

THE BANSHEE OF BAROVIA

SEAN VAN DAMME



THE BANSHEE OF BAROVIA

IN THE DREAD PLANE OF BAROVIA THE VILLAGE OF NOLINSKY IS LOST IN THE MIST AND TERRORIZED BY A TIMELESS SPECTOR.

A 4 HOUR MURDER MYSTERY FOR 3ED LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY SEAN VAN DAMME

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ACT I

The Banshee of Barovia is an adventure for four or five characters of level 3. The party, already stuck in the demiplane of Barovia, stumble upon the small town of Nolinsky. Quickly - as people start to die - they find out that the mists will not let them leave until they have solved the mystery and put the banshee that is haunting the town to rest. The adventure is broken into three acts starting when the party enters the town of Nolinsky, and it is assumed that each act takes place over the course of a day.

NOTE ON SETTING

The adventure takes place in a small town in Barovia that is itself phasing in and out of a pocket dimension. Much of the lore is directly connected to that location, but the general outline of the story will work just fine in another setting with only a little re-flavoring. The text though will assume that the DM is running this for a party already in Barovia.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

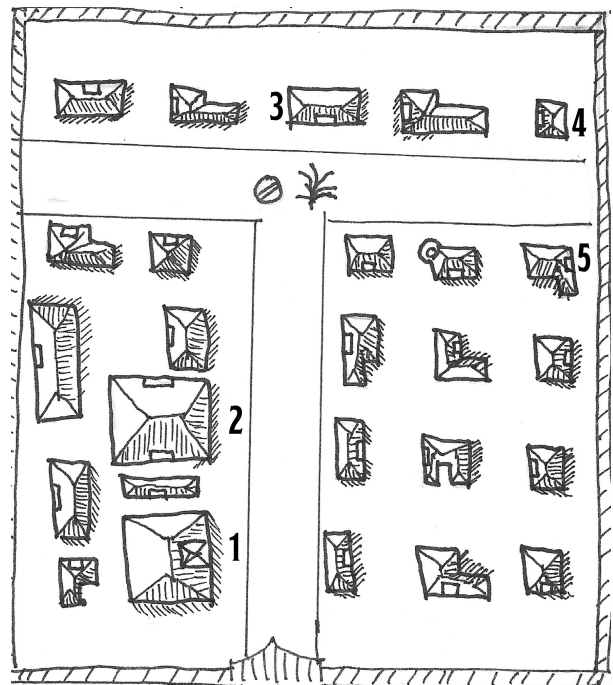
The mists are the prime force that bring people to Barovia and also keeps them there. Out between the village of Barovia and Vallaki, along the Old Svalich Road, they are ensnaring people.

You have been on the road for most of the day, leaving the village of Barovia behind, the eyes of Castle Ravenloft always at your back. The wind howls mournfully, as your feet crunch on the cobblestone road. As the day progresses, the mist which had been nipping at your ankles starts to rise higher and higher, choking what little sun there is in Barovia. The group pushes through, and eventually the fog parts like a current. In the distance you see a small town sitting atop an outcropping of rock that is black as night.

This small town is ringed with a rod iron fence that has seen better days, rust eating away at it like a cancer. Black birds circle overhead. As you draw nearer, at the foot of the road leading up the embankment is a small wooden sign swaying in the wind. Through faded paint, you can make out 'Village of Nolinsky.' Below that is a population count. The number 200 is scratched out and 150 is painted and scratched out beneath. Under that is 75 with a streak of bright red through it, and a tentative light 50 written under that.

THE VILLAGE OF NOLINSKY

Nolinsky is a small town situated atop a black rock outcropping, that sets it about twenty feet above the flat ground of Barovia around it. The rock seems to have come from nowhere, and there are no other formations around it. When the party enters town, they are welcomed by a row of old buildings, one a large church, another an inn, and the rest simple houses and shops. The areas that are most important are the St. Bergoyavich church, the Black Rose Inn, and the town square. Most of the other buildings are boarded up and the doors are locked. If players try to break into these buildings all they find are empty homes, dust and cobwebs.



1. ST. BERGOYAVICH CHURCH

The tallest building in town is the church to St. Bergoyavich, a long dead and long forgotten saint in the age old fight against the devil Strahd. The first floor of the building is made of the same black stone the town is situated upon. The years have worn it flat, and it is hard to see the mortar lines of the bricks, if they are even there. The second floor and steeple are made of wood and plaster, a few boarded up windows are on the second floor. A window on the east side of the building has a single storm window that is hanging on for dear life, that rhythmically bangs in the wind like a warning to anybody who would enter the town to exit now before it is too late. Above, the Steeple is slightly crooked and bent, a large crack clearly visible where it meets the eaves of the red shingled roof. At the top there is nothing but emptiness as the bell has long ago vanished like the town's hopes.

The door is made of solid wood, with rusted rivets and a knocker that screams if anybody tries to use it. The door is unlocked and inside the Church looks like many other churches in Barovia. A small hallway with four rooms, that leads to a sanctuary with pews and an altar.

Inside the church is quiet as a grave, giving no hint to the hymns that were once sung here, or the marriages that were created in the sight of the Morninglord. There is nothing now but dust and sadness, an absence of faith. The room to the right of the main door has a staircase that leads up. The second floor is choked full of spider webs and dusty books that fall apart when touched. The steps leading up to the bell tower are splintered and broken. Anybody who tries to walk on them will fall down to the hallway below.

Under the altar is the entrance to the Crypt below, which is described in greater detail in Act III. You can find **Father Frederich Dargova** (Human male Barovian, LG, Commoner) here in Act I. Sitting in one of the pews looking forward blankly, a hymnal in his hand is a soulless Barovian (**Commoner**).

