

A GUIDE TO CURSE OF STRAID

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POWER SCORE RPG



In this guide, we are going to go over Curse of Strahd and discuss the things you need to know when running the adventure. This guide has a lot of stuff that should make your life easier.

At the end, I have included a sample campaign so newer DMs can get an idea of how to put this adventure together.

This guide grew out of my blog:

Power Score RPG

<http://powerscorerpg.blogspot.com/>

<http://thecampaign20xx.blogspot.com/>

How to Run Curse of Strahd

I've been reading that a lot of newer dungeon masters are having a hard time figuring out how to run Curse of Strahd. In this section, I am going to give you an outline of how you can put this adventure together.

This Show Helps: If you have the time and you are new to D&D, you might want to watch Dice Camera Action, a show that is on Twitch and Youtube. On that show, the guy who wrote this adventure runs it for a group. You can see how he ran it and how he handled things. It is very helpful.

What Do I Do With This? You might look at the Curse of Strahd book and ask yourself, "What do I do with this?" Your job is to link the different areas and ideas together to form a storyline path. There are a lot of details in a lot of different places and it can be very difficult to fit it all together. I would suggest that you create an outline of the places you want the group to go to, and in what order. I wrote a Guide to Curse of Strahd which might help you figure out other stuff, too.

Making Your Outline: When you are planning out your campaign outline, keep in mind that certain things might change once you start running the game depending on the actions of the players. For the most part you'll probably be fine. The fact that the magic items that the heroes need to get (the tome, the icon and the sunsword) are in specific areas means that the group has to go to those areas at some point.

Making Connections: The trickiest thing about making an outline for Curse of Strahd is finding out how to connect one section to the next. The details are buried in the text of each chapter. If things get muddled and your group is floundering in the game, remember that you can use the wereravens to nudge them in the right direction. The wereravens are good guy allies of the heroes from start to finish.

How to Handle the Tarokka Reading: In the adventure, it is suggested that the DM do one reading before the game, and then another if the heroes go to Eva's. This way, if the heroes never meet Eva, you have determined where the items are and etc. Be aware that if you do the reading at the table with your players, you might get results that you don't like.

As an example, while I think the Amber Temple is awesome, it just didn't feel right to me for this campaign. So if I did a reading at the table and I draw the temple, I'm kind of stuck with it.

For the tarokka reading, I just picked the results that I wanted. That way I could put the items in locations that I want to run, use the NPC I like, and put Strahd in the room that I think is the most fitting.

When it came time to run this, I would stack my tarokka deck so that when I did the reading at the table when running the game, it would give me the results I wanted. If you don't own a tarokka deck, that's fine. You can just narrate the reading. That actually makes it easier.

Strahd Encounters: One thing the book leaves in your hands is when, where and how Strahd interacts with the group as they travel through Barovia. There are general guidelines for encounters on page 10, and there are a number of suggested Strahd encounters sprinkled in various chapters, but ultimately it's up to you to decide what you want to do.

I placed four Strahd Encounters prior to the actual trip into Castle Ravenloft in my outline. I decided to make one a dramatic introduction encounter, and the other 3 based on each of Strahd's Goals (listed on page 10).

Gaining Levels: I would recommend that you do not give out experience points when you run this. Just have the group level at certain points, usually after they finish a chapter.

Sometimes the group might fly through a chapter in a single session and it will feel too soon to level them. In that instance, don't level them for at least another session or two. 5th edition D&D is supposed to be flexible, so that 4th level characters can handle 6th level areas. Some areas will probably take longer than you expected, so the discrepancy in leveling should even out.

Starting at Level 3: If I ran this adventure, I would start the group at level 3. If you decide to start at level one, you could run Death House (page 211) or you could cook up a little introductory adventure in the world the heroes come from, before they are drawn to Barovia.

Be careful, though. If you have new players, they might get attached to your world. They might not want to leave! If you do make up an intro adventure, you might want to use the

werewolves and Vistani in your homebrewed adventure so that the tone of Curse of Strahd is ingrained in your campaign from the start.

Short Outline

Here is a simple outline of how you could run this adventure. We'll assume that the characters start at level three.

1. Creeping Fog: (page 22) The group is drawn into the mists
2. Village: The group follows the road and comes to the village of Barovia. They meet vistani who tell them to seek out Madam Eva. They also meet Ismark and Ireena, who want to flee to Vallaki once they bury their father. Strahd attacks the group in the graveyard.
3. Madam Eva: The raven guides the group to Tser Pool (page 36), which is on the way to Vallaki. The vistani talk with the heroes. Madam Eva does her reading. Here are the results I chose:
 - Tome of Strahd is in Van Richten's Tower
 - Icon of Ravenkind is in Krezk
 - Strahd's Enemy is Ezmerelda
 - The Sunsword is in The Ruins of Berez
 - The final battle with Strahd occurs in Strahd's Tomb (page 93).

After the reading, Ismark wants to get Ireena to Vallaki, where he hopes she'll be safe from Strahd.

4. Vallaki: The group travels to Vallaki. They meet the Keepers of the Feather and Rictavio. Rictavio translates Madam Eva's reading. Rictavio has to flee Vallaki, so he tells the group to go to Van Richten's Tower. The Tome of Strahd is there.
5. Van Richten's Tower: The heroes obtain the tome and meet Ezmerelda. Strahd attacks.
6. Roadblock: The group goes to Krezk, but they aren't allowed in. They must go get wine from the Wizard of Wines first.
7. The Wizard of Wines: The place is over-run with monsters. The group needs to get a magic gem from Yester Hill. I decided not to require the group to get the gem in Berez.
8. Yester Hill: Twig Blights, druids and a statue of Strahd. The group gets the gem. They can now get the wine and will be allowed into Krezk.
9. Krezk: The group might have a major encounter at the pool (page 156). The Icon of Ravenkind is in room 13 (page 150).

10. Ruins of Berez: The group will have to battle Baba Lysaga and her Creeping Hut to obtain the Sunsword.

11. Invitation: Once the battle is complete, the heroes find the Black Carriage (page 37) waiting for them. Wind blows, and an invitation to the castle (page 251) lands at their feet. The heroes get in, and the carriage takes them to Castle Ravenloft.

12. The Castle: The heroes make their way through the castle and have a final battle with Strahd and his brides in his tomb.

13. Epilogue: The sun is out, and the heroes can at last go home.

Things to Do

That's a simple "road map" for you to follow. The group might decide to go to a place like Argyvostholt just to check it out, and they might decide to go to a location "out of order." But that's our basic framework and we can change it as we like as the campaign progresses.

Things you might want to do when you plan your campaign out:

Create an Outline: Plan out the locations that you want to use in order. Use the "Areas by Level" chart as your guide (page 6).

Place Encounters: Pick out the random encounters you want to use (on pages 28-33). You can roll them during the game if you want, but I like to place them in advance so I can make sure I get to use the ones that I like when I want. Also, rolling during the game eats up time and can become a pain.

Plan Out and Place Your Strahd Encounters: There's a major Strahd Encounter in Krezk (on page 156) that you probably want to use. There's a very scary and deadly one, too ("St. Andral's Feast" on page 124). Even if you use those, you still might want to make up some on your own (see page 10 for guidance). Strahd is supposed to be popping up a number of times before the group gets to the castle.

Look at the Marks of Horror: (page 7) Try to add little flourishes in the adventure, like creeping shadows and decay. Doing it in advance is usually better than making those things up on the fly, though you can do either or both.

Trinkets: You might want to place trinkets (page 210) in your outline. These types of fun but non-essential things are easy to forget. There's a lot of cool trinkets that deserve to be used. Your players will appreciate little details like this, as it all adds up to an enriched game experience.

Planning Out Your Game

My goal here is to provide a resource for all of us DMs to use. I am going to go through the book and try to organize things, figure out any confusing sections, and provide notes for any scenes with a lot of moving parts.

You should definitely check out the [Adventurers League DM Guide for Curse of Strahd](#), as it has a number of fun things you might want to include in your game.

Jenny Greenteeth: This hag can help out the adventurers and she is the only spellcaster who offers services in Barovia. The heroes have to pay her in gold and will also have to do a random hilarious chore for her.

Death in Ravenloft: This rule option says that if a character is under 5th level and they die, the Dark Powers of Ravenloft will resurrect them! The adventurer will rise up the very next round, but they will have to roll on a chart for a "dark gift." They will also be Touched by the Mists: "You're tainted by evil. Cats hiss as you approach, milk sours at your touch..." The character also gains resurrection madness (see below).

Resurrection Madness: Souls of the dead are trapped in Barovia. When the character is resurrected they gain a form of indefinite madness from realizing that their spirit is trapped in Ravenloft, possibly forever. This is discussed in the Curse of Strahd book on page 24.

Curse of Strahd Level Guide

Roaming Barovia: This adventure is wide open. It is possible that the heroes will end up in a place way too dangerous for them. If this is something you don't normally do, you might want to alert your players before the first session of this fact. Some players go into a campaign with the assumption that everything is scaled to their level. Here is the areas by level chart (page 6) with page numbers for each area:

(Level 3) Village of Barovia: Flavor page 33 (the heroes will likely hit A, B and C before arriving at Barovia),

(Level 4) Town of Vallaki: Page 95

(Level 4) Old Bonegrinder: Page 125

(Level 5) Village of Krezk: Page 143

(Level 5) Wizard of Wines Winery: Page 173

(Level 6) Van Richten's Tower: Page 167

(Level 6) Yester Hill: Page 197

(Level 7) Argynvostholt: Page 129

(Level 7) Werewolf Den: Page 201

(Level 8) Tsolenka Pass: Page 157

(Level 8) The Ruins of Berez: Page 161

(Level 9) Castle Ravenloft: Page 49

(Level 9) The Amber Temple: Page 181

Appendix A: Character Options

(Page 209) I am putting this appendix here because this background stuff should be handled before the campaign even starts. All of the "Haunted One" options can be linked to entities in the adventure.

Harrowing Event: For most of these, the vestiges in the Amber Temple seem like the natural choice. Definitely check out pages 191-196.

1. The monster could be linked to one of the vestiges (page 191-196).
2. The "dark star" is probably a reference to a vestige - Zhudun the Corpse Star on page 196.
3. Not sure about this one. Maybe it's Strahd's dead brother Sergei, reaching out for someone to rescue Tatyana/Ireena.
4. Again, this sounds like it calls for a vestige (pages 191-196).
5. I just realized that the best choice for this is that the sibling is Izek Strasni (pages 231-232). It fits perfectly. I guess you could go with Ezmerelda (page 231). If you want to go real dark, you could say that the sibling died and many of her body parts were used to create the flesh golem bride (read S13. Main Hall on pages 150-151).
6. You should probably link this to the werewolf clan in chapter 15 (page 201). You can use the "Werewolves in the Mist" hook on page 21. The werewolves have been able to creep into the Misty Forest and go back to Barovia.
7. This should definitely be Baba Lysaga (stats on page 228, her home is on page 163). Remember that the creeping hut is a new development. The Hut hasn't been around in this form for long.
8. This tome might be a book in the Amber Temple library. It might relate to Vecna or one of the vestiges.
9. I'd probably go with a cacodemon servant of Shami-Amourae (page 192) or Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer (page 193). Maybe the hero can summon a weak hell hound, or become one for a short time.
10. You could say that the murderers were vistani. They come and go from Barovia as they please. Maybe pick one of the vistani in the camp on page 119 as a murderer who got away. Ezmerelda (page 230) was a vistani who went rogue, maybe she helped this character escape.

What the Author Did: In the game that Chris Perkins is running, here is how he linked two heroes to the scenario:

- One character was taken away from Barovia as a child. Izek Strazni is her brother.
- The bard's parents were killed by Van Richten (possibly because they had become vampires).

Before You Start the Campaign

Here's some stuff you might want to do before you begin the first session. You might also want to check out my "How to Run Curse of Strahd" article which gives details on how to plan out your campaign.

Decide Between Level One or Level Three: If you want to run "Death House" (page 211) start the group at level one. If you want to jump right in to the main adventure, have the group make level three characters.

Do a Tarokka Reading: This reading might be supplanted if the heroes visit Madame Eva. The Tarokka rules are on page 11.

Handout: Print out the handout called "Version Two" on page 256 in case the heroes find the body in the Svalich Woods (page 34).

Notes: Check out page 7 and maybe jot down a few little moments like a sight only the hero with the highest passive perception sees, an example of age, etc.

Page 35 is Your Friend: Put a tab or bookmark or something on page 35. It's got the map of Barovia and descriptions of all the weird little random areas. You'll be flipping to this a lot.

The Mists: Make sure you understand how the mists work (page 23) and have those elusive exhaustion rules ready (Player's Handbook page 291). When you're in the fog, you're heavily obscured (PH page 183) which means you are blinded - attacks rolls against the blinded person have advantage, and the blinded person's attack rolls have disadvantage.

Souls: Make sure you understand Barovian Souls (page 24). Only 1 in 10 Barovians have a soul!

The Dark Powers: Check out the mysterious evil entities in the Amber Temple (pages 191-196). These creatures offer the heroes dark gifts that might turn the character evil. If you think you have a player who would get a kick out of this, consider having a chosen entity reach out to the hero throughout the adventure, calling them to the amber temple.

Personally I would try to work Tenebrous or Shami-Amourae into this any way I could. You could do a variation on the 2e "dark powers check" rules.

NPCs: Make a list of Barovian names (use the name list on page 25). There are a lot of points in this adventure where the heroes will interact with someone, and it's up to you to name them. I think you should have the first and last names of at least five men and five women ready.

Roll Treasure: Roll on the treasure chart on page 37, in case the group gets to the Tser Pool Encampment. This way you don't have to stop the game to roll dice and possibly look up a magic item at the table.

Special Items: There are items in the castle that can be used in locations to get stuff. The thing about this is, once you've dealt with the castle, the campaign is over. So you should look at those places and see if you want to change where the adventurers find the item, so they can actually use some of this stuff before the adventure is over. The heroes can free the revenants on page 142 and get permanent bonuses, and they can get a ring of regeneration on page 148.

Trinkets: To save game time and to maximize trinket-ness, pick out some trinkets (page 210) that you want the heroes to have. There are a few points in the adventure where the heroes will find a trinket.

Zombies: Make sure you have Strahd Zombie stats ready, maybe roll out how many zombies there are in a house or two. There are zombies in houses in Barovia, the first place the heroes are likely to explore.

Yikes: Check out/absorb the night hag stats just in case things get hairy when the heroes get to page 48.

Marching Order: When you sit down to play, ask your players to establish a marching order. Tell them that unless you are told differently, this is the order you will assume they are traveling in. There are a number of traps that will hit the person first in line, so you need to be clear on who that is beforehand.

