

FLESHING OUT CURSE OF STRAHD: VILLAGE OF BAROVIA

CHAPTER 3

A Guide and Expansion by MandyMod



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd is a series of expansions and elaborations to the main *Curse of Strahd* campaign. The full series is a DM tool that attempts to add depth to various NPCs, streamline confusing plot lines, fill in plot holes, and alleviate some of the stress associated with TPK inducing encounters throughout the

campaign.

As such, information presented and included throughout the series is designed to overwrite some of the information in the original text. For instance, if *Fleshing Out* refers to Ireena Kolyana as the natural born daughter of the Village of Barovia's burgomaster, this is taken as fact, even if the printed text states otherwise.

However, *Fleshing Out* is in no way meant to completely replace the original *Curse of Strahd* campaign. It instead is a companion guide, used properly by reading and referencing the original text to incorporate the overwrites detailed in this series.

For a more in-depth and casual look at the thinking behind the changes in *Fleshing Out*, please refer to the original posting of the series on Reddit. Find the series under username [u/MandyMod](#) on the [r/CurseofStrahd](#) subreddit.

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THE VILLAGE OF BAROVIA

The population of the Village of Barovia in the as-written text stands at about 250 people. While this number would appropriately accommodate a tiny village, perhaps half the size of the Village of Barovia itself, those 250 people are accompanied by over 100 zombies and 120 swarms of rats. The natives of the Village effectively live in a walking dungeon surrounded by enemies.

Frankly, it isn't plausible that the Village of Barovia survive generation after generation with so many threats close by. The residents could not keep farmland or livestock and would be unable to support themselves, let alone have families and children.

With those statistics in mind, adjust the occupancy of the Village of Barovia to the numbers on the following table.

HOUSE OCCUPANTS

d20	Occupants
1-3	None
4-6	2d4 Swarms of Rats
7-20	Barovian Villagers

With these changes, about 30% of the houses in the Village of Barovia are unoccupied, either devoid of life or home only to rats. The zombies should be moved outside the Village entirely, perhaps saved for a random encounter during travel. The party may come across an abandoned farmstead containing 2d4 **Strahd Zombies**.

With these adjustments, the population of the Village itself is increased to about 500 residents.

A DOUR LOT

While the above changes provide the Village of Barovia a more stable economy and populace, the people themselves are overwhelmed by hopelessness. They are a grim and jaded lot who sequester themselves in their homes when they aren't working, preferring the safety of their thresholds to the dangers of the streets.

PEOPLE DO, DON'T THEY? MIX UP LOVE

and possession. I don't think that should be possible. I mean, they're opposites really. Love and ownership.

- Dani, The Haunting of Bly Manor

The villagers live primarily on a barter system, providing for one another whenever they can and trading goods and services. Physical coin is most often used for mass produced goods, like food and wine. The people find simple pleasure in fireside hobbies and the few dozen tomes shared amongst them all.

Strahd primarily chooses his consorts from the Village of Barovia, descending upon the populace every decade or two when an interesting individual comes of age. Overzealous, bright, or beautiful individuals are often kept hidden away in hopes that Strahd never finds them. Additionally, Strahd's current brides and grooms are allowed to feed off the people of the Village when needed, though not to kill them. As such, the Village's populace is well aware of the great dangers of vampires and have come to terms with the fact that they are not a town of people, but simply a cattle pen for their vampire lord.

Most residents of the Village are extraordinarily wary of visitors. They avoid people they don't recognize and generally keep their doors locked, even if a weary traveler comes knocking. If players see the odd Villager on the street, that villager is more likely to avoid them and head immediately to their house than engage with the party.

ADVENTURE FLOW

After a long day's travel on the Old Svalich Road and a horrible encounter with the Death House, the party arrives in the Village of Barovia frightened and weary. However, they soon find that this little piece of civilization is devoid of the comforts of normalcy.

As the party wanders the nearly vacant streets, they encounter a friendly old woman called Granny, who offers them pie to sweeten their dreams and points them to the local tavern. In the tavern, the party meets Ismark Kolyanovich, the up-and-coming burgomaster of the Village. Unlike the ghostly town, Ismark is open and welcoming. He offers the party a place to stay in exchange for a favor: help him carry his father's casket to the local cemetery for burial in the morning.

After arriving in Ismark's home, the party meets his beautiful sister, Ireena, and soon learns that the girl has been preyed upon by Strahd himself.

The next morning, the party accompanies Ismark to the local church and meets the priest there, a man gone mad after Strahd turned his son into a vampire spawn. That son now lives under the floorboards of the church, a monster thirsty for blood. Whether or not the party chooses to try and help the priest and his undead son, they eventually bury the late burgomaster.

That evening, Strahd visits the burgomaster's manor, terrorizing Ireena and the party. Ismark begs the party escort his sister to the westward town of Vallaki, which is said to have high walls and a great, holy church. With the promise of safety from the Devil, the party embarks the following morning.

