

Barovian

Born and Raised



BY WYATT TRULL

Ravenloft



RISE AGAINST THE DEVIL
AS A NATIVE BAROVIAN

Ravenloft



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wyatt Trull is a bestselling author and coffee addict responsible for delightful gems such as *Daerdan's Class Feats*, *Daerdan's Tall Tales*, the *Dungeon of the Mad Mage Companion*, and thirty other products for the world's okayest roleplaying game.

When Wyatt isn't regretting his life choices over a nice cup of joe or teaching English to his students in South Korea, he's lost in a daydream concerning robots, goblins, or a mixture of both, such as a tale in which a cyborg goblin—a "cyborgoblin," if you will—fights crime in a fantasy version of Venice. When he isn't thinking about Robogob, he's dreaming about a whole slew of other idiotic, pun-inspired worlds, which bleed into whatever product he's producing next.

To stay up to date on his—my—work, or the production of Robogob, try following him online at wyatttrull.com or on [social media](#).

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CREDITS

Author: Wyatt Trull 

Art Direction: Christian Zeuch 

Layout: Christian Zeuch (based on the Affinity Publisher template by Nathanaël Roux)

Editor: Matthew Wulf 

Cover Art: Bob Greyvenstein

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INTRODUCTION

Curse of Strahd is written with the assumption that the player characters—all of the player characters—are foreigners to Barovia. As strangers to a strange land, they must grapple with Barovia’s many horrors and many mysteries. Trapped behind the mists, the only way home is through Strahd von Zarovich himself.

But, what if Barovia is their home? What if the adventurers are not from abroad, but natives who have suffered for too long under Strahd’s shadow? What if they are this land’s saviors, not the foreigners unfortunate enough to be trapped on this side of the mists?

Barovian Born and Raised rewrites *Curse of Strahd* to be run with Barovian natives—be they villagers, mountainfolk, dusk elves, or even Vistani—who would dare to stand boldly against the devil. Featuring Barovian natives in your campaign comes with several benefits:

- The adventurers have personal attachments in the form of friends and family. Through this, their Background—with a capital “B”—actually comes into play in the campaign.
- The adventurers have a much more personal stake in toppling their deathly tyrant.
- *Curse of Strahd* veterans, namely Dungeon Masters, can play in the campaign, as their insider knowledge of its people, culture, and locales is no longer a barrier to entry.

HOW TO USE THIS SUPPLEMENT

This supplement comes with a bevy of suggestions to run your *Curse of Strahd* campaign on a personal and narrative level. These options can be utilized before you start a *Curse of Strahd* campaign or in the middle of an ongoing one; if any of your adventurers die, you can replace them with Barovian natives that wish to overthrow the devil Strahd, thereby forging a party of both native and foreign adventurers. As with any supplement, use only what you agree with. It is your table and your players, after all.

Chapter 1 guides the players through character creation, taking several factors alien to the usual process into consideration. Through this chapter, you can sculpt a true Barovian native, all while avoiding campaign spoilers. This chapter can and should be read by players.

Chapter 2 mirrors chapter 1, but with further details on how to link the player characters to the campaign and its characters. It is, essentially, a spoiler-heavy version of chapter 1. It features class hooks, adventure hooks, and more.

Chapter 3 provides guidance on how to run *Curse of Strahd* from within, providing adventure hooks you can use to start the adventure, as well as sample events you can use to personalize your campaign.

Appendix A contains printer-friendly handouts you can give your players to remind them of the lore their character knows.

CONTENT WARNING

Some content may be triggering, including: miscarriage, oppressive situations.

CHAPTER I

PLAYER PRIMER

This chapter provides guidelines for creating a Barovian player character, be it a human, an elf, or even someone even more unconventional, such as a dragonborn. It is written for players and therefore eschews any spoilers, major or minor. When crafting a Barovian native player character, you must consider several new factors alien to the usual character creation process:

Barovia Itself. The mist-choked land from which your character hails is beautiful but dangerous. This section provides you with basic information on Barovia that any native would know. Draw upon this information as you roleplay your character in the campaign. Additionally, see the lore handouts provided in appendix A for more details on the realm and your people.

Race. Barovia is a homogenous country composed almost entirely of humans. Its supernatural borders—the choking mists from which none ever return—prevent almost any immigration and all emigration. As a closed country, there is very little opportunity for nonhumans to enter. Not every player wishes to be human, however, and so several ideas are presented in the Race section below.

Class. When determining your class, you can choose to embrace Barovia’s dark nature with a gothic class (and later subclass) or rebuke it by choosing a more righteous class like paladin or cleric. Because one does not suddenly wake up a wizard or cleric, this section provides sample mentors and guidelines on how to link this class to your background as a Barovian native.

Backgrounds. Your background, oft a neglected character aspect in fifth edition, is rooted in the Barovian culture and lifestyle. This section provides examples on how to link your background to preexisting areas and characters. For once, backgrounds can actually matter in an official campaign.

BAROVIA ITSELF

Your native land—your prison—is the idyllic, misty valley of Barovia. Nestled between the rugged Balinok Mountains, it is a land of great beauty and greater peril. The Svalich Woods offer no shortage of danger, be they wolves, werewolves, or even worse horrors. Mount Baratok towers in the north, and Mount Ghakis in the south. Both can hardly be seen under such overcast skies and choking mists. The sun has not shone unobscured in centuries—and so, no Barovian alive has ever seen its beauty. The woods are pregnant with silence, every tree a mute voyeur. The land is without seasons, its people trapped in a perpetual autumn too close to winter for its chill to be ignored at night.

The Old Svalich Road is the country’s artery, connecting all three Barovian settlements: the village of Barovia in the east, the town of Vallaki, and the village of Krezk in the west. Spirits, the victims of the devil Strahd or his minions, walk this road at night. To venture off road is to prostrate oneself to the creatures of the night that haunt the wilderness.

LORD AND LIEGE: COUNT STRAHD VON ZAROVICH

There is but one tyrant of this land: your lord and liege, the vampire Count Strahd von Zarovich. He is known by many titles, but most Barovians refer to him as “the devil” or “the devil Strahd.” He is the eldest son of the late King Barov, whose many wars he finished. After years of bloodshed, Strahd chased his enemies to an idyllic, unnamed valley—this valley. He offered no amnesty and no mercy. After the slaughter, he was struck by this place’s beauty and decided to escape his father’s shadow by establishing a new kingdom. Out of respect for Barov, a true giant of a man, Strahd named the valley Barovia and refused to ever take the title of king.

Count Strahd lairs in Castle Ravenloft, the forlorn fortress perched upon a cliff in the east.



The castle was named for his beloved mother, Queen Ravenovia. As construction began, headed by the genius architect Artimus, Count Strahd sent for his relatives abroad. His mother, who had always feared her cold and arrogant son, passed away while traveling to Castle Ravenloft. With her corpse came Sergei von Zarovich, Strahd's younger brother. Per custom, Sergei, as a second son, was inducted into the Church of Ravenloft but later died there—as did Strahd when he later became a vampire. For nearly four centuries, he has preyed upon this land, raising more of his foul ilk to stalk the night. His great thirst comes and goes, but Barovia's greatest criminals are condemned to Castle Ravenloft...

Count Strahd is an implacable but distant sovereign. So long as the tax is paid, the vampire is content to remain in Castle Ravenloft until he hungers for blood. His chamberlain, the dusk elf Rahadin, collects the tax, arriving in a black carriage. Some say he sleeps for many years at a time; others claim he stalks the darkness every night for fools and virgins. No one is suicidal enough to find out the truth.

THE BAROVIAN CALENDAR

Barovia follows a lunar calendar much like other civilizations. The word "month" is rarely used, with "moons" being used to mark the passages of time. There are twelve lunar cycles to a Barovian year.

Barovian history starts with Count Strahd's forebears, the elder kings and queens of the Zarovich lineage. Strahd himself was born in Year 306. He inherited his father's crown in Year 346 and finished the wars King Barov started. He chose to settle in this valley after chasing his enemies, the dusk elves and other detractors, in 347. The first stones of Castle Ravenloft were laid in the same year; construction was completed in 350. Count Strahd infamously died in 351 and rose as a vampire.

The current year is 735.

LORE HANDOUTS

There is much more to Barovia than meets the eye, and as a native, you are intimately familiar with many parts of this dismal prison. See appendix A for lore handouts, which further detail the country. Your race or origin determines the knowledge that you have gleaned over the years.

RACES OF BAROVIA

Barovia is a small, isolated country of three thousand people, the vast majority of which are human. All are damned to this dismal land. Though their backgrounds, and sometimes even their ancestry, may be diverse, all languish together as Barovians.

This section provides guidance on how to design your Barovian player character while fitting into *Curse of Strahd's* core themes of horror and isolation. As mentioned above, nearly every single

person in Barovia is human. Although it is possible for, say, a dwarven family or even a clan to have been trapped by the mists, to include every possible ancestry runs counter to these themes. Barovia is not a high fantasy realm; its woods are haunted by wolves, not orcs. To the average Barovian, anything inhuman (beyond the few nonhumans they are familiar with) is a terror to behold. To be acquainted with dwarves, elves, orcs, goblins, and the plethora of other folks would go a long way in alleviating their fears and bringing light to their otherwise dark world—and thereby diminish the horrific nature of Barovia itself.

Take these points into account when designing your Barovian. Consult your DM if you need a small populace placed in the valley, but be aware that this creative "space" must be shared with your fellow players. Too many will turn Barovia into a fantasy kitchen sink realm.

AASIMAR

Aasimar, like tieflings, are a perfect addition to a human-centric setting. The extraordinary circumstances amounting to their birth can happen regardless of a realm's homogeneity.

Barovian aasimar are extremely rare. All bear some connection to the Morninglord, the deity of light that has seemingly abandoned the Barovian people. Although worship of the Morninglord has waned over recent years, his light can still influence Barovia—it can still pierce the darkness that encloses this land. These individuals represent



the deity's greatest effort to protect his wayward children.

Aasimar History. Throughout Barovian history, only four aasimar have been discovered. The first was murdered by an ignorant Vallakian mob that believed fate—or Strahd, or even Mother Night—was testing them. The second died to consumption, landing yet another blow to the laity's faith. The third committed herself to the Abbey of Saint Markovia and even marched upon Castle Ravenloft with the saint herself. The fourth joined ranks of adventurers that were determined to slay Strahd and return home. After his comrades failed to fell the devil, he was kept in a gilded cage on Castle Ravenloft's battlements. Some say his cries could be heard as far as Vallaki until at last he starved to death.

AASIMAR PLAYER CHARACTERS

When creating your aasimar, consider the following traits:

Racial Traits. Aasimar traits can be found in Volo's Guide to Monsters.

Origin. As an aasimar, you still come from a lineage. Choose an origin just as an ordinary human does. It is recommended that you grew up in Vallaki or a small steading outside it during less dangerous times. This also determines the lore handout you can read from appendix A (e.g. the Barovian Lore and Vallaki Lore handout).

Upbringing. Your heavenly heritage cannot be mistaken. As an aasimar, you have had a unique upbringing, be that good or ill. Roll on the Aasimar Upbringing table or choose an option on the table.

AASIMAR UPBRINGING

d6 Upbringing

1	I was raised by Father Lucian at St. Andral's Church in Vallaki. I have a deep relationship with the priest whose faith is unshaking.
2	I appeared as a normal child until I hit puberty, after which everything changed.
3	I was sheltered by my parents, who feared I would be stoned or stolen. I was forbidden from ever leaving the house.
4	I was told that I am—I <i>must</i> —be the messiah or avatar of the Morninglord himself, and that the fate of Barovia was in my "angelic" hands.
5	I was brought to Castle Ravenloft as a teenager to be inspected by Count Strahd himself. The three words he spoke, before I was ushered back into that black carriage, will haunt me forever: "They'll do fine."
6	A strange, youthly abbot from Krezk visited my family when I was a toddler. It was odd that he knew of me, my parents said, because they had not yet told anyone of my celestial appearance. He studied me for a few minutes and left with a scowl.

HUMAN

Humanity constitutes Barovia's largest populace, numbering at approximately 2,900. Although Count Strahd cares little for a census, he occasionally sends out minions to affirm this number. They separated into three diverse groups: the Barovians, who cower in the safety of their settlements, the lively Vistani who have the freedom to come and go from Barovia, and the rugged mountainfolk that roam the Balinok Mountains. You must choose between one of these groups, which determines the settlement you hail from.

BAROVIANS

When the devil conquered this valley, he stocked his new demesne with subjects drawn from his other territories. Thus, Barovian humans come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Over the last four centuries, these humans have clustered into distinct settlements.

The Barovians are a broken people. For far too long have they suffered the curse of Strahd. Centuries of smashed hope has left the living as empty shells. They drown their perpetual sorrow in wine and dare not even hope for a day on which the sun shines.

Origin. As a Barovian, you hail from one of three Barovian settlements: the town of Vallaki, the commune of Krezk, or the dismal village of Barovia that suffers under the shadow of Castle Ravenloft. It is highly recommended you choose Vallaki, as it is the safest and most populous settlement. With a higher population comes a more stable way of life, which in turn gives you more opportunities to craft a more believable character. Your choice determines the lore handout you receive from appendix A of this supplement.

Family. As a Barovian human, you can be the immediate family member of certain campaign's characters, be this for good or ill. It certainly affords you unique opportunities that others would not. For the sake of avoiding spoilers, your Dungeon Master alone knows the consequences (happy or otherwise) of your choice. Consider rolling on the Barovian Family table or choose one of the options.

Lineage. If you do not wish to be directly related to a campaign character, consider choosing a lineage. This is a less hands-on approach to deciding your family, but it can still carry certain benefits (to be revealed later by the Dungeon Master) such as a family inheritance or legacy that will open metaphorical doors for you during the campaign. Consider rolling on the Barovian Lineage table or choose one of the options.

BAROVIAN LINEAGE

d20	Lineage
1	Artimus. I am a descendent of Artimus the Builder, architect of Castle Ravenloft.
2	Dostron. I am descendent of Dostron the Hellborn, an ancient, bloodthirsty king of this land whose reign predates Count Strahd's.
3-4	Dilisnya. I am descended from Duchess Dorfniya, who sought (and failed) to win the hand of Count Strahd. Our lineage is forever stained by Leo Dilisnya, the assassin that murdered Strahd and ushered him into undeath. My name is cursed; few are willing to risk angering the Count by aiding those of my lineage.
5-6	Gregor. I am descended from Stefan Gregorovich, First Counselor of King Barov. Our line has a history of diplomats and sages.
7	Ivlisk. I hail from the Ivlisk lineage. Nearly two hundred years ago, a maiden of my family, Sasha, married Count Strahd von Zarovich himself—who took her life and damned to her eternity as one of his vampire spawn.
8	Karelova. I am of the Karelova lineage, known for the wedding between dearest Anastrasya and the devil Strahd.
9	Katsky. My ancestor is King Katsy the Bright, whose reign predates Count Strahd's. Katsky was a marvelous inventor who dedicated his kingdom to the pursuit of science—a pursuit that proved just as short as his life.
10-11	Krushkin. I am a descendent of the mighty warrior Sir Leonid “the Crusher” Krushkin, whose martial prowess earned him a resting place in Castle Ravenloft. My distant cousin, Yevgeni, lives in Vallaki as a wolf hunter.
12	Petrov. I am a descendent of Tasha Petrovna, the legendary “Healer of Kings.” She is buried in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft. I have two very distant cousins: Father Lucian, who carries her priestly legacy, and Lady Lydia, who is married to the baron of Vallaki, Vargas Vallakovich.
13	Popofsky. I am a descendent of the sister of Volenta Popofsky, who was married, or taken by, the devil Strahd.
14	Romul. I am descended from Prefect Ciril Romulich, the very priest who consecrated Castle Ravenloft and brought the holy <i>Icon of Ravenloft</i> from Count Strahd's ancestral lands. Family legends claim that the Icon was anathema to the dead and darkness.
15	Spinwitovich. I am descended from Admiral Spinwitovich, who so famously arranged the largest naval force of any landlocked country.
16	Tripalotsky. I am an embarrassed descendent of Sir Klutz Tripalotsky, who lived up to his god-given name when he tripped and fell onto his own sword. Count Strahd humorously had him buried in Castle Ravenloft. My mother always claimed that Sir Klutz's spirit hungers to redeem himself and prove to Barovia that he is more than a laughable parable.
17	Troisky. I am a descendent of King Troisky, the Three-Faced King, whose reign predates the arrival of Strahd von Zarovich. His legendary, three-faced helm still rests alongside his corpse in Castle Ravenloft.
18	Twitterberg. I am a descendent of the beloved actor Elsa Fallona von Twitterberg, whose talents earned her a place in Castle Ravenloft's catacombs.
19	Vilisevic. My great aunt Ludmilla married the devil Strahd.
20	Vonderbucks. My ancestor is none other than the prodigal Sir Erik Vonderbucks, who wasted our family fortune on his dying wish: to have his corpse dipped in molten gold. He lies in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft, plastered with a fortune.

BAROVIAN FAMILY

d12	Family Member
1	The Vallakian town drunk, Bluto Krogarov, is my brother (or father or uncle). He has recently become obsessed with fishing.
2	My father (or uncle) is Father Donavich, the local priest of the village of Barovia. Once a man full of life and laughter, he is now a sullen shell of his former self.
3	My uncle is Gadof Blinsky, the eccentric Vallakian toymaker whose slogan is “Is no fun, is no Blinsky!” The townsfolk might think he's mad, but he's a joyful, if strange, man.
4	My grandfather is Henrik van der Voort, the sullen Vallakian coffinmaker. Given his grim profession, most people give him a wide berth.
5	I am the child of Kolyan Indirovich, burgomaster of the village of Barovia. My siblings are Ireena and Ismark; both are full of life and love despite living under the shadow of Castle Ravenloft.
6	I am the sibling of the brutish Izek Strazni, Baron Vallakovich's enforcer. Izek lost his arm to wolves as a child but awoke one day, many years later, with a sudden, dark appendage. No one, not even him, knows how he grew a new arm.
7	My brother is the bloodthirsty Kiril Stoyanovich, who suffered the curse of the werewolf several years ago. I know he is still out in the wilds, ripping throats from necks.
8	My mother (or aunt) is “Mad” Mary Belasco of the village of Barovia. My sister (or cousin) Gertruda has gone missing and it's driving my mother insane.
9	I am the brother (or cousin) of the Vallakian shoemaker Udo Lukovich, who was arrested by Baron Vallakovich for “malicious unhappiness.” He now languishes in a cell somewhere in Vallaki.
10	I am a member of the Vallakovich family, which rules Vallaki. It is headed by Baron Vargas Vallakovich, his wife Lady Lydia Petrovna, and their unsettling son, Victor.
11	I am a member of the Wachter family, a Vallakian noble family now headed by the callous Fiona Wachter. Her late husband, Nikolai, is survived by his sons Karl and Nikolai the Second, and his daughter Stella.
12	I am a member of the Krezkov family, who rules the village of Krezk. I was reluctant to live my life within its walls, eking out a boring life swine herding. My parents, Dmitri and Anna, were devastated by my decision, but my younger brother Ilya told me that he wishes he could leave as well, no matter the dangers abroad. Perhaps when he is older, I can return for him. With three other children already lost to illness, it is no wonder that my parents were furious and heartbroken with my decision.

BAROVIAN AND VISTANI NAMES

Barovians and Vistani share several naming practices—namely, patronyms which denote one's father. For many a Barovian, this is effectively a surname. Men add the suffix “-ovich” to their father's name, while women use “-na” or “-ana” (e.g., Petrovich and Petrovna for the son and daughter of Petrov, respectively).

Male Names: Alek, Andrej, Anton, Balthazar, Bogan, Boris, Dargos, Darzin, Dragomir, Emeric, Falkon, Frederich, Franz, Gargosh, Gorek, Grygori, Hans, Harkus, Ivan, Jirko, Kobal, Korga, Krystofor, Lazlo, Livius, Marek, Miroslav, Nikolaj, Nimir, Oleg, Radovan, Radu, Seraz, Sergei, Stefan, Tural, Valentin, Vasily, Vladislav, Waltar, Yesper, Zsolt

Female Names: Alana, Clavdia, Danya, Dezdrelda, Diavola, Dorina, Drasha, Drilvia, Elisabeta, Fatima, Grilsha, Isabella, Ivana, Jarzinka, Kala, Katerina, Kereza, Korina, Lavinia, Magda, Marta, Mathilda, Minodora, Mirabel, Miruna, Nimira, Nyanka, Olivenka, Ruxandra, Sorina, Tereska, Valentina, Vasha, Victoria, Wensencia, Zondra

Family Names: Alastroi, Antonovich/Antonova, Barthos, Belasco, Cantemir, Dargovich/Dargova, Diavolov, Diminski, Dilisnya, Drazkoi, Garvinski, Grejenko, Groza, Grygorovich/Grygorova, Ivanovich/Ivanova, Janek, Karushkin, Konstantinovich/Konstantinova, Krezkov/Krezkova, Krykski, Lansten, Lazarescu, Lukresh, Lipsiege, Martikov/Martikova, Mironovich/Mironovna, Moldovar, Nikolovich/Nikolova, Nimirovich/Nimirova, Oronovich/Oronova, Petrovich/Petrovna, Polensky, Radovich/Radova, Rilsky, Stefanovich/Stefanova, Strazni, Swilovich/Swilova, Taltos, Targolov/Targolova, Tyminski, Ulbrek, Ulrich, Vadu, Voltanescu, Zalenski, Zalken

VISTANI

The Vistani are a people of wanderers and tradesmen who are free to appreciate the beauty of the natural world. The roads are their kingdom, and no one may deny them passage. To be tied down is to die, they say, and let the world wilt in their absence.