Gay Stuff: There are a number of gay NPCs in this adventure. Where I live in New York this isn't a big deal, but if you think there might be problems you should mention this to your group before you even start the adventure. You don't want one person making jokes that offend others. It could get out of hand really fast. If you are running this in a public game store, be extra mindful! The last thing you want is for a closeted, shy player who has chosen D&D as a way to connect socially have insults shoved in their face.

Ezmerelda: Ezmerelda is an NPC who may accompany the group on the adventure. Almost every chapter has a way to get her to meet the party. Personally, I think she should join the group in Chapter 11 (see page 172). Her stats are on page 231.

Once You Start: Write down a deed each PC has done, either in the adventure or as part of their background. Madame Eva will know these things (page 37) and players might get a kick out of it when she meets them.

It's Always Cloudy in Barovia: Remember that it is always raining or cloudy. The sun does not come out until the very end of the adventure, once Strahd is defeated.

Use Ravens to Guide the Group: Throughout this adventure, ravens (wereravens - the Keepers of the Feather - page 98) try to help the heroes and lead them to places, or warn them off. It is entirely possible that the heroes will end up heading to a place that is way too deadly for them. You can use the ravens to warn them. You might want to use Muriel Vinshaw (see page 165) if the heroes are in a pinch.

How to Start the Adventure

1. Adventure Hooks: Pick a hook from the pile on pages 18-22 and run it. Here's the three that I think are kind of the "main" ones:

- Plea For Help (page 18): A gypsy gives the group an invite to Ravenloft. These people are scum (check out the whipping scene on page 121).
- Creeping Fog (page 22): The heroes are camping, the mists take them to Ravenloft.
- Mysterious Visitors (page 19): The group investigates gypsies, are escorted through Barovia.

2. The Lands of Barovia: Go to the map of Barovia on page 35. The heroes come in on the far right of the map and experience these encounters in order:

- A. The Road (page 33): Creepy forest. The heroes walk for 5 hours and then...
- B. Gates of Barovia (page 33): Headless statues, gate swings open. The image of this place is on the bottom of page 34.
- C. Svalich Woods (page 34): Where they might find a dead guy with a letter.

3. The Village of Barovia: Once the group gets to town, there are some choices to make:

- If the heroes are level 1: ...and you are going to run "Death House", skip to page 211 and read that flavor text. Once this adventure is done, then proceed...
- If the heroes are level 3: read the flavor text on page 41 (Mad Mary's weeping).
- As the Group Begins to Explore the Town: They see an old lady selling dream pastries (she does her best to avoid the heroes). This one is a bit weird and dangerous.
- Follow the Weeping: Checking out the weeping will bring the group right by Bildrath's Mercantile and the Blood of the Vine Tavern. A major NPC awaits the heroes in the tavern, so put a neon sign on it or something.
- Exploring: The group will probably check out Mad Mary (page 44), then buy some stuff at Bildrath's (page 43) and check out the tavern (also page 43).

- The Tavern: The heroes can meet Ismark. If you did the "Pleas for Help" hook, Ismark says the letter is a forgery. Ismark wants the heroes to come to his mansion to help his sister...
- Burgomaster's Mansion (page 44): The heroes meet Ireena and see that their father needs to be buried in the cemetery...
- Church (page 45): There's a vampire spawn and some shenanigans.

Chapter 1: Into the Mists

Strahd's Plans: Strahd has got three goals:

- Turn Ireena: Strahd thinks she is his love Tatyana reborn. He has already drunk her blood twice. The next time he does so, he will kill her and turn her into his vampire consort.
- Find Dr. van Richten: Strahd wants to find him and break his spirit.
- Search for a Successor/Consort: Strahd will test the heroes to see if they are worthy. The more challenges they overcome, the more he is interested in them.

Strahd Should Interact with the Characters Multiple Times: I would suggest that you have Strahd meet the characters when they are level 4 and see how it goes. I would be a little worried as a DM of 7th/8th level heroes taking Strahd down with some clever trick.

Bonus Hit Points: As far as I can tell, the Heart of Sorrow (check out page 59) absorbs Strahd's damage, up to 50 hit points. This gives you a nice buffer. Strahd can show up and do something evil. The heroes might hit him a few times, and it will seem like he takes no damage at all. Then he turns into mist and heads back to his castle. I'm still reading up on the heart of sorrow, but this is my understanding so far.

Beucephalus: Remember, Strahd can ride his nightmare! It flies, it can go ethereal, it is very handy. Strahd could hover far above the heroes and drop level 4 fireball spells on the heroes if he wanted to. Beucephalus, "the Wonder Horse" is detailed on page 93.

Here is What Chris Perkins Did: The group got sucked into Barovia while camping. Their campfire began raging, and Strahd glared at the group. He stared at the paladin long and hard.

The group got sucked into the realm and began to make their way toward the village.

Fortunes of Ravenloft

You will need the Tarokka deck or playing cards. You could also just narrate the scene and predetermine what cards are drawn based on how you want it to go. Make sure you write down the results of the reading.

When to Do the Reading: You should do the reading once before you run the adventure. Then, if the characters meet Madame Eva, do it again and have that reading be the "official" one. You can also have Ezmerelda do a reading if the heroes don't meet Madame Eva.

Card Reading: This reading determines all of the important details of this adventure. Let's go through it step by step:

1. Make Two Decks: You are going to take 14 cards and make the high deck. The rest of them are the common deck:

- High Deck: Artifact, Beast, Broken One, Darklord, Donjon, Ghost, Executioner, Horseman, Innocent, Marionette, Mists, Raven, Seer, Tempter.
- Common Deck: All the other cards.

2. Set Up: Shuffle each deck. Check out the diagram on page 11. Then:

- Draw three cards from the common deck and put them in positions 1, 2, and 3.
- Draw two cards from the high deck. Put them in positions 4 and 5.

3. Do the Reading: Now you're going to flip them over in number order, and match up the cards with the entries on pages 12-17.

Common Deck

- Card 1: Match this up with the entry on pages 12-15. This determines where the Tome of Strahd is.
- Card 2: Match this up with the entry on pages 12-15. This determines where the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind is.
- Card 3: Match this up with the entry on pages 12-15. This determines where the Sunsword is.

High Deck

- Card 4: Match this up with the entry on pages 15-17. This is Strahd's Enemy, an NPC that can help you.
- Card 5: Match this up with the entry on page 17-18. This determines where Strahd can always be found.

Notes on the Cards:

NPC Aid: Remember that the NPC who is Strahd's Enemy has a special power that can give a character inspiration.

Drawing the Darklord Card for Strahd's Enemy: This one is kind of a bummer. The heroes have no NPC ally. I think if I drew this I'd change it - I'd just pick the NPC I want (Rictavio or the Mad Mage).

Adventure Hooks

Mysterious Visitors (page 19): Keep in mind that the group will be with the Vistani. They'll pass through the gates (page 33), Barovia (page 41) and River Ivlis (page 35).

It's kind of weird to go through the town of Barovia with the Vistani. Do they stop or do they pass through? Or do the Vistani wait outside town and let the heroes wander? The Vistani would probably know the three women who own the Blood of the Vine Tavern.

The Factions

Faction Info: Here's the faction NPCs for those using the Forgotten Realms or running in the Adventurers League. Factions are virtually non-existent in this adventure:

- (Harpers) Zelraun Roaringhorn: Human mage who gives each Harper PC a scroll of remove curse (PH page 271). He can have the characters' weapons silvered, too.
- (Order of the Gauntlet) Lanniver Strayl: Human knight, follower of Tyr. Gives each faction PC a potion of heroism (For 1 hour you gain 10 temporary HP and the effects of a bless spell - PH page 219).
- (Emerald Enclave) Nobody: Nobody!
- (Lords' Alliance) Eravien Haund: Half-elf noble who knows a lot. He gives Lords' Alliance PCs a scroll of magic weapon (PH page 257) and a mark of prestige - letter of recommendation (DMG page 228).
- (Zhentarim) Davra Jassur: Human assassin - her husband was killed by the werewolves. She can give the Zhentarim PCs a mark of prestige - special favor (DMG page 229).

Chapter 2: The Lands of Barovia

Demiplane: Barovia is a demiplane formed by Strahd's consciousness and surrounded by fog. No creature can leave without Strahd's permission.

Setting DCs: A good rule of thumb when you're figuring out a DC on the fly: When in doubt, it's a 15. Check the bottom right of page 33. It's almost all 15's.

Things the Heroes can Learn: Barovians can tell the characters useful info from the lists on page 26.

Magic & Etherealness: Check page 24 for all of the little changes to magic. You can go ethereal in Barovia, but once you leave the ethereal, you appear back in Barovia no matter where you went. So I guess if you go in the ethereal and you find an ethereal curtain (portal to another plane), when you go through you just pop out in Barovia.

Resurrection: If you die, your soul is trapped in the mists. If you are dead 24 hours before being raised, you gain indefinite madness (DMG page 260).

Clerics: Clerics do still get their spells.

Mists of Ravenloft: The Mists are important (see page 23). Here's the deal:

- Deadly: If you start your turn in the mists, make a DC 20 CON save. Fail means you gain a level of exhaustion (PH page 291). You can't reduce this exhaustion until you leave the mists. Once you hit level 5 exhaustion, you can't move. Level 6, you're dead!
- No Escape: Wandering in the mists always ends up with you back in Barovia.
- Pea Soup: The area in the fog is heavily obscured (you're blind - you have disadvantage to hit things, and things have advantage to hit you).

Souls: 1 in 10 Barovians have a soul. When someone dies in Barovia, their soul is trapped. After decades, the soul is reincarnated into a newborn. If Strahd is defeated, they can leave Barovia.

Shells: The rest are "shells" - mindless, depressed people. They can and do have children, who sometimes have souls. Even if Strahd is defeated, shells cease to exist if they try to leave Barovia.

Strahd Can't Feed on Shells: Strahd can tell who has a soul and who doesn't. He gains no nourishment from shells.

Two "Gods" Exist in Barovia: Mother Night and the Morninglord. The Morninglord rules the day. The people believe Mother Night sent Strahd to punish them for their ancestors'

offenses. From what I understand, these two may be Forgotten Realms gods better known as Lathander (Morninglord) and Shar (Mother Night).

Vistani: They're gypsies, secret spies for Strahd. Strahd lets the Vistani come and go from Barovia as they wish. They know some lore, found on page 27. They have powers:

- Vistani Curses: Vistani can curse people who are within 30 feet (see page 28). The curse goes like this: WIS save DC 13? Madame Eva has a DC of 17. The curses range from making it impossible to tie a rope, to going blind and deaf. I guess this is a power to use when the heroes mistreat a Vistani.
- Evil Eye: (page 28) This can charm person or hold person, save each round.

Random Encounters: (page 29) Check every 30 minutes of travel. Roll a d20. 18+ means an encounter. My favorites are Corpse, Revenant, Skeletal Rider and Trinket. Here are some notes:

- Creepy Thieves: I love the idea of a spy trying to steal hair and pieces of clothing from the characters, to enable Strahd to scry them better.
- Corpse: Finding a corpse of yourself.. awesome.
- False Trail: Spiked Pit (DMG page 123). Save DC is 12-15 (you pick). Damage = 11 (2d10).
- Hunting Trap: (PH page 152) DC 13 DEX save, d4 damage and stop moving. Escape = DC 13 STR check. Fail = 1 point of damage. It's like a bear trap - it clamps on your foot/leg and is attached to a chain that is held in the ground by a spike.
- Revenant: This might be a cool NPC to jump in and help the heroes fight some of Strahd's wolves. Revenant stats - MM page 259.
- Skeletal Rider: This could be fun to use fairly regularly. Maybe you could make it where the rider is eternally looking for a way out of Barovia. They might spot the skeleton near the mists, poking around, trying to find a way through.
- Trinket: The trinkets (page 210) are awesome. Pick a few in advance!

Areas of Barovia

Gates of Barovia: (page 33) When I read about the gates, I had a picture in my head. When you look at the art of this place on page 34, it's quite more grand than the flavor text suggests. Definitely check that picture out, it will help make the beginning of this adventure bigger. Remember, the gates open and close on their own.

Svalich Woods: The letter is on page 256. The heroes may eventually learn that the letter was forged by Strahd. Dire Wolves are on MM page 321. Wolves are on MM page 341.

Tser Pool Encampment: (page 36) This place is important. This is where Madam Eva is, so we'll do the Tarokka reading here. The wizard in the vistani's story is the Mad Mage on page 39. You might want to roll the treasure in advance (page 37) so if it's a magic item, you can select what it is without slowing the game down.

Gates of Ravenloft: (page 38) There's a thousand foot drop so.. you know, you're dead. Green slime is on DMG page 205: DC 10 DEX save, 5(d10) acid damage. It does 11 acid to wood or metal. It does this damage until scraped off. You might want to have the slime damage the boots of some of the PCs to set up my idea for Helga (page 64). The gates lead to the Front Courtyard (page 52).

Lake Zarovich: (page 38) This is pretty dark. A drunk guy puts a little girl in a sack and chucks her into the lake. She demands that the heroes bring her to the Vistani Camp (it is "N" on the Barovia map, description on page 119). She is Luvach's daughter (page 122). Luvach will ask the heroes to find her, if they don't find her on their own.

Mad Mage of Mount Bartok: Wow. The Mad Mage is D&D famous! Stuff to consider:

- Prepare Spells: You should definitely make notes on a few spells you want him to use - Time stop? Cone of cold? A lightning bolt cast at an 8th level slot? And definitely counterspell. Read up on them, maybe write down what they do and a page number in advance.
- Mansion: The magnificent mansion is on PH page 261.
- Reward: If the heroes help him shake off his nuttiness, he gives them each a charm of heroism: It gives the effect of a potion of heroism. Let me save you the comedy of references that is the charm of heroism. Here is what it does: +d4 to attack rolls and saving throws for one minute (10 rounds). 10 temporary hit points for one hour. Wow.. imagine having this guy as Strahd's Enemy.

Chapter 3: The Village of Barovia

This area is scaled for level 1-3 characters.

When the Heroes Arrive: (page 41) Read the flavor text out loud. The group can hear Mad Mary weeping (page 44). They spot a lady in rags (page 48). Ultimately the group is going to want to get to the Blood of the Vine Tavern (page 43) to meet Ismark.

Strahd Zombies: You might want to cook up an encounter in a house with some Strahd Zombies (page 241). The zombies are fun - you can cut their limbs off when you do 5 damage or more. If you have a group that likes combat, this is an entertaining way to keep them satisfied as they explore.

Dream Pastries: (page 48) When exploring, the heroes are meant to notice a hunched figure in rags. She sells dream pastries (see page 125). They are 1 gp each. The pastries put you in a happy dream-trance: DC 16 Con save, fail = incapacitated and 0 speed for d4+4 hours. The secret ingredient: Bones of innocent children! Seriously! This old lady is actually a hag named Morgantha. She lives in the windmill (see page 127). She can see through an eye that Cyrus Belview is wearing on a necklace in Castle Ravenloft (Cyrus is on page 77). She probably knows quite a bit about the interior of Castle Ravenloft. If the adventurers get in a fight with her, they will probably die.