QUICK REFERENCE

NOTABLE NPCs

Name	Description	Name	Description
Ismark "the Lesser" Kolyanovich	Mid-twenties, human. Son of the late burgomaster. Veteran statblock.	Mad Mary	A middle-aged woman gone mad from fear of Strahd, but otherwise harmless. Gertruda's mother. Commoner statblock.
Ireena Kolyanovich	Early twenties, human. Daughter of the late burgomaster and the reincarnation of Tatyana, Strahd's most desired conquest. Noble statblock with 14 hit points.	Gertruda	Mad Mary's missing daughter, age 16.
Indirkov Kolyanovich	The late burgomaster and father of Ismark and Ireena. Died from stress after Strahd's prolonged attacks against his household.	Bildrath Cantemir	Owner of Bildrath's Mercantile. Commoner statblock.
Morgantha "Granny"	Eldery peddler of dream pastries. Sells pies in exchange for gold and children. Night Hag statblock.	Parpol Cantemir "Parriwimple"	Bildrath's nephew. An unintelligent shopboy and strongarm. Gladiator statblock with Int 6 and AC 14.
Father Donavich	Priest of the local church of the Morninglord. Gone somewhat mad after the loss of his son, but still good aligned. Acolyte statblock.	Arik Lorensk	Dour, old barkeep at the Blood on the Vine tavern. Commoner statblock.
Doru	Donavich's son. Turned into a vampire after Strahd took an interest in him. Vampire Spawn statblock.	Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia	Three, middle-aged Vistani sisters and owners of the Blood on the Vine tavern. Bandit statblocks.
		Muriel Vinshaw	Wereraven spy for the Keepers of the Feather. Wereraven statblock.
		Falkon Tomescu	Wereraven spy for the Keepers of the Feather. Wereraven statblock.

BILDRATH'S MERCANTILE INVENTORY

Cost	Item	Cost	Item	Cost	Item
20 gp	Abacus	20 gp	Grappling hook	20 gp	Pot, iron
10 gp	Arrows (20)	10 gp	Hammer	5 gp	Pouch
10 gp	Crossbow Bolts (20)	50 gp	Healer's kit	10 gp	Quiver
100 gp	Arcane Focus	50 gp	Holy Symbol	5 gp	Rations (1 day)
20 gp	Backpack	50 gp	Hunting trap	10 gp	Rope, hempen (50 feet)
10 gp	Ball bearings (bag includes 1,000)	100 gp	Ink (1 ounce bottle)	100 gp	Rope, silk (50 feet)
10 gp	Bedroll	2 sp	Ink pen	1 sp	Sack
10 gp	Bell	100 gp	Lantern, bullseye	50 gp	Scale, merchant's
5 gp	Blanket	50 gp	Lantern, hooded	5 gp	Sealing wax
20 gp	Bottle, glass	100 gp	Lock	20 gp	Shovel
1 sp	Candle	20 gp	Manacles	5 sp	Signal whistle
10 gp	Map/Scroll Case	2 gp	Mess kit	2 sp	Soap
1 sp	Chalk (1 piece)	50 gp	Mirror, steel	10 gp	Spikes, iron (10)
5 gp	Clothes, common	1 gp	Oil (flask)	20 gp	Tent, two-person
20 gp	Clothes, traveler's	2 gp	Paper (one sheet)	5 gp	Tinderbox
20 gp	Crowbar	1 gp	Parchment (one sheet)	1 sp	Torch
10 gp	Druidic focus	20 gp	Pick, miner's	10 gp	Vial
2 sp	Flask or tankard	5 sp	Piton	2 gp	Waterskin
		5 sp	Pole (10-foot)	1 sp	Whetstone

INTRODUCING THE VILLAGE

Once players break through the Svalich Woods and catch sight of the Village of Barovia in the lower river basin, they'll likely be overjoyed to see signs of civilization. Tired and weary, they'll wander down the road and dream of a warm bed and a belly of ale.

However, as the looming Castle Ravenloft on the cliffsides might suggest, the Village holds little safety for the party.

A LONELIER BAROVIA

Isolation is a key ingredient to successful horror. In general, human beings find safety in numbers and comfort in the knowledge that they are not alone. Because of this need for isolation in *Curse of Strahd*, Chapter 1 of the *Fleshing Out* guides recommends that you drastically reduce the number of visitors that wander in from mists around Barovia.

Instead of a consistent influx of new faces, Barovia only sees small groups of travelers arrive once every couple decades or so. The appearance of foreign races, including ones as simple as dwarves and elves, are surprising to Barovians and indicative of non-natives. However, Barovians harbor no ill-will towards foreign races and instead pity newcomers for their misfortune of being trapped by the mists.

MARCH OF THE DEAD

For the previous reasons, it is recommended that you change the March of the Dead event to only include mobs of angry Barovians, instead of a mob of past adventurers.

Alternately, you might remove the March of the Dead event entirely.

The narrative purpose of the March event is to frighten players by foreshadowing their eventual demise at Strahd's hand. It is meant to show them that others have tried to defeat the vampire lord, but all have failed, and therefore so will they.

However, as players in a game of *Dungeons & Dragons*, your party is more likely to unconsciously adopt a "chosen one" complex. While all these other spirits failed to kill Strahd, they will succeed simply because they are the main characters in the campaign. Instead of frightening your party, this event is therefore more likely to harden their resolve and passively motivate them.

With those narrative beats in mind, present the March of the Dead to your players if you wish to motivate them with a creepy encounter. If you wish to instead upkeep their anxiety and fear of the land, remove the event.



GRANNY'S PIES

Once the players wander into the Village of Barovia, their very first encounter should be with Morgantha, the night hag. The coven's pastry business creates a horrifying minor plotline that, if setup well, can make for an excellent narrative payoff at Old Bonegrinder.