2. THE BLACK ROSE INN

The Black Rose is the liveliest place in Nolinsky. The two story building is two houses down from the Church and close to the small excuse for a square that the village has. The Black Rose is made of timber and plaster and the roof, once tiled in a rich purple, has now faded away from the royal look. The windows are not boarded up, but much of the glass is broken and the wind whips through the second story like a whistle. Hanging above the door is a placard on rotted wood with an old painting of a black rose. Sitting off to the side, tied up, is a brightly colored Vistani cart and two black horses. This is more color than the whole of the town has.

Inside the Black Rose is a large downstairs floor filled with tables. There is a fireplace with a fire that is clinging to life, cracking as the dead wood pops, but isn't doing much else. To the side is a staircase that rises to an open second floor. Behind the bar is a quiet Barovian with a rag in his hand who is running it from one side of the bar top to the other, wiping it clean. There doesn't seem to be much going on with him. Running from table to table is **Drasha** (Female, human, Barovian, NG, Bandit), the owner of the establishment.

TOWN SQUARE

Sort of in the center of town, but more near the back, is a well and an old tree. The well has seen better days, the always moist wood growing a strong strain of mold and fungus. Next to it is a sickly gray tree whose leaves have long since abandoned it. Stretching out in all which ways are gnarled branches, with sharp fingers that cast shadows like knives across the back half of the town.

Areas 3-5 will be described later in the adventure when the party comes into contact with them.

THE PEOPLE OF NOLINSKY

By and large the people of Nolinsky are your average Barrovians: they live sad lives that are usually devoid of happiness and filled with fear. While still suffering a soul imbalance, the particular nature of how Nolinsky seems to filter in and out of reality makes the town's people feel that they are much closer to the fall of their beloved Count Strahd von Zarovich. In fact to them, his fall is less than a generation out of living memory. Because of this the fear that they feel is stronger, and more irrational quickly turning to anger. Even the most sedate people here are closer to the spark of life that once burned in every Barovian.

FATHER FREDERICH DARGOVA

Frederich is an older man with thinning gray hair that is quickly retreating from his chapped and cracked pate. When he walks it is in a shuffle, hands always folded in front of his chest nervously rubbing inside of each other. His voice cracks, and his eyes always dart around. He knows what lurks under the town, an undead banshee named Katerina. Carried inside of him is a third of her soul, and around his neck he has a holy symbol of the Morninglord. It weighs heavy on his neck like a jailor's chain.

DRASHA KREZKOV

Drasha owns and operates the Black Rose Inn. She is loud, abrasive and deadly serious. While Frederich shows his fear and worry about the horror that lurks under the town with quiet nervous fidgeting, Drasha shows it with anger and assertiveness. Outsiders worry her, because she knows that it means Katerina is awakened and looking for the living to feed on. She is mean to most outsiders, and downright rude to the Vistani, whom of course find it amusing. She is a tall reed of a woman with jet black hair and a small nose. Her face though is always in a perpetual grimace. She is carrying the second third of Katerina's soul inside of her. As the de facto leader of the town, people look up to her, and when there are issues her word is law. There is no relation to the Krezkov's of Krezk, at least not that she remembers.

MAN ON THE STREET

This is a sad village indeed. As you pass the gate it slowly sways in the wind like a listless guard. Fluttering over the church are black birds, quietly they circle, looking down at you for only a moment before flying away into the mist. There are a few people aimlessly walking around the street. As you walk a little farther into town, a man wringing his hands walks forward, his eyes darting back and forth. "You're new here?"

This is **Father Frederick Dargova, (Commoner)** the rector of the local Church. He looks at you with scared eyes. Frederick knows that if there are new people that means the town has started drawing people in. He implores the party to leave before the mist settles down. He says that Nolinsky is a cursed place and that good people don't come here. But they are here, so he directs them to the Black Rose Inn. It is getting late and in the distance you can hear wolves howling, and the wind almost screaming in quiet anguish. "Yes, yes the Inn, darkness is coming we should all get inside."

If the party tries to leave the town, all that happens is they wander in the mist for about fifteen minutes, and are spit back out where they started in Nolinsky.

Outside the Black Rose the party sees a brightly colored Vistani cart, milling around outside of it are two **Vistani children** (Non-combatant), a small stool between the two of them. One is playing with a deck of cards trying to tell the fortune of the other child. Sitting next to the child with his fortune being told is a small jester doll, and it seems like the eyes might be following you. The eyes of the two children most definitely are.

A STRANGE NIGHT AT THE INN

The Black Rose is busy, a few of the table have quiet sullen Barovians sitting at them, glasses of wine in their hands looking forward, kind of empty. Running around is a haggard woman who seems to run the bar. She yells at the barkeeper, who snaps back at her; it feels slightly rote like something they have perfected over the years for effect. Sitting in the corner drinking are the Vistani whose cart is outside.

The woman runs up to you, her name is **Drasha**. She looks tired, and worried. She is bitter about there being more outsiders in town. Very quickly the party learns that she is not a fan of the Vistani and mentions in obtuse ways that they don't come very often because even they have to wait until the town appears. She will serve the players. All the bar has is Purple Grapemash No. 3. If asked she has rooms for 10sp a night. Rooms come cheap here as they don't get visitors often.

If the party goes over and talks to the Vistani (**Bandit**), two men named Tigran, and Narek, they are a slightly more forthcoming with information, but still don't completely understand what is up with this town.

They know it rose against the Lord of Barovia, and that he smote them with great fury to where they have been forgotten. Also that they have a local dish, a mushroom soup, that is by far one of the most flavorful foods in the land. It is a rare treat that most people only hear about. Alas, Drasha doesn't have any right now, and doesn't know when some man named Gorek will be making more.

When things are starting to wind down, read the following text.

From outside a scream pierces the night. Everybody in the Inn stops what they are doing and looks around. The hesitation only lasts a moment and Drasha is the first out the door. Outside you see a group of people standing around by the Church. One of them screams, "It's the Father!"

