

FLESHING OUT CURSE OF STRAHD: BAROVIAN PLAYER PRIMER



A Campaign Companion by MandyMod



FORWARD

This character chronicle was designed to inspire the creation of player characters with depth and verisimilitude. Since the publication of *The Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* in March 2020, a couple different player primers have been published to help players integrate their characters into campaign settings. Most notably, we've seen the [Heroic Chronicle: Sword Coast and the North](#), which helps integrate characters generally into the Swordcoast, and the [Player Primer: Icewind Dale](#), which helps develop characters specifically for the *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* adventure module.

This primer was designed specifically for the *Curse of Strahd* campaign, to similarly assist in the character creation process. It reflects ideas and tables found in the previously mentioned work, but all rewritten to better suit the Ravenloft setting.

This Barovian Player Primer is intended for creating characters from Barovia, and contains very minor spoilers for the *Curse of Strahd* campaign. For the original *Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Player Primer*, which is spoiler free, check out other work of MandyMod on the DM's Guild [here](#)!

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A CHARACTER FROM BAROVIA

A player may like to create a character from Barovia. More often than not, this will occur if their first character dies in Strahd's horrific lands. While losing a player character can be heartbreaking, it also opens the door for additional character options that Dungeon Masters can choose to implement.

It is recommended that the following information and tables be kept secret from a party that is first starting the campaign and instead be introduced to individual players when they need to roll a new player character in Barovia. All of the following tables and options are, of course, completely optional and should only be used with the Dungeon Master's approval.

For the original *Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Player Primer*, which is spoiler free, check out other work of MandyMod on the DM's Guild [here](#).

SPOILERS!

The following selection of tables and character options reveal information about the *Curse of Strahd* campaign and is intended for players who may have lost a character mid-game. If you are a new player, close this document immediately unless you have already spoken to and secured the approval of your DM.

BACKSTORY

A player character from Barovia will have alternate origins from their Faerunian counterparts. However, there are several standards that will maintain across them. Unless you are Vistani, your character has never seen the sun and is used to life with overcast skies. If your character is from one of the main towns, they also likely believe in the Morning Lord and are extraordinarily unfamiliar with other gods or pantheons.

It is also recommended that your new character be somewhat of a recluse or homebody. Maintaining a general naivety about Barovia will allow this new character to discover aspects of the campaign alongside the rest of the party. Under specific circumstances, the Dungeon Master might give you new information your character would know as a Barovian native.

With those details in mind, you'll roll for your character's origins. First, you'll discover their hometown and associated family composition. Later, you'll determine some of their important relationships.

HOMETOWN

There are few sources of civilization in the Barovian valley, but those that stand are the cornerstones of life in this sunless world.

Roll on the table below to determine your character's hometown.

d100	Home Settlement	Size
1 - 40	Vallaki	Town
41 - 60	Village of Barovia	Village
61 - 80	Krezk	Hamlet
81 - 90	The Wilds	Tribe
91 - 00	Vistani Nomads	Tribe

TOWN: VALLAKI

Vallaki is home to about 1500 people and is the largest point of civilization in the valley. The town is ruled by Burgomaster Vargas Vallokovich, who imposes a heavy martial law upon the town as well as lackluster, near weekly festivals. It is part of your character's civil duty to help prepare for and to attend these festivals.

VILLAGE: THE VILLAGE OF BAROVIA

The Village of Barovia lays in the shadow of Castle Ravenloft, which is ever visible on the nearby cliff sides. Life in the Village is arduous and dour and most of the populace is hardworking. The Village is primarily lead by Ismark Kolyanovich, who most refer to as Ismark the Lesser. Many locals also have a taste for magical pies which help them escape their drab reality with wonderful dreams.

HAMLET: KREZK

Krezk is a tiny village in the far west of Barovia and home to only about 75 people. The families all know one another and most provide for themselves with home gardens. Krezk is shadowed by the Abbey of St. Markovia, which is watched over by the reclusive Abbott.

TRIBE: THE WILDS

Barovia is also home to several nomadic tribes of wild peoples, usually referred to as the forest folk or the mountain folk. These people are primarily druids and their tribes almost never exceed about a dozen people. While about half of these wild folk worship Strahd, believing him a god, the other half worship a trio of nature goddesses called the Ladies Three.

TRIBE: THE VISTANI

The Vistani are a colorful and boisterous people who value family above all else. They don't follow any known gods, but instead believe in the Threads of Fate which bind all creatures. While the Vistani travel often around the Barovian Valley, they are mostly safe from the horrors of the land due to an understanding they have with Strahd.

FAMILY

Your family is your first social network. In the most general sense, a character's family consists of two parents and their siblings, all of which are blood related. However, the composition of a family can vary greatly. It's possible that your parental figure was instead a mentor or an aunt. It's possible that you have over a dozen half-siblings from a particularly promiscuous parent and that the majority of those siblings are dead. However supportive or dysfunctional, loving or absent, your family has helped define you.

