dark Gift of Khirad 400
Dark Gift of Norganas 400
Dark Gift of Savnok 400
Dark Gift of Seriach 400
Dark Gift of Shami-Amourae 401
Dark Gift of Sykane 401
Dark Gift of Tarakamedes 401
Dark Gift of Tenebrous 401
Dark Gift of the Vampyr 401
Dark Gift of Vaund the Evasive 401
Dark Gift of Yog 401
Dark Gift of Yrrga 401
Dark Gift of Zantras 402
Dark Gift of Zhudun 402
Dark Gift of Zrin-Hala 402
Desecrated Ground 402
Disguise Kit 402
Dream Pastries 402
Extreme Cold 402
Glider 403
Glyph of Warding (Abridged) 403
Green Slime 403
Gunpowder Horn 403
Holy Water 403
Healer's Kit 403
Heavy Precipitation 404
Hunting Trap 404
Incants of Exethanter 404
Madness 404
Manacles 405
Mother Night's Curse 405
Musket 405
Oil (Flask) 405
Pale Tincture 405
Poison Needle Trap 405
Poisoner's Kit 405
Raise Dead (Abridged) 406
Rope 406
Spellbook of Vilnius 406
Spyglass 406
Strong Wind 406
Tsunami (Abridged) 406
Wall of Stone (Abridged) 406
Web 407
Werewolf Lycanthropy 407
Wolfsbane 407
Yellow Mold 407

Antipathy/Sympathy (Abridged)

Spell

This spell attracts or repels creatures, and lasts for up to 10 days.

Antipathy. The enchantment causes creatures of the kind you designated to feel an intense urge to leave the area and avoid the target. When such a creature can see the target or comes within 60 feet of it, the creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened. The creature remains frightened while it can see the target or is within 60 feet of it. While frightened by the target, the creature must use its movement to move to the nearest safe spot from which it can't see the target. If the creature moves more than 60 feet from the target and can't see it, the creature is no longer frightened, but the creature becomes frightened again if it regains sight of the target or moves within 60 feet of it.

Sympathy. The enchantment causes the specified creatures to feel an intense urge to approach the target while within 60 feet of it or able to see it. When such a creature can see the target or comes within 60 feet of it, the creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or use its movement on each of its turns to enter the area or move within reach of the target. When the creature has done so, it can't willingly move away from the target. If the target damages or otherwise harms an affected creature, the affected creature can make a Wisdom saving throw to end the effect, as described below.

Ending the Effect. If an affected creature ends its turn while not within 60 feet of the target or able to see it, the creature makes a Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the creature is no longer affected by the target and recognizes the feeling of repugnance or attraction as magical. In addition, a creature affected by the spell is allowed another Wisdom saving throw every 24 hours while the spell persists.

A creature that successfully saves against this effect is immune to it for 1 minute, after which time it can be affected again.

Antitoxin

Adventuring gear

A creature that drinks this vial of liquid gains advantage on saving throws against poison for 1 hour. It confers no benefit to undead or constructs.

Avalanche

Wilderness Hazard

A typical avalanche (or rockslide) is 300 feet wide, 150 feet long, and 30 feet thick. Creatures in the path of an avalanche can avoid it or escape it if they're close to its edge, but outrunning one is almost impossible.

When an avalanche occurs, all nearby creatures must roll initiative. Twice each round, on initiative counts 10 and 0, the avalanche travels 300 feet until it can travel no more. When an avalanche moves, any creature in its space moves along with it and falls prone, and the creature must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw, taking 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

When an avalanche stops, the snow and other debris settle and bury creatures. A creature buried in this way is blinded and restrained, and it has total cover. The creature gains 1 level of exhaustion for every 5 minutes it spends buried. It can try to dig itself free as an action, breaking the surface and ending the blinded and restrained conditions on itself with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. A creature that fails this check three times can't attempt to dig itself out again.

A creature that is not restrained or incapacitated can spend 1 minute freeing a buried creature. Once free, that creature is no longer blinded or restrained by the avalanche.

Brown Mold

Hazard

Brown mold feeds on warmth, drawing heat from anything around it. A patch of brown mold typically covers a 10-foot square, and the temperature within 30 feet of it is always frigid. When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the mold for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Brown mold is immune to fire, and any source of fire brought within 5 feet of a patch causes it to instantly expand outward in the direction of the fire, covering a 10-foot-square area (with the source of the fire at the center of that area). A patch of brown mold exposed to an effect that deals cold damage is instantly destroyed.

Blizzard

Weather

A blizzard in typically lasts 2d4 hours, and whenever the characters are caught in one, the following rules apply until it ends.

Wind. A blizzard's howling wind limits hearing to a range of 100 feet and imposes disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls. It also imposes disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing. The wind extinguishes open flames, disperses fog, erases tracks in the snow, and makes flying by nonmagical means nearly impossible. A creature falls at the end of its turn if it is flying by nonmagical means and can't hover.

Visibility. Visibility in a blizzard is reduced to 30 feet. Creatures without goggles or other eye protection have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight due to blowing snow.

Concentration. Any creature that is concentrating on a spell in a blizzard must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn or lose its concentration on the spell unless the creature is sheltered against the elements (for example, in an igloo).

Veering Off Course. It's easy to veer off course while traveling through a blizzard, and it's also easy for party members to become separated from one another, which is why the wisest course of action is to stay put and wait for the blizzard to pass. If the characters travel during a blizzard, have the players designate one party member as the navigator. At the end of each hour of travel through the blizzard, the DM makes a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check on behalf of the navigator. On a successful check, the party stays on course. On a failed check, the party wanders off course, putting its members no closer to their destination than they were at the start of that hour. If the check fails by 5 or more and the party members aren't tied together, one randomly determined party member becomes lost in the blizzard and separated from the others. If the group tries to reunite with its missing member, have the party members (including the missing one) make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) group check at the end of each hour. If this group check succeeds, the missing party member is found, but no progress is made toward reaching the group's intended destination that hour. The group check can be repeated after each hour spent searching for the missing party member.

Cackle Fever

Disease

This disease targets humanoids, although gnomes are strangely immune. While in the grips of this disease, victims frequently succumb to fits of mad laughter, giving the disease its common name and its morbid nickname: "the shrieks."

Symptoms manifest 1d4 hours after infection and include fever and disorientation. The infected creature gains one level of exhaustion that can't be removed until the disease is cured. Any event that causes the infected creature great stress—including entering combat, taking damage, experiencing fear, or having a nightmare—forces the creature to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

On a failed save, the creature takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage and becomes incapacitated with mad laughter for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the mad laughter and the incapacitated condition on a success. Any humanoid creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of an infected creature in the throes of mad laughter must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or also become infected with the disease. Once a creature succeeds on this save, it is immune to the mad laughter of that particular infected creature for 24 hours. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature can make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the DC for this save and for the save to avoid an attack of mad laughter drops by 1d6. When the saving throw DC drops to 0, the creature recovers from the disease. A creature that fails three of these saving throws gains a randomly determined form of indefinite madness.

Climber's Kit

Adventuring Gear

A climber's kit includes special pitons, boot tips, gloves, and a harness. You can use the climber's kit as an action to anchor yourself; when you do, you can't fall more than 25 feet from the point where you anchored yourself, and you can't climb more than 25 feet away from that point without undoing the anchor.

Covenant of the Corpse Star

Charm

Zhudun the Corpse Star grants the power to raise the dead. You may use this covenant to cast revivify thrice, raise dead twice, and resurrection (regardless of how long ago the target died) once. Each spell is cast as an action and requires no material components.

Covenant. The Corpse Star requires tribute. Whenever you cast one of these spells, you must murder others in cold blood, dedicating their souls to the Corpse Star. If you fail to do so within 24 hours, you and every single person you've raised from the dead die instead. You must slay one humanoid per casting of *revivify*, three for *raise dead*, and ten for *resurrection*. These victims must be innocent strangers who have never done you any wrong. To dedicate them to the Zhudun, you must carve their names into your body under starlight. These scars will never fade.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you become so corpselike that you are easily mistaken for undead, and your eyes glow a sickly yellow light. You also gain the flaw, "I demand recompense for favors and assistance given." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of the Destroyer

Charm

Great Taar Haak the Five-Headed Destroyer offers legendary strength. Your Strength score increases by 4, up to a maximum of 22. Further, your hit point maximum increases by 30.

Covenant. The Five-Headed Destroyer demands blood, violence, and entertainment. You must slay a sapient creature once a week; or you may nonlethally reduce a humanoid to 0 hit points daily. Failure to entertain the Destroyer reduces your Strength score by 1d4 until you make up for your failure. You die if your Strength score is reduced to 0.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you gain the flaw, "I must bully the weak and prove their inferiority." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of the Grave Wyrm

Charm

Tarakamedes the Grave Wyrm grants draconic gifts. You grow skeletal wings, granting you a flying speed of 50 feet. Additionally, you may subsist off carrion, bones, and grave dirt instead of eating ordinary food.

Covenant. Tarakamedes hungers for bones and grave dirt and satiates its fell hunger vicariously through you. Daily at dawn, you die if you have not consumed 1 pound of bones or grave dirt in the last 24 hours.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you begin to salivate uncontrollably in the presence of corpses, carrion, bones, and grave dirt and must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw to not feast on such, provided you are not in any immediate danger. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of the Houndmaster

Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer grants the power to summon and control two **hell hounds**. The hounds can be summoned only once, appearing both at the same time within unoccupied spaces within 30 feet of you. You also learn to speak and understand Infernal, which the hell hounds understand. You may only summon the hell hounds once.

Covenant. Seriach requires meat and more hounds for its infernal kennel. Monthly, you must sacrifice 100 pounds of meat to Seriach, burning it in a brazier. Alternatively, you may sacrifice a ferocious canine to Seriach, sending its soul to its kennel, to be transformed into a hell hound. Failure to do so will cause a **hell hound** you cannot control to be loosed after you; the hound appears somewhere within 100 miles and begins to magically track you.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, sulfurous smoke issues from your pores whenever you speak Infernal and canines detest you, whimpering, growling, and howling when they smell you from afar. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil, and it persists even if the hell hounds are dead and gone, up until your death.

Covenant of the Kingmaker

Charm

Zantras the Kingmaker grants unnatural gravitas. Your Charisma score increases by 4, up to a maximum of 22. Further, you may cast *suggestion* (spell save DC 15) thrice; saving throws are made against this spell with disadvantage.

Covenant. The Kingmaker demands wealth as tribute: monthly, you must sacrifice 100 gp worth of treasure by casting them in a brazier of flames and calling out Zantras' name; the tribute crumbles to ash. However, the price for every subsequent tribute paid with wealth increases by 100 gp. Should you fail to pay tribute, your Charisma score is reduced by 4 and you suffer a level of exhaustion that you cannot remove until you make your missing tribute to Zantras with an interest of ten percent.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you gain the flaw, "Nothing is ever enough, I won't take no for an answer." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of the Lich

Charm

Tenebrous opens for you the path to lichdom. You may use this covenant to cast *finger of death* thrice, but it can only target humanoids. If you fail to slay a humanoid with this spell, you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or drop to 0 hit points and begin dying. If your target knows any wizard spells, you instantly learn them if they are turned into a zombie by finger of death. Once you have cast this spell thrice, Tenebrous grants you the knowledge to craft a phylactery to house your soul and concoct a potion to twist you into a lich. To do so, you must be a 17th level wizard or higher.

Covenant. Until you become a lich, you must dedicate yourself to unearthing new arcana for Tenebrous. Under each new moon, you must either sacrifice a magic item, which instantly crumbles into dust; or offer a spell you know, which you permanently forget (if you a wizard, it is stricken from your spellbook). Failure to make an offering to Tenebrous drives you to madness and transforms you into a nothic under the Dungeon Master's control.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you become gaunt, almost skeletal, despite however well you eat. Further, your blood becomes pitch black and viscid, like tar. You also gain the flaw, "All I care for is acquiring new magic and arcane knowledge. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of Poxes

Charm

Fekre, the Queen of Poxes, renders you immune to the ravages of disease at the cost of alienating you from society. You are immune to disease and can cast *contagion* (spell save DC 15) thrice.

Covenant. You vow to spread disease and death in your wake, becoming a carrier for all manner of diseases, from influenza to typhoid. You infect others with your bodily fluids, such as saliva. Should you fail to spark an epidemic each month, Fekre curses you with leprosy that slowly develops but is paused when you fulfill your covenant.

Mark of Evil. Upon accepting this covenant, you reek of filth and others instinctively understand that you are unclean. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Covenant of the Vampyr

Charm

The Vampyr opens to you the path to immortality through vampirism. You become a dhampir, gaining the following these traits:

- Only the blood of humanoids can sustain you. You gain no sustenance from other food and drink.
- You cannot be charmed by vampires, and do not suffer necrotic damage, nor a penalty to your hit point maximum, if you are bitten by them.
- You do not need to breathe.
- You gain darkvision, out to a range of 60 feet.
- You gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed and you can move up, down, and across vertical surfaces and upside down along ceilings, while leaving your hands free.
- You count as both undead and humanoid; magic that would detect or affect a humanoid or an undead both works against you.
- Your teeth sharpen into fangs, which you can use for unarmed strikes, dealing 1d6 piercing damage on a hit. You may use either your Strength or Dexterity modifier for your attack and damage rolls with this attack. Once per turn, if you bite a humanoid, you gain 1d10 temporary hit points.

Covenant. You vow to become a true vampire. To do so, you must slay both a humanoid that loves or reveres you, drinking their blood; and a true vampire, whose blood you must also drink. Then, you must die a violent death at the hands of a creature that hates you. When both conditions are met, you instantly become a vampire.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "I am surrounded by hidden enemies that seek to destroy me. I can't trust anyone." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Crowpoison

Adventuring Gear

Known as *nothoscordum bivalve* by herbalists and “false garlic” by peasants, crowpoison is a wild, scentless flower frequented by butterflies. It can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Consumption. A wereraven that consumes a sprig of crowpoison is poisoned for 1d6 hours, and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 41 (7d8 + 10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The wereraven is also poisoned for 1d6 hours.

Incense. As incense, crowpoison sickens wereravens and deprives them of their ability to shapeshift. A wereraven that starts its turn within 60 feet of the incense, or enters within that range for the first time on its turn, must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. While poisoned, the wereraven loses its immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks and can't use its Shapechanger feature to transform.

Dark Gift of Dahlver-Nar

Charm

The gift of He of the Many Teeth is the power to live many lives. When you die, you are reincarnated (as if by a *reincarnate* spell), your new body appearing within 10 feet of the old one. Once you have been reincarnated thrice, this Dark Gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you lose all your teeth until you reincarnate for the third and final time. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Delban

Charm

The gift of the Star of Ice and Hate is the power to unleash deadly cold. You have resistance to cold damage; you and everything you wear and carry are unharmed by temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit; and you may cast *cone of cold* (spell save DC 15). After you have cast the spell seven times, this gift and all its benefits fade but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "Fire terrifies me." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Drizlash

Charm

The Nine-Eyed Spider's gift is that to walk on walls and ceilings. You can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you grow an extra eye somewhere on your body. The eye is blind and ever open. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Fekre

Charm

The Queen of Poxes' gift is that to spread disease. You may cast *contagion* (spell save DC 15) thrice, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you reek of filth and no magic or detergent can rid you of your stench. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Great Taar Haak

Charm

The Five-Headed Destroyer's gift is great strength. For the next 10 days after receiving this gift, your Strength score is 25, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "I like to bully others and make them feel weak and inferior." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Khirad

Charm

The gift of the Star of Secrets is the power of divination. You may cast *scrying* (spell save DC 15) thrice, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, your voice becomes a low whisper, and your every smile is cruel and evil. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Norganas

Charm

The Finger of Oblivion's gift is to turn life into undeath. You can cast *finger of death* (spell save DC 15) thrice, after which you must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or drop to 0 hit points. The gift then fades, but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, your blood becomes pitch black and viscid, like tar. No magic but a wish spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Savnok

Charm

Savnok the Inscrutable's gift is the power to shield the mind. You come under a spell of *mind blank* for the duration of 1 year: you are immune to psychic damage, divination magic, the charmed condition, and any effect that would sense your emotions or read your thoughts. This spell even foils wish spells and spells or effects of similar power used to affect your mind or to gain information about you.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, your eyes melt away, leaving empty sockets that can still see. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Seriach

Charm

The Hell Hound Whisperer's gift is to conjure and control hell hounds. As an action, you can summon two **hell hounds**, both appearing simultaneously. The hounds can be summoned only once, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you learn to speak and understand Infernal, which you may use to converse with the hell hounds, who understand no other language. Sulfurous smoke issues from your pores whenever you speak Infernal. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Shami-Amourae

Charm

The Lady of Delights' gift is the power of persuasion. You may cast *suggestion* thrice (spell save DC 15, targets have disadvantage), after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you grow an extra finger on each hand and gain the flaw, "I can't get enough pleasure. I desire others to create beauty for me at all times." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Sykane

Charm

The Soul Hungerer's gift is the power to raise the recently dead. You may cast *raise dead* thrice, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, your eyes begin to glow a sickly yellow and you have the flaw, "If I help someone, I expect payment in return," until you have cast *raise dead* thrice. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Tarakamedes

Charm

The Grave Wyrm's gift is the power of flight. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you grow skeletal wings from your back, granting you a flying speed of 50 feet.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you become dependent on the consumption of bones or grave dirt. You die at dawn if you have not eaten 1 pound of bones or grave dirt in the last 24 hours. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Tenebrous

Charm

Tenebrous' gift is the secret of lichdom. To learn this secret, you must be an evil humanoid able to cast 9th-level wizard spells. You learn how to craft a phylactery and imbue it with the power to contain your soul; and concoct a potion that transforms you into a lich.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "All I care about is acquiring new magic and arcane knowledge." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of the Vampyr

Charm

The Vampyr's gift is the immortality of undeath. If you accept this Dark Gift, you must first satisfy several conditions, in the order below. You become aware of these conditions after accepting the Dark Gift: first you must slay another humanoid that loves or reveres you, then drink their blood within 1 hour of slaying them; then you must die a violent death at the hands of a creature that hates you. When both conditions are met, you instantly become a vampire.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "I am surrounded by hidden enemies that seek to destroy me. I can't trust anyone." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Vaund the Evasive

Charm

Vaund the Evasive's gift is the power of evasion. For the next 10 days, you gain the benefits below, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

- When you fail a Dexterity saving throw, you can use your reaction to succeed instead. You may use this ability thrice, regaining 1d3 uses daily at dawn.
- You are hidden from divination magic. You can't be targeted by such magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you become twitchy and nervous. You also gain the flaw, "I can't give a straight answer to any question put to me." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Yog

Charm

Yog the Invincible's gift is supernatural resilience. Your hit point maximum increases by 30 for 10 days, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, oily black fur erupts across your face and body. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Yrrga

Charm

The Eye of Shadows' gift is the power of truesight. You gain truesight out to a range of 60 feet, allowing you to see in normal and magical darkness; see invisible creatures and objects; automatically detect visual illusions and succeed on saving throws against them; perceive the original form of a shapechanger or a creature that is transformed by magic; and allow you to see into the Ethereal Plane. This gift lasts for 30 days.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, and until the gift fades, your eyes become starry voids, and you gain the flaw, "I believe that all life is pointless and look forward to death when it finally comes." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Zantras

Charm

The Kingmaker's gift is gravitas. Your Charisma score increases by 4, up to a maximum of 22.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, "I won't take 'no' for an answer." No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Zhudun

Charm

The Corpse Star's gift is the power to raise the ancient dead. You may cast *resurrection* as an action, instead of over the course of 1 hour, and the spell succeeds regardless of how long the target has been dead. This gift fades once the spell is cast, but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, you gain the flaw, you become corpselike in such a severe manner that you are easily mistaken for undead. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Dark Gift of Zrin-Hala

Charm

The gift of the Howling Storm is the power to conjure lightning. You may cast *lightning bolt* (spell save DC 15) thrice, after which this gift fades but your Mark of Evil remains.

Mark of Evil. Upon receiving this Dark Gift, one side of your face sags and loses all feeling. No magic but a *wish* spell can relieve you of your Mark of Evil.

Desecrated Ground

Hazard

Some cemeteries and catacombs are imbued with the unseen traces of ancient evil. An area of desecrated ground can be any size, and a *detect evil and good spell* cast within range reveals its presence. Undead standing on desecrated ground have advantage on all saving throws.

A vial of holy water purifies a 10-foot-square area of desecrated ground when sprinkled on it, and a *hallow* spell purifies desecrated ground within its area.

Disguise Kit

Tools

This pouch of cosmetics, hair dye, and small props lets you create disguises that change your physical appearance. Proficiency with this kit lets you add your proficiency bonus to any ability checks you make to create a visual disguise. The perfect tool for anyone who wants to engage in trickery, a disguise kit enables its owner to adopt a false identity.

Dream Pastries

The *Companion* revises Dream Pastries:

Original. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or fall into a trance that lasts for 1d4+4 hours, during which time the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0 feet. The trance ends if the affected creature takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor. While in the trance, the creature dreams of being in some joyous place, far removed from the evils of the world. The places and characters in the dream are vivid and believable, and when the dream ends, the affected creature experiences a longing to return to the place.

Revision. A creature that eats one pastry in its entirety later experiences a euphoric dream when they next sleep. Upon waking up, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become addicted to dream pastries and gain the following flaw: "I can't think straight without a dream pastry in my belly." For every 24 hours the creature goes without eating another dream pastry, they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw. The DC begins at 16; for every dream pastry the creature has consumed in the last 30 days, the DC increases by 1, up to a maximum of 20. On a failure, the creature gains one level of exhaustion (up to three levels). If a creature succeeds on three of these Constitution saving throws in a row, their addiction to dream pastries ends.

Extreme Cold

Weather

Whenever the temperature is at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, a creature exposed to the cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures wearing cold weather gear (thick coats, gloves, and the like) and creatures naturally adapted to cold climates.

Glider

Object

This glider is made of taut, leather wing flaps, and can be worn by any Small or Medium humanoid. It takes 1 minute to don or doff the glider. It can't support more than 80 pounds, although the amount of weight it can carry is not evident. A character who inspects the glider in an attempt to discern its maximum weight allowance can do so accurately with a successful DC 15 Intelligence check.