Due to an ancient debt owed by Strahd, the Vistani are free to leave Barovia as they please. As such, they have much more in life to appreciate. Why they continue to live in a land as dismal and dangerous as this one has confounded Barovians for centuries. Some have directly served Strahd von Zarovich, leading many Barovians to discredit them all as malefactors, thieves, and murderers, but the Vistani are no more prone to vice and greed than any other mortal. Attempts to mend this divide prove fruitless for two reasons: the Barovians are set in their prejudices, and the Vistani are free to leave when they wish, so why bother living alongside those who do not tolerate their existence?

Associate. You are familiar with the brothers Arrigal and Luvash of the Vallaki Vistani camp. You also know of the mystical seer, Madam Eva, who can tell the fortunes of non-Vistani.

Origin. You belong to the Tser Pool encampment, the Vallaki camp, or have spent much of your life roaming the Barovian countryside. You're also familiar with lands beyond the mists.

Lore. See the Vistani Lore handout in appendix A for more details on your people.

CALL TO ARMS

d6 Motivation

- 1 I am in search of the legendary *blood spear*, the weapon of Kavan, an ancient chieftain who drank the blood of his enemies and prey. The elders say Kavan was buried at Yester Hill.
- 2 The Mistwhispers slaughtered my tribe after they refused to bend the knee. I have gone in search of power so that I may avenge the fallen.
- 3 I was exiled from my tribe for blasphemy—for consorting with forbidden knowledge better left in the depths below Mount Ghakis.
- 4 I am off to hunt Sangzor (“Bloodhorn”), a massive mountain goat of otherworldly resilience and shocking malice. The beast has taken the life of my brother.
- 5 The roc of Mount Ghakis has taken wing yet again. To prove myself worthy of the title of chieftain, I must return with its bloodied feathers.
- 6 The mists have closed in on Barovia, cutting my tribe in two. To be reunited with my kin, I must find a way to press through the mists.

MOUNTAINFOLK

The Balinok Mountains are home to disparate tribes of mountainfolk. Although they are certainly citizens of Barovia and subjects of Strahd, the devil pays them little heed. Rarely do they venture down to the green lands and when they do, it isn't for long. They are a people of hardy berserkers and somber druids that somehow thrive in the harshest corners of Barovia.



Of all the tribes, none are more feared than the Mistwhisper Tribe, whose druids worship Strahd von Zarovich as the “Land Itself.” After years of peace, the Mistwhispers have begun to attack neighboring tribes and march upon Barovian territory. The sacred place of Yester Hill—once shared by all tribes—has become the site of their operations.

Call to Arms. Mountainfolk rarely leave their summit, except to make a pilgrimage to Yester Hill. Never do they consort with Barovians. Something has caused you to leave your tribe behind. Consider rolling on the Call to Arms table or choose one of its options.

Associate. You are the friend, lover, or relative of Helwa, a mighty warrior of your tribe. She refused to accompany you to greener lands, believing that “consorting with Barovians is the errand of the fool.” Should you return to Mount Ghakis, you might be able to find her.

Lore. See the Mountainfolk Lore handout in appendix A for more details on your people.

CALL TO ARMS

d6 Motivation

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | I am in search of the legendary Blood Spear, the weapon of Kavan, an ancient chieftain who drank the blood of his enemies and prey. The elders say Kavan was buried at Yester Hill. |
| 2 | The Mistwhispers slaughtered my tribe after they refused to bend the knee. I have gone in search of power so that I may avenge the fallen. |
| 3 | I was exiled from my tribe for blasphemy—for consorting with forbidden knowledge better left in the depths below Mount Ghakis. |
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| 6 | The mists have closed in on Barovia, cutting my tribe in two. To be reunited with my kin, I must find a way to press through the mists. |

DUSK ELF

The dusk elves constitute the second largest populace of Barovia, and their history is fraught with tragedy. In ages past, long before Strahd set out to conquer his enemies, a dusk elven kingdom neighbored his family’s holdings. A war broke out after the dusk elves refused to pay fealty to his father, King Barov. With the help of the “Great Betrayer,” Rahadin, a dusk elf exile, Barov obliterated the dusk elven kingdom and ended their royal line. The survivors fled to an idyllic valley—what would one day become Barovia. There they found shelter with the Order of the Silver Dragon, but Strahd, when he inherited the crown, would not relent. Soon the devil was on their doorstep, and with him came the Great Betrayer that had hunted the dusk elves like rabbits.

The years after their subjugation proved no less forgiving for the dusk elves. Although they found friendship with the Vistani, so much so that they even adopted their surnames and customs, the dusk elves were still hated by Strahd and therefore disdained by Barovians. Ultimately, they found peace in quiet obscurity—until Patrina Velikovna dared to demand Strahd’s hand in marriage. Patrina was a powerful wizard whose magic rivaled the devil’s. The two, it was said, were a match made in Hell. And much to the valley’s surprise, the devil accepted her as his newest bride.

Horrified that one of their own would marry the devil, the dusk elves stoned Patrina to death. Her own brother, Kasimir, threw the very first stone—for he had organized her murder. When news of his bride’s demise reached Castle Ravenloft, Strahd sent Rahadin to punish the elves. The Great Betrayer slew all women but left the men, dooming them to extinction. The dusk elves are now a broken people, left to languish forever in Barovia.

DUSK ELF PLAYER CHARACTERS

When creating your dusk elf, consider the following traits:

Racial Traits. A dusk elf uses the traits of a wood elf, as found in the *Player’s Handbook*.

Origin. As a dusk elf, you either live out in the Svalich Woods—a suicidal venture if there ever was one—or with your surviving kin outside Vallaki.

Lore. See the Dusk Elf Lore handout in appendix A.

Call to Arms. Your people have languished here in Barovia for four centuries—but something has caused you to suddenly leave for adventure. There is no doubt that any dusk elf has cause to murder Strahd von Zarovich, but a particular reason has motivated your recent flight. Roll on the Call to Arms table below or choose one of its options.

CALL TO ARMS

d6 Motivation

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | I am the last living female dusk elf. Should the devil Strahd learn of my existence, I will surely be put to death after years of torture. Someone has learned my secret and my choices are clear: escape Barovia or die. |
| 2 | My people have been driven to extinction. Our only hope is to escape Barovia and to do so, we must drive a stake into Strahd’s heart. |
| 3 | I burn with hatred for Rahadin, the Great Betrayer. My days on this earth are numbered but his will prove even shorter! |
| 4 | Kasimir Velikov believes that there is power to be found deep in the Balinok Mountains—a power that might save our people. I must gather my own strength before setting out on such a harrowing journey. |
| 5 | I have heard rumors that Dr. Rudolph van Richten, the legendary monster hunter, has come to Barovia. I must find this hunter before the devil does. |
| 6 | A dark presence has offered me the chance to replace Strahd von Zarovich as ruler of this land. It is better to rule in such a dismal Hell than languish here with a good heart. |

GOLIATH

No other nonhuman populace fits Barovia's grim nature better than goliaths, whose rugged and callous lifestyles would win even the devil's approval. While a goliath clan isn't ordinarily found in *Curse of Strahd*, the Dungeon Master can easily add one for the benefit of a goliath player character without infringing upon the module's core themes. The following information in this section relies upon this fact.

The Balinok Mountains, which cradle the Barovian valley, are home to goliaths. They are an unyielding people that have somehow managed to thrive in the country's harshest terrain. Rarely do they visit the green lands, and when they do it, it is to trade pelts for wine and other goods.

The goliaths predate Strahd von Zarovich's arrival to this land, having been guided to it by dreams centuries ago. Once united as one clan, the goliaths were sundered four centuries ago after a disastrous war with a silver dragon that now lies dead. One clan left for Mount Baratok in the north; the other remained at Mount Ghakis in the south. The two clans are at war to this day; skirmishes are infrequent but violent.

Clan Vaima-Olava. Mount Baratok is home to Clan Vaima-Olava, who believe that no good can come from either arcane magic or consorting with Barovians. To leave their lands for any other purpose than trade is to allow oneself to be corrupted.

Clan Thelgataana. Mount Ghakis is patrolled by Clan Thelgataana, who nurse a deep-seated hatred for Barovians. Their druids have a dark fascination with Strahd von Zarovich and believe that the fertile lands to the north ought to be theirs. Chieftess Maveia Darkwarden Thelgataana leads the clan with an ironfist.

GOLIATH PLAYER CHARACTERS

When creating your goliath, consider the following traits:

Racial Traits. See Volo's Guide to Monsters for goliath racial traits.

Origin. As a goliath, you originate from either Clan Vaima-Olava or Clan Thelgataana.

Lore. See the Goliath Lore and Mountainfolk Lore handouts in appendix A.

Call to Arms. Your people rarely consort with Barovians, but something has motivated you into leaving for greener lands. Roll on the Call to Arms table or choose one of its options.

CALL TO ARMS

d6	Motivation
1	My people were slaughtered by the opposing clansmen; I seek vengeance for the fallen.
2	I am in search of the <i>blood spear</i> , the legendary weapon of Chieftain Kavan, the warrior of yore. Legends say that only the worthy may wield it and that its touch drains the life force from the wielder's enemies.
3	I am a Vaima-Olavan; I must prove myself to win the hand of Chieftess Gautheni Wolfslayer Vaima in marriage.
4	I am a Thelgataana disgusted with my people's dark fascination with Strahd. I must end this lunacy before it spells our doom.
5	I am in search of the ancient sanctum my people once protected.
6	I have been exiled from my clan for consorting with dark spirits or some other dishonor.



TIEFLING

Tieflings, like aasimar, represent the opportunity to expand a player's options in a human-centric setting. Although Barovia has seen few tieflings, it is not without its own share of devilish influences.

Your infernal lineage does not go unnoticed in this dismal land. Barovian tieflings must mind their

neighbors, many of whom are always looking for a scapegoat in times of distress. The average Barovian proves ill-tempered, ignorant, and suggestible, as many a tiefling can attest to. Not a single one has lived without the fear of being blamed for misfortune and natural disasters.

History. Barovia has seen five tieflings in its time and dreads the arrival of the sixth (an unlucky number). Three of these tieflings came from the lands beyond the mists; one betrayed their comrades to serve the devil Strahd before being slain two years later. The two native tieflings faced far too much prejudice in their lives; one was stoned to death in the wake of a fire and the other took their own life rather than continue to suffer beside such awful folk in such a dismal land.

TIEFLING PLAYER CHARACTERS

When creating your tiefling, consider the following traits:

Racial Traits. Tiefling traits can be found in the Player's Handbook.

Origin. As a tiefling, you still come from a human lineage. Choose an origin just as an ordinary human does. It is recommended that you grew up in Vallaki or a small steading outside it during less dangerous times. This also determines the lore handout you can read from appendix A (e.g. the Barovian Lore and Vallaki Lore handout).

Upbringing. Your infernal heritage cannot be mistaken. As a tiefling, you have had a unique upbringing, be that good or ill. Roll on the Tiefling Upbringing table or choose an option on the table.

TIEFLING UPBRINGING

d6 Upbringing

1	I was raised by Father Lucian at St. Andral's Church in Vallaki, who fought to keep frightened Vallakians from stoning me in the aftermath of a cyclone. I have a deep relationship with the priest, who has been like a father to me.
2	I was an ordinary human until I was lost in the Balinok Mountains. A spirit of sorts offered me the opportunity to be forever warm. When I returned to civilization, it was with this infernal appearance.
3	The townsfolk believe I am the bastard of the devil Strahd. They give me a wide berth when they can and suck up to me when they can't.
4	I was once kidnapped by devil worshipers who believed I was either their dark messiah or the portal through which they could summon even worse fiends.
5	Throughout my childhood, I was routinely visited by a mad priest that sought to exorcise "my demons." Clearly, it didn't work.
6	My mother was a witch who laid with fiendish spirits. Last I heard, she continues to practice her dark craft at Castle Ravenloft.

HEIR TO RUIN

You are the descendant of an adventurer that perished in Barovia—but not before siring a child. This ancestor may have been an orc, a dragonborn, or of some other ancestry foreign to Barovia. You now bear their legacy—and languish under the

curse of Strahd. You never asked to be born into this dismal prison of a land. You never asked to be condemned to Barovia. Yet thanks to this ancestor—their carelessness, their weakness—you now must now suffer in this wretched country, ogled or feared by the ignorant.

HEIRS TO RUIN: NONHUMANS OF BAROVIA

The Heir to Ruin origin is your opportunity to play a race that is not already present in Barovia. As such, you do not come from a clan or tribe of people, but are simply the descendent of one. Be forewarned that too many Heirs to Ruin in a single adventuring party simply contradicts Barovia's ancestral makeup. This is a story about Barovian natives overthrowing their darklord, after all.

HEIR TO RUIN PLAYER CHARACTERS

When designing your heir to ruin, consider these facets of your ancestry:

Racial Traits. Use the racial traits of your chosen ancestry, such as dwarf, orc (or half-orc), or halfling.

Ancestor. Your ancestor is as much of your story as their descendent, and they might be able to factor into the campaign. Roll on the Ancestor Circumstances table or choose an option that appeals to you.

Family and Lineage. How long ago your ancestor arrived in Barovia is up to you. They may have come with a spouse or another person of your same ancestry, allowing them to have children. Depending on your ancestry, they may have had children with other humans, in which case you are partially human. You may have even already been born when they wound up in Barovia. While devising this lineage, ask yourself if you have any living siblings or other kin here in this dismal country.

Origin. You are free to choose any settlement of Barovia as your origin, such as the town of Vallaki, the Vistani, the dusk elves, or even the mountainfolk tribes. The Vistani, having traveled to foreign lands, are far more accepting of outsiders than the average Barovians. In contrast, mountainfolk tribes rarely allow outsiders in their midsts, but prove undyingly loyal once trust is established.

Lore. The lore handout you receive in appendix A is determined by your origin.



CLASSES

Those with the will to survive, to thrive, and to stand boldly against the darkness (or embrace it) become what would be called “heroes” in other lands. Barovia, however, does not want heroes. Barovia does not produce heroes, only entire generations of miserable, soulless husks. To suffer in silence is a Barovian custom. To defy it is to invite scorn, not hope, by those who fear that any heroics will only worsen their fate—for while Strahd von Zarovich loves (to play with) heroes, so too does he punish his flock to discourage any would-be wolves from ever trying to stand against him again.

As a Barovian—human or not—you can tie your adventuring career to the land of your birth. This section explores each of the thirteen classes, making suggestions for your background or the origins of your profession. Take them as you will and adapt them to shape the character you desire. Your choice of class might determine:

- Events that transpire in the campaign, or obstacles you later face.
- Events that shaped your character’s talents and class (to be *suggested* by the DM after hearing what it is you wish to play).
- Your relationship with other characters (e.g., a Vallakian cleric would be familiar with Father Lucian, the local priest).
- The origin of your gifts as an adventurer (e.g., a wizard’s mentor, the source of a sorcerer’s magic, or the identity of a warlock’s patron).

Behind the Scenes. Your Dungeon Master is given much advice on how to tie your class into the campaign, but this information can’t be presented to players, lest certain storylines or secrets be spoiled. You effectively make the choice first (because you know what you want to play) and they look up the information in chapter 2 to better help flesh out your character or their role in the campaign.

CLASSES BY REGION

Class	Most Prevalent Region
Artificer	Barovians and Vistani
Barbarian	Mountainfolk
Bard	Vistani
Cleric	Barovians
Druid	Mountainfolk
Fighter	Barovians
Monk	Barovians
Paladin	Barovians
Ranger	Dusk Elves and Vistani
Rogue	Dusk Elves and Vistani
Sorcerer	Any
Warlock	Any
Wizard	Barovians and Dusk Elves



ARTIFICER

Artificers represent the industrious spirit absent in most Barovians. They make do, invent, and evolve. They are not content to darn socks or repair the same leaky roof for the umpteenth time. With no new wealth—material or intellectual—flowing into the valley, artificers are one of Barovia’s sole sources of innovation. Even the simplest magic item proves invaluable in a land of hand-me-downs and recycled equipment. As an artificer, your services are in high demand, granting you much influence with nobility, clergy, and peasants alike.

The greatest artificer in Barovian history is no doubt Fritz von Weerg, the legendary inverter whose most famed creation—a clockwork automaton—is rumored to still roam Castle Ravenloft. Most Barovian artificers begin their education with an old manual of his. Although Fritz has been dead for centuries, his legacy is carried on by these posthumous students.

Artificer Master. You were taught the secrets of artificing by a skilled magus or guided along your path by a supportive mentor. Roll on the Artificer Master table or choose one of the options below.

ARTIFICER MASTER

d6 Master or Mentor

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | You are the apprentice of the miserly Jakarion, a dark-hearted wizard that set off for Mount Ghakis with your colleague, Vilnius. It has been several weeks since they departed. |
| 2 | You were taught the mundane arts of woodworking and cobbling by Gadof Blinsky, the eccentric toymaker of Vallaki. Although Blinsky lacks magic, his knowledge and passion proved instrumental in honing your magical craft. |
| 3 | The dusk elf wizard Kasimir Velikov taught you the fundamentals of magic, which you then applied to artificing. |
| 4 | Through great trial and error, you taught yourself artificing with the help of a dog-eared manual of Fritz von Weerg’s. |
| 5 | Your master died forging an automaton for the devil Strahd. The magical suit of armor strangled your master because you botched a spell that would protect you and him from its wrath. |
| 6 | Your master was summoned away for business. You know not her fate, only that she set off for Krezk. It has been several weeks since her departure. |





BARBARIAN

Violence is the invisible undercurrent of Barovian society. One need not hail from the Balinok Mountains to earn the title of “barbarian.” Barovians possess short tempers, but some can channel a rage so fearsome that it rivals the lupine ferocity of werewolves. Grief and discontent are the seeds from which most Barovian barbarians are born—be they human widows, dusk elven survivors of genocide, or goliath berserkers.

Origin of Rage. As a barbarian, your rage might originate from circumstances mundane or magical. Roll on the Barovian Rage table or choose an option that best fits your character.

BAROVIAN RAGE

d8	Origin of Rage
1	My rage is born from the loss of a loved one.
2	I drank a potion by an alchemist that has since split my personality in twain. When enraged, I take on this violent alter ego.
3	I was cursed to fits of rage by a witch whose love I rebuked.
4	My family was murdered years ago. My grief has been distilled into a cold fury I can call upon in battle.
5	I was the unwilling sacrifice of a devilish cult, but I embraced the fiendish spirit they summoned rather than allowing myself to be consumed.

6 I beseeched a hag for the strength to overcome this land’s many horrors. Her foul deal has left me with a murderous temper that I can just barely control.

7 When my family came under attack from creatures of the night, I found a disastrous inner source of strength with which I could protect them.

8 I was grazed by a werewolf’s fangs. Although I have not succumbed to lycanthropy, I still labor beneath a bestial rage that demands to be freed.

PRIMAL PATH

You can link your barbarian’s Primal Path to Barovian lore. Consider the suggestions below:

Path of the Ancestral Guardian. You are haunted by the spirits of your ancestors, past victims, or fallen comrades. All wish to see you suffer for your past betrayals or failures.

Path of the Beast. You are the descendant of a true lycanthrope.

Path of the Berserker. Your rage is so complete that you can wade into battle unarmored.

Path of the Storm Herald. You were close to death one winter while hunting in the Balinok Mountains. As you accepted death, you felt a surge of elemental power that kept you warm and alive until you returned to the valley below.

Path of the Totem Warrior. After becoming lost in the Svalich Woods, you came upon an ancient shrine carved into the stump of a tree. There, you communed with the primal spirits that once held dominion over Barovia. They seek to be restored, to see Strahd’s grip on this land undone.

Path of the Wild Magic. You found a strange, pinecone-sized gem once while washing yourself in a stream. Although the gem vanished, you were left with a semblance of magic that is now manifesting many years later.

Path of the Zealot. You are a fierce worshiper of the Morninglord—the mace with which he will take back Barovia from the devil Strahd!

BARD

Barovia is in dire need of a song, but few are willing to sing it. Even fewer dare to listen. The soul of this country, long since lost to despair, aches for artistry, for inspiration, for hope. As a bard, you have found yourself loved and scorned by the very same people, for while many rejoice in your works, they are prone to sudden fits of resentment over the lot they’ve been dealt. To practice your art is to bring both great joy and invite greater sorrow.

Barovian bards are few in number and come from many professions. Although this world is grim and forlorn, you still manage to invoke beauty through your art, whatever that medium may be.





BARDIC COLLEGES

Your choice of bardic college may be rooted in an event that shaped your life, be it magical or mundane. Consider the following hooks when making your decision:

College of Creation. Known as a skilled painter, you were summoned by the devil Strahd to paint the portrait of a fair-haired maiden. The devil warned you that if you “failed to capture her beauty,” you would spend all eternity trying again as one of his vampire spawn. Drawing upon a spark of creation, you wrought a masterpiece that you know still hangs in Castle Ravenloft to this day.

College of Eloquence. You once heard the devil Strahd when he came to publicly execute an embezzling steward. You were awed by the very strength of his voice and the gravity of his presence. You are convinced that the Spoken Word is the ultimate form of power.

College of Glamour. You were once enthralled by a hag but, after breaking free of her foul charms, managed to somehow steal a fragment of her power. She still lurks out there in the darkness, hungering for what she lost...

College of Lore. You dared to speak truth to power—and were imprisoned by Baron Vargas Vallakovich of Vallaki. Ultimately, a mob of your fans demanded your release.