Using the size of your hometown as a base, roll on a pair of the following tables to determine the size of your family.

FAMILY SIZE (TOWN/VILLAGE)

d100	Number of Parents	d100	Number of Siblings
1 - 10	1d4 + 2	1 - 12	2d4 + 1
11 - 45	2	13 - 38	2d4 - 1
46 - 80	1	39 - 88	1d4
81 - 00	0	89 - 00	0

FAMILY SIZE (HAMLET/TRIBE)

d100	Number of Parents	d100	Number of Siblings
1 - 15	1d4 + 2	1 - 20	2d4 + 1
16 - 50	2	21 - 50	2d4 - 1
51 - 85	1	51 - 80	1d4
86 - 00	0	81 - 00	0



GENERAL RELATIONSHIPS

d100	Relationship
1 - 6	You once saved a small animal from dying and it has followed you ever since. Choose one beast of CR 1/8 or lower as a pet. This pet cannot help you in battle or in social encounters unless you have the magic or mechanical abilities to justify that help.
7 - 13	You once tried to steal from someone, but were caught in the act. Instead of turning you in for your attempted crime, this person employed you.
14 - 19	One of your parents left home. You were the only one to see them leave.
20 - 26	Someone you love was murdered in cold blood. You got your revenge, but in doing so acted more monstrous than the murderer.
27 - 32	You and a family member were once attacked by a werewolf. Though you both were bitten, only that family member obtained the affliction. A few months later, you found this family member dead with a silvered bolt in their chest.
33 - 39	You and a family member were once in a horrible accident. In an act of sheer cowardice, you left them to die to save your own skin.
40 - 45	One of your family members has always favored you over the others.
46 - 52	A person knows one of your darkest secrets. You do what they say to <i>keep</i> it a secret.
53 - 58	You got into a friendly fist fight with a family member, but in a sudden turn of events you accidentally killed that family member.
59 - 65	You were once engaged to be married, but the engagement met an untimely end.
66 - 71	You once got into terrible trouble and when caught, blamed a family member. This family member paid dearly for your crime.
72 - 78	You married young. However, your marriage was short and ended from some unfortunate circumstance.
79 - 84	An injured stranger once fell on your doorstep. Though they revealed little about the cause of their injury, you nursed them back to health.
85 - 91	You are not the trueborn child of one of your parents. Ironically, you know this fact and your parent does not.
92 - 00	A family member has forsaken you and disclaimed you as family.

FATEFUL RELATIONS

Every character has or has had relationships that have helped shape their personalities. These important relations might be family, a friend, or a mentor. They might also be someone the character has wronged, creating an unfortunate rival or enemy. No matter the details, these relationships are crucial to that character.

If you encounter an inconsistency by rolling on the following charts, such as rolling an option that notes a parent but your character has no parents, you may change that option to denote a different relation, like to a sibling or friend.

Roll once on the general relations table to the left to gain a single fateful relation. And then roll once on one of the following tables that corresponds with your hometown to gain another.

VALLAKI RELATIONSHIPS

d6	Relationship
1	Someone close to you was hanged for treason in the town square, accused of hiding Strahd-related propaganda.
2	One of your family members has recently joined an underground resistance cell against the Burgomaster. You know next to nothing about this cell and have refrained from asking too many questions thus far.
3	You have a close relationship with the local priest, Father Lucian, and meet with him in the confessional often.
4	Someone you know is a wereraven.
5	One of your family members consistently refuses to attend the weekly festivals. This person has spent more time in the stocks than out as a result. Most recently, this person has disappeared.
6	Your closest friend or family member is part of the town guard. You're able to get away with more than the average towns person by using this connection.

VILLAGE OF BAROVIA RELATIONSHIPS

d6	Relationship
1	One of your family members was slowly hunted and later killed by one of Strahd's wives for their blood.
2	You and a friend once tried to leave the Village to find a better life elsewhere. You encountered some horrible creature on the road and this friend died. You fled back to the village and haven't tried to leave again.
3	One of your parents is addicted to dream pastries.
4	You despise the local priest, Father Donovich. Your family, however, is extraordinarily devout. Your disagreement on the priest has caused a great rift between you and a few of your most important family members.
5	You and a friend or family member liked to play in the scattered abandoned buildings as children. You both once stumbled on a couple swarms of rats in one of these buildings which attacked you. You were scarred by this attack and your friend was permanently maimed.
6	You are close friends with one of the Vistani sisters that runs the local tavern. You have a far more positive view of the Vistani than most Barovians as a result.

KREZK RELATIONSHIPS

d6	Relationship
1	You once had an incurable and chronic illness as a child. The Abbott healed you of this illness. While you only met the man that once, you hold him in high regard now as an adult.
2	A friend or family member was a town guard. However, they were once attacked by a werewolf and were infected. Rather than die, this person fled Krezk.
3	One of your family members was born without a soul. They show little emotion and perform most tasks mechanically.
4	You once angered a werewolf and this person will stop at nothing to kill you.
5	When you were young, you snuck up to the Abbey and made a friend of one of the caretakers there. Talk to your DM about the nature of this friend.
6	Someone in your family used to be a member of the forest folk and lived in the wilds for the beginning of their life.