If its wearer is light enough (accounting for gear), the apparatus can be used to glide, but only in wide-open spaces where there is room to maneuver. The wearer can become airborne by stepping or jumping off a high place, or by performing a high jump to take off from level ground. While aloft, the wearer gains a flying speed equal to its walking speed, with the following limitations: except in a significant updraft, the wearer can't use the glider to gain altitude, and the glider descends 1 foot for every 10 feet of horizontal distance covered. At the end of the flight, the wearer lands on its feet and the glider is intact. If the wearer tries to accelerate the rate of descent, the glider breaks, and the wearer falls.

The glider has AC 12, 1 hit point, and a 15-foot wingspan. Any damage causes it to break and become inoperable. A mending cantrip can repair the damage, provided all the broken pieces are present.

Glyph of Warding (Abridged)

Spell

The glyph is nearly invisible and requires a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check against your spell save DC to be found. When you inscribe the glyph, choose explosive runes or a spell glyph.

Explosive Runes. When triggered, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the glyph. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 5d8 acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage on a failed saving throw (your choice when you create the glyph), or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spell Glyph. You can store a prepared spell of 3rd level or lower in the glyph by casting it as part of creating the glyph. The spell must target a single creature or an area. The spell being stored has no immediate effect when cast in this way. When the glyph is triggered, the stored spell is cast. If the spell has a target, it targets the creature that triggered the glyph. If the spell affects an area, the area is centered on that creature. If the spell summons hostile creatures or creates harmful objects or traps, they appear as close as possible to the intruder and attack it. If the spell requires concentration, it lasts until the end of its full duration.

Green Slime

Hazard

This acidic slime devours flesh, organic material, and metal on contact. Bright green, wet, and sticky, it clings to walls, floors, and ceilings in patches.

A patch of green slime covers a 5-foot square, has blindsight out to a range of 30 feet, and drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement below it. Beyond that, it has no ability to move. A creature aware of the slime's presence can avoid being struck by it with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Otherwise, the slime can't be avoided as it drops.

A creature that comes into contact with green slime takes 5 (1d10) acid damage. The creature takes the damage again at the start of each of its turns until the slime is scraped off or destroyed. Against wood or metal, green slime deals 11 (2d10) acid damage each round, and any nonmagical wood or metal weapon or tool used to scrape off the slime is effectively destroyed. Sunlight, any effect that cures disease, and any effect that deals cold, fire, or radiant damage destroys a patch of green slime.

Gunpowder Horn

Explosive

Setting fire to a container full of gunpowder can cause it to explode, dealing fire damage to creatures within 10 feet of it (3d6 for a powder horn). A successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage. Setting fire to an ounce of gunpowder causes it to flare for 1 round, shedding bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet.

Holy Water

Adventuring Gear

As an action, you can splash the contents of this flask onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw it up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In either case, make a ranged attack against a target creature, treating the holy water as an improvised weapon. If the target is a fiend or undead, it takes 2d6 radiant damage.

A cleric or paladin may create holy water by performing a special ritual. The ritual takes 1 hour to perform, uses 25 gp worth of powdered silver, and requires the caster to expend a 1st-level spell slot.

Healer's Kit

Adventuring Gear

This kit is a leather pouch containing bandages, salves, and splints. The kit has ten uses. As an action, you can expend one use of the kit to stabilize a creature that has 0 hit points, without needing to make a Wisdom (Medicine) check.

Heavy Precipitation

Weather

Everything within an area of heavy rain or heavy snowfall is lightly obscured, and creatures in the area have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. Heavy rain also extinguishes open flames and imposes disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Hunting Trap

Adventuring Gear

When you use your action to set it, this trap forms a saw-toothed steel ring that snaps shut when a creature steps on a pressure plate in the center. The trap is affixed by a heavy chain to an immobile object, such as a tree or a spike driven into the ground. A creature that steps on the plate must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 piercing damage and stop moving. Thereafter, until the creature breaks free of the trap, its movement is limited by the length of the chain (typically 3 feet long). A creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 1 piercing damage to the trapped creature.

Incants of Exethanter

Spellbook

This spellbook contains the following spells: *animate dead, blight, cloudkill, counterspell, detect magic, detect thoughts, dimension door, disintegrate, dispel magic, dominate monster, finger of death, fireball, globe of invulnerability, invisibility, magic missile, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, plane shift, power word kill, power word stun, scrying, shield,* and *thunderwave*.

Madness

Madness can be short-term, long-term, or indefinite. Most relatively mundane effects impose short-term madness, which lasts for just a few minutes. More horrific effects or cumulative effects can result in long-term or indefinite madness.

A character afflicted with short-term madness is subjected to an effect from the Short-Term Madness table for 1d10 minutes.

A character afflicted with long-term madness is subjected to an effect from the Long-Term Madness table for 1d10 × 10 hours.

A character afflicted with indefinite madness gains a new character flaw from the Indefinite Madness table that lasts until cured.

Short-Term Madness

d100	Flaw (lasts 1d10 minutes)
01-15	The character retreats into his or her mind and becomes paralyzed, ending if the character takes any damage.
21-30	The character becomes incapacitated and spends the duration screaming, laughing, or weeping.
31-40	The character becomes frightened and must use his or her action and movement each round to flee from the source of the fear.
41-50	The character begins babbling and is incapable of normal speech or spellcasting.
51-60	The character must use his or her action each round to attack the nearest creature.
61-70	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
71-75	The character does whatever anyone tells him or her to do that isn't obviously self-destructive.
76-80	The character experiences an overpowering urge to eat something strange such as dirt, slime, or offal.
81-90	The character is stunned.
91-100	The character falls unconscious.

Long-Term Madness

d100	Flaw (lasts 1d10 x 10 hours)
01-10	The character feels compelled to repeat a specific activity over and over, such as washing hands, touching things, praying, or counting coins.
11-20	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
21-30	The character suffers extreme paranoia. The character has disadvantage on Wisdom and Charisma checks.
31-40	The character regards something (usually the source of madness) with intense revulsion, as if affected by the antipathy effect of the *antipathy/sympathy* spell.
41-45	The character experiences a powerful delusion. Choose a potion. The character imagines that he or she is under its effects.
46-55	The character becomes attached to a "lucky charm," such as a person or an object, and has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws while more than 30 feet from it.
56-65	The character is blinded (25%) or deafened (75%).
66-75	The character experiences uncontrollable tremors or tics, which impose disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws that involve Strength or Dexterity.
76-85	The character suffers from partial amnesia. The character knows who he or she is and retains racial traits and class features, but doesn't recognize other people or remember anything that happened before the madness took effect.
86-90	Whenever the character takes damage, he or she must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be affected as though he or she failed a saving throw against the *confusion* spell. The confusion effect lasts for 1 minute.
91-95	The character loses the ability to speak.
96-100	The character falls unconscious. No amount of jostling or damage can wake the character.

Indefinite Madness

d100	Flaw (lasts until cured)
01-15	"Being drunk keeps me sane."
16-25	"I keep whatever I find."
26-30	"I try to become more like someone else I know—adopting his or her style of dress, mannerisms, and name."
31-35	"I must bend the truth, exaggerate, or outright lie to be interesting to other people."
36-45	"Achieving my goal is the only thing of interest to me, and I'll ignore everything else to pursue it."
46-50	"I find it hard to care about anything that goes on around me."
51-55	"I don't like the way people judge me all the time."
56-70	"I am the smartest, wisest, strongest, fastest, and most beautiful person I know."
71-80	"I am convinced that powerful enemies are hunting me, and their agents are everywhere I go. I am sure they're watching me all the time."
81-85	"There's only one person I can trust. And only I can see this special friend."
86-95	"I can't take anything seriously. The more serious the situation, the funnier I find it."
96-100	"I've discovered that I really like killing people."

Manacles

Adventuring Gear

These metal restraints can bind a Small or Medium creature. Escaping the manacles requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Breaking them requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. Each set of manacles comes with one key. Without the key, a creature proficient with thieves' tools can pick the manacles' lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Manacles have 15 hit points.

Mother Night's Curse

If a creature takes treasure from the feet of Mother Night's statue in Area Z7, they are cursed. The creature is haunted by horrible dreams that last from dusk to dawn, depriving them of the benefits of a short or long rest finished at night. The curse is suppressed from dawn to dusk, allowing the character to rest during that time. A *greater restoration* or *remove curse* spell ends the curse, as does leaving Barovia.

The curse affects only the creature that did the pilfering and isn't passed on to anyone else who might come into possession of the item. Returning a stolen item to the treasure pile doesn't end the curse.

Musket

Weapon (Firearm)

This weapon deals 1d12 piecing damage on a hit and has a range of 40/120 ft, as well as the Ammunition, Loading, and Two-Handed tags.

Oil (Flask)

Adventuring Gear

Oil usually comes in a clay flask that holds 1 pint. As an action, you can splash the oil in this flask onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw it up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. Make a ranged attack against a target creature or object, treating the oil as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target is covered in oil. If the target takes any fire damage before the oil dries (after 1 minute), the target takes an additional 5 fire damage from the burning oil. You can also pour a flask of oil on the ground to cover a 5-foot-square area, provided that the surface is level. If lit, the oil burns for 2 rounds and deals 5 fire damage to any creature that enters the area or ends its turn in the area. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Pale Tincture

Adventuring gear, poison (ingested)

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) poison damage and become poisoned. The poisoned creature must repeat the saving throw every 24 hours, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save. Until this poison ends, the damage the poison deals can't be healed by any means. After seven successful saving throws, the effect ends and the creature can heal normally.

Poison Needle Trap

Trap

A tiny, poisoned needle hidden in a lock is a good way to discourage thieves from plundering a hoard. Such a trap is usually put in a chest or in the door to a treasure chamber.

Trigger. Anyone attempting to pick or open the lock triggers the trap.

Effect. The triggering creature must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 14 (4d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 10 minutes. While poisoned in this way, the creature is paralyzed. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the needle, but only if a character inspects the lock. A successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the needle, and a check with a total of 10 or lower triggers the trap.

Poisoner's Kit

Adventuring Gear

A poisoner's kit includes the vials, chemicals, and other equipment necessary for the creation of poisons. Proficiency with this kit lets you add your proficiency bonus to any ability checks you make to craft or use poisons.

Raise Dead (Abridged)

Spell

You return a dead creature you touch to life, provided that it has been dead no longer than 10 days. If the creature's soul is both willing and at liberty to rejoin the body, the creature returns to life with 1 hit point.

This spell also neutralizes any poisons and cures nonmagical diseases that affected the creature at the time it died. This spell doesn't, however, remove magical diseases, curses, or similar effects; if these aren't first removed prior to casting the spell, they take effect when the creature returns to life. The spell can't return an undead creature to life. This spell closes all mortal wounds, but it doesn't restore missing body parts. If the creature is lacking body parts or organs integral for its survival—its head, for instance—the spell automatically fails.

Coming back from the dead is an ordeal. The target takes a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks. Every time the target finishes a long rest, the penalty is reduced by 1 until it disappears.

Rope

Adventuring Gear

Rope, whether made of hemp or silk, has 2 hit points and can be burst with a DC 17 Strength check.

Spellbook of Vilnius

Spellbook

This spellbook contains the following spells: *cone of cold, counterspell, detect magic, fireball, fly, greater invisibility, ice storm, mage armor, magic missile, misty step, shield,* and *suggestion.*

Spyglass

Adventuring Gear

Objects viewed through a spyglass are magnified to twice their size.

Strong Wind

Weather

A strong wind imposes disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing. A strong wind also extinguishes open flames, disperses fog, and makes flying by nonmagical means nearly impossible. A flying creature in a strong wind must land at the end of its turn or fall.

Tsunami (Abridged)

Spell

A wall of water springs into existence at a point you choose within range. You can make the wall up to 300 feet long, 300 feet high, and 50 feet thick. The wall lasts for the duration.

When the wall appears, each creature within its area must make a Strength saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 6d10 bludgeoning damage, or half as much damage on a successful save.

At the start of each of your turns after the wall appears, the wall, along with any creatures in it, moves 50 feet away from you. Any Huge or smaller creature inside the wall or whose space the wall enters when it moves must succeed on a Strength saving throw or take 5d10 bludgeoning damage. A creature can take this damage only once per round. At the end of the turn, the wall's height is reduced by 50 feet, and the damage creatures take from the spell on subsequent rounds is reduced by 1d10. When the wall reaches 0 feet in height, the spell ends.

A creature caught in the wall can move by swimming. Because of the force of the wave, though, the creature must make a successful Strength (Athletics) check against your spell save DC in order to move at all. If it fails the check, it can't move. A creature that moves out of the area falls to the ground.

Wall of Stone (Abridged)

Spell

A nonmagical wall of solid stone springs into existence at a point you choose within range. The wall is 6 inches thick and is composed of ten 10-foot-by-10-foot panels. Each panel must be contiguous with at least one other panel. Alternatively, you can create 10-foot-by-20-foot panels that are only 3 inches thick.

If the wall cuts through a creature's space when it appears, the creature is pushed to one side of the wall (your choice). If a creature would be surrounded on all sides by the wall (or the wall and another solid surface), that creature can make a Dexterity saving throw. On a success, it can use its reaction to move up to its speed so that it is no longer enclosed by the wall.

The wall can have any shape you desire, though it can't occupy the same space as a creature or object. The wall doesn't need to be vertical or rest on any firm foundation. It must, however, merge with and be solidly supported by existing stone. Thus, you can use this spell to bridge a chasm or create a ramp.

If you create a span greater than 20 feet in length, you must halve the size of each panel to create supports. You can crudely shape the wall to create crenellations, battlements, and so on.

The wall is an object made of stone that can be damaged and thus breached. Each panel has AC 15 and 30 hit points per inch of thickness. Reducing a panel to 0 hit points destroys it and might cause connected panels to collapse at the DM's discretion.

If you maintain your concentration on this spell for its whole duration, the wall becomes permanent and can't be dispelled. Otherwise, the wall disappears when the spell ends.

Web

Hazard

Giant spiders weave thick, sticky webs across passages and at the bottom of pits to snare prey. These web-filled areas are difficult terrain. Moreover, a creature entering a webbed area for the first time on a turn or starting its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try to escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Each 10-foot cube of giant webs has AC 10, 15 hit points, vulnerability to fire, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage.

Werewolf Lycanthropy

A character who becomes a werewolf lycanthrope retains his or her statistics except as follows:

- The character gains a Strength of 15 if his or her score isn't already higher
- The character gains a +1 bonus to AC while in wolf or hybrid form (from natural armor)
- The character gains a speed of 40 feet while in wolf form.
- The character gains a werewolf's damage immunities, traits, and actions that don't involve equipment. The character is proficient with the lycanthrope's natural attacks, such as its bite or claws, which deal damage as shown in the lycanthrope's statistics. The character can't speak while in animal form.

If the character embraces the curse, his, or her alignment becomes the one defined for the lycanthrope. The DM is free to decide that a change in alignment places the character under DM control until the curse of lycanthropy is removed.

Wolfsbane

Adventuring Gear

Wolfsbane can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature). It can be collected with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using an herbalism kit. Half a pound of wolfsbane is worth 10 sp.

A werewolf that ingests wolfsbane must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the werewolf takes 58 (8d6 + 30) poison damage, or half as much on a success. The werewolf is also poisoned for 2d4 x 4 days. A humanoid that is cursed with lycanthropy but has not transformed into their hybrid or beast form yet (e.g., the full moon has not yet risen) takes only 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The character is also poisoned for 1 hour.

Incense. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies, wolfsbane can be reduced to an oil that can be burned as an incense. To do so requires eight hours of distillation and 10 sp worth of supplies and is worth 5 gp.

One tincture of wolfsbane incense burns for 1d4+6 hours and is dispersed by a wind of moderate or greater (at least 10 miles per hour). Werewolves within 1 mile of burning incense suffer disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks reliant on smell. Once within 500 feet, any check reliant on smell fails. A werewolf within 10 feet of burning wolfsbane incense suffers disadvantage on attack rolls.

Yellow Mold

Hazard

Yellow mold grows in dark places, and one patch covers a 5-foot square. If touched, the mold ejects a cloud of spores that fills a 10-foot cube originating from the mold. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save. Sunlight or any amount of fire damage instantly destroys one patch of yellow mold.

Appendix D: Dramatis Personae

The following characters are featured in *Curse of Strahd* or added by the *Companion.*

The Abbot 412
Abductees 412
Adrian Martikov 412
Alenka, Mirabel, & Sorvia 412
Alexei 412
The Amber Temple 413
Anastrasya Karelova 413
Anna Krezkova 413
Arabelle 413
Argynvost 414
Arik Lorensk 414
Arrigal 414
Aziana 414
Baba Lysaga 414
Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut 415
Barovian Witches 415
Bella Sunbane 415
Beucephalus 415
Bianca 415
Bildrath Cantemir 415
Bluto Krogarov 415
Bray & Brom Martikov 415
Brother Grigor 416
Claudiu Martikov 416
Clovin Belview 416
The Custodian 416
Cyrus Belview 417
Dag Tomescu 417
Damia 417
Danika Dorakova 417
Davanka 417
Davian Martikov 417
Dimira Yolensky 418
Dmitri Krezkov 418
Donavich 418
Doru 418
Drekht 419
Elisabeth Durst 419
Elvir Martikov 419
Emil Toranescu 419
Ernst Larnak 419
Escher 419
Esmardeus 419
Exethanter 420
Ezmerelda d'Avenir 420
Ferecha 420
Fiona Wachter 420
Freek & Myrtle 420
Gadof Blinsky 421
Gertruda 421
Gunther Arasek 421
Gustav Durst 421
Helga Ruvak 421
Helwa 421
Henrik van der Voort 422
Ilya Krezkov 422
Ireena Kolyana 422
Ismark Kolyanovich 423
Izek Strazni 423
Jakarion 424
Karl & Nikolai Jr. Wachter 424
Kasimir Velikov 424
Kavan 424
Kellen 425
Khazan 425
Kiril Stoyanovich 425
The Knights of the Round 426
Kolya 426
Kolyan Indirovich 426
Kretyana Dolvof 426
Lazlo Ulrich 426
Leo Dilisnya 427
Lief Lipsiege 427
Lorghoth the Decayer 427
Lucian Petrovich 427
Ludmilla Vilisevic 428
Luvash 428
Lydia Petrovna 428
The Mad Mage 428
Mad Mary 428
Madam Eva 428
Marina 429
Martin Martikov 429
Marzena Belview 429
Milivoj 429
Minadora von Zarovich 429
Mishka Belview 429
Morgantha 430
Mother Night 430
The Mournful Three 430
Muriel Vinshaw 430
Nala 430
Neferon 431
Nikolai Wachter Sr. 431
Offalia Wormwiggle 431
Otto Belview 431
Parriwimple 431
Patrina Velikovna 431
Pidlwick II 432
The Prophet 432
Rahadin 432
Ratka 432
Revyr 432
The Roc of Mount Ghakis 432
Rosavalda Durst 433
Rudolph van Richten 433
Saint Markovia 433
Sangzor 433
Sasha Ivliskova 433
Savid 434
Sergei von Zarovich 434
The Shadow of Strahd 434
Sir Godfrey Gwilym 434
Skennis 434
The Snow Maidens 434
Stanimir 434
Stefania Martikov 435
Stella Wachter 435
Strahd von Zarovich 435
Szoldar Szoldarovich 436
Thornbolt Durst 436
Udo Lukovich 436
Urwin Martikov 436
Vargas Vallakovich 436
Vasilka 437
Victor Vallakovich 437
Viggo Martikov 438
Vilnius 438
Vladimir Horngaard 438
Volenta Popofsky 438
Walter Durst 438
Wensencia 438
Willemina Rikalova 438
Wintersplinter 438
Yan the Dead 439
Yelena Arasek 439
Yeska 439
Yevgeni Krushkin 439
Yolanda Martikov 439
Zuleika Toranescu 439
Zygfrek Belview 439

