

FLESHING OUT CURSE OF STRAHD: MYSTERIOUS SECRETS

A Campaign Companion by MandyMod



FORWARD

The following list of mysterious secrets were designed to be implemented during character creation to help integrate player character backstories into the *Curse of Strahd* campaign and were inspired by the secrets included in the *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* adventure module.

CREDITS

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I would like to personally thank all of my followers on the [r/CurseofStrahd](#) subreddit for your ongoing support and feedback. I love you guys from the bottom of my heart.

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MYSTERIOUS SECRETS

The following list of mysterious secrets were designed to be implemented during character creation to help integrate player character backstories into the *Curse of Strahd* campaign module. Ideally, the following secrets should be used in conjunction with the Player Primer and/or Barovian Player Primer, all found under MandyMod's other work on the DM's Guild.

The first section of this documents includes instructions on rolling and distributing secrets. The second section includes the listed version of those secrets. Finally, the last section includes recommendations on how Dungeon Masters might implement secrets into the campaign.

SPOILERS AHEAD!

The mysterious secrets in this document contain spoilers for the *Curse of Strahd* campaign. This entire document should only be visible to the Dungeon Master of the module. If you are a player, close this document immediately and refer to the standard Player Primer to help you roll a spoiler-free player character. Or, pass on this document to your Dungeon Master so they can determine whether or not they wish to use the secrets here.

GAINING A SECRET

Each player character gets a secret, either terrible or seemingly benign.

The secrets listed here should only be visible to the Dungeon Master, who is also responsible for privately distributing the results. If a player has a character concept that seems to favor one secret more than another, the Dungeon Master might offer that secret to them instead of requiring a roll or random draw. Each secret is exclusive to a single player character at a time, though at the Dungeon Master's discretion, it's possible for one character to have more than one secret.

Have your players roll on the following table to gain a secret. Alternatively, you can print out the pages of secret cards and cut them out individually, allowing your players to draw a card randomly from the deck. If a player is unsatisfied with the result of their roll or draw, the Dungeon Master can choose to let them redraw their secret.

Once the campaign begins, the players have full authority over when they share their secret, if ever. Some players will delight in guarding their secret as long as possible, while some will decide to share them right away.

RACE OPTIONS

Some of the following secrets allude to differing race options not included in official rule books. The Player Primer has a separate document entitled, Character Options, which includes mechanics to employ these race variations should the Dungeon Master desire to use them.

SECRETS TABLE

d20	Secret
1	Crimson Beginnings
2	Silver Blooded
3	A Deal Struck
4	Prophetic Nightmares
5	Guardian
6	A Holy Calling
7	A Strange Elf
8	Demonic Heritage
9	Arcane Mystery
10	The Moon's Curse
11	Host
12	A Cycle of Death
13	A Verdant Treasure
14	Greenteeth
15	Hunter's Scion
16	Shell
17	Witch Kin
18	Strange Romantic
19 - 20	Reroll for a Secret

SECRETS

The secrets in this section correspond to the options on the table above.

Each secret includes an optional mechanical feature that might help or hinder players as they progress through the campaign. These features may also help players further visualize and develop their character based on their secret. Because these are mechanical additions, the Dungeon Master might choose to disregard the optional features and use the story-based part of the secret alone.

1. CRIMSON BEGINNINGS

In your earliest memory, you are lost in the woods and covered in blood. The memory still haunts you and colors your dreams in red.

Optional Feature: Countless restless nights have better enabled you to stay up without sleep. When you take a long rest, you can choose to roll a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a success, two additional hours of your rest may be used to take watch or perform light activities. On a failure, you gain 1 level of exhaustion which that long rest cannot remove.

2. SILVER BLOODED

You are the descendant of an ancient silver dragon, who's blood and/or magic still manifests in your family line. You know little of your distant relation, except that the dragon was a paragon of good.

Optional Feature: You know the *ray of frost* cantrip and use your Intelligence modifier to cast it.

3. A DEAL STRUCK

You died once. You would have stayed dead if it weren't for some otherworldly entity that made you a deal. One day, it will give you a single command that you must follow, no matter the cost. You agreed to the price and rose from the dead. The entity has been completely absent from your life since.

Optional Feature: Once per long rest, when you make a death saving throw, you may add 1 to the roll as this entity continues to pull you away from death.

4. PROPHETIC NIGHTMARES

One of your parents had the gift of foresight. Sometimes, you have strange dreams that come true, but only in the worst ways.