MURDER!

You see the Father who had warned you about the village on the ground splayed out. His throat cut, his chest opened, his heart missing. Drasha's face turns as pale as milk. "It's starting," she mutters, shooting the party a nasty look.

Drasha turns and asks the party if they can help the town figure out who did this to the Father. By now your players should have picked up on the fact that treasure and money in Barovia are not the prime drivers of adventure, but... If they insist on getting paid Drasha says there is a pair of golden candlesticks in the church that nobody is going to miss anymore. On the open market they fetch 300gp, in Barovia maybe 100gp.

If the party turns down the option to look for the killer and resigns for the night, assume that the town turn on the Vistani and drive them out. If they try and leave town again they get lost in the mist and before arriving back in town they are passed by the Vistani who laugh at them as they depart town.



Patrick E. Pullen

Credit:

THE HUNT

Looking over the crime scene the players will see a few clues and roll a few skill checks to try and put things together. Looking over the body the adventurers can clearly see that he died from having his throat cut. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check tells them that whoever did this was working quickly, and not using a very sharp blade. There is also bruising around his neck where it isn't cut. Making a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the broken chain of his amulet that has fallen into his clothing. Also his holy symbol of the Morninglord is still gripped tightly in his hand, so much so that you can't easily pry it from his dead fingers. The party also notices small droplets of blood and what look like footprints. The footprints wrap behind the church. The party can follow them then around to an alleyway between the Black Rose and a Row house. It looks like the killer ran behind the church and adjoining buildings while people were running to where the scream was coming from. When they reach the alleyway the footsteps seem to vanish. Give the party a few moments to come up with what they want to do then have the person in the lead hear somebody screaming about hand prints. It is coming from back on the main road.

When the party arrives there are four Villager's squaring off with three **Vistani** adults. The two **children** from before are hiding behind their parents. Splashed across the Vistani cart is a large, bloody handprint. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check will notice that the two children look like they have seen a ghost and the Tarokka deck is layed out on the table with a card that looks like a ghost and some others. The person who sees the deck can make DC 15 Intelligence (History) check, a player who has had their fortune read before can make this check with advantage.

CARD READING

The layout of the cards is as follows, going left, top, right, bottom, and then middle: Priest, Merchant, Rogue, Artifact and Ghost.

These cards represent the order that the three people who hold parts of the Banshee's soul are going to die, with The priest representing Father Frederich, the Merchant representing Drasha, and the Rogue representing Emeric the hunter who appears at the start of Act II. The artifact is referring to the *Sword of St. Bergoyavich*. Lastly the Ghost card is referring to the Banshee Katerina who is trapped under the town and who's sway the real killer, Gorok, is under.

A quick questioning of the parties will reveal that the children came into the Inn screaming, causing everybody to run outside where they found the hand print. The Barovians concluded, wrongly, that the Vistani must have committed the crime and are hiding the killer in the cart. The Vistani refuse to open their cart and deny any connection to the killing, but the children keep looking over at the deck of cards. An observant character can pick up on this without having to make a skill roll.

The lead Barovian is a tall bald man named **Krystofor** (Male Barovian LE Thug, All talk, he only does things when he has complete control). The leader of this wagon of Vistani is an old woman named **Lucciana**(Female Vistani CN, Bandit Captain, Stands up for her people and will not back down. She doesn't fear Barovians). The true answer to what happened at the cart is held with the kids who are both scared within an inch of their lives, which is saying something for two children raised in Barovia. It is a combination of what they saw and the cards that they pulled. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check can get the two children to talk. They tell the party that they saw a scary man limping and running, he had on a horrible bloody cloak as he ran toward the well. Additionally, they explain the card reading that they had just done.

If you can't get the kids to talk the situation can come to blows as the Vistani are not going to allow the Villagers to see inside their cart. If combat starts between The Vistani, the villagers, or the Party Drasha appears after two rounds, and pulls her people back. If this ends with the Vistani dead proceed to Act II. If the party turns against the town Drasha pleads for them to stop, and she tries to work out safe passage for the Vistani. Just as the confrontation is reaching a larger head, if it hasn't come to blows Drasha appears and sends her people home, saying she doesn't want anymore blood on the street. She asks what the party has found. They can jump to a conclusion or try for a few more minutes to get the kids to talk. With the villagers gone and if the party seemed to stick up for the Vistani the children will talk with them.

INSIDE THE CART

Inside the cart, the walls are covered by shelves filled with bolts of colorful fabric, Three feather mattresses, covered with pillows and blankets, and vials filled with many different colors and varieties of liquid... There is nothing of value inside the cart.

THE VISTANI DID IT!

"The evidence is clear, they killed Father Frederich. It doesn't matter what they say at this point," Krystofor yells. Drasha steps forward "I don't want anymore bloodshed this night, I don't know if you did or didn't, but I want you gone now! Or may the devil take you," she says spitting on the ground before walking back into the inn.

The Vistani look at you, mutter and curse and start quickly packing their wagon. As they leave, the adults give the party sour looks muttering curses under their breaths. One of the children, holding the creepy jester doll walks up to the party and hands them the Ghost card from the Tarokka deck reading, before turning and running to catch up with her parents.

THE KIDS SAW SOMETHING.

You reach the well, there cloaked in bloody rags, holding a heart, is a man hunched over, his face consumed by shadow from his hood. He throws the heart at the party and runs into a nearby house.