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Disposition	Description
The Abbot	Unique	Neutral	A fallen angel of the Morninglord determined to save Barovia.
Abductees	—	Friendly	The children abducted by the werewolves.
Adrian Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The eldest, unmarried son of Davian Martikov.
Alenka, Mirabel, & Sorvia	N **Spies**	Friendly	The three Vistani owners of the Blood of the Vine Tavern.
Alexei	CN **Bandit**	Neutral	A Vistana teenager charged with watching Arabelle.
The Amber Temple	—	Hostile	The sadistic genius loci of the Amber Temple itself.
Anastrasya Karelova	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's most anxious vampire bride.
Anna Krezkova	LG **Noble**	Friendly	The wife of Dmitri Krezkov & mother to four dead children.
Arabelle	LN **Commoner**	Friendly	The secret Vistana descendant of Madam Eva & King Barov.
Argynvost	Unique	Friendly	The eponymous founder of the Order of the Silver Dragon.
Arik Lorensk	CN **Commoner**	Neutral	The soulless bartender of the Blood of the Vine Tavern.
Arrigal	Unique	Neutral	A Vistana assassin in service to Strahd.
Aziana	**Werewolf**	Hostile	A werewolf on guard duty with Davanka.
Baba Lysaga	Unique	Hostile	Strahd's deluded, witch-midwife that imbued him with magic.
Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut	Unique	Hostile	Lysaga's hut, animated by a stolen Wizard of Wines gemstone.
Barovian Witches	**Barovian Witch**	Hostile	Witches that study at Castle Ravenloft with Strahd's permission.
Bella Sunbane	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	Hostile	Morgantha's crude, hag-daughter.
Beucephalus	**Nightmare**	Hostile	"The Wonder Horse," Strahd's demonic steed.
Bianca	**Werewolf**	Hostile	Kiril Stoyanovich's werewolf mate.
Bildrath Cantemir	LN **Commoner**	Neutral	A miserly scalper in the Village of Barovia.
Bluto Krogarov	NE **Commoner**	Neutral	The Vallakian town drunk about to drown Arabelle at the lake.
Bray & Brom Martikov	—	Friendly	The sons of Urwin & Danika (7 HP apiece).
Brother Grigor	—	—	The priest that convinced Lazlo Ulrich to murder Marina long ago.
Claudiu Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The teenage son of Stefania Martikov & Dag Tomescu.
Clovin Belview	NE **Mongrelfolk**	Neutral	The Abbot's faithful, perpetually drunk martinet.
The Custodian	**Animated Armor**	Neutral	A construct fashioned by Khazan to maintain his tower.
Cyrus Belview	CE **Mongrelfolk**	Hostile	Strahd's monstrous, faithful manservant.
Dag Tomescu	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The husband of Stefania, father to her four children.
Damia	CN **Spy**	Friendly	Stanimir's daughter, doomed to die to werewolves.
Danika Dorakova	**Wereraven**	Friendly	Co-proprietor of the Blue Water Inn & wife of Urwin Martikov.
Davanka	**Werewolf**	Hostile	A werewolf on guard duty with Aziana.
Davian Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The elderly patriarch of the Martikovs & Keepers of the Feather.
Dimira Yolensky	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	A Krezkite mother that gives birth to a soulless baby boy.
Dmitri Krezkov	LG **Noble**	Friendly	The burgomaster of Krezk & father to four dead children.
Donavich	LG **Acolyte**	Friendly	The village priest, struggling through a crisis of faith.
Doru	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Donavich's son, returned from the dead as a vampire.
Drekht	Unique	Hostile	An evil wildling druid that attacks the Wizard of Wines.
Elisabeth Durst	**Ghast**	Hostile	The co-cult leader of Death House, now ravenously undead.
Elvir Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The youngest son of Davian Martikov.
Emil Toranescu	Unique	Neutral	An imprisoned werewolf that criticized Kiril's tournaments.
Ernst Larnak	LE **Spy**	Neutral	Fiona Wachter's money-grubbing, treacherous spy.
Escher	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's most insolent consort.
Esmardeus	Unique	Hostile	An evil wildling druid that attacks the Wizard of Wines.
Exethanter	Unique	Friendly	An amnesiac lich that would share the Amber Temple's secrets.
Ezmerelda d'Avenir	Unique	Friendly	Van Richten's wayward, prodigal apprentice.
Ferecha	**Specter**	Hostile	The murdered Durst Manor maid, mother of the stillborn Walter.
Fiona Wachter	Unique	Hostile	A contemptuous noblewoman & leader of an infernal cult.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Disposition	Description
Freek & Myrtle	—	Friendly	Two village children sold to Morgantha for dream pastries.
Gadof Blinsky	CG **Commoner**	Friendly	The strange but well-meaning Vallakian toymaker.
Gertruda	NG **Commoner**	Friendly	Mad Mary's missing, naïve daughter.
Gunther Arasek	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	The amiable co-proprietor of the Arasek Stockyard.
Gustav Durst	**Ghast**	Hostile	The co-cult leader of Death House, now ravenously undead.
Helga Ruvak	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's vampiric maid, who plays as a damsel-in-distress.
Helwa	CE **Gladiator**	Hostile	A Balinok wildling sheltering in the Amber Temple.
Henrik van der Voort	LE **Commoner**	Neutral	The Vallakian coffin maker forced to steal St. Andral's bones.
Ilya Krezkov	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	Dmitri & Anna's dead son, soon to be resurrected by the Abbot.
Ireena Kolyana	LG **Noble**	Friendly	Tatyana reborn, Strahd's beloved & perpetual victim.
Ismark Kolyanovich	LG **Veteran**	Friendly	The new burgomaster of the Village of Barovia.
Izek Strazni	Unique	Hostile	Ireena's long-lost brother and the baron's devil-armed minion.
Jakarion	—	—	A wizard that died delving the Amber Temple.
Karl & Nikolai Jr. Wachter	N **Noble**	Friendly	The mischievous, near-alcoholic sons of Fiona Wachter.
Kasimir Velikov	Unique	Friendly	A broken elf responsible for his people's genocide.
Kavan	—	Neutral	The restless, disgruntled spirit of a bloodthirsty wildling chief.
Kellen	—	Hostile	A 10-year-old werewolf, newest victor of Kiril's tournaments.
Khazan	Unique	Hostile	The former archmage now reduced to a banished boneclaw.
Kiril Stoyanovich	Unique	Hostile	The vicious alpha of the Children of Mother Night.
The Knights of the Round	Varies	Neutral	The senior-most knights of the Order of the Silver Dragon.
Kolya	CN **Bandit**	Neutral	A Vistana that delivers an accursed coffin in *Special Delivery*.
Kolyan Indirovich	—	—	The late burgomaster of the Village of Barovia.
Kretyana Dolvof	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	The midwife that delivers Dimira Yolensky's baby.
Lazlo Ulrich	NG **Ghost**	Friendly	Berez's last burgomaster, now a restless spirit.
Leo Dilisnya	—	—	He who murdered Strahd on the day of Sergei's wedding.
Lief Lipsiege	CE **Commoner**	Neutral	The royal accountant.
Lorghoth the Decayer	Varies	Hostile	The monster in the basement of Death House.
Lucian Petrovich	LG **Priest**	Friendly	The priest of St. Andral's Church in Vallaki, doomed to die.
Ludmilla Vilisevic	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's most stoic vampire bride.
Luvash	CE **Bandit Captain**	Neutral	A sadistic brute & terrible drunk; co-leader of the Vallaki Vistani.
Lydia Petrovna	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	The perpetually-giggling baroness.
The Mad Mage	Unique	Neutral	Mordenkainen who came to free Barovia, now lost to madness.
Mad Mary	CN **Commoner**	Friendly	The distraught mother of the missing Gertruda.
Madam Eva	Unique	Friendly	The Vistana seer and secret half-sister of Strahd.
Marina	—	—	A previous reincarnation of Tatyana & Ireena Kolyana.
Martin Martikov	—	Friendly	The son of Stefania Martikov & Dag Tomescu.
Marzena Belview	Mongrelfolk	Neutral	A winged, paranoid mongrelfolk.
Milivoj	Unique	Neutral	The teenage church gravedigger who stole St. Andral's bones.
Minadora von Zarovich	Snow Maiden	Hostile	A cousin of Strahd & commander of the Snow Maidens.
Mishka Belview	Mongrelfolk	Neutral	A spidery, bloodthirsty mongrelfolk that enjoys murder.
Morgantha	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	Hostile	A hag peddling addictive, magical pastries made from children.
Mother Night	—	—	The Barovian deity of darkness, patron to Madam Eva.
The Mournful Three	**Revenants**	Hostile	Three revenants charged with safeguarding Argynvostholt.
Muriel Vinshaw	**Wereraven**	Friendly	A secret agent of the Keepers of the Feather.
Nala	Unique	Hostile	An evil wildling druid that attacks the Wizard of Wines.
Neferon	**Arcanaloth**	Neutral	A yugoloth bound to the Amber Temple.
Nikolai Wachter Sr.	LN **Noble**	—	The dead patriarch of the Wachter family.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Disposition	Description
Offalia Wormwiggle	**Night Hag** or **Green Hag**	Hostile	Shy seamstress and hag-daughter of Morgantha.
Otto Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	Neutral	A dog-and-donkey-faced mongrelfolk.
Parriwimple	LG **Gladiator**	Friendly	Parpol Cantemir, Bildrath's simple-minded nephew.
Patrina Velikovna	Varies	Neutral	Strahd's bride-that-never-was, now languishing as a banshee.
Pidlwick II	Unique	Neutral	A murderous, clockwork jester.
The Prophet	Unique	Hostile	A druid raised by Baba Lysaga to believe he is Strahd's son.
Rahadin	Unique	Hostile	Chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft & Strahd's honorary brother.
Ratka	CN **Bandit Captain**	Friendly	Stanimir's son.
Revyr	Unique	Hostile	An evil wildling druid that attacks the Wizard of Wines.
The Roc of Mount Ghakis	**Roc**	Hostile	Lugdana's giant raven, now corrupted by the Dark Powers.
Rosavalda Durst	LG **Ghost**	Friendly	The ghostly daughter of Elisabeth & Gustav Durst.
Rudolph van Richten	Unique	Friendly	The legendary monster hunter, masquerading as "Rictavio."
Saint Markovia	—	—	A long-dead cleric that led a crusade against Strahd—and failed.
Sangzor	Unique	Hostile	A monstrous, huge, supernatural goat of Mount Ghakis.
Sasha Ivliskova	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's oldest vampire bride, sealed away in a crypt.
Savid	N Dusk Elf **Scout**	Friendly	A dusk elf tracker in search of Arabelle, wounded by Ch. 7.
Sergei von Zarovich	—	—	Strahd's pious, virtuous brother, murdered on his wedding day.
The Shadow of Strahd	Unique	Hostile	A construct conceived of by the Dark Powers to torment Berez.
Sir Godfrey Gwilym	Unique	Varies	Undead paladin & champion of the Order of the Silver Dragon.
Skennis	**Werewolf**	Hostile	An elderly werewolf (36 HP) fond of the flute.
The Snow Maidens	**Snow Maiden**	Hostile	Spectral soldiers loyal to Strahd that hold Tsolenka Pass.
Stanimir	CN **Mage**	Friendly	A friendly, Vistana leader that elucidates on Strahd's past.
Stefania Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The daughter of Davian Martikov & mother to four children.
Stella Wachter	CG **Commoner**	Neutral	The mad daughter of Fiona, sequestered in her bedroom.
Strahd von Zarovich	Unique	Hostile	The Ancient, the Land, the Lord of Barovia.
Szoldar Szoldarovich	N **Scout**	Friendly	A wolf hunter that may serve as a guide through the woods.
Thornbolt Durst	LG **Ghost**	Friendly	The ghostly son of Elisabeth & Gustav Durst.
Udo Lukovich	LN **Commoner**	Friendly	A cobbler imprisoned for speaking out against the baron.
Urwin Martikov	**Wereraven**	Friendly	The proprietor of the Blue Water Inn.
Vargas Vallakovich	NE **Noble**	Neutral	The egotistical, deluded, brittle baron of Vallaki doomed to die.
Vasilka	**Flesh Golem**	Neutral	The Abbot's "perfect bride" for Strahd, forged from Krezkites.
Victor Vallakovich	NE **Mage**	Neutral	The Vallakian baronet & a self-taught mage.
Viggo Martikov	—	Friendly	The young son of Stefania Martikov & Dag Tomescu.
Vilnius	NE **Mage**	Neutral	The apprentice of the late wizard Jakarion.
Vladimir Horngaard	Unique	Hostile	The hate-blinded commander of the Order of the Silver Dragon.
Volenta Popofsky	**Vampire Spawn**	Hostile	Strahd's most honey-tongued vampire bride.
Walter Durst	—	—	The stillborn bastard of Gustav Durst & the maid, Ferecha.
Wensencia	**Werewolf**	Hostile	A surrogate mother to Kellen.
Willemina Rikalova	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	The distraught mother of Udo Lukovich.
Wintersplinter	**Tree Blight**	Hostile	A tree blight unleashed by evil, wildling druids at Yester Hill.
Yan the Dead	—	Friendly	A dead Vistana whose head Van Richten magically preserved.
Yelena Arasek	LG **Commoner**	Friendly	The amiable co-proprietor of the Arasek Stockyard.
Yeska	—	Friendly	The altar boy of Saint Andral's Church.
Yevgeni Krushkin	N **Scout**	Friendly	A wolf hunter that may serve as a guide through the woods.
Yolanda Martikov	—	Friendly	The infant daughter of Stefania Martikov & Dag Tomescu.
Zuleika Toranescu	**Werewolf**	Neutral	A malcontent werewolf opposed to Kiril Stoyanovich.
Zygfrek Belview	**Mongrelfolk**	Neutral	A scaled, self-conscious mongrelfolk.

The Abbot

Major Character of Chapter 8

Sent by the Morninglord to save Barovia, the Abbot is an angel long-since fallen from grace. His tragedy is further detailed in Appendix D of *Curse of Strahd*. The Abbot believes that to redeem the Devil, he must find Strahd the perfect bride—and so he fashioned Vasilka from the corpses of dead Krezkites. The Abbot represents a major turning point in the campaign, as described in *CMP* Chapter 8.

Revision. The Abbot came to Krezk over a century ago. To preserve his mysterious nature, it is far better to place his arrival to twenty years ago—long enough for Krezkites to be shocked by his eternal youth, but not long enough to prove he is inhuman.

Roleplaying the Abbot. Above all else, the Abbot is smug and arrogant—an immortal being unable to hide his quiet disdain for mortals, with zero self-awareness of his own flaws or fall from grace. He often refers to a mortal as "my child," and is fond of placing a "reassuring" hand on someone's shoulder as if to comfort instead of condescend.

Unlike other characters, it is best to carefully plan out what the Abbot says. Rely heavily on the scripts provided by the *Companion*. When in doubt, the Abbot can answer with silence, as any arrogant angel would when pestered by a mortal.

Knowledge. The Abbot, as an immortal observer and agent of the Morninglord, knows much about Barovia—and yet, there are still secrets that elude him:

- The Abbot knows Barovia is no longer on the Material Plane and refers to its placement as "on the shoulder of the Shadowfell."
- The Abbot knows that Barovian souls can't escape to the afterlife, but he does not know they are reincarnated into new bodies. Thus, he doesn't know Ireena Kolyana is the reincarnation of Tatyana.
- The Abbot does not know about Tatyana's history or fate, only that Strahd hungers for a bride.
- The Abbot knows killing Strahd is futile, that Strahd can't truly die, but never shares this secret with mortals. Frankly, the Abbot should not know this fact, but only believe that Strahd *must* be redeemed with love.

In the Campaign

The Abbot is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** the Abbot resurrects Ilya Krezkov, thereby demonstrating his divine powers. If Ireena's corpse is brought to him, the Abbot resurrects her but demands a wedding dress for Vasilka afterwards. He does not intervene when Strahd arrives to take Ireena.

During **The Wedding,** the Abbot crashes the ceremony, presenting Vasilka as Strahd's perfect bride.

Abductees

Minor Characters of Chapter 15

The *Companion* names the children abducted by the werewolves. Per the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline, they are all Vistani children, forced to fight to the death in Kiril Stoyanovich's sick competition.

- Alek, a ten-year-old boy
- Dezdrelda, a twelve-year-old girl
- Livius, an eleven-year-old boy
- Mathilda, a nine-year-old girl
- Nimira, a seven-year-old girl

Adrian Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

The eldest son of Davian Martikov, Adrian is set to inherit the Wizard of Wines after his father's passing.

Roleplaying Adrian. A quiet individual, Adrian is capable, confident, and kind. Where his father is cantankerous, Adrian is soft-spoken and warm.

In the Campaign

Adrian is featured in multiple chapters:

Adrian is with his family in **Chapter 12,** unscathed after the druids' attack on the winery.

In **Chapter 14,** Adrian has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Adrian attends **The Wedding** with his father and dies fighting against the werewolves in Act II or III.

Alenka, Mirabel, & Sorvia

Minor Characters of Chapter 3

These three Vistani women own the Blood of the Vine Tavern in the Village of Barovia. Per *Curse of Strahd*, they are spies of the Devil that alert him to newcomers.

Revision. The Vistani are not Strahd's servants; instead, they send newcomers to Tser Pool Encampment, claiming that Madam Eva has foreseen their arrival in Barovia.

Roleplaying the Vistani. The Vistani have an air of mystique. In sharp contrast to the grim and dismal Ismark, they are a rare source of warmth and laughter in the otherwise dismal Village of Barovia.

Alexei

Minor Character of Chapters 2 & 5

A Vistana teenager, Alexei was charged with watching Arabelle while Luvash and his cohorts were partying.

In the Campaign

Alexei is featured in multiple chapters:

The *Companion* adds Alexei to **Chapter 2** in the *In the Search of Arabelle* random encounter, giving the adventurers the chance to meet him before his whipping in Chapter 5.

In **Chapter 5,** Luvash whips Alexei for losing his daughter.

The Amber Temple

Major Character of Chapter 13

Per the *Companion*, the Amber Temple has become a genius loci—a spirit of a place—born from the residual evil of the vestiges imprisoned inside its walls. As such, the Temple is a character in its own right. The spirit attempts to corrupt good- and neutral-aligned visitors, killing those that refuse.

Anastrasya Karelova

Minor Character of Chapter 4 & the Wedding

Anastrasya is Strahd's most sharp-featured and anxious vampire bride. She wears a stained and tattered red wedding gown; a black-and-crimson silk head scarf sewn with precious jewels (worth 750 gp); and a platinum necklace with a black opal pendant (worth 1,500 gp).

Roleplaying Ana. Like all Strahd's consorts, Anastrasya is afraid Strahd will discard—or worse, seal her away—once his beloved "Tatyana" is in his grasp.

In the Campaign

Anastrasya is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Anastrasya attends dinner during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* and otherwise guards Strahd's coffin.

During **the Wedding,** Anastrasya guards Ireena and begrudgingly serves as a bridesmaid.

Anna Krezkova

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Anna Krezkova is the mother of four long-dead children, with her son Ilya being the latest to pass. She carries in her heart a sorrow that can never truly be understood or softened. Still, Anna wears a smile and dares to defy the crushing melancholy of life in Barovia.

In the absence of a genuine priest, Anna fulfills the duties of the church of the Morninglord. She oversees domestic matters and offers prayers to the faithful, such as when Dimira Yolensky's son is born.

Roleplaying Anna. Anna is a woman of unfathomable sorrow that somehow still dares to hope.

In the Campaign

Anna is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** Anna is introduced, and is featured in the *Something New* and *Something Borrowed* special events.

As a noble, Anna must attend **the Wedding;** she and her husband keep their distance from the adventurers.

Arabelle

Major Character of Chapter 2

Arabelle is a seven-year-old Vistana child—the daughter of Luvash, niece of Arrigal, descendant of Madam Eva, and, some could argue, the heir to Strahd von Zarovich's throne.

Roleplaying Arabelle. Arabelle is a seven-year-old spitfire who does not suffer fools. Years without a mother and too many years with a drunk for a father has forced Arabelle to grow up fast. She commands an air of authority and acts as if she were thrice her age. She is, however, still prone to fits of mischief and immaturity. She snaps whenever she doesn't get her away, never owns up to her faults, and fails to foresee the consequences of her actions. She has a particular fondness for animals, even wolves, which she claims "like her."

As a Destined Ally. Arabelle is the ally named by the Tempter card. However, she should not be the party's true Destined Ally. Instead, saving her draws the true ally (Rudolph van Richten, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, or even Arrigal) to the party's cause.

Second Sight. At your discretion, Araballe has the gift of precognition, or "the Sight" as the Vistani call it, allowing her a greater role in the narrative. Her premonitions of the future come randomly; they might allow her to warn the adventurers of an ambush, provide insight to their enemies, or offer cryptic and symbolic prophecies. However, Arabelle can never divine the fate of herself or another Vistana. You can go one step further and allow Arabelle to occasionally share her visions with the others, allowing them to see what she sees, thereby allowing you to give the adventurers visions of distant places and events. Arabelle effectively becomes a cutscene vehicle for your campaign.

In the Campaign

Arabelle is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 2,** Arabelle is about to be drowned by Bluto Krogarov at Lake Zarovich. Alexei and Savid are looking for her in the *In Search of Arabelle* revised encounter.

Arabelle is mentioned in **Chapter 5** by the Vistani.

Arabelle is added to **Chapter 15** by the *Companion*, provided she was rescued from Lake Zarovich.

During **the Wedding,** Arabelle serves as the flower girl.

Argynvost

Major Character of Chapter 7

In life, Argynvost was a noble, silver dragon dedicated to safeguarding dark knowledge. Having founded the Order of the Silver Dragon to watch over the Amber Temple, the dragon—in disguise as a human lord—found himself in conflict with Strahd's ruthless armies. Argynvost had his knights bring the refugees of Strahd's wars to this valley—but Strahd followed. Argynvost was slain, his skull taken to Castle Ravenloft. The Order, however, endured as revenants bound by hatred. His final journal entry can be found in Area Q40.

Argynvost's spirit cannot find rest until his knights have been freed from their hatred, and that cannot happen until the dragon's skull is returned to mausoleum. A shadow of the dragon's spirit roams Argynvostholt, imploring wayward heroes to redeem the Order of the Silver Dragon.

Revision. See the *Companion's Argynvost the Reanimated* variant, which changes how Argynvost can be put to rest.

In the Campaign

Argynvost is featured in multiple chapters:

Argynvost's skull is found in Area K67 of **Chapter 4.**
Argynvost's spirit reaches out to the party in **Chapter 7.**

Arik Lorensk

Minor Character of Chapter 3

The Blood of the Vine Tavern's barkeep, Arik is the mascot for soulless Barovians everywhere. When the adventurers later learn that some Barovians are born without souls, they should think back to Arik and realize he was the first one they ever met.

Roleplaying Arik. Arik is perpetually bored, uninterested, and unimpressed. He continuously wipes down the counter or cleans mugs.

Arrigal

Major Character of Chapter 5

A Vistana assassin in service to Strahd, few hearts in Barovia are blacker than Arrigal's. Other than Rahadin, Arrigal is Strahd's greatest mortal agent, able to walk where the Devil's undead cannot go. He is the campaign's antagonistic wildcard. You can use him for treachery, theft, murder, or ambush. He can steal artifacts, sabotage a plan, abduct a Destined Ally, and more.

Although Arrigal nominally shares leadership over the Vallaki Vistani with his brother Luvash, all Vistani know him to be the true puppeteer. Out of fear and respect, they obey him without question.

Roleplaying Arrigal. Arrigal pretends to be warm and friendly, but this is all a guise. In truth, he is cold, cruel, and level-headed, his sharp mind always calculating how best to kill someone. He seems to be the voice of reason whenever his brother flies off the handle. Arrigal's one weakness is his niece, Arabelle—but even that love is not enough for him to disobey Strahd's orders for long.

As a Destined Ally. Arrigal serves best as a faux lead for the Destined Ally. It should be unclear whether he, Ezmerelda, or van Richten, is the Destined Ally, up until Arrigal betrays the adventurers for Strahd. Secretly, Arrigal hungers for the throne of Barovia himself, but whether this is enough for him to truly betray Strahd is up to you.