College of Swords. Your parents were carnies that hailed from lands beyond the mists. They taught you the arts of sword swallowing, knife juggling, and fine dueling.

College of Valor. As a bard of valor, you were inspired by tales of some of Barovia’s greatest

warriors: Sir Leonid “the Crusher” Krushkin, who slew the valley’s last giant; Alex Guilliam, the greatest of Strahd’s generals and warriors; and Vladimir Horngaard, a legendary knight of the now-destroyed Order of the Silver Dragon.

College of Whispers. You are aware of an insidious undercurrent endemic to Barovia... a wave of shadow that permeates every aspect of life here. Knowing that this land only rewards the wolves, and not the sheep, you have chosen to harness this power for your own purposes.

CLERIC

The cleric is truly an iconic choice for a Barovian campaign, for this is a land of darkness haunted by ghosts, ghouls, and other creatures of the night. To wield the light of the Heavens is to stand in stark opposition to these evil forces.

The Barovian people worship two deities, both of whom have become silent in recent years. These deities are the Morninglord, charged with guarding the Barovian people from dawn to dusk; and Mother Night, a mysterious deity to whom Barovians pray for protection from the creatures of the Night.

As a Barovian cleric, your divine domain choices are largely limited to these two deities unless your Dungeon Master decides to add further deities to the Barovian pantheon. Your choice of subclass is not so limited, however, for these two deities can be interpreted into many divine domains. Your choice of deity, and your interpretation of their divine domain, has drastic consequences for your character. If you are a Vistani cleric, you might worship deities from distant lands, such as gods of the forge, travel, or trade.

THE MORNINGLORD

The Morninglord is a kind and loving deity whose priesthoods are charged with keeping hope alive in Barovia. Each Barovian settlement holds a house of worship: the humble church in the village of Barovia, St. Andral’s Church in Vallaki, and the illustrious Abbey of Saint Markovia in Krezk.

DIVINE DOMAINS

The Morninglord is a deity of life and light. When choosing your divine domain, consider these domains:

Grave. The Morninglord is not the typical morose deity of the grave, nor is his priesthood. Barovian funerary rites are centered upon the Morninglord; the dead are even buried at dawn so that they may be welcomed into his warm embrace.

Life. The Morninglord’s most devout wield his powers to foster love, life, and hope in an otherwise dismal land.

Light. Clerics that wish to wield the fire and fury of the sun invoke the Morninglord’s most incendiary



rites. More zealots than priests, these clerics are determined to burn away the darkness and march into the Svalich Woods to exterminate its horrors.

Peace. The Morninglord wishes for nothing more than a safe and happy life for his flock. Clerics who interpret his powers as a means of peace might seek to better Barovian life without bloodshed.

MOTHER NIGHT

The mysterious deity known as Mother Night is as cold and distant as the moon itself. She has no church in Barovia but is prayed to with even greater fervor—fear, really—than the Morninglord himself.

DIVINE DOMAINS

Mother Night is a deity of darkness and secrets. When choosing your divine domain, consider these facts:

Knowledge. Those who wish to hide or unearth secrets often pray to Mother Night. Her most devout hierophants are sometimes gifted with oracular powers.

Trickery. It is not unknown for Mother Night to curse those who prove witless or weak-willed. Hierophants that focus on this most nefarious aspect channel her favor to beguile others.

Twilight. The night is long and treacherous, and Mother Night often rewards the vigilant with comfort and favor.

DRUID

The Barovian wilderness is harsh and full of horrors—and yet druids still dare to walk the Svalich Woods and Balinok Mountains, attuning themselves to the natural world. Barovian druidism is unseen but not unheard of. The mountainfolk, whose traditions predate Strahd's conquest, practice the ancient art, and exceptional Barovians may become druids in times of famine. Before their genocide, many dusk elves likewise practiced druidism.

Druidic Circle. As a druid, you may be an inductee to a druidic circle whose legacy stretches to the days of yore. During the campaign, you can use your druidic circle once to your advantage, asking for help in the form of information that they might feasibly know. You must be able to reach the circle with a message, such as through an animal messenger spell or leaving a Druidic message carved on a well-frequented stump.

Lore. As a druid, you are privy to secrets unknown by most Barovians. See the Druid Lore handout in appendix A.

FIGHTER

Necessity is the mother of invention—and danger is the mother of warriors. Fighters come from all walks of Barovian life, for Barovia is a land teeming with peril. As a fighter, you may have mundane



origins, but your destiny is far grander than that of the guards who patrol your settlement's borders.

Feat of Strength. An act of martial superiority distinguishes you from your peers. Roll on the Feat of Strength table or choose one of its options to better flesh out your character.

FEAT OF STRENGTH

d6 Feat

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | You stood fast against an incursion of undead and smashed in the head of a ghoul. |
| 2 | You dared to tackle a raging werewolf long enough for your comrade to pierce its heart with a silver blade. |
| 3 | You fought Izek Strazni of Vallaki, the baron's brutish enforcer, to a standstill. He has sworn vengeance and eagerly awaits the day he may wring your neck. You still bear the burns left by his conjured fire. |
| 4 | You were selected to battle another warrior for the amusement of the devil Strahd at Castle Ravenloft. The loser would be slain and raised as one of his vampire spawn. Suffice to say, you won. |
| 5 | You were taught the art of swordplay from a Vistani master-at-arms and ultimately bested him in honorable combat. |
| 6 | You saved a roadside family from mountainfolk marauders. |



MARTIAL ARCHETYPES

When deciding your martial archetype, consider any of the possible circumstances below. A martial archetype not included below is not so easily related to existing Barovian lore.

Arcane Archer. You were taught the elven art of arcane archery by a dying dusk elf patriarch.

Battle Master. You are the deputy commander of a local militia.

Eldritch Knight. You were trained as a wizard's apprentice but failed their exacting standards. Now, many years later, you have decided to channel such disappointing schooling into martial magic.

Psi Warrior. Your neighbors have always given you a wide berth, citing the strange circumstances that always seem to occur in your presence. Curtains twitch by themselves; scratches appear on nearby glass windows; and porcelain tends to shatter from across the room.

Rune Knight. You discovered your first runes on a menhir outside Vallaki.

Samurai. Making your last stand against a wave of undead, you believed that your death was inevitable— and found the will to survive, no matter what, in that dark hour.

MONK

Monks have been a rare sight in Barovia ever since the Abbey of Saint Markovia fell to Strahd's siege centuries ago. In the abbey's heyday, somber spiritualists meditated alongside the Morninglord's most devout priests. After the abbey fell, many roamed the Barovian countryside as hermits or sages, taking on only a few students. Your monk is one of these pupils, having been taught by a local hermit or a small, secretive order. Work with your Dungeon Master to describe this order, keeping the limitations of its size and influence in mind.

MONASTIC TRADITIONS

You can embrace or rebuke Barovia's gothic nature through your monastic tradition. Consider the hooks below when deciding your monastic tradition. Monastic traditions not on this list prove more difficult to link to preexisting Barovian lore.

Way of the Drunken Master. In a land as dismal as Barovia, where wine is often the sole comfort of the downtrodden, the drunken master becomes a tragic figure. Although your monk has learned to channel a drunk's wild behavior into martial prowess, their "talent" may have originated as a means to cope with the loss of a loved one or the dark realization that the land of your birth shall forever be your tomb.



Way of the Long Death. Morbid alchemists or morticians, monks of the Long Death are feared, and even reviled, in Barovian society. The average peasant does not seek the secrets of death—but nobility do. Perhaps your monk is desperate to escape the mortal coil or being patronized by an aristocrat too afraid to die.

Way of Mercy. Monks of Mercy are a grim omen, appearing only, it seems, when a plague is imminent in Barovia. In their eerie, raven-beaked cowls, these monks tend to the sick and dying...

Way of Shadow. A Shadow monk may belong to an order of assassins or be secret hierophants of Mother Night, the mysterious deity whose prayers still go unanswered.

Way of the Sun Soul. Those who still have faith in the Morninglord may have found within themselves an ember of his light—and fanned it into a glorious flame with which they battle the darkness.

PALADIN

Godforsaken Barovia is home to a people so broken that they no longer yearn for heroes—yet still individuals of great conviction emerge to fight the darkness. Few take on the title of “paladin,” but their heroism and zealotry cannot be denied.

Paladins are inherently symbols of hope—but Barovians aren’t interested in hope anymore. They prefer to suffer in quiet, but safe, obscurity rather than tempt Strahd’s wrath. Barovians even go so far as to discourage valor and resistance lest the devil punish the commonwealth for the antics of one fool.



SACRED OATHS

Given their conviction, most paladins’ oaths are related to Strahd or the monsters that infest Barovia. Consider these motivations when selecting your oath. Some oaths are more difficult to relate to the campaign than others and therefore do not appear below.

Ancients. You swore an oath before the ancient fey of Barovia to free this land from the grip of Strahd, whose power seems to swell with each passing year.

Conquest. You intend to replace Strahd von Zarovich as the ruler of this land.

Devotion. A fierce believer of the Morninglord, it is your duty to bring light to the darkness and restore the church to its former glory. When the sun at last shines again unobscured, you may lay your head to rest.

Vengeance. You have sworn to avenge the countless souls who have fallen to the darkness.

Redemption. This land is soaked in ancient blood and unforgotten violence. So long as the tumor that is Strahd von Zarovich continues to fester, the Barovian people will continue to turn to vice and fear over the warmth of the heart. It is not enough to slay Strahd von Zarovich; you must force the vampire to repent his sins before sending him to the grave.

Watchers. Barovia is infested with horrors far greater than avaricious and frightened men. Werewolves, undead, and greater threats continue to lurk in the shadows. It is up to you to enter the darkness and end them.

RANGER

Barovia is a wild land teeming with beasts and monsters alike. When someone goes missing, when a monster stalks the streets or prowls the woods, or when knowledge is needed to battle the dark, it is a Barovian ranger the townsfolk call for. These hunters and trackers prove vital for the realm, for although civilization has been eked out under the gaze of Castle Ravenloft, Barovia’s distant liege offers no aid to his people. Faced with creatures of the night, Barovians must look inward for those brave enough to leave the safety of a settlement to dispatch threats.

Rangers are most prevalent amongst the dusk elves and mountainfolk, who grapple with Barovia’s horrors far more intimately than Barovians. Those who become rangers live brief and brave careers; it is a station often reserved for an extra son or daughter.

RANGER ARCHETYPES

A ranger’s calling is a testament to the prey they hunt or the tactics they employ against such monsters. When choosing your ranger archetype, consider these origins:



Monster Slayer. You were but a simple tracker until you found a copy of Van Richten's *Treatise on Creatures of the Night*, written by the legendary monster hunter Rudolph van Richten. Armed with his wisdom and knowledge, you can bravely face Barovia's horrors.

Swarmkeeper. Your father failed to pioneer the Barovian mead industry and lost out to the Martkov family's monopoly on wine. Raised an apiarist, your innate connection to Nature allows you to harness the bees your father once hoped would make him rich.

ROGUE

There is little bravado in Barovia. Those who steal do so only to stave off the Reaper but, by doing so, walk closer to the grave. The laws of Count Strahd are iron clad: thieves are put to death without remorse. Rogues stand in defiance of the morose reality they were born to; they dare to make their own fortune and test Fate itself.

ROGUSH ARCHETYPE

You can link your roguish archetype to Barovia's preexisting lore and characters. Some hooks, however, are more related to your actual character, or just inherent to the rogue class in general.

Beast Master. Demonstrating kinship with animals, the traveling half-elf entertainer Rictavio has entrusted you with a foreign beast of his.

Fey Wanderer. Long ago, while along the river, you came across a magical gemstone as big as a pinecone. Although the gem mysteriously vanished, this brief contact imbued you with now-blossoming fey magic.

Gloom Stalker. Rarely do creatures of the night give their hunters the opportunity to fight in the light of day. To hunt monsters, one must stalk their kingdoms of darkness.

Horizon Walker. You are quite certain that Barovia's horrors originate in a land of eternal death and gloom. Its influence leaks out into the valley, bringing with it monsters and misery. Cultivating your otherworldly senses, you seek to close off whatever rifts are threatening your people.

Hunter. You are a skilled wolf hunter who stands amongst legends like Yevgeni Krushkin and Szoldar Szoldarovich, the esteemed wolf hunters of Vallaki.



Arcane Trickster. Since you were young, you've been able to occasionally move small objects with your mind—door knobs and papers were trivial feats. Now, as your roguish talents develop, you've been able to access greater magics.

Assassin. You were slated to join the Ba'al Verzi (the very order whose most esteemed member, Leo Dilisnya, murdered Strahd von Zarovich)—before your recruiter wound up dead.

Inquisitive. You are a witch-hunter tasked by the Church of the Morninglord to root out sorcerers and magi.

Mastermind. You were hired by the Wachter family to spy upon the rival Vallaki families.

Phantom. A brush with death has left a stain upon your soul. Perhaps you were sentenced to execution, almost murdered, possessed by a ghost, or the right hand of a necromancer.

Scout. You are a skilled tracker that has trained alongside dusk elven rangers.

Swashbuckler. You have honed your bladework by studying under a traveling Vistani master-at-arms.

Thief. You have a long history of smuggling garlic and silver across Barovia.

SORCERER

Sorcerers burn bright in Barovia, but they don't burn for long. Most are stoned or banished lest they bring ruin upon everyone else. As a sorcerer in this forlorn land, you live in constant fear that the power you wield may be your demise. There are many who would use you to further their own dark agendas. Even the devil Strahd has been known to "invite" sorcerers to Castle Ravenloft; it is rumored that the vampyr savors the blood of magi above even that of virgins.

SORCEROUS ORIGINS

As a Barovian sorcerer, your magical origins are linked to the dismal land you were born into. When designing your character, consider these possible explanations. A sorcerous origin that does not appear below cannot be so easily linked to preexisting Barovian lore.

Divine Soul. Your heritage is wreathed in the light of the Morninglord or the darkness of Mother Night. Some may consider you a messiah, others an ominous portent of future tragedies.

Draconic. Your draconic ancestor is none other than Argynvost, the silver dragon that protected this valley before being slaughtered by Count Strahd's soldiers.

Shadow. A brush with death or living darkness has left its mark upon your very soul...

Wild Magic. Your powers may have been inherited from a powerful wizard of Barovia's misty past—And its arcane secrets are your birthright.

WARLOCK

Warlocks are no strangers to godforsaken Barovia. With no salvation in sight, it should come as no surprise that the intrigued and desperate would turn to forbidden knowledge and otherworldly beings for the very power they've been denied. To consort with such dark influences is a death sentence; no Barovian can allow such blasphemy. It is in every warlock's interest to keep their pact a secret until they amass enough power to cow any mob or would-be mage hunter.

OTHERWORLDLY PATRONS

Several otherworldly patrons are present in Barovia, allowing you to relate the origin of your power to the campaign. If a patron does not appear on this list, your character may have made a pact through forbidden research or consorting with a spirit. Because some of these hooks may spoil parts of the campaign, they have been left intentionally vague.

Archfey. Upon discovering menhirs outside Vallaki, the wicked archfey Ceithlenn of the Crooked Teeth offered you power—so long as she could watch your exploits through your own eyes.

Celestial. You were languishing in a cell, condemned to execution, when a heavenly being appeared within your mind. This celestial force offered you salvation: repent your wicked ways and live with that heavenly fire at your fingertips. Surely, this angel must belong to the ranks of the Morninglord or Mother Night, the two deities that once watched over the Barovian people.

Fathomless. Beneath a Barovian lake slumbers a sunken entity who promises power—and urges you to join it in the frigid depths.





Fiend. You belong to a fiendish cult or were slated to be sacrificed in its rituals. Recognizing your potential, the worshipped fiend offered you a pact.

Hexblade. A dark spirit wishes for you to slay Strahd von Zarovich, but you do not know why. Alternatively, you found a sentient dagger that calls itself “Kingslayer.”

Undying. Your patron is the lich Exethanther, who lairs in a forbidden sanctum dug deep into the summit of Mount Ghakis.

WIZARD

Wizards, while feared and respected, are few in number. Not only is arcane magic vilified by Barovians, it is shockingly difficult to find the materials needed to pursue the craft. Since so much of Barovian life is devoted to ensuring there is enough food and firewood to last the month, those that would otherwise find the time and patronage to study wizardry are instead busy with day-to-day survival.

Barovian wizards and witches may be few in number, but they prove consequential. Some of the country’s greatest figures were wizards. Count Strahd von Zarovich himself is a practitioner of the Arcane, and he himself was advised by Archmage

Khazan, who—if legends are to be believed—almost achieved lichdom. Likewise, the foothills are fraught with would-be witches to whom Barovians turn to when they cannot solve their problems through mundane means. Some are even invited to practice their craft in the halls of Castle Ravenloft—although they are seldom better off for it.

WIZARDLY MASTERS

One is not simply born a wizard; they must learn to control the forces of arcane magic. As a Barovian, there are but a few individuals in the valley that could teach you such arcana. Roll on the Wizardly Masters table or choose an option that appeals to you.

WIZARDLY MASTERS

d6 Master or Mentor

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | I am a self-taught wizard, having found an old spellbook in the precarious ruins of a tower outside Vallaki. Or rather, the spellbook found me. It flew from the ruins and into my hand with enough force to crack a bone. |
| 2 | I was taught by Stanimir, a traveling Vistani mage that occasionally leaves Barovia. He is a kind and forgiving master that often brings news from the lands beyond the mists. |
| 3 | My master is Jakarion, an unpleasant miser who left last month with his older apprentice, Vilnius, for an expedition to Mount Ghakis. I suspect they left in search of forbidden knowledge. |
| 4 | My master is a local witch named Ruxandra, who lairs in a hut outside town. Her familiar, a black cat, collects me whenever it is time to study. |
| 5 | I was taught magic by Kasimir Velikov, the earless dusk elf wizard that lives among the Vistani outside Vallaki. Kasimir is a broken man who seems to distract himself through tutoring others in magic. |
| 6 | My master is the none other than the “Mad Mage of Mount Baratok.” The archmage arrived in Barovia a year ago and has haunted the foothills north of Lake Zarovich ever since. On a good day, he remembers that I am his apprentice. |



BACKGROUNDS

Every Barovian, from the youngest child to the oldest crone, must toil every day to survive. None are afforded respite; all must pull their weight. Your background describes the profession (or lack thereof) you practiced before deciding to oppose the devil Strahd. The *Player's Handbook* contains several backgrounds for your character. When choosing your background, consider adopting the character hook suggested in Character Hooks Tied to Backgrounds table.

YOUR BAROVIAN LIFE

No man is an island. As a Barovian, you have a network of family, friends, and neighbors, and you risk them all by opposing the devil Strahd. Consult the following sections and tables below to determine your life in Barovia. First, decide the settlement from which you hail, if you have not already:

BAROVIAN SETTLEMENT

d20	Settlement
1-3	The village of Barovia
4-10	The town of Vallaki
11-13	The village of Krezk
14-16	The vallaki Vistani Camp
17-18	Tser Pool encampment
19-20	Mountainfolk clan

CHARACTER HOOKS TIED TO BACKGROUNDS

Background	Character Hook
Acolyte	You are an acolyte of the Morninglord, tending to a place of worship: the church in the village of Barovia, St. Andral's Church in Vallaki, or the Abbey of Saint Markovia in Krezk.
Charlatan	To escape death, you stole the identity of another person. It has been so long that you've all but forgotten your former self—as if something is eating away at those memories.
Criminal	You are wanted for "malicious unhappiness" in Vallaki and fled to avoid the baron's draconian punishments. To return to Vallaki is to risk your very life.
Entertainer	You were once summoned to Castle Ravenloft to amuse the devil Strahd. It was the most harrowing experience of your life.
Folk Hero	You are praised as a hero of the common man for slaying a necromancer... but the truth is he was already dead. Barovians do not tolerate such deceit and to admit the truth is to invite a mob's wrath.
Guild Artisan	You apprenticed at the Wizard of the Wines winery but were suddenly fired for inquiring about just <i>how</i> the vineyard remains so fertile when most other Barovian crops wither on the vine.
Hermit	Questions dogged your mind until you had no recourse but to leave civilization behind and live in the Svalich Woods. You know Barovia is not what it seems, but can't quite grasp <i>what</i> exactly is wrong. Standing on the brink of such a titanic discovery has torn at your sanity.
Noble	You are the last living descendent of the ruined Dilisnya lineage, whose most prodigal son, Leo, murdered Count Strahd at Castle Ravenloft. The former prestige of your family has granted you a modest estate, but few are willing to consort with those who proved so treacherous.
Outlander	You were bitten by a werewolf long ago and fled to the Svalich Woods to spare others from your wrath. Somehow the curse has yet to consume you, but you cannot abide the touch of silver.
Sage	You are obsessed with Barovia's greatest secrets—how the devil Strahd became a vampire; the origin of the mists and why they seem to draw in tighter once every few decades; and rumors of a sanctum of dark power hewn deep into the mountains. The truth is yours, should you gain access to Strahd's study in Castle Ravenloft.
Sailor	You are one of the few people brave (or foolish) enough to continue fishing on Lake Zarovich, despite the wolves that teem along its shores. Your dedication in the face of danger has been "rewarded" by an encounter with the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, who once invited you into his abode—a magical mansion that appears to exist in a world of its own.
Soldier	You are a Vallakian guard, sworn to serve the baron and protect the townsfolk—in that order. You have been ordered to bloody "dissidents" and jail innocent people on more than one occasion.
Urchin	Vallaki is unkind to orphans, and your life has had no shortage of hardships. After so many years of skulking about, Lady Fiona Wachter paid you to eavesdrop on others' conversations. You've since terminated your position.

