

Herein is the Account of The Great

Strahd von Zarovich

Prince, Count, General, and Conqueror

Finally, after twenty-six years, the Tergs are defeated. Our people shall never know of my sacrifice. I have given so much, but my family's ancestral lands are free once again and I have avenged the death of Father.

Pathetic cowards that they were, the Tergs fled west to a small valley in the Balinok mountains to hide and lick their wounds. Looking back now, it astounds me how their barbarian hordes, with terrifying speed, overtook our entire nation nearly shattering its power, unseating my family, but I slaughtered them all!

I thundered across the land like the wrath of a just god, and it was my justice that brought peace to the valley. I claim the right to rule over this land and all lands reclaimed from those barbarians. The peasantry is grateful to, once again, be under the rule of a von Zarovich. This is my just reward.

347 Winter

I have decreed the land “Barovia,” after Father, and shall rebuild our ancestral castle to commemorate our greatness!

Strahd von Zarovich, savior of the von Zarovich name! Our line shall reign as Lords of men forever!

My army has settled in the valley of Barovia and have taken power over the people in the name of a just god, but with none of a god’s grace or justice. The... Barovians, that is a good name for them, are a simple people... innocent, they need to be taught what is wrong and right, like babies.

I am collecting wizards and artisans from across the land and have decreed the construction of a castle to rival the magnificent fortress of our ancestral homeland. I shall name it **Ravenloft** after my beloved Mother.

Perhaps she will appreciate that...

348 Spring

Khazan informs me the construction of Castle Ravenloft nears completion.

The pillar that we construct upon is a towering plateau, one thousand feet high. It shall be the perfect defense against attackers. Our home shall never again be sieged so easily!

It also gives me a beautiful view of the valley and the little hamlet that I have named the Village of Barovia.

I admit, with Castle Ravenloft complete, I did not expect my first Royal Visitors to be a group of Wild Druids.

Too long had they suffered at the hand of lesser men they come seeking patronage and safety. They see me as the savior I am.

When asked what they offered in return for my protection they said “Ancient secrets” – hidden knowledge that they claim will allow me control over the Swamps, Forests, and Mountains of Barovia.

My interest was piqued.

Thrice did they lead me to these ancient places. As I stood in these sanctums and felt their primal, old magic, I determined that these too must be conquered.

348 Summer

I have been in contact with Mother, and... I – I have a younger brother. Shortly before Father joined me in the crusades, Mother became with child. I am overjoyed for her... for us... for there is another to add greatness to our name.

I am... perplexed, however, her previous correspondences had no mention of him. There have been many opportunities over the last twenty-five years to tell me I had a sibling... Our last missive explained as such... Twenty-five years. How? Why could Mother keep such joyous news from me?

Understandably I am...

...cross.

As Master of the family, I have commanded my Mother and Little Brother join me in our new home.

348 Winter

The Mountain Fane granted me a vision. I saw Mother. She feared me and that is why she kept Sergei a secret from me? Say it isn't so...

I wanted from her what any son wants... Love.

But she spurned me.

Cold... Arrogant?!

She secreted Sergei away and visited upon him all her love and attention!

I saved our family. I freed our lands. I avenged Father. I was exactly what I needed to be.

Mark me, I shall get what I was denied by Mother from Sergei, she will see! All the love that was lavished upon him, he shall return to me tenfold!

Mother did not make the journey.

Her carriage fell to... disaster... and she died.

I admit, I am... disappointed she did not get to see her name sake.

Sergei and I mourn together. We have sealed her body alongside Father's in the crypt below the castle.

Sergei

My unknown younger brother.

The receptacle of our Mother's love.

He comes bringing me a gift of reverence. A sword with a crystal blade. I laugh, what use is a crystal sword? But I graciously accepted the gift.

He is handsome, youthful, and charming. In truth, he reminds me of my younger years...

He has never known war, and never will with the peace that I have brought him.

Because of my sacrifices he is a kind and giving soul; willing to stretch out a helping hand to any and all. He studies in the Priesthood of the Morninglord.

His voice is eloquent and his wit quick. He speaks with a wisdom of one who has lived several lifetimes.

His mind is like a sponge soaking up endless drops of knowledge. We often have friendly debates, which I, of course, with my greater wisdom and advanced knowledge, win.

We are as two sides to a coin, one that has sat outside on a stone for too many years... one side is weather worn yet the other is fresh and new having been protected from the elements.

It is good to be with family again.

This morning my brother Sergei entered my study in a mood too cheerful to bear, too bright and youthful to tolerate. He's met a girl from the village of such virtue and beauty he plans to marry her. Of course, I was furious.

Sergei was destined to embark on a life of service to the church! He was to be our Most High Priest. He had already been given the Priest's Pendant to wear as a symbol of the approaching ceremony, and here he was bubbling over with ludicrous devotion to a peasant!

Let him make his mistakes!

Fate, it seems, is on my side.

These past few months I have welcomed an interesting partner into my life, **Patrina Velikovna**, one of the estranged dusk elves that live in the valley.

Her elvish charm and ageless beauty belie her true skill. She is a cunning witch and as powerful as she is beautiful.

She tells of a place of power, a vault of forbidden lore high in the frozen peaks of the Balinok Mountains.

The Amber Temple, where the secret to gaining immortality is hidden.

Rahadin protested my involvement with her. Though he has been a longtime servant and confidant of my family, he oversteps himself.

350 Winter

He brought this wretched embarrassment of his, **Tatyana**, to my castle, and I...

I fell in love!

I say it simply because it happened simply. At the first sight of her, I knew she was far beyond ordinary beauty as the luster of a jewel is beyond that of polished glass.

A rare beauty, who is called “perfection,” “joy,” and “treasure.” **Tatyana**... I long for her to be mine.