The heart falls well short of the party and thumps across the cobblestones picking up dirt and small rocks as it comes to a stop. Following the man into the house reveals nothing but rats and old clothing. Like the villain in a slasher movie, the killer has vanished. In actuality **Gorek** had a single potion of invisibility that he had created with his mushrooms. He used it and has already slipped out the back door. Investigating the house, the party can find bloody footprints that lead out the back. Behind the house, is a small pile of clothing and an empty bottle. A DC 13 Intelligence, (Arcana) check can detect that the bottle had an invisibility potion. On the bloody clothing if it is turned out there is grave dirt and mushrooms. Gorek the killer is a mushroom farmer and anybody in town can tell you this, and it can be an important clue in act II.

Drasha is convinced that for now the killer has escaped, but that they will find him in the morning. For now though it is no time to be outside.



Credit: Patrick E. Pullen

ACT II

It is the next morning, if you can call it morning, as the sky is still mostly dark and depressing. In this act the Rilsky's move against Drasha and have to adapt their plan to fit the arrival of Emeric. What is presented next are a few set ups of plans. They will take into account both outcomes from the night before. Whereas Act I had a branch, Act II has a stronger branch that will completely change how Act III is played.

EMERIC PETROVNA

(Male, Human, Barovian, CG, **Archer**, *Volo*) Emeric is happy, for a Barovian. He tells morbid jokes, and has even been known to, on occasion, smile. By trade he is a hunter, and always vanishes with the town but never appears inside of it again. He holds the third part of Katerina's soul, and it was his father who slew her sixty years ago. When it comes to dealing with outsiders he is more willing to talk with them, knowing that the Morninglord has brought them to Nolinsky for a reason. He is always at odds with Drasha about whether they should tell outsiders who might be able to help them what is going on. He thinks they should, but she overrules him, by virtue of having the town at her back. They interact like two people who were at one point were in a relationship but are estranged now, but always still on the edge of falling back into a romance.

GOREK RILSKY

Gorek is an old farmer, who grows mushrooms in his basement. He is known in town as kind of a crazy man. He is generally covered in dirt, and always has on an oiled rain slicker. Whenever he does talk it is in muttered tones. He hasn't been completely right in the head for the last fifteen years since his wife died. Unbenounced to the rest of the town, a few events have happened in his life that have pushed the already teetering Gorek into full blown madness. First, while digging a grave for his son Dragomir, he chipped the top of Katerina's tomb, and he and his family started to hear the banshee's cry. At the same time, sensing that the town was shifting back into reality, the dark gods of the Amber Temple - who made a deal with Katerina - started looking for a vessel to free their servant. They have shown him a plan to silence the voices and bring his son back, there are just three people he has to kill.

OLIVENKA RILSKY

(Female, Human, Barovian, NE, **Commoner**) Daughter of Gorek, and twin of the recently dead Dragomir. Like her father, she is a bit of a recluse in the town. She has a beauty that is both arresting and terrifying. The voices coming from the basement have not just affected her father. She is hearing them as well and is working with him in all respects. She has a paramor in the village of Barovia whom she gets letters from every so often carried into town by the Vistani. He hasn't written her in over a year and she wants nothing more than to be able to leave the town and go find him. He has, of course, been dead for well over two hundred years.

ARRIVAL OF THE HUNTER

You walk downstairs the next morning, your sleep was fitful, as horrible images of ghosts and screaming mirrors filled your dreams. The inn is quiet, there are two Barovians from the night before sitting downstairs, a single glass of wine sitting between the two of them. Neither man is reaching for it, and it is filled nearly to the brim.

Sitting at another table is an old man who seems to stick out like a sore thumb. He has on brown leathers, his hair is white as snow and the beard on his chin is long but well trimmed. Leaning against the table is a longsword and bow. In his hand he has something wrapped. There seems to your eyes something strange under his beard, is that...no it couldn't be...yes it seems that he is cracking a smile.

Drasha bursts out of the kitchen, waving her rag. "You have some nerve coming back here after all of these years."

"It is good to see you as well Drasha, it has been far to long come sit," the man says. Hearing him speak you know he is Barovian even if he doesn't at all look the part. Drasha walks over and sits down. The strange man sits the box in front of her.

"I found you something, it is rarer than I remembered." She gives him a funny look as she opens the box. Inside is a bottle and on the label you can see it says Champagne du le Stomp. She is taken aback.

"This is too much," she says.

"Not for how long I have been gone. I heard about Frederick." He says reaching into his bag and pulling out two small wooden cups. He opens the bottle and pours two drinks. He and Drasha sip them, in quiet memory.

"I see we have more outsiders than just me. You there on the steps, come over here and sit."

The party comes over and **Emeric** introduces himself. He is indeed a strange style of Barovian, he has a sense of humor. It is still dark and morose, but there is more levity to it. The whole time he and Drasha bicker. He wants to tell the party things, 'Outsiders need to know what they have stumbled into.' Emeric is more than willing to answer most of your questions, about the town not being stuck in one place or time, he is less open about the banshee that lives under the town or the soul fragments. Drasha is completely quiet about any of those topics. They will talk freely about the time difference.

OLIVENKA'S GAMBIT

Olivenka's plan is simple, she knows that her father and her are going to need a scapegoat, they also need to take care of Emeric because he has the third half of the banshee's soul. Once the players have gotten the information that they need from Emeric and been friendly with him, run this section. Olivenka uses one of two plans depending on what happened the night before. If the party accused and drove the Vistani out of town, she accuses Emeric of taking her hostage last night and using her blood in a ritual to the devil Strahd. If the party chased the killer to the well losing him in the night, Olivenka will claim that Emeric was the killer and that she only just managed to escape from his grasp.

OLIVENKA THE HOSTAGE.

The door to the Black Rose flies open, like a man running from a monster. A haggard young woman walks in, her eyes darting around the room. Quickly she makes her way over to the two men who are sitting looking at the glass of wine. "That man there," she yells pointing to Emeric. "He abducted me last night during the commotion, he tried to use my blood," she pulls up the sleeve of her dress showing a gash, "he was performing a ritual to the devil."