In the Campaign

Arrigal is featured in multiple chapters:

Arrigal might be met in the *Plea for Help* optional adventure hook during the **Death House** prologue.
Arrigal might ambush the adventurers in **Chapter 2** (see *Random Encounters Revised*).
In **Chapter 5,** Arrigal watches Luvash whip Alexei raw for losing Arabelle. If Bluto Krogarov is not brought to justice, Arrigal infiltrates Vallaki to murder him.
In **Chapter 7,** Arrigal pursues Ezmerelda to Argynvostholt during the *Arrigal's Hunt* special event.
During **the Wedding,** Arrigal leads the Vistani, and acts as the instigator of Strahd's inevitable betrayal.

Aziana

Minor Character of Chapter 15

Aziana is a werewolf of the Children of Mother Night.

Baba Lysaga

Major Character of Chapter 10

Baba Lysaga is an ancient witch awarded long life by Mother Night. The midwife that brought Strahd into the world, Lysaga considers the Devil to be her own son. See *Curse of Strahd* Appendix D for her history.

Baba Lysaga is a powerful spellcaster capable of 8th-level spells. It was she who imbued Strahd with the spark of magic. She spends her days rooting out his enemies and cooing over an illusion of him as a baby in a ghastly crib. She opposes the Keepers of the Feather, stole a gemstone from the Wizard of Wines to animate her hut, and, in your campaign, may have even pitted the Yester Hill druids against the wereravens (see the Prophet in *CMP* Ch. 14).

Roleplaying Lysaga. Lysaga is the archetypal, creepy crone of horror dialed up to eleven. She acts and sounds like a grandmother, but her cheerful smile is all teeth and sadism. She treats the illusion of baby Strahd–and the Shadow of Strahd–as her own son, never minding the truth or the paradox of having them both. She hates Ravenia, Strahd's true mother, above all, and cannot but help mention her when raging. Lysaga, especially her hands, are prone to shaking uncontrollably. Lysaga might say any of the following:

- "Oh deary, you've made quite the fatal mistake coming here."
- "His love is all I need."
- "It should've been me! Not Ravenia, but me! I loved him more than anything! All my love for Strahd and Strahd alone! Ravenia split her love among Sergei and Barov, but I would've given the moon for him! I gave him the spark of magic, me!"

Baba Lysaga's Creeping Hut

Minor Character of Chapter 10

Built from the rotting stump of a great tree felled long ago, Baba Lysaga has animated her home with a gemstone stolen from the Wizard of Wines.

Barovian Witches

Minor Characters of Chapter 13

Seven **Barovian witches** study at Castle Ravenloft; three, which the *Companion* name, visit the Amber Temple to acquire Dark Gifts. They are:

- Gretchen, the youngest, who has toadlike eyes. She has accepted the Dark Gift of Delban, the Star of Ice and Hate. She can cast *cone of cold* (spell save DC 15) seven times, and has resistance to cold damage. As part of her Dark Gift, fire now terrifies her.
- Matilda, a miserly old crone destined to accept the Dark Gift of Tarakamedes if given the chance. She loudly complains that she deserves the next Dark Gift.
- Meredith, a warty voyeur and ruthless gossiper, destined to take the Dark Gift of the Kingmaker if given the chance. If you ran the *Death in the Dead of Night* storyline for Chapter 6, Meredith is the witch that shepherded the horde of zombies that accosted the adventurers; perhaps they recognize Meredith, having caught a glimpse of her.

Bella Sunbane

Major Character of Chapter 6

A hag-daughter of Morgantha's, Bella has the face of a gnarled tree and the self-control of a toddler. She wears a silver choker too small for her throat, an ugly butterfly brooch, and four gaudy pyrite rings that have stained her fingers green. Dressed in a threadbare robe, Bella joins Morgantha shortly after the adventurers arrive to Old Bonegrinder in Chapter 6.

Roleplaying Bella. Bella is uncomfortably "affectionate" and gregarious. She clings to her mother's arm in a loving fashion, offering guests tea. She makes unwelcome, bawdy comments and crude suggestions to guests about "staying the night" with her.

Beucephalus

Minor Character of Chapters 4, 8, & 14

Beucephalus is Strahd's **nightmare** steed.The fiend has a crypt in Castle Ravenloft, the inscription on which implies he was an ordinary horse before Strahd's dark ascension.

In the Campaign

Beucephalus is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4**, Beucephalus is in his crypt.

Strahd rides Beucephalus to Krezk in **Chapter 8** when he finally seizes Ireena Kolyana.

If Strahd is featured in **Chapter 14**, he visits Yester Hill astride Beucephalus.

Bianca

Minor Character of Chapter 15

A werewolf, Bianca is Kiril Stoyanovich's mate.

Bildrath Cantemir

Minor Character of Chapter 3

The Village of Barovia's only merchant, Bildrath is a testament to Barovian culture. He peddles gear scavenged from long-dead adventurers, and price-gouges customers at every opportunity. In this, Bildrath sets the tone for most future interactions with Barovians in the campaign.

Revision. Bildrath is one of the chief conspirators in the conspiracy to kidnap Ireena and turn her loose in the woods so that the village will finally be free of Strahd's attention. See *Funeral for the Burgomaster* in *CMP* Ch. 1.

Roleplaying Bildrath. See *CMP,* Ch. 3, Area E1 for details on how to roleplay Bildrath. His nephew Parriwimple is Bildrath's only soft spot; he truly loves the boy.

Bluto Krogarov

Major Character of Chapter 2

The Vallakian town drunk, Bluto is the only person brave, dumb, or desperate enough to fish at Lake Zarovich, whose shores teem with wolves. And yet the fish have all gone—to restore them, he has decided to make a sacrifice. Believing Vistani to be lucky, Bluto has kidnapped Arabelle and will soon drown her in the lake. If he is stopped but not slain, and not punished by Vallaki for his crimes, the Vistani demand justice. If no justice is scored, Arrigal assassinates Bluto in the middle of the night.

Revision. Bluto intends to drown Arabelle not to restore the fish, but to satiate his dead, pregnant wife whom—per the *Companion*—he drowned months ago. Her spirit endures as a furious rusalka and can only be placated with a child and Bluto's death.

Roleplaying Bluto. Bluto only ever mumbles in a tiny, unsettling voice. His gaze is dead, his face nearly catatonic.

Bray & Brom Martikov

Minor Characters of Chapter 5

The sons of Urwin Martikov and Danika Dorakova, Brom (eleven) and his little brother Bray (nine) are a familiar sight to all those who patronize the Blue Water Inn. Were-ravens both, Bray & Brom are noncombatants with 7 hit points apiece.

Roleplaying Bray & Brom. The boys are too curious for their own good, but are otherwise harmless and good-natured, taking after their parents.

In the Campaign

Bray & Brom are featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** the boys are introduced.

During **the Wedding,** the boys serve as the ringbearers, much to their parents' dismay. If blood is shed, they shapeshift and fly away to alert the Keepers of the Feather that are stationed outside.

Brother Grigor

Minor Character of Chapter 10

Brother Grigor is a filthy but devout holy man that frequented the village of Berez. Strahd himself met him under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, and was repulsed by Grigor's odor and state. In *I, Strahd: The Memoirs of a Vampire*, Strahd charmed Grigor with his vampiric gaze and compelled the holy man to leave Berez behind, adding, at the last second, to "bathe daily." *Curse of Strahd* has retconned this fate for Grigor, instead having him die by Strahd's hand immediately after the murder of Marina.

Revision. Brother Grigor's echo is featured in Berez's Groundhog Day-esque cycle.

Claudiu Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Claudiu is the teenage son of Stefania Martikov and Dag Tomescu, eldest of their four children.

In the Campaign

Claudiu is featured in multiple chapters:

Claudiu is with his family in **Chapter 12;** he became concussed during the druids' attack on the winery and is struggling to remain awake.

In **Chapter 14,** Claudiu has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Clovin Belview

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Clovin Belview is the Abbot's faithful, two-headed servant, responsible for feeding his family and tending the Abbey. He is the Igor to the Abbot's Frankenstein. A tragic figure in his own right, Clovin finds solace in the bottom of a wine bottle. While drunk, he performs beautifully with a viol. His loyalty to the Abbot is not one of convenience; he legitimately admires the priest. That he also fears the Abbot certainly helps as well.

Clovin stands 4 feet, 7 inches tall and has a barrel-like shape. His right head is fully formed and combines the features of a patchy-haired man with those of a goat, complete with stubby horns. His left head is about half normal size and has a soft, cherubic face partly covered with crocodilian hide. Clovin has a crab's pincer in place of his left hand and a bear's paw where his right foot should be. He wears an ill-fitting monk's robe with a belt made of hempen rope.

Roleplaying Clovin. Clovin is a timid drunk propelled to acts of music whenever he has finished another wine bottle. He all but worships the Abbot and his "holy work." Clovin believes that the Abbot will perfect his "despicable" family yet. He often turns his eyes down or refuses to meet someone's gaze. His madness is embodied in the following statement: "Being drunk keeps me sane." He is drunk most of the time, but not to the extent that it impedes his combat ability, and his musical performance improves when he is inebriated.

As a Destined Ally. Clovin is a potential Destined Ally, but there is nothing heroic or inspiring about him. He ranks as a poor choice among candidates like Kasimir Velikov, Ezmerelda d'Avenir, and Rudolph van Richten.

Statistics. Clovin has the Two-Headed feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.

In the Campaign

Clovin is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** Clovin is introduced as the Abbot's servant responsible for feeding his mad family.

Clovin serves as the harpist for **the Wedding**.

The Custodian

Minor Character of Chapter 11

Upon the fourth floor of Khazan's tower stands an animated armor that the *Companion* names. The Custodian, as it is referred to, is an attendant left behind by Khazan. The Custodian obeys whoever first utters "Khazan." When this occurs, it animates and salutes the speaker with a thump of its metallic fist on its metallic breast. The Custodian is magically bound to the island and can't leave.

Roleplaying the Custodian. The Custodian cannot speak but can answer binary questions by saluting or by stomping its foot. It is an otherwise chatty construct that expresses itself through physical gestures—particularly shrugs, frustrated hand gestures, and "finger guns." It cups the chin of its helmet or strokes its metallic cheeks when contemplating an answer.

The construct is quite knowledgeable of its late master and is willing to share those secrets—as Khazan wishes intruders to utilize his wards and thereby set him free. Through its limited communicative abilities, the Custodian can direct the adventurers to Khazan's wards.

If asked whether its master is alive, the Custodian stomps its foot. If asked if Khazan is dead, it stomps its foot. If asked if Khazan is present right now, the Custodian turns to wherever Khazan is lurking in his shadowy realm, and stares.

The Staff of Power. The Custodian kneels before a character wielding Khazan's *staff of power* like a knight before its liege. At your discretion, the wielder of the staff has telepathy with the Custodian, allowing a full dialogue.

Cyrus Belview

Minor Character of Chapters 2 & 4

Strahd's monstrous, mongrelfolk manservant, few are as unsettling as Cyrus Belview, whose throat is full of gravel. He is, without doubt, Strahd's Igor.

Cyrus is 4 feet and 9 inches tall, but appears shorter because of his hunched posture. The left side of his face is covered with lizard scales; he has the ears of a panther; he has the left foot of a duck; and his arms are patchy with black dog fur. He wears Morgantha's hag eye, unaware that it gives the hags insight into Castle Ravenloft.

Roleplaying Cyrus. Cyrus wrings his hands often, wearing a lunatic grin, and shouting, "Yes, yes!" Cyrus constantly refers to "the master" and calls the adventurers "our most anticipated guests." To be near him ought to be uncomfortable, as his gaze lingers too long and his grin stretches too wide, all the while he growls, "Yes, yes!"

Statistics. Cyrus has the Keen Hearing and Smell feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.

In the Campaign

Cyrus is featured in multiple chapters:

Per the *Companion's* revision to the Black Carriage (Area I), Cyrus is present in **Chapter 2.**

In **Chapter 4,** Cyrus skulks about the castle, and receives guests at the gates for *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft.*

During **the Wedding,** Cyrus meets guests at the gates, taking their horses to the carriage house.

Dag Tomescu

Minor Character of Chapter 12

Dag is the husband of Stefania Martikov, and father of their four children: Claudiu, Viggo, Martin, and Yolanda.

In the Campaign

Dag is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 12,** Dag goes for help, bringing the adventurers to the Martikovs. He has suffered a vicious slash that ran from his neck to his ear. The right half of his face has been wrapped with a bandage that needs imminent changing.

In **Chapter 14,** Dag has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Damia

Minor Character of Death House

The daughter of Stanimir, Damia can be met with the other Vistani in the *Mysterious Visitors* optional adventure hook or as part of the *On the Shadow's Shoulder* prologue.

Danika Dorakova

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Danika is the wife of Urwin Martikov and mother of their two children, Brom and Bray. Like her husband, she runs the Blue Water Inn and is both a wereraven and agent of the Keepers of the Feather.

In the Campaign

Danika is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Danika welcomes the adventurers as new patrons to the Blue Water Inn.

Danika attends **the Wedding** alongside her husband. Much to her horror, Strahd has demanded that her sons act as his ringbearers for the ceremony.

Davanka

Minor Character of Chapter 15

Davanka is a werewolf of the Children of Mother Night.

Davian Martikov

Major Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Patriarch of the Martikov family and leader of the Keepers of the Feather, Davian is an old, done man. He contents himself with supplying much-needed wine to Barovians and keeping a weather eye on Strahd.

Roleplaying Davian. Davian patriarch is a true spitfire. He demonstrates remarkable vitality for a man his age. Always cantankerous, Davian is quick to offer a devastating remark, mocking others with the finality of a man well aware he is in the twilight of his life.

As a Destined Ally. As a wereraven, Davian is a formidable ally. However, you risk your players demanding he infect their characters with lycanthropy, skewing the campaign.

In the Campaign

Davian is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 12,** Davian is on the cusp of death. A blight's needle has pierced his lung, and only his lycanthropic regeneration has spared him from death. He tasks the adventurers with reclaiming the Wizard of Wines.

In **Chapter 14,** Davian attempts to rescue his family from the Gulthias tree with Muriel Vinshaw.

As a noble, Davian must attend **the Wedding**. He stations several Keepers of the Feather outside the castle in case blood is shed.

Dimira Yolensky

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Featured in the *Something New* special event, Dimira gives birth to a baby boy that does not cry—which Kretyana Dolvof, the midwife, believes is proof the baby is soulless.

Dmitri Krezkov

Major Character of Chapter 8

The burgomaster of Krezk has suffered the death of all four of his children, and no more are forthcoming. Soon after the adventurers reach the gates, Dmitri is fetched by the guards to treat with these newcomers.

Roleplaying Dmitri. Broken, Dmitri clings to his stubborn disdain of the world to make it through the day. He is loud, firm, and belligerent but nonetheless good-hearted, thereby contrasting Baron Vallakovich and Lady Wachter.

In the Campaign

Dmitri is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** Dmitri treats with the adventurers from the safety of Krezk's tall walls. He demands they find the village's missing shipment of wine in exchange for access.

As a noble, Dmitri has no choice but to attend **the Wedding.** He gives the adventurers a wide berth, not wishing to become collateral damage.

Donavich

Major Character of Chapter 3

The village priest, Donavich is suffering a crisis of faith. He has devoted his life to two causes: the Morninglord, and his son, Doru. When Doru joined a revolt against Strahd last year, Donavich prayed for his son's return. And much to his horror, Doru has—as a vampire. Donavich has trapped his bloodthirsty son in the under-croft and closed the church. He prays nightly for Doru's restoration, unable to end his own son.

Revision. Just for how long Doru has languished in the undercroft as a vampire spawn is not specified in *Curse of Strahd*. It is clear that he left on a peasant revolt a year ago, but how recent his return has been is still unclear. The *Companion* suggests setting it at a month because Doru is meant to be a surprise for the adventurers. Ismark and Ireena, however, as the good-natured folk they are, would realistically inform the adventurers of Doru and thereby ruin the surprise. Their father Kolyan knew, however, and he took that secret to the grave.

Roleplaying Donavich. In *Curse of Strahd*, Donavich is described as "insane." Insanity is notoriously difficult to portray. Therefore, lean into his desperation and tattering faith: although he clings to the Morninglord's rites and hymns, his faith is withering on the vine. However, do not fall into the trap of portraying Donavich as broken. If he's broken, he cannot truly perform the Morninglord's burial rites for Kolyan's funeral. Instead, his zealotry has been amplified in this dark hour, even hilariously so. To demonstrate this, consider the following:

- Donavich constantly remarks or appeals to the "grace," "glory," "warmth" and "light" of the Morninglord, no matter how dark and dismal the situation. Every time he does so, it emphasizes his desperation and obstinance. He wears a smile with every remark—in a land where few have ever broached even a smirk.
- Donavich offers to pray for Ismark, Ireena, or any of the adventurers, as if that will do anything.
- Donavich is adamant that through prayer and worship, the Morninglord will restore Doru—despite all conventional wisdom suggesting otherwise.

Donavich's Suicide. As described in the Aftermath section of Chapter 3, Donavich is likely to commit suicide if Doru is slain. If Doru survives and later escapes the church, Donavich finds purpose: to put down his monster of a son before he can harm others. Whether this occurs at your table is up to you; suicide is a sensitive topic and you must not flippantly portray it. If Donavich does end his own life, he hangs himself from the rafters in the church, thereby forever corrupting what was once hallowed ground.

Donavich is a tragic figure meant to cement Barovia's awful nature. If Ismark or Ireena offer light and redemption, Donavich is the final nail in the coffin.

In the Campaign

Donavich is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 3,** Donavich is on the brink of insanity. He has closed the church and prays for a cure for his son.

Donavich might attend **the Wedding:** possibly as the officiator, if Lucian Petrovich is dead, or as Ismark's plus-one, if Donavich becomes a fiery zealot hellbent on avenging his son.

Doru

Major Character of Chapter 3

Donavich's son, Doru left the Village of Barovia last year to march on Castle Ravenloft with the other peasants incited by Mordenkainen (who would later be known as the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok). Doru died in Castle Ravenloft, but did not meet his end. He has since been returned to his father as a vampire spawn. Horrified, Donavich locked his son in the undercroft, praying nightly for some cure to Doru's dark thirst.

Doru should be the first of Strahd's spawn met by the adventurers. He serves as grim reminder that vampirism is no fairy tale, and in Doru, they might see a reflection of their own future, should they fail to slay Strahd.

Revision. *Curse of Strahd* never specifies how long ago Doru returned; the *Companion* determines it to be a month. Moreover, Doru's return and existence is a secret known only to Donavich and the late Kolyan Indirovich. Nobody, especially Ireena and Ismark, should know of Doru's vampiric state, only that Donavich has closed the church for some reason.

Roleplaying Doru. Doru is gripped between bloodthirsty madness and loathing for his dark fate. He constantly screams, his every word jagged and frenzied. At all hours of the night, he howls for blood.

Drekht

Minor Character of Chapter 12

Drekht is the name given by the *Companion* to one of the otherwise nameless druids inhabiting the Wizard of Wines.

Roleplaying Drekht. When Drekht dies, he ominously says, "It will be… a cruel winter…" This refers to Winter-splinter, the tree blight.

Elisabeth Durst

Minor Character of Death House

Elisabeth is the wife of Gustav, and mother to Rosavalda and Thornbolt. She led a murderous cult with her husband and endures in undeath as a **ghast** haunting Death House.

Elvir Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Davian Martikov's youngest son, Elvir works diligently with his older brother Adrian to run Wizard of Wines.

In the Campaign

Elvir is featured in multiple chapters:

Elvir is with his family in **Chapter 12;** he suffers from a broken arm after the druids' attack on the winery.

In **Chapter 14,** Elvir has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Emil Toranescu

Minor Character of Chapter 4

Emil is the rightful alpha of the Children of the Mother Night. Disgusted by Kiril's sick tournaments, Emil believes the pack should infect all its surviving victims into were-wolves. When Kiril returned from Castle Ravenloft with Strahd's support, Emil was taken away to languish in the castle dungeons. His mate, Zuleika, desires his safe return.

In the Campaign

Emil is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Emil is met as a prisoner of Castle Ravenloft.

During **the Wedding,** Strahd promises Emil his freedom if he acts as a jailer for Ismark and the adventurers.

Ernst Larnak

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Ernst is Fiona Wachter's money-grubbing spy, tasked with keeping her updated on Vallaki's every development.

Roleplaying Ernst. Ernst is a bold and treacherous cur willing to cross, double-cross and triple-cross anyone. He seldom looks someone in the eye, but always wears an easy grin. He has no ideals to speak of and cares only for his own well being. Most conversations with Ernst are held in public, for he knows it far more conspicuous to move to an alley or other clandestine location. Ernst refers to Wachter as his "fair lady" but would blackmail her in a heartbeat.

In the Campaign

Ernst is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Ernst spies on the adventurers, as part of the *Lady Wachter's Wish* special event.

Ernst attends **the Wedding** as a guest of Fiona's and a member of the Wachtercult.

Escher

Minor Character of Chapters 4 & the Wedding

Escher is Strahd's most insolent consort. He is handsome and the picture of youth that contrasts his worn, faded clothing. He wears a platinum ring engraved with tiny roses and thorns on the third finger of his left hand (worth 150 gp), and a gold ruby pendant (worth 750 gp).

Roleplaying Escher. Like all Strahd's consorts, Escher is afraid Strahd will discard—or worse, seal him away—once his beloved "Tatyana" is in his grasp.

In the Campaign

Escher is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Escher attends dinner in *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft.* Otherwise, he can be found in his favorite haunt, the guest lounge.

During **the Wedding,** Escher serves as one of Strahd's groomsmen.

Esmardeus

Major Character of Chapter 12

Esmardeus is the identity given by the *Companion* to the otherwise nameless druid wielding the *Gulthias staff* at the Wizard of Wines. He is the grandson of "the Prophet," the wildling leader invented by the *Companion*,who believes himself to be the dhampir bastard of Strahd himself. Esmardeus has been given the honor of leading the attack on the Wizard of Wines, a task he has taken to with gusto.

Roleplaying Esmardeus. A fanatic and a fool, Esmardeus cannot comprehend his own demise. He believes himself to be invulnerable, warded from harm and consequence by the "vampiric" blood running through his name. He speaks mostly in Druidic, but manages half-fluency in Common. In Druidic, however, he spills several secrets alongside his taunts, which any fluent character could then learn:

- "Nature bows to my every whim, for I have the vampire's staff!"
- "He is the Ancient! He is the Land! Praise be!"
- "The Prophet shall see this world in ruins! Let the vines grow old on the stone and the people know we laid them low!"
- "I am heir to the Devil's throne!"
- His dying words are, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land. And we are his heirs."