Parriwimple's Stats: He might need to rough up the heroes in Bildrath's Mercantile (page 43).

- **Parriwimple:** (Gladiator, MM page 346) AC 14 HP 112! +7/+7/+7 13(2d8+4) Parry: +3 to AC against one melee attack.

Mad Mary: (page 44) She's a creepy lady whose daughter, Gertruda, is gone. The heroes don't know it, but they will eventually meet Gertruda in Strahd's Castle.

Blood of the Vine Tavern: (page 43) Two things to keep in mind here. One is that the sisters suggest that the heroes meet Madame Eva. The other thing is that the heroes can meet Ismark here. Ismark wants the group to meet his sister Ireena, who plays a gigantic role in this adventure.

In his article in Dragon Plus issue 6, Ed Greenwood wrote about the menu of this tavern: *"Stews and ale and warm round loaves of dark nut bread with strong yellow-green cheeses of unfamiliar local varieties."*

Burgomaster's Mansion: (page 45) Our heroes meet important people. Here's stuff to keep in mind:

- Strahd's Army: Strahd had wolves and zombies attack the house for weeks. The stress caused their father, the Burgomaster, to die.
- Strahd got to Ireena: Strahd visited her twice, but the memories are hazy. She remembers the blazing hunger in his eyes.
- We Need to Bury the Dad: Ireena and Ismark want to bury their dad, but there are screams coming from the church. The heroes need to bury the dad. Ireena and Ismark won't do anything until this is done.

Church: Keep note of what time it is in the game. If it is midnight, the march of the dead happens (page 48). If you've ever played or run Ravenloft before, maybe have old characters as some of the ghosts, just for fun. You could also have these ghosts be the spirits of the dead adventurers found in the cells on pages 80-82.

Here is What Chris Perkins Did: While the heroes were digging the grave, Strahd showed up with a horde of wolves. The wolves attacked, Strahd watched. I think Strahd beckoned to Ireena.

Chris didn't do much at all with Ismarck and Ireena. Ismarck almost immediately faded into the background, and Ireena was there but barely mentioned.

Chapter 4: Castle Ravenloft

This area is scaled for level 9 characters.

Make sure you are prepared before the group goes in:

- Marching Order: Make sure you know the marching order of the party before you go in here. You will need to know who is in front and back at certain times. Also, there is a trap on page 80 where it will be important to know if your group is single file or not.
- Write Down the Weight of Each Character: There are a few traps which are triggered by weight. It is particularly important for the trap on page 80.
- Lots of Perception Stuff: Write down the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores.
- Tarokka Placement: Don't forget to implement the tarokka results. Strahd will be in a specific area and there might be a magic item or two here depending on the cards you drew.
- What Time is it? Make sure you establish what time of day it is when the group enters. There's at least one room (K50. on page 70) where it matters if it is day or night.
- Make a Map: You might want to draw or make a map of room k84 (page 85). The group might spend a lot of time in there, and it is important to know who is standing where. There's a million traps and monsters, and positioning will matter. There is a top-down map here. The 3e isometric map is here.
- NPC Prep: The heroes might end up with a buddy or two. Maybe have stats handy for Sir Klutz (page 91), Gertruda (page 68) and Pidlwick II (page 236).

Random Encounters: (page 49) Roll a d20. 18+ means there is a random encounter. Check at these times:

- Every ten minutes when resting in the castle.
- When the heroes enter an unoccupied area for the first time.

You might want to roll the unoccupied room ones ahead of time so it doesn't slow the game down at the table. There are a ton of unoccupied areas.

Here's some notes on some of the encounters:

- Black Cat: You might want to do what they did in one of the older Ravenloft modules. If the black cat crosses a character's path, something bad happens to them soon. Maybe they have disadvantage on certain rolls for a short time.
- Blinsky Toy: The Strahd coffin jack-in-the-box is awesome.
- Ezmerelda D'Avenir: I love the tap on the shoulder.
- Strahd: This is cool, but be careful. You can have him turn to mist after he gets a shot or two in. I find surprise to be a little tricky. First, roll to see who is surprised. Then, roll initiative. Then proceed in order. The people who are surprised can't do anything until their next turn. No movement, no actions, no reactions.
- Unseen Servant: See PH page 284. AC 10 HP 1. It can't attack. Creatures have disadvantage to hit it. I really like the goblet of wine.

Entering: The group is likely to enter the castle in K7 (page 54). They'll go in, see the dragon statues, move on to K8 and meet Rahadin coming down the stairs.

K1. Front Courtyard: (page 52) You might want to do a thing where some of the characters mess up their boots in the mud. Maybe there are some broken bones half-buried in the mud that might tear open the sole of someone's boots. This way, Helga (page 64) can offer to repair them and maybe make friends with the party. You could also use the green slime back at the gate (page 38) to damage boots as well.

K8. Great Entry: (page 55) Rahadin's stats are on page 236: AC 18 HP 135. Remember that those who are within 10 feet of him hear deathly screams and may need to make a save. He is completely loyal to Strahd. He wants to lead the group to K10.

K10. Dining Hall: (page 56) This room is so great. Make sure you get all the little details. The players will be quite freaked out.

K13. Chapel: There are great items in here:

- Icon of Ravenloft: (page 222) It can heal! That is always useful. Augury is on PH page 215. Remember that Strahd can choose to answer this (see page 24).
- Mace of Terror: (DMG page 180) It can frighten! Pretty cool, great art for it.

K20. Heart of Sorrow: (page 59) It says that the heart absorbs Strahd's damage. So, if you hit Strahd, the heart takes damage, not him. The heart has 50 hit points, and then it shatters.

- Ten Animated Halberds: (MM page 20) flying sword AC 15 HP 17 +3 d10+1

K27. King's Hall: (page 62) Roll initiative! Strahd acts on initiative count 5. This is very haunted house-y.

K30. King's Accountant: (page 62) You might want to roll on the chart in advance so you have the stats all prepared. Lief Lipsiege knows where the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind is. You might want to run Lief as an older version of John Harker from the Dracula movies. Maybe an older Kianu Reeves (in my opinion, Bram Stoker's Dracula is mandatory viewing for anyone planning on running this adventure).

- Manual of Bodily Health: (DMG page 180) Read this for 48 hours and gain +2 CON. Not too shabby!

K31. Trapworks: (page 63) This leads down through K31b down to K61 (page 74). The sound of this elevator moving can be heard all throughout the castle. I am not clear on how the trap works. Check out page 74. The elevator fills with sleep gas. Now, I am not sure if that means when this elevator comes up, the doors open and the sleep gas pours out? Or does it only affect those in the elevator? Let me know what your thoughts are on this. Those asleep in the elevator are prime targets for Strahd, who can get to this elevator from K47.

K31a. Elevator Shaft: Not sure what the DC is to climb. It says climb is impossible without a climber's kit due to the greasy chains and smooth walls. Seems to me that this is a case where the DC would be a 30. Check DMG page 238. A 30 is described as "nearly impossible," which is what climbing this shaft is supposed to be. You should make that clear to a player thinking of climbing in there.

K32. Maid in Hell: (page 64) What an awesome NPC! You can do a lot of cool stuff with Helga. You could go with the pathetic peasant villager angle, or you could give her a sexy maid outfit. As the bootmaker's daughter she could help the party by tricking out their footwear somehow during a rest, maybe attaching little spikes to the soles or something.

K36. Dining Hall of the Count: (page 65) This is another really fun room. I feel like there might be a cooler effect for the cake, but I can't quite come up with it yet. Pidlwick is amusing.

- Invisible Stalker: (MM page 192) AC 14 HP 104 +6/+6 10(2d6+3)
- Doss Lute: (DMG page 176) If you play this without being attuned, you might take damage. This thing is loaded with spells! Fly, invisibility, protection from fire, and a pile more. This is a major boost for a bard.

K37. Study: You might want to play up the age of the painting of Tatyana. You also might want to flesh out the book titles, maybe tie them in to old Ravenloft products. Here's some ideas I had:

- Bestiary of Strange Beasts: Van Richten's guide to ghosts, vampires, etc. Maybe the vampire one is damaged, as Strahd found it insulting and he chucked it.
- Book of Military Strategy: This might refer to the Tergs, the barbarian horde that Strahd and his brother battled before Strahd became a vampire.
- Epic Novel: There is a famous author who lives in Sigil. Her name is Jeena Ealy (In the Cage: A Guide to Sigil page 72). Stuff she's written: *In Darkest Sigil*: A novel that exposes how poor the quality of life is in the Hive Ward. *History of the Blood War*: The war between devils and demons.
- Guide to Wines: You could do a book on planar wines.

You might also want to place some of the books from page 21 of the original AD&D Ravenloft adventure. They might be too goofy depending on how you run your games:

- Identifying Blood Types: A Beginner's Handbook
- Masonry and Woodworking

There's two others from the 1e Ravenloft adventure:

- Embalming: The Lost Art
- Life Among the Undead: Learning to Cope. But much to my amusement, they are in Curse of Strahd on page 70 along with two new books.

K41. Treasury: (page 67) Lots of loot:

- Daern's Instant Fortress: (DMG page 160). Only Strahd knows the command word.
- Alchemy Jug: (DMG page 150) It can make liquids like acid, beer, mayonnaise and poison. Maybe even poison mayonnaise!
- Helm of Brilliance: (DMG page 173) This thing can cast spells, make your weapon a flaming weapon, and piles more.

K42. King's Bedchamber: (page 68) Gertruda is here, She is Mad Mary's daughter (see page 40). Gertruda thinks Strahd is a great guy.

K46. Parapets: (page 69) If the heroes spend five minutes out here, they will have to deal with Strahd's animated armor (page 227). Remember that it has blindsight and that it has a pretty nice ranged attack.

K47. Portrait of Strahd: (page 69) You might want to creep the players out by having Strahd be in a different pose the next time they look at it.

- Rug of Smothering: (MM page 20). Remember that whoever is being smothered takes half of the damage if the other heroes start attacking the rug.
- Guardian Portrait: (page 227) It has counterspell! Use it!

K49. Lounge: Escher will run and try to lure them to wherever Strahd is. Remember that he has spider climb, which will help him survive a chase. He might want to climb out onto the rooftop (K53. page 71). Spider climb makes it easy for him and hard for the heroes. Escher seems to have a special role in this adventure, as it is noted that Escher will make an effort to become a vampire lord once Strahd is slain (see "Consorts Unleashed," page 208).

K56. Cauldron: (page 72) Barovian Witch stats are on page 229. I was nervous looking at this room. Fighting seven witches sounds deadly, but then you look at their stats and see that they have 16 hit points.

- If the Heroes are Defeated: I'll tell you what, though. If the witches are invisible and surprise the heroes, and they all cast Tasha's hideous laughter, your group is in huge trouble. I would say that if the witches defeat the heroes, they could tie them up and put them in the cauldron, slow-cooking them to perfection. The witches would leave to let them simmer. The heroes can escape and creep around in their underwear looking for their gear.

K59. High Tower Peak: (page 73) Pidlwick II stats are on page 236. Roll a stealth check at +2 and compare to the group's passive perceptions. Pidlwick II badly needs attention, and remember that he has a penchant for pushing people down stairs.

K60a. North Tower Rooftop: (page 74) Swarms of bats are on MM page 337.

K61. Elevator Trap: (page 74) I found this room very confusing, so I broke it down in a way that makes it easy for me to understand it:

- Trigger: 400 pounds of pressure on the plate triggers the trap. It also triggers if someone raises the lever in K31 (page 63).
- The Trap: Solid steel portcullises seal the people standing on the plate in a compartment. The portcullises can't be lifted. It's actually an elevator. It goes up to K31a as magic sleep gas fills the compartment.
- Sleep Gas: DC 15 CON save or fall unconscious for one minute. You can use an action to shake someone awake. Once the save is made, those in the elevator need to roll for initiative.
- The Counterweight: This comes down and lands next to where the elevator was. If you are under this thing and don't move, you are "pulverized."
- Roll Initiative: The heroes must roll initiative. The elevator goes all the way up in one round. They could use this time to wake up an ally, cast a spell, etc. (there's a secret door in the ceiling of the elevator, but if you climb onto the top you will get squashed for 44 damage at the end of the round!)
- Arrival: Once at the top, the portcullises retract. The heroes are at K31 (page 63).
- Strahd: Strahd can hear the elevator - it's loud. He may make his way here to pummel the heroes.
- Return: One round after the elevator comes up, the portcullises lower again and it goes back down.

K62. Servants' Hall: Mongrelfolk stats are on page 234. Hag Eye info is on MM page 176. Remember that Morgantha the hag (the dream pastry lady, page 127 and 48) can see through this. Cyrus will try to lead the group to the elevator and trigger the trap. Then he'll drag their bodies to Escher's lounge (page 70). You can also do a thing where Cyrus leads the group to their guest room. A lot of the rooms in this area have special things that happen if Cyrus is with the party.

K63. Wine Cellar: (page 77) Yellow mold is on DMG page 105. Touch it: 10 foot cube of spores. DC 15 CON save or 11 damage and poisoned. You take 5 damage per round until you make your save. Black pudding is on MM page 241.

K65. Kitchen: (page 78) Zombies are MM page 316.

K66. Butler's Quarters: (page 78) Desecrated ground is on DMG page 110. Undead have advantage on saves.

K69. Guards' Quarters: (page 79) Skeletons are on MM page 272.

K72. Chamberlain's Office: (page 79) Rahadin's stats are on page 237. Remember that he has that scream aura that does a lot of damage. Shadow demon stats are on MM page 64. Rahadin has a special scene when Strahd dies (see page 207) so really play up his slavish devotion to Strahd.

When Chris Perkins ran this, he actually used Rahadin as an agent. Rahadin pretended to be an ally, sent by Madame Eva. He rode a horse with glowing eyes. Chris specifically said that he can't turn off the screaming aura.

K73. Dungeon Hall: The group has no chance of detecting these traps unless they use magic or are extremely clever. Remember that each trap goes off once, then they need to recharge for 24 hours. Refer to the map on page 75 to get a nice look at where the victims are teleported to. Notes on the side-prisons:

- K74c. Rotting Corpse: Potion of heroism is on DMG page 188. 10 temporary hit points and +d4 to attack rolls and saving throws for an hour
- K74g. Gray Ooze: Gray ooze is on MM page 243.
- K74h. Lost Sword: Crusader's mantle is on PH page 230. For one minute, you and your allies do +d4 radiant damage.
- K75a. Prisoner: Remember that he will betray them when it is advantageous. Werewolf stats are on MM page 211. His wife, Zuleika, is on page 204. She has some child prisoners, and she will gladly set them free in exchange for Emil.