Once players enter the village and see the streets rather devoid of life, read the following modified text to introduce Morgantha to the party.

The sorrowful streets of the village appear quite empty. If it weren't the occasional flicker of lamplight shining behind closed curtains in the surrounding houses, you might fear this a terrible ghost town.

But then, you round a corner and spot a house with an open door and a middle-aged human woman standing in the frame. The woman is quietly conversing with a much older woman on her doorstep. You see a quick exchange of goods between them: coin for some sort of baked good. As you approach, you hear the younger woman say, "Thank you, Granny. You take care, now." and shut the door.

A wooden cart on rickety wheels sits on the street nearby. From it, you smell the scent of fresh bread and hearty seasoning.

ROLEPLAYING GRANNY

For the following encounter, Morgantha portrays herself as a nearly stereotypical grandmother figure. She warmly greets the party and laments their entrapment in Barovia, introducing herself only as Granny.

Morgantha is an experienced peddler and is quite used to manipulating people into buying her pastries. She moves to sell her goods to the party as soon as it seems proper, advertising the recipe as one passed down from her grandmother, each pie containing just enough magic to give the consumer good dreams. She grieves the sorrowful nature of the village and its populace and says that she only wishes she could do more to alleviate their suffering.

If players ask Morgantha about the ingredients of her pastries, she lists off a series of benign food items like, flour, churned butter, protein, and love. The majority of her goods are meat pies and are heavily seasoned to cover up the taste of the meat. If asked about her source of proteins, she easily evades the question and instead lists off the many animals that Barovians tend to consume, including pig, goat, chicken, and wolf.

If the players use *detect magic* on Granny and her cart, they sense enchantment magic from her dream pastries and abjuration magic from the Heartstone hidden under her clothes. Morgantha keeps her Soul Bag at Old Bonegrinder. If asked about the source of the abjuration magic, Morgantha does not reveal the Heartstone, but instead woefully tells the party that her grandmother had an unfortunate encounter with a demon before her death. Morgantha keeps a token on her person to protect her from the demon's curse, which otherwise plagues her with terrible nightmares. Morgantha will also use this story to explain her fiendish aura to any player character that thinks to use *divine sense* on her.

At the end of the conversation, Morgantha gives the party one free pie regardless of their financials to promote new customers and soothe the weary travelers.

AN INNOCENT ENCOUNTER

Outside the conversation above, do not have Morgantha capture the little boy later in the evening. Instead, if the players wish to follow her around the Village, they see her go door to door selling her pastries. Some of the Barovians that greet her seem rude or otherwise short, but most offer her a quick thanks before sending her on her way.

TERRIFYING ART

Do not show your players Morgantha's illustration. The illustration is rather sinister and this storyline relies on your players trusting Morgantha for an effective emotional payoff at Old Bonegrinder.

THE MECHANICS OF DREAM PASTRIES

A single dream pastry contains two portions and can constitute two separate meals. Instead of immediately falling into a trance, Morgantha's dream pastries produce a more subtle effect.

Any player character that indulges in a dream pastry is delighted to find that it is exceptionally flavorful and filling, quite unexpected in the drab Village of Barovia.

Additionally, they do not make a saving throw of any kind. Instead, that evening when they go to sleep or to trance for a long rest, the player character has bright and beautiful dreams that are rich in color and comfort.

During this long rest, they cannot be woken by any normal means. Any character that trances does so for a full 8 hours. The following morning, the player character wakes to find the world around them overwhelmingly grey and hopeless in comparison.

The next evening, before the party settles down for the night, any player character that previously indulged in a dream pastry must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a success, that player character no longer craves dream pastry and can rest normally.

On a failure, they mechanically take out and eat a single portion of dream pastry they have on their person. If they do not have any dream pastry in their inventory, they go to sleep that evening and are plagued by horrific nightmares and cannot benefit from that long rest, earning them a point of exhaustion in the morning. The following day's long rest goes by as normal and the player character no longer craves dream pastry.

WERERAVEN WATCHERS

The Keepers of the Feather are an organization of wereravens that maintain a spy network throughout the Barovian townships. The Keepers are enemies of Strahd and hope to one day see the vampire lord fall. While the Martikov family comprises the core of the organization, other smaller families of wereravens work alongside them.

Two such wereravens may be encountered in the Village of Barovia: Muriel Vinshaw and Falkon Tomescu. This pair works together to monitor Strahd's actions in the Village and report on any newcomers that may wander in through the mists. Falkon primarily serves as a watcher while Muriel flies all around Barovia delivering messages to various members of their order.

MURIEL VINSHAW

Muriel is the wereraven mentioned in the Berez chapter of the original text. In the adventure, she serves as an alarm mechanically, warning away low-level parties from the extraordinary dangers of Berez. However, in this guide, she is now an excellent messenger for the Keepers of the Feather, delivering the more elaborate information to her comrades that simple ravens cannot.



Muriel is a young woman in her early twenties. She is every bit a youthful revolutionary, brave and bold. She takes great joy in the freedom of flight and more than willingly spends her time soaring between townships. While she would never reveal herself or her fellow wereravens, she adamantly believes that Strahd will fall in her lifetime and continuously encourages the Keepers of the Feather to finally rise up against him.

FALKON TOMESCU

While not included in the original text, Falcon is a character that appears in Chris Perkin's run of *Curse of Strahd* on the series, "[Dice, Camera, Action!](#)".