FAMILY

When determining the circumstances of your family, ask yourself the questions below; roll on the supplementary tables if you'd like to leave the answers up to chance:

- Who raised you?
- What is the fate of your parents? Have you any aunts or uncles?
- Do you have siblings? Are they still alive?
- Are your grandparents still alive?
- Are you married, or in a committed relationship? Is your partner still alive?

WHO RAISED YOU?

d100	Circumstances
1-10	I was abandoned by my parents.
11-14	I am an orphan that grew up in an orphanage.
15-20	I am an orphan with an appointed guardian.
21-30	I am an orphan raised by older siblings.
31-39	I am an orphan adopted by another family.
40-45	I am an orphan raised by my uncle, aunt, or grandparents.
46-60	I was raised by my mother.
61-75	I was raised by my father.
76-100	Both of my parents raised me.

SIBLING

d6	Siblings
1	No siblings
2	One younger sibling: alive (70%), dead (30%)
3	One older sibling: alive (60%), dead (40%)
4	Two siblings, one younger, one older (30% chance of death for each)
5	Two siblings, both younger (40% chance of death for each)
6	1d4 siblings. Roll 1d4; the result equals the number that are still alive.

ROMANCE

d6 Relationship Status

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | I am single (and perhaps ready to mingle). |
| 2 | I am in a committed relationship. |
| 3 | I have been divorced 1d4 times. |
| 4 | I am happily married. |
| 5 | I am unhappily married. |
| 6 | I am a widow/widower. |

CHILDREN

d6 Number of Children

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | I have no children. |
| 2 | I have one young child. |
| 3 | I have one adolescent child. |
| 4 | I have 1d4 young children. |
| 5 | I have 1d4 adult children. |
| 6 | I am a grandparent with 1d4 children and 2d4+2 grandchildren. |

FAMILY GREAT SHAME

d8 Shame

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A family member once openly served the devil Strahd. |
| 2 | A family member was convicted for murder. |
| 3 | A family member harbored the Dilisnyas (whose prodigal son, Leo, murdered Count Strahd) after the devil ordered them to be put to death. |
| 4 | A family member became a werewolf that slaughtered scores of innocents. |
| 5 | A family member became a vampiric consort of the devil Strahd's. |
| 6 | A family member belonged to a fiendish cult. |
| 7 | A family member bargained with a hag for power. |
| 8 | A family member was a warlock or witch responsible for many crimes against the common folk. |

LOVED ONE'S CAUSE OF DEATH

d100 Cause of Death

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 1-5 | Entered the mists |
| 6-15 | Accident |
| 16-30 | Illness |
| 31-35 | Murder |
| 36-40 | Execution: innocent of crime (60%), guilty of crime (40%) |
| 41-50 | Creature of the Night: werewolf (50%), undead (20%), vampire spawn (10%), unknown horror (20%) |
| 51-60 | Exposure |
| 61-70 | Wilderness |
| 71-90 | Unknown |
| 91-95 | Condemned to Castle Ravenloft |
| 96-00 | Taken as a vampiric consort of the devil Strahd |

PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS

As a Barovian, you have inherited and accumulated some wealth or property over the years, and, unlike in an ordinary campaign, you can actually leverage them in *Curse of Strahd*.

GOthic TRINKET

Curse of Strahd provides the Dungeon Master with a table of gothic trinkets, many of which are far more fitting for Barovians than foreign adventurers. It

has been extrapolated to this supplement for your convenience. Roll a d100 and consult the table. Your trinket may be a family heirloom no one ever thought to get rid of (if it didn't always find its way back) or brought by an adventurer beyond the mists.

GOthic TRINKETS

d100 Trinket

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1-2 | A picture you drew as a child of your imaginary friend |
| 3-4 | A lock that opens when blood is dripped in its keyhole |
| 5-6 | Clothes stolen from a scarecrow |
| 7-8 | A spinning top carved with four faces: happy, sad, wrathful, and dead |
| 9-10 | The necklace of a sibling who died on the day you were born |
| 11-12 | A wig from someone executed by beheading |
| 13-14 | The unopened letter to you from your dying father |
| 15-16 | A pocket watch that runs backward for an hour every midnight |
| 17-18 | A winter coat stolen from a dying soldier |
| 19-20 | A bottle of invisible ink that can only be read at sunset |
| 21-22 | A wineskin that refills when interred with a dead person for a night |
| 23-24 | A set of silverware used by a king for his last meal |
| 25-26 | A spyglass that always shows the world suffering a terrible storm |
| 27-28 | A cameo with the profile's face scratched away |
| 29-30 | A lantern with a black candle that never runs out and that burns with green flame |
| 31-32 | A teacup from a child's tea set, stained with blood |
| 33-34 | A little black book that records your dreams, and yours alone, when you sleep |
| 35-36 | A necklace formed of the interlinked holy symbols of a dozen deities |
| 37-38 | A hangman's noose that feels heavier than it should |
| 39-40 | A birdcage into which small birds fly but once inside never eat or leave |
| 41-42 | A lepidopterist's box filled dead moths with skull-like patterns on their wings |
| 43-44 | A jar of pickled ghouls' tongues |
| 45-46 | The wooden hand of a notorious pirate |
| 47-48 | An urn with the ashes of a dead relative |
| 49-50 | A hand mirror backed with a bronze depiction of a medusa |
| 51-52 | Pallid leather gloves crafted with ivory fingernails |
| 53-54 | Dice made from the knuckles of a notorious charlatan |
| 55-56 | A ring of keys for forgotten locks |
| 57-58 | Nails from the coffin of a murderer |
| 59-60 | A key to the family crypt |
| 61-62 | A bouquet of funerary flowers that always looks and smells fresh |
| 63-64 | A switch used to discipline you as a child |
| 65-66 | A music box that plays by itself whenever someone holding it dances |
| 67-68 | A walking cane with an iron ferrule that strikes sparks on stone |
| 69-70 | A flag from a ship lost at sea |
| 71-72 | Porcelain doll's head that always seems to be looking at you |
| 73-74 | A wolf's head wrought in silver that is also a whistle |
| 75-76 | A small mirror that shows a much older version of the viewer |
| 77-78 | Small, worn book of children's nursery rhymes |

79-80	A mummified raven claw
81-82	A broken pendent of a silver dragon that's always cold to the touch
83-84	A small locked box that quietly hums a lovely melody at night but you always forget it in the morning
85-86	An inkwell that makes one a little nauseous when staring at it
87-88	An old little doll made from a dark, dense wood and missing a hand and a foot
89-90	A black executioner's hood
91-92	A pouch made of flesh, with a sinew drawstring
93-94	A tiny spool of black thread that never runs out
95-96	A tiny clockwork figurine of a dancer that's missing a gear and doesn't work
97-98	A black wooden pipe that creates puffs of smoke that look like skulls
99-00	A vial of perfume, the scent of which only certain creatures can detect

HOME

Determine the nature, status, and quality of your family home with the table below.

HOME

d6 Home

1	Several rooms in a squalid boarding house.
2	A run-down cabin that never keeps enough heat in the winter.
3	A rowhouse split shared with another family.
4	The remains of a haunted inn.
5	A collection shacks next to a graveyard.
6	A manor bought with ancestral or ill-gotten funds.

WEALTH

With no new wealth flowing into the valley, most Barovians hoard and hide their valuables, lest thieves or jealous neighbors come knocking. To determine your family's accumulated wealth (measured in gp), roll 5d10 and multiply it by 1d10. Additionally, roll on the table below to determine what other valuables your family has.

WEALTH

d20 Treasure

1-7	No additional valuables.
8	A diamond-encrusted wedding ring brought from Count Strahd's homeland (250 gp).
9-10	Savings of 3d10 x 5 + 50 gp.
11	30 bloodstained silver coins an ancestor was paid for betraying a close friend.
12	A silvered dagger once used to harm a ghost.
13-14	A silver holy symbol of the Morninglord (25 gp).
15	1d4+1 sets of fine clothing and one velvet doublet with gold buttons worn by an ancestor when he was invited to dine at Castle Ravenloft.
16	A breastplate worn by one of your ancestors in battle.
17	A silvered longsword with a ruby set into its pommel (150 gp).
18-19	The deed to a haunted manor.
20	An uncommon magic item (roll on the Magic Heirloom table).

MAGIC HEIRLOOM

d6 Magic Item

1	An <i>amulet of proof against detection</i> worn by an executed smuggler.
2	A pair of <i>boots of the winterlands</i> an ancestor used to climb Mount Ghakis.
3	A <i>driftglobe</i> fashioned by Fritz von Weerg, Barovia's greatest inventor, after a dispute with a local candlemaker.
4	A <i>figurine of wondrous power (silver raven)</i> gifted to your great grandfather that no one knows is a magical item.
5	A jar of <i>Keoghtom's ointment</i> with two doses left; one dose was famously used to save the life of a poisoned child.
6	A <i>sending stone</i> , the pair to which was possessed by a companion of your ancestor's that was buried alive.



BEASTS AND PETS

Your family may have some beasts of burden or strange pets. Roll on the table below.

BEASTS AND PETS

d20 Animal

1-9	No animals
10	A 60-year-old, one-eyed raven that offers unsettling noises and advice in the dead of night.
11-13	1d4 riding horses or 1d3 draft horses.
14	An old mule that once kicked a noble in the head. When publicly tried for murder, the mule was acquitted.
15	2d4+2 mastiffs
16-17	A tailless black cat believed to be the familiar of a long-dead witch.
18	A beakless cockatrice.
19	A fist-sized ooze kept in a glass vial that an ancestor of yours infamously used to dispose of corpses overnight.
20	An old hound believed to house the soul of your great, great grandfather.



CHAPTER 2

BEHIND THE SCREEN

In an ordinary *Curse of Strahd* campaign, the player characters are foreign to the region. Their preexisting attachments and character choices, such as class and subclass, have almost nothing to do with the region because—again—they’ve never been there. Almost every official fifth edition adventure from Wizards of the Coast follows this same routine: the adventurers know no one, everything is fresh and new, and any attachments they have are out of reach of the campaign and its villains. It stands to reason that a Dungeon Master running *Curse of Strahd* isn’t used to a setting where all of the adventurers’ friends and loved ones are within easy reach of the Darklord.

This chapter arms you with all the information you need to link your players’ characters to Barovia itself, providing information you can’t give to the players for fear of spoiling major campaign elements. As described in chapter 1, players have several new considerations to make when designing their characters. The sections below suggest possible relationships and outcomes for the adventurers during the campaign, based on their race, class, and background choices.

RACE

Barovia is a homogeneous country inhabited almost entirely by humans. Logically, then, the party should consist chiefly of humans—but players rarely all want to play the same ancestry, especially when that ancestry is the least fantastic option. This section provides you with guidance on how to incorporate certain other ancestries into the campaign—not just Barovia, but *Curse of Strahd* itself.

Before starting your campaign, inform your players that the races below are appropriate for this campaign (removing any that you disagree with).

- Aasimar
- Dusk Elf (using Wood Elf traits)
- Half-Elf

- Human
- Goliath
- Tiefling

Additionally, inform your players that an “heir to ruin” (a single descendant of a foreign nonhuman that wound up in Barovia) can belong to an ancestry not on this list. However, they should be warned that too many heirs to ruin run counter to Barovian’s setting and invalidate the entire purpose of this section.

SOULS AND SHELLS

As described in *Curse of Strahd*, approximately nine-tenths of the population are mere vessels created by Strahd’s will to fill out Barovia. It is recommended that you inverse this, making one out of ten Barovians soulless. Regardless of your choice, all of your players’ characters should possess souls. Later, when the Abbot (or someone else) casually reveals the truth about the Barovian reincarnation cycle, they will have to stop and wonder which of them are soulless.

AASIMAR

Although Barovia belongs to a godforsaken realm, the light of the Morninglord can still penetrate the Shadowfell’s tenebrous aether to produce the occasional aasimar. Because aasimar, like tieflings, can be born from humans, this represents a lore-friendly way to insert a nonhuman into the campaign without threatening Barovian homogeneity.

Barovian Perspective. Aasimar are feared as cruel jokes by the average Barovian; they believe that to embrace happiness is to invite fate’s brutality. Only clergy and fervent members of the laity admire aasimar; others are too afraid to dream of a world in which their deity can still shine.

History. Consider adopting this history for aasimar into your campaign, informing the aasimar player character:



Throughout Barovian history, only four aasimar have been discovered. The first was murdered by an ignorant Vallakian mob that believed fate—or Strahd, or even Mother Night—was testing them. The second died to consumption, landing yet another blow to the laity's faith. The third committed herself to the Abbey of Saint Markovia and even marched upon Castle Ravenloft with the saint herself. The fourth joined ranks of adventurers that were determined to slay Strahd and return home. After his comrades failed to fell the devil, he was kept in a gilded cage on Castle Ravenloft's battlements. Some say his cries could be heard as far as Vallaki until at last he starved to death.

REINCARNATION

Barovians are trapped in an endless reincarnation cycle, giving aasimar the opportunity to be the reincarnation of some of Barovia's holiest figures. This hook has immense potential and ties into several campaign elements, as described below. This truth can be revealed or recognized by Madam Eva, Strahd, or even the Abbot.

It is important that the aasimar does not know they are reincarnation, for few people in Barovia even know of the reincarnation cycle itself. As the campaign unfolds, take note of the aasimar's personality, actions, and convictions (as well as their class) and match them up with the figures below. Throughout the campaign, the aasimar is plagued by dreams that reflect moments from their past life. With enough misdirection, you might lead the players to believe that only the aasimar is a reincarnation, making it a tremendous reveal when they learn that all Barovian souls are reincarnated.

The aasimar might be a reincarnation of one of the following holy figures:

Ciril Romulich, the priest who consecrated Castle Ravenloft with the *Icon of Ravenloft* centuries ago. Upon entering Castle Ravenloft, the character discovers that they have intimate knowledge of the castle's layout. This identity is appropriate for gentle souls, devout worshipers, and clerics.

Lugdana, the ancient paladin who first received the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*. Upon seeing the relic for the first time, the character receives a vision of the original Lugdana receiving the symbol from a giant, divine raven. This identity is appropriate for paladins, zealots, and defenders of the faith.

Saint Markovia, the priest that once so famously launched a crusade against Strahd himself. Markovia's quest ended in failure, but her spirit lives on. Upon learning that the Abbey has fallen to madness, the character is compelled to restore it to its former glory—pitting them against the Abbot. The character is also haunted by nightmares of slowly starving to death in a sealed tomb—the memory of Markovia's doom over three centuries ago. This identity is appropriate for those who hunger for revenge against Strahd and see power



returned to the people.

Sergei von Zarovich, brother of Strahd himself whose death sealed Barovia's dark fate. This character feels a strange, inexplicable connection to Irena Kolyana (and vice versa). Thanks to their angelic appearance, Strahd does not recognize the character's uncanny likeness to Sergei—but should he ever learn that Sergei has been reborn, the devil will waste no time in sending him back into the black hereafter. This identity is appropriate for kindhearted, forgiving individuals who continue to live and love despite Barovia's oppressive atmosphere.

CHARACTER RELATIONS

The average Barovian may fear the light an aasimar brings to the darkness, but the characters below will have their own perspective:

The Abbot views the aasimar—a child of the Morninglord—as competition he must eliminate or undermine. How can he shine brightly when another torch is already burning away the darkness?

Father Donavich sees the aasimar as a sign from the silent deity he has spent so many years praying to. He believes that the aasimar's divine touch can cure his son Doru of vampirism and is broken

when that fails to be true.

Father Lucian celebrates the aasimar as a symbol of the Morninglord's light, but fears that they will suffer the same grim fate as their forebears.

Henrik van der Voort asks the aasimar for forgiveness for his crimes.

Mad Mary sees the aasimar as the savior destined to bring her daughter home.

Strahd sees the aasimar as a symbol of hope that must be extinguished or corrupted.

Vargas Vallakovich insists the aasimar is proof that "all will be well." He even requests the aasimar "consecrate" the Festival of the Blazing Sun.

GOLIATH

If there is any nonhuman race to consider adding en masse to your version of Barovia, it's goliaths. Although there is nothing inherently evil about goliaths, their unforgiving culture based on the survival of the fittest is perfect for Ravenloft. Given that the mountainfolk tribes are hardly present in the module already, you can outright replace them with goliath clans. Barring that, adding a goliath clan amounts to little work on your part, for they would naturally leave the valley to Barovians and instead stake out their own lands in the Balinok Mountains. If implemented, two clans call Barovia home: Clan Vaima-Olava in the north and Clan Thelgaatana in the south.

The goliaths steer clear of Barovian territory, but they are no strangers to Strahd, whom they refer to as "the Ancient" and "the Land." Storms and tragedies are attributed to his terrible wrath—but he is more respected than feared. Whenever tragedy strikes, it is customary for a goliath to grunt, "He is the Ancient" (echoed by grunts of "He is the Land") as if that alone surmises the world's brutal nature. To the goliaths, Strahd is more of a force of nature—an inevitability—than a man.

Barovian Perspective. Barovians fear and respect goliaths more than they do other nonhumans, for the weight they carry and strength they bring to bear can hardly be ignored. The more ignorant fear them as brutes and marauders, despite any historical evidence to that fact.

History. The goliaths were drawn to this valley by dire dreams sent by their ancestral spirits—long before Strahd's armies ever marched upon it. Settling on the summit of Mount Ghakis, they found that which gave the spirits such unease: the unguarded Amber Temple. Initial forays confirmed their worst fears: here lay forces that no mortals should traffic with. The clan decided on that dark eve to become the wardens of this awful place.

Centuries had gone by with minimal incidents. Some among the goliaths demonstrated an appetite for unnatural powers. Those that were not executed for their crimes were exiled or otherwise escaped justice. Then the Order of the Silver

Dragon came. Lord Argynvost considered one crime too many and demanded the clan abdicate their duty and relocate. A brief war was fought, and for a while it seemed as if the clan would endure this conflict. Then Argynvost took wing and laid waste to their armies and holdings. This disastrous defeat sundered the clan, who had long been divided on whether to hold tight to their duty or abandon this terrible place for better lands.

Ultimately, two clans emerged: Clan Vaima-Olava, which sought a better life in the north, and Clan Thelgaatana which refused to leave their home, defeated or otherwise. With the Order of the Silver Dragon dead (but not gone), the two clans have been at war ever since. Border skirmishes are uncommon but fierce—as if some dark force in the land has heightened their enmity and pushed them to greater acts of slaughter.

REVISION: THE BLIGHT CULT

The druids of Yester Hill can easily be replaced by Clan Thelgaatana. Under this revision, the clan has abandoned their ancestors and patron spirits to instead worship Strahd. They believe that the green lands are theirs to take. It is they who have attacked the Wizard of Wines and grown Wintersplinter, the **tree blight** described in Yester Hill.

Subsequent Revisions. If you implement this change, the Berserkers and Druid and Twig Blights random encounters feature goliath **berserkers** and **druids**, respectively (see chapter 2 of *Curse of Strahd*). Additionally, the enemies present in chapters 12 and 14, "The Wizard of the Wines" and "Yester Hill," are goliaths. Should the adventurers enter the Amber Temple, the nomads they encounter in Area X15 are also goliaths.

CHARACTER RELATIONS

A goliath is sure to attract all manner of peculiar interactions with cloistered Barovians. Three individuals in particular treat the goliath differently:

Davian Martikov initially believes the goliath is working with the druids of Yester Hill (if the revision above is utilized in your campaign). Izek Strazni feels threatened by the baron's interest in the goliath and tries to run them out of Vallaki, if not murder them in their sleep.

Vargas Vallakovich is interested in recruiting the goliath as his new enforcer. If his offer is declined, the baron becomes hostile and sets Izek upon them.

THE LEGACY OF KAVAN

With the addition of goliath clans, Kavan (the ancient chieftain whose *blood spear* can be found at Yester Hill) is rewritten as a goliath. As darkness once again encroaches upon Barovia and the Balinok Mountains, a goliath player character might leave to seize this legendary weapon for themselves.

GOLIATH NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

Goliath NPCs, such as the **druids** and **berserkers** of Yester Hill, have the following changes to their ordinary statistics:

- A goliath speaks Giant, in addition to Common.
- A goliath has resistance to cold damage.
- A goliath counts as one size larger when determining its carrying capacity and the weight it can push, drag, or lift.
- Once per short or long rest, when a goliath takes damage, it can reduce it by 1d12.

HUMAN

While one might think that humans offer the fewest opportunities for roleplay and involvement in the narrative, they would be wrong. Humans

have the *most* relevancy in *Curse of Strahd*, for they can easily be related by blood—which is no small feat—to other, existing characters of the campaign and Barovia itself. How does a person feel when they learn their grandfather, Henrik van der Voort, has been forced to steal the bones of Saint Andral? How are they to feel when the devil hungers to make their very sister his eternal bride?

To involve a human in the campaign narrative, you need only tell them that by choosing to be related to some character, living or dead, minor or major, they can experience new depths of roleplay unavailable in any other officially published campaign.

IMMEDIATE FAMILY

In a normal campaign, the adventurers rarely get the opportunity to be related to its characters, major or minor. Not so with *Curse of Strahd*.



Barovia is a small country with dense population centers. Human player characters (as well as half-elves and half-orcs to a limited degree) may be related to the following characters:

Bluto Krogarov. The player character is the child or sibling of Bluto Krogarov, who has kidnapped the Vistana child Arabelle and intends to drown her in Lake Zarovich. This amplifies the disgust and horror one might feel after confronting the madman.