K76. Torture Chamber: (page 82) Strahd zombies are on page 241.

K78. Brazier Room: (page 82) Iron golems are on MM page 170. Remember that if the heroes attack something in here, the doors shut and magically lock. To breath weapons, heroes must save for each.

Teleportation page numbers:

- Red: Page 66
- Orange: Page 74
- Yellow: Page 93
- Green: Page 118
- Blue: Page 195
- Indigo: Page 152
- Violet: Page 157

K84. Catacombs: (page 85) Lots of notes. This is a very crucial area:

- Doors: The crypt doors require a DC 15 STR check to move them.
- Bats: The bats don't attack unless provoked.
- Trap: This teleport trap sends an adventurer into crypt 14 (page 88) with 14 wights! One wight is teleported out and appears where the hero was. I marked it on the map below.

Catacombs, page 85

Crypt notes:

- Crypt 4: (page 86) Ghost is on MM page 147.
- Crypt 6: (page 86) Poison darts are on DMG page 123. +8 to hit, 2 damage and a DC 15 CON save: 11 poison damage, half on save. St. Markovia's thighbone is on page 222. It's like a mace of disruption (DMG page 179).
- Crypt 7: (page 87) Gargoyle is on MM page 140.
- Crypt 9: (page 87) Deck of illusions is on DMG page 161.
- Crypt 14: (page 88) This is real nasty if a PC gets teleported in from the trap (see above). Wights are on MM page 300. Remember, when a wight is slain, it becomes 2d6 skeletons! Skeletons are on MM page 272.
- Crypt 15: (page 88) Staff of power is on DMG page 202. Remember, the first time it is grabbed it does piles of damage, CON save for half.
- Crypt 20: (page 89) Sasha Ivliskova seems like an awesome NPC. Vampire Spawn is on MM page 298.
- Crypt 21: (page 89) Banshee is on MM page 23. Archmage spells are on MM page 342. Time stop! She has been visiting her brother (see page 121). Patrina is

mentioned on page 208 ("Consorts Unleashed"). If she survives this adventure, she is going to try to become Barovia's new master.

- Crypt 27: (page 90) Giant wolf spider is on MM page 330.
- Crypt 29: (page 91) Brown Mold is on DMG page 105. DC 12 CON save, 22 cold damage, half on save. Fire makes it expand. Luck blade is on DMG page 179. Read up on wishes on PH page 288. Wish duplicates any 8th level spell or lower, heal 20 people, undo a single recent event, etc.
- Crypt 31: (page 91) Spiked pit is on DMG page 122. DEX save DC 12? 11 damage plus 3d6 falling damage. The trap doors close. You need to make a DC 20 STR check to open them (locking pit DMG page 122).
- Crypt 33: Sir Klutz might not fit the tone of your game, so you might want to rename him if you think it won't go over well. Have his stats ready, as he is a potential NPC ally. Phantom warrior stats are on page 235.
- Crypt 34: (page 92) Imp is on MM page 76.
- Crypt 35: (page 92) Ghoul is on MM page 148.
- Crypt 38: (page 92) Hell hound is on MM page 182.
- Wraith is on MM page 302.
- Crypt 39: (page 39) Beucephalus the Wonder Horse! Strahd will be really angry if they kill it. Nightmare is on MM page 234.

K85. Sergei's Tomb: (page 93) If Ireena is with the group, maybe have her have a vision or something. After all, this is the body of the dude she was in love with in a past life.

K86. Strahd's Tomb: (page 93) Strahd's brides! Vampire spawn are on MM page 298.

Chapter 5: The Town of Vallaki

This area is scaled for level 4 characters.

There's a lot of fun stuff in this chapter, but there is an awful lot of organizing to do. I have tried to list the plots and NPCs as succinctly as possible so you can make sense of this rather dense chapter. But first..

Poison Needle Traps: (DMG page 123) This chapter is full of poison needles! If you fail to pick the lock: 1 point of damage, 11 poison damage and a DC 15 CON save. Fail = poisoned 1 hour (one of the needles in this chapter knocks you unconscious).

Organize Your NPCs: You're going to have to decide what NPCs to "feature." You have a million options. **Lady Wachter** has an imp and a spy that you could do a lot with, or nothing at all. The group should probably meet **Blinsky**, as his toys are strewn all throughout the adventure and his toy shop is very amusing. Don't forget to check out this page for more toy options. The heroes should definitely meet **Rictavio** - he's a big deal. I get a kick out of **Stella** (Lady Wachter's daughter) so you might want to send the heroes into her house for some snooping around. Also, **Izek Strazni** is really cool (page 231). He's been dreaming about Ireena and he will abduct her if he sees her.

Why Are We Here?

Remember that Ismark wanted to try to bring Ireena here for safe-keeping, but in the end Ireena is going to have to stick with the group to prevent Strahd from killing her. Rictavio is an important PC who can help the group figure out their tarokka reading and he can point them in the direction they should go.

The group might also be here looking for one of the treasures, depending on your tarokka reading results. Once the adventurers arrive, there are a number of plots for you to unleash on them. Finding a treasure will put them through one "quest" of some kind. It's up to you to use the other ones if you want. The main one seems to be:

The Bones: There were magic bones (page 97) in the church that did keep Strahd away, but Milivoj the local weirdo stole them. The group needs to go to the coffin maker to get them back. It turns out that the coffin maker cut a deal with Strahd. He's got vampire spawn hanging out at his place (page 116). They are getting ready to attack the church. If the heroes don't deal with this within three days, then an "event" happens:

St. Andral's Feast: (page 124) 3 days after the heroes arrive in town and haven't dealt with the bones at the church yet, the vampire spawn attack the church. It's a pretty crazy attack.

In the middle of a service, the spawn and bat swarms attack the congregation! Strahd comes in and attacks the priest! People blame the burgomaster and set his home on fire.

On that same day as the vampire attack (which is 3 days after the heroes arrive in Vallaki), there is a festival:

The Festival of the Blazing Sun: (page 123). A guard laughs at the burgomaster and is tortured as punishment. If the heroes intervene, they are banished and may befriend the Keepers of the Raven.

There are other events and likely scenarios you can utilize as you wish:

The Tiger: (page 123) Rictavio's tiger gets loose. This one is best used after the heroes meet Rictavio and befriend him. Rictavio will flee to the tower (page 167).

Dinner Party: (page 124) The heroes are invited to Lady Wachter's place for dinner. She wants to see if the heroes can kill the Burgomaster. She'll probably end up enlisting the Vistani to kill the heroes once they leave Vallaki. The Vistani are scared to do it, so they contact Strahd, who may decide to ambush the adventurers.

The Keepers of the Feather: (page 98) The heroes will probably meet these lawful good people if they go to the inn, or if they oppose the Burgomaster in some way. They are wereravens (stats on page 242) that oppose Strahd. They protect the Blue Water Inn. It is possible that the heroes befriend the keepers if they try to free the poor people in the stockade (page 119).

Vistani Camp

The Vistani: (page 119) This camp also has dusk elves, who aren't happy with Strahd. Their leader Kasimir (page 121) can tell the heroes about the Amber Temple and how the secret to ending Barovia's curse might be there. Luvash (page 122) will want the heroes to find his daughter (see page 38, a guy wants to drown her). A dusk elf named Savid went looking for her, but he never returned (he's on page 133 - he's wounded and hiding in Argynvostholt).

The Wedding Gown of The Baroness: The adventurers can loot a wedding dress on page 108. This gown is needed for a quest on page 155. A crazy guy made a flesh golem bride for Strahd. So just keep that in mind. If the heroes loot this thing, it will help them out quite a bit.

Important Location

The Blue Water Inn: (page 98) There are a lot of people that can be found in the inn, and time of day is a bit important. Here is a quick cheat sheet:

1. Morning: No patrons. At dawn Rictavio brings food "to Blinsky."
2. Noon to Dusk: 2d4 locals. At dusk, Rictavio brings food "to Blinsky."
3. Dusk to Midnight: 2d8 locals.

NPCs at the Inn:

- (Owners) Urwin & Danika Martikov: Wereravens, lawful good.
- Brom & Bray Maritkov: Children of the owners, also wereravens.
- 1d4 Wereravens: In raven form on roof, or in taproom in human form.
- Szoldar Szoldarovich & Yevki Kruhkin: Wolf hunters.
- Nikolai & Karl Wachter: Brash drunkards.
- Rictavio: A "carnival ringmaster from a distant land." (see below)

Missing Ravens: If they befriend the heroes, you might want the Keepers to mention that animated scarecrows have been attacking them and snatching ravens. This is the work of the hag Baba Lysaga (page 161). Just be careful when doing this, because the heroes might decide to go investigate - that area is meant for level 8 characters. Lysaga has extremely powerful spells and her hut is no joke, either.

Major NPCs: There are a few important NPCs in this chapter that have a lot of little details to keep straight. Here they are:

Rictavio: (stats page 238) He's got a sword cane, which is very cool. Remember that he can cast cure wounds spells, which will really help the heroes. He's also got a scroll of raise dead!

- He's actually Dr. Van Richten in disguise.
- He's trying to learn about the wereravens. He wants to kill the Vistani.
- He was cursed by a Vistani seer long ago: Doom comes to all those he befriends.
- He has a pet sabretooth tiger that wears armor (AC 17) and is trained to hunt evil Vistani.
- Hat of Disguise: (DMG page 173) It casts disguise self (PH page 233) at will.
- Ring of Mind Shielding: (DMG page 191). Remember, he can make this ring invisible. When you die wearing this, your soul is sucked into it. Almost seems like a way to smuggle a soul out of Barovia via the Vistani. Maybe there's already a soul in it. If Van Richten dies in your game, this might be a cool thing to take advantage of.
- He stays in the guest room at the inn on page 102.
- His wagon is on page 115.

Baron Vargas Vallakovich:

- He runs a festival every week - he thinks it keeps the devil Strahd away.
- Thinks everyone is beneath him. Those who speak ill of the festivals are arrested.
- He lives in a mansion on page 104.
- His butler and a lady-in-waiting have gone missing (his son accidentally killed them, see page 109).
- (Wife) The Baroness: She has daily tea and sandwich parties for locals. The priest, Lucian Petrovich, is her brother.
- (Son) Victor: Creepy guy. He stays in the attic, and is trying to use magic to escape Barovia. His workroom is on page 109. He has six undead skeleton cats.
- (Henchman) Izek Strazni: (stats on page 231) Has an evil, barbed arm that conjures fire. He forces the toymaker to make him dolls that look like Ireena (page 118).
- (Pets) Two mastiffs (MM page 332).

Lady Fiona Wachter:

- She is loyal to Strahd, wants to take over Vallaki.
- Her home is on page 110.
- She started a cult of devil worshipers.
- Her daughter is locked in the attic.
- She sleeps with the corpse of her dead husband!
- (Daughter) Stella: She acts like a cat, is locked in the attic. She's actually chaotic good and will latch on to any character that is nice to her.
- (Sons) Nikolai & Karl: Local troublemakers.
- (Imp) Majesto: Her invisible servant who eavesdrops (page 115).
- (Spy) Ernst Larnak: Keeps Fiona informed, willing to blackmail her.

Perkins Notes: When Chris Perkins ran this chapter, he had the wereravens be extremely helpful and Rictavio was very open with the group. The party thief ended up getting put in the stocks and was then hung. He died, but his spirit roamed free. He was able to possess other people. He actually lived inside another character for a session. Eventually he was raised and is somewhat back to normal.

Izek Strazni realized the party sorcerer was his sister who had been stolen away and brought to the city of Sigil when he was born.

Chapter 6: Old Bonegrinder

This area is scaled for level 4 characters.

This is really crazy. Three hags live here. They steal children, kill them, put their bone dust in their dream pastries and sell them for people to eat!

Deadly: Be aware that these hags are really powerful and can easily kill a party of 4th level characters. They do not attack right away - they assume the heroes want to buy dream pastries. You can have NPCs like Ireena warn the heroes about the hags. The raven also tries to warn them.

Green Hags: The author himself changed these to green hags when he ran this, so you might want to do so as well. He had Morgantha away to start. The heroes crept in, battled the daughters, and the daughters jumped out the window to escape. Then Morgantha pulled up at the door with dream pastries and a freshly-captured child named Emmerich.

Once the heroes see the captured kids, they are probably going to want to save them. These hags have an AC of 17 and 112 HP each! In one round they can fire off three lightning bolts. The party could die before they even get to go once. You could have it where the group chats up the daughters while a hero frees the kids and they make a run for it.

All of them are night hags (MM page 178). They are:

- Morgantha: The mother in room O2 on page 127.
- Bella Sunbane: Daughter in room O3 on page 127.
- Offalia Wormwiggles: Daughter in room O3 on page 127.

They have two captive children that parents gave to the hags. The daughters are pricking with needles (page 127):

- Freek: 7 years old.
- Myrtle: 5 years old.

Night Hag Int mod is +3, so: DC 15 and +7 spell attack

Hag Coven: The three hags use the "hag coven" rules on MM page 125. They share a bunch of spells.

List of Stuff in Area O1: Lots of stuff in here. This is a concise list:

- 12 dream pastries baking in an oven.
- Barrel of greenish black ichor (Morgantha can use it to scry and summon dretches).
- Bowls of herbs, flour, sugar, powdered bone.
- 12 locks of hair.
- Chicken coop with three chickens, 1 rooster, and a few eggs.
- Wooden trunk containing 100 harmless croaking toads.
- Various concoctions (Check out this list for ideas on what the other concoctions might do), including three labeled elixirs...
- Elixir of Youth: You look younger and more attractive for 24 hours.
- Elixir of Laughter: Gives you cackle fever (DMG page 257). It kicks in d4 hours after imbibing. DC 13 Con save, fail = 5 damage and incapacitated with mad laughter for one minute. It can spread to other people within 10 feet.
- Mother's Milk: It's pale tincture (DMG page 258) DC 16 Con save, fail = 3 damage and poisoned. Save against poisoned every 24 hours. Even when you make your save, you need to keep saving each day for a long time.

Perkins Notes: First of all, Chris made the hags green hags. Second, he had it set up where only two hags were home. Once the group went in there and got into a skirmish with the hags, Morgantha came home. She'd been out doing her dream pastry thing and she also snatched another kid.

There was an epic battle in the rain. The hags made liberal use of invisibility and a number of characters nearly fell off the ledge.

Chapter 7: Argynvostholt

This area is scaled for level 7 characters.

This has an interesting backstory. This chapter is about revenant knights who served a silver dragon slain by Strahd. The knights feel Strahd is being punished and thus they have nothing to do but seethe with anger.