Falcon is Dag Tomascu's - the husband of the Martikov daughter in the Winery chapter - older brother. When he was a younger man, Falcon fell in love with a Village of Barovia native named Escher. Escher was handsome, bright, and a natural romantic and the pair loved one another dearly. However, Falcon kept his lycanthropy and connection to the Keepers of the Feather secret. That secret eventually drove the pair apart.

Escher fell into Strahd's sights and Strahd took him as a consort, eventually turning Escher into a vampire spawn. However, Falcon believes Escher fully dead, murdered at Strahd's hands. Falcon now blames himself for the loss of his only love.

Falcon, a man currently in his late forties, is quiet and weary, decades of grief having worn down his countenance. He is good-natured and kind, but generally keeps his opinions to himself.

ENCOUNTERING THE WERERAVENS

In the Village of Barovia, the party should not technically meet Muriel or Falcon. Instead, as they approach the Blood on the Vine tavern, any player character with a passive perception of 12 or higher spots two ravens watching the party from a nearby rooftop. As they watch, one raven caws to the other and flies away, heading vaguely westward.

In this encounter, Muriel sees Barovia's newcomers and flies off to Vallaki to report her findings to Urwin Martikov. Falcon stays behind and will continuously follow and watch the party from afar. The party may later catch sight of him perched on the fence outside the burgomaster's house and again on a tombstone in the graveyard during the late burgomaster's burial. Later, Falcon follows the party to the Tser Pool Encampment and eventually to Old Bonegrinder, where he caws at the party to try and warn them away from the hag coven within.

As the campaign progresses, Falcon becomes the party's official watchdog, assigned by the Martikovs to spy on them throughout their adventures. If a player character attempts to converse with Falcon, perhaps even using Druid spells like *Speak with Animals*, he remains resolutely silent and flies away before they come within range.

However, Falcon's kind nature prevents him from watching the party die. If they get into a situation they cannot handle, death seemingly imminent, Falcon will do his best to intervene and save who he can. His priority is not to defeat monsters, but to preserve the lives of his charges.



THE BLOOD ON THE VINE

While the Blood on the Vine tavern is well lit and warm inside, it is hardly comparable to the lively taverns in great cities like Neverwinter. The residents of the Village do not linger at the tavern for more than a couple hours at a time, preferring to occasionally indulge in a meal there and fill a few waterskins with wine before heading to their homes. While the tavern serves food and wine, it has no adjoining inn or rooms for travelers.

With few other suggestions, however, Granny points the party towards the tavern once she's effectively peddled her pastries.

WHAT'S FOR SALE?

Price	Food
1 cp	Cup of Wine (Purple Grapemash No.3)
1 sp	Pitcher of Wine (Purple Grapemash No.3)
1 cp	Bowl of Potato Pottage
2 cp	Loaf of Potato Bread
5 cp	Plate of Pork Meatloaf

VISTANI OWNERS

Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia are three Vistani sisters in their thirties. Each are quite lovely in appearance, but primarily wear drab Barovian dresses. They add a bit of color to their wardrobe with vivid red and purple shawls and sashes.

Each sister bears a long, pale scar under their left eye. Though they will say nothing about the scars to the players, these scars mark the sisters as Mortu, Vistani outcasts. When the sisters were younger women, they maliciously tormented another Vistani girl for being more beautiful than they. When those torments eventually lead to the girl's death, the sisters were exiled and excommunicated.

As Mortu, the sisters are no longer welcome in Vistani encampments and have no friends or family among them. Additionally, they have been cast out from the Threads of Fate and no longer have access to their *evil eye*, *Vistani curse*, or minor precognitive abilities.

The Vistani sisters are vain and shallow, only taking an interest in the party if the player characters pander to their arrogance. While most of the natives of the village believe the sisters to be Strahd spies, Strahd refuses to associate with them due to his lawful nature and respect for the Vistani. Instead, Strahd uses Arik, the barkeep, as a source of scrying.

ISMARK THE LESSER

Ismark Kolyanovich is the only truly friendly face in the Blood on the Vine tavern. The Vistani sisters, if approached, prove quite rude and the barkeep leaves much to be desired in the way of conversation. However, once Ismark sees the party begin to flounder in the tavern, he invites them to his table to share in a pitcher of wine.

ROLEPLAYING ISMARK

Ismark is honest to a fault, willingly telling the party about the horrors of Strahd and his lands. Ismark sadly informs the player characters that they are indeed trapped within Barovia and that escape is wholly impossible, though he doesn't know mechanically why the mists imprison them so.

Ismark is kind, but also bears an air of perpetual exhaustion, like the weight of his responsibilities are always one word away from breaking him. He reservedly relates the recent tragedies of his household if prodded, and emits an air of desperation that should evoke the party's sympathies.

OL' LANCELOT

If the party managed to rescue Lancelot, the old hound dog from Death House, Ismark will recognize the animal immediately. He tells the players that the dog used to belong to a mother and daughter in the village (Mad Mary and Gertruda), but that Lancelot has been missing for over a week. If the players relate the events of Death House to Ismark, they will greatly impress him and inadvertently convince him that they're skilled enough to protect Irenea.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A QUEST

As conversation with Ismark comes to a close, the up-and-coming burgomaster invites the players to stay in his home for the evening. If the players seem hesitant about accepting a quest to protect Irenea, Ismark does not push the issue. However, he does offer the party a generous 20 gp to help him bury his father at the local cemetery in the morning. The promise of a warm bed and gold should be more than enough to get the party to accept Ismark's hospitality.



