

Curse of Strahd - Daggerheart Campaign Frame

Curse of Strahd

A Daggerheart Campaign Frame

The Pitch Overview Principles Custom Mechanics Adversaries Items Environments
Character Options Session Zero

The Pitch

The mists have taken you. You find yourselves in **Barovia**, a land trapped in eternal twilight, ruled by the immortal vampire **Count Strahd von Zarovich**.

This is a land without hope. The sun never fully rises. The mists turn travelers around, no matter how far they walk. The people are broken, their spirits crushed under centuries of Strahd's rule.

A fortune-teller named **Madam Eva** reveals your destiny through her tarokka cards, you are meant to face the ancient evil that haunts this land. Three artifacts of power await discovery. An ally will aid you. And a final confrontation with the vampire lord himself looms.

But be warned: Strahd is not a villain to be easily defeated. He is a master tactician, a powerful wizard, and has had centuries to perfect his cruelty. He will test you, torment you, and try to break your spirit before he kills you.

Can you bring light to this land of darkness? Can you break the curse and free Barovia? Or will you become just another ghost wandering the Old Svalich Road, another failed challenger in Strahd's endless game?

tone

Dark, Gothic, Tragic, Oppressive

THEMES

Corruption, Doomed Love, Hope vs Despair, Redemption

TOUCHSTONES

Dracula, Castlevania, Bloodborne, Penny Dreadful

Campaign Overview

The Land of Barovia

Barovia exists in a demiplane, torn from its original world by the mysterious **Dark Powers**. Deadly mists surround the land, no matter how far you walk, you end up back where you started. The sun never fully breaks through the perpetual cloud cover, casting everything in gray gloom.

This land is trapped in time, isolated from the outside world. The same souls are reborn generation after generation. The people are broken, terrified, and have long since abandoned hope. They cower in their villages, fearing the night and the wolves that howl from the Svalich Woods.

Strahd von Zarovich - The Ancient

In life, Strahd von Zarovich was a count, a prince, a soldier, and a conqueror. After the death of his father, King Barov, Strahd waged long bloody wars against his family's enemies. He cornered the last of them in a remote mountain valley and slaughtered them all. He named the valley Barovia after his father.

But peace made Strahd restless. He felt his best years slipping away. Unwilling to age like his father, he studied magic and forged a pact with the Dark Powers in return for immortality.

Then came Tatyana. A young Barovian woman of remarkable beauty. Strahd lavished her with attention, believing her worthy to be his bride. But she fell in love with his younger brother, Sergei instead.

On the day of Sergei and Tatyana's wedding, Strahd gazed into a mirror and realized he had been a fool. He murdered Sergei, drank his blood, and sealed his pact with darkness. When he chased Tatyana through the castle gardens, she threw herself from the walls rather than submit to him.

Strahd became a vampire. The sky went black. The castle guards shot him with arrows, but he did not die. He slaughtered them all. The castle and valley were spirited away, locked in a demiplane surrounded by deadly mists. For Strahd and his people, there would be no escape.

For centuries now, Strahd has ruled Barovia. He takes consorts, feeds on the people, and plays games with strangers who wander into his domain. Every generation, Tatyana's soul is reborn. The current incarnation is **Ireena Kolyana**, and Strahd will stop at nothing to claim her.

Strahd's Goals

Claim Ireena

Strahd has already bitten Ireena twice. He intends to turn her into his vampire spawn consort, believing her to be Tatyana reborn.

Find Van Richten

The legendary vampire hunter has come to Barovia in disguise. Strahd wants to find him, lock him in his dungeons, and slowly break his spirit.

Test the Newcomers

Strahd senses your arrival. He will test you, studying your tactics and weaknesses. Are you worthy challengers? Or just more prey?

Find a Successor

Deep down, Strahd believes the key to escaping Barovia is finding someone worthy to rule in his place. But his arrogance ensures no one is ever good enough.

Key Locations

Castle Ravenloft

Strahd's towering gothic fortress atop the Pillarstone of Ravenloft. A maze of crypts, towers, and haunted halls. The final confrontation awaits here.

Village of Barovia

A broken place where hope has died. The people are terrified, the burgomaster is dead, and Ireena Kolyana needs protection from Strahd's advances.

Town of Vallaki

The Baron forces weekly festivals to maintain happiness. But beneath the forced smiles, corruption and tyranny fester. Revolution is brewing.

Old Bonegrinder

An ancient windmill where three night hags bake dream pastries from the bones of kidnapped children. The people buy them willingly.

Argynvostholt

Ruined mansion of the Order of the Silver Dragon. The knights are now revenants, twisted by hatred, refusing to let their spirits rest.

The Amber Temple

An ancient vault of dark knowledge in the frozen mountains. Here, dark gifts can be claimed, but at terrible cost. This is where Strahd made his pact.

How to Defeat Strahd

Strahd cannot be permanently destroyed unless several conditions are met:

- **Find the Three Fated Treasures:** The Sunsword, Holy Symbol of Ravenkind, and Tome of Strahd (locations determined by Tarokka reading)
- **Destroy the Heart of Sorrow:** A 10-foot crystal in Castle Ravenloft that absorbs all damage meant for Strahd
- **Reduce Strahd to 0 HP:** Force him into mist form and back to his coffin
- **Stake him in his coffin:** While at 0 HP in his coffin, drive a wooden stake through his heart
- **Expose him to sunlight:** Or keep him staked until sunrise to destroy him permanently

But even if you destroy Strahd, will the mists release Barovia? Or will the Dark Powers simply choose a new master? Some questions have no easy answers.

Principles

Player Principles

Embrace the Horror

Barovia is a land of dread and despair. Let your character feel fear and doubt. The darkness makes your courage shine brighter.

Find Light in Darkness

There are people worth saving. Your Hope tokens represent actual hope, use them to create moments that matter.