The Beacon: The main idea here is for the heroes to get the dragon's skull from Castle Ravenloft (it's in the Hall of Bones on page 78) and bring it here to the dragon's mausoleum (page 134). Once lit, the beacon puts the revenants to rest and gives the heroes a bonus to AC and saves. It's kind of weird, because Castle Ravenloft is the final destination, right? So coming here is nice, to free the revenants, but the bonus isn't really helpful because the game is over.

This Might Bore Players: Honestly, reading through this place, you should probably avoid running this like a dungeon crawl. There's a lot of empty, dull rooms. This is more of a ponderous place where the heroes learn about the knights and have encounters with the ghostly spirit of a dragon. It's cool, but it could really be a drag if you don't cut to the chase. You should read this thoroughly, note the cool places and get the heroes there. Don't forget about how the spirit leads the heroes to the revenants, it's very cool and different.

Angry Knights: The revenants will immediately attack the heroes. Remember that if they are slain, they are reborn elsewhere in Barovia (roll on the chart on page 130) and will come for revenge.

Vladimir Horngard: (Vlad's stats on page 241) If he has a treasure determined in the tarokka reading, you should look it up and let him use the item's powers. Definitely read pages 241-242. His revenant stats are adjusted.

Sir Godfrey Gwilym: Fun fact: Chris Perkins said on twitter that Godfrey is related to a character in the novel I, Strahd, Alek Gwilym. (Spoilers incoming) Alek was Strahd's fiercely loyal right hand man when Strahd was mortal. Strahd actually killed Alek to hide the fact that he had become a vampire.

Revenants: Stats are in the MM on page 259. They regenerate, they are immune to turning, and they have a paralyzing glare!

Phantom Warriors: Stats on page 235.

Potion of Invulnerability: (DMG page 188) This is found in the Knights' Quarters on page 136. For one minute, you have resistance to all damage.

Chapter 8: The Village of Krezk

This area is scaled for level 5 characters.

If Ireena is With the Party: Once the group is in Krezk and near the pool, run "Something Blue" (page 156). Sergei's spirit will actually have a chance of stealing her away! Strahd will flip out and show up, very cool.

Special Events: There are some quests on page 155-156. Most of them have a variation of: The Abbott wants a wedding dress, and he'll raise the dead son of the burgomaster in exchange.

Deva Stats: The Abbot is a deva (MM page 16). Deva stats are actually a little confusing to find.

Roll in Advance: There are around 100 mongrelfolk in the abbey. You should roll on the madness table (DMG page 260) for some of the mongrelfolk (page 147). You should also roll their "special ability" on the chart on their stat block on page 234. It'll give you a chance to develop them a little bit, rather than stopping the game and rolling on two charts in two different books.

Getting In: Just getting in to Krezk is hard. The guards won't let the heroes through the gate. The burgomaster comes and will tell the heroes he'll let them in if they go get wine from the Wizard of Wines (page 174).

S4. Pool and Shrine: (page 146) Drinking the water has the effects of lesser restoration (PH page 255). It ends a disease or one certain condition: blindness, deafness, paralyzed, or poisoned.

Gazebo: This gazebo is badly wounded, so the heroes actually have a chance to take it down. A treasure might be beneath it.

Mongrelfolk: Stats on page 234. Remember, they can mimic voices. That might be handy for leading heroes into an ambush.

Mongrelfolk NPCs: Here's a list of the mongrelfolk NPCs so you can get the essential info at a glance:

Otto Belview: (page 147) Sleeping guard.

- He has a wolf's snout.
- Standing leap
- Madness: He thinks he is the best

Zygrek Belview: (page 148) Sleeping guard.

- Half her face has scales, the other half fur
- She has darkvision.
- Madness: She doesn't like people judging her.

Mishka Belview: (page 150) Creepy guy hiding in a well.

- She has three red spider eyes on the right side of her face.
- He has spider climb.
- Madness: He enjoys killing people.

Marzena Belview: (page 150) She's chained to a post and skittish.

- She has bat wings and spider mandibles instead of a mouth.
- Madness: She thinks she's being watched by powerful enemies all the time.

Clovin Belview: (page 153) The Abbot's Manservant

- Two heads, one is basically a baby with a snake tongue. That head only hisses.
- The others want him to starve to death, he's a food hoarder.
- Madness: "Being drunk keeps me sane."

S7. Graveyard: (page 148) Here's another one of those deals where an item you loot in the castle can be used. This time it's a holy symbol (page 87). You can use it to get a ring of regeneration (DMG page 191) which lets you regain d6 hit points every ten minutes.

Wights: MM page 300. Life drain! Yikes.

S13. Main Hall: This is awesome. The Abbot is trying to make a bride for Strahd using corpse parts. Remember, she can't speak and the stitches/seams aren't visible until she is closely inspected. She's got a lot of powder on her.

The Dress Quest: The Abbot wants a wedding dress. If the heroes bring him on, he'll use raise dead for them 3 times if they end up needing it. Check out page 155. There's a quest involving the dress. The heroes will need to escort the burgomaster's wife to Vallaki, and will need Lydia Petrovna's wedding gown (page 108)

Stat Stuff:

- The Abbot: He's a deva (MM page 16). He also has stats on page 225. He thinks he's good, but he's lawful evil. He does a lot of damage. 25 points!
- Flesh Golem: MM page 169.
- Potion of Superior Healing: DMG page 188, top left of the page. Heals 8d4+8!
- Scroll of Heroes Feast: PH page 250. Once you eat it, increases HP Max by 2d10 for 24 hours, immune to poison, etc.
- Shadows: MM page 269.

Perkins Notes: Chris had it where the Burgomaster had his throat slit. He lived but he can't speak. It was his evil son who did it. The kid ended up stabbing the party sorcerer in the woods in a subsequent chapter.

The group wanted the Abbot to raise their dead thief. They entered the abbey and head bells. They hid and watched in horror as the mongrelfolk came out to feed.

The group later realized the Abbot was evil, but he did resurrect the thief. This is where Chris introduced Ezmerelda. She joined the party for a while.

Later on, a bunch of "bandits" (werewolves) showed up with a cart of stolen wine. A fight broke out, and Strahd showed up on Beucephalus to take Ireena. Ireena actually died in this battle. She fell off the nightmare and plummeted 40 feet to the ground. Strahd was more than a bit upset.

Chris did not use the lake encounter. I was shocked that he actually took Ireena out of the equation, as she is the entire point of the adventure.

Chapter 9: Tsolenka Pass

This area is scaled for level 8 characters.

The group will have to traverse this pass to get to the Amber Temple.

Heading to the Pass: Don't forget to read the flavor at the raven river crossroads, page 40.

Extreme Cold at Night: Extreme cold is on DMG page 110. Each hour, roll a DC 10 CON save. Fail = gain one level of exhaustion (page 291).

Crossing the Bridge: It's a 500 foot drop! A roc (MM page 260) attacks, see "Roc of Mount Ghakis" on page 159.

Vrocks: MM page 64.

Snow Maidens: (page 159) Stats of a specter (MM page 279) with additional traits:

- Immune to cold
- Life Drain does cold damage

The Giant Goat: (page 160) As the group travels on the pass, a... giant evil goat (MM page 327) attacks and tries to headbutt a hero over the side. They plummet 100 feet.

Chapter 10: The Ruins of Berez

This area is scaled for level 8 characters.

Berez is a village that was flooded and abandoned and now an evil hag lives in the middle of the ruins. You'll probably want to have her hut attack the heroes, check out the special event on page 166. Creeping Hut stats are on page 226.

In Berez, there's a statue of a woman who was the previous incarnation of Tatyana. There's also a potential ally here named Muriel Vinshaw, a wereraven (stats on page 242).

Scarecrow stats are on MM page 268.

Baba Lysaga: This chapter is all about Baba Lysaga. She's a great villain. Here's the essential info:

- Stats on page 228.
- Stole a magic gemstone that has animated her hut. Does everything she can to keep the heroes from getting the gem.
- Flies around in a giant skull (effectively giving her AC 20).

- If she has time to prepare before a battle, she could summon d4 insect swarms (stats on MM page 338)
- You should look up some of her powerful spells, like power word stun and finger of death (!!).
- She helped raise Strahd and considers herself to be his true mother.
- She is allied with the barovian witches in Castle Ravenloft (page 72).
- Sacrifices beasts to Mother Night and collects their blood, bathes in the blood to stave off old age.
- Makes animated scarecrows that attack the ravens and wereravens.

U3. Baba Lysaga's Hut: (Page 163)

It's easy to sneak up to it without alerting Lysaga because the trapped ravens in here are making a lot of noise.

- Giant Skull: Remember, nobody else can use this except Lysaga. She can fly around in it and it gives her three-quarters cover (+5 to AC and DEX saves).
- Programmed Image: PH page 269. Physical objects pass through it. Disbelieve: INT (Investigation) check DC 17.
- Crawling Claws: MM page 44.

The Creeping Hut: Remember, once the group gets in the hut, they're probably going to get the gem and de-animate it. So if you want the heroes to fight the hut, have it attack before they get in it. Also remember that Lysaga does everything she can to stop the heroes from getting the gem. Here's essential info on the hut:

- Stats on page 226.
- Everything in it is bolted down.
- The heroes can see a glowing green thing under the floorboards.
- The hut contains a cage of captured ravens, a "baby Strahd" in a crib and a pile of treasure
- The hut lurches from side to side when it walks and it shakes the ground with every step.
- It's powered by a gem stolen from the Wizard of Wines. Removing it incapacitates it.
- Remember that it has blindsight 120 feet!
- It does double damage to objects and structures.

U6. Standing Stones: These stones can boost druids who wild shape, and they can also protect you from those who scry.

Chapter 11: Van Richten's Tower

This area is scaled for level 6 characters.

Ezmerelda Intro: This might be the best place to introduce Ezmerelda to the heroes. Check out "Ezmerelda's Retreat" on page 172. She shows up here badly wounded. Her stats are on page 231. Remember, she has a prosthetic leg, she's looking for Van Richten even though they don't get along, and she has got a lot of powerful spells that can help the heroes big time. I think she's a really cool NPC.

This chapter is about exploring a tower once owned by a lich. The heroes might come here with Van Richten, in which case there will be no danger because this is his home. This is a really crazy place with some extremely deadly but awesome traps.

The symbol on the door, page 169

The Door: You should print out or draw the symbol on the door pictured on page 169.

V1. Ezmerelda's Magic Wagon: (page 168) Wow. What a nasty trap! Be ready for this! If it goes off, remember that a horde of werewolves will be here in one hour (see "Pack Attack" page 171).

V2. Tower Door: This is a part where the party's marching order matters big time. Be sure to establish where people are beforehand. If the trap goes off and there's not a clear idea of who was standing where, there could be problems. If this trap goes off, werewolves attack ("Pack Attack" on page 171).

- Young Blue Dragon: Stats on MM page 91.
- Animated Armor: Stats on MM page 19.

The tower has a spell drain effect:

- Antimagic Field: (PH page 213) Spells can't be cast, magic items become mundane!!

Chapter 12: The Wizard of Wines

This area is scaled for level 5 characters.

When the heroes show up here, they see a horde of twig blights rampaging all over the place. The family who owns the place (wereravens) are hiding in the woods. They ask the heroes to help.

Lots of Variables: This is a scenario that can go a million different ways. The group might end up fighting up to 60 monsters at once, or they might creep through the place and take them out piece by piece.

Best Possible Option: The quickest way to take them out is to destroy the Gulthias staff, wielded by the druid in room W16 (page 178). Once the staff is destroyed, all of the blights within 300 feet wither and die.

Needle Blights: (MM page 32) Remember that they have blindsight.

W15. Brown Mold: Brown mold is on DMG page 105. CON save DC 12 or 22 cold damage, half on save. Fire causes it to expand into a ten foot square area. Cold damage wipes it out. When Chris Perkins ran this, he did not have all of the molds do damage to a single PC. Just one mold did 22 damage.

Once the group has dealt with the hordes, the family then tells them about the gems...

The Gems: This place was powered by three magic gems, but all of them have been stolen. Where the gems are:

- Gem 1: Stolen ten years ago.
- Gem 2: Stolen 3 weeks ago by Baba Lysaga. The gem has animated her creeping hut (see page 163).
- Gem 3: Stole 5 days ago by blights, placed inside the statue on page 198.

Another Attack: If the group goes to get a gem and comes back here, you could have the huge, evil tree attack (see page 180).

When it's All Over: If the heroes wipe out the blights and return two of the gems, they might be asked to do a delivery (page 180).

Perkins Notes: Chris had it where the blights were really slow – like zombies milling about. He did a thing where the sorcerer who took the gulthias staff fell over and had visions of Yester Hill. I think it was to nudge the group in that direction.

Chapter 13: The Amber Temple

This area is scaled for level 9 characters.

Here's the deal with this location. It is a giant dungeon and it feels sort of out of place in this adventure. If you have a group who loves hacking and slashing, then this will work out great for you. If not, you may want to shrink this down.

Also, this place is loaded with magic items.

I must say that the final rooms with the imprisoned vestiges are awesome and you should take a good look at them. This place is devoted to a "faceless god of secrets." Vecna!

There are two "special events" for this chapter on page 196.

Extreme Cold: This place is freezing. Characters need cold weather gear or they have to deal with extreme cold (DMG page 110). DC 10 CON save each hour. Fail = a level of exhaustion (PH page 291).

Wand of Secrets: DMG page 211. It finds secret doors or traps within 30 feet.

X5. Temple of Lost Secrets: (Page 183) Remember that the arcanaloth is in the form of a confused old wizard named Heinrich Stolt. Once he is dropped to half hit points, he will say he was just guarding the temple, then turn invisible and flee.

Arcanaloth: Stats on MM page 313.

- He's in the statue firing spells out of the eyeholes. He has three-quarters cover (PH page 196). That's +5 to AC and DEX saves.
- If he hears the group coming, he can get mirror image going.
- Remember, he has counterspell and shield.
- He could drop a chain lightning on the heroes.. yikes. 10d8 lightning damage!
- Also don't forget he can teleport up to 60 feet as an action.

Flameskulls: Stats on MM page 134. Remember, they can cast fireball.

Robe of Useful Items: Stats on DMG page 195.

X15. Southwest Annex: You might want to make names for Helwa's five berserkers. In theory the group could befriend these people. Remember that the wolf is Strahd's eyes and ears.

Staff of Power: DMG page 202. It's loaded with spells and has all sorts of special powers.

Tome of Understanding: DMG page 209. Read it for 48 hours, gain +2 Wisdom.

X24. West Shrine: Sympathy Effect (Antipathy/Sympathy on PH page 214) WIS save DC 16 or get close to target and refuse to leave. Duration: 10 days!

X30. Preserved Library: The books appear to be empty but the heroes might be able to figure out how to read them. These books are full of "vile, forbidden lore."

You might want to brainstorm some topics/examples of the lore because the players will probably ask.