THE BURGOMASTER'S HOUSE

The Burgomaster's house has been under assault for weeks prior to the party's arrival. While it is commonplace for residents of the Village of Barovia to hide away their more desirable youths so that Strahd cannot find them, Strahd recently learned that the late burgomaster's elusive daughter is none other than the reincarnation of his lost love, Tatyana.

Following this discovery, Strahd could not contain his own enthusiasm and started to terrorize the late burgomaster for keeping his daughter hidden away. That terror turned out to be too much for the older man's heart to handle, and he sadly died three days prior to the party's arrival.

SIMPLER NAMES

In order to simplify the naming conventions in the module, the following family of NPCs include siblings Ismark Kolyanovich and Ireena Kolyanovich, and their father Indirkov Kolyanovich.

Take the time to introduce Ireena properly to the party and allow the players to relax that evening with the Kolyanovich siblings. While both Ismark and Ireena can report the constant assault and harassment from Strahd over the past several weeks, they can also tell the players that they have not seen Strahd or his minions since the death of their father.

In truth, Strahd never intended to kill the burgomaster and is giving Ismark and Ireena time to mourn their father, which would be proper of one noble house to another. Make no mistake, Strahd feels no guilt or remorse over Indirkov's death, but instead sees his passing as an unfortunate accident. Nonetheless, Strahd's lawful nature forces him to keep a respectful distance from the Kolyanovich family until the burgomaster has been buried.

PLANNING THE NEXT DAY

In this gentle evening, Ismark will politely warn the party about the tragedy at their local church. He tells the player characters about Father Donavich's grief-stricken madness and hints at the unfortunate fate of his son. If there is a holy or clerical party member present, Ismark asks that player character to take point in the following day's conversations.

Ismark pointedly uses Doru's unfortunate fate to also express the horror that it is to be chosen as one of Strahd's consorts. While he still refrains from outright begging the party's help in keeping Ireena safe, he does his best to manipulate the party into agreeing to his escort mission. Once his father is properly buried, Ismark is intent that Ireena embark for Vallaki as soon as possible.

IREENA KOLYANOVICH

Ireena is arguably the most important NPC in the campaign. While the player characters are here to liberate Barovia from Strahd, Ireena's narrative is the path of the abused overcoming her abuser.

As Tatyana's reincarnation, she is directly tied to Strahd's curse, and will inevitably die young as a result. Tatyana represents the one thing that Strahd can never claim: youth and love. While Strahd himself believes that his love for Tatyana is true, it is nothing of the sort. Strahd has confused love for possession and believes that he rightly owns Tatyana, body and soul.

Whenever Strahd comes close to claiming Tatyana, either by finally being able to turn her into a vampire under his control or by actually earning her returned love, she dies. The as-written module only provides us one example of such a loss: Marina in Berez. However, you may feasibly invent other instances of Tatyana's reincarnations and their horrible deaths.

Strahd is intelligent enough to understand that his pursuit of Tatyana is directly linked to her deaths. However, Strahd is a conquerer, and will under no circumstances let her go. Strahd believes that it is his right to defy the Dark Powers themselves, despite the pact he made with them. His immense arrogance makes him believe that, given enough time, he will claim Tatyana at last. At this point, Tatyana is not a person to Strahd, but a trophy to be won.

Unfortunately, Ireena is an unwitting victim in Strahd's centuries long game of cat and mouse.

A PLAYER CHARACTER AS IREENA

In Chapter 1: Prepping the Adventure, there are detailed recommendations on how to replace Ireena's narrative function as Tatyana's reincarnation with that of a player character.

With this change, Strahd is after a player character for hosting Tatyana's soul and Ireena is either removed from the campaign or reduced to another unfortunate NPC in Strahd's path. Making a player character Tatyana's reincarnation can help reorient the campaign's narrative around the party, rather than around a NPC. For more details on this optional change and how it alters the encounter in the burgomaster's mansion, refer to Chapter 1.

ROLEPLAYING IREENA

Meeting Ireena Kolyanovich should be a great pageantry. Her natural beauty is awe-striking and she carries herself with the grace of a princess and the ferocity of a dragon. She has scarlet-colored hair, fair skin, a heart-shaped mouth, and soft hazel eyes. When introducing Ireena to the party, make sure to note her immense beauty and give her an entrance worth remembering.

Ireena has lived the majority of her life within the burgomaster's mansion, hidden away by her family like other villagers that Strahd might consider desirable. In the past month, however, Strahd caught sight of Ireena while scrying on Arik the barkeep in the local tavern. Ever since, Strahd has terrorized their household and fed twice on Ireena already. These feedings have occurred far enough apart that Ireena is in no danger of dying, but she is now intimately aware of how dangerous Strahd truly is.

Ireena understands the feeling of losing her own mind to Strahd's hypnosis. She understands how intimate and violating it is to be forced to love someone who hurts you. Ireena has more reason to fear Strahd than anyone in Barovia at the moment.

But make no mistake, Ireena is no scared lamb. She is fiercely independent and faces the world around her with an indomitable will. Strahd's charm ability, which steals that will from her, both terrifies her and ignites her fury. However, Ireena is not vengeful. She doesn't want to beat Strahd to a pulp or watch him suffer as he has made her suffer. Ireena simply wishes to be free of Strahd. She wants to go to sleep at night without worrying about seeing Strahd the next day. She wants, above all things, to not be afraid anymore.