Optional Feature: Once per long rest, you can roll 1d4 and add the result to a single attack roll or saving throw in order to prevent one of these terrible futures. You can use this feature after the initial roll but before knowing the results of the roll.

5. GUARDIAN

You own a necklace with a small amber pendant. Within the pendant lies a dormant, evil entity and you are its guard. With each passing year, the entity grows stronger and you know that one day it will escape from its prison unless you stop it.

Optional Feature: You may use the pendant to cast the spell, *detect evil and good*. Once you've used the pendant 3 times, it is destroyed and the entity released.

6. A HOLY CALLING

You recently received a holy vision from a god of light - perhaps Lathander or Pelor - featuring a fallen angel. Though you were unable to identify the god contacting you or this angel's face, the message was clear: Kill the fallen angel before it is too late.

Optional Feature: You know the *sacred flame* cantrip. The saving throw DC for this cantrip is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier.

7. A STRANGE ELF

Prerequisite: You must be elf or half-elf to have this secret. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different card.

Your elven blood is dubious. With physical traits of both wood elves and drow, you have black hair and charcoal colored skin, but don't quite fit into either subrace. These physical abnormalities make you an outsider to most elves and many believe you were touched by the Shadowfell as a baby. See your Dungeon Master for guidance on your subrace.

Optional Feature: You have a permanent +1 bonus to your Dexterity (Stealth) skill.

8. DEMONIC HERITAGE

You have an infernal heritage, though you don't know where it originates. If you are not a tiefling, you have an unusual marking that represents your evil ancestry, such as a patch of red skin, pointed teeth, or claw-like fingernails.

Such physical signs of your heritage appear in every member of your blood family.

Optional Feature: You know the *firebolt* cantrip and use your Charisma modifier to cast it.

9. ARCANE MYSTERY

You have obtained an unfinished spell scroll written by the legendary mage, Mordenkainen. It seems to be an unfinished prototype for a new spell. You have been searching for a mage talented enough to finish the spell, or at least understand its purpose.

Optional Feature: From your time pondering over the spell scroll, you have a better understanding of the arcane. You have a permanent +1 bonus to your Intelligence (Arcana) skill.

10. THE MOON'S CURSE

You and your family are werewolf lycanthropes. However, your curse is quite weak and none of your family can spread it through bite. Instead, it is passed on genetically. Unfortunately, though you and your family members lived peaceful lives, a hunter came through your town and murdered many or all of them. You've been tracking this hunter ever since. Speak to your Dungeon Master for guidance on your race.

Optional Feature: You have a permanent +1 bonus to your Wisdom (Survival) skill.

11. HOST

At one point, you came in contact with a small, living black vine of unknown origin, about the size of a piece of thread. When you touched the vine, it pierced your skin and crawled into your veins. That little vine lives within you still and sometimes you can see it moving beneath your skin.

Optional Feature: This vine lives by drinking your life blood, bolstering you against necrotic damage. When you take necrotic damage, you can reduce the damage taken by 1d4. You may use this ability once per long rest.

12. A CYCLE OF DEATH

You are haunted by the memories of your past lives. But the only memories you receive are of the moments before your previous deaths. You remember being stoned by a village, the clench of a wolf's teeth around your throat, and falling an impossible height only to feel your bones shatter on the impact. Of all the deaths you remember, not one has you dying old in your bed.

Optional Feature: Your intimate knowledge of death gives you advantage on any Wisdom (Medicine) check to determine a creature's cause of death.

13. A VERDANT TREASURE

A mysterious, hooded individual once appeared on your doorstep and handed you a glowing, fist-sized, green gemstone. As soon they gave you gem, they dropped dead. Though you don't know the gem's true purpose or origin, it brims with life-giving magic.

Optional Feature: You can use the gemstone to cast the *revivify* spell without material components. You cannot use the gemstone again in such a way until 3d6 + 5 days have passed.

14. GREENTEETH

You once knew an old herbalist named Jeny Greenteeth who told you crazy stories of the Feywild. Though you originally thought that this woman simply lived in the Feywild for a time to have such knowledge, you now have reason to believe she was actually a powerful archfey. Before you could discover the truth, she vanished.

Optional Feature: You know the *druidcraft* cantrip.