Forbidden Lore Ideas:

- Ordinary Necromancy: A tome written by Vecna, according to wikipedia.
- Souls and the Undead: A book about how souls leave the body and thus undead have no souls - they are powered by an "animus." (check out the 4e Open Grave book, page 7)
- Theories on the Tome of Shadow: The Tome of Shadow is an artifact (also from Open Grave) that contains secrets about the Shadowfell, including the location of secret planar portals.
- Maybe something relating to The Tome of Shared Secrets or the Compendium Maleficarium both mentioned here.
- The Head of Vecna: If you are a jokey kind of DM, maybe include something about the Head of Vecna.. maybe hype up its powers and get the players excited about finding it.

X33. Amber Vaults: These chambers allow the heroes to connect with different vestiges. A character can get a different 'dark gift' from each of them. Accepting a gift means a DC 12 CHA save. Fail = alignment shifts to evil. Most of the gifts are spells the character can cast three times.

What is a Vestige? On page 181, a vestiges are defined as "remnants of dead, malevolent entities." In the 3e Tome of Magic, vestiges are entities that exist outside of the rules of reality. They are untraceable, untouchable and they defy powers that try to define them. The Tome of Magic lists a ton of vestiges, a few of which appear in Curse of Strahd as well.

These vestiges and their gifts are so cool that you might want to use them for villains or NPCs in whatever campaign you are running. Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer - that's clearly an NPC you want in your campaign, right?

Shami Amourae: One vestige that sticks out to me here is Shami Amourae. Shami Amourae is one of the four original succubi. She got on Demogorgon's bad side and he imprisoned her in the Wells of Darkness (see Dungeon magazine issue 148). She is meant to be freed at the end of that adventure. I don't understand how she ended up as a vestige. It seems like a waste of an awesome NPC.

Here's a list of the vestiges and the major details:

- **Fekre, Queen of Poxes:** Gift = Contagion three times. Character reeks of filth.
- **Zrin-Hala, the Howling Storm:** Gift = Cast lightning bolt three times. One side of the character's face sags and loses all feeling.
- **Sykane, the Soul Hungerer:** Gift = Raise dead three times. The character's eyes glow sickly yellow and they expect to be paid if they help someone.
- **Savnoke the Inscrutable:** Gift = Mind blank three times. Character's eyes melt but they can still see.
- **Tarakamedes the Grave Wurm:** The character grows skeletal wings and a fly speed of 50. This character must eat one pound of bones or grave dirt each day or die.
- **Shami Amourae, the Lady of Delights:** Gift = Suggestion three times. Character gains an extra finger on each hand and can't get enough pleasure.
- **Driznash, the Nine-Eyed Spider:** Gift = Permanent spider climb ability. Character grows an extra eye which is blind and always open.
- **Dahlver-Nar, He of the Many Teeth:** Gift = When slain the character instantly reincarnates (three times total). The character loses all of their teeth.
- **Zantras the Kingmaker:** Gift = +4 to Charisma! Character won't take no for an answer.
- **Delban, the Star of Ice and Hate:** Gift = Cone of cold 7 times. Character is terrified of fire.
- **Khirad, the Star of Secrets:** Gift = Scry three times. Character's voice becomes a low whisper.
- **Yrrga, the Eye of Shadow:** Gift = Truesight for one month. Character's eyes become starry voids and believes that all life is pointless.
- **Great Taar Haak, the Five-Headed Destroyer:** Gift = Fire giant strength for 10 days. Character likes to bully others.
- **Yog the Invincible:** Gift = +30 hit points for 10 days. Oily black fur covers the character's face and body.
- **Norganas, the Finger of Oblivion:** Gift = Finger of death three times. Character's blood becomes like black tar.
- **Vaund the Evasive:** Gift = powers of ring of evasion and amulet of proof against detection for 10 days. Character becomes twitchy and won't give straight answers.
- **Seriach the Hell Hound Whisperer:** Gift = power to summon and control 2 hell hounds one time. Character knows the Infernal language.

There are a couple more important vestiges on page 196. One of them is Tenebrous! That's undead Orcus!

If Orcus is alive during Out of the Abyss, how the heck is Tenebrous locked away in a crypt? Tenebrous is the bad guy in the classic Planescape adventure Dead Gods. I did some digging and in Dragon Magazine #417 we learn this:

"A few even whisper that when Orcus was reborn yet again, whatever vestige of his divine spark that had given form to Tenebrous remained behind, and that the shadow's essence is still out there somewhere on the planes."

So there you go. Tenebrous and Orcus might be separate entities now. Here's the other vestiges:

- **The Vampyr:** Evil creatures become vampires. The character becomes an NPC.
- **Tenebrous:** Gift = Evil creatures gain the knowledge of how to become a lich. This is the sarcophagus that Exethanter the lich touched. If you have it, check out Dragon Magazine 417 for a nice article on the story of Tenebrous.
- **Zhudun, the Corpse Star:** Gift = Bring a dead creature to life one time. The character looks like a corpse.

Chapter 14: Yester Hill

This area is scaled for level 6 characters.

This one is real short. The Ritual (page 200) is cool. Strahd shows up on his nightmare, and the druids begin their ritual. The group has ten rounds to put a stop to it, or else Wintersplinter the evil tree is born and rampages down to the Wizard of Wines.

Blood Spear: If one of the heroes is a ranger, druid or barbarian, you should definitely use "Blood Spear of Kavan" (page 200). The stats are on page 221. It gives temporary hit points when you kill someone and the chosen character gain +2 to hit and damage.

Gem: One of the magic gems from the Wizard of Wines is in the statue on page 198.

Y5. Wall of Fog: (page 200) The Mists rules are on page 23. DC 20 CON save each round or gain a level of exhaustion (PH page 291). When you're in the fog, you're heavily obscured (PH page 183) which means you are blinded - attacks rolls against the blinded person have advantage, and the blinded person's attack rolls have disadvantage.

Perkins Notes: I learned a lot watching Chris running this. The group came to the hill and made their way up to the tree, avoiding the circle. They saw the fog (which I know I would have forgotten about if I ran this) and were very curious about it. Then they pulled the axe out of the tree.

A lone druid started chanting for Winter Splinter and in just a round or two, Winter Splinter exploded out from under the wicker statue. Honestly, I got it in my head that the Gulthias Tree and WinterSplinter were the same entity, but they're not. There are two evil trees. WinterSplinter immediately began rampaging toward the Wizard of Wines but the heroes defeated it.

Chapter 15: Werewolf Den

This area is scaled for level 7 characters.

Of all the stuff in this book, this chapter feels the most "optional." I guess it really comes down to whether you want to throw werewolves into the mix.

You might want to set this up so that the prisoner kids are actually fighting in the Ring of Stone (page 205). Yikes.

Raven: You also might want to establish that there's a wereraven here watching the den (see Die Kinder, page 205). I personally like the idea of using Muriel Vinshaw (page 165), as she has a small role in this adventure and thus she is easy fodder to use for whatever.

Lycanthropy: (MM page 211) A hero might be bitten and become a werewolf. DC 12 CON save. There's a big blurb about the curse of lycanthropy on MM page 206.

Z5b. North Cave: (page 203) You might want to think in advance about Kellen's doll. It looks like one of the heroes, but it's in zombie form. If a hero was nearly killed by a certain attack, maybe give the doll the same wound.

Z7. Shrine of Night: Zuleika has 8 children as prisoners. She will want the heroes to rescue her husband Emil, who is imprisoned in Castle Ravenloft (on page 81). You might want to figure out the age (d6+6 years old) and names of the kids in advance.

Epilogue

Patrina and Escher are called out by name on page 208 as NPCs with schemes once Strahd is dead.

Appendix B: Death House

The Death House is in the village of Barovia. It has burned to the ground many times, only to rise from the ashes time and again. It was once home to a cult slain by Strahd. Their spirits still lurk in the dungeons underneath the Death House.

The heroes are in Barovia and they meet two little kids named Rose and Thorn. The kids say that there's a monster in their house and that they won't go back in until it is gone.

The truth is that these kids are illusions made by the house. Here's the deal with them:

"The children died of starvation centuries ago after their insane parents locked them in the attic and forgot about them. They were too young and innocent to understand that their parents were guilty of heinous crimes."

How about that? Yikes. Later, the heroes might come upon their skeletons and even be possessed by their ghosts.

Exploring

Haunted House: Running the exploration of the Death House is going to require finesse on the DM's part. There are a whole lot of rooms with nothing in them. Some players might be hungry for combat and may get turned off by the lack of action. Remember that this is an adventure that ramps in intensity from start to finish. The beginning is slow and the horror builds all the way to the frenzied escape at the end.

Mists: Once the heroes begin exploring, the mists of Ravenloft surround the Death House. Basically, the group is trapped into the Death House and they can't leave until they've gone through it. Mist effects are on page 23, exhaustion rules are in the PH page 291.

Possession: There's a chance the heroes will be possessed by the ghosts of Rose and Thorn. If so, they gain flaws. Thorn's is "I'm scared of everything, including my own shadow, and weep with despair when things don't go my way." I can see some players having trouble with this, so I think you should be mindful of how you use it.

Nice Treasure: Who wouldn't want a hag's severed finger? Maybe this should belong to Baba Lysaga. You could do all sorts of things with that. Imagine the hijinks the heroes could get into with a bag full of guano.

There's also an aspergillum carved from bone. I have no idea what that is, so I googled it. An aspergillum is an implement for sprinkling holy water - a perforated ball at the end of a short handle.

The Monster Will Kill PCs: The final encounter involves a dais and chanting ghostly voices. They demand a sacrifice. If the heroes don't provide one, a monster lurches up to attack them. The group is probably best served running away.

The Best Part of This Adventure: My favorite part of this adventure occurs at the end. Once the heroes have either made a sacrifice or killed the monster, the Death House itself tries to do them in. The doors are all replaced by slashing scythes. How awesome is that? Every room with a fireplace or oven is filled with poisonous black smoke. You have to roll initiative and everything - it's the group vs. the Death House. Awesome.

Building Tension: This is a severe change of pace from the previous adventures, and it will require a different set of skills from the DM. Running your heroes through a haunted house means in theory you want to build tension, which is very tricky in a game where the players are likely to be joking around.

You might want to use the Fear and Horror Check rules in the DMG on page 266 for a few scenes.

I'm a little concerned that players will get bored exploring so many empty rooms. You'll need to be very mindful of pacing. If you let the group linger and sift through each room, it could really drag. Don't be afraid to say "That's all that's in there."

Resting: You should also think about what to do if the group wants to take a long rest. They could hole up in a room. Does anything happen overnight? I think something should. Maybe they have weird nightmares, maybe the specter comes to haunt them, who knows. I think one cool idea is for them to hear rats in the walls, to foreshadow the final "escape" section.

Combat: If you have a group that is combat-oriented, you might want to throw one or two battles at them when they first arrive in Barovia. They could fight some Strahd zombies. This way, the group has scratched the itch and will be more inclined to accept the opening exploration.

Foreshadowing: I think it might be helpful to foreshadow the final escape portion by trying to creep the players out. As the players explore, have the PCs smell smoke, maybe have them hear a scythe cutting through the air as they pass through a door, that kind of thing. It's always nice to plant legit clues and give the group things to speculate about. Just remember that if they correctly guess what's being foreshadowed, don't punish them. They were clever, let them reap the rewards.

Appendix C: Treasures

Tome of Strahd: (page 221) Remember that Strahd will want to kill whoever has this tome. There's a whole article about the Tome of Strahd in Dragon Magazine issue 348. It uses 3rd edition rules, but maybe you'll want to adapt some of the material. The tome has a bunch of new spells:

- (lvl 4) **Bloodstone's Frightful Joining**: Your soul attempts to invade the body of an undead creature, leaving your own body lifeless. This lasts for one hour per level
- (lvl 2) **Curse of the Gypsies**: You can choose from three curses..

- *Bad Luck*: Whenever the target rolls a natural 20, they must re-roll and take the second result.
- *Mark of the Gypsies*: The victim has a permanent mark on their forehead that's invisible to all but the person's closest family and companions. This mark causes negative reactions, and some NPCs may shun them.
- *Unnatural Aura*: Animals can sense the victim from 30 feet away. They panic and regard the victim with fear.
- (lvl 3) **Rain of Terror**: You cause unnatural rain (hot blood or writhing snakes) to fall from the sky that causes a fear effect.
- (lvl 4) **Strahd's Baneful Attractor**: You cause spells to divert from their original paths to strike a new target. So, magic missile or scorching ray would be diverted.
- (lvl 4) **Wraithform**: This is like gaseous form, except the target can move faster. Mindless undead do not perceive you as a threat.

Detailed Outline

I made two outlines. One is short and simple, way back in the beginning of this guide. This one is much more elaborate. Please remember that my way is not the "right" way. There is no "right" way. Every DM has their own style. I am just trying to give an example of a more detailed outline that allows you to foreshadow things and help you get all of your ideas in one place. I started by doing the Tarokka Reading:

Tarokka Results

- **Master of Stars** (Van Richten's Tower) Tome of Strahd
- **Monk** (Krezk) Holy symbol of Ravenkind
- **Enchanter** (Ruins of Berez) The Sunsword
- **Mists** (Ezmerelda) The book provides an option for the group to meet her in almost every single chapter. I decided that I want the group to meet her at Van Richten's Tower
- **Darklord** The final battle with Strahd occurs in Strahd's Tomb

We start the outline by picking out a hook. Then we are going to organize and connect all of the chapters we want to use. When you make your outline, add in your own ideas and flourishes. Change whatever you want. You do not have to stick to the book.

Creeping Fog: (pg 22) It's evening. The mists draw the heroes into Barovia. You'll have to cook up some reason as to how this happens. You could even have it where the group doesn't know each other, and that they each were drawn into the mists from separate locations. They all emerge in Barovia at the same time.

Skeletal Rider: Upon emerging from the mist, they see a skeletal rider in the distance ("skeletal rider" page 31). It does not attack. It is searching for a way to escape the fog. I decided to make the skeletal rider the "spirit of the campaign," so to speak.

Each time the group sees the rider, a trinket falls off the horse and the rider leaves it. The group may wonder if the rider is trying to help them in some weird way. In my mind, the rider is a person that will never give up trying to get out of Barovia. The rider refuses to "die" for good and dropping a trinket it found in the woods is the rider's way of helping the group defeat Strahd.

- Trinket: A little black book that records your dreams, and yours alone, when you sleep. This will be useful further along if the heroes have "prophetic dreams."

I decided to start the campaign off with a bang. First the group walks down the road for hours, and then they have their first Strahd Encounter. The journey to the village:

1. **Old Svalich Road**: (page 33) The group gets a look at the realm.
2. **Gates of Barovia**: (page 33) The heroes pass through massive gates flanked by headless statues
3. **Svalich Woods**: (page 34) The group might find a letter.