IREENA IN THE CAMPAIGN

Most likely, Ireena will become a longterm companion to the party. There's a great possibility that she'll be traveling with the party for a number of sessions to come and fight alongside them in more than a few combat encounters. As such, it's imperative that you make sure your players like Ireena.

Make Ireena interested in the player characters and get them to talk about themselves. Ireena can be a dutiful listener and a faithful friend. As one of the few truly good NPCs in the campaign, the players should hopefully come to care for Ireena and become invested in her survival.

Throughout the campaign, Ireena shouldn't be idle; an uncaring passenger to the narrative. Instead, Ireena might be the surprise rescuer that helps break a player character out of the stocks in Vallaki. When the party returns from visiting Lady Wachter, Ireena may have taken the time to go shopping and distribute some much needed gear to the players. She actively volunteers to help keep watch during travel and practices her swordplay when idle.

Making Ireena an active and useful participant in the campaign is essential to making the party care for her.

IN COMBAT

As written, Ireena has the statblock of a **noble**, which works quite well for her. However, her true usefulness in combat comes out in her support actions and not in her ability to fight monsters.

In fights, make sure that Ireena does not outshine the players. She should not be a front line fighter and she should not, if at all possible, make killing blows. Instead, she is there to help the party whenever possible. If a player character drops to 0 hit points, Ireena will prioritize stabilizing them and dragging their unconscious bodies from conflict. If Ireena's given access to health potions, she will consistently use them to save party members from death and never drink one herself.



Against enemies, Ireena is more likely to take the Help action to give her comrades advantage on their attacks than strike a blow. She's also creative, looking for ways to utilize the environment to give the party better odds against their enemies. For instance, Ireena might try to shove an enemy into a room and shut the door to lessen their number of attackers.

If it does seem like Ireena will be with the party for a long time, especially if she is still around after Vallaki, consider giving Ireena a bit more health so she can minutely level up with the party. You might give her a d8 hit dice and eventually give her the Cunning Action ability from the Rogue class so that she both help the party and stay safe from danger at the same time.

Remember that the more the party has to worry about Ireena in combat, the more of a nuisance she becomes. Make sure that Ireena is not some wailing damsel in distress, but instead a helpful ally and the party will love her all the more.

IREENA'S ABDUCTION

No matter how much your party comes to love Ireena, it is generally not recommended that you allow Ireena to remain with the party for the entirety of the campaign.

Instead, sometime during or after the events in Vallaki, Strahd should come and successfully abduct Ireena and whisk her away to his castle. Maybe Strahd comes to kill the party after they thwart the Feast of St. Andral, and Ireena offers her freedom in exchange for the party's lives. However Ireena's abduction occurs, the event should be devastating to the party, making them both hate and fear Strahd all the more.

Once Strahd has Ireena in Ravenloft, he does not turn her into a vampire right away. Strahd knows that immediately attempting to do so will only cause her death. Instead, he goes about the slow and meticulous process of trying to woo Ireena in one way or another, drinking from her only when he can not resist her presence. Ireena lives on as a bird in a cage, biding her time to finally escape or kill her captor.

ENDINGS FOR IREENA

While the text offers a strange and ghostly "happy" ending for Ireena at the Pool of the White Sun in Krezk, the event will usually end up feeling lackluster and trite to players.

It is recommended that you instead get rid of Ireena's ending in Krezk. Her narrative should only end in one of two ways: with Strahd's defeat and Ireena's freedom from their joint curse or with Ireena's death.

IREENA DIES

During Ireena's travels with the players, she will come in close contact with innumerable dangers. It is quite possible that any one of these dangers could kill Ireena. If this occurs in your game, let her die. In the grand narrative, Ireena is only fulfilling her end of Strahd's curse in this case.

If at all possible, try to save Ireena's death until after the party shows an attachment to her, so that they'll grieve her passing. Additionally, try to include Strahd somehow in the events surrounding her death. Watching his beloved die once again will undoubtedly infuriate Strahd and the following chase sequence can be terrifying as he hunts down the party in a fit of rage. Whether or not he's successful in his hunt, eventually Strahd will regain his senses and accept that Tatyana will only be reborn again. He'll dedicate the remainder of the campaign to slowly watching the party suffer for letting Ireena die.

IREENA PREVAILS

In this ending, Ireena makes it to the end of the campaign, surviving the final showdown with Strahd and finally watches her abuser die. Ireena and her soul - Tatyana's soul - are freed from their curse at last.

If Ireena makes it to this point in the campaign, do not have her turn into Tatyana's ghost as per the Epilogue section of the original text. By the end of the game, the players know and love Ireena while Tatyana is nothing more than a bit of old lore to them. Instead of focusing on Sergei and Tatyana's ghosts, Ireena strides into the sunlight a liberated woman, ready to start her life anew.





EVENTS IN THE NIGHT

While staying the night at the burgomaster's mansion, there are a few events that should occur.

DREAM PASTRIES

While spending the evening with the Kolyanoviches, passively remind your players about their dream pastries if they haven't already indulged in them. Remember that the pies themselves require no saving throw and simply taste wonderful.

That night, during the character's long rest, they have beautiful, vivid dreams that you can embellish however you please. In the morning, however, the burgomaster's mansion looks all the more sorrowful after experiencing such peace.