15. HUNTER'S SCION

After a monster hunter saved your town from some terrible threat, you became a student of this hunter. The two of you are close friends and the hunter holds you in high regard. However, your mentor left under mysterious circumstances and you've been trying to find them ever since.

Optional Feature: One weapon of your choice from your starting equipment is silvered.

16. SHELL

You do not have a soul. You are desperately afraid of death and have been searching all your life for a way to earn a soul of your own.

Optional Feature: You are immune to all resurrection magic. Once you accumulate 3 failed death saving throws, you cannot be revived except by the *wish* spell.

17. WITCH KIN

You are the descendant of an ancient and powerful witch that discarded her only child for being born a girl. Though that baby girl, one of your several times great-grandparents, survived, remnants of that evil magic still courses through her bloodline.

Optional Feature: You can cast the *infestation* cantrip. The saving throw DC for this cantrip is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier.

18. STRANGE ROMANTIC

You once fell in love with a vampire, but they were only using you for your blood. You found out their true intentions and managed to escape the relationship before it was too late. However, the experience has left you jilted towards romance in general.

Optional Feature: You have a +1 bonus to any saving throw to resist being charmed by a vampire or their kindred.

USING SECRETS

The following suggestions are ways the Dungeon Master might implement secrets into the campaign.

Crimson Beginnings. Because the character's early memories are dubious, it's possible that they are originally from Barovia and have family or connections there. They may reunite with a long lost family member during the campaign.

Silver Blooded. The player character is a distant descendant of Argynvost. When the player meets his ghost in Argynvostholt, the dragon recognizes the player character as their kin immediately.

A Deal Struck. This deal may have been with one of the evil Dark Powers that shroud the Domains of Dread. At one point, the Dark Power may ask the player character to commit a horrible and immoral deed, like killing Father Lucian in Vallaki. If the player refuses, consider giving them some form of madness from the DMG.

Prophetic Nightmares. The player character may have Vistani roots or heritage. You might send this player ambiguous dreams of events to come in the campaign. These dreams all assume those events all end in the worst way.

Guardian. This player character holds a sliver of a vestige from the Amber Temple, which was chipped away from a larger sarcophagus. On finding the sarcophagus, the vestige possesses the player character and tries to force them to free the vestige by breaking the sarcophagus.

A Holy Calling. Pelor bids this player character to kill the Abbott in the Abbey of St. Markovia. If the Abbott finds out about this calling, he tries to convince the player character that this message is from a false and evil god, like the Dark Powers.

A Strange Elf. This player character is a dusk elf. Finding their kindred should inspire them to either fight Strahd or find a way to save their people.

Demonic Heritage. This player character is Izek Strazni's long-lost sibling and wholly replaces Irenea for the function of this relationship.

Arcane Mystery. The spell is a 9th level wizard spell that plays with time magic. If restored, it allows the caster to alter a single moment in time up to ten years prior.

The Moon's Curse. The hunter that killed this player character's family members is Rudolph van Richten. If Richten finds out that this character is in Barovia, he may take the time to try and hunt them down to finish his work.

Host. The vine is from the Gulthias Tree. Killing the Gulthias Tree - or restoring the Fanes of Barovia if you are using other *Fleshing Out* guides - kills the embedded vine.

A Cycle of Death. This player character is Tatyana's reincarnation and completely replaces Irenea's functionality in the campaign.

A Verdant Treasure. The gemstone is the third winery gem that disappeared over ten years prior.

Greenteeth. Jeny Greenteeth appears later in the module as an evil witch bent on killing the player character. Alternatively, if you are using other *Fleshing Out* guides, Jeny is a Fane of Barovia who gently guides the players towards her restoration.

Hunter's Scion. The monster hunter mentor is either Rudolph van Richten or Ezmerelda d'Avenir, who left when they found secret transport into Strahd's realm.

Shell. This player character might earn a soul by impressing or serving some great power, like by submitting to the Dark Powers or by earning the favor of a god like Pelor by defeating Strahd. Where they obtain their new soul will determine its purity or corruption.

Witch Kin. This player character is the descendant of Baba Lysaga, who thinks of Strahd as her only true family. Should Lysaga find out this character is her kin, she'll fly into a fit of rage and try to kill them immediately.

Strange Romantic. It's possible that this vampire lover was one of Strahd's spawn that left Barovia for a time. The player character might encounter their ex-lover sometime during the campaign.

SECRET CARDS

CRIMSON BEGINNINGS

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PROPHETIC NIGHTMARES

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HOST

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