GM Principles

Make Barovia Feel Alive (and Dead)

Describe the oppressive atmosphere constantly. But also show signs of life struggling to persist.

Play Strahd as Complex, Not Evil

Strahd is a tragic figure. Show his charisma, his loneliness, his terrible love. Make players understand him even as they oppose him.

Custom Mechanics

The Mists of Barovia

Deadly fog surrounds Barovia. Any creature that tries to leave must make an **Instinct roll (Difficulty 20)** every hour or gain 1 level of Stress. Even flying creatures cannot escape.

The mists turn travelers around, no matter how far you walk, you end up back in Barovia.

Sunlight in Barovia

By the will of the Dark Powers, the sun never fully shines. Even during the day, thick clouds or mist obscure the light.

Effect: Daylight in Barovia provides bright light but does NOT count as sunlight for vampire vulnerabilities. Strahd and his spawn can move about during the day. Only magical sunlight (from spells or items like the Sunsword) affects vampires normally.

Fortunes of Ravenloft

When the party first meets Madam Eva, she performs a tarokka card reading that determines the location of three powerful artifacts and where Strahd can be confronted.

The Fated Items:

- The Tome of Strahd: A journal revealing Strahd's history
- The Sunsword: A legendary blade that deals magic damage and creates true sunlight
- The Holy Symbol of Ravenkind: Can hold vampires at bay and cause direct damage

Whenever a PC discovers one of the fated items, they immediately gain **3 Hope tokens** and clear **1d4 Stress**.

Hope in Despair

Barovia is a land where hope dies slowly. This mechanic represents the difficulty of maintaining morale.

Rule: At the start of each session, each PC must make a **Presence roll (Difficulty 12)**. On a failure, they start the session with 1 fewer Hope token (minimum 0).

Exception: If the party made significant progress last session (rescued someone, found a treasure, defeated a major foe), this roll is not required.

Adversaries of Barovia

Complete adversary roster for Curse of Strahd. Organized by tier for easy reference during play.

Tier 4 - Legendary Adversaries

Strahd von Zarovich - Solo

The ancient vampire lord of Barovia. Aristocratic, cunning, and nearly unstoppable.

Difficulty

20

Thresholds

15/30

HP

8

Stress

8

Attack

+5

Attack: Vampiric Strike (2d12+8 magic, marks 2 Stress on Major Hit)

Features

- **Shapechanger:** Transform into bat, wolf, or mist form
- **Legendary Resistance:** 3x/session ignore damage or effects
- **Regeneration:** Clear 2 HP per turn (if not in sunlight/running water)
- **Spider Climb:** Can climb any surface including ceilings
- **Charm (3 Stress):** Dominate minds (Difficulty 19, Presence + Instinct to resist)
- **Move Like Shadow (2 Stress):** Teleport to any space within Far range in dim light/darkness
- **Bite (2 Stress):** 3d8+6 magic damage, clears HP equal to damage, reduces target's max HP
- **Children of the Night (4 Stress, 1x/session):** Summon 2d4 swarms or 3d6 wolves
- **Dominate (3 Stress):** Issue single command to creature (Difficulty 19 to resist)

Lair Actions (Castle Ravenloft)

Spend 2 Fear at start of round for one:

- **Phase Through Walls:** Move through solid objects until next round
- **Seal the Castle:** Lock any doors/windows (Difficulty 18 to force)
- **Summon Specter:** Spirit appears and attacks one enemy, then vanishes
- **Living Shadow:** Target's shadow becomes hostile creature

Heart of Sorrow

A 10-foot-diameter crystal heart in Castle Ravenloft's tower with 50 HP. While it exists, damage to Strahd is transferred to the Heart first. Strahd knows when it takes damage and from what source.

Weaknesses

- Cannot enter homes without invitation
- Takes 3 Stress per round in sunlight
- Takes 2 Stress per round in running water
- Stake through heart while in his coffin destroys permanently

Baba Lysaga - Solo

Ancient witch and Strahd's self-proclaimed "true mother." Commands swarms and dark magic.

Difficulty

19

Thresholds

14/28

HP

7

Stress

7

Attack

+4

Attack: Spinestaff Strike (2d8+6 magic)

Features

- **Shapechanger:** Transform into swarm of flies
- **Summon Swarms (3 Stress):** Call 1d4 insect swarms
- **Blight Bolt (2 Stress):** 3d8+6 ranged magic attack

Strahd's Brides - Elite Vampires

Ludmilla Vilisevic, Anastrasya Karelova, and Volenta Popofsky. Elite vampire spawn consorts of Strahd.

Difficulty

18

Thresholds

12/24

HP

7

Stress

6

Attack

+4

Attack: Claws (2d8+5 physical) or Specialized weapon

Features

- **Regeneration:** Clear 2 HP per turn (not in sunlight/running water)
- **Spider Climb:** Climb any surface without rolls
- **Bite (2 Stress):** 2d8+4 magic, clears HP equal to damage
- **Vampire Weaknesses:** Cannot enter homes uninvited, sunlight/running water weaknesses

Individual Traits:

- **Ludmilla (Mage):** Can cast spells (Fireball 3 Stress, Misty Step 1 Stress)
- **Anastrasya (Seductress):** Charm (2 Stress, Difficulty 17), Enhanced Deception
- **Volenta (Sadist):** Poisoned dagger (adds 1d6 poison), Acrobatic (+2 to evasion)

Tier 3 - Elite Adversaries

Rahadin - Leader

Strahd's chamberlain. Ancient dusk elf warrior surrounded by screams of his victims.