Donavich. The player character is the child of Donavich and the sibling of Doru. The character is forced to let their brother languish in undeath or drive a stake through his heart.

Gadof Blinsky. The strange toymaker of Vallaki is the adventurer's eccentric uncle.

Henrik van der Voort. The Vallakian carpenter is the player character's morose grandfather. Once his crime—stealing the Bones of St. Andral—has been discovered, the adventurer is treated as a pariah or accomplice.

Ismark & Ireena. The player character is a sibling to Ismark and Ireena. You can go a step further and replace Ismark with the player character (although Ireena must remain an NPC, if you ever intend for Strahd to capture and wed Ireena, as in the [The Wedding at Ravenloft](#) module).

Izek Strazni. The adventurer is the sibling of Baron Vallakovich's fiendish enforcer, Izek. The discovery of Izek's relation to Ireena Kolyana affects the player character too, for it means that they are also related to Ireena, making the quest to protect her from Strahd a family affair.

Kiril Stoyanovich. The player character is the sibling or parent (if they are older) of the bloodthirsty werewolf, Kiril Stoyanovich. Their story, then, becomes about putting down that rabid dog before he can inflict further harm. Kiril wishes to either turn the character into a werewolf or extinguish all ties to his former life.

Mad Mary & Gertruda. The adventurer is (preferably) the cousin of Gertruda, who has gone missing.

Udo Lukovich. The player character is related to Udo Lukovich, who has been imprisoned by Baron Vallakovich for laughing during one of the baron's pointless festivals. The baron may threaten to execute Udo if the adventurer doesn't do his bidding.

The Krezkovs. The player character is the child of Dmitri and Anna Krezkov, the rulers of Krezk. When the adventurers reach Krezk, they won't require a shipment of wine to convince Dmitri to open the gates. What the player character does not know is that their younger brother, Ilya, died of an illness while they were gone.

The Vallakoviches. The adventurer is the child, niece, or nephew of Baron Vargas Vallakovich. If the Vallakoviches are murdered in the aftermath of the St. Andral's Feast event, the mob demands the

character's blood as well, forcing them to flee Vallaki. Lady Wachter is a natural enemy of this character who might wish to forcibly marry them to one of her children so she can cement a claim on Vallaki.

The Wachters. The player character is related to the late Nikolai Wachter and his wife Lady Fiona—making her possible takeover of Vallaki much more personal. If the character is a child of Fiona, you can replace Karl or Nikolai (although Stella should remain the same). Fiona attempts to recruit them into her cult.

LINEAGE

Several bloodlines dominate Barovian history (appearing in *Curse of Strahd*) and they can be discovered through living descendants, lost treasure, and ancient feats. This approach is less hands-on than making a player character the immediate family member of a major or minor character in the campaign. For a player, this is simply the choice of a surname that may later turn into an interesting discovery to their lineage or a quest to find an ancestral artifact. Consider the lineages below:

Belview. The player character is a member of the disgraced and malformed Belview family, who convinced the Abbot to "fix" their flaws. The trip to the Abbey of Saint Markovia, then, becomes a macabre homecoming story in which they must confront their mad family.

Dilisnya. The Dilisnya line bears notoriety: Lady Dorfniya wintered at Castle Ravenloft and was involved in the creation of Pidlwick—and Leo Dilisnya is the treacherous assassin who slew Strahd von Zarovich, ushering him into undeath. His bloodline has been vilified ever since, and any descendants that still bear the Dilisnya name are shunned out of fear.

Gregor. Stefan Gregorovich was the First Counselor to King Barov von Zarovich. Family legend suggests that whoever holds his skull—currently entombed in Castle Ravenloft—may commune with his spirit (see Crypt 25 in chapter 4 of *Curse of Strahd*).

Ivlisk. The Ivilisk lineage is forever wed to Strahd von Zarovich through his vampire bride, Sasha Iviliskova. Likewise, Ivan Iviliskovich was a champion of winter dog racing. His family, if it still persists, continues to breed athletic hounds, one of which the adventurer might own.

Karelova. Anastrasya of House Karelova gave herself—or was forcibly taken—to the devil Strahd as a bride.

Krushkin. The legendary warrior Sir Leonid "the Crusher" Krushkin is survived by his descendent, Yevgeni Krushkin of Vallaki (see the Blue Water Inn in chapter 5). Those born of this bloodline are usually thick with muscle and heavy as stone.



Petrov. The Petrov line is alive today in the form of Father Lucian Petrovich and his sister Lydia Petrovna, baroness of Vallaki. Their forebear, Tasha Petrovna, was a famous healer now entombed in Castle Ravenloft (see Crypt 11). Her ring of regeneration is buried in the graveyard at the Abbey of Saint Markovia. A descendent of hers might know of a legendary ring she used to stave off death and heal her patients. If chosen, the party does not need Tasha's holy symbol from Castle Ravenloft's catacombs to retrieve the ring.

Popofsky. Volenta was given by her father to the devil Strahd as part of a political marriage.

Romul. Ciril Romulich once served as the Prefect of Barovia and consecrated Castle Ravenloft with the *Icon of Ravenloft*. A descendant is aware of this and knows the Icon still resides in the castle—for its touch is anathema to undead.

Tripalotsky. The character's forebear is Sir Klutz Tripalotsky, a potential destined ally who famously fell upon his own sword. See Crypt 33 for details on this phantom and consider using him when determining the Fortunes of Ravenloft.

Vilisevic. Ludmilla Vilisevic was taken as a bride of the devil Strahd, forever wedding her lineage to Barovia's tyrant.

Vonderbucks. Sir Erik Vonderbucks was a wealthy noble whose dying wish was to be dipped in molten gold. His gilded corpse is entombed in Castle Ravenloft.

ON VISTANI PLAYER CHARACTERS

It is clear that the Vistani were written with the expectation no player character could ever be one. They, as a people, already know many Barovian secrets and can invoke magic not ordinarily available to other humans. If you have any Vistani player characters, consider the following revisions this supplement has made:

Curses. It would be unfair to give Vistani player characters an advantage over other humans; likewise, it is a bit problematic to assume that Vistani can curse others or invoke the Evil Eye. Instead, it is usually only evil Vistani that can command such terrible powers. Should the players encounter curse-hurling Vistani, the resident Vistana knows that these individuals command great willpower or have embraced greater evils.

Beliefs and Knowledge. Two changes have been made to *Curse of Strahd's* section on Vistani Lore, so as to preserve the campaign's many mysteries:

- Vistani do not know that the souls of the dead are trapped in Barovia.
- Vistani do not know for certain that some Barovians are born without souls.

In the Campaign. You can have quite a lot of fun with Vistani player characters. Female Vistani might be gifted with prescience (which manifests as episodes of déjà vu or strange dreams). Additionally, a Vistana might be related to Madam Eva (just as Arabelle is) and Arrigal and Luvash. Further, since Vistani are not allowed in Vallaki, the resident Vistana must take care to go undiscovered by the baron's forces.

DUSK ELF

The history of the dusk elves is fraught with tragedy, and there are few people with better reasons to kill Strahd von Zarovich than dusk elves. King Barov shattered their kingdom only to have his son finish the job. With their women and children dead, the dusk elves have been driven to the brink of extinction. Unless the mists fall, their people are doomed. To save their people, the dusk elves must murder the devil.

All told, there's likely less than thirty dusk elves left in Barovia—a country that does not wait for age to take you to the grave. Given their tight knit community and longevity, every dusk elf knows each other. Every single dusk elf knows of Kasimir Velikov, who led the execution of his sister, and thereby doomed his people.

On Sex. As punishment for stoning Patrina Velkovna, Strahd had all dusk elven women put to death. This lore must be respected during the character creation process; there can be no female dusk elves in the campaign. If a player wishes to play one, encourage them to be a half-elf instead or give them a hat of disguise (or similar magic) that has allowed them to go undetected. Should Strahd, or any of his sycophants and vassals, learn of this dusk elf, she shall surely be put to death. However, being the last female dusk elf might just be the adventure hook you or a player is looking for.

Barovian Perspective. The Barovians look upon the dusk elves with pity and consider them a dire testament to Strahd's wrath. A dusk elf might attract a bewildered glance or a few condescending comments by one of Strahd's sycophants, but they otherwise face no danger from average Barovians.

History. Although the dusk elves are a broken people, two have stood boldly against Strahd—despite their kin begging them otherwise. These two heroes were Telsa “the Grave Lily,” who marched with Saint Markovia upon Castle Ravenloft; and Antinimir, a paladin sworn to vengeance against Strahd and died after acquiring the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*. The symbol might still reside with his corpse, depending on your tarokka reading.

THE GREAT BETRAYER

It is said a hound cannot be faulted for following its master's orders—but there is no forgiving Rahadin, the Great Betrayer. Twice, the “Mad Dog of Zarovich” betrayed his own people: first by giving military secrets to King Barov and then later by carrying out the dusk elven genocide. He is as much a part of a dusk elf adventurer's story as Strahd. To kill him is to achieve justice for the fallen.

Rahadin should be featured thrice in the campaign. He should first be seen from afar in Area I; he is driving the Black Carriage towards Castle Ravenloft. He must then be met at the Amber Temple or could even be met when the adventurers

first visit the Vistana camp outside Vallaki. They encounter Rahadin one last time when they enter Castle Ravenloft, either by Strahd's invitation for dinner or to slay him in the endgame. If a dusk elf cannot kill Strahd, they can go to their grave knowing that they brought Rahadin along.

You can also feature Rahadin by having him appear to collect taxes in Vallaki, attend Kolyan Indirovich's funeral in the village of Barovia, or join Baba Lysaga for dinner in the Ruins of Berez (where he informs her of her "son's" latest activities).

ON SHADAR-KAI

The shadowy elves described in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes* remain a tantalizing option for players, and there is no campaign they would be further suited for than *Curse of Strahd*. If a player wishes to be a dusk elf but balks at the wood elf's lackluster racial traits, consider allowing them to use Shadar-Kai traits.

For the sake of the story, you can ignore this discrepancy (as no other dusk elves use Shadar-Kai statistics), or you can justify it through these options:

- The miserable, forlorn nature of the Shadowfell has soured the dusk elf.
- The dusk elf engaged in a dark ritual of vengeance before setting out to destroy Strahd.
- The dusk elf once struck a covenant with Morgantha and her hag coven.
- The dusk elf is a shadow sorcerer.

CHARACTER RELATIONS

Dusk elf adventurers have a unique relationship with several characters in the campaign:

The Abbot promises redemption for the elves, but his vision of redeeming Strahd through a bride will hardly track with any dusk elf.

Arrigal considers the dusk elves a convenient nuisance. At best, they are a buffer between him and the creatures of the night. He cares nothing for the friendship these elves struck with his ancestors but knows that to let them die will disappoint Strahd, who wants to prolong their suffering.

Kasimir demands that the dusk elf venture with him to the Amber Temple and resurrect Patrina—even though the woman showed true darkness in her heart while alive. What, they must wonder, will she be like after death?

Kiril Stoyanovich is curious about how dusk elf flesh tastes. Strahd forbade Kiril's pack from killing the elves altogether, but it's open season on any that go rogue.

Luvash is torn between his duties to his dark master and his inherited duty to guard the dusk elves. He considers them good friends and neighbors undeserving of their tragedies.

Rahadin is the greatest enemy of the dusk elfen people. He looks upon any dusk elf with disgust and centuries of festering hatred. When at last his master gives him permission, Rahadin will take



great pleasure in killing the last dusk elf. Strahd can't help but grin at any dusk elf foolish enough to stand against him. The devil wants to maximize their misery and suffering and threatens to slaughter the rest of their kin—unless that dusk elf serves him as Rahadin does.

TIEFLING

Tieflings, like aasimar, are a lore-friendly way to expand an adventuring party beyond humans, for although Barovia sits firmly in the Shadowfell, infernal influences can still produce tieflings. Three such origins are already present in *Curse of Strahd*, requiring minimal effort on your part to explain the tiefling. Remember, you need only have a single tiefling in the campaign and therefore one lineage. You do not need to carve out an entire tiefling population for the benefit of the players.

Barovian Perspective. Tieflings face outright fear and suspicion by ignorant Barovians. It is believed that the laws that govern vampires also apply to tieflings in a limited capacity. For example, while a tiefling can still enter a home uninvited, Barovians believe it saps any magic they might bring to bear. Tieflings are usually kept at a distance of 8 feet—the length of a grave. Barovian hosts often insist that a tiefling salt their hand and lick it off before having dinner. Although the more worldly Vistani know that tieflings are mere people, they cannot convince the average Barovian otherwise.

History. Tieflings are featured in Barovian superstition alongside devils and hags, but only a handful have ever been seen in Barovia. All were foreign adventurers drawn into the valley; none received a happy ending.

FIENDISH ORIGINS

Three sources of fiendish influence are already present in *Curse of Strahd*. Consider using one to explain the origin of the tiefling's origin, working with the player to craft such a story without spoiling any campaign secrets.

Death House Cult. Centuries ago, the Durst family began an indulgent cult of vice and devil worship just to wind up slaughtered by Strahd. Consider this revision: the cult was wiped out only twenty



years ago, and not before summoning a devil's spirit. The devil left its mark upon a cultist and when she at last bore a child (perhaps through immaculate conception), the child came out as a tiefling. The player character is that tiefling. The Death House prologue is thus a story of discovering the secrets of their foul birth. When running the chapter, add a journal to Area 9 (the secret room behind the library) that names the tiefling's mother and describes the events of the ritual. The tiefling may have been raised by Mad Mary or Kolyan Indirovich in the village of Barovia or been adopted by the Vistani. You can go one step further and replace the Durst's stillborn baby with the tiefling.

Wachter Cult. The tiefling is the crowning success of the Vallakian devil cult led by Fiona Wachter. Use the same guidelines as the Death House cult above. The tiefling likely grew up in a Vallakian orphanage. Inform the player that they are the product of a fiendish ritual and that a devil cult operates in the shadows of the town.

Dark Vestiges. The Amber Temple teems with infernal influences. A tiefling's ancestor may have visited the temple, perhaps in their quest to slay Strahd or amass power, and struck a covenant with such fiendish entities. Unbeknownst to this blasphemer, their lineage would forever produce tieflings. The player character may suffer from dreams in which they climb the summit of Mount Ghakis.

CHARACTER RELATIONS

Beyond the usual scrutiny and undeserved suspicion, the tiefling faces unique interactions with several characters in the campaign:

The Abbot is condescending to the tiefling, offering platitudes like, "Your dark lineage need not be your future, my child," as if such a hypocrite has any right to preach about corruption. Fiona Wachter seeks to recruit the tiefling into her cult, if they were not already a byproduct of its fiendish rituals.

Morgantha offers the tiefling the chance to escape their life of scrutiny. If they spread her dream pastries throughout Vallaki (hooking the baron or the Martikovs), she curses the tiefling so that no one will ever truly see or remember their face or appearance.

The Vallakian Mob that forms after the St. Andral's Feast event might blame the tiefling for their misfortune and try to execute them alongside the baron's family.

Vargas Vallakovich will not allow them to stay in Vallaki for long, believing that they will bring ruin to the town. A tiefling born and raised in Vallaki learns to walk on eggshells around the baron and his minions, for any mistake they make is interpreted as an omen. He blames St. Andral's

Feast on the tiefling and suggests stoning them, but Lady Wachter is likely to convince the mob otherwise.

HEIR TO RUIN

When a player chooses an ancestry not mentioned above, they are likely an heir to ruin—the descendent of one or more foreigners caught by the mists of Ravenloft. Their mistakes or misfortune have doomed the player character to a Barovian life. Defeating Strahd may be their attempt to honor their fallen ancestor or escape this wretched land and return to the home of their forebears.

The Ancestor. Much attention should be paid to the heir's ancestor, as this unwitting immigrant is as much a part of the campaign as their descendant. It behooves you to somehow incorporate them into the narrative. Consider these possibilities:

- The ancestor now languishes as one of Strahd's **vampire spawn**. It is better to feature them early in the campaign; therefore, the ancestor is one of the spawn Strahd has sent to secure the bones of Saint Andral in Vallaki. If they survive their clash with the adventurers, the ancestor again faces them in Castle Ravenloft. Strahd may also repeatedly send the ancestor after the party just to toy with the heir.
- The ancestor's spirit guards or haunts an artifact. Use the statistics of a **ghost** or **wraith**.
- The ancestor is the party's destined ally; replace Sir Klutz (the **phantom warrior**) with the ancestor (with a personalized tarokka reading from Madam Eva).
- The ancestor is the skeletal rider in the random encounters listed in chapter 2 of *Curse of Strahd*.
- The ancestor has been reincarnated as their descendant. Now called to action, the heir is haunted by strange dreams of bygone days and bloody nights— memories of the ancestor's life in Barovia.

CLASS

You can further personalize your campaign by involving the background of a character's class. To craft a narrative, one must know where it begins, so canvass your players for the goals and origins of their character. A class is no small matter, and each one can be further tied into Citizens of Strahd. This section provides suggestions on a character's personal quest or events that they may encounter during the campaign.

Madam Eva is your mouthpiece for this personalization. She alone has the power to be intimate with a character's past and future. Use a tarokka reading to guide them on their personal journey.

ARTIFICER

An artificer's arc is related to the fate of their master, six of which are suggested in chapter 1. Consider these developments:

Gadof Blinsky. While the adventurers are in Vallaki, feature Izek Strazni bullying Blinsky, so that the artificer can either jump to his rescue or prove to be a mewling cur. If Blinsky is helped, he happens to their altruism mention to Rictavio, thereby proving to Rudolph van Richten that these outsiders might be good-hearted.

Kasimir Velikov. In a dark, out-of-character moment, Kasimir demands payment for his years of teaching—payment in the form of an expedition to the Amber Temple.

Jakarion. Once during the campaign, the artificer receives a message from Jakarion via the sending spell that implores them to rescue him and Vilnius from the Amber Temple.

Self-Taught. The artificer considers themselves a student of the great Fritz von Weerg, Barovia's greatest artificer—if they aren't already his reincarnation. They are haunted by tales of Weerg's clockwork automaton, which supposedly resides in Castle Ravenloft to this day. Organize an early foray into Castle Ravenloft to facilitate this quest. See Pidlwick II in *Curse of Strahd*, Appendix D for details on Weerg's masterpiece.

Strahd's Animated Armor. The artificer's late master was forced to forge Strahd's animated armor. During the process, the artificer botched a spell that would ward the construct's creators from its wrath. The artificer watched in horror as their master was strangled. Feature the construct at least twice during the campaign.

Vasilka. The artificer's master was secretly a golemancer summoned to the Abbey of Saint Markovia to construct the Abbot's flesh golem, Vasilka. The artificer does not know the fate of their master, only that she left for Krezk. Upon reaching the abbey, they discover that their master's body parts have been incorporated into the flesh golem.

BARBARIAN

A barbarian's arc should be concerned with mastering their rage (if it comes from unnatural sources or intense grief) or finding the *blood spear* of Kavan at Yester Hill. In the case of the latter, they might suffer bloody dreams of Kavan's bygone battles, which guide the barbarian to Yester Hill.

Because a barbarian is likely to hail from a mountainfolk tribe or goliath clan, their arc is invariably involved with the druids of Yester Hill. The Dark Powers themselves might even take notice of a barbarian's unbridled rage and offer them power.

BARD

A bard's arc is difficult to chart, for no two are alike. Instead, focus on their past lives. The bard may be the reincarnation of one of Barovia's greatest artists, performers, or scholars, such as:

- The actress Elsa Fallona von Twitterberg
- The musician that performed at Sergei and Tatyana's disastrous wedding
- Stefan Gregorovich, sage and counselor to King Barov

Thus, the bards' arc is one of self-realization and ancestral memories. They may be haunted by a poem never written, a song never sung, or knowledge they never learned.

CLERIC

A cleric's arc is likely to be concerned with the restoration of the Church of the Morninglord. Thus, they will be deeply involved with Father Donavich in the village of Barovia, St. Andral's Church in Vallaki, and the Abbey of Saint Markovia in Krezk. Their quest will inherently put them at odds with the Abbot, who views them as either competition or a pawn to which he is the rightful sovereign. Their journey is complete when they slay Strahd and once again consecrate Castle Ravenloft's chapel with the *Icon of Ravenloft*.

Additionally, like aasimar, a cleric might be the reincarnation of one of Barovia's holiest figures, such as Saint Markovia or Ciril Romulich. See the Aasimar section in the Race subchapter above.

DRUID

A druid's arc is likely concerned with maintaining the balance of nature. There's a bevy of aberrations in *Curse of Strahd* that might concern a druid:

Berez. The witch Baba Lysaga has stolen one of the three life-giving gems once owned by the Martikov family. Moreover, the druid might wish to restore Berez, which was unfairly destroyed by Strahd. To do so, they must remove Baba and her minions and then drain the marsh.

Werewolves. Lycanthropes are unnatural predators that threaten beasts and men alike. To eliminate them is to score a victory for nature itself.

Yester Hill. The crimes committed by the druids of Yester Hill cannot be ignored. A druid might take it upon themselves to excise the tumor that is the Gulthias Tree and destroy the blights of Barovia.

FIGHTER

Given its mundane nature, a fighter's arc is likely to have little to do with the class itself and more to do with their own personal growth. Still, their choice of martial archetype can be linked to Barovian lore, as described in chapter 1.