EMERIC THE RIPPER.

The door to the Black Rose flies open, like a man running from a monster. A haggard young woman walk in, her eyes darting around the room. Quickly she makes her way over to the two men who are sitting looking at the glass of wine. "That man there," she yells pointing to Emeric. "He is the one who killed Father Frederich! During his escape he grabbed me as well, and said I would be next. Now he is here!"

INVESTIGATION

The men turn, Emeric gets defensive, Drasha sends the party to investigate again. She doesn't think Emeric did what **Olivenka** is claiming and a Wisdom (Insight) check DC 13 will cue the players into this.

QUESTIONING THE TOWNSPEOPLE

There are no DCs listed here, as it is envisioned as a very much pure roleplay experience. But if you want to add in some dice rolls, each line goes up by 3 starting at a DC of 10.

Asking town's people if they saw Olivenka or Emeric last night.

- I didn't see them last night. In fact I haven't seen Olivenka or her brother in a while. Her father, the mushroom man, is also strange, hasn't been the same since his wife died.

- Haven't seen the old Hunter before. Looks like you, like he doesn't belong. You know he does kind of look like a wolf hunter that went missing a few years ago, but that was a young man, not old and strange like this person.

Follow up questions about Olivenka's family

- Dad is a loon.
- Olivenka claims to have a paramore in the village of Barovia but he hasn't sent her a letter in years. Nobody has heard from the rest of Barovia in years as well.

GOING BACK TO THE HOUSE WHERE THE KILLER VANISHED.

This is area 3 on the map of Nolinsky. The house where the killer vanished, this is also where Olivenka says she was taken by Emeric while the Village was distracted with the Vistani. The door when the party rolls up is stuck. A Strength (athletics) DC 15 will push the door open. There is a pile of old furniture stacked behind it. Any player who has a Passive Perception less than 12 is surprised when the 2 **Rat swarms** attack them. In the house aside from the furniture looking different there is no sign that there was any ritual here.

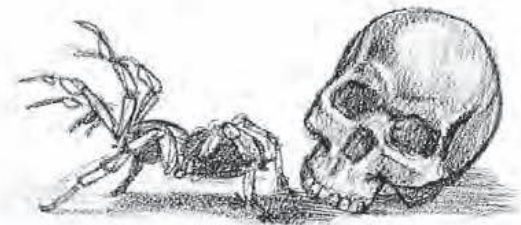
RILSKY HOUSE

This is area 4 on the map of Nolinsky Nobody is home. Olivenka is still at the Black Rose waiting for the party to return with any kind of information. Her father is using this time to set up his abduction of Drasha. The door is locked, but can be picked with a DC 15. The front door is also trapped, and it takes a Wisdom (Perception) DC 10 to see the tripwire. The trap is a crossbow sitting across the room that is pointed at the door. +2 attack 1d6 +2 damage.

The house is dark, the windows boarded up, choking the little light that manages to make it's way inside. The stench is oppressive, death and rot. The furniture is broken, dust and cobwebs are the only residents. The door to the cellar is banging against the chain that is trying to keep it closed.

The smell of death is coming from the cellar. Looking at the lock it seems there is no way to open it, there is no key hole to pick, and pulling on the chains doesn't cause them to budge. If detect magic is cast you can detect a *illusion* on the cellar door, and realize that it is magically locked.

In the house you find a bloody knife. The dried blood doesn't seem that old. There is also a defaced holy symbol to Lythander.



Credit: Wizards of the Coast

DRASHA GOES MISSING

When you think that the party has come to a conclusion, or if they are just taking a long time rolling around town, run this section. If they are already heading back to the Black Rose this is easy, if they are not, describe a commotion that is going on at the inn.

Inside, the Black Rose is in Chaos. The Barovian men are up stairs where they confined Emeric, Olivenka is down standing by the kitchen screaming, and crying. Walking forward you see a pool of blood coming from the kitchen. The barkeep is dead and Drasha is missing.

Olivenka tells you that there was a scream and then the inn went dark, the windows banging open and closed. There was a scream from the kitchen. As they got the candles lit again what had happened was plain as day. The bartender was dead, Drasha was missing and standing over the body was Emeric. It doesn't take a smart man to know that he was working with somebody and that they abducted Drasha. The men of the village shoved him in his room until they could sort things out. Olivenka and her father staged this show with quick work and Olivenka's ability to use Thaumaturgy.

With the party arrived **Krystofor**, the bold leader from Act I, steps up to be an arbiter because sending a raven to the castle and requesting Lord Strahd would take too much time. Olivenka has already given her side of the case so he wants to hear what the party was able to find out and then will render his verdict. If the party sides with Olivenka things are cut and dry and you can read **siding with the town** as they are all ready to blame this man they think is an outsider. If the party sides with Emeric they will need to present their evidence, and then make a party Charisma (Persuasion) check of DC 15. You can do away with this check if they found all the clues, and just role play it out. If they agree with you read **Side with Emeric**. If the party fails, go to **Side with the Town**.

SIDE WITH EMERIC

"I see your point," Krystofor mutters, "Olivenka what do you..." He turns to look and doesn't see the young woman anywhere. There is a thud and from outside all you can hear is a horrible screeching scream. The villagers back away from the windows and huddle in the middle of the Black Rose. Emeric looks calmer and walks over to you.

"She is mad," come we have much to talk about.

Emeric pulls the party aside and tells them about Katrina and the three parts of her soul. He feels that Olivenka is involved somehow. With her screaming that means that they have already started whatever it is they plan to do, and will soon come for him. The party has little time to lose. Start Act III.

SIDE WITH THE TOWN

"We of the town of Nolinsky find you guilty of witchcraft and murder. Tell us where you have taken Drasha and we will make your end quick," Krystofor bellows.

"I do not know where she is, because I did not kill her, though I'm sure she does," Emeric says, pointing at Olivenka.