Difficulty 17 | Thresholds 10/20 | HP 6 | Stress 6 | Attack +4

Attack: Scimitar Flurry (2d8+5 physical, 3 attacks/turn)

Features: Screams of the Dead (enemies mark Stress), Perfect Warrior (+3 Difficulty reaction for 1 Stress)

Ezmerelda d'Avenir - Standard/Social

Young vampire hunter and Van Richten's former student. Skilled with blade and spell.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 9/18 | HP 5 | Stress 5 | Attack +3

Attack: Rapier Strike (1d10+5 physical)

Features: Vampire Hunter (advantage vs undead, +1d8 vs vampires)

Night Hags - Support

Hideous crones with blue-gray skin and iron teeth who corrupt souls and feed on nightmares.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 9/18 | HP 6 | Stress 5 | Attack +2

Attack: Claws (2d8+3 magic)

Features: Magic Resistance, Etherealness (2 Stress), Nightmare Haunting (3 Stress), Hag Coven (shared magic)

Tree Blight - Solo

A 30-foot-tall animated dead tree with blood for sap. Crushes and feeds on living creatures.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 12/24 | HP 8 | Stress 4 | Attack +4

Attack: Branch (3d6+6 physical, Very Close) or Bite (3d8+6 physical, Melee, grappled targets only)

Features: Grasping Roots (grapple, Strength Difficulty 16 to escape), False Appearance, Siege Monster, Fire Resistance

Shambling Mound - Solo

Massive heap of rotting vegetation animated by dark magic. Death House's final guardian.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 11/22 | HP 7 | Stress 4 | Attack +3

Attack: Slam (2d8+5 physical, can grapple)

Features: Lightning Absorption (heals instead of damages), Engulf (2 Stress, suffocates grappled target), Resistance to cold/fire

Flesh Golem - Bruiser

Stitched-together corpse animated through dark rituals. Created by the Abbott.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 10/20 | HP 7 | Stress 3 | Attack +3

Attack: Slam (2d10+5 physical)

Features: Lightning Absorption (heals 1d6 HP), Aversion to Fire (fear effect), Berserk (when damaged, attacks nearest creature), Immunity to charm/fear

Vladimir Horngaard - Leader Revenant

Leader of the Order of the Silver Dragon. Twisted by hatred, he wants Strahd to suffer forever.

Difficulty 17 | Thresholds 11/22 | HP 7 | Stress 6 | Attack +4

Attack: Greatsword (2d12+5 physical, two-handed)

Features: Regeneration (2 HP/turn), Rejuvenation (reforms after 24 hours), Vengeful Glare (2 Stress, paralyze Difficulty 17), Turn Immunity, Commander (+2 to allies' attacks)

Izek Strazni - Bruiser

Baron Vallakovich's brutal enforcer. His barbed devil arm burns with hellfire.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 9/18 | HP 6 | Stress 5 | Attack +3

Attack: Greataxe (2d10+4 physical) or Fiendish Claw (2d6+4 physical + 1d6 fire)

Features: Fiendish Arm (immune to fire), Hurl Flame (2 Stress, 3d6 fire damage at range), Intimidating Presence

Kasimir Velikov - Mage

Dusk elf mage seeking to resurrect his sister. Haunted by guilt.

Difficulty 16 | Thresholds 8/16 | HP 5 | Stress 6 | Attack +2

Attack: Dagger (1d4+2 physical) or Spells

Features: Spellcasting (Fireball 3 Stress, Lightning Bolt 3 Stress, Misty Step 1 Stress, Shield 1 Stress), Arcane Knowledge +3

Rudolph van Richten - Legendary Monster Hunter

Greatest vampire hunter alive, disguised as ringmaster Rictavio. Potential powerful ally.

Difficulty 17 | Thresholds 10/20 | HP 6 | Stress 6 | Attack +4

Attack: +1 Saber (2d8+5 physical, silvered) or Crossbow (2d6+4 physical)

Features: Monster Slayer (advantage vs undead/fiends, +2d6 damage), Master of Disguise, Holy Water (carries multiple vials), Tactical Genius (+2 to allies when commanding)

Mordenkainen - Mad Archmage

Legendary wizard driven mad by Strahd. Memory shattered, power diminished but still formidable.

Difficulty 17 | Thresholds 9/18 | HP 5 | Stress 7 | Attack +2

Attack: Staff (1d6+2 physical) or Powerful Spells

Features: Archmage Spells (Fireball 3 Stress, Lightning Bolt 3 Stress, Counterspell 2 Stress, Teleport 4 Stress), Madness (unpredictable behavior), Shield (reaction, +5 Difficulty vs 1 attack for 1 Stress)

Tier 2 - Standard Adversaries

Vampire Spawn - Standard

Pale, gaunt undead servants of Strahd with extended fangs.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 7/14 | HP 5 | Stress 4 | Attack +3

Attack: Claws (2d6+4 physical)

Features: Regeneration (1 HP/turn), Spider Climb, Bite (2 Stress, 2d6+3 magic), Vampire Weaknesses

Werewolves - Bruiser

Savage wolf-human hybrids who hunt in packs.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 8/16 | HP 5 | Stress 4 | Attack +3

Attack: Bite (2d8+4 physical, may inflict lycanthropy)

Features: Shapechanger, Damage Resistance (non-magical/non-silver), Pack Tactics, Keen Senses

Revenants - Standard

Undead knights of the Order of the Silver Dragon, bound by vengeance.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 8/16 | HP 6 | Stress 5 | Attack +3

Attack: Longsword (2d10+4 physical, two-handed)

Features: Regeneration (1 HP/turn), Rejuvenation (reforms after 24 hours), Vengeful Tracker, Turn Immunity

Ghosts - Standard

Spirits of those who died in Barovia, unable to find rest.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 5 | Stress 4 | Attack +2

Attack: Withering Touch (2d8+3 magic)

Features: Ethereal, Horrifying Visage (2 Stress, ages target), Possession (3 Stress), Incorporeal Movement

Animated Armor - Standard

Strahd's enchanted burgundy plate armor guards.