Exethanter

Major Character of Chapter 13

Long after its guardians died, Archmage Exethanter came to the Amber Temple and accepted the Dark Gift of Tenebrous, becoming a lich. The wizard was eager to share the temple's dark knowledge with all. Over the centuries, however, Exethanter has lost his memory. He does not remember his own name, nor where his spellbook is (his ancient, bronze-plated spellbook is on a rotted divan nearby, and his phylactery is hidden in Area X28; it can only be destroyed by taking 20 or more radiant damage from a single source).

Roleplaying Exethanter. The lich is friendly to those that do not harm him or the Amber Temple, and he will eagerly share its secrets.

Revisions. See Chapter 13's many revisions to the Amber Temple and its inhabitants, which can drastically change Exethanter's past and present.

Ezmerelda d'Avenir

Major Character of Chapter 11

Van Richten's estranged Vistana protege, Ezmerelda is a monster hunter and wizard. Following rumors of her master, she has come to Barovia to slay Strahd. She can be met in a variety of places throughout the campaign. Her history is further detailed in *Curse of Strahd*, Appendix D.

Roleplaying Ezmerelda. Ezmerelda is hot-headed and ever confident, as epitomized by her flaw, "I go where angels fear to tread." She is also a font of lore, able to speak on a variety of subjects ranging from Barovia to Vistani to monster hunting.

As a Destined Ally. Narratively, Ezmerelda is a great ally, but her strengths will likely outshine the party. She should be used sparingly until the Final Confrontation.

In the Campaign

Ezmerelda is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Ezmerelda can be met as part of a Random Encounter, or as part of the *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* storyline. Either way, she attempts to convince the party to assist her in her attempt on Strahd's life.

In **Chapter 7,** Ezmerelda escapes from Arrigal by slipping into Argynvostholt; she just stole a horse from the Vallaki Vistani camp. The *Companion* utilizes her for its *In the Court of Horngaard* chapter.

In **Chapter 8,** Ezmerelda awaits Strahd in the Abbey, knowing that he sometimes visits the Abbot.

In **Chapter 11,** Ezmerelda's wagon is parked at the tower. She arrives later, grievously wounded, having just failed to assassinate Strahd in Castle Ravenloft.

Continuity. Ezmerelda is featured in so many chapters that keeping track of her continuity becomes a concern. It is likeliest that her story follows this order: Chapters 11 (parking her wagon at the tower), 7/8 in either order, 4, and 11 again (returning to the tower). *Curse of Strahd* does not confirm this timeline, but it is the most logical assumption.

Ferecha

Minor Character of Death House

Ferecha is the name given by the *Companion* to the nursemaid of Death House, whose affair with Gustav Durst resulted in the stillborn baby Walter. Murdered by the cult, her spirit can be roused by the adventurers, to great peril.

Fiona Wachter

Major Character of Chapter 5

Lady Fiona Wachter leads a secret devil-worshiping cult and has her eyes on seizing the barony for herself. Fiona married her sweetheart Nikolai Wachter at a young age and bore an unhappy family that, to this day, can hardly stand each other. Her sons, Karl and Nikolai Jr., are mischievous drunks. Her daughter Stella has gone mad and must be kept locked away to avoid embarrassing the family. Her dear husband died three years ago—and with her devilish powers, Fiona has been keeping his fresh corpse in her bed. Through nightly spells of *gentle repose*, she has kept Nikolai from festering. No one knows this great secret.

Roleplaying Fiona. Fiona is cold and humorless. Her gaze is hostile and sterile. Fiona never smiles—not until she has seized Vallaki will even a grin grace her lips. Highly calculated, Fiona never utters a word or commits to an action without piecing out the consequences.

Victor Vallakovich. Even if Fiona seizes control over Vallaki, she must still cement a claim to the barony. She has Victor captured, gagged, and manacled so as to inhibit his spellcasting—for she knows that *he* is the one who broke her daughter's mind with enchantment magic. If she has it her way, Fiona will wed Victor and Stella. Once Stella bears a living heir, Fiona intends to execute Victor and raise her grandchild as a puppet.

In the Campaign

Fiona is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Fiona is eager to enlist the adventurers against the baron. After *St. Andral's Feast,* she uses the civil unrest to launch a coup against the Vallakoviches and install herself as the new liege of Vallaki.

As a noble, Fiona attends **the Wedding.**

Freek & Myrtle

Minor Character of Chapters 2, 6, & 15

Freek (a 7-year-old boy) and Myrtle (a 5-year-old girl) were both sold to Morgantha by their respective parents for dream pastries in the Village of Barovia. Father Lucian will watch over them if the adventurers can spirit the children to St. Andral's in Vallaki.

Roleplaying the Children. Until delivered to safety, the children are always—understandably—terrified and broken by how easily their parents sold them. Freek attempts to keep a brave face for Myrtle's sake.

In the Campaign

Freek & Myrtle are featured in multiple chapters:

By dint of being rescued from Old Bonegrinder, Freek and Myrtle are in **Chapter 2;** the werewolves attempt to kidnap them.

The children are introduced in **Chapter 6** as Morgantha's captives, soon to be killed and baked into dream pastries.

If captured by the werewolves in Chapter 2, the children are forced to fight in the Kiril' sick tournament during **Chapter 15**.

Gadof Blinsky

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Blinsky is a strange Vallakian toymaker whose toys can be found throughout Barovia, always with the tag "Is No Fun, Is No Blinsky!" He is a kind soul who simply wants to make the children "hyappy," as he says. Rictavio has given Blinsky his carnival monkey, Piccolo. Meanwhile, Izek Strazni forces Blinksy to fashion him dolls resembling Ireena Kolyana. Blinsky considers himself a student of the great inventor and toymaker (and artificer) Fritz von Weerg, and he can share a rumor with the adventurers: that Weerg's masterpiece, a living, clockwork jester, roams the halls of Castle Ravenloft.

Roleplaying Blinsky. Blinsky speaks with a strange accent. When new customers enter his store, he recites a well-rehearsed greeting: "Wyelcome, friends, to the House of Blinsky, where hyappiness and smiles can be bought at bargain prices. Perhaps you know a leetle child in need of joy? A leetle toy for a girl or boy?"

In the Campaign

While Gadof is featured solely in Chapter 5, his toys appear in multiple chapters of the campaign:

- A malformed doll with a strange leer and sackcloth dress is owned by Mad Mary (Chapter 3).
- Up to six Blinsky toys can be found in Castle Ravenloft as part of the *Blinksky Toy* random encounter (Chapter 4).
- Blinsky toys are found throughout Vallaki (Chapter 5).
- A wooden, demonic horse after Beucephalus at the Wizard of Wines (Chapter 12).
- A zombie doll held by Kellen (Chapter 15).

Gertruda

Minor Character of Chapters 3 & 4

Gertruda is the missing daughter of Mad Mary, plucked from the Village of Barovia. *Curse of Strahd* never specifies how she made it all the way to Castle Ravenloft, but she does certainly fit Strahd's tastes, and it's always possible the vampire took her whilst waiting on Ireena Kolyana.

Revision. Per the *Companion's The Liar, the Glitch, and the Wardrobe* variant, Gertruda was Victor Vallakovich's secret lover. The flaws in his teleportation circle caused her to fall into Castle Ravenloft. See Chapters 3 & 5 for details.

Roleplaying Gertruda. Gertruda lives in a dream, oblivious to peril and reality. She maintains a fairy-tale view of the situation and is a danger to herself and others.

In the Campaign

Gertruda is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 3,** Gertruda's disappearance is mentioned.

In **Chapter 4,** Gertruda can be found in Strahd's bed-chamber. She also attends for *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft.*

If Gertruda hasn't been rescued from Castle Ravenloft yet, Strahd uses her as a decoy Ireena during **the Wedding.**

Gunther Arasek

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Gunther owns the Arasek Stockyard in Vallaki alongside his wife, Yelena.

Roleplaying Gunther. Gunther is a good-natured man hard-pressed by the dire economic times. He apologetically sells his goods for five times their rightful price.

Gustav Durst

Minor Character of Death House

Gustav Durst is the husband of Elisabeth, and father of Rosavalda, Thornbolt, and the stillborn Walter—born from an affair with the maid, Ferecha. As leader of the Durst cult, he languishes in undeath as a **ghast**.

Helga Ruvak

Minor Character of Chapter 4

The daughter of the local cobbler, Helga is Strahd's maid—and secretly a vampire spawn. All outward inspection fails to prove her as undead, and she claims to be a prisoner of Strahd's, though the ruby pendant on her neck (worth 750 gp) implies otherwise.

Roleplaying Helga. When Helga finds the adventurers, she begs to be taken away from this infernal place. She insists she was kidnapped and forced into service by Strahd, and will get down on her hands and knees to beg, if necessary. She plays the innocent damsel-in-distress until at last she can single out and attack a lone adventurer.

Helwa

Minor Character of Chapter 13

The leader of a band of Balinok wildlings, Helwa and her ilk use the Amber Temple for shelter from time to time. She knows very little of the temple.

Revision. Helwa and her men are no longer servants of Strahd, but souls already corrupted by the Amber Temple (per the *Genius Loci* variant). Never before have she and her men stayed in the temple this long, but the blizzard outside has forced them to remain, rendering them vulnerable to the Temple's deprivations. After nearly dying to the temple's evil, Helwa and two of her three berserkers accepted the genius loci's offer, becoming chaotic evil and attacking their companions.

Henrik van der Voort

Major Character of Chapter 5

The Vallakian coffin maker has always been a pariah thanks to his ghastly profession. One night, several months ago, Strahd visited Henrik in the guise of Vasili von Holtz. Strahd offered "good business" in exchange for Henrik's help. Now his home is infested with vampire spawn, and he has been forced to keep the bones of Saint Andral so that Strahd may attack the church.

Roleplaying Henrik. Henrik is terrified, a prisoner in his own home. He cannot leave and he cannot stay. When the adventurers break into his home, he says, "It is no use… *They* are here… creatures of the night…"

In the Campaign

Henrik is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Henrik keeps the bones of Saint Andral. For his part in *St. Andral's Feast,* Strahd invites Henrik to **the Wedding**. He has no choice but to attend and is doomed to die to gargoyles during Act IV.

Ilya Krezkov

Minor Character of Chapter 8

The youngest of Dmitri and Anna Krezkov's children, Ilya is dead and gone, buried beside his siblings behind the burgomaster's cottage. The Abbot resurrects him during the *Something Old* special event, which is elaborated in *Evil's Bride*. Ilya's cause of death is unspecified; assume he died of consumption and that he drank from Krezk's sacred pool earlier in life. Already cured once by its holy waters, he could not cheat death yet again.

Roleplaying Ilya. Having been dead for more than 24 hours, Ilya is afflicted with Resurrection Madness. He raves about a "black bottle," which describes a mortal's perception of the Barovian afterlife. The rest of his days will be spent raving about this maddening truth. The Krezkovs sequester him to the cottage, but his screams continue to trouble the neighbors.

Ireena Kolyana

Major Character of Chapters 3, 8, & the Wedding

The second-most important character of the campaign, Ireena is the reincarnation of Strahd's beloved Tatyana. Twice now, Strahd has bitten her—playing the part of a gentleman in a lengthy courting. She fears that she will not survive a third. For *the Wedding at Ravenloft* to occur, she *must* be captured by Strahd, preferably at Krezk.

Adopted Daughter. Ireena was found as a child by Kolyan Indirovich. While rumors circulated that Kolyan conceived her with a Vallakian prostitute, he raised her as his own alongside Ismark. After Kolyan's death shortly before *Curse of Strahd*, Ismark asks that the adventurers take Ireena from the village, out from the shadow of Castle Ravenloft, to the safety of holy ground in Vallaki or Krezk. Safeguarding Ireena is at the heart of *Curse of Strahd*, but her capture is inevitable (see *the Wedding at Ravenloft*).

Roleplaying Ireena. Ireena is a rare source of kindness in Barovia. She is stubborn, but not insufferable; daring, but not foolhardy; idealistic but not blind. She is well aware of the horrors of her country. She wishes only to live her life free from fear and Strahd, to see her brother happy, and make her father proud. Though she hungers for vengeance, she understands how powerful Strahd is and cannot hope to avenge her father directly. Learning that she is Tatyana's reincarnation—and can never truly escape Strahd—might shatter Ireena.

Revisions. The *Companion* revises Ireena several times:

- Ireena is aware that Morgantha's dream pastries are addictive, but doesn't know they're made from children.
- Ireena has met the other Barovian nobles before at Castle Ravenloft; Strahd would summon his vassals from time to time for dinner. This allows Ireena a personal history with Dmitri Krezkov, which she can leverage on behalf of the party to gain access to Krezk without wine. Along the way to Krezk, Ireena remarks, "I have never been to Krezk, but I have met its nobility in years of yore at… at Castle Ravenloft. Long before the Devil came knocking at my window at night. Dmitri Krezkov, lord of Krezk, was a kind man then, and I hope a kind man still."
- If Ireena can reach the Shrine of the White Sun in Krezk, the spirit of Sergei appears to bid Tatyana join him safely in the afterlife. This is the only chance for her soul to escape Barovia beyond Strahd's death. However, the *Companion* denies Ireena this happy ending—sensing that she is about to escape Barovia forever, Strahd hurls a lightning bolt from Castle Ravenloft, killing Ireena as she enters the sacred pool.

Ireena's Past

Ireena is not the true daughter of Kolyan Indirovich; he found her wandering the woods as a young girl and adopted her. In truth, Ireena was born to Vallakian parents and is the sister of Izek Strazni. The *Companion* expands on this history, using Lucian Petrovich to reveal this information:

- Ireena was born as Yasmine to her parents Hans and Ruxandra Strazni.
- One day, their father and Uncle Radu took Yasmine and Izek to fish at Lake Zarovich, where they were attacked by wolves. Uncle Radu died defending Izek, who lost his arm. Hans carried Izek to safety, but lost Yasmine, who ran off into the woods and was never seen again.
- Hans and Ruxandra, lost to their grief, committed suicide, orphaning Izek.

How Ireena safely made it to the Village of Barovia, many miles away, is a mystery, but the answer should later become obvious: the Dark Powers spirited her to safety, conveniently scrubbing away memories of her family.

In the Campaign

Ireena is featured in multiple chapters:

Ireena is surely featured in **Chapters 2,** if she leaves the village for Vallaki and later Krezk. See *CMP* Ch. 2 for how she interacts with Barovian locales along the way.

In **Chapter 3,** Ireena is introduced, and has a large part to play in *Funeral for the Burgomaster.* She refuses to skip her father's funeral, despite the dangers of leaving the manor.

In **Chapter 5,** Ireena goes incognito but is soon discovered by Vargas Vallakovich and Fiona Wachter, both of whom wish to betroth her to their son (see *The Honor of Your Presence* special event added by the *Companion*).

In **Chapter 6,** Morgantha refuses to harm Ireena, claiming she has "Evil's Mark" on her.

In **Chapter 8,** Ireena dies at the Shrine of the White Sun and must be resurrected by the Abbot. Strahd arrives to at last take her away, lest he risk losing her forever.

In **the Wedding,** Ireena asks one adventurer to be her Maid of Honor or a groomsman. Strahd then charms her into submission. If Strahd is slain, her soul reunites with Sergei and escapes Barovia (see *Endings*).

Ismark Kolyanovich

Major Character of Chapter 3 & the Wedding

Ismark is the son of Kolyan Indirovich and adopted brother of Ireena. He has lived all his life in his father's shadow, but now with Kolyan's passing, the burdensome title of burgomaster falls to Ismark's shoulders. The villagers call him "Ismark the Lesser."

Ismark is a major character of the campaign, and while *Curse of Strahd* allows him to leave the village with Ireena, the *Companion* suggests otherwise. To take him along can prove detrimental for your campaign. Having an extra NPC in your party will bog down your game: combat will be slower, you'll have another body to worry about, and another character to voice, in addition to Ireena. Leave Ismark in the village to spare yourself this extra overhead.

You can justify this through two of Ismark's sense of duty. He wants to do right by his people, to make his father proud, to protect the village—and so his duty to his family is juxtaposed with his duty towards his people. Ultimately, Ismark fears it will be too conspicuous if he leaves the village with Ireena. As a precaution, he stays behind to buy the adventurers some time to take her away.

Should the adventurers ever return to the village after wedding invitations have been sent out, they find Ismark furious. The man is furious at the adventurers' failure to keep his sister safe, and his own decision not to leave this place with her. As it becomes apparent later, Ismark has an important role in *The Wedding at Ravenloft,* so it is best to keep him alive until then.

Roleplaying Ismark. Ismark is melancholy, but not dour. Kolyan raised no coward; Ismark has studied the sword since he was ten years old. He took command of the local militia—or the village's next best thing—at seventeen and has been charged with protecting the village ever since. When creatures of the night stalked the streets, it was Ismark and his haggard men who drove the beasts off or cut them down. For all Ismark's courage, the man is worn down. His shoulders sag with the weight of his family's woe, with his father's death, and the grim realization there is little he can do to stop the Devil's advances upon his sister. He simply is grieving in an unrelenting world.

In the Campaign

Ismark is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 3,** he illuminates the adventurers on the nature and reality of Barovia.

As a noble and brother to the bride, Ismark is invited to **the Wedding.** Drawing his blade, he objects to this unholy union in Act II, thereby breaking guest right. His fate is decided in Act III and he may be rescued in Act IV.

Izek Strazni

Major Character of Chapter 5

Izek Strazni is the devil-armed, long-lost brother of Ireena Kolyana and henchman of Baron Vallakovich. Loyal to the baron and evil to the core, Izek is more monster than man. He enforces the baron's will and is a true wild card. If the baron is executed, Izek flees into the Svalich Woods, where he can bide his time and stalk the adventurers.

Family is Forever. Izek lost his arm, uncle, and sister to a dire wolf as a young boy at Lake Zarovich. His parents, unable to cope with the loss of their daughter, took their own lives, leaving Izek orphaned. Tormented by his peers, Izek gave into his darker urges and began to kill. Were it not for the baron's intervention, Izek would have been executed. The brute is haunted by dreams of a lovely woman: Ireena Kolyana, his sister Yasmine. Izek attempts to kidnap Ireena after seeing her, not knowing she is her sister. He then smuggles her to his room in the baron's manor. A maid sees this and alerts the baron; Ernst Larnak then hears about it and informs both Wachter and the adventurers.

Roleplaying Izek. Speaking in a heavy, disinterested voice, Izek prefers short, simple sentences. He expects all his orders to be obeyed and flies into a rage when those orders are questioned. Granted impunity by the baron, Izek has no qualms with using force to reinforce his point or satisfy his own ends. He faces no consequences and therefore has nothing to fear. If Izek were brighter, and not blinded by loyalty, he would realize Vargas is afraid of Izek—or would be, if Vargas did not have absolute certainty he could control Izek.

Jakarion

Minor Character of Chapters 11 & 13

The wizard Jakarion delved the Amber Temple with his apprentice Vilnius shortly before the adventurers. They may find his charred corpse, and his *staff of frost* (which curses whomever wields it with the flaw "I crave power above all else, and will do anything to obtain more of it").

Revision. With Amber Temple's *Enemies Revised* variant and *The Ecstasy of Amber* storyline, Jakarion was murdered by the wildlings, not incinerated.

The Tower of Khazan. The *Companion* also adds Jakarion and Vilnius to Chapter 11, although they've already left the tower for the Amber Temple before the adventurers arrive.

In the Campaign

Jakarion is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 11,** his notes can be found in the tower.
In **Chapter 13,** Jakarion is already dead, but survived by his apprentice Vilnius.

Karl & Nikolai Jr. Wachter

Minor Characters of Chapter 5

The Wachter brothers are the two mischievous but largely harmless sons of Fiona Wachter. As nobles, they have been shielded from consequence by dint of their privilege. They detest their mother and spend their days getting drunk.

In the Campaign

The Watcher brothers are featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** the brothers can be met in the Blue Water Inn. They may attempt to free Rictavio's tiger as part of *Tyger, Tyger* special event.
The brothers accompany their mother to **the Wedding.**

Kasimir Velikov

Major Character of Chapter 13

The dusk elf wizard Kasimir is responsible for the genocide of his people. His tragic history is further detailed in *Curse of Strahd,* Appendix D. He is one of the few allies the party may find in the campaign, and he quickly proposes that they mount an expedition to the Amber Temple.

Roleplaying Kasimir. Kasimir is a pessimist tormented by a thin ray of hope. He is quick to complain, lament, and disparage good tidings. He finds the downside in everything and isn't shy about pointing it out. When nervous or lost in thought, Kasimir often strokes what were once his ears.

As a Destined Ally. If the adventurers have no wizard in their campaign, Kasimir makes for a fitting ally. His allegiance, however, is to his sister Patrina. It is better that Kasimir remain a traditional ally of the adventurers.

Knowledge. Having lived through all of Barovia's history, Kasimir is a font of lore. However, there are several secrets that continue to elude him:

- He does not know Barovia is in the Shadowfell or separated from the Material Plane. He instead believes that the pervasive gloom and misery of Barovia has caused the Shadowfell's evil to permeate the country. He is the first character in the campaign to name this influence "the Dark Powers." He suspects that this evil is sentient and sadistic.
- He does not know Strahd is a prisoner of Barovia or that Tatyana reincarnates every few generations. Instead, he believes Strahd covets beautiful men and women—as he did with Kasimir's sister, Patrina.
- He is unaware of the Abbot in Krezk; the Krezkites have been tight-lipped about this strange, ageless priest. If Kasimir was made aware, he would believe the Abbot to be a half-elf or have the blood of some other long-lived race in him.
- Kasimir knows that it is impossible to teleport out of Barovia or escape to another plane of existence (other than the Border Ethereal). He has tried before—many, many times.
- Kasimir knows of the hags of Old Bonegrinder, for he has sat at Morgantha's table before and listened to her lies about resurrecting dusk elves without a terrible price.