Strahd Encounter I: It's evening. A thick fog rolls in. The group encounters some Strahd zombies ("Zombies" page 31, Strahd Zombie stats on page 241). One of the zombies must have had an interesting job in life, because it is wearing..

- Trinket: A black executioner's hood.

During the battle, a black carriage comes down the road. Rahadin (page 236) is driving it. A passenger emerges - it's Strahd. If they peer into the carriage, the heroes might spot one of Strahd's consorts wearing a skull mask (Valenta Popofsky, page 94).

There's a lantern on the carriage that causes Strahd to cast a long shadow. Narrate Strahd's shadow as moving in impossible ways. The shadow's claws extend and it gets larger and larger. The shadow is creeping toward the heroes, reaching for their throats.

Strahd gives the group a single warning about Ireena, who they haven't even met yet: "She is mine!" (perceptive heroes will see the consort Valenta shift uncomfortably in the carriage). If the adventurers give him some of that patented sassy player backtalk, Strahd tries to charm a PC that you think Strahd might want as a consort or a successor. Maybe have Strahd's shadow reach out to caress the target.

The point of the charm attempt is really so that the group can see that the DC of Strahd's charm power is 17, and thus they are warned that Strahd is extremely powerful. Just say

the DC out loud, unless you don't like doing that kind of thing. Also remember that Strahd is protected by the heart of sorrow (page 59), which absorbs up to 50 points of damage.

Strahd admires his charmed subject for a moment (to tease that he might want that PC as his own servant/ally), then releases the hold and gets back in the carriage. The black carriage rides away and almost immediately vanishes into the fog, as if it was never there.

Infected Shadows: I had an idea today that I'd probably use in Curse of Strahd. When Strahd's shadow creeps toward the group, I'd have it actually attack the shadows of the adventurers. I'd have each character make a saving throw (charisma?). Those who fail the save now cast a shadow with a mind of its' own. Throughout the adventure, the tainted shadows will make like they are trying to kill the other heroes, and will reflect the feelings of either Strahd or the Dark Powers (you pick). So when the group meets Ismark, the tainted shadow will try to hack his shadow to pieces. When the group meets vistani, the shadow will drink and cavort with them.

This is not a mechanical thing at all, it is merely a fun effect that the heroes could use in many ways to their advantage. Once the players see what the shadows do, they might want an infected shadow, too. So in the next Strahd encounter, I'd let them make saves again and if they want to fail, they can. I really like the whole idea of casting a shadow with a mind of its own and I think it could lead to a lot of hilarious things. You could even say sometimes that the shadow plays out what the character is really thinking. Maybe the character needs to make a saving throw to prevent it from happening. You don't want to use this to really screw over your players, so be careful how you use it.

I am thinking that Barovians with no souls can't see the shadows, or don't care. Only those with souls might notice something a tainted shadow is doing. Maybe the shadow abruptly starts acting normal if an NPC sees what it is doing.

Village of Barovia

Raven: The group enters the village and notices that a raven is watching them from a rooftop. This is Muriel Vinshaw (page 161), the wereraven ("wereraven" page 32, wereraven stats page 242). She flies down the street and perches on the sign of the Blood of the Vine tavern. The group doesn't know it yet, but she's watching out for their interests.

Souls and Shells: Check out the stuff on Barovians on page 24. I want to make sure that I demonstrate just what the people are like throughout the adventure, so I'm going to place little moments throughout the outline. Here in Barovia, let's have a scene where a bunch of Barovians wearing brown, white and gray clothes stare openly at the heroes. One Barovian among them is wearing a red vest and has bright blue eyes. He gives the group a slight

smile and a nod. This is just to sort of "set the table" and display the difference between souls and shells.

The Hag: I would not use the Morgantha encounter ("Dream Pastries" page 48). Instead, I'd have two villagers fighting over a dream pastry (dream pastry info is on page 125). A villager desperately needs his fix, so to speak. This way, you can get across the story of the dream pastries without potentially putting the group up against the hag, who is really powerful.

Mary: The group will hear crying and they might investigate Mad Mary (who talks about Gertruda, an NPC in the castle on page 68). Her doll, "Morbid Molly," is described in this article.

The group might visit Bildrath's Mercantile to buy supplies.

Blood of the Vine: The heroes will probably (hopefully) enter the Blood of the Vine tavern. A whole bunch of stuff happens here:

- Vistani Owners: The owners tell the heroes they should visit Madam Eva at Tser Pool (which is on page 36).
- The Mirror Character: While in the tavern, pick a character. This character looks in the mirror in the tavern and see that their reflection makes them look significantly older - grey hair, wrinkles, crow's feet. This character is going to have progressively worse visions throughout the adventure. Nobody else sees it - just them!
- Radu: Let's put a vistani NPC in the tavern. I want him to try to steal things from the group later on. We'll make up a name: Radu Radovich. Let's go ahead and let the group get a look at him when they enter the tavern. Who knows, maybe they'll figure out he's up to something. He's from the Vistani camp on page 119. He's supposed to be looking for Arabelle, a 7 year old girl (see page 119) but he's a jerk and now he's seeking an opportunity to suck up to Strahd.
- Ismark: The heroes meet Ismark, who really needs the group's help. He asks them to come to his mansion.

Ireena Introduction: Ismark brings them to his home (page 44). The group hears cries from upstairs. His sister Ireena is having a fit in her sleep. A healer-type can calm her down. The group will see two puncture marks on her neck. Ismark will sadly tell the tale of what Strahd is doing to her, and that he wants to take her to Vallaki once their father is buried.

I would play up the "abusive boyfriend" subtext that is mentioned in the forward. I would run Ireena as if she mostly fears and hates Strahd, but a part of her is drawn to him. Maybe throughout the adventure at quiet times, the group sees Ireena touching her puncture

marks with a faraway look in her eyes. I added those moments into the outline so I wouldn't forget when the time comes to run it.

The Church: Ireena and Ismark recruit the heroes to bury their father. The group goes to the church (page 45) meets the priest and his son. The priest hands a wineskin to the players and says, "Please take this. I don't think The Morninglord would approve of how I have been using its powers."

- Trinket: A wineskin that refills when interred with a dead person for a night.

They go out into the graveyard and begin burying the Burgomaster (see page 47). Ireena and Ismark are with the group, of course. This is a great time to do a Strahd Encounter!

Strahd Encounter II: Fog rolls in. The sound of wings flapping fills the air. A massive swarm of bats burst out of the fog and flies into, past and through the party. This does no damage, it's just meant to throw the characters off balance and obscure their vision for a moment. The swarm scatters. The group hears growling. Snarling wolves creep out from the mist and attack the adventurers (except for Ireena)!

As the battle commences, Strahd appears in the mist. He holds a hand out toward Ireena and says, "Tatyana, come to me." Ireena feels drawn to him. She starts approaching him, a mix of fear and yearning etched on her face. If none of the heroes try to stop her, Ismark will hold her back.

After a few rounds of fighting, the wolves back off. If a hero did particularly well in the combat, Strahd compliments them. He says to Ireena in a pained voice, "They can't keep us apart for long." Then he turns to mist and vanishes.

Remember that the heart of sorrow absorbs the first 50 points of damage Strahd takes (see page 59). So if the heroes strike Strahd, you should decide if it looks like he's invincible, or whether some kind of red field appears and blocks the attack. Some groups might get frustrated if they think Strahd has "plot immunity," so I'd probably narrate some kind of effect where it is clear that the field is getting damaged with each strike.

Aftermath: The group may want to check on Ireena who maybe stabs a dead wolf over and over in frustration. Ismark reminds the heroes that they should finish burying his father. As the group puts the last shovelful of dirt on the grave, the March of the Dead (page 48) kicks in. A ghostly procession of the deceased heads toward Castle Ravenloft. This event hopefully will give the group the feeling that "this place is crazy!" and that there is a lot happening here.

The Characters Hit Level Four

Tser Pool

When the Group Rests: A character has a prophetic dream: They see a mansion, a woman lying in bed with what looks like a mannequin, a door with what sounds like a cat scratching on the other side, and a distinctive wedding dress on a display. For a moment, the dress is being worn by a woman with white powdered skin and she looks pleased. This dream gives clues about the Wachters (page 110) and that the wedding gown should be taken and brought to The Abbot (page 155).

Vistani Crook: Radu the gypsy spy (who I talked about above in the Blood of the Vine section) tries to steal a token of some kind from each character (this is described in "Strahd's Spies" on page 29). Strahd can use these tokens for scrying. Radu has the stats of a bandit (Monster Manual page 343). If the heroes catch him, he can give them information about the dusk elves at his camp (page 119).

The Raven: Once the group has rested or whatever, the Raven shows up again. It gets their attention. It flies down the road a bit and tries to get the group to follow it. It wants to lead the group to Madam Eva's, for the all-important tarokka reading.

The Journey to Tser Falls:

1. **River Ivlis**: (page 35) The group crosses the river.
2. **River Ivlis Crossroads**: (page 35) There's a gallows here. One of the heroes might see something that will creep them out.

Arrival: The group comes to the Tser Pool Encampment (page 36) and they are welcomed by drunken vistani. The vistani greet the heroes, offer them drinks, and talk about Rictavio. They think there's something up with him. He's mysterious - dangerous. This is just a little added incentive to nudge the group toward Vallaki. They might be skeptical that Ireena will be safe there. A gypsy is drunk and messing with a lock that he "found" in Vallaki.

- Trinket: A lock that opens when blood is dripped in its keyhole. He'll let them have it. He has other, more reliable locks.

The Tarokka Reading: Madame Eva does the reading (see the results above).

Vistani Debauchery: After the reading, the vistani want to drink with the adventurers some more. They'll try to get the heroes drunk and sell them phony potions. If things get heated between the heroes and the vistani, this is a golden opportunity to break out the evil eye or curse rules (page 28).

Muriel's Warning: If possible, Muriel the wereraven will assume human form and draw one hero away from the camp. She says: "The vistani are Strahd's minions! You should leave at

once. You will find allies and guidance at the Blue Water Inn in Vallaki. Beware - the devil's eyes and ears are everywhere." If you want, have her turn into a raven right in front of the character. Or try to keep her identity a secret for the sake of mystery.

Vallaki

The trip to Vallaki:

- **Tser Falls:** (page 37) A massive waterfall.
- **Second Gates of Ravenloft:** (page 33) Same as above, headless statues and massive gates.
- **Bonegrinder:** Along the way, the group will see Old Bonegrinder. The raven will do what she can to ward the heroes away from this place as it is a very deadly area. You might want to change the hags to green hags, and you might want to say Morgantha is not home.
- **Maybe Some Wolves:** If the group doesn't go to the Bonegrinder, you might want to run "Wolves" on page 33. Strahd is testing the group's capabilities.

The Characters Hit Level 5

This chapter (page 95) is overloaded with stuff. It's awesome, but it is hard to figure out what to use when. It might be best to plop the group down and give them a chance to explore Vallaki at their own speed. If the group makes a beeline for Rictavio, you could say that Rictavio is gone but will be back in a few hours. This gives the group time to look around, if that's what they want to do.

Izek Strasni: (pages 231-232) I think Izek is a really cool bad guy, so I want to give him a super cool slow motion movie intro. The heroes are walking down the street checking out Vallaki and they see Izek. Izek is leaning against a wall as his guards question a nervous citizen. As he gives the heroes the stink-eye, he smokes a special pipe...

- Trinket: A black wooden pipe that creates puffs of smoke that look like skulls.

There's a lot of hijinks they can get up to:

- **Town Square:** (page 119) People trapped in the stocks as punishment for "malicious unhappiness."
- **The Burgomaster's Mansion:** (page 103) Where criminals are brought in for "malicious unhappiness."
- **The Wachterhaus:** Home of the schemer Lady Wachter. The character who had the prophetic dream will instantly recognize this place and have flashbacks to

their dream. The group might spot a girl in a window meowing like a cat at them (Upstairs Hall page 113). This is Stella, Lady Wachter's daughter.

- **Rictavio's Wagon:** (page 115) There's a lot of stuff in there.
- **Vistani Camp:** (page 119) They're looking for Arabelle, a little girl.
- **Lake Zarovich:** (page 38) The group might want to check out Lake Zarovich, which is just north of Vallaki. There is a creepy guy there named Bluto and a little girl.
- **The Mad Mage:** (page 39) He's across the lake if you want to get a little nutty.

Adding in an NPC: There's a throwaway NPC in the castle that I like. She is Sasha Ivlickova (page 89), a vampire bride (vampire spawn stats, Monster Manual page 298) that Strahd got bored with and locked away in a crypt. I want her to try to join the party and wreak havoc of one kind or another.

- How She Escaped: Let's say that she tricked Cyrus Belview into letting her out. She just sweet-talked him a little bit. Strahd might know this happened and probably doesn't care.
- What She Wants: Sasha wants revenge on Strahd. She really does want to help the heroes. The problem is that she's a crazy evil vampire, so things probably aren't going to work out. She can't help but resent Ireena.

Souls and Shells II: Let's say someone is putting on a show. Maybe it's Blinksy doing a puppet show or a schtick with Piccolo. Maybe it's Rictavio doing a performance. Whatever seems fun to you. The characters are wandering the streets and see about 30 people watching. Almost all of them are wearing dusty black and white clothing. There are three people among the crowd laughing uproariously. They are wearing a bright green dress, a bunch of shiny jewelry and a red scarf, respectively. All of the shells are not laughing, because shells don't laugh or cry. Once they notice the group though, they think the heroes might be new guards. So they give really pathetic fake laughs so as not to be accused of "malicious unhappiness."

If you want to put the story in motion, I'd do this:

The Dancing Monkey: Piccolo the dancing monkey does a little jig and hands the group a card that says: "Is no fun, is no Blinsky!" He tries to lead the group to Blinsky's toy shop.

Blinsky's: If the group follows Piccolo, he brings them to Blinsky's (page 118). If the group doesn't ask, Blinsky will mention how kind and gracious Rictavio is. Blinsky is very loyal to him. He will gladly direct the group to the Blue Water Inn, and says, "Tell him Blinsky sent you."

Sasha: As the group leaves Blinsky's, a woman comes in and brushes past the group. This is Sasha. She's trying to make a first impression. She's got a hooded cloak on during the day, even though it's always cloudy, a bit of sunlight comes through that makes her uncomfortable. She's wearing vistani clothes and has a dagger and a bow. This is because the previous night, she drank a vistani's blood and dumped the body in the Arasek Stockyard (page 115).

She will not join the party now. She wants them to want her to. If she talks about herself, she will mention that she wanders the land alone, and that she is searching for someone. By sheer coincidence, this matches up with what Madam Eva said in the tarokka reading (see "Mists" (Queen of Spades on page 17). The group might think that Sasha is the ally that Madam Eva foretold.