Difficulty 15 | Thresholds 8/16 | HP 5 | Stress 3 | Attack +3

Attack: Greatsword (2d6+3 physical + 1d6 lightning)

Features: Lightning Absorption, Shocking Bolt, Antimagic Susceptibility, False Appearance

Scarecrows - Standard

Animated scarecrows created by Baba Lysaga, stuffed with dead ravens.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Claw (2d6+3 physical)

Features: Terrifying Glare (2 Stress), Bound by Evil, False Appearance

Wights - Standard

Undead warriors that drain life force. Found throughout Castle Ravenloft.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 7/14 | HP 5 | Stress 4 | Attack +3

Attack: Longsword (2d8+3 physical) or Life Drain (2d6+3 magic, reduces max HP)

Features: Sunlight Sensitivity (disadvantage in sunlight), Create Spawn (humanoids killed rise as zombies)

Berserkers - Bruiser

Wild barbarian warriors driven by rage. Serve various factions in Barovia.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 7/14 | HP 5 | Stress 3 | Attack +3

Attack: Greataxe (2d10+4 physical)

Features: Reckless (advantage on attacks but enemies have advantage vs them), Rage (1 Stress, resist physical damage, +2 damage for 1 minute)

Druids - Support/Mage

Corrupted nature priests who worship Strahd at Yester Hill.

Difficulty 14 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 4 | Stress 5 | Attack +2

Attack: Quarterstaff (1d6+2 physical) or Nature Spells

Features: Wild Shape (transform into wolf/raven), Entangle (2 Stress, restrain enemies), Healing Word (2 Stress, heal ally 2d4+2 HP)

Vine Blights - Standard

Ambulatory masses of vines that ensnare and constrict prey.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Constrict (1d10+3 physical, grapples on hit)

Features: Entangling Plants (1 Stress, difficult terrain), False Appearance, Root Network (communicate with other blights)

Tier 1-2 - Social NPCs

Ireena Kolyana - Social

Reincarnation of Tatyana with auburn hair and determined eyes.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +1

Attack: Desperate Defense (1d8+2 physical)

Features: Tatyana's Soul (connection to Ravenloft), Bite Marks (advantage vs fear from undead), Iron Will (reroll Charm 1x/session)

Madam Eva - Social

Ancient Vistana fortune-teller with penetrating eyes and knowing smile.

Difficulty 15 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 5 | Stress 4 | Attack +0

Attack: Staff Strike (1d6+1 physical)

Features: Ageless, Fortune Telling (tarokka reading), Evil Eye (2 Stress), Curse (3 Stress), Vistani Insight, Protected by Fate

Tier 1 - Common Adversaries

Wereravens - Standard (Allies)

Keepers of the Feather who oppose Strahd. Can shift to raven form.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 5/10 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Beak (1d4+2) or Shortsword (1d6+2) or Hand Crossbow (1d6+2)

Features: Shapechanger, Mimicry, Damage Resistance, Messenger Network, Flock Tactics (1 Stress)

Dire Wolves - Standard

Enormous wolves with shaggy black fur and glowing red eyes.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +3

Attack: Bite (2d6+4 physical, knocks Prone on Major)

Features: Pack Tactics, Keen Hearing and Smell, Pounce, Relentless Tracker

Needle Blights - Standard

Plant creatures covered in needle-like thorns.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 2 | Attack +1

Attack: Claws (1d8+2 physical)

Features: False Appearance, Needle Spray (2 Stress, attacks all within Very Close range)

Vistani Bandits - Standard

Evil Vistani who serve Strahd and prey on travelers.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 5/10 | HP 3 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Scimitar (1d6+2 physical) or Dagger (1d4+2 physical, thrown)

Features: Vistani Curse (3 Stress, disadvantage effect), Evil Eye (2 Stress), Treacherous (advantage on deception)

Barovian Commoners - Social

Terrified peasants broken by generations of Strahd's rule.

Difficulty 10 | Thresholds 3/6 | HP 3 | Stress 2 | Attack +0

Attack: Club or Tool (1d4+1 physical)

Features: Terrified (disadvantage when Frightened), Broken Spirit (Presence Difficulty 14+ to help), Local Knowledge

Mongrelfolk - Standard

Deformed humanoids created by the Abbott. Pitiful and servile.

Difficulty 11 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 3 | Attack +1

Attack: Claws or Improvised Weapon (1d6+2 physical)

Features: Mimicry (imitate sounds/voices), Skulk (advantage on stealth in dim light), Varied Abilities (random extra sense or ability)

Shadows - Standard

Undead shadows that drain strength and life. Hide in darkness.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Strength Drain (2d6+2 magic, reduces Strength temporarily)

Features: Incorporeal (move through objects), Shadow Stealth (invisible in dim light/darkness), Sunlight Weakness (disadvantage in sunlight)

Specters - Standard

Wrathful spirits of those who died violently. Haunt Castle Ravenloft.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 5/10 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Life Drain (2d8+2 magic, reduces max HP)

Features: Incorporeal, Sunlight Sensitivity, Create Specter (humanoids killed rise as specters)

Gargoyles - Standard

Stone guardians that come to life. Decorate Castle Ravenloft.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 6/12 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Claws (1d8+3 physical) or Bite (1d6+3 physical)

Features: False Appearance (indistinguishable from statue), Damage Resistance (non-magical weapons), Flight

Crawling Claws - Minion

Severed hands animated by necromancy. Creep along walls and ceilings.

Difficulty 10 | No Thresholds | HP 1 | Stress 1 | Attack +1

Attack: Claw (1d4+1 physical)

Features: Minion (4), Spider Climb, Group Attack, Turn Immunity

Tier 1 - Hordes & Minions

Strahd Zombies - Horde

Shambling corpses of ancient Barovian guards (2d4+2 zombies).

Difficulty 11 | Thresholds 3/6 | HP 1 per zombie | Stress 2 | Attack +1

Attack: Rotting Slam (1d8+2 physical per zombie)

Features: Horde (one zombie dies per Major damage), Loathsome Limbs, Undead Fortitude

Twig Blights - Minion

Small animated bundles of twigs that swarm enemies.