"I never! You tried to kill me,"

"The girl is lying but you seem to have made up your minds, so get on with it. You won't get anything more from me."

The wind starts to howl, and rain begins to batter the outside of the Inn. The party learns from Krystofor that the execution will be at dawn in the light of the Morning Lord. He thanks you for your help and bids you to come see Barovian justice in the morning. If the party tries to talk to Emeric he refuses to even look at them. He has resigned himself to his fate. Start Act III



Credit: Patrick E. Pullen

ACT III: SIDED WITH THE TOWN

EMERIC'S EXECUTION

Morning falls over Nolinsky, its is dark and sickly. What little of the sun you see in Barovia seems to be hiding behind the clouds like a guilty party. The people of the town, showing more life than most of them have shown in the two days you have been here, gather around the sad tree, an empty wine crate sitting under a branch. Krystofor walks out with a rope. Behind him, his hands tied, is Emeric. Krystofor nods to you as he passes by. Looking around, Olivenka is nowhere to be seen. Krystofor reaches the tree and throws the rope over it in a single swing. The noose hangs over the wine box. Emeric is brought up, and the noose slipped around his neck.

"Any last words?" Krystofor asks.

Emeric just looks forward locking eyes with the group and sighing. With a single quick kick the wine crate goes flying and Emeric drops, the snap of his neck echoing through the square, his legs twitching as if they were trying to run.

Silence, and then the howl. A door down the street, the Rilsky house, explodes and a horrific creature charges toward the town square, it looks like a man, but a man changed, covered in mushrooms, his right eye bulging from his head, his left arm missing replaced by two flopping tentacles, both of which have claws at the end dripping in blood.

Gorek the Changed (Appendix) charges toward the players screaming and howling about how his mistress is free, and that now she can purge the stink of life from her town. Caught between Gorek and the party are 20 Barovian **Commoners**

It is clear that his mutations are causing Gorek horrible amounts of pain even before the fight starts. Any villagers that get in his way he kills, pulling their bodies to him before breaking them. Roll a d4 each time he kills a villager. On a 4 he finds one that has a soul and regains 2d6HP.

When Gorek is at half health he starts running back toward his house, saying that his mistress will protect him.

RITUAL AFTERMATH

Once Gorek is killed the party enters his house. The residual effects of a foul ritual are everywhere. Drasha's body is in the middle of a circle made of blood, Olivenka is crumpled in the corner, her arms opened from hand to elbow. On a table, without having to roll, you find the journal of Gorek Rilsky telling about how he first heard the call of the banshee under the city and what she beckoned him to do. You can find the journal entry in the back of the adventure as a player handout. The cellar door is open. When the party goes down the cellar is dark, damp and full of mushrooms. There is a grave with coldness seeping out from it. Upon closer inspection you see a rope leading down into the darkness. If the party heads down they end up in room 1a of Katerina's Lair.

TO THE CRYPT

The Banshee's Lair is detailed in full in Act III: Sided with Emeric. The effects on Katerina for siding with the town are listed there.



Credit: Patrick E. Pullen

ACT III: SIDED WITH EMERIC

STORY OF THE BANSHEE

Emeric pulls the party aside and tells them the story of Katerina the Banshee who is at the heart of the mess in Nolinsky.

Now that that, stupidity is out of the way, I need to tell you something. We don't have much time. She is free....wait I need to backup... Katerina's influence is loose in the village. Sixty years ago my father, and Frederick's father fought a Banshee. Katerina, she was the most beautiful woman that you would have ever seen, and she knew it. Her soul though was rotten, and for a soul in this cursed land that is saying something. She bargained with the dark powers of the mountain temples, the same ones that gave the devil his powers. Though like him they cursed her with that power, stripping away her beauty and filling her with a hatred for life. She tried to take over the town, and our ancestors put her down. Using the magic from a wizard who was quite mad, but adamant about his intention to kill the devil they split her soul asunder, giving it to the next generation to keep safe. Frederick, me, and the Burgermeister's daughter Drasha. If she gets her hands on two parts she will almost have enough power to exit her crypt without needing the door to be opened.

We have two options and I hate to even entertain one of them. We can move with haste and try and save Drasha, though I fear her already dead with the howling that is coming from outside. To face this unprepared would be madness. Under the Church lies the tomb of St. Bergoyavich, it is said a part of her most holy soul is grafted to her blade. That might be able to help us.

TOMB OF ST. BERGOYAVICH

Inside the church **Emeric** looks sad at the rot that has taken root in the place. He walks over to the altar and presses his hand hard against the symbol of the Morning Lord. There is a groan and the altar slides aside, revealing a set of steps that lead downward.

1. ENTRANCE

The Tomb entrance is choked with spider webs. Shadows from the open door cast out across the room like the bars of a prison. As you head down the flagstones scream under foot. In the room you see a pedestal with a leather bound tome.

Anybody who steps forward and touches the tome triggers the combat encounter. It isn't trapped in a way that can be disarmed, as there is a curse upon the book. On the pedestal the leather bound book has all the pages torn out of it except the last one. On the cover it says Bergoyavich. Any player that reads the book, hears a quiet but strong female voice in the back of their head reading the words as well. You can find the text of the book as a handout in the back of the adventure.

Entereance Combat Encounter

There is a crash from empty pockets in the wall and three undead start shambling forward. Three **Strahd Zombies** (CoS) lurch from the wall and start making their way toward the party.