In the Campaign

Kasimir is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Kasimir proposes an expedition to the Amber Temple to the adventurers.
In **Chapter 9,** Kasimir treks Mount Ghakis.
In **Chapter 13,** Kasimir seeks out the power of Zhudun, the Corpse Star, so that he may resurrect Patrina.
To humiliate him, Strahd demands Kasimir attends **the Wedding.** If imbued with Zhudun's power, Kasimir ventures to the catacombs to resurrect his sister.

Kavan

Minor Character of Chapter 14

Kavan was a ruthless chieftain whose tribe lived in the Balinok Mountains centuries before the arrival of Strahd von Zarovich. Although he was very much alive, Kavan had some traits in common with vampires: he slept during the day and hunted at night, drank the blood of his prey, and lived underground. In battle, he wielded a spear stained with blood. His was the first *blood spear*, a weapon that drains life from those it kills and transfers that life to its wielder, imbuing that individual with the greater stamina.

Kavan's spirit has yet to find peace. The wildlings have turned away from honoring the ancestors to instead worship Strahd and poison the land. When the party visits Yester Hill, Kavan reaches out, challenging the strongest adventurer to claim his legendary weapon for use against the Gulthias Tree. The spear, Kavan promises, can exsanguinate the Gulthias Tree, killing it instantly. To win the *blood spear*, however, that challenger must fight Kavan's animated skeleton, blood, and spirit in single combat.

Kellen

Minor Character of Chapter 15

All of ten-years-old, Kellen is the latest victor of Kiril's sick tournaments. He has 10 AC and 2 HP. He hails from Liam's Hold, a hamlet near the Misty Forest in the Forgotten Realms. He cradles a wooden doll that eerily resembles one of the characters but is painted and dressed to resemble a zombie; "Is No Fun, Is No Blinsky!" is etched into the doll.

Kellen struggles with his lycanthropy and wishes only to be rid of it. In *For the Love of Mother Night,* he can be found petitioning Mother Night for a cure.

Khazan

Major Character of Chapter 11

It is unclear as to how or when the archmage Khazan came to Barovia, or whether he was already affiliated with Strahd von Zarovich beforehand. What is known is the wizard oversaw the construction of Castle Ravenloft and then plumbed the Amber Temple for forbidden knowledge. After mastering lichdom, Khazan made a thunderous return to Castle Ravenloft. Rather than battle the wizard for control over Barovia, Strahd offered him tenure as an adviser over matters of magic. Khazan accepted the position and continued his research into necromancy. Ultimately, the lich destroyed himself when trying to master demilichdom—a pursuit Khazan hoped would project his spirit beyond Barovia and allow him to escape the Domains of Dread.

Khazan has a crypt in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft, where his *staff of power* rests. Whoever wields this staff becomes the Heir Apparent of Khazan and commands the tower and its wards.

Revision. Per the *Companion,* Khazan was not destroyed in his attempt to achieve demilichdom, but was reduced to a boneclaw (see *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes* for lore on these failed liches). Seizing an opportunity to torment and humiliate Khazan, the Dark Powers imprisoned him in a shadowy realm attached to his tower. Strahd is unaware of Khazan's fate and had Khazan's "remains" entombed in Castle Ravenloft. In Chapter 11, Khazan may be unleashed by the adventurers; if so, whenever he is destroyed, he reforms in his crypt in Castle Ravenloft.

Roleplaying Khazan. As a boneclaw, Khazan is a slave to darkness, hatred, and pain. Though he was a refined wizard in life, this twisted fate has made him into a murderous lunatic. Khazan has a single-minded devotion to inflicting the maximum pain in the shortest time. To him, it is not the amount of cruelty, but the depth. Better to torture one than to hurt many. Full of cackles, you can voice Khazan with the following sample dialogue:

- "My name is power!"
- "The laws of magic yield only to Khazan!"
- "Your death will not be quick! It may never even come—but you will be mine!"
- "Zarovich himself would not dare challenge me!"
- "The Devil Strahd isn't the only one to take playthings!"

Kiril Stoyanovich

Major Character of Chapter 15

Kiril is the despotic alpha of the Children of Mother Night. When the werewolves sought to increase their numbers, he decided to slowly oblige by forcing abducted children to fight to the death. The victor of these foul tournaments would receive the "gift" of lycanthropy. In this, he manages to control and feed an ever-growing pack, rather than risk his power to a surge in numbers. Not all agreed with Kiril's philosophy; as discord grew in the pack, Kiril sought the support of Strahd himself and managed to rid himself of his rival, Emil Toranescu. Kiril's rule has been unquestioned ever since.

In Kiril's hybrid form, he can be recognized by his dark coat and a wicked scar across his left eye.

Roleplaying Kiril. Kiril is a vicious creature with a fiery temper. He believes might makes right and proves sadistic at every opportunity. Kiril's voice is deep and hoarse; while in his hybrid form it is strained and sharp. Voice Kiril with the sample dialogue below:

- "In this world, there are sheep—and there are wolves."
- As Kiril claws at a foe, he snarls, "It won't be quick!"
- "I am the Devil's favorite! To my fangs does the pack kneel!"

In the Campaign

Kiril is featured in multiple chapters:

In the *Companion's* **Death House** prologue, Kiril leads an attack on the caravan the adventurers are traveling with.

In **Chapter 2,** Kiril menaces the adventurers on the road, and may attempt to steal Freek & Myrtle outside Vallaki.

In **Chapter 11,** Kiril appears in the *Pack Attack* special event.

In **Chapter 15,** the party has the opportunity to invade Kiril's den and end the werewolf threat. Ordinarily, he is only present in this chapter during the *Leader of the Pack* special event. This is changed by the *For the Love of Mother Night* storyline.

To shore up his forces, Strahd requires Kiril's presence in **the Wedding.** Kiril brings with him four werewolves.

The Knights of the Round

Minor Characters of Chapter 7

The Knights of the Round are the Order's senior-most officers. These revenants have moldered at their table for centuries now, sitting in silence until at last erupting into another debate over the Order's purpose. The *Companion* has named the four beyond Sir Godfrey Gwilym. The Knights of the Round have never once been slain since becoming revenants and still possess their original bodies.

Sir Godfrey Gwilym is further described below and has his own unique statistics.

Sir Ancelin of the Cold Fire was a powerful war mage in life, capable of wielding both blade and fire in battle. Undeath has sapped all heat from his pyromancy and his spells burn with an azure light. His cold, sharp voice crackles as if it were fire. Ancelin disagrees with Vladimir Horngaard's decision to let Strahd suffer in his prison. See his unique statistics in Appendix B.

Sir Gervaise is a staunch supporter of Horngaard's plan of apathy. He has personally slain several werewolves, mortal agents, and vampire spawn of Strahd's. He wields a morningstar.

Lady Gwendolyn has voiced her dissent against Horngaard's plans for the last four centuries. She would like nothing more than to see the Devil Strahd punished and executed for his many crimes. Her ragged, gray hair hints to the beauty she once commanded in life. Lady Gwendolyn wields a gilded shortsword.

Lady Lyorne Raimbaut has been a quiet supporter of Horngaard's decisions. Half her face is missing. She wields a warhammer whose spike has snapped off.

Kolya

Minor Character of Chapter 7

Kolya, a Vistana bandit, is featured in the *Special Delivery* special event in Chapter 7.

Kolyan Indirovich

Major Character of Chapter 3

Kolyan was, up until recently, the burgomaster of the Village of Barovia. By when the adventurers enter Barovia, he is already dead. His poor heart could not take the stress of Strahd's nightly visits to his daughter. He is survived by his children, Ireena and Ismark.

In life, Kolyan was a good man saddled with a terrible burden. His burial is the focal point of the *Companion's* take on Chapter 3. Further, a letter of his can be found in the Svalich Woods (see Area C), urging visitors to leave Barovia to its eternal misery.

Revision. A few changes are made to Kolyan:

- Per *Curse of Strahd*, Kolyan died three nights ago. The *Companion* reduces this to one night, and stipulates that Barovian religion requires his burial at dawn on the third night, requiring a specific design for a coffin.
- Being Donavich's good friend, Kolyan alone knew of Doru's vampiric state, a secret he has taken to his grave.
- Kolyan has been summoned to Castle Ravenloft many times before and met his fellow vassals. Ismark and Ireena came with them after they become of age, thereby becoming acquainted with other Barovian nobles.
- From time to time, Kolyan had to send some unfortunate villager off to Castle Ravenloft to be fed upon by Strahd. See *The Lottery* variant in Chapter 3.

Kretyana Dolvof

Minor Character of Chapter 8

A Krezkite midwife featured in the *Something New* event, Kretyana believes Dimira Yolensky's baby boy was born without a soul, since he did not cry.

Lazlo Ulrich

Major Character of Chapter 10

Lazlo Ulrich was the last burgomaster of Berez and the employer of Marina—Tatyana's first reincarnation. Brother Grigor, after studying Strahd's nightly visits, convinced Ulrich to murder Marina and spare her soul from eternal damnation—thereby dooming Berez.

Per the *Companion*, Berez is trapped in a Groundhog Day-esque cycle, the ghosts forced to relive their last day in life. Only Ulrich knows the truth, but he is trapped. Daily he finds himself having the same conversation. If he attempts to stray from history, the Dark Powers force him to obey the chronology of his last day alive, meeting with other ghosts like Brother Grigor. He openly explains Berez's history and Baba Lysaga's presence to the adventurers. Pointedly, however, he does not know that Marina is the reincarnation of Tatyna or that Ireena Kolyana is the latest reincarnation. If Ireena is present, however, Ulrich gasps and says, "Is that you, Marina?"

Roleplaying Ulrich. Ulrich is depressed, bored, and pained. Though he knows exactly how every day will go, he still manages to be disappointed. If he meets the adventurers, however, he does not implore them to spare him from this hell, but to save themselves by leaving Berez at once. Ulrich might say any of the following:

- "I am but the only candle of sanity left in this asylum of ghosts. Three centuries ago, I let that buffoon of a priest convince me to murder a young girl that had attracted the Devil's attention. We sought to spare her from an eternity of damnation–and instead doomed all of Berez. In his grief and rage, Strahd conjured a titanic flood that swept away the village. My friends, my family, my citizens… They live in an endless cycle of destruction. At midnight, the Shadow of Strahd will drown Berez, just as he did long ago."

- If the party insists on ending Ulrich's torment, he sighs and says, "Others have tried before to end our curse, attacking the Shadow of Strahd, only to die to *her*. Baba Lysaga, the witch. Over long years I have gathered that she was the Devil's nursemaid, that she imbued him with the spark of magic, that she treasures him as her own son. The madness of it all. She cannot bear the Devil's rejection, so instead she treats his Shadow as her own son. Those that dare attack the Shadow provoke her wrath. I would not blame you for turning back; Baba Lysaga has made a sport of slaughtering altruists."

Leo Dilisnya

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Leo Dilisnya murdered Strahd, ushering him into undeath. In *I, Strahd: Memoirs of a Vampire,* Leo was a secret agent of the Ba'al Verzi, a society of assassins. In *Curse of Strahd*, however, Leo has been retconned into a mere guard of Castle Ravenloft that betrayed Strahd. In the former, Strahd tracked Leo down after long years, turned him into a vampire, and had him sealed away to go mad with hunger (his tomb being watched over by the Wachter family). If you include the *Ba'al Verzi dagger* as a fourth artifact in the campaign, it belonged to Leo and was used to murder Strahd nearly four centuries ago.

Regardless of who Leo Dilisnya was in life, the Wachters have kept his bones these long years.

Revision. The ghostly assassin summoned by Lydia Petrovna's mirror in Vallaki instead rouses Leo's spirit.

Lief Lipsiege

Minor Character of Chapter 4

The royal accountant, Lief is literally chained to his desk and has been stuck in Castle Ravenloft for longer than he can remember. If shown kindness, he will divulge the location of the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind.*

Revision. At your discretion, Lief knows the command word to Strahd's *Daern's instant fortress*, although he has no means to reach it.

In the Campaign

Lief is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Lief can be met in his office.
It is up to Lief to plan and finance **the Wedding**. Strahd uses Lief to help instigate his inevitable betrayal.

Lorghoth the Decayer

Minor Character of Death House

In life, the Death House cult threw their victims to Lorghoth, a ravenous monster. If the adventurers do not sacrifice one of their own in Area 38, the spirits rouse it with cries of "Lorghoth the Decayer, we awaken thee!"

Revision. Lorghoth is a **gibbering mouther** instead of a **shambling mound.**

Lucian Petrovich

Major Character of Chapter 5

Father Lucian Petrovich is the older brother of Baroness Lydia Petrovna, and the priest of Saint Andral's Church. He is a symbol of hope—a symbol that is about to be sullied by Strahd. His arc is representative of the entire Barovian cycle: dare to stand boldly against the Devil, only to be destroyed or corrupted by the evil that permeates this land. Additionally, he offers the Chapter 5's main quest, *The Bones of Saint Andral.*

Father Lucian is Vallaki's only lifeline. His fiery, hopeful sermons are Vallaki's sole comfort against Barovia's miserable reality. Without him, the townsfolk would be lost. No one, not even the most jaded Barovians, have an unkind word to say about Father Lucian. Even Baron Vallakovich sees the use in the priest's sermons—and he even fears what may happen if Father Lucian ever turned his sermons against him. Fortunately, Father Lucian believes in Vargas' "All will be well" message, even if he doesn't believe it will save Vallaki.

Revision. Father Lucian is ordinarily a **priest**, but it is better that he be a **commoner** instead. Vallaki should be bereft of spellcasters, especially one that can heal the sick and wounded and conjure food and drink. With such powers, Father Lucian has proof that faith will be rewarded and that the Morninglord is real. For a grimmer Barovia, strip him of this magic.

Roleplaying Lucian. Father Lucian is a kind and wise soul. Nearing sixty, he has seen countless tragedies in his time and *chooses* to remain hopeful. He is no misguided priest, but a veteran of Barovia's unrelenting misery. He is filled with doubts and often drums his fingers against a surface when troubled. You can voice Father Lucian with the sample dialogue below:

- "It is my duty to nurture the flame of Vallakian hope… Alas, I am an old, done man. Someone will soon have to take my place. I hope it may be Yeska, but the boy forgets his catechisms. Still… there is hope in his heart. Children truly are the future."
- "I have witnessed joy and tragedy. I have delivered men and women I know today… and I have buried even more. Without hope, we have nothing."
- "I am but a servant of the Morninglord… the crook through which He guides His flock."

In the Campaign

Lucian is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Lucian turns to the adventurers for aid.
Strahd may use Lucian as the officiator of **the Wedding,** if he survived, rose as a vampire spawn, or his corpse was never burned (in which case he raises Lucian as a sapient zombie able to speak).

Ludmilla Vilisevic

Minor Character of Chapter 4 & the Wedding

Ludmilla is Strahd's most stoic vampire bride. She wears a gold tiara (worth 750 gp), and ten gold bracelets (worth 100 gp each).

Roleplaying Ludmilla. Like all Strahd's consorts, Ludmilla is afraid Strahd will discard—or worse, seal her away—once his beloved "Tatyana" is in his grasp. She does her best to remain stoic, but cannot help clenching her fists in anger.

In the Campaign

Ludmilla is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Ludmilla attends dinner during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* and otherwise guards Strahd's coffin.

During **the Wedding,** Ludmilla guards Ireena and begrudgingly serves as a bridesmaid.

Luvash

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Luvash is a brute of a man and a terrible drunk. He leads the Vallaki Vistani alongside his brother Arrigal, but is too dim to realize Arrigal is their true master. On the day the adventurers near Vallaki, his daughter Arabelle goes missing. It's Luvash's fault, ultimately—he chose to day-drink instead of watch his daughter.

A Father's Debt. The *Companion* takes a kinder view to Luvash than *Curse of Strahd*: if Arabelle is returned safely, he embarks upon a path of change. He is still a deeply troubled and lost soul, but he takes his first steps towards the light:

- He doesn't attempt to swindle the adventurers with fake potions that allegedly teleport the imbiber from Barovia.
- He turns to the adventurers for help in Chapter 15, when (per the *Companion*) the werewolves kidnap Vistani kids.
- He warns the adventurers to keep the peace during *the Wedding*, and even tackles Arrigal when his brother is about to stab a poisoned dagger into someone's heart.

In the Campaign

Luvash is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Luvash is whipping Alexei for losing his daughter Arabelle.

The *Companion* adds Luvash to **Chapter 15,** wherein the werewolves have stolen Arabelle and other Vistani kids.

Luvash attends **the Wedding** with Arrigal and the other Vistani, but his priority is safeguarding Arabelle.

Lydia Petrovna

Minor Character of Chapters 5

The wife of Vargas Vallakovich and brother to Lucian, Lydia stands perpetually between evil and good.

Roleplaying Lydia. Lydia is a gods-fearing woman that perfectly plays the part of noble hostess, heaping praise on others. Lost to her husband's delusions, she does her best to spread good cheer. She laughs at just about anything, especially Vargas' comments and inappropriate developments.

In the Campaign

Lydia is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Lydia welcomes the adventurers into her home and may be executed by a mob.

If she survives, Lydia must attend **the Wedding** with her husband.

The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok

Minor Character of Chapter 2

A year ago, the legendary wizard Mordenkainen came to Barovia to end Strahd—and failed. The peasant revolt he mustered met its grisly end in the halls of Castle Ravenloft, and Strahd personally triumphed over Mordenkainen, hurling his body over the Tser Falls. Mordenkainen may have survived, but his sanity has not. He now haunts the hills of Mount Baratok, living in an extradimensional manor. The locals call him the Mad Mage, unaware of his past or true identity.

Revision. Ordinarily, a *greater restoration* spell is necessary to restore Mordenkainen's sanity, but the *Companion* offers a chance to restore him through great effort (see Area M in *CMP,* Ch. 2).

Roleplaying the Mage. The Mad Mage is an amnesiac armed with incredible power; he proves fickle and flippant in its use. The wizard is fond of jokes only he understands and never misses an opportunity to stroke his own ego.

As a Destined Ally. The Mad Mage is a formidable ally—so formidable he risks stealing the show. If he is destined to stand beside the adventurers, he can't be allowed to follow them around Barovia. Instead, he makes a grand entrance into Castle Ravenloft during *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*

Mad Mary

Minor Character of Chapter 3

Mad Mary's daughter Gertruda has gone missing, and she wails at all hours of the night in grief.

Madam Eva

Major Character of Chapter 2

Madam Eva, the Vistana seer—and secret half-sister of Strahd—offers the campaign's main quest at the Tser Pool Encampment. She doesn't usually factor into the campaign beyond that point, but it's in your best interest to feature her at least once more, especially if you intend to run *The Wedding at Ravenloft.* They might return to her for any of the following reasons:

- A new player and/or player character has joined your campaign, in which case they're met at Tser Pool.
- The party has lost an artifact and requires guidance.
- The party is on their way to the Village of Barovia to slay Doru or scheme with Ismark on the eve of Strahd's wedding.

Roleplaying Madam Eva. Madam Eva wears a smile like a shawl; never does she grimace. News and threats merely make her laugh. She cannot be surprised and she can hardly be impressed. Having divined their secrets, Madam Eva rips

into the adventurers' past with no concern for how they might feel about such ancient history being brought up. If that wasn't enough, she calls nearly every person "child."

You can voice Madam Eva with the following dialogue:

- "I am blessed with the Sight. What was and what is and what will be are all known or will be known to me in good time. I am the loom that spins out the threads of Fate."
- "We are all but playthings in the hands of Fate. There is no shame in that, child."
- "The Devil's shadow is vast and deep. Barovia has choked upon his noose for too long. This land and its people cry out for freedom, but there are few who listen."

Meeting Eva Again. The adventurers might cross paths with Madam Eva again. This might be at Tser Pool or it might be along the Old Svalich Road, near Area I. That Eva has finally left Tser Pool alarms the Vistani; the seer has been there for generations. Eva trusts the adventurers once they've secured all three artifacts and their Destined Ally. She, at last, believes that the adventurers are capable of killing Strahd. She remarks, "I knew you were but Fate's newest playthings… but never did I truly believe you could stand against the Devil, that you could triumph over my *brother*." In one casual breath, Eva reveals her true identity: the half-sister of Strahd, born from King Barov's tryst with a Vistana. "I was born Katarina," Eva says, "but Mother Night offered much more. For my name, the Second Sight. For my beauty and youth, life everlasting. So long as Strahd persists, so shall I. It is not until Barovia is freed from my brother's curse that I might too find rest."

Marina

Minor Character of Chapter 10

Marina was the first reincarnation of Tatyana Federovna after her death at Castle Ravenloft. Strahd chanced upon her while bookshopping in Berez under the guise of Vasili von Holtz, approximately twenty years into his undeath. Strahd courted her at night, as he would later with Ireena Kolyana, and it was only through the murderous intervention of Lazlo Ulrich and Brother Grigor that her soul was not damned for all eternity as a vampire thrall.

Strahd built a monument to Marina, which still stands in the Ruins of Berez. The statue strikingly resembles Ireena, hinting at her past life.

Martin Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Martin is a younger son of Stefania and Dag Tomescu.

In the Campaign

Martin is featured in multiple chapters:

Martin is with his family in **Chapter 12;** he's unconscious, his little lungs damaged by crowpoison.

In **Chapter 14,** Martin has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Marzena Belview

Minor Character of Chapter 8

The Abbot keeps Marzena chained up outside so that she can't fly away—for like all Belviews, she is a mongrelfolk. Marzena stands at 4 feet, 5 inches tall and has a hunched posture. Long, stringy black hair hides much of her face, but clearly visible are the spider mandibles and teeth that replace her human mouth. She has the arms and wings of a bat, as well as a cloven hoof in place of her right foot.

Roleplaying Marzena. Marzena is skittish and afraid of everyone except Clovin Belview, whom she allows to come close enough to feed her. Her madness is embodied in the following statement: "I am convinced that powerful enemies are hunting me, and their agents are everywhere I go. I am sure they're watching me all the time."

Statistics. Marzena has the Flight feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.

Milivoj

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Saint Andral's teenage gravedigger, Milivoj is an orphan responsible for taking care of his many siblings. He learned of the Bones of Saint Andral from Yeska and sold them to Henrik van der Voort for some much-needed coin.

Roleplaying Milivoj. All bluster and brawn, Milivoj takes umbrage in the slightest provocations. Many believe the boy wants to prove himself as an adult, but he is still just a child at heart—an overburdened kid who never got to vent his grief and frustration. Belligerent and unable to accept criticism, he flies off the handle at every opportunity.