Difficulty 10 | No Thresholds | HP 1 | Stress 1 | Attack -1

Attack: Claws (1d4+1 physical)

Features: Minion (4) - defeated by any damage, Group Attack (spend Fear to coordinate), False Appearance

Swarms of Bats - Horde

Hundreds of shrieking bats serving as Strahd's spies.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 2 | Attack +1

Attack: Biting Cloud (2d6+2 physical)

Features: Swarm (occupies same space), Echolocation, Strahd's Spies, Obscuring Cloud (1 Stress, heavily obscured)

Swarms of Ravens - Horde (Allies)

Hundreds of ravens that aid those who oppose Strahd.

Difficulty 11 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 2 | Attack +0

Attack: Pecking Frenzy (2d4+2 physical)

Features: Swarm (occupies same space), Helpful Ravens (aid party attacks), Warning Cries (advantage on surprise/detection)

Special & Unique Adversaries

Pidlwick II - Unique Construct

Mechanical jester doll possessed by a murdered soul. Creepy and lethal.

Difficulty 13 | Thresholds 5/10 | HP 4 | Stress 3 | Attack +2

Attack: Dagger (1d6+2 physical, often from hiding)

Features: Assassin (advantage when attacking from hiding, +2d6 damage on surprise), Creepy Presence (unnerving), Construct (immune to poison/disease)

Vasilka - Flesh Golem Bride

The Abbott's "perfect" bride for Strahd. Innocent and confused.

Difficulty 15 | Thresholds 9/18 | HP 6 | Stress 2 | Attack +3

Attack: Slam (2d8+4 physical)

Features: Lightning Absorption, Innocent (will not attack unless commanded), Aversion to Fire, Beautiful (under veils)

Baron Vargas Vallakovich - Social

Tyrannical burgomaster of Vallaki. Enforces "happiness" through terror.

Difficulty 12 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 4 | Stress 4 | Attack +1

Attack: Longsword (1d8+2 physical)

Features: Political Authority (commands town guard), Delusional (believes festivals work), Cruel (stocks/punishment for sadness)

Cyrus Belview - Mongrelfolk Servant

The Abbott's loyal servant. Hideously deformed but devoted.

Difficulty 11 | Thresholds 4/8 | HP 3 | Stress 3 | Attack +1

Attack: Club (1d6+2 physical)

Features: Mimicry, Skulk, Loyal to Abbott (will defend him), Knowledge of Abbey secrets

Magic Items

These legendary artifacts can turn the tide against Strahd. Finding the three fated treasures grants immediate benefits: 3 Hope tokens and clear 1d4 Stress.

The Three Fated Treasures

The Sunsword

Legendary Weapon (Longsword)

Discovery Benefit: Gain 3 Hope tokens and clear 1d4 Stress

Properties: Attack +4, Damage 2d8+4 (magic, radiant), Creates TRUE SUNLIGHT

Blade of Dawn: Summon a blade of pure sunlight. Sheds bright light 30ft, dim light 30ft. This counts as TRUE SUNLIGHT (affects vampires). Advantage on attacks vs undead.

Sentient Weapon: Chaotic Good, communicates through emotions. Burns with desire for revenge against Strahd. Fears its own destruction.

Holy Symbol of Ravenkind

Legendary Wondrous Item

Discovery Benefit: Gain 3 Hope tokens and clear 1d4 Stress

Description: Platinum amulet shaped like the sun with a crystal center. Requires good alignment. **Charges:** 10, regains 1d6+4 at dawn

Features:

- **Hold Vampires (1 charge):** Vampires within 30ft make Difficulty 16 Instinct roll with Fear or paralyzed 1 minute
- **Turn Undead Enhanced (3 charges):** Undead roll with disadvantage
- **Sunlight (5 charges):** TRUE SUNLIGHT in 30ft radius for 10 minutes
- **Healing Light (1/dawn):** Heal 3d8+3 HP and clear 1 Stress (30ft range)

Tome of Strahd

Legendary Wondrous Item (Book)

Discovery Benefit: Gain 3 Hope tokens and clear 1d4 Stress

Know Thy Enemy: Spend 1 hour reading to gain 1 Hope token, learn one of Strahd's flaws/desires/fears, and gain advantage on Presence rolls against Strahd when leveraging this knowledge.

Strahd's Obsession: If Strahd learns you have his tome, he becomes obsessed with recovering it and targets whoever carries it.

Other Notable Items

Heart of Sorrow

Legendary Artifact

10-foot diameter crystal heart in Castle Ravenloft's tower with 50 HP. While intact, all damage to Strahd is transferred to the Heart first. Strahd knows when it's damaged and the source.

Destroying this is crucial to defeating Strahd permanently.

Rictavio's Saber of Sharpness

Rare Weapon (+1 Saber, Silvered)

Attack +3, Damage 2d6+3 (magic, silvered). On critical hit (with Fear), severs limb. Van Richten's signature weapon.

Brazier of Commanding Fire Elementals

Rare Wondrous Item

While lit, spend 1 Hope to summon a fire elemental ally for one combat (Tier 3 Standard). Can be used 1x/day. Located in a treasure hoard.

Mirror of Life Trapping

Very Rare Wondrous Item

4-foot tall mirror. Creatures who see their reflection make Presence Difficulty 16 roll or are trapped inside. Can hold up to 15 creatures. Found in Argynvostholt.

Breaking mirror releases all trapped souls.

Icon of Ravenloft

Silver statuette. Creatures within 30ft protected from fiends/undead.

Augury (1/dawn), Bane of Undead (+2 Difficulty), Cure Wounds (1/dawn, 3d8+3 HP)

Saint Markovia's Thighbone

Mace, Attack +2, Damage 2d6+2. Vampires hit make Difficulty 15 roll or stunned.