Additionally, the fighter may be the reincarnation of some of Barovia's greatest warriors, such as:

- Sir Leonid "the Crusher" Krushkin, who is entombed in Castle Ravenloft.
- Alex Guilliam, the friend, general, and champion of Strahd, whom the devil mistook for an assassin and murdered on the night of Sergei and Tatyana's wedding.
- A mighty adventurer from beyond the mists who wishes to return home.
- General Kroval "Mad Dog" Grislek. If you choose this, remove the Kroval's **wraith** from Crypt 38 in Castle Ravenloft (but keep the **hell hounds**).

MONK

A monk's arc is introspective. They can act as a Hermit (as in the background) by discovering a startling truth of Barovia, such as its prison-like afterlife, the reincarnation cycle, or that it lies within the Shadowfell.

Monks once studied alongside priests at the Abbey of Saint Markovia. Thus, Open Hand and Sun Soul monks may originate from its legacy. More peculiar monastic traditions may have been passed down by individuals, rather than institutions, or unlocked through introspection.

PALADIN

Paladins are born of conviction and do not need to be champions of the gods to exercise their divine powers. Like a cleric, a paladin worshiper of the Morninglord is seen as a threat or pawn by the Abbot in Krezk. Worse, Strahd himself seeks to corrupt the paladin and orchestrate their fall from grace. Throughout the campaign, the devil pits the adventurers in situations that test the paladin's oath.

RANGER

Rangers are ever in search of something, be it their next foe or a missing person. A ranger's arc in *Curse of Strahd* should be linked for the search of Dr. Rudolph van Richten. As suggested in chapter 1, a ranger may have found a weathered copy of *Van Richten's Treatise of the Night*, which ultimately inspired their career.

ROGUE

A rogue's arc is personal and often unrelated to their actual class. To relate their class to Barovia itself in extraordinary ways proves difficult, but the following roguish archetypes can further tie into the story:

Arcane Trickster. The rogue, like a wizard, studied with one of Barovia's resident wizards, like Kasimir Velikov. The Vallakoviches and Wachters seek to employ the rogue for their own nefarious purposes.

Assassin. The rogue is destined to join the Ba'al Verzi, the order of assassins that slew Strahd. The rogue may be the reincarnation of Leo Dilisnya, the agent that murdered the devil.

Phantom. Unbeknownst to the rogue, they *actually* died and were brought back by the Dark Powers. Alternatively, they are inheriting the memories of their many past lives.

SORCERER

The heart of a sorcerer's story is often related to their sorcerous origin. For example:

Aberrant Mind. The sorcerer's ancestor accepted the gift of Savnok the Inscrutable (see Area X33b in chapter 13, "The Amber Temple," of *Curse of Strahd*) or any of the other esoteric dark vestiges.

Divine Soul. The sorcerer is either endowed by the Morninglord or Mother Night. If the sorcerer chooses Good or Law as their divine affinity, they have a connection to the Morninglord. If they choose Evil, Neutral, or Chaos, they belong to Mother Night. The Abbot is hostile to the sorcerer. He believes that they were sent to thwart his divine mission and, in his pride, decides that they are an enemy that must be humbled, lest the Morninglord himself lose faith in the Abbot.

Draconic. The sorcerer is the descendant of Argynvost, who founded the Order of the Silver Dragon. The revenants of Argynvostholt (see chapter 7) recognize the sorcerer's draconic blood. This can lead to Sir Godfrey Gwilym leaving with the adventurers or an epic showdown with Vladimir Horngard; if Vladimir is defeated by the sorcerer, the revenants find rest. They do not, however, gain the benefits of the Beacon of Argynvost.

Shadow. The sorcerer may have already died, but been resurrected by the Dark Powers. The memories of this transaction have been expunged, but the sorcerer is haunted by macabre dreams of a nightmare realm...

Storm. The sorcerer's ancestor accepted the gift of Zrin-Hala the Howling Storm (see Area X33a in the Amber Temple).

Wild. The sorcerer is the distant child of Khazan, the archmage that oversaw Castle Ravenloft's construction and sought the secrets of lichdom in the Amber Temple. Although Khazan officially bore no children, one careless night with a chambermaid continued his lineage. The constructs of Khazan's tower (see chapter 11) instinctively recognize the sorcerer as Khazan's heir and do them no harm.



WARLOCK

A warlock's arc is inherently one regarding the search for forbidden knowledge or (dis)obeying the wishes of their patron. That patron should factor into the campaign and influence the warlock's goals. Consider these possible narrative hooks:

Archfey. The warlock's patron is Morgantha and her coven of fellow night hags. Despite becoming fiends, they can still function as fey for this purpose. Morgantha and her foul ilk yearn to corrupt the innocent. They demand that the warlock hook Vallakian nobles on their dream pastries so that they may puppet Vallaki. Alternatively, the patron is the wicked archfey Ceithlenn of the Crooked Teeth, whom the hags worship.

Celestial. The warlock's patron is none other than the Abbot himself (or an opponent thereof). Nothing is ever free with this angel, who will take out his wrath upon the warlock if they do not help him perfect Vasilka, the flesh golem.

Fathomless. It is a popular among *Curse of Strahd* enthusiasts to add an aboleth below Lake Zarovich, but one could also add a rusalka—a drowned spirit of a maiden who hungers for company. She may be the reason why Bluto Krogarov has abducted Arabelle (an order the warlock once received), thereby forcing the warlock to either save the girl or let her drown.

Fiend. Once again, Morgantha can act as the warlock's patron. Otherwise, the warlock is involved in Lady Fiona Wachter's cult or has been offered power by a Dark Vestige in the Amber Temple that has somehow managed to whisper to mortals from its prison. The patron might even be King Dostron the Hellborn, whose spirit languishes in Castle Ravenloft's catacombs. Each potential patron is eager to replace Strahd von Zarovich as ruler of this land.

Genie. The genie is bound to Ravenloft just like any other creature and it cannot return home. It knows Strahd must be slain for it to plane shift back to the Elemental Planes.

Great Old One. The warlock's patron is one of the more esoteric Dark Vestiges in the Amber Temple, such as Savnok the Inscrutable, Tarakamedes the Grave Wurm, or Zhudun the Corpse Star. The vestiges are not even aware that their influence has leaked from the temple but would be delighted for a warlock to be drawn there by troubled dreams.

Hexblade. The warlock's patron is none other than the Raven Queen, who wishes to see Strahd von Zarovich excised from the Shadowfell. Alternatively, the Ba'al Verzi dagger Leo Dilisnya used to murder Strahd was found by the warlock—and it now possesses its own sentience or Leo's soul.

Undead. The warlock's patron is the lich Exethanter, who resides in the Amber Temple. The lich is aware that his memories are fleeting and suspects that it is due to the Dark Powers' influence. He sought the warlock out from afar so that they may reach the Amber Temple and restore his memories.

WIZARD

A wizard's arc is invariably tied to Barovia's great magi, whose ranks they are destined to join. Consider these sub-arcs, which can all be woven together:

The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok. The wizard may seek out the Mad Mage for guidance in the ways of magic but must discover a way to restore his sanity first.

The Legacy of Khazan. Although the great archmage Khazan left no heirs, his legacy can be continued by Barovia's next great wizard. Organize an early foray into Castle Ravenloft's catacombs so that the wizard can reclaim Khazan's staff of power and guide the party to Van Richten's Tower (see chapter 11 in *Curse of Strahd*). The constructs obey whomever is attuned to the staff of power.

The Pursuit of Lichdom. Like Khazan, the wizard might realize that the only way to defeat Strahd or endure Barovia is to achieve lichdom. An expedition to the Amber Temple promises such a possibility and tests the wizard's very soul.

BACKGROUNDS

The following suggestions assume that the adventurer uses the hook suggested in chapter 1:

Acolyte. The acolyte is familiar with their local priest and can use the church as a base of operations. At your discretion, they also have one vial of holy water.

Charlatan. The Dark Powers are sapping the charlatan's memories so that they gradually become the person whose identity they stole. Unbeknownst to the charlatan, that person was murdered and now their spirit has risen as a **revenant** that blames the charlatan for their death.

Criminal. The criminal is still wanted, dead or alive, and the streets of Vallaki are plastered with posters stating just as much. While in town, Izek Strazni makes it his mission to find the criminal. Outside the walls, Szoldar Szoldarovich and Yevgeni Krushkin (the wolf hunters described in the Blue Water Inn) decide to track the criminal down.

Entertainer. Later during the campaign, Count Strahd demands another evening of amusement. Having scried their location, he sends Rahadin in the black carriage to collect the entertainer.

Folk Hero. One person knows that the folk hero is a fraud and blackmails them during the campaign. If their secret gets out, a mob of 2d6+4 **commoners** and two **thugs** assembles.

Guild Artisan. The vintner knows the layout of the Wizard of Wines and is personally tasked by Urwin Martikov to investigate his family's recent silence. They also came close to discovering the existence of the life-giving gemstones that imbue the vineyard with fertility.

Hermit. The hermit realizes the truth of the Barovian afterlife or that the realm itself has been ripped away from the Material Plane. They might also realize that Ireena Kolyana is Tatyana, Strahd's beloved.

Noble. Rahadin takes a dark interest in the Dilisnya heir. Throughout the campaign, other folk either whisper that the noble should "finish the work of their ancestor" or "end their lineage for all our sakes." Strahd himself may come under a promise of peace and offer his neck to the Dilisnya to goad him into an attack.

Outlander. The outlander and the werewolf that bit them share an intrinsic bond and can sense when each other are close. The werewolf, for their part, is tortured by the Dark Powers; until they feast upon the outlander, they can find no rest or satisfaction. This werewolf may be Kiril Stoyanovich.

Sage. The sage may be the reincarnation of Stefan Gregorovich, First Counselor to King Barov, whose body is entombed in Castle Ravenloft.

Sailor. Bluto Krogarov is an old fishing buddy of the sailor's. To facilitate the sailor's background feature, stock Barovian waterways with old barges that they can operate.

Soldier. The baron expects the soldier to continue his dark duty. He demands they whip Udo Lukovuch, arrest their friends or family, or abandon the party. To refuse is to invite his wrath. Meanwhile, Izek Strazni, his position threatened, tries to murder the soldier.

Urchin. Since terminating their position as Lady Wachter's spy, they have been replaced by Ernst Larnark.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

As Barovian natives, the adventurers' loved ones are always in reach of Strahd and his minions. Once the devil is aware of the party, he begins to threaten their families and friends. These are, at first, mere threats, but as the campaign drags on, the devil has these innocents captured or executed. Therefore, the adventurers want to preserve their anonymity for as long as possible and hide their loved ones after such cover is blown.

Possible Encounters. As Strahd strikes out against an adventurers' loved ones, any of the encounters below may occur:

- Strahd casually mentions characteristics of a loved one's life: a painting they may have, their work schedule, when they go to bed, et cetera; thereby informing the adventurer that he or his minions can reach their loved ones at any time.
- Upon reaching the River Ivlis Crossroads, the adventurers find one of their loved ones at the noose, either already dead or pleading to the empty air for their life. The loved one only remembers waking with a noose around their neck.
- Strahd offers the adventurers safe passage or the return of a hostage if they're willing to bet the life of their loved one.
- A Vallakian mob rounds up the adventurers' loved ones for execution, believing that they will bring doom upon the entire town.
- Strahd murders a loved one before the adventurers' eyes. If they do not burn the corpse, it rises as a **vampire spawn**.
- Unbeknownst to the adventurer, Strahd has turned a loved one into a **vampire spawn**, which later attacks the adventurers in a gaggle of 1d4 other **vampire spawn**.



CHAPTER 3

CITIZENS OF STRAHD

Make no mistake: it is not Strahd who suffers under a curse, but Barovia and its people—but they need not be the broken, mewling curs that they are painted as in *Curse of Strahd*. No, they too have the courage and cunning to stand boldly against the devil. They do not need foreign intervention; they do not need serendipity; they need only each other. So long as there are people willing to fight—and die—there is a hope that Barovians will end Strahd’s tyranny.

This chapter tackles *Curse of Strahd* itself, providing the Dungeon Master with insight on how to run the campaign with Barovian natives and not foreign adventurers. It addresses any issues or inconsistencies this change might entail, and it also provides new events that this change can inspire. The short of it is this: you can experience the same plotline as an ordinary *Curse of Strahd*, but you owe it to your players to personalize that experience in ways that foreign adventurers can never enjoy.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Although there is room for great variance when playing *Curse of Strahd* with Barovian natives, you can keep to the same plotline presented in the campaign: begin in the east, at the village of Barovia, head west to Tser Pool for the Fortunes of Ravenloft tarokka reading, and continue onto Vallaki. The difference lies in consequence and personalization; foreign adventurers have nothing to risk but their own lives (and souls), but Barovian natives risk their loved ones. To escape Barovia, foreigners must plunge headfirst into the darkness; Barovian natives need to operate in that darkness or lose all they hold dear.

Throughout the campaign, frequently remind your players of their character’s attachments. These reminders come in the form of familiarity, visits to home, and threats from the adventurers’ enemies. Inevitably, the adventurers must figure out how to

protect their loved ones from retaliation, such as by spurring them into flight or sheltering them at Khazan’s Tower, whose antimagic field prevents scrying (see chapter 11 of *Curse of Strahd*).

At Higher Levels. It is recommended that you begin the campaign at 3rd-level, even if you intend to run Death House (as long as you soften the adventurers up before they enter the manor). By starting at 3rd-level, you also ensure that all characters have already chosen their subclass and can therefore incorporate it into their backstory.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Like with any adventure, something must hook the player characters into leaving behind their homes. In Barovia, it is not enough to simply hate the devil Strahd; the adventurers require *opportunity*. They have spent their lives simply amassing the strength and knowledge to be counted as adventurers, but now they require a reason to set out on this quest.

Just as *Curse of Strahd* recommends several adventure hooks to get the player characters into Barovia, this section suggests options that draw them out from the safety of their homes. Choose one of the following adventure hooks, or combine them all into your own take on *Curse of Strahd*. Each one should still lead to the Death House prologue (which is detailed below).

SURVIVING INSURGENTS

A year before *Curse of Strahd* begins, the wizard Mordenkainen came to Barovia to slay Strahd von Zarovich. He mustered a peasant’s revolt and marched upon Castle Ravenloft. Most met their end in its black hallways, and although Mordenkainen did not lose his life, he lost himself.

With a simple revision, you can unite the party through this revolt—rather than happen a year ago, it occurred only a week hence. The adventurers all marched upon Castle Ravenloft and escaped before being cut down by the devil’s minions. They have since wandered the surrounding woods, lost and

alone—but when they return to civilization, they learn it has been a week since their disastrous defeat. The party arrives at the River Ivlis Crossroads or Death House itself, with no explanation of the many miles they've covered or locales they've not noticed.

Subsequent Revisions. If you adopt this approach to the campaign, three revisions are necessary down the line:

- Doru has only recently returned from Castle Ravenloft as a vampire spawn, making it all the more shocking for villagers like Ireena and Ismark when they learn the priest's son endures as one of the undead.
- The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok only recently became known to Vallakians.
- The A Vistana's Tale event at Tser Pool encampment (see *Curse of Strahd*, chapter 2, Area G) must be rewritten to reflect this revision, as the battle happened not a year ago, but a week ago.

Starting the Campaign. Read the text below when you begin your campaign; it assumes that most of the party is together, wandering the mists.

Damn that wizard! Damn him to the bleakest Hell! You still remember his honeyed words, the conviction of his throat, how his voice cut like steel against the dusk. "A better tomorrow lies just beyond the dark!" he shouted to the desperate and downtrodden. Morninglord forgive you, but you too fell to his charms. You too joined the fools that dared to march upon Castle Ravenloft and bring "justice" to the devil Strahd.

The darkness, the claws, the fangs—the laughter. You will go to your grave hearing the Count's laugh. You can hear it even now as you wander the mists, your tunics bloodied and drenched with sweat, your stakes misplaced and your courage forgotten. It has been hours since you fled from the castle and the world has been white with mist. Now as dusk settles, driving the last of the daylight to the west, you find yourselves upon the Old Syalich Road. You don't remember when someone last spoke, for in that silence you find peace—until the devil's laughter haunts you once again.

THE DEVIL'S GAME

Knowing that Tatyana lies so close, Strahd—disguised as Lord Vasili von Holtz—has brought the adventurers together so that they may be pawns in his game. He accomplishes this through blackmail, offers of amnesty, or promises of riches. Each adventurer is coerced, convinced, or deceived into traveling to the village of Barovia.

Throughout the campaign, "Vasili" continues to leave clues, gold, or letters for the adventurers. He can be met (under a *disguise self* spell) in Vallaki and may even invite the adventurers to dine with him and either Lady Fiona Wachter or Baron Vargas Vallakovich. He then sends the adventurers out on assignments to distract them from recovering the bones of Saint Andral.

Strahd's Perspective. The devil is bound by his cynicism and hubris. Strahd knows that fate has conspired again and again to rip Tatyana away from him, so now he is trying a new approach: using heroes, not dark minions, to deliver Tatyana into his grasp. However, as pragmatic as this approach may be, the vampire is still too arrogant to allow such a simple plan to come to fruition. Ever the cat playing with mice, Strahd hungers to shock and corrupt these would-be heroes. His pride will allow for nothing short for an overly-complicated and stunning gambit.

Starting the Campaign. The adventurers are brought to the River Ivlis Crossroads by carriage or foot. The letters they've received instructed them to wait for their fellow "collaborators" and their "contact." That contact, however, never arrives—instead, werewolves do, whose howls send them towards the Death House. This, for once, is not a calculated move of Strahd's but simple bad timing. In the aftermath of the prologue, they find the corpse of Lief Lipsiege, Strahd's accountant who is normally found in Area K30 of Castle Ravenloft. His coin purse contains 100 gp, which he was to give to the adventurers for expenses. With no further direction than the letters they already received, the adventurers must soldier on to the village of Barovia, where they quickly learn who has attracted the devil Strahd's dark attention.

To start the campaign, read the following text:

You do not know how your secrets were discovered, but the letter came nonetheless. A mysterious "Vasili von Holtz" has coerced you into leaving behind the safety of your home to join with other "collaborators" in his plan to save a maiden from the devil's bite.

There has been little time to debate your role in all this. Your instructions were clear: meet your contact or face ruin. You do not know why you were selected for this intrigue, but fate, as the letter claimed, strides onward in the face of mortal ignorance.

Now, after a paid-for carriage, you have arrived at the site of your rendezvous: the River Ivlis Crossroads, a morose path marked by an empty and ancient gallows that continues to creak in the wind.

STAY OF EXECUTION

Under this adventure hook, consider adding a drop of darkness to Barovia: once every ten years, frightened Barovians round up their undesirables and send them to Castle Ravenloft in a bid to alleviate the next decade's suffering. The adventurers were chained in a cart bound for Strahd's demesne when a freak storm blew them off course. The cart fell from the Tser Falls; those who did not drown were swept up in the swollen current and delivered downwater on the River Ivlis.

Unbeknownst to most folk, this macabre tradition was formed by Barovians that noticed the devil Strahd preyed upon the populace every ten to twenty years—as he searched for Tatyana's newest



reincarnation. This routine would inspire Barovians to cut out the middleman and deliver prey to Strahd. The devil never corrected their assumptions and instead smirks whenever these poor souls are forced to wander the benighted halls of Castle Ravenloft.

Starting the Campaign. The adventure begins with the cart hurtling towards the Tser Falls. Read the following text:

This is not the death you imagined—drowning in your chains as the cart to which you were bound sinks like a stone in the frigid waters of River Ivlis. No, you imagined a far worse death: wandering the benighted halls of Castle Ravenloft until some fiend picked you off.

This is a mercy, you know that. You and your fellow prisoners have been spared eternity in favor of an undignified death. As your cart rushes towards the waterfall, you know that the Morninglord, or perhaps Mother Night, has truly smiled upon you. The rocks below are nothing compared to the agony of undeath.

THE SEAMS OF FATE

This adventure hook is more hands-off and personalized for each adventurer. A number of strange circumstances bring them to Death House, as described below. Choose this adventure hook if your players are familiar with Barovia or *Curse of Strahd* as a concept and want to leap right into the action.

- An adventurer's late relative was once a brave warrior; Kolyan Indirovich has sent a letter requesting aid in spiriting his daughter Ireena to Vallaki. The adventurer, promised riches or status, has come in place of this bygone hero.
- A citizen of the village of Barovia wakes up in the Death House, having arrived in a fugue state. They do not remember being drawn here. Or perhaps they were forced to shelter here from werewolves outside.
- A Vistana may have been exiled from their people. Having heard of three similar exiles in the village of Barovia—Alenka, Mirabel and Sorvia—the Vistana has left Tser Pool Encampment for the village.
- A Vistana returning from lands beyond the mists has just survived a skirmish with the undead at the River Ivlis Crossroads. Their companions have been lost, and with the undead on their heels, the Vistana must head east into the sea of mist...
- A goliath or mountainfolk may have just descended from the mountains with werewolves hot on their heels.
- A dusk elf visitor to the Tser Pool Encampment may have been advised by Madam Eva to head east "to meet their destiny and be free of this wretched land."

DEATH HOUSE

Even with Barovian natives, it is best to start the campaign with Death House. No matter your choice of adventure hook, begin at the River Ivlis Crossroads or further east, on the outskirts of the village of Barovia. By starting *in media res*, you avoid the headache of random encounters or explaining the journey each individual made across Barovia.