I love her with all my heart. I love her for her youth. I love her for her joy. **Tatyana** is my life.

350 Winter

~~Sergei ... He is my most beloved friend and my bitterest rival, my confidant and my betrayer, my sustainer and my dependent, and scariest of all, my equal.~~

351 Spring

She spurns me!

“**Old one**,” is my name to her – “**Elder**” and “**Brother**” also.

Her heart belongs to Sergei. They are betrothed... the date is set.

Summer.

They asked for my **blessing** and it was a blow more crippling than that inflicted by any Terg warrior.

With words she calls me “**Brother**,” but when I look into her eyes, they reflected another name: “**Death**.”

It is the death of the aged that she sees in me.

She loves her youth and enjoys it... but I... I have squandered mine.

All goodness has slipped from my life. The war years and the killing years have worn down my soul

as wind wears stone to sand. My youth and strength are gone, and all I have left is death.

Sergei is full of youth and life. A life that was filled with the love of a mother. A life that was denied to me. My joy for him fades. I hate his handsomeness. I hate his youth.

It is the **death** in me that turns her from me.

I hate **death** – **my death**.

My hate is very strong.

I will not be called death so soon!

351 Spring

My brother is no more than a cold obstacle to me now.

I have left the castle, the incessant cooing of my traitorous brother for **my love Tatyana** is more than I can bare.

I travel with Patrina into the Balinok Mountains. This land was ancient and powerful long before mere man set foot here.

I have discovered the temple high in the mountains, easily two millennia old... I have scoured it for its secrets and found that the inhabitants, though dead, are very useful.

It is here that I encountered the steward of the temple, an undead lich called **Exethanter**. Even after selling his soul for everlasting life this pathetic creature is nowhere close to my equal. He sensed my greatness, and, as not to incur my wrath, lead me toward destiny.

The temple is a tomb, a vault of sorts, built to contain these remnants of ancient powers. Ancient intelligent beings. Dangerous to lesser men.

All of them supplicated themselves before me...

...and I found what I wanted.

I have made a pact with death...

~~I must...~~

~~to complete it...~~

I shall have what I want.

I demand it.

I killed Sergei, my brother.

My pact is sealed with his **blood**.

My stolen youth is returned to me!

I found **Tatyana** weeping in the garden east of the chapel. I expressed my love to her, confessed my crime, and she fled from me!

She would not let me explain, and a great anger swelled within me. She had to understand the pact I made.

The pact I made for her!

I pursued her...

Finally, in her despair, she flung herself from
the walls of Ravenloft, and I watched...

everything I ever wanted...

fall from my grasp forever.

A thousand feet through the mists.

No trace of her was ever found.

Arrows from the castle guards pierced me to
my soul, but my pact had forever freed me from
the indignity of death. As their poisoned tips
stopped my heart...

I would not die.

Nor did I live.

I became undead, forever.

I am forever.

360 Winter

I have studied many things since... then.

“Vampyr” is my new name.

I still lust for life and youth, and I curse the living that took them from me.

Running water burns like **acid**. Even the **sun** is against me. It is the sun and its light I fear the most, but little else can harm me now. Even a steak through my heart does not kill me, though it holds me from movement.

But the sword, that cursed sword that Sergei brought! I must dispose of that awful tool! ~~The memories I ha-~~ I fear and hate it as much as the sun.

The Wizard Khazan retired to tower on Lake Baratok. I ordered him to destroy the blade.

I have learned much, about this land...

Ancient are its ways, ancient beyond the knowledge of the simple folk of the valley. I have walked the ancient ways, secret roads linking three fanes of might.

Three ancient powers dwelt in this valley long before my coming, and three hidden fanes still give tribute to their memories.

I visited the Swamp Fane, the Forest Fane, and the Mountain Fane.

I have consecrated the Fanes in my image...

and claimed their power for my own.

Thus, I solidified my grasp on this dim shadow of life.

I have become the Land.

362 Winter

Khazan has become a lich, how quaint. He visited me at Castle Ravenloft with the notion of challenging me for rulership of Barovia.

I helped him... see the error of his ways... and he now advises me in matters of magic. We often return to the amber temple.

400 Spring

She has returned! Tatyana, my love, has found her way back to me.

Sequestered in Berez this whole time!

The Burgomaster tells tale of how she wandered the Luna River with no memory of her past or who she was. He took her in and made her his adopted daughter and named her Marina.

She is as bright as molten silver. Her face is aglow with such joy as to make my heart burst from the sheer happiness at the sight.

400 Spring

Laslo disgusts me, he treats Marina with callous disregard...

He conspires with Brother Grigor, that fanatical and dangerous monk, to rescind the adoption license so he can marry his former daughter!

Disgusting.

I shall save my Tatyana!

400 Spring

She **loves** me, oh how **she loves me!**

I pull her close, holding her tight so that she will
never, ever be taken from me again. I hold her,
cherish her, my heart so full of love I can no longer
even speak her name.

Her laughter is like birdsong.

Her hair that of the setting sun.

She is the embodiment of beauty.

Her wishes are my wishes, and I have granted
her a brief reprieve to collect her things and say
farewell to her friends, then we away to the Castle
to live eternity together!

I have defeated **Death**, and I have defeated
Darkness!

There is **nothing** that can stop me!

We elope at midnight.

400 Spring

Lazlo... **I Curse Him!** If he could not have her...

~~Staked her...~~

~~Burned her...~~

They killed my Tatyana...

Again, I am denied.

I destroyed them all.

I am the ancient! I am the land!

The waters of the Ivlis rose as the agent of my fury and buried the land beneath them. And in the desolation as I approached her lifeless body...

My love...

My true love...

The mists... Am I not even allowed to mourn?