Crumbles to dust after use in battle vs vampires

Blood Spear of Kavan

Attack +1, Damage 2d6+2. Gain 2d6 temp HP when reducing foe to 0 HP. Sentient evil weapon that thirsts for blood.

Gulthias Staff

Attack +1, Damage 2d6+2. 10 charges. Vampiric Strike (1 charge): regain HP equal to damage dealt.

Evil plants don't see you as hostile. Found at Yester Hill.

Luck Stone

Uncommon Wondrous Item

While carrying, gain +1 to all ability checks and saving throws. Once per session, reroll any die result (must use new result).

Bag of Devouring

Rare Cursed Item

Appears as Bag of Holding. Items placed inside are devoured. Living creatures pulled inside (Strength Difficulty 15 to escape) take 4d6 damage per round.

Deck of Illusions

Uncommon Wondrous Item

Draw a card to create illusory creature. Lasts 1 minute or until dispelled. Deck has 1d4+3 cards remaining when found.

Dream Pastries

Cursed Consumable

Made by night hags from bones of kidnapped children. Eating grants pleasant visions for 1d4+4 hours but is addictive (Presence Difficulty 14 or become dependent). Clear 1d4 Stress but mark 1 corruption.

Key Environments

Village of Barovia

Tier 1-2 Social/Exploration

The saddest place in the land. Fog everywhere. Castle Ravenloft looms overhead.

Features

- **Mist-Shrouded (Passive):** Visibility 60ft. Instinct Difficulty 12 or mark 1 Stress from whispers
- **Terrified Villagers (Passive):** Won't help. Presence Difficulty 14+ to persuade
- **Castle's Gaze (Reaction):** GM spends 1 Fear for Strahd to become aware

Death House

Tier 1-2 Dungeon

Living, malicious house. Won't let party leave until they face the Shambling Mound.

Features

- **Living House (Passive):** Doors lock, windows sealed
- **Animated Armor (Action):** GM spends 1 Fear to animate as Tier 1 minions
- **Scythes (Action):** 1 Fear for blade traps (Agility Difficulty 13, 2d10 damage)
- **Escape Sequence:** House tries to kill party. Walls collapse, stairs crumble

Reward: Escape = advance to 3rd level

Castle Ravenloft

Tier 4-10 Dungeon

Ancient castle on 1000-foot pillar. Gothic spires, thousands of bats. Strahd watches all.

Features

- **Strahd's Domain (Passive):** He moves through walls, teleports, always aware
- **Ever-Watching (Reaction):** Spend Fear for Strahd to observe and taunt
- **Misleading Architecture (Passive):** Knowledge Difficulty 14 to navigate
- **Windows to Void (Passive):** 1000-foot drops everywhere

Town of Vallaki

Tier 2-4 Social

Mandatory festivals enforced. Baron punishes anyone showing despair.

Features

- **Festival Mania (Passive):** Weekly festivals. Must attend and smile or face stocks
- **Baron's Enforcers (Action):** Izek Strazni patrols, arrests rule-breakers
- **False Cheer (Passive):** Presence Difficulty 13 to sense underlying fear

Amber Temple

Tier 7-10 Dungeon

Temple in mountains. Amber sarcophagi hold vestiges of dead gods offering dark gifts.

Features

- **Extreme Cold (Passive):** Instinct Difficulty 13 every hour or mark 1 Stress
- **Amber Sarcophagi (Action):** Touch one = offered DARK GIFT (power + curse)
- **Dark Gift Choice:** Accept = gain ability + curse. Refuse = Instinct Difficulty 16 or mark 2 Stress

Old Bonegrinder

Tier 3 Dungeon

Windmill on a hill where three night hags bake dream pastries from kidnapped children's bones.

Features

- **Grinding Stones (Action):** GM spends 2 Fear to activate millstone trap (Agility Difficulty 15, 4d10 damage)
- **Sickening Smell (Passive):** Instinct Difficulty 12 or mark 1 Stress from the odor of baking children
- **Height Advantage (Passive):** Three-story building gives hags defensive positions
- **Coven Magic (Passive):** If all three hags survive, they gain shared spellcasting abilities

Argynvostholt

Tier 5-7 Dungeon

Ruined mansion, former headquarters of the Order of the Silver Dragon. Now haunted by vengeful revenants led by Vladimir Horngaard.

Features

- **Revenant Guardians (Passive):** Undead knights patrol the halls, attacking intruders
- **Dragon's Beacon (Action):** If the skull of Argynvost is returned here, it creates a beacon of hope that weakens Strahd

- **Phantom Warriors (Action):** GM spends 2 Fear to summon spectral knights (2d4 specters)
- **Mirror of Life Trapping (Special):** Contains trapped souls who may offer aid or attack

Berez (Ruined Village)

Tier 8-9 Dungeon

Flooded swamp ruins where Baba Lysaga lives in a walking hut made from a hollowed-out giant's skull.

Features

- **Deep Swamp (Passive):** Difficult terrain, Agility Difficulty 12 or fall prone in mud
- **Scarecrow Sentries (Passive):** 6 scarecrows guard the perimeter, alert Baba Lysaga
- **Walking Hut (Action):** Baba Lysaga's giant skull hut can move and attack (Tier 3 construct)
- **Swarm Summons (Action):** Baba Lysaga calls endless insect swarms from the swamp
- **Murky Waters (Passive):** Visibility limited, disadvantage on ranged attacks beyond Close range

Yester Hill

Tier 5-6 Social/Combat

Ancient druidic ritual site where corrupted druids and berserkers worship Strahd. Features massive tree blight statue.