MAD MARY'S VISIT

Sometime in the evening, shortly before Ismark and Ireena decide to turn in for the night, there is a frantic knock at the front door. Initially, Ireena retreats into the back hall and Ismark hushes the party, bracing for another visit from Strahd. But then, the voice of crying woman comes through door; one that Ismark recognizes.

Ismark will open the door to reveal the distraught Mad Mary, who quickly pushes passed Ismark and into the home. While her pushing in would seem rather rude under normal circumstance, this action actually proves to the Kolyanoviches that Mary is not a vampire, and instead relaxes them.

In this encounter, Mary weeps openly, distraught about her missing daughter, Gertruda. Gertruda has been missing for over a week, having disappeared from the village without trace. Mary, in her own anxiety-ridden insanity, has not yet come to terms with Gertruda's absence, and has been making rounds through the village for days in search of her daughter.

While Mary initially only speaks to Ismark, since he is the new up-and-coming burgomaster of the village, the party may take an interest in Mary's plight. If Mary converses with the party, she refers to Gertruda as a child, often inferring that the girl is far younger than she is. Mary begs the party to look for Gertruda, and is mostly pacified if they promise to do so. After Mary's mania subsides, Ismark either sends her on her way or walks her home himself.

RUMORS OF BEREZ

After Mary leaves the burgomaster's mansion, either Ismark or Ireena will relay the true hopelessness of Gertruda's disappearance to the players. They sadly tell the party that Gertruda has been missing for long enough that she is a lost cause, and that they should not risk their own lives running off into the woods to search for the girl.

Gertruda's absence is actually an excellent opportunity to tell the party about Berez. Ismark and Ireena have heard rumors of the devilish witch women that collect in Berez, and may absently remark that if Gertruda is alive, she may have fallen in with them.

Ismark and Ireena can also take this opportunity to tell the players about Berez's fall. While neither know anything about Marina, both know the general story of Berez: that the people there angered Strahd in some way and that Strahd used the river to wipe them out in a single day. This story is an excellent way to passively warn your players about Strahd's immense power over the land and how crossing Strahd generally only leads to tragedy.

STRAHD'S GREETING

Let the first night that the players spend in the burgomaster's mansion pass without incident. They should be allowed to try their dream pastries and get to know Ismark and Ireena. The following day, the party helps Ismark bury the late burgomaster.

However, should the players end up spending another night in the Village of Barovia, it may be an excellent opportunity to introduce Strahd to the campaign. In this event, all manner of horrible beast begins to surround the manor, howling and scratching at the boarded-up windows. All of the sudden, the noise ceases and there is a resounding knock on the door. Ismark, too afraid to anger Strahd, moves to answer it and advises the players not to meet Strahd's eyes.

Strahd will use this opportunity to greet the party and declare his love for Ireena. He may even exert his will over a player character, charming them and getting them to invite him in. Strahd will then drink from as many player characters as he can without starting open combat, politely stating that the bite is something to remember him by.

"Until next we meet," he says. And then Strahd leaves.

THE CHURCH OF BAROVIA

After a quiet night at the burgomaster's mansion, possibly dreaming sweetly from Granny's treats, the party helps Ismark carry his father's coffin across town to the village's church and accompanying graveyard. Despite her many protests, Ireena remains behind, at least somewhat safe behind the threshold of their

home.

During this procession, make note of the few villagers that quickly do the Barovian equivalent of crossing themselves - a circular motion in front of their hearts indicative of the Morninglord and the sun - as they dart away from the coffin.

With enough hands on the coffin, the party arrives at the church after a short walk.

THE BURGOMASTER'S FUNERAL

Talking to Father Donavich will be a strained affair. Not only is the poor priest in a sorry mental state, but Doru's constant screams from the undercroft will be quite disconcerting to the players. As the party converses with Donavich, they can gently coax the priest into leaving his prayers to oversee the burgomaster's funeral.

Once in the graveyard, Donavich finds a couple shovels and gets to work digging the burgomaster's grave with Ismark's help. Most likely, a party member or two will either take over or assist in this sorry affair.

In its entirety, the funeral takes about two hours, which includes digging the grave, moving the coffin, and giving final rites.

STRAHD'S ATTENDANCE

Shortly after Father Donavich starts reciting final rites, a slow-rolling mist collects in the woods beyond the far fence of the graveyard. Any player character with a passive perception of 13 or higher spots the dark silhouette of a tall, humanoid man standing in the mist, his head bowed as if in respectful prayer.

This figure is Strahd, come to attend the funeral of a fellow noble and the father of his beloved bride to be. He silently pays his respects to the burgomaster, but does not interfere in the proceedings or enter the graveyard. Once the funeral is concluded, the figure disappears into the mist again.

DORU

While the story of the Mad Mage recruiting Doru to storm Castle Ravenloft in the previous year is interesting enough, it may be more conducive to storytelling to simplify Doru's fall into vampirism.

Instead, Doru is one of Strahd's consorts, chosen years prior to become one of Strahd's unwitting grooms. Doru, in a moment of clarity, managed to escape Strahd and return to his father with the vain hope that the Morninglord could cure him of his undeath. Doru fully consented to his imprisonment in the church's undercroft, insistent that he never be allowed to drink blood and become the monster he so feared.