WILDS RELATIONSHIPS

d6	Relationship
1	One of your female family members practices blood magic. This family member left your tribe to live with the witch women of Berez.
2	Your closest friend was sacrificed to appease Strahd.
3	You once tried to befriend a dire wolf, but it went horribly wrong. One of your parents sacrificed themselves to save you from the wolf.
4	You once had a horrible argument with a friend or family member. Emotionally distraught, this person fled into the woods to be away from you. While you later searched for them, you never saw them again.
5	One of the members of your tribe was born and raised in one of the Barovian towns. Their conversion to the ways of the forest folk has always been a source of contention amongst all your people.
6	You are related to a high priestess of your tribe and they believe you are destined for greatness.

VISTANI RELATIONSHIPS

d6	Relationship
1	One of your closest family members is a Mortu, a Vistani outcast that disgraced your people and is banished from the tribes.
2	One of your parents hates leaving Barovia and avoids traveling from your homeland whenever possible.
3	A family member or friend left your tribe to become one of Strahd's brides/grooms.
4	One of your closest friends is a dusk elf from the encampment outside the town of Vallaki.
5	Madam Eva, the Vistani's most respected and eldest seer, once read your fortune and predicted something awful.
6	You have a favorite horse that you raised from its birth. Speak to your DM about whether or not it would be practical to bring your trusted horse with you on your adventures.

PERSONALITY

Now that you've laid the foundations of your character's past, you'll switch focus to their personality and tastes. What kind of employment is your character familiar with? Do they have any particular quirks or phobias? What event or events in their life gave your character these personality traits?

BACKGROUND & PHOBIA

First you'll start with your character's background. Choosing a background is essential for character creation. Not only does a background give you some insight as to your character's employment or life experience, but it also gives you proficiencies and starting gear that represent that experience.

Second, you'll discover your character's phobia. At one point in the course of their lives, your character developed a phobia, an anxiety driven fear that borders on the irrational. How or why your character developed this fear is up to you. Your character has a very difficult time dealing with this particular source of anxiety and will avoid situations that might force them to face their fear.

Roll on the pair of tables on page 8 of the original Player Primer to determine your character's background and phobia.

FAVORITE FOOD & DRINK

Barovia is a dark land where crops must grow with low sunlight. Various spices and seasonings are scarce and crops that need excessive warmth to grow, like rice and sugarcane, are nonexistent. The people get by on what they must and rely on game and livestock as a primary food source. Your character is used to root vegetable salads, pork roasts, venison, and potato stew. Additionally, despite its toughness, wolf meat steaks are considered a delicacy in Barovia, as they represent a minor victory over the horrific woods.

Barovia's generally cold environment, hard soil, and lack of sunlight also limits the amount of brewing crops available. Save for a single vineyard which miraculously grows year round, Barovia lacks all alcoholic beverages but wine. The occasional keg of mead or bottle of spirits may turn up from past adventurers or a Vistani import, but remain exceptionally rare. As a native Barovian, your character drinks wine and water and is unfamiliar with most anything else.

TRINKETS

A trinket is an odd or peculiar object your character has collected. A trinket usually has no use or intrinsic value, but your character has kept it for one reason or another. Maybe the item reminds them of a dead parent or maybe it was the first thing they ever stole.

While the Player Handbook has a standard trinket list, *Curse of Strahd* has its very own trinket table of gothic themed items on pg. 210 in Appendix A. It's recommended that you roll on that table to obtain a trinket.

QUIRKS

For the last section of personality development, you'll roll for a quirk. Everyone possesses a little eccentricity, from a curious habit to a peculiar preference. A player character should be no different.

Roll on the table on page 10 of the original Player Primer to gain a quirk.

MYSTERIOUS SECRET

Your character has a secret, either terrible or seemingly benign. This Player Primer has a separate, accompanying document entitled, *Mysterious Secrets*, that contains a list of secrets that pertain to the *Curse of Strahd* campaign. These secrets can help your Dungeon Master integrate your character into the module.

If you are a player, do not open the *Mysterious Secrets* document unless you have permission from your Dungeon Master. If you are a Dungeon Master, use the *Mysterious Secrets* document privately and distribute the results individually to your players.

THE FINAL TOUCHES

You should now have all the information you need to start building a player character from Barovia. Take your rolled information plus any additional knowledge you have from playing in the campaign thus far to help develop this character. Remember the few overall traits and beliefs that are consistent across Barovia, including a faith in the Morning Lord and an unfamiliarity with the sun.

Otherwise, have fun with your new character and have a horrifying adventure in the *Curse of Strahd* campaign!



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