Minadora von Zarovich

Minor Character of Chapter 9

Invented by the *Companion* to lead the overhauled Snow Maidens—now an elite team of female commandos—of Tsolenka Pass, Minadora was a cousin of Strahd's with a successful, bloody military career. Fearing a potential claim to his throne, Strahd sequestered her at Tsolenka Pass. She soon succumbed to a deadly winter, but endures as a spectral soldier committed to holding the tower.

Roleplaying Minadora. Minadora is cold and calculating, but she goes berserk if someone implies that Strahd stationed her at Tsolenka not out of love or trust or respect, but out of fear and contempt for a potential challenger.

Mishka Belview

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Mishka, a mongrelfolk, hides in the Abbey's well. He is 5 feet tall and has a wiry, spindly build. He has three red spider eyes on the right side of his face, while the left side appears human. He has a frog's foot in place of his left hand and a taloned crow's foot where his right foot should be.

Roleplaying Mishka. Mishka will attack whomever shines a light down on him. In his madness, Mishka has discovered he enjoys killing people.

Statistics. Mishka has the Spider Climb feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.

Morgantha

Major Character of Chapters 3 & 6

The hag Morgantha preys upon the weak and desperate by peddling her magical, addictive dream pastries, which are made from the bones of children. She is an instrumental character in any *Curse of Strahd* campaign, but requires great finesse to use (namely, playing to her desire not to kill an adventurer, but corrupt them instead).

Roleplaying Morgantha. Morgantha is a sickeningly sweet, nosy, well-meaning grandmother—or so she pretends. Through backhanded compliments, Morgantha eviscerates her guests' ego ("Why, what strength… if only you could scrub the grease from your face," and the like) all while dropping thinly-veiled threats. To a gnome or goblin, she might say, "So adorable. I could just eat you up."

Evil's Bride. Morgantha is aware of Strahd's obsession with Ireena Kolyana and therefore will *never* harm her.

In the Campaign

Morgantha is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 3,** Morgantha can be encountered with the *Dream Pastries* special event.

In **Chapter 6,** Morgantha is in her place of power, ready to torment whomever is foolish enough to enter her home.

Mother Night

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Barovia's deity of darkness, Mother Night involves herself in the *Companion's For the Love of Mother Night* storyline in Chapter 15. Arabelle has been captured by werewolves, and as the descendant of Madam Eva—a disciple of Mother Night—the deity reaches out to the adventurers with a vision imploring them to take action.

The Mournful Three

Minor Characters of Chapter 7

The Mournful Three are the three revenants found in the Argynvostholt chapel. Charged with defending the manor, they are the most sadistic and predatory revenants. Junior officers, they are:

Sir Avadrone, a bald warrior whose current corpse has no ears. He wields a longsword.

Sir Caradwal, a male warrior whose spirit currently inhabits a woman's body. He wields a gilded, dragon-shaped mace and a shield.

Lady Isabel Essaveer, a tall and broad-shouldered woman clad in a tattered tabard of the Order of the Silver Dragon. She wields a rusted spear.

Roleplaying the Mournful Three. A member of the Mournful Three always speaks in a way that another member can answer or add onto, as they do in the description above. Never yelling, the revenants comment with bored disinterest. You can voice the revenants with these sample remarks:

- If the adventurers take the fight to the revenants, Essaveer remarks, "What valor. To rush headlong into danger…" Sir Caradwal then adds, "Valorous indeed, my Lady Essaveer. Were we not so, in the days of yore?" Avadrone then adds, "And just as foolish."
- If the adventurers flee from the revenants, Essaveer remarks, "The enemy is routed. Another victory for the Order." Sir Caradwal then adds, "Wisdom, it seems, has triumphed over hunger." Avadrone then muses, "Death makes veterans of us all."
- "Lord Horngaard will wish to interrogate these intruders," remarks Caradwal. Essaveer replies, "May he prove gentler than last." Avadrone then adds, "We cannot fail him again."
- If the revenants strike down a foe, Essaveer remarks, "Freed from the mortal coil." Avadrone then sneers, "How we envy you." Caradwal adds, "Our duty is unending… our devotion without equal."

Muriel Vinshaw

Minor Character of Chapters 10 & 14

Muriel Vinshaw is a wereraven agent of the Keepers of the Feather whose role is expanded upon by the *Companion.* She is the de facto liaison between the adventurers and the Keepers, who must keep their identities secret.

Roleplaying Muriel. Muriel is a realist and cynic. She is straight to the point and unimpressed by the adventurers' humor or exploits.

In the Campaign

Muriel is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 2,** a bundle of Muriel's lavender-perfumed clothes can be found (see *The Raven's Attention* revised random encounter).

In **Chapter 5,** Muriel Vinshaw dines at the Blue Water Inn (added by the *Companion*).

In **Chapter 10,** Muriel can warn the adventurers of Baba Lysaga if they meet her at the menhirs. Per the *Companion* she has been captured by Lysaga.

In **Chapter 14,** Muriel assists Davian Martikov in rescuing his family from the roots of the Gulthias Tree.

Nala

Minor Character of Chapter 12

Nala is the name given by the *Companion* to one of the otherwise nameless druids inhabiting the Wizard of Wines.

Roleplaying Nala. When Nala dies, she croaks, "You are too late… Wintersplinter will walk this earth…"

Neferon

Major Character of Chapter 13

An arcanaloth, Neferon is bound to the Amber Temple, and masquerades as a frail, human wizard.

Revision. The *Companion* removes Neferon (see Ch. 13).

Roleplaying Neferon. Neferon desires arcana, especially magic items. He can be bribed with a magic item, but hungers especially for the *Sunsword*, *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, and the *Tome of Strahd*. Similarly, he is loath to part with any of these items, should they already be in the Amber Temple. If you use *The Symbol Stolen* (see *Companion*, Chapter 1) and have the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* deposited here by Rahadin, Neferon deserves to remain in the chapter so the adventurers can slaughter the arcanaloth and retrieve the artifact from its corpse.

Nikolai Wachter Sr.

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Death has been kind to Nikolai Sr.—or rather, his wife has. For the three years, Fiona has kept his corpse magically preserved with nightly spells of *gentle repose*. What a scandal it would be if anyone learned she still sleeps beside her dead husband…

As a Destined Ally. If Nikolai is destined to stand beside the adventurers, he must first be brought back to life. Before he can leave for adventure, however, he's compelled to set his house right by reigning in his sons, restoring his daughter's sanity, and confronting his devilish wife.

Offalia Wormwiggle

Major Character of Chapter 6

Morgantha's hag-daughter, Offalia weaves garments from human flesh. Throughout the chapter, Offalia is frequently mentioned by Morgantha, who wishes to "fix her up with the right man." Offalia stays up in the bedroom (Area O3) throughout much of the chapter. In this regard, she acts as a floater—a combatant that remains ready to lend her support where it's most needed. Offalia can trundle down the stairs to join the fray, or even open a window and scale the windmill's walls.

Offalia wove the hags' wardrobes: clothes spun from human flesh and hair. She wears one such dress when finally met by an adventurer. However, the dress is dyed in a way to disguise its nature. Instead, an observant character can perceive a hideous detail: an entire human face woven into the "fabric."

Roleplaying Offalia. Once finally met, Offalia plays the part of a shy maiden dedicated to her loom. She smiles sheepishly and never meets someone's gaze. She wishes only to show off the "pretty dresses" she has made. Offalia divulges a sad secret to potential husbands: "Mother only wishes to marry me off because I disgust her so." This secret, an actual truth believed by Offalia, is partnered with deep resentment of her sister Bella.

Otto Belview

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Otto guards the Abbey of Saint Markovia with Zygfrek. He is 4 feet, 9 inches tall and squats instead of standing upright. He looks like a beardless dwarf with patches of donkey flesh covering his face and body. He has one human ear and one wolf's ear, and a protruding wolf's snout and fangs. His arms and hands are human, but his legs and feet are leonine, and he has a donkey's tail. He can barely speak Common, and his laugh sounds like a donkey's bray. He wears a plain wool cloak.

Roleplaying Otto. Otto's madness is embodied in the following statement: "I am the smartest, wisest, strongest, fastest, and most beautiful person I know."

Statistics. Otto has the Standing Leap feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.

Parriwimple

Minor Character of Chapter 3

Parriwimple—born Parpol Cantemir—is Bildrath's simple-minded but lovable nephew, whom he employs to clean and guard his storefront.

Roleplaying Parriwimple. See *CMP,* Ch. 3, Area E1 for details on how to roleplay Parriwimple, whose time on screen is largely limited to his uncle's storefront.

Patrina Velikovna

Minor Character of Chapter 4

Long years ago, the dusk elf wizard Patrina Velikovna craved power at any cost. After amassing her own hoard of arcana, Patrina offered her hand in marriage to Strahd von Zarovich, the scourge of her people. And the Devil accepted, eager to add such another impressive paramour to his ever-growing harem. For daring to wed that monster, Patrina was murdered by her own people, chief among them her brother, Kasimir, who cast the very first stone. This sororicide sparked the dusk elf genocide.

Death has not been kind to Patrina, who lingers beyond the grave, her corpse laid to rest in the catacombs of Ravenloft. Through dreams and across long years, she has haunted her brother, urging him to delve the Amber Temple and unearth the power of resurrection, promising him that all would now be different.

Revision. As revealed by Exethanter, Patrina took the power of Shami-Amourae.

Roleplaying Patrina. Patrina plays the part of a damsel-in-distress until she gathers her power. This facade crumbles if the adventurers attack her, revealing her contempt.

Statistics. Until the time of her dark rebirth, Patrina is a **banshee**. Afterwards, she assumes unique statistics.

In the Campaign

Patrina is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Patrina languishes inside her crypt.

During **the Wedding,** Kasimir attempts to resurrect Patrina in Act IV (see *Daughter of Dusk*), if he wields the power of Zhudun the Corpse Star.

Pidlwick II

Minor Character of Chapter 4

Forged by the legendary toymaker Fritz von Weerg, Pidlwick II is a sapient, clockwork jester that murdered its namesake, Pidlwick the Fool. At 4-feet-tall, Pidlwick is not much a threat, but one good shove down the stairs is all the construct needs.

Roleplaying Pidlwick II. The jester is mute and uses sign language and other gestures to converse. If shown kindness, the jester proves amiable. If not, its resentment grows until at last it attempts another murder.

The Prophet

Major Character of Chapter 14

Invented by the *Companion,* the Prophet is the leader of the Gulthias cult. Nameless, he was raised by Baba Lysaga, who found him abandoned in the woods as an infant. She raised him on a lie: that he is the illegitimate, dhampir son of Strahd and Volenta Popofsky, born in her undead womb on the night of her vampiric turning. Lysaga refused to name the Prophet, who even now, fifty years later, lacks any identity than the false one she has spun for him. Whether Lysaga was prophetic or simply bored is unknown, but she set in motion a series of events that would see to the ruin of Strahd's enemies: the Keepers of the Feather.

The Prophet does not dare believe he is anything but Strahd's bastard. He has staked his entire life on that lie. Like a vampire, the Prophet drinks the blood of men and sleeps in a grave, a dogma he has enforced upon the Gulthias Cult who now worship Strahd as a god. He needs Strahd to be a god so that he himself may have an identity. The Prophet proves to be a fanatic to these ludicrous beliefs; his world would crumble without that zealotry. The Prophet leads the Gulthias druids in their ritual atop Yester Hill. Thanks to Baba Lysaga, he and his followers have an undying hatred for the Martikov family, whose own lineage (altered by the Companion) includes wildling druids. When Wintersplinter the tree blight is born, he intends to cleanse Barovia with ash and shadow.

Roleplaying the Prophet. The Prophet is fond of grandiose statements that pay homage to Strahd and himself. He might say any of the following:

- "You are too late! The ravens bleed! Long dead will our feud be and soon Barovians everywhere will know we are not the scum of the earth, but the salt!"
- "I shall do my father proud!"
- "The Son of Strahd bows to none!"
- "He is the Ancient… He is the Land… and I am the future."
- "It shall be a cruel winter!"
- When the Prophet is slain, he gawps and stammers, "But, but… Baba Lysaga… promised… the future."

Rahadin

Major Character of Chapter 4 & the Wedding

Rahadin von Zarovich was adopted by King Barov after he betrayed his dusk elf kin. His grisly life is further detailed in *Curse of Strahd,* Appendix D. Rahadin remains Strahd's chief confidant, friend, and champion. Those near Rahadin can hear the wails of his many, long-dead victims.

Roleplaying Rahadin. Rahadin wears a permanent scowl, and seems oblivious to the wails of his long dead victims, which precede his arrival. He makes no attempt to hide his utter contempt for the adventurers.

In the Campaign

Rahadin is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 3,** Rahadin may be featured in the *Companion's Funeral for the Burgomaster* quest.
In **Chapter 4,** Rahadin greets Strahd's invited guests.
In **Chapter 13,** Rahadin may visit the Amber Temple to pray for Strahd's behalf; as a sacrifice, he swallows a toad.
During **the Wedding,** Rahadin serves as Strahd's best man.

Ratka

Minor Character of Death House

The Vistana Ratka is the son of Stanimir.

Revyr

Minor Character of Chapter 12

Revyr is the name given by the *Companion* to one of the otherwise nameless druids inhabiting the Wizard of Wines.

Roleplaying Revyr. Revyr's dying words are, "Death to ravens!"

The Roc of Mount Ghakis

Major Character of Chapter 9

The Roc of Mount Ghakis has nested in the Balinok Mountains for millennia, and it rouses when the party makes their trek to the Amber Temple.

Revision. The Roc was once the giant raven that delivered the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* to the paladin Lugdana long ago in the Ravenloft mythos. Corrupted by the Dark Powers, the raven has betrayed its holy purpose and become a shadow of itself. It now guards the Amber Temple, mystically recognizing those that are aware of the temple and intend to enter it. The Roc will not, however, attack whomever wields the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind,* which thrums and vibrates when the Roc is near.

In the Campaign

The Roc is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** the *Companion* depicts Lugdana's raven in a gilded portrait painted by Artista DeSlop (see Area S13).
In **Chapter 9,** the Roc attacks from the heavens above.

Rosavalda Durst

Major Character of Death House

"Rose" Durst exists as two entities: her spirit, bound to the manor's play room, and an illusion crafted by Death House. She, along with the illusion of her little brother Thorn, lure unsuspecting travelers into the Death House. If her remains are taken from Area 20 and laid to rest in the family crypts below, her spirit at last finds peace.

Rudolph van Richten

Major Character of Chapters 5 & 11

Strahd's archnemesis has come to Barovia to end him once and for all. An esteemed doctor and legendary monster hunter, van Richten has a storied history elaborated upon in *Curse of Strahd,* Appendix D (see "Rictavio," the disguise he maintains with the help of a *hat of disguise*).

Revision. The *Companion* ignores van Richten's racism against Vistani, an inclusion that should have never made it to print. By extension, the *Tyger, Tyger* special event in Vallaki does not occur, and his tiger does not exist.

Roleplaying Van Richten. Van Richten is hesitant to trust the adventurers until they prove themselves to be good of heart. Saving Arabelle at Lake Zarovich is a good start, as is slaughtering the vampire spawn in Henrik van der Voort's house or opposing Strahd in *St. Andral's Feast.* However, even if the party prove themselves, van Richten must keep his distance. It is all but certain Strahd is spying on these strangers from afar—through minions and magic alike. Van Richten can't afford to get caught in the Devil's gaze too. He seldom speaks with the adventurers, and when he does, it is to test the contents of their souls.

As a Destined Ally. Van Richten risks overshadowing the adventurers as a Destined Ally, but the hunt for him should permeate the campaign. It should never be clear whether he or Ezmerelda, his wayward apprentice, is the adventurers' Destined Ally. As described in *CMP* Ch. 1, it is best to engineer a showdown where Strahd has Ezmerelda hostage and van Richten cornered. Whomever survives is the Destined Ally.

Knowledge. Van Richten has the education of a scholar and the wisdom of a veteran. He has traveled to many Domains of Dread over the years—although he only knows them as accursed lands—and braved the Mists many times over. When it comes to Barovia, and its campaign, Van Richten is aware of the following:

- The weaknesses and abilities of a vampire.
- That the "accursed lands" are enshrouded by Mist and unseemly things lurk therein.
- The history of Strahd's death and his brother's wedding. He does not know that Tatyana continues to be reincarnated, however. If he learns of Strahd's obsession with Ireena, Van Richten connects the dots but keeps this information to himself, believing it will do no one any good, least of all Ireena.

Van Richten expressly does not know anything of the following:

- Van Richten is unaware of the vampire spawn that infest the coffin maker's shop.
- Van Richten is unaware of the Amber Temple and what evils lie therein.
- Van Richten is unaware that the Domains of Dread are in the Shadowfell. Being a native of another domain would shock him to his core.

Bounty. As described by the *Companion*, rumors already float about Vallaki and the Vistani that van Richten has come to Barovia to end Strahd's reign. Baron Vallakovich has put a bounty of 1,000 gp on van Richten's head—if brought in alive. Strahd's agents are similarly searching for the monster hunter.

In the Campaign

Van Richten is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** van Richten masquerades as Rictavio.
In **Chapter 11,** van Richten's belongings can be found in the Tower of Khazan, which he may return to if Vallaki falls to chaos after *St. Andral's Feast.*

Saint Markovia

Minor Character of Chapters 4 & 8

When, four centuries ago, it became clear that Strahd had become a vampire, Saint Markovia led a righteous crusade against Castle Ravenloft—and failed. Her forces were picked apart and Saint Markovia was sealed in a crypt in the catacombs below and left to starve. Her thighbone (*Saint Markovia's thighbone*) persists as a magical weapon.

Sangzor

Major Character of Chapter 9

Sangzor is a monstrous, evil goat with supernatural resilience to harm and greater sentience than other beasts. The wildlings of Barovia have been hunting Sangzor for years; his pelt commands their respect, sparing the adventurers from an attack.

Sasha Ivliskova

Minor Character of Chapter 4 & the Wedding

Sasha is Strahd's oldest bride—and he has long since tired of her. She languishes in a sealed crypt in the catacombs of Ravenloft, desperate to see her dear husband once again. Her example terrifies Strahd's other consorts, who fear they too will be discarded.

Roleplaying Sasha. Poor Sasha still believes Strahd sees her more than a plaything he has grown bored of—despite sealing her away for long years in the catacombs below—and were it not for his precious "Tatyana" she would surely win his heart over again. Of all the brides, Sasha is the most brazen in her hatred and jealousy of Ireena, and would strangle her, were she blessed with free will.

In the Campaign

Sasha is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Sasha languishes in her crypt.
During **the Wedding,** Sasha is unearthed to be the Maid of Honor (unless Ireena asks an adventurer instead).

Savid

Minor Character of Chapters 2 & 7

A dusk elf tracker, Savid assists the Vistani in their search for Arabelle.

Roleplaying Savid. Ordinarily, Savid is a sweet and friendly soul willing to reach out to outsiders like the adventurers. In Chapter 7, he is terrified, trembling at the slightest noise and wincing with every step.

In the Campaign

Savid is featured in multiple chapters:

The *Companion* adds Savid to **Chapter 2** in the *In the Search of Arabelle* random encounter, giving the adventurers the chance to meet him before Chapter 7.

In **Chapter 7,** Savid is wounded and shelters in Argynvostholt, after having been attacked by blights. He has 4 hit points remaining and requires medical attention.

Sergei von Zarovich

Minor Character of Chapter 8

In life, Sergei was a pious, gentle soul—everything that Strahd was not. On the day of his wedding to Tatyana, Strahd murdered him, fulfilling the dark pact of the Vampyr. Sergei was buried in his *+2 plate* armor, and his piety has kept his corpse preserved all these years.

If Ireena Kolyana reaches the Shrine of the White Sun in Krezk, Sergei's spirit rouses, beckoning her to join him and escape Barovia's grim afterlife.

The Shadow of Strahd

Minor Character of Chapter 10

Invented by the *Companion* to fulfill Strahd's part in the *Ending the Cycle* storyline, the Shadow of Strahd is a dark construct conceived of by the Dark Powers to torment the ghosts of Berez. Baba Lysaga treats the Shadow as if it were Strahd, satisfying her desire to play as his mother.

Sir Godfrey Gwilym

Major Character of Chapter 7

In life, Sir Godfrey was the lover and confidant of Vladimir Horngaard—until Strahd personally slaughtered him on the field of battle. It was Godfrey's gruesome death that kindled the fires of Vladimir's hatred and caused him to endure in undeath as a revenant. With his beloved Vladimir blinded by hatred Godfrey alone is willing to abandon Argynvostholt to aid in the death of Strahd—but only if he is the adventurers' Destined Ally.

Revision. Per the *Companion's The Redemption of Godfrey* storyline and variant, Godfrey begrudgingly labors as Strahd's executioner. Strahd has promised Argynvost's skull after Godfrey completes six centuries of service.

Roleplaying Godfrey. The original Godfrey is a weary paladin desperate to see his lover restored. The revised Godfrey is a cynical, dark-hearted executioner. No matter what corpse he is possessing, his raspy voice and glowing, crimson eyes can be recognized.

As a Destined Ally. The original Godfrey can be recruited with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The revised Godfrey can only be recruited as the Destined Ally if the adventurers put Argynvost to rest—Godfrey's soul will endure until Strahd is defeated. Either way, exercise restraint with Godfrey, for his Vengeful Tracker will defeat Strahd's attempts to ambush or hide from the adventurers.

In the Campaign

Godfrey is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 2,** the revised Godfrey may be met during the *The Revenant* revised random encounter.

In **Chapter 3,** Godfrey may be featured in the *Companion's Funeral for the Burgomaster* storyline.

In **Chapter 7,** Godfrey (original) languishes with other senior members of the Order (the Knights of the Round). The revised Godfrey comes in Act IV of *In the Court of Horngaard* to battle Vladimir so that the adventurers may put Argynvost's spirit to rest.

In **Chapter 9,** the revised Godfrey pursues the adventurers up Mount Ghakis to prevent them from entering the Amber Temple.

Skennis

Minor Character of Chapter 15

Skennis is an elderly werewolf of the Children of Mother Night. He has only 36 hit points and is too old to hunt.