The Blue Water Inn: When the group enters the inn, the same character as before looks in the mirror and this time their reflection is of a very old person with liver spots, little to no hair, yellow teeth and is struggling to breathe.

The Allies: The group meets the Keepers and they will allow the heroes to visit Rictavio. Rictavio is tense - he thinks Strahd is onto him. Rictavio will interpret Madam Eva's reading for them, literally telling them where the items are. He wants to say more, but there's a commotion downstairs. Guards have come for him. Rictavio may have caused "malicious unhappiness."

Escape: The keepers help the group slip out of the inn (or maybe the group just wants to fight the guards). Rictavio asks the heroes to escort him to his wagon in the stockyards. When they get there, Izek Strasni (pages 231-232) and a pile of guards are waiting.

Izek reveals that he knows the devil Strahd is looking for him. "We're going to hand you over to him..." Izek then sees Ireena. He's been dreaming of her (see "family is forever" on page 232). He orders his men to kill everyone except "that woman"(Ireena).

Tiger: A couple of fun things can happen in this fight. Van Richten has a tiger in his wagon who can jump in to help the group. Sasha will also run in at an opportune time to save a hero and prove her worth as an ally. Now she's ready to join the party.

Sasha is going to crash and burn. I want her out of the picture by the time the group gets to Van Richten's Tower. So her jealousy of Ireena and her bloodlust should seep out in short order.

Once the guards are defeated, Rictavio flees town and wishes the group good luck. The deaths of the guards have no witnesses. People blame it all on the mysterious Rictavio.

Invitation: At this point, the group might want to just get out of Vallaki. If they haven't been to Lady Wachter's, they are invited there to have a meal with her. She will want to try to recruit the group to kill the Burgomaster or to join her "book club" (devil worshipping cult).

During the meal, she excuses herself, and Stella peers into the room and meows. She'll scamper up to her room. This might entice the group to explore.

The Characters Hit Level 6

Van Richten's Tower

The Journey to the Tower:

- Skeletal Rider Again: On the road to Van Richten's Tower, the group again spots the skeletal rider. Ireena explains that she believes the rider is eternally searching for a way out of Barovia - but there is no way out. Trinket: The rider drops a trinket wrapped in cloth. It is a vial of perfume, the scent of which only certain creatures can detect. Let's say that it is called "Conjunction" and the vial is engraved with the image of a happy wolf. When this perfume is worn, Strahd's wolves will like the smell and won't attack that character. In fact, they might even act like happy dogs around the character.
- The End of Sasha: If Sasha is still with the party on the road to Van Richten's, it's time for her to turn. If the group makes camp for the night, she'll take a watch if they let her. She won't be able to control her bloodlust. If everyone's asleep, she'll try to drink Ismark's blood and kill him. If there's a PC that has been particularly nice to her, she'll nudge them awake. Blood is running down her chin. She'll ask for forgiveness. The group will either have to kill her, or she'll flee back to crypt 20 in Castle Ravenloft.
- Zombies: If they don't camp and are walking on the road near Van Richten's Tower, a horde of Strahd Zombies lumbers out of the fog ("Zombies" page 33). A massive battle breaks out. Blood spilled puts her into a frenzy. Sasha will jump Ismark and drain him dry if she can.
- Luna River Crossroads: (page 40) Crossroads with some flavor text.
- The Aging Tree: The heroes spot a tree shedding its leaves. Wind blows and the leaves swirl around the characters. The leaves turn yellow, then grey, then crumble into nothing. The tree literally ages before their eyes, growing a few feet and then turning almost black. Its branches droop down and fall off. One touch will cause the brittle wood of the trunk to break and tip over.

The Tower: The group will have to deal with the crazy traps here. The Tome Of Strahd is on the Fourth Floor (page 171)

Ezmerelda: As the group emerges from the tower, Ezmerelda shows up ("Ezmerelda's Retreat" page 172). She just tried to fight Strahd in Castle Ravenloft and it didn't go well. She's hurt bad. As she talks to the group, slip in this comment: "I'm searching for my mentor. I try not to stay in one place long. I had been staying near St. Markovia's Abbey..." This is wording right out of Madame Eva's fortune. But the group probably got burned by Sasha, who said similar things. I just think it's an amusing thing to do.

Strahd Encounter III: As the group talks with their new buddy, it starts to rain. She tells them that she knows where the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind is - it's in St. Markovia's Abbey in a secret compartment. Fog rolls in. Thunder rumbles.

As the group starts to head out into the suddenly-thick fog, Strahd arrives with swarms of bats. He will mock Ezmerelda for failing to kill him, and he will demand to know where Van Richten is.

The bat swarms and Strahd attacks. Strahd focuses on the hero with the tome. During this entire encounter, Strahd ignores Ireena. He can feel her watching him. He is giving her the cold shoulder to try to make her realize that she actually wants his attention.

Strahd will back off after a few rounds. Perhaps during the battle, he takes notice of any PCs who he thinks might make for a good consort/successor. He goes from angry to intrigued. He compliments that person and tells the group "Do as I have done and accept Barovia as your prison. You are all my subjects!" He turns into mist and vanishes into the fog.

Resting: A lot happens during the next rest:

1. **Ireena**: During a rest, Ireena gets a far away look in her eye. In the middle of the night she wakes up, petrified. She felt Strahd calling to her, speaking in her mind.
2. **Info Dump**: Ezmerelda dishes out some of her backstory. She was a vistani but turned on them, she is missing part of her leg, and she is actually searching for Van Richten, her former mentor.
3. **It Was All a Dream**: A character has a prophetic dream about a statue of Strahd on a hill. There is a green glow coming from inside the statue's head. This foreshadows the statue at Yester Hill (page 198).

The Journey to Krezk:

1. **Raven River Crossroads**: (page 40) An intersection with some flavor.
2. **A Delicious Snack**: Muriel, in raven form, flies over the group. She is carrying a small sack in her beak. She drops it to the heroes and flies off. In the sack is a loaf of dark nut bread from the Blue Water Inn. The point of this is to reinforce the idea that the wereravens are allies. Additionally, we can show the players that some kind

of encounter doesn't happen every time Muriel shows up and that she's not just a plot device.

3. **Along the way to Krezk:** The hero who has the Tome of Strahd comes upon a corpse that looks just like them (see "corpse" page 30).

Approaching Krezk: As the heroes approach Krezk (page 143), Ezmerelda again reiterates: "We may have to jump through some hoops before they let us in." If anyone asks why, she says "They caught me sneaking around in there and it got a little ugly." This is not meant to be anything major, it's just a way to let Ezmerelda show some personality and reinforce the fact that the place is under lockdown.

Souls and Shells III: Let's say that the guards are shells. Dark circles under their eyes, faded armor. Like all shells, these guards are pointedly rude and have a violent temper. Once the guards start insulting the heroes, let's have the Burgomaster show up to calm them down. Describe the Burgomaster as wearing a big shiny ring with his family crest on it, and maybe a buttoned-up red jacket with the symbol of Krezk emblazoned boldly in gold on the front.

GemQuest: The place is walled in. The burgomaster will talk with them over the wall ("Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov" page 145). He is worried that they are allies of the devil Strahd. He asks the adventurers to get a wagonload of wine from the Wizard of Wines winery. The next delivery is long overdue. If they do this, he'll let them in.

The Wizard of Wines

Journey to the Wizard of Wines:

1. **Scarecrows:** A freak lightning storm hits. On the way to the Wizard of Wines, Baba Lysaga's scarecrows attack ("Scarecrow" encounter page 31, stats page 231). During the battle, lightning strikes a tree and it topples onto the scene.
2. **Allies:** As the group nears the winery, they meet Davian Martikov and his family (wereravens). He explains that this is his winery, and that it's been overrun by invaders.

Invaders: I do not like twig blights. So I'd replace them with Strahd Zombies controlled by necromancers. The group will be up to their necks in zombies, but hopefully they can clear the place out. Let's put one zombie in pirate clothes. It has a wooden hand...

- Trinket: The wooden hand of a notorious pirate. Carved into the hand is a crude 'treasure map', which leads to the treasury in Castle Ravenloft (page 67).

More Bad News: The winery is powered by magic gems, and all of them have been stolen. Damian will need at least one - which was stolen by the villains at Yester Hill. I won't

mention the gem at Lysaga's as I don't want the group to go there yet (it's dangerous). We'll say that Damian is happy just to get one gem back and feels that he's asked more than enough of the group.

Yester Hill: (page 197) We're going to revamp this area to use undead instead of twig blights. The "Hidden Graves" have zombies, the druid circle is a "Circle of Bones," the druids are mages, and the Gulthias Tree is a "Desecration" from the 4th edition book Open Grave. A Desecration is the "animated remains of a deserted cemetery." We'll just re-flavor the Gulthias tree stats and boom, done. The group obtains the gem.

Now the group can bring the wine back to Krezk.

The Heroes Hit Level 7

Village of Krezk

More fateful resting:

1. Ezmerelda's Adventure: Ezmerelda describes some of the areas she saw in Castle Ravenloft. She mentions the painting of Tatyana in room 37 (page 66). Ezmerelda realizes that Ireena looks almost exactly like the woman in the painting. Ireena touches her bite marks and looks off into the distance.
2. Dreaming About Horses: A character has a prophetic dream of a horse with flaming hooves (Beucephalus, page 39), a prisoner in a cell transforming into a werewolf (Emil, page 81) and a youthful man sipping wine looking at a portrait of Strahd. He angrily tosses the glass against a wall (Escher, page 70). We're giving clues to NPCs that lurk in Castle Ravenloft.

Return to Krezk: The heroes can come in if they brought the wine. Ezmerelda says there's a magic pool that has healing powers in Krezk and leads them to it ("Pool and Shrine" page 146). This triggers a major event...

Strahd Encounter IV... Something Blue: (page 156) Ireena sees Sergei in the pool. If the heroes don't stop her, Sergei frees her spirit and both of them vanish.

Strahd immediately goes crazy and sends lightning down on the group. From this moment on, he wants to destroy the characters.

Souls and Shells IV: If the group goes near a commoner cottage (pages 145-146), they hear a screeching noise. A Barovian is about to cut the head off of a chicken. The Barovian's young kid watches, staring in silence. Both are wearing drab brown clothing and their eyes are very dark. The Barovian cuts off the chicken's head and blood splatters on the kid. The

kid doesn't react or wipe the blood off of their face. The kid follows the Barovian inside the cottage to cook up the chicken or whatever.

After that, the group needs to get the Icon of Ravenkind from the Abbey (page 147). It's in...

The Main Hall: (page 150) The Icon is in a secret compartment. Ezmerelda knows this but wasn't able to snatch it when she was last here.

The Abbot: When the group meets the abbot, he will look the group over up and down excitedly. He'd love to make a golem of their parts! He asks if they would donate their parts to him - once they've died far in the future, of course. He looks at a female character's hands, and exclaims that her hands would be perfect for the bride. The bride's hands are from two different people and look very mismatched once it is pointed out to the viewer.

Master Bedroom: (page 178) The 'mirror' character looks into the freestanding mirror and their reflection is literally them as a fresh corpse with a pair of puncture wounds on their neck.

All that's left to get is The Sunsword. It's time to face Baba Lysaga

The Heroes Hit Level 8

Ruins of Berez

This place is dangerous. Muriel is here and ready to help. She can direct the heroes to the ghost.

Big Battle: The ghost can lead the group to the sunsword, which is under Marina's monument. The creeping hut will likely charge and Baba will fly around in her giant skull. It should be an epic battle. The group will probably find the other gem in the creeping hut, and if they want, Muriel could fly it over to the Wizard of Wines

Rest: Once the battle is over, the group might rest. A character has a prophetic dream of a pulsing red heart. The heartbeat pulses through Strahd's body somehow. This is a clue to the Heart of Sorrow (page 59). When the heroes awaken, the skeletal rider is watching them. The rider leaves a trinket that might help them out in the castle in a small way...

- Trinket: A bouquet of funerary flowers that always looks and smells fresh. There are two cards. One says "for Helga" (she's on page 64) and the other says "for Gertuda" (she's on page 68). Giving this bouquet to one of those NPCs will cause them to like and become loyal to the character who hands her the bouquet. The roses are all pink (which, according to teleflora.com, signifies love, grace, appreciation and gentility). Let's say that as soon as a rose is separated from the

others, it rots. That way the group doesn't split the bouquet and give the roses to both. We want them to make a choice here.

The Invitation: After the group is rested or if they prepare to leave Berez, thunder rumbles in the distance. A warm breeze blows. There's a flash of lightning, and the heroes see The Black Carriage waiting for them (change the flavor text and use it, pages 37-38). A sealed envelope is carried on a breeze from the carriage and lands at the feet of the heroes (Invitation is on page 251).

When the heroes get in, the carriage takes the group to the gates of Castle Ravenloft (page 38).

The Characters Hit Level 9

Castle Ravenloft

Dining Hall: (page 56) Once this crazy encounter is over, the "mirror" character looks at their reflection in the floor-to-ceiling mirrors and sees a Strahd zombie looking back at them. The zombie is wearing tattered remnants of the character's equipment and is holding Van Richten's severed head in its hands. Nobody else can see it! If it seems more creepy/amusing, have the severed head be another member of the party.

The heroes make their way through the gigantic castle and fight Strahd for the final time in his crypt (Strahd's Tomb page 93). His brides are in there, too! When Strahd dies, read the flavor text on page 207.

The Group Should Hit Level 10

Epilogue

The fog around the land thins ("Escape from Barovia" page 208). The sun comes out. Escape is now possible through the mists.

One Last Reflection: The group celebrates at the Blue Water Inn with Muriel, the Martikovs, Rictavio, Ezmerelda, Piccolo the monkey and whatever other friends they made during the campaign. This might be too goofy or cheesy for you, but I think it would be funny for the "mirror" character to look in a mirror one final time. The character is relieved to see that they look normal, but is shocked to see Sergei's ghost behind them. Sergei pats the character on the back and says, "Well done! Well done, indeed!" And you know what else? Everybody in the bar sees Sergei in the mirror, too.

The Warrior: As the heroes leave Barovia, they spot the skeletal rider at the edge of the realm. He nods to the heroes, steps into the mists, and disappears. He leaves them one final trinket (I altered the "87-88 old little doll..." trinket):

- Trinket: An old little doll of Strahd. The doll's body has wounds on it which match up to the big attacks the group used to kill Strahd. Months later, when Strahd is reborn in Barovia, the "wounds" heal and the doll is like new.

The Best Thing: Outline done! You know what the best thing is? You are going to have months to refine the back end of this outline as you play through the adventure. You'll likely have a million more great ideas that you can add into your document.

Thanks for reading, and good luck!

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Power Score RPG

☞ <http://powerscorerpg.blogspot.com/>

☞ <http://thecampaign20xx.blogspot.com/>

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