Relocation. It is better to move Death House to the eastern outskirts of the village, for the adventurers will have come from the west, rather than the east. The manor is the only shelter in a sea of mist—and the howls of werewolves abound. The lycanthropes have just returned from the lands beyond the mists and are headed west. With no other recourse, the adventurers must delve into that lone manor. Rose and Thorn—or rather, the illusions thereof—are playing on the porch. Death House, that dark puppeteer, is all too eager to bring new victims into its belly. If the adventurers still continue east, they get lost in the mist and wind back up at the Durst Manor.

Aftermath. The mist clears when the adventurers emerge from Death House, revealing the village of Barovia. Bloodied and haggard, the newly-bonded party ventures to the village only to learn that its burgomaster died a few days prior. Run the rest of the campaign as usual, but with the Barovian natives capitalizing on their foreknowledge and backgrounds.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Barovia Born and Raised has far more narrative potential than an ordinary *Curse of Strahd* game. How are the heroes to react when Strahd orders the rest of the dusk elves be put to the sword solely for the actions of one insurgent? What about when a Thelgataanan goliath seeks out the resident goliath to settle an old grudge? There truly is no limit on the personal events that might transpire in your campaign.

During the campaign, consider using these sample events to further personalize your game:

FATHER'S APPEAL

Prerequisite: Aasimar adventurer, 3rd-level or higher

This encounter is a truly dark addition to your game that requires great care. Before running it, confirm all of your players are comfortable with scenes involving miscarriages or stillborn births. While this event is perfect for a setting as grim as Ravenloft, no set piece is worth harming your players.

A disheveled Vallakian approaches the aasimar with a makeshift coffin containing his stillborn child. This desperate, would-be father knows no other recourse than to beseech such an angelic being for aid. When the aasimar proves unable to



resurrect the infant, the man crumbles and sobs in the streets until Izek Strazni has him arrested for “malicious unhappiness.”

This event mirrors the Abbot’s actions during the Something Old event in chapter 8 of *Curse of Strahd*, in which he casually resurrects Ilya Krezkov. It pits the aasimar as his uncorrupted but impotent counterpart. Later, if the adventurers accept the powers of the Amber Temple, the aasimar may feel the need to resurrect the stillborn child, although to do so is to curse them to a life of resurrection madness.

Starting the Encounter. Read the following text to begin the encounter:

“Please,” a voice croaks. You turn to face a disheveled man, red-eyed and haggard. He holds a small box stained with blood. “Please, you must...you must...Angel of the Morninglord, you must...I’ve lost everything.”

The man throws himself to the dirt, kneeling before you, the box—a coffin?—held as dearly as one would a reliquary. In the distance, you notice a number of guards take note, staring out with cold curiosity to the spectacle before you.

“Please,” the poor sod continues, “bring him back. I’ve lost everything! Please, just bring him back!” The man, his matted hair a crown of thorns, opens the box, revealing a gray, stillborn child.

The man’s name is Arneli Krotchunovich, a **NG commoner**. His sorrow can be temporarily

alleviated with a *calm emotions* spell or a successful DC 21 Wisdom (Persuasion) check made over the course of 1d4+2 minutes. This spectacle inevitably draws the attention of **Izek Strazni**, who arrives with 1d4+2 **LE guards**. He arrests Arneli and promises, “The baron shall make you happy.” Izek cannot be reasoned with, only intimidated (DC 17). If a brawl breaks out, Izek fights until he has been reduced to 35 hit points or fewer; any attacks made by him or the guards prove to be nonfatal. If Arneli is taken away, he is imprisoned alongside Udo Lukovich in Area N3m.

In the aftermath, Baron Vargas Vallakovich sends an invitation to the adventurers; he hopes to smooth over the altercation and learn how he can use these adventurers for his own ends.

FINISHING THE JOB

Prerequisite: Dusk Elf adventurer, 7th-level or higher

As punishment for the dusk elf’s audacity, Strahd orders Rahadin to slay the remaining dusk elves. The Vistani camp outside Vallaki becomes a bloodbath, with Arrigal and several evil Vistani joining Rahadin. The adventurers must battle alongside Kasimir Velikov to preserve as many as possible.

Starting the Encounter. While the adventurers are in the camp (Area N9 of chapter 5), read the following text, which assumes some familiarity with Rahadin:



Upon the wind rides the wails of the long-dead—Rahadin, the Great Betrayer, comes! You look to the north and see a black carriage pulled by stallions as dark as Mother Night. He hangs from the car, the door ajar, with his scimitar tapping against the lintel.

The elf's voice cuts through the midday gloom, thundering with all the authority of Castle Ravenloft: "It is time to end what was begun so long ago! By decree of Count Strahd von Zarovich, the elven legacy ends today! Do be good pets and line up!"

Rahadin arrives with four LE Vistani **bandits** brought from Castle Ravenloft. Upon his proclamation, half the Vistani residents of the camp turn upon the dusk elves. The others either flee, stand aside, or take their stand with the elves. For the sake of combat, leave the Vistani and dusk elves (and Vistani sympathizers) to battle it out in the background while **Rahadin**, his four Vistani servitors, and Arrigal (a NE **assassin**) face the adventurers. If the party saved Arabelle, Luvash (CE **bandit captain**) is torn between his allegiance to Strahd and to those who spared his daughter from an untimely death. He is more likely to scoop up Arabelle (if she is present) and hide in a wagon.

Aftermath. Two outcomes are possible for this event:

- If Rahadin is reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, a cloud of darkness consumes him, spiriting him away to Castle Ravenloft where he lays infirm for 2d4+1 days. Kasimir tells the adventurers that he must flee to Mount Ghakis—that it is now or never to venture to the Amber Temple and find the power his sister Patrina has promised. Kasimir leaves immediately. Some surviving dusk elves flee to the Svalich Woods; others accompany him on this expedition. At Tsolenka Pass, add a smashed dusk elf corpse to Area T8 (the elf was plucked by the roc but fell from its claws).
- If Kasimir Velikov is reduced to 0 hit points, Rahadin stabilizes the elf and takes him to Castle Ravenloft. He is put into a cell (Area K74d) and left to rot. Strahd intends to turn him into a vampire spawn after years of torture and will entomb him behind a wall of stone so he may starve for blood.

INFERNAL VENDETTA

Prerequisite: Mountainfolk human, 7th-level or higher

A tribesman from the mountainfolk human's past has come to settle an old score, perhaps even informed of the character's location by Strahd. This **warlock of the fiend** (appendix B of *Volo's Guide to Monsters*) has recently emerged from the Amber Temple armed with infernal powers—and two **hell hounds** gifted to him by Seriach, a Dark Vestige.

The warlock's name is Caerlenn. He was already a brute of a man of great violence before accepting dark power. When he arrives, ask how the adventurer dishonored him in the days of yore.

Roleplaying Caerlenn. The tribesman is as fiery as the fell powers he now commands. He snarls as a beast and wastes little time on words, only remarking that his redemption is nigh. His hounds burst from the brush to flank the adventurers' backline.

Loot. Caerlenn carries a rawhide satchel that contains 49 gp, 22 sp, and 87 cp. He also has a chunk of amber taken from shattered doors in the Amber Temple. One shard of amber acts as an arcane focus for warlock spells.

MYSTERIES OF BAROVIA

Barovia, and Ravenloft at large, is a land of many mysteries, many of which come as a shocking or insidious surprise to the player characters—but when the adventurers are Barovian natives, many of these mysteries lose their punch or are already known to the average citizen. As the Dungeon Master, it is your duty to present and reveal these mysteries over the course of the campaign. This section classifies *Curse of Strahd's* mystery and intrigue into two sections: Lore and Arcana.

Lore is information that even the most cloistered Barovian knows, whose impact is lost when running *Curse of Strahd* with natives. Examples include: Strahd's fratricide, the mists of Ravenloft that seal Barovia from the outside world, and the Strahd's debt to the Vistani people. This lore is communicated to players in appendix A's handouts.

Arcana refers to the mysteries that few individuals of Barovia even know. Examples include: Barovia being ripped away from its homeworld and being brought into the Shadowfell; the reincarnation cycle; and the truth of Ireena Kolyana's identity. Every piece of Arcana should be revealed over the course of the campaign, often through the mouth or actions of a single character, as detailed below.

MYSTERIES OF BAROVIA

Mystery	Classification
Afterlife: "the Black Bottle"	Arcana
The Amber Temple	Lore
The Brides of Zarovich	Lore
Daywalkers	Arcana
Evil's Bride	Arcana
Divine Eavesdropper	Arcana
The Doom of Berez	Arcana/Lore
He is the Ancient	Arcana
The Keepers of the Feather	Arcana
On the Shoulder of the Shadowfell	Arcana
The Reincarnation Cycle	Arcana
Soulless Barovians	Arcana/Lore
Vasili von Holtz	Arcana
The Vistani Debt	Lore

*A black bottle! A black
abode brimming with a
thousand souls, all
waiting for someone
new to take a swig!*
- Ilya Kreskov

AFTERLIFE: “THE BLACK BOTTLE”

“The Black Bottle” is a term coined by this supplement’s author to describe the Barovian afterlife. Those who are raised from the dead rave about “the black bottle” in which a thousand souls languish. The term appears throughout Barovian folklore, but is usually discounted as the ravings of madmen (for those who are brought back to life suffer from resurrection madness, as described in *Curse of Strahd*).

The Reveal. This mystery is best revealed by the Abbot in chapter 8, either after Ilya Kreskov is resurrected or when the adventurers visit him in the Abbey of Saint Markovia. This is combined with the On the Shoulder of the Shadowfell reveal: “...and just as Barovia has left the lands of the living, so too do the dead languish in this prison.”

Take heed: the Abbot does not reveal the Reincarnation Cycle, for this is a realization better left for the player characters to work out as they continue to see Ireena Kolyana’s likeness appear in Berez and Castle Ravenloft.

THE AMBER TEMPLE

The existence of the Amber Temple is unknown to most Barovians but is common knowledge for the mountainfolk and goliaths. Those who do know of its existence rarely speak of this font of terrible power.

The Reveal. In the absence of any goliath or mountainfolk player characters, Kasimir Velikov remains the source of this knowledge. He reveals it only after establishing trust with the adventurers, which can be earned by saving Arabelle from Bluto Krogarov from Lake Zarovich.

THE BRIDES OF ZAROVICH

It is no secret that the devil Strahd covets beautiful things, be they treasure or live people. Many a beauty is told to hide their hair or smudge their cheeks, “lest the devil take your hand.” Over the last four centuries, Strahd has taken four wives and countless other consorts. This lore is known by most Barovians, but few know the names of these wives, each of which can be recalled with a separate

DC 15 Intelligence (History) check: Sasha Ivliškova, Ludmilla Vilisevic, Anastrasya Karelova, and Volenta Popofsky.

DAYWALKERS

Per *Curse of Strahd*, Barovia does not experience true sunlight, allowing vampires to walk about unharmed. This must be classified as Arcana, for Barovians are already afraid to go outside as it is. The truth would shatter the already fragile way of life and quash any semblance of society.

The Reveal. This mystery is revealed through action, not words. If the adventurers attempt to kill Doru in the day, he makes an escape attempt and climbs the Pillarstone of Ravenloft. If the adventurers confront the vampire spawn in Vallaki, they might be pursued onto the streets.

DIVINE EAVESDROPPER

Per *Curse of Strahd*, the devil can eavesdrop on any plea or prayer issued to a deity beyond Barovia. This Arcana is unknown to even the most devout priests of the Morninglord or hierophants of Mother Night. Not even the Abbot knows this truth, but the long-dead Saint Markovia had her suspicions.

The Reveal. This mystery is best revealed by Strahd himself, who mocks any paladin, cleric, or religious character later in the campaign. Grinning, he so sweetly repeats their past prayers.

THE DOOM OF BEREZ

Most Barovians, especially Vallakians, know that the valley once hosted a fourth settlement: Berez, located on the shore of the Luna River. It was destroyed in a flash flood invoked by Strahd’s wrath. Not a living soul knows that it was punishment for murdering Tatyana’s reincarnation. This mystery also ties into Evil’s Bride.

The Reveal. The reveal is made by the spirit of Berez’s last burgomaster, Lazlo Ulrich. Ordinarily, he only reveals the fate of Berez and Marina—Tatyana’s reincarnation—if prompted. However, this is your one opportunity, so do not pass it up. Ulrich murmurs, “For but one life, we were doomed... One maiden of ours, the orphan Marina, attracted the dark fascination of the devil Strahd. He sought to turn her. To spare her soul, Brother Grigor and I sent her to the grave before the devil’s final bite damned her to eternity. Never did we realize that sparing one innocent would doom scores more.”

EVIL’S BRIDE

The truth surrounding Ireena Kolyana’s parentage and identity are at the heart of the campaign’s story. For centuries, the devil Strahd has pursued his beloved only to have her ripped away at the last minute. She has since reincarnated in Ireena Kolyana and it is up to the adventurers to protect all while wondering just why the devil is so obsessed with her.



The Reveal. It is no secret that the devil has a dark fascination with Ireena; this is made clear in the village of Barovia. Their clues come in the form of Marina’s statue in the Ruins of Berez, Tatyana’s portrait in Strahd’s study in Castle Ravenloft, and other clues associated with the Barovian afterlife and its reincarnation cycle. You can directly reveal this through Strahd himself if he ever captures or comes face to face with Ireena. Brushing her hair back, the vampire murmurs, “My dear Tatyana...” or simply refers to her as “Tatyana” instead of Ireena.

HE IS THE ANCIENT

The expression “He is the Ancient. He is the Land,” crops up often in Barovian folklore, but most people do not know what this truly means. The average Barovian believes it just expresses Strahd’s undying nature and that he is a curse upon this country and its people. They do not know that Strahd has actual mastery over the land, its beasts, and its weather. Only the mountainfolk druids suspect as much.

The Reveal. This reveal comes in three parts, with each dedicated to a different aspect of Strahd’s power:

- To demonstrate his mastery over beasts, give the adventurers a friendly wolf. Later, in person, Strahd looks upon the beast, inciting it into a

treacherous rage.

- To demonstrate his mastery over the weather, Strahd wrenches a thunderstorm into being.
- Should a player become infected with lycanthropy, but has not yet suffered a full moon, Strahd can reach up into the air and *wrench* the full moon into existence, displaying his godlike powers over this realm. This exact event is recommended in *The Wedding at Ravenloft* while the adventurers battle Strahd on the battlements and towers of Castle Ravenloft. Smirking, the devil shouts, “Fools. You rely on the position of the sun and stars to protect you? I am the sun! I am the stars! I am the Ancient and I am the Land—and I alone control the tides of the moon! *Watch!*”

THE KEEPERS OF THE FEATHER

That an order of wereravens lurks within Barovia is a secret not even the devil Strahd is certain of. This is a true piece of arcana that is hidden behind Barovian and Vistani superstitions regarding ravens.

The Reveal. This secret is best protected until there is no other choice to reveal it—specifically in the form of a Martikov or wereraven standing at the brink of death. This likely occurs at the Wizard of the Wines winery or at Yester Hill, if a Martikov is dragged there by evil druids to be sacrificed. Once revealed, you can bet that the adventurers will all clamor for wereraven lycanthropy, as it is a positive form of lycanthropy.

ON THE SHOULDER OF THE SHADOWFELL

That Barovia has been ripped away from the Material Plane is a mystery of grave importance. It should be earth-shattering for any native Barovian to learn that their entire country—their entire world—exists in the most dismal plane of existence.

The Vistani, for their part, are unaware that Barovia is in the Shadowfell. They know it is some otherworldly realm but they do not know how grave the situation truly is. Were the truth be known, few would willingly live here, after all.

The Reveal. This mystery should be casually revealed by the Abbot in chapter 8, alongside the truth about the Barovian afterlife. Despite Barovia sitting firmly in the Shadowfell, he colorfully describes it as sitting “on the shoulder of the Shadowfell.”

THE REINCARNATION CYCLE

Barovian souls are trapped in a merciless reincarnation cycle that manifests every generation, forcing a soul—innocent or evil—to suffer Ravenloft’s horrors again and again. That this cycle exists, and that it extends to every person that dies in Barovia, is known only to folks like Madam Eva and Strahd himself. (Per *Curse of Strahd*, the Vistani know that some Barovians possess old souls, but not all; it is recommended that you scrap this for the sake of surprise.)



The Reveal. This Arcana has no reveal. It is up to the adventurers to figure it out themselves as they learn more about Tatyana (see *Evil's Bride* and *The Doom of Berez*). The portraits of the Vallakovich line also hint at the reincarnation cycle, for Vargas Vallakovich is nearly identical to every previous male burgomaster of Vallaki, as shown in his manor. If the players do not piece it together, a Hermit or monk character may realize it in-character.

SOULLESS BAROVIANS

That some, if not most, Barovians are born as empty shells is already known to the Vistani and is present in Barovian superstition (as evidenced in the *Something New* special event in chapter 8, wherein a newborn baby is born but does not cry). As written in *Curse of Strahd*, this is classified as Lore. It comes as a shock to foreign adventurers but would already be suspected by Barovian natives.

It is recommended that you instead change this to Arcana and reduce the ratio of soulless Barovians from 9-to-1 to 1-to-9. It is far more horrific for your narrative if ten percent of the populace is born without souls. The Vistani still know that some Barovians are soulless, and it is still present in Barovian superstition, but it is far less confirmed, making it more of a suspicion, rather than an actual fact.

The Reveal. If you reclassify this Arcana, it can be revealed through Morgantha or Baba Lysaga. The hag requires souled children for her dream pastries and the witch could be holding a ritual when the adventurers enter Berez. Likewise, the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok suspects this fact and Sir Godfrey Gwilym can confirm it, having briefly seen the afterlife himself.

THE MISTS OF RAVENLOFT

Every Barovian knows that the choking mists that surround the valley are deadly. They do not, however, know that it marks the border between their world and countless others. They instead believe it is a ward imposed by Strahd to control his demesne (when in truth, it marks the borders of his prison).

The Reveal. The truth—that Barovia is a prison for Strahd and not one created by him—is revealed by the Abbot when he presents Vasilka.

VASILI VON HOLTZ

The mysterious nobleman known as Vasili von Holtz is seldom mentioned in *Curse of Strahd*. It is Vasili who corrupted the Abbot (see chapter 8); it is Vasili who penned a letter to a Wachter ancestor (see chapter 5, Area N4q); and it is Vasili who coerced the Vallakian coffin maker to steal the bones of Saint Andral. His role in the campaign is largely behind the scenes.

The Reveal. How much you wish to feature him is up to you, but the realization that he is none other than Strahd occurs after the adventurers find the *Tome of Strahd* and the letter “Vasili” penned to Lovina Wachter, an ancestor of Nikolai. This has as much consequence as you wish in your campaign.

THE VISTANI DEBT

Strahd's ancient debt to the Vistani people comes as a shock to foreign adventurers and more proof that they ought not to be trusted—but this is simple lore to a Barovian. It is already known by all living Vistani, who readily share the story. It is included in the lore handouts of appendix A for just that reason.



APPENDIX A PLAYER HANDOUTS

This appendix provides the players with several handouts they may use to familiarize themselves with the lore, culture, and history of Barovia. All characters have access to the Barovian Lore handout, as well as one other handout, as determined by their race. If a player chooses not to read such vital information, so be it. Their character deserves to suffer from such wilful ignorance.

The handouts are written with the perspective of a few weeks before the start of *Curse of Strahd*. For example, the Village of Barovia Lore handout makes no mention of Kolyan Indirovich's death. This choice is deliberate, for your campaign might begin far from a character's hometown. This couples well with the family options for human player characters; a child of Burgomaster Dmitri Krezkov may return to Krezk only to learn that their brother Ilya has died in their absence. Thus, you can later surprise your players with these events.

PLAYER HANDOUT BY RACE

Race	Handout
Aasimar	Krezk, Vallaki, Village of Barovia, or Vistani Lore
Dusk Elf	Dusk Elf Lore
Half-Elf	Choose one of the following: Dusk Elf, Krezk, Vallaki, or Village of Barovia Lore
Human (Barovian)	Krezk, Vallaki, or Village of Barovia Lore
Human (Mountainfolk)	Mountainfolk Lore
Human (Vistani)	Vistani Lore
Goliath	Goliath Lore and Mountainfolk Lore
Tiefling	Krezk, Vallaki, Village of Barovia, or Vistani Lore
Heir to Ruin	One handout of your choice

BAROVIAN LORE

This handout is known to all inhabitants of Barovia, regardless of their race or origin.

OVERVIEW

- Barovia is ruled by the vampire Count Strahd von Zarovch—or “the devil Strahd.”
- Thanks to the curse of Strahd, the sun has not shone unobscured for centuries, and creatures of the night stalk the countryside.
- Barovia is surrounded by insidious fog (“the mists”) that choke the life from all who dare leave the realm. The country is, effectively, sealed off from the outside world.
- Barovia is inhabited chiefly by humans, but there is a small population of elves that live in the valley. Humans are divided into three groups: the Barovians, who descend from the subjects Count Strahd brought to this land; the traveling Vistani; and the mountainfolk who roam the harsh summits to the north and south.
- Many foreign travelers have wound up in Barovia over the years. These strangers do not survive for long and often attract the attention of Count Strahd himself. The mists (or Strahd himself), they say, hungers for new victims.
- The year is 735. Strahd died and rose as a vampire in Year 351.