Features

- **Gulthias Tree Effigy (Passive):** 50-foot tall wicker statue that animates as massive tree blight
- **Ritual Circle (Action):** Druids perform dark rituals (spend 3 Fear to summon 2d6 twig/needle blights)
- **Desecrated Ground (Passive):** Healing spells/abilities restore 1 less HP (minimum 1)
- **Height Advantage (Passive):** Enemies on hill have advantage, harder to reach

Wizard of Wines Winery

Tier 4-5 Dungeon

Vineyard and winery under siege by druids and blights. The Martikov family (wereravens) need help reclaiming their home.

Features

- **Blight Infestation (Passive):** 30+ needle and twig blights occupy the winery
- **Druid Leaders (Passive):** 2-3 druids command the blights, can wild shape
- **Wine Cellar (Action):** Poisoned wine casks, bursting barrels create hazards

- **Missing Gem (Quest):** One of three magical gems stolen, weakening wine's magic

Krezk & Abbey of Saint Markovia

Tier 4-6 Social/Dungeon

Isolated mountain village and corrupted abbey ruled by the mad deva known as the Abbott.

Features

- **Walled Town (Passive):** Krezk is fortified, suspicious of outsiders (Presence Difficulty 15 to enter)
- **The Abbott (Social):** Fallen celestial creating Vasilka as bride for Strahd, believes this will end curse
- **Mongrelfolk (Passive):** Dozens of deformed humanoids live in abbey, loyal to Abbott
- **Blessed Pool (Special):** Heals all HP and Stress but only works once per person
- **Flesh Golem Workshop (Passive):** Horror and body parts throughout

Werewolf Den

Tier 4-5 Dungeon

Cave system in the Svalich Woods where werewolf pack makes their lair. Led by Kiril Stoyanovich.

Features

- **Pack Tactics (Passive):** Werewolves fight in coordinated groups, always have advantage
- **Narrow Passages (Passive):** Tight caves limit movement, hard to escape
- **Captive Children (Social):** Kidnapped children held as potential new pack members
- **Alpha Challenge (Action):** Defeating pack leader in single combat can end hostilities

Tsolenka Pass

Tier 6-7 Exploration/Combat

Treacherous mountain pass with ancient gatehouse guarded by vrocks (demons) and dire wolves.

Features

- **Narrow Bridge (Passive):** 1000-foot drop on either side, single file crossing
- **Howling Winds (Passive):** Strong winds, Strength Difficulty 13 or blown off balance
- **Gatehouse Guards (Passive):** Vrocks attack anyone trying to pass to Amber Temple
- **Roc Nest (Action):** Giant bird may attack travelers (spend 3 Fear)

Van Richten's Tower

Tier 3-4 Dungeon/Puzzle

Four-story tower on island in Lake Baratok. Heavily trapped, contains Rictavio's secrets and equipment.

Features

- **Arcane Lock (Passive):** Door sealed, requires answering riddle or Difficulty 18 to force
- **Blade Traps (Action):** Numerous traps throughout (Agility Difficulty 14-16, 2d10-4d10 damage)
- **Clay Golems (Passive):** Two constructs guard upper levels, attack intruders
- **Vampire Hunter's Arsenal (Treasure):** Holy water, stakes, research notes, anti-undead gear
- **Captured Saber-toothed Tiger (Action):** Wagon outside contains dangerous tiger (spend 1 Fear to have it escape)

Lake Zarovich

Tier 2-3 Exploration

Massive lake with dark, murky waters. Souls of drowned victims lurk beneath.

Features

- **Drowning Hands (Action):** Undead grasp at swimmers (spend 1 Fear, Strength Difficulty 13 or pulled under)
- **Cursed Waters (Passive):** Swimming requires Strength Difficulty 12 checks every minute or mark Stress
- **Mad Mage Island (Location):** Mordenkainen's refuge in the middle of lake
- **Bluto's Boat (Encounter):** Fisherman sacrificing girl to lake (Ireena lookalike)

Tier Scaling Guide

Tier 1-2: Village of Barovia, Death House | **Tier 3-4:** Vallaki, Old Bonegrinder | **Tier 5-6:** Argynvostholt, werewolf den | **Tier 7-9:** Castle Ravenloft, Amber Temple | **Tier 10+:** Final confrontation with Strahd

Character Options

Creating characters for Barovia requires understanding the gothic horror tone and how your PC fits into this cursed land. Use these options to ground your character in the setting.

How Did You Enter Barovia?

Taken by the Mists

You were traveling elsewhere when fog surrounded you. When it cleared, you were on the Old Svalich Road leading to the Village of Barovia. You cannot leave the same way.

Native Barovian

You've lived under Strahd's shadow your entire life. You know the land, the customs, and the hopelessness. But you dare to fight.

Vistani Traveler

You travel with a Vistani caravan, one of the few groups who can pass through the mists. You've heard stories of Barovia and Strahd all your life.

Summoned by Fate

You received a mysterious letter from Kolyan Indirovich, burgomaster of Barovia, begging for help. The mists guided you here for a reason.

Ancestries in Barovia

All standard Daggerheart ancestries can exist in Barovia, but they take on the land's gothic flavor.

Human

Native Barovians are pale, dark-haired, and haunted. They speak in hushed tones and avoid eye contact. Foreign humans look healthier but won't for long.

Fits: Any class. Most Barovians.

Elf

The dusk elves (dusky skin, dark hair) are nearly extinct; Strahd slaughtered most when they refused to turn over a woman he desired. Only a handful remain. Other elves are outsiders.

Fits: Rangers, rogues. Tragic backstory.

Dwarf

Hardy folk from mountain communities or trapped travelers. Their resistance to poison helps against cursed wine and tainted food common in Barovia.

Fits: Warriors, guardians. Stubborn hope.

Halfling

Small folk trying to stay unnoticed. Their natural optimism is a light in the darkness, though Barovia tests it constantly.

Fits: Rogues, bards. Hope-bringers.

Orc

Fierce warriors who refuse to bow to Strahd. Their strength is needed but often feared by superstitious Barovians.

Fits: Warriors, barbarians. Defiant spirit.