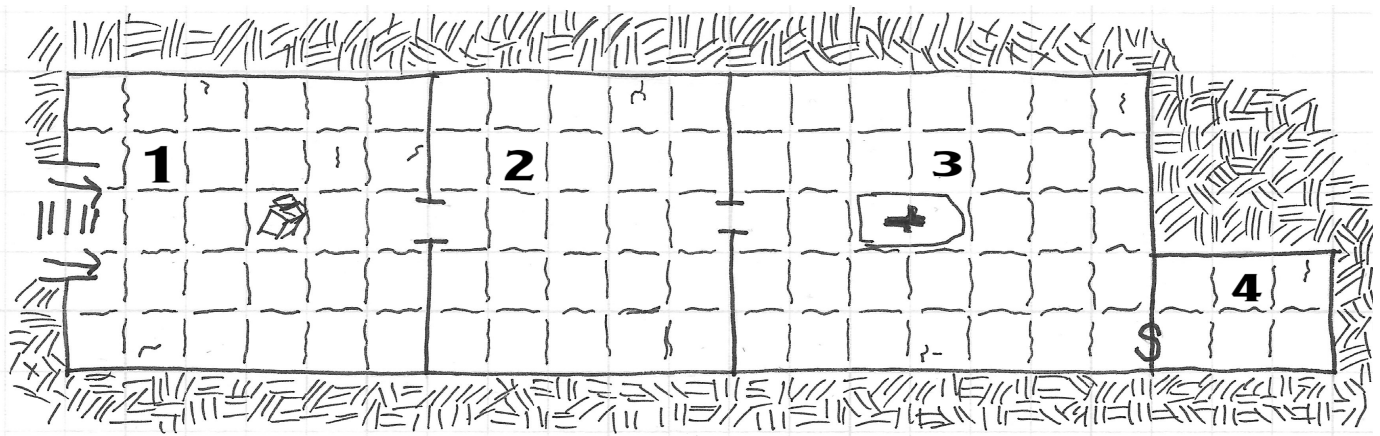


Credit: Patrick E. Pullen

2. PUZZLE ROOM

More darkness, the scent of rot is getting stronger as you walk forward. In the center of the room is a map of Nolinsky painted into the floor. Spread out across the room, casualties of time, are fifty small faded lead miniatures.

Any player who walks up to the door sees that it is locked shut, and the handle is painted on. There seems to be no way to move it. Anybody who casts detect magic sees that there is a ward upon the door. The inscription on the door reads "Tactical to the last."



GAME BOARD PUZZLE

The party has to reenact the last stand of Nolinsky against Strahd and his forces. 30 of the small miniatures are village fighters, 17 are undead horrors, one is a woman with armor and a sword, and the last has a visage you recognize from the coins of the land, Strahd. When people start picking up the small miniatures the board starts to glow in two places along a line in Nolinsky and out along the road. Putting all the miniatures on their correct side of the board, minus Strahd starts the next section. Two times the lights move and the ghastly undead sounds of combat ring out. After each engagement, some of the miniatures become dark. The battle doesn't start again until the party removes the casualties. After the two days all the pieces are dark and two small lights appear. The party must sit Strahd on his side and Bergoyavich on hers. Then both minis come to life and Strahd plunges his blade into her heart. Little Strahd waves his hand and the mist wells up over the town, and it vanishes. All that is left on the ground is a small lead miniature of Strahd. It looks up at you and smiles before vanishing as well. Then there is a click and the door deeper into the crypt opens.

3. BURIAL CHAMBER

All that there is in this room is a single stone coffin sitting in the center. All around the edge are tapestries depicting battles of old Barovia.

This is the coffin of St. Bergoyavich, her name is etched into the stone. When the lid is pushed aside. The party is faced with the still perfectly preserved visage of the woman who stood up to Strahd. Driven through her heart is a short sword, whose blade is polished to a mirrored sheen. Anybody who reaches forward realizes that the eyes are following them and then Bergoyavich lifts from her grave and attacks the party the sword still lodged in her chest. St. Bergoyavich is a **Vampire Spawn**.

THE SWORD OF ST. BERGOYAVICH

Wonderous item

This shortsword is polished to a mirrored sheen and is magical. Once a day the wielder can turn it toward an opponent and show them the error of their ways. They make a charisma save vs DC 13. If they fail the target creature is frightened of the wielder of the sword. This ability can be used once a day.



Credit: David Lewis Johnson

Once dealt with the party can remove the *Sword of St. Bergoyavich*, from her chest. Anybody who looks at the tapestries or the room in general makes an Intelligence (investigation) check DC 15. They find that there is a tapestry of St. Bergoyavich's sister, and it is ripped where her heart is almost like she was stabbed. If they slip the sword into this hole, a door beside the tapestry opens and reveals a small treasure room.

4. REPOSERY

Entering this room you feel stronger, you feel the bleakness of your life since entering Barovia lift from you. In the middle is a coffin, with a stone carving of a woman holding a sword. The wall behind is painted with that same woman holding her blade aloft and pointing it at castle Ravenloft.

Anybody who walks into the room and basks in the light of the saint is allowed to spend one of their hit dice without having to actually take a hit against their available hit dice. Sitting beside the coffin are a pair of *Gauntlets of Giant's Strength*.

RESCUING DRASHA

Standing outside of the Rilsky house you hear horrible sounds coming from inside, chanting in a language that you don't recognize. The sound of wind blowing against the inside walls like a tornado. A moment later the door bursts open and the compressed air escapes like the last gasp of a dying man.

"It is time. Whatever is inside will be horrific, but don't hesitate to do what must be done," Emeric says nocking an arrow.

Bursting in the party is confronted with a ritual circle on the floor drawn in blood, full of arcane runes. In the center of it, kneeling and tied up is Drasha. Laying in the corner in a pool of blood is Olivenka. Standing over them both, a dagger in his hand, is the horrible mutated form of **Gorek the Changed** (Appendix), he looks like a man, but a man changed, covered in mushrooms, his right eye bulging from his head, his left arm missing replaced by two flopping tentacles, both of which have claws at the end dripping in blood.