In the years since, Strahd has quietly delighted in Doru and Donavich's fall into madness, seeing their torture and insanity as adequate punishments for Doru's exodus.

Doru's new backstory as one of Strahd's consorts, alongside Ireena's own plight, should fully inform the party of Strahd's abusive nature.





DEALING WITH DORU

The players will undoubtedly be interested in helping Father Donavich deal with his son in some way, either out of sympathy or from the inherent heroic calling that comes to most players in *Dungeons & Dragons*.

While Father Donavich is doubtful as to how much the party can actually assist his son, he's desperate enough to cling onto any hope the players provide. He agrees to let the player characters into the undercroft after they promise not to harm Doru; a promise that he emphasizes as much as possible.

Ismark, if present when the party decides to deal with Doru, chooses to wait outside the church. While he is not afraid of fighting Doru, he does not want to risk his own life unnecessarily while Ireena is in danger. Additionally, Ismark does not believe it is his place to interfere in Donavich's tragedy.

No matter when the players have this conversation with Donavich, use Ismark to insist that they first bury the late burgomaster. If the encounter with Doru goes exceptionally poorly, Donavich or a party member may die, potentially halting the flow of the narrative completely. Ensure that the funeral occurs prior to this encounter.

FIGHT! DORU THE VAMPIRE SPAWN

While Doru has a challenge rating of 5 and possesses regeneration abilities, he is completely outnumbered and easily beatable, especially if even a single member of the party has access to consistent radiant damage. However, the goal of this fight is not a fight to the death for either side. Doru's primary goal is to drink at least once from one of his combatants and then escape the church. The party's goal should be to non-lethally contain Doru.

Before the party enters the undercroft, establish a marching order. As the players unchain the hatch, Doru will stealth by the entrance to gain the advantage of a surprise round as he waits for new prey to enter his prison. The first party member to descend the ladder starts initiative. Doru will attack this person, attempting to claw and grapple them, as well as bite them to finally satiate his thirst. Lastly, he'll drag this grappled player away from the hatch at half speed.

Even in his maddened hunger, Doru is an intelligent and predatory creature. He'll go for the least armored looking member of the party in an attempt to state his thirst quickly. However, even in starvation, Doru still recognizes his father and avoids attacking Donavich if at all possible. If Doru takes radiant damage or drops to under half his maximum health, he'll disengage and make a break from the cellar, attempting to escape to Castle Ravenloft.

Father Donavich will do his best to both contain and protect his beloved son. If the party attacks and hits Doru within sight of Donavich, the father cries out in anguish. He'll use his action to either cast *sanctuary* on Doru or to heal his son. If Doru's escape seems imminent, Donavich would sooner let him go than risk the party killing his child.

OUTCOMES OF THE FIGHT

There are several possible outcomes to the party's confrontation with Doru.

On one hand, the party may have managed to contain Doru, locking him away in the undercroft without killing him. In this outcome, the status quo remains unchanged. The party has no viable way of helping Doru or of reversing his vampirism and asking Father Donavich to try and feed his child more regularly is excessively dangerous. Donavich will thank the party for examining Doru and for trying to help, but sadly resign himself to his usual prayers.

If Doru manages to escape the church, he immediately flees into the woods towards Castle Ravenloft. Father Donavich weeps over the loss of his son, but retains enough sense to recognize the party's efforts to help his family. He dejectedly thanks the party for their attempt, but becomes quiet and withdrawn henceforth.

If the party kills Doru, Father Donavich becomes inconsolable, weeping over the corpse of his child. When the party leaves him to his grief, exiting the church, they hear the church bell ring once ominously. If they reenter the church, Father Donavich has hanged himself with the bell's rope behind the altar.

LEAVING THE VILLAGE

Following the burgomaster's burial, Ireena finally consents to leaving the Village of Barovia for the possible safety of the larger church in Vallaki. Ismark will politely suggest that the players stay one more night in the village, to better prepare for the coming journey. Ismark will even offer to prepare rations for the party to last the

trip, so long as he has the day to prepare them. Spending the remainder of the day in the village will also give the players the opportunity to shop for supplies, provided they can afford Bildrath's obscene prices.

ANOTHER NIGHT IN THE VILLAGE

If the players accept Ismark's offer to stay one final night in the village, don't forget to include the Strahd's Greeting encounter detailed on page 12. The night is also another opportunity to remind the player's about Granny's dream pastries as well as ask for Constitution saving throws to resist mindlessly eating more of them.

LEAVING ISMARK

Despite what the as-written text suggests, it is recommended that you force Ismark to stay behind in the village. Though it is still technically unofficial, Ismark is the Village of Barovia's new burgomaster and it is his responsibility to run the village now that his father is properly buried.

Mechanically speaking, it is generally recommended that you limit the number of NPCs traveling with the party at a time. Ireena has a high chance of being a long-term party companion and adding her brother to the group is just another NPC to worry about, both during role-play and during combat. Ismark is better used for a bittersweet goodbye.

LANCELOT'S HOME

If Lancelot is still with the party, Ismark offers to take in the old hound dog prior to the party's departure. Mad Mary is hardly in a state to care for poor Lancelot anymore and Ismark declares that he could use the company. Lancelot is also old enough that long term travel would be rather straining going forward. The party can rest assured that old Lancelot has found a comfortable home with Ismark.

The players set out for Vallaki. The trip should take them about 3 days travel, with their first pit-stop at the Vistani encampment at Tser Pool.