THE DEVIL STRAHD

- The devil Strahd was once a mortal man who inherited his father’s crown and finished his many wars. In life, he had two brothers: Sergei and Rahadin, his adopted brother. Strahd died the night of Sergei’s wedding.
- The devil Strahd has taken many brides and playthings over the years. He is attracted to beauty, innocence, and hope—all of which he strives to corrupt.
- The devil is a curse placed upon Barovia and its people as punishment for a long-forgotten sin of their ancestors. For so long as he lives, the Barovian people must suffer.
- The devil is an implacable but distant sovereign. So long as the tax is paid and Barovians keep quiet, the vampire is content to leave them alone.
- Some say that the devil slumbers for years at a time in Castle Ravenloft.
- Rumor has it that the devil’s archnemesis, the monster hunter Dr. Rudolph van Richten, has come to slay Strahd. To speak his name is to invite the devil’s wrath; to harbor him is to invite a thousand years of torture as one of the devil’s vampire spawn.

THE LAND OF BAROVIA

- Barovia is named after Strahd’s late father, King Barov. Castle Ravenloft, where Count Strahd dwells, is named after his late mother, Queen Ravenovia. No one is welcome at the castle without an invitation.
- Barovia was founded almost four centuries ago, after the devil Strahd slaughtered the last of his enemies in this valley. He brought subjects from his other conquered lands to fill out his new country.
- Three main settlements lie along the Old Svalich Road, which cuts through the valley: Krezk in the west, Vallaki in the heart of the valley, and the village of Barovia in the east, above which is perched Castle Ravenloft.
- Barovian settlements are ruled by a burgomaster. Dmitri Krezkov rules Krezk; Baron Vargas Vallakovich rules Vallaki; and the miserable village of Barovia is led by Kolyan Indirovich.
- Many foreign travelers have wound up in Barovia over the years. These strangers do not survive for long and often attract the attention of Count Strahd himself.
- The Svalich Woods teem with wolves and dire wolves with a keen taste for humanoid flesh.

BAROVIAN CULTURE

- Barovians worship (or worshipped) two deities who have fallen silent over the years: the Morninglord, whose duty is to watch the Barovian people from dawn to dusk; and Mother Night, a goddess of secrets whose presence can be felt at night. Priests of the Morninglord practice their faith openly, while hierophants of Mother Night remain hidden. Some sages claim it was Mother Night that wrought the curse of Strahd.
- Wine is the lifeblood of the Barovian people. For some, it is the only reason to continue living. Nearly all

- wine is provided by the Martikov family, who own and operate the Wizard of Wines winery in the west.
- Barovians suffer in silence until their rage boils out. They prove violent and easily provoked. When faced with a common threat, they fight or flee as one.
 - Prayers to the Morninglord are offered at dawn, and pleas to Mother Night are made at dusk.
 - Barovians never ask for permission to enter an adobe, nor do they give it. They simply open the door and watch to see if their would-be guest can enter unbidden.
 - It is customary to bid someone farewell with the expression, “Be smart, be swift, and beware the night.”

BAROVIAN SUPERSTITIONS

- Werewolves hunt the innocent and wicked alike. They are immune to most attacks but die if they ingest wolfsbane—an increasingly rare herb found in the Svalich Woods. When made into an incense, it can keep the beasts away. Those bitten by a werewolf have until the next full moon to kill their “lupine sire” with silver. Should they fail, the curse takes root.
- Hags and devils cannot abide the taste or presence of salt, and they cannot cross a circle of salt.
- Ghosts cannot bear their own reflection.
- Barovia is infested with vampires begat by Strahd. These creatures burn in sunlight and are burned by running water. They cannot enter residences uninvited and they must rest in their coffins during the day. Its gaze is enthralling and can’t be ignored by wolves, bats, and vermin. A vampire itself can shapeshift into a wolf, bat, or cloud of mist. They do not have reflections.
- Never harm a raven, lest ye be cursed forevermore.

DRUIDIC LORE

Druid player characters know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- Barovia hosts two druidic menhirs, each built in antiquity by human migrants. The first is located near an old windmill outside Vallaki; the other stands alongside the Luna River in the ruins of Berez.
- The ruins of Berez are haunted by a witch or hag known as Baba Lysaga, who bathes monthly in the blood of lambs.
- On the west end of the valley stands Yester Hill, a burial mound for ancient tribes of the Balinok Mountains. A wall of mist stands there, depicting a far-off land.
- Barovian soil is cursed with low fertility. To combat this, a wizard of yore crafted three, pinecone sized gems that could revitalize whatever soil they were planted into. Although they were created by a wizard, they still bear immense druidic power.
- Barovia is haunted by blights—chlorofiends with a taste for blood. They are created through the evil influence of a Gulthias Tree. You do not know where the tree is.
- Some Barovian ravens are shapeshifters in disguise.
- Some Barovian druids have a dark fascination with Strahd, citing his mastery over the land and weather.

DUSK ELF LORE

Dusk elf player characters know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- The dusk elves hail from the lands neighboring those of Strahd's ancestors. Their kingdom was shattered by Strahd's father, King Barov, with the help of the Rahadin the Great Betrayer, a resentful dusk elf exile.
- The dusk elves are on the brink of extinction. Strahd had all their women put to death two centuries ago as punishment for the stoning of Patrina Velikovna, a dusk elf archmage to whom Strahd was to be wed.
- The dusk elves are led by Kasimir Velikov, the very brother of Patrina—who led her stoning. He is a morose wizard whose ears were cut off by Strahd. Rumor has it that the wizard is haunted by his crimes and is seeking a power that might restore his people.

HISTORY

- Strahd continued Barov's wars, driving the elves to the brink of annihilation. Their surrender is all that stayed him from completing their genocide. He left them to the mercy of the Vistani, who bore them to this valley. Many dusk elves remember these folk fondly, although their descendants are hardly as true and just as they were.
- Once in the valley, the dusk elves were sheltered by the knights of the Order of the Silver Dragon, who welcomed Strahd's other enemies. It was not long before Strahd arrived and defeated the Order, slaying the great silver dragon, Argynvost.
- In the aftermath, the dusk elves were again sheltered by the Vistani of Velikov's line. They remain there, on the outskirts of Vallaki, to this day. The elders have passed on, leaving the brothers Arrigal and Luvash in charge. Luvash is a brute fond of wine and Arrigal is as coldhearted as they come.

RAHADIN THE GREAT BETRAYER

- Rahadin was exiled from the dusk elven kingdom for refusing to swear fealty to a corrupt prince.
- Nursing a hatred for his own people, Rahadin willingly gave dusk elven military secrets to King Barov, the father of Strahd von Zarovich. After his victory over the elves, Barov was so grateful and proud that he adopted Rahadin as his honorary son.
- Rahadin—"the Mad Dog of Zarovich," as the surviving dusk elves call him—faithfully serves Strahd to this day as chamberlain of Castle Ravenloft.
- When Strahd ordered the death of all dusk elven women, it was Rahadin who carried out the massacre—and he did it with a smile.
- Rahadin has slain so many over the years that the souls of the dead continue to wail about him. One cannot remain in his presence without hearing that dreadful choir. The elf can channel this sorrow to inflict great harm upon the minds of others.

GOLIATH LORE

Goliath characters know the following lore, which supplements the lore that mountainfolk humans know. See the Mountainfolk Lore handout in addition to this one. As described in chapters 1 and 2, goliaths are not ordinarily found in *Curse of Strahd* but can be added for the benefit of a player. If so, the DM decides if the goliaths supplement the human mountainfolk or replace them outright. In the case of the latter, they replace the Mistwhisper tribe.

HISTORY

- The goliaths were guided to this valley centuries ago by dreams, long before Strahd von Zarovich's arrival.
- The goliaths were charged by their ancestors to guard a sanctum of dark power hewn deep into the summit of Mount Ghakis. To consort with such evil entities was worthy of exile; to accept their power was punishable by death.
- Over the years, several individuals stole power from the sanctum and either faced justice or escaped it. An order of knights led by a silver dragon later arrived to violently wrest control of the sanctum away from the clan, citing these malefactors as the reason why the goliaths had failed their sacred duty.
- The "War of the Dragon" was long and bloody. Ultimately, the leviathan swooped down from the Heavens to destroy the clan's holdings and send its people into flight. The knights guarded the sanctum until being slain by Strahd von Zarovich's armies many years later.
- In the war's aftermath, the clan split in twain. Clan Thelgataana was determined to remain at Mount Ghakis and guard the sanctum. Clan Vaima-Olava sought refuge in the north, far from such dark influences. The clans oscillate between periods of peace and war. Border skirmishes are infrequent but fierce—as if some dark force in the land has heightened their enmity and pushed them to greater acts of slaughter.

STRAHD VON ZAROVICH

- The goliaths respect Strahd von Zarovich more than they fear him.
- Strahd is considered more of a force of nature than a mortal man. When tragedies strike and storms batter the Balinok Mountains, goliaths appreciate or scorn this misfortune with the phrase, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land," as if Strahd is an embodiment of the world's cruel nature.
- The goliaths believe that Strahd's curse originates from an entity within the dark sanctum.

CLAN VAIMA-OLAVA

- Clan Vaima-Olava is led by Chieftess Gautheni Wolfslayer Vaima, who famously slew six werewolves under a single moon. She has no heirs and so it is believed that whomever she marries will inherit control of the clan. Many a suitor seeks to prove himself to her.
- Clan Vaima-Olava believes it is better to leave the Barovians be and preside over the mountainsides. History has shown that the Barovian people are not interested in being neighbors. The clan occasionally trades pelts for wine and other goods.

CLAN THELGATAANA

- Clan Thelgataana is led by Chieftess Maveia Darkwarden Thelgataana, eldest of three daughters. She has four children.
- Clan Thelgataana's druids have a dark fascination with Strahd, believing he has mastery over the land itself. They believe the green lands to the north are theirs to take.
- Clan Thelgataana has seized Yester Hill, denying their enemies access to such a sacred place.

MOUNTAINFOLK LORE

Mountainfolk humans (or those who live among them) know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- The mountainfolk consist of disparate tribes, all of whom predate Strahd von Zarovich's arrival to this land. The Balinok Mountains have been their home for as long as their sages can remember.
- The mists have closed in tighter around Barovia—an omen interpreted by tribal sages that another “Hour of Night” is due and much blood will be shed in coming days.
- The mountainfolk contend with many threats when they leave the mountains for the forest: wolves, undead, and malicious “tree fiends” with a taste for blood.
- The Mistwhisper tribe has recently gone on the warpath, swallowing other tribes and slaughtering those who refuse to bend the knee. Their druids idolize Strahd von Zarovich's mastery over the land and weather and seek his favor.

MOUNT BARATOK

- In recent months, Mount Baratok has become the home of an amnesiac wizard that even the most reckless mountainfolk give a wide berth. Some say he is a shapechanger.
- Werewolves lair in a grisly cave perched above Lake Baratok in the northwest. Their attacks have grown far more frequent as of late.

MOUNT GHAKIS

- Mount Ghakis is haunted by Sangzor (“Bloodhorn”), a massive mountain goat of supernatural resilience and great malice. Many a traveler has been gored or knocked off the mountain; many a hunter has received a far worse fate, as if Sangzor knows that they were after him.
- A great roc nests on the peak of Mount Ghakis, having lived there for so long that many tribes consider it a wild god or undying spirit. To wear its massive feathers is a great honor. A prophecy claims that whoever slays the roc is the rightful ruler of all mountainfolk and Barovia itself.
- A sanctum of dark power is hewn into the summit of Mount Ghakis. Legends say “the Dragon” guarded his place, but his vigil has since ended. To even seek the sanctum is enough to be exiled from one's tribe. Those who dare consort with the living darkness there are to be put to death.

YESTER HILL

- The mountainfolks' most sacred place, Yester Hill, lies on the west end of the valley.
- Yester Hill is a burial mound for heroes and warriors and is tended to by druids.
- There stands a wall of mist (“the Whispering Wall”) that they believe was created by a dying god's last breath—given to save the world from destruction. Within the wall are all the memories of the world and all possible futures. Many tribesmen make a pilgrimage there.
- The berserker Kavan rests at Yester Hill. In ancient days, this chieftain notoriously hunted at night and drank the blood of his enemies. Some claim that his legendary weapon, the Blood Spear, is still there and that Kavan's spirit awaits one who is worthy of wielding it.
- The Mistwhisper tribe has seized control of Yester Hill, denying access to pilgrims on their vision quest.

KREZK LORE

A citizen of Krezk knows the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- Krezk is the westernmost settlement and is built around the Abbey of Saint Markovia, a mountainside church. The abbey is named after Saint Markovia, who instigated a fierce uprising against the devil.
- Krezk is a commune. Its fifty or so people never leave the safety of its walls and aim to be as self-sufficient as possible. Very little trade is made and newcomers are often turned away at the gates.
- The burgomaster is Dmitri Krezkov, a cautious and guarded man who mans the walls during most waking hours. He and his wife, Anna, have lost three children over the years to illness, hence why they are so protective of their last son, Ilya.
- The Krezkites' ancestors built a shrine ("the Shrine of the White Gazebo") to the Morninglord upon the shore of a spring.
- Wine is delivered monthly, but the next shipment has yet to arrive.

THE ABBEY OF SAINT MARKOVIA

- The abbey was once a hospital and convent until Saint Markovia marched upon Castle Ravenloft. She and her forces proved no match for the devil Strahd in his own demesne.
- In the absence of Saint Markovia, the priests fell to madness and cannibalism after Strahd's sieged the abbey.
- The abbey remained empty for years; Krezkites believed it was cursed.
- Decades ago, a youthful priest came from a distant land with the intent to reopen the abbey and continue the Morninglord's legacy. He has not aged a day since. Krezkites refer to him simply as "the Abbot."
- The Abbot can heal diseases and raise the dead. He attributes it to faith in the Morninglord. His powers, however, are never given freely. Everything has a price.
- The leprous Belview family came to the Abbot years ago, hoping to be healed. It is unknown what happened to them, but now the abbey is filled with baleful howls and inhumane laughter that haunts the village.
- Many believe that the Abbot is a servant of the devil Strahd's—if he is not Strahd himself in disguise.

LOCALES

- The Wizard of Wines winery lies to the south. Originally, it was owned by the Krezkov family, but a regretful marriage to their vassals, the Martikovs, summarily transplanted it to their ownership.
- To the south is Yester Hill, a burial mound frequented by mountainfolk tribes.
- To the northeast stands Khazan's Tower, the abode of the late archmage Khazan. The sages say his word was power.

VALLAKI LORE

As a Vallakian, you know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- Vallaki was founded by the Vallakovich family, who have reigned ever since.
- Vallaki is protected by a palisade and sits on the shores of Lake Zarovich. It has historically been a fishing town, but recent lupine aggression has halted all fishing.
- Baron Vargas Vallakovich is the current burgomaster. He throws weekly festivals determined to improve morale. Those who disparage the festivals or otherwise spread gloom are accused of consorting with the devil Strahd or arrested for “malicious unhappiness.”
- The baron is served by Izek Strazni, a vicious brute with a devilish arm that can conjure fire. Izek was caught killing other children when he was young but was pardoned by the baron. He is fiercely loyal to Vargas and obeys without question. So long as Izek lives, no one dares challenge the baron.
- A Vistani clan lives outside Vallaki with a group of dusk elves. Vistani aren’t friendly, nor are they allowed in Vallaki.

LIFE IN VALLAKI

- Most Vallakians have never left the safety of their walls.
- With so many wolves at the door, Vallakians have been dining chiefly on wolf steaks and wolf burgers. The meat proves gamey and pungent—wolves who feast on carrion and carnivores make for a poor meal, after all.
- Vallaki has endured the baron’s weekly festivals for over seven years; preparing for each one consumes the majority of the villagers’ time and resources.
- The Blue Water Inn offers wine to the weary. It is operated by a branch of the Martikov family, who owns the Wizard of Wines winery.
- Father Lucian Petrovich of St. Andral’s Church holds nightly sermons for the devout. The congregation has been on the decline for years now.

NOBLE FAMILIES OF VALLAKI

- Three noble families inhabit Vallaki: the Vallakoviches, the Wachters, and the Martikovs.
- The Vallakovich family consists of Vargas, his wife Lydia Petrovna, and their morbid son Victor, who rarely leaves the manor. Vargas’s fragile ego can suffer no insult and no discontent, and he is beyond paranoid.
- The Wachter family is led by Lady Fiona, wife of the late Nikolai Wachter. Fiona is a fierce opponent of Baron Vargas and has been quoted saying, “I’d rather serve the devil than a madman.” Her sons, Nikolai and Karl, are local troublemakers, and her daughter, Stella, has not been seen outside for quite some time.
- The Martikovs who own the local inn are an offshoot of the main family, who are vassals of Krezk. They consist of Urwin, the eldest son of the family patriarch, his wife Danika, and their sons, Brom and Bray. They are kind and forgiving.

RUMORS

- A stranger with pointy ears has come from beyond the mists; for a coin, he offers a tale. He rode into town on a carnival wagon and with a monkey on his shoulder.
- Purple flashes have been seen emanating from the attic of the baron’s mansion.
- To the west of town is a ruined mansion rumored to be haunted.
- The Blue Water Inn’s latest shipment of wine has disappeared.
- Lady Fiona runs a very exclusive book club that many believe is just her excuse to complain about the baron and undermine his efforts.
- The town drunk, Bluto Krogarov, continues to fish on Lake Zarovich, despite the wolves that crowd its shores. He insists that his bad luck is about to turn around.

VILLAGE OF BAROVIA LORE

Those who have lived in the village of Barovia (hereafter “the Village”) for long know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- The Village sits at the eastern edge of the valley, under the shadow Castle Ravenloft, which is perched on a cliff (“the Pillarstone of Ravenloft”) a thousand feet above.
- The Village burgomaster is Kolyan Indirovich, whose two children are Ireena Kolyana and Ismark Kolyanovich. Ismark is mocked as “Ismark the Lesser” for he has always lived in his father’s shadow; the beautiful Ireena is desired by the devil Strahd.
- The Village is a ghost town. Most homes are abandoned; many are infested with undead locked inside cellars or boarded up bedrooms.
- When foreigners come from the lands beyond the mist, they usually wind up here.

LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

- Life is dismal. So close to Castle Ravenloft, few leave the safety of their homes after dusk. The monotony is disrupted whenever foreigners and Vistani arrive.
- The Blood of the Vine tavern offers wine to the weary. It is owned by three Vistani women: Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia.
- Bildrath’s Mercantile is the village’s sole general store. He charges exorbitant rates to foreigners that come from beyond the mist and upcharges locals whenever he can. His nephew, Parriwimple, is a hulking, simple lad with a kind heart. Bildrath uses him to cow disgruntled customers.
- An old woman named Morgantha occasionally visits the village to peddle her “dream pastries.” These addictive mincemeat pies put the eater into a euphoric stupor that allows them to escape the dismal nature of reality. There is nothing an addict won’t offer Morgantha when they run out of coin.
- The villagers are woken nightly to the spirits of the dead, who rise from the graveyard to march upon Castle Ravenloft. These spirits consist chiefly of dead foreigners who dared stand against the devil Strahd.

RUMORS

- The devil Strahd flies among the thousand bats that emerge from Castle Ravenloft each night.
- It is believed that Father Donavich’s son has returned from the doomed revolt on Castle Ravenloft. The priest has him locked up in the church basement.
- Ireena Kolyana has attracted the dark attention of the devil Strahd. Twice now has she been bitten.
- Mad Mary’s daughter, Gertruda, has recently gone missing.
- Alena, Mirabel, and Sorvia spy for the devil Strahd.

VISTANI LORE

Vistani player characters know the following lore:

OVERVIEW

- The Vistani are a wandering people of silversmiths, musicians, and raconteurs. They alone can leave Barovia. The roads, they say, are their kingdom, and no force can deny them passage.
- The Vistani occasionally return to Barovia with goods from foreign lands. Somehow, they can always find their way back to Barovia.
- Vistani are not allowed to enter the town of Vallaki.

VISTANI SETTLEMENTS

- The Vistani maintain two settlements in Barovia for their weary kin: the Tser Pool encampment in the east, and the Vallaki camp at the heart of the valley.
- The Tser Pool encampment is near the village of Barovia and hosts Madam Eva, the mystical and seemingly ageless seer.
- The Vallaki camp has lost its elders, leaving the callous brothers Arrigal and Luvash in charge.

COUNT STRAHD VON ZAROVICH

- Count Strahd comes from a royal bloodline. He finished his late father's wars and conquered this valley. He died centuries ago but endures as one of the undead, feasting upon the blood of the innocent. Barovians refer to him as "the devil Strahd."
- Count Strahd has taken many brides, but they are only distractions from his one true love: a peasant girl named Tatyana, who died long ago.
- Strahd owes his life to the Vistani people, who saved him long before he became a vampire. They sheltered him from his enemies and delivered him home. As a reward, Strahd promised the Vistani that they could come and go from his realm as they pleased.

VISTANI CULTURE

- Vallaki clans are gerontocracies: the elder enforces tradition, settles disputes, and decides where their next destination is.
- Vistani believe life is to be celebrated while it still can. To seize the day, to enjoy the finer things, to laugh and love in the face of sorrow, to be beholden to no master—these are principles all clans embrace.
- Vistani dress in colorful clothing and school their children in the ways of music.
- Vistani travel in vardos: large, barrel-top wagons that can serve as mobile homes. They prefer to sleep out under the stars when the weather is fair.
- Vistani are often at odds with Barovians, who believe them to be Strahd's servants. The Vistani consider most Barovians ignorant, miserable wretches with no appreciation for life.

VISTANI SUPERSTITIONS

- Some Vistani can invoke terrible curses upon their enemies. No curse is more heinous than the Evil Eye. To curse someone undeserving of such pain is of grave consequence.
- Some Vistani women are gifted with precience, although they cannot divine their own future or that of other Vistani.
- Ravens carry the souls of the dead; to kill one is to invite calamity.

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