Fungril

Mushroom folk thrive in Barovia's damp, decaying places. Your connection to death and decay resonates with the land itself in unsettling ways.

Fits: Druids, rangers. Death-touched.

Faerie

Creatures of joy and mischief struggle in this land of sorrow. Your fey nature makes you anathema to undead, but the oppression weighs heavily on you.

Fits: Bards, rogues. Light vs darkness.

Ribbet

Frog-folk from Lake Zarovich or swamps. You might know secrets of the cursed waters or have witnessed the horror beneath the surface.

Fits: Druids, rogues. Swamp natives.

Communities in Barovia

Your community determines your relationship to civilization, magic, and each other.

Loreborne

Scholars, sages, priests. You seek knowledge to break the curse: ancient texts, forbidden lore, or religious wisdom. The libraries and temples of Barovia hold dark secrets.

Examples: Priest of the Morninglord, Van Richten's student, wizard's apprentice, historian

Order-Bound

Knights, soldiers, paladins. You belong to (or seek to restore) the Order of the Silver Dragon or serve as town guard. You believe in law and duty even when hope fades.

Examples: Revenant's descendant, Vallaki guard, knight errant, oath-keeper

Slyborne

Thieves, smugglers, survivors. You know the secret ways, who to bribe, how to avoid Strahd's attention. You've learned to take what you need to survive in this cursed land.

Examples: Vallaki smuggler, tomb robber, street urchin, spy

Wildborne

Rangers, druids, hermits. You live in the Svalich Woods or mountains, away from civilization. You might be part of the Keepers of the Feather (wereravens) or survive alone.

Examples: Wereraven ally, forest hermit, mountain guide, druid

Ridgeborne

Mountaineers, miners, isolated villagers. You're from Krezk or other mountain communities. Hardy, suspicious of outsiders, but protective of your own.

Examples: Krezk villager, mountain shepherd, stone mason, miner

Seastruck

You come from beyond Barovia, a traveler from distant shores. The mists have trapped you far from home, and you seek a way back, or forward.

Examples: Shipwrecked sailor, foreign merchant, lost traveler, explorer

Character Motivations

Why does your character dare to oppose Strahd when all others have given up?

Motivation Options

- **Protect Someone:** Ireena, a family member, or innocents. You won't let Strahd take them.
- **Seek Revenge:** Strahd killed someone you loved. You'll destroy him or die trying.
- **Break the Curse:** You believe you're meant to end this. Prophecy, duty, or stubborn hope drives you.
- **Escape:** You want out of Barovia and will do anything, even face Strahd, to leave.
- **Redemption:** You failed someone before. This is your chance to make it right.

- **Power:** You seek the secrets of the Amber Temple or artifacts to gain strength.
- **Faith:** The Morninglord, the Dark Powers, or another force has called you here.
- **Curiosity:** You're a scholar, monster hunter, or explorer drawn to the mystery.

Barovia-Specific Backgrounds

Haunted One

You've witnessed something that shattered your understanding of reality. You came to Barovia seeking answers or running from your past. You're harder to frighten but haunted by visions.

Vampire Hunter

You've trained specifically to hunt undead. You know their weaknesses, carry holy water and wooden stakes, and understand what you're facing, which makes it worse.

Cursed Lineage

You're related to someone important in Barovia's history, perhaps Tatyana, the Order of the Silver Dragon, or even Strahd himself. This connection draws you here.

Lost Noble

You were nobility elsewhere, but now you're trapped here. Your title means nothing, but your education and bearing might earn respect, or resentment.

Party Bonds

In Barovia, trust is survival. Establish connections between PCs at Session Zero.

Bond Examples

1. We traveled together and entered the mists as a group
2. We're family, siblings, cousins, or found family
3. One of us saved the other's life before entering Barovia
4. We share a common enemy or goal that led us here
5. We met in the Village of Barovia and realized we're stronger together
6. One of us received Kolyan's letter and recruited the others to help
7. We're bound by oath, pact, or shared prophecy
8. We survived Death House together, that bonds people for life

Starting Equipment Considerations

Recommended Items for Barovia:

- **Torches/Lanterns:** Darkness is everywhere and dangerous
- **Holy Symbols:** Even if not religious, they help against undead
- **Wooden Stakes:** Essential vampire-hunting gear
- **Silvered Weapons:** For lycanthropes (expensive but vital)

- **Rope:** Escape, rescue, climbing ancient ruins
- **Rations:** Food is scarce and often tainted
- **Holy Water:** Precious and powerful against undead
- **Mirror:** Vampires cast no reflection, useful for identification

Class Recommendations

All classes work in Barovia, but some themes resonate particularly well with the gothic horror setting.

Guardian / Warrior

Protectors of the innocent, knights seeking to restore honor, or simple defenders standing against the darkness. Your courage matters more than your sword.

Ranger / Rogue

Survivors who know the land, trackers hunting monsters, or infiltrators seeking Strahd's weaknesses. Knowledge and cunning are weapons here.

Wizard / Sorcerer

Seekers of arcane knowledge, challengers to Strahd's magical dominance, or desperate souls willing to risk dark power at the Amber Temple.

Cleric / Druid

Faithful servants of the Morninglord or nature itself, bringing light and healing to a land that desperately needs both. Your magic is hope incarnate.

Session Zero Questions

Safety and Boundaries

1. What horror themes are you comfortable exploring?
2. How graphic should violence be?
3. What safety tools will we use?
4. How do we handle character death?

Character Connections

1. How did your character arrive in Barovia?
2. What do you hope to accomplish?
3. Which PC does your character trust most?
4. What is your character afraid of losing?

Barovia Specific

1. Have you heard stories of Strahd before entering?
2. Do you believe in prophecy and fate?
3. What does your character think of the Vistani?
4. What keeps your character fighting when all seems lost?

Curse of Strahd © Wizards of the Coast

Converted to Daggerheart System