Roleplaying Skennis. Skennis plays an electrum flute (250 gp) to entertain himself and his wolves. Though past his prime, he fights to the death to defend the den from intruders. Skennis's dying words are, "When Kiril returns, he'll skin you alive."

The Snow Maidens

Minor Characters of Chapter 9

Originally the six **specters** roused if a Fortune of Ravenloft is found on Tsolenka Tower, the *Companion* rewrites these ghostly women into an elite commando unit of Strahd's former army led by his cousin Minadora von Zarovich. The Snow Maidens died guarding Tsolenka Pass during a harsh winter four centuries ago but endure as undead loyal to the Devil Strahd.

Stanimir

Minor Character of Death House

Stanimir is a Vistana mage that can be met as part of the *Mysterious Visitors* optional adventure hook campaign, or as part of the *Companion's On the Shadow's Shoulder* prologue to Death House. Stanimir shares a story that, unbeknownst to his listeners, describes Strahd's history with the Vistani. When the werewolves attack, Stanimir casts *hold person,* saving several adventurers. Ultimately, the mage and his son and daughter, Ratka, and Damia, are torn apart by the werewolves.

Stefania Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Stefania is the daughter of Davian Martikov and wife of Dag Tomescu, with whom she has four children: Claudiu, Martin, Viggo, and Yolanda.

In the Campaign

Stefania is featured in multiple chapters:

Stefania is with her family in **Chapter 12.** Several blight needles are buried in her shoulder.

In **Chapter 14,** Stefania has been captured by the druids just like the rest of her family.

Stella Wachter

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Now mad, Stella has been sequestered to her room by her mother, Fiona Wachter. Stella's story is that of a victim—a victim of her heartless mother and the demented Victor Vallakovich, who broke her mind.

Revision. Stella Wachter was not driven insane by Victor Vallakovich's "unkind words," nor does she believe she is a cat. Stella is instead a victim of Victor's magic. At first, she was interested in Victor romantically… but when he fatally tested his teleportation circle with his family's butler and maid, Stella was ready to alert his father. Victor attempted to scrub her memory and charm her all with one spell and simply ended up fracturing Stella's mind. Later that night, when Stella got home, she walked in on her mother's bedroom only to find her father's magically preserved corpse. These horrors combined shattered Stella's sanity. To cope, she rips up anything she can get her hands on—fabric, sheets, clothes—because it helps her feel in control. She saw Victor's victims be ripped into pieces, and so she herself rips up household items.

Her Sanity Restored. If Stella's sanity is restored through a *greater restoration* spell, she informs her brothers of their father's unnatural state. She then seeks refuge with the Martikovs, Vallaki's only kind noble family.

As a Destined Ally. No matter how you shape it, Stella is not a worthwhile ally. She has no magic and no prowess in combat, and the *Companion* does not believe it is justified to revise her statistics to grant her these abilities.

Strahd von Zarovich

Major Character of Curse of Strahd

Strahd is the Ancient; Strahd is the Land; Strahd is the centerpiece of the campaign—the shadow that looms over Barovia, the invisible menace slowly wrapping its fingers around the adventurers' throats.

Roleplaying Strahd. The Devil is suave and arrogant; he is cruel and beautiful; he is death and he is life. Although he hides behind a mask of eminence, he is no less of a beast than the werewolves. In but a flash, he can summon rage so deep and sharp that the skies weep in fear. Consider the following aspects of his personality:

- Strahd is lawful evil. He considers himself a lord first and a monster second. He keeps his word and wishes to foster trust with the adventurers, so that when he at last betrays them, it cuts all the deeper. This betrayal may be when he has Ezmerelda d'Avenir in his grasp or when he promises the adventurers the safety of guest right during *The Wedding at Ravenloft.*
- Strahd does not quickly resort to violence and is loathe to kill his playthings too soon. He would sooner punish an adventurer for their arrogance than kill them. He wishes to test and toy with his victims before ultimately breaking them… and perhaps then, he will allow them the luxury of death.
- Strahd delights in corrupting heroes and inflicting pain. He may offer one adventurer the chance to leave the realm if they betray their comrades. He is certain to take innocent hostages to force the heroes into an impossible position—such as by the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* in return for the life of their Destined Ally.

Knowledge. Though cunning, well-studied, and immortal, there are still limits to Strahd's knowledge:

- His omniscience over the adventurers should be toned down during the campaign to give your players any narrative agency and opportunity for secrecy. *Some* privacy is required to grease the plot along.
- Strahd does not know that the *Sunsword* was never fully destroyed by the wizard of Khazan. He reacts with rage (and, to the keen observer, fear) when it first shines.
- As a wizard, Strahd is not bound by the spells described in his statistics. He has access to virtually any spell in the game. A spell of *telekinesis* or *misty* step can be used to great effect in your campaign. However, stick to utility spells; his current damage-dealing spells are already strong enough.

Death. As described in the *Endings* section, Strahd cannot truly die. The Dark Powers must have their plaything and as the mists close in again, Strahd will rise from the dead to repeat the cycle.

Using Strahd

Every Dungeon Master has their own take on Strahd and no one opinion can be considered correct. However, it is recommended that you seldom show Strahd. Like any monster or menace, he should be heard, not seen. He should appear no more than four times before the party delves into Castle Ravenloft to drive a stake into his black heart. These appearances are (in order):

- In the Black Carriage at Area I, which the Companion revises to be in motion when the adventurers first reach that area (see *CMP* Ch. 2).
- Vallaki for the *St. Andral's Feast* event and the carnage that follows that night (see *CMP* Ch. 5).
- At the Abbey of Saint Markovia, when he decides to at last seize Ireena Kolyana, setting up *the Wedding*.
- In an epic showdown (preferably in Vallaki) prior to *the Wedding* that forces Rudolph van Richten out of hiding and leaves either him or Ezmerelda d'Avenir dead.

So long as you follow this structure, dread will fester in your campaign. There is, of course, room for one or two more appearances (such as dinner at Castle Ravenloft) but do not make the mistake of dispelling the mystery and suspense by featuring Strahd too often. Every appearance must count; every appearance must be memorable and pregnant with gravitas.

In the Campaign

The *Companion* advises against featuring Strahd too often or too early, but he may appear in these chapters:

In **Chapter 4,** Strahd invites the adventurers to dine at Castle Ravenloft.
In **Chapter 5,** Strahd attacks the Church of Saint Andral.
In **Chapter 8,** Strahd comes to collect Ireena once and for all after she nearly escaped Barovia forever with Sergei.
In **Chapter 14,** Strahd rides Beucephalus to Yester Hill; however, the *Companion* recommends removing Strahd from the chapter altogether.
During **the Wedding,** Strahd marries and kills Ireena before battling the adventurers for the fate of Barovia.

Szoldar Szoldarovich

Minor Character of Chapter 5
A wolf hunter, Szoldar—with his friend Yevgeni—can act as a guide for the Svalich Woods, though he will not stay out past dark. During *St. Andral's Feast,* Szoldar charges Strahd but is easily cut down, bereaving Yevgeni.

Thornbolt Durst

Minor Character of Death House
"Thorn" Durst, like his older sister, exists as two entities: a sad little ghost bound to his toy room, and as an illusion used by Death House to lure unsuspecting travelers into an abattoir. If his skeleton is taken from Area 20 and laid to rest in the family crypts below, his spirit at last finds peace.

Udo Lukovich

Minor Character of Chapter 5
The Vallakian cobbler, Udo was imprisoned by the baron for "malicious unhappiness" after he spoke out against the burgomaster. His mother, Willemina Rikalova, prays nightly for his safe return at St. Andral's. He is being held in the burgomaster's mansion (Area N3M).

Urwin Martikov

Major Character of Chapter 5
Urwin is the husband of Danika Dorakova, father to Brom and Bray, and the estranged son of Davian Martikov. Years ago, one of the three gemstones that give the Wizard of Wines its vitality went missing on Urwin's watch; his father has always blamed him for the disappearance. Their relationship has been frayed ever since.

In the Campaign

Urwin is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Urwin welcomes the adventurers to the Blue Water Inn and requests that they find the inn's missing wine shipment. He can also send the adventurers to Lake Zarovich by asking them to check up on Bluto Krogarov.
As a noble, Urwin must attend **the Wedding**—and much to his horror, Strahd has asked his sons to serve as the ringbearers for the ceremony.

Vargas Vallakovich

Major Character of Chapter 5
The burgomaster of Vallaki, Baron Vargas Vallakovich is a brittle tyrant deluded enough to believe that, if all of Vallaki is happy enough, they will escape Barovia. To that end, he throws weekly, asinine festivals. His authority is palpable, his guards, ever on the lookout for malcontents. However, were it not for Izek Strazni, his reign would already have been challenged, as the devil-armed brute scares off would-be dissidents.

Roleplaying Vargas. The baron is paranoid, hearing an insult in every sentence and a threat in every shadow. Because his ego is so brittle, and yet so demanding, he responds to every threat with overwhelming force. He is incapable of admitting a mistake and is truly irredeemable. Freeing Vallaki from Strahd is not a labor of love, but a demand of hubris. Vargas takes every opportunity to compliment himself or applaud his own decisions. He is fond of starting sentences with, "Were it not for my wit…" and "Only by dint of my own cunning…" and "Alas, I am a merciful sovereign…"

Just as other nobles would be referred to as "His Grace" or "His Majesty," Vargas insists that his servants and soldiers address him as "His Sanguinity." It is the most regal-sounding synonym for "hopefulness" Vargas could find in his family's faded thesaurus.

You can voice Vargas with the following sample dialogue:

- "I am the Law. I am Hope. I am Vallaki's savior. Do your part and find joy. Remember, all will be well."

- "Thanks to swift maneuvering on my family's part, the Devil has not visited Vallaki in generations. The tax is paid ahead of schedule, and the hope of our citizens is too bright a flame for the vampire."
- "The festivals give people hope and purpose. Without them, we shall crumble. I am the dam holding back despair, don't you see?"
- "Why is no one having a good time? I specifically ordered it."

The Cycle. Vargas is an old soul; he reincarnates back into his lineage every few generations, always as the heir to the barony, thereby perpetuating a cycle of incompetence and terror. A look through the Vallakovich family portraits over the years hints to this cyclical reincarnation.

Van Richten. Vargas has heard that Rudolph van Richten, the self-described archnemesis of Strahd, has come to Barovia. Vargas believes van Richten to be an "incorrigible instigator" who will only spell ruin for Vallaki. In truth, however, Vargas is too unyielding in his thinking to consider another means of salvation for Vallaki, and he won't tolerate a competition with van Richten. The baron muddies van Richten's name so that he may remain the people's sole option. To make matters worse, Vargas is offering a bounty—which he has no intention of paying—for van Richten's head.

In the Campaign

Vargas is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Vargas is busy preparing for the Festival of the Blazing Sun. If *St. Andral's Feast* occurs, he will be dragged from his home and executed by a mob.

Vargas is required to attend **the Wedding.**

Vasilka

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Created by the Abbot to be his idea of Strahd's "perfect bride," Vasilka is a mute flesh golem formed from countless bodies. With powdered skin and fierce auburn hair (eerily similar to Ireena Kolyana's shade), Vasilka appears ordinary from a distance, but once one is within 5 feet, one can spot the seams running throughout her flesh. She is dressed in a torn, red dress taken from a Krezk villager.

Roleplaying Vasilka. Because Vasilka is mute, you must roleplay her through actions. Nothing is quite as unsettling as her attempts to mimic the living. She cannot follow social cues, gurgles when she ought to speak, and performs an eerily wrong gesture inappropriate for the situation:

- Vasilka winks rapidly, widening a tear in her cornea.
- Vasilka smiles so wide, the stitches in her mouth snap, exposing unsettling, white gums devoid of color and blood.
- Vasilka attempts a mutilated dance move.
- Vasilka randomly makes the motion of drinking a cup of tea. Her eyes then settle on her fingers; with her other hand, she manually sticks out her pinky.
- Vasilka pulls her hair over her shoulder, but instead of stroking it seductively, she tugs at it until clumps are ripped right out of her skull.

In the Campaign

Vasilka is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 8,** the Abbot takes the opportunity to train Vasilka in dancing when the adventurers visit the Abbey.

During **the Wedding,** the Abbot presents Vasilka to Strahd as the "perfect bride."

Victor Vallakovich

Minor Character of Chapter 5

A moody baronet and fledgling mage, Victor is a monster in the making. After finding a forgotten spellbook in his father's study, Victor began to teach himself magic—but with none of the caution or respect a proper education would provide. He broke Stella Wachter's mind with enchantment magic and has killed two family servants by testing his teleportation circle.

Revision. Victor is the star-crossed lover of Gertruda in the Village of Barovia and his teleportation circle is linked to her wardrobe. He met Gertruda after his inaugural attempt to teleport, which hurled him into the village. After Gertruda dumped him, Victor tried to teleport away from Barovia. See *The Liar, the Glitch, & the Wardrobe* in *Variants & Revisions* of Chapter 5 for details.

Roleplaying Victor. Victor is a moody shut-in who takes umbrage with anything requiring him to be outside or in the presence of others. He sighs more than he speaks. He is interested only in magic and his own misery. There is no price he won't pay to be free of his parents and Barovia itself. Magic makes him feel powerful, so he uses at every opportunity, provided he is outside Vallaki.

The Betrothal. If Fiona Wachter seizes Vallaki, she has Victor spared from execution. Instead, she marries him to Stella to cement her family's claim to the barony. Once Victor has fathered a few whelps, Fiona will quietly have him killed off. Until then, he will remain a prisoner.

As a Destined Ally. A despicable human being, Victor is an ironic ally. Great is his magic; terrible are his morals. In this manner, he is iconic of Ravenloft itself—a poison pill the adventurers must swallow. If Victor is the ally, his imprisonment by Lady Wachter becomes all the more personal for the adventurers.

In the Campaign

Victor is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 5,** Victor continues to experiment with his teleportation circle.

As a noble, Victor must attend **the Wedding**—either with his parents (if they've survived thus far) or as the prisoner of Fiona Wachter.

Viggo Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Viggo is the son of Stefania Martikov and Dag Tomescu.

In the Campaign

Viggo is featured in multiple chapters:

Viggo is with his family in **Chapter 12.** He has been traumatized by the attack and refuses to speaking, instead rocking back and forth in the fetal position.

In **Chapter 14,** Viggo has been captured by the druids just like the rest of his family.

Vilnius

Minor Character of Chapters 11 & 13

Vilnius is a mage ordinarily found only in the Amber Temple. He came with his late master, Jakarion, to plumb the temple of its secrets. He is served by a **quasit** that sits invisibly on his shoulder.

Roleplaying Vilnius. Vilnius is treacherous; he will use the adventurers for as long as he can, until he secures power from a vestige and can find a way safely down from Mount Ghakis. He has no intention of sharing power, and cannot resist the offer of a Dark Gift.

The Tower of Khazan. The *Companion* also adds Vilnius and Jakarion to Chapter 11, although they've already left the tower for the Amber Temple before the party arrives.

In the Campaign

Vilnius is featured in multiple chapters:

In **Chapter 11,** his journal can be found in the tower.

In **Chapter 13,** Vilnius hides from the Amber Temple's flameskulls and golems, surviving off vermin. He is fated to find and accept the Dark Gift of Seriach.

Vladimir Horngaard

Major Character of Chapter 7

From upon his throne, Vladimir Horngaard sits in quiet contemplation, appreciating the dreadful prison of Barovia, which he considers himself as the sole warden of. In life, he was a valiant knight of the Order of the Silver Dragon. After Strahd at last defeated the Order and butchered Vladimir's lover, Sir Godfrey Gwilym, Vladimir went to his grave with such hatred in his heart that he returned as a revenant—and dragged the Order's knights back in undeath along with him. Knowing that Strahd is in a Hell of his own making, Vladimir is content with letting the Devil suffer. He commits his hate-blinded knights to slaying whomever would end or ease Strahd's suffering.

Vladimir is further described in Appendix D of *Curse of Strahd*. He possesses a *+2 greatsword*. As a magic item, it is impervious to rust and contrasts the rusted armor Vladimir wears and the withered body his spirit possesses.

Roleplaying Vladimir. Whereas the other revenants rasp, Vladimir's voice rings out with the clear authority of thunder. He answers any insult to his honor with a snarl but can rarely be moved to strike down an enemy for an insult. An insult to Argynvost or the Order, however, incurs his wrath. Though Vladimir has lost himself to hatred, he is still a knight obsessed with chivalry. He searches for any opportunity to act as a knight once more. The adventurers can appeal to his "honor" (in truth, his pride) to escape his blade.

Volenta Popofsky

Minor Character of Chapter 4 & the Wedding

Volenta is Strahd's shortest and most sycophantic vampire bride. She wears a platinum, skull-shaped mask (worth 750 gp) and ten platinum rings each set with gemstones (worth 250 gp apiece).

Roleplaying Volenta. Like all his consorts, Volenta fears that Strahd will seal her away in a crypt for all eternity once he has his beloved Tatyana. Unlike the others, Volenta is honey-tongued and pretends to be demure. She shies away from Ireena's gaze, sharing broken smiles and offering sweet compliments, as if she hopes to curry favor with Ireena and thereby escape an eternity of darkness.

In the Campaign

In **Chapter 4,** Volenta attends dinner during *To Dine at Castle Ravenloft* and otherwise guards Strahd's coffin.

During **the Wedding,** Volenta guards Ireena and begrudgingly serves as a bridesmaid.

Walter Durst

Minor Character of Death House

Walter was the stillborn bastard of Gustav Durst and the manor maid, Ferecha, whose spirit guards over his crib.

Wensencia

Minor Character of Chapter 15

Wensencia is a werewolf of the Children of Mother Night. She takes on a motherly role for Kellen, the newest werewolf among the pack.

Willemina Rikalova

Minor Character of Chapter 5

The mother of Udo Lukovich, who has been imprisoned for speaking out against Vargas Vallakovich, Willemina prays nightly to the Morninglord for her son's safe return.

Wintersplinter

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

If the druids complete their ritual atop Yester Hill, Wintersplinter, a tree blight, shall be born. Its first mission? To lay waste to civilization—starting with the Wizard of Wines.

Yan the Dead

Minor Character of Chapter 11

Yan the Dead was a Vistana thief that made the mistake of betraying Rudolph van Richten. In the misty realms beyond Barovia, Yan—cast out from his clan—came upon a half-elf bard named Rictavio. The gentle soul offered Yan a ride in his carnival wagon. But when that wagon began to trundle towards Barovia, Yan betrayed its owner—and learned firsthand that appearances can be very misleading.

Van Richten embalmed Yan's head with magic oils that rendered him into, essentially, a magic item. Yan is roused whenever a *speak with dead* spell is cast on his head.

Roleplaying Yan. The disembodied head is very eager to speak with others and always tacks on a helpless, "Restore me! Please!" to whatever answer he provides to the caster of *speak with dead*. Humbled by his state, Yan is shockingly honest about his crimes. He is limited in his knowledge of "Rictavio" and describes his monkey, a ravenous beast in the wagon (his tiger), and shares any of the false stories described in Rictavio's journal (see Area N2N).

Disembodied Snark. If your *Curse of Strahd* campaign leans more toward comedy, or is in dire need of it, you could lift the requirement of a *speak with dead* spell from Yan's head. As soon as they take him out of Khazan's Spell Drain, he awakens. Of course, Yan plays dead and bides his time until a startling revelation. Thereafter, he can be a source of dry commentary.

Yelena Arasek

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Yelena owns the Arasek Stockyard alongside her husband, Gunther.

Roleplaying Yelena. Yelena is well-meaning, but well, Barovia's in a perpetual recession. She has little choice but to sell her goods for five times their rightful price.

Yeska

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Yeska is the altar boy of Saint Andral's Church—and the accidental architect of its doom. To comfort Yeska, Father Lucian revealed that the church is protected by the holy bones of Saint Andral himself. Yeska told Milivoj, and Milivoj told Henrik van der Voort. And so, *St. Andral's Feast* was set in motion. If Father Lucian dies in this attack, his dying thoughts, perhaps even his dying words, are "Do not blame the boy."

Roleplaying Yeska. Yeska may be afraid of his own shadow, but he quickly warms to the adventurers, seeing them as heroes brave enough to stand up to the world's perpetual gloom and dangers.

Yevgeni Krushkin

Minor Character of Chapter 5

Yevgeni is a wolf hunter, dutifully supplying Vallaki with fresh meat and culling the seemingly unending wolves that prowl the Svalich Woods and the shores of Lake Zarovich. Like Szoldar, he can act as a guide but will not enter the woods at night.

Yevgeni has a famous ancestor: Sir Leonid "the Crusher" Krushkin, a true giant of a man entombed in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft.

Yolanda Martikov

Minor Character of Chapters 12 & 14

Yolanda is the infant daughter of Stefania Martikov and her husband, Dag Tomescu.

In the Campaign

Yolanda is featured in multiple chapters:

Yolanda is with her family in **Chapter 12.** Unscathed by the attack, she is cold, hungry, and upset. She cries without pause, despite her mother's best efforts.

In **Chapter 14,** Yolanda has been captured by the druids just like the rest of her family.

Zuleika Toranescu

Major Character of Chapter 15

Zuleika is a werewolf of the Children of Mother Night opposed to Kiril Stoyanovich's despotic rule and ghastly tournaments. Her husband Emil, a rival of Kiril's, shared these sentiments but was taken to Castle Ravenloft once Kiril petitioned Strahd for aid. Zuleika wants nothing more than to see Kiril dead, the children freed from their terrifying capture (and turned into werewolves), and her husband safely returned.

Zygfrek Belview

Minor Character of Chapter 8

Zygfrek guards the Abbey of Saint Markovia with Otto. She is 4 feet, 7 inches tall. The left side of her face and body is covered with lizard scales, the right with tufts of gray wolf fur. Between these tufts is pale human skin. One of her eyes is that of a feline, and her fingers and hands resemble cat's paws with opposable thumbs. She has a gruff voice and wears a gray cloak with black fur trim.

Roleplaying Zygfrek. Zygfrek is shy. Her madness is embodied in the following statement: "I don't like the way people judge me all the time."

Statistics. Otto has the Darkvision feature of the **mongrelfolk** statistics.