Through the fight Gorek taunts the party about how his mistress is going to be freed, and that the dark gifts given to him will help purge the life from this town, ending their curse, letting him be with his family again. There is a profound sadness mixed in with the anger and violence. Gorek doesn't run, he is an animal caged and fights to the death.

"Emeric you fool!" Drasha yells out.

"You could have gotten us both killed and you know what that would have brought?"

"I do my dear I do. It is time we have to let go, let our lives mean something in the end. It is time to end the cycle. 'Do you know what you are asking me to do, what you are asking yourself to do?'"

"I do."

If the party asks, Drasha will explain that to end the curse the banshee must be killed, but her crypt can't be opened until her soul is reunited and freed. They have the last two parts, thus they have to die. She doesn't want to die, and fights against it. A Charisma (Persuasion) of DC 20 can change her mind, or the party can just kill her. If they do Emeric isn't happy but resigned to the outcome. Eventually she sends the party away, and as you are leaving the building a wash of energy and light bursts out the door and down the street. How this plays out is going to depend heavily on the relationships you have built over the last two days.

If the party says that they are going to save her Emeric steps in and offers to take Drasha back to the inn, they can have another drink of that good wine he brought back. She agrees and will hear nothing else about it.

Regardless of how it goes down to get to the last section of the adventure Drasha needs to die.

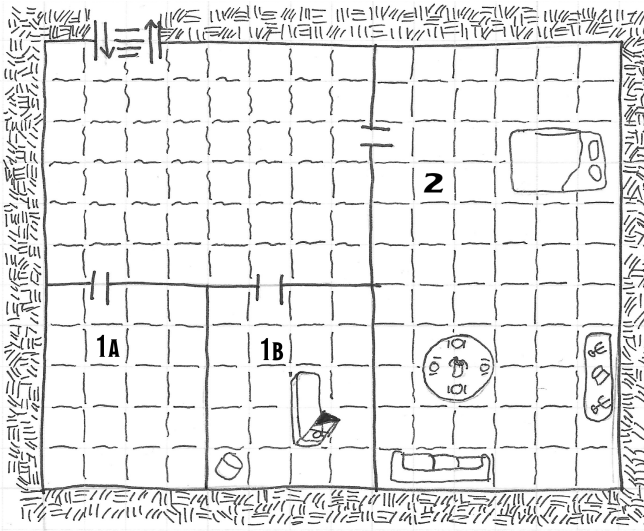
TO THE BANSHEE LAIR

Emeric leads the party to a small house across the street, (area 5). When you get outside the town is starting to fade. The mist has gotten deeper, heavier. The buildings look like they are starting to lose their mass. A few villagers are still on the street, looking vacantly up into the distance, stuck in the last action that they had performed. As such the party is unable to take anything longer than a short rest between the first part of the act and the crypt.

"This is it. Inside you will find the door to the basement locked and barred. It will open as soon as I do what must be done. Go inside leave me alone to look upon my town one last time," Emeric says a sense of sadness in his voice.

Inside this house is old. It hasn't been touched in close to a century, the dust is piled high, it fills your lungs with each breath. The furniture is all broken, and sitting face down but open on the floor is a book.

This is the journal of Katerina, whichever player picks it it up hand them the journal handout. When the party is ready a bolt of light bursts into the room smashing into the cellar door, the shimmering barrier vanishing, and the door opening.



KATERINA'S LAIR

Cold it is very cold down here, and darker than the blackest soul. The only light is a shimmering coming from the otherside of a door. With the first step you take into the room a scream echos in your brain, rattling around in your head, yelling to turn back, but also enticing you forward, promising a swift death.

The underground lair is a front room with the stairs and three doors, two to the south and one to the east.

1A. CLOSET

This room is locked and a DC 10 check with Dexterity (thieves tools) will open it. Inside are hundreds of moth eaten rotted dresses. None of them have any value, and disintegrate if moved. If Katerina enters this room she flies into a rage at the players and yells at them to get away from her things.

1B. TORTURE CHAMBER

This room the door isn't locked but there is a frost trap Wisdom (Perception) DC 12 to see and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) DC 12 to disable. If the trap is triggered the player who opened the door makes a Constitution saving throw DC 10 if they fail they take full damage, if they pass taking half of (6) 2d6 cold damage.

Inside this room are devices of pain and suffering, a rack, a bucket full of skulls, on the wall are knives and a scourge, there is a bath basin the sides covered in long dried blood. In this room Katerina seems the most happy, and actively cackles when the party triggers the trap if she is there to see it.

2. KATERINA'S BED CHAMBER

In the center of this large bed chamber is a horrible visage of a ruined undead gastly woman, floating ethereal, screaming. There is no language to the wailing, it's just pain and anguish. There is no time the figure moves towards the party arms outstretched, deadly claws looking to rend flesh.

Katerina is a **Banshee** with max HP. On her turns she tries to drive the players back, and leads them around her lair, moving through walls, and trying to get them to waste time unlocking doors, and falling into her traps.

If you have the *Sword of St. Bergoyavich* it is magical and bypasses her resistances. Also once a day you can turn the blade toward Katerina forcing her to see herself. She must make a Wisdom save vs DC 13 or be frightened of the wielder of the blade.

If instead you saved Drasha from the ritual Katerina has average hit points, and isn't resistant to normal damage.

With the killing blow, the form that was once Katerina spins and then vanishes in a puff of mist and cold energy.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

When the party walks out of the lair all they see is a rotten cellar door, and a few foundations around them, the village of Nolinsky is no more. The mist clears and the visage of castle Ravenloft looms ever present, never letting the party forget that while they might have gotten out of Nolinsky they are still stuck in Barovia.

THE END



Credit: Patrick E. Pullen

APPENDIX

GOROK THE CHANGED

Medium humanoid, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 85 (9d10 + 36)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (0)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	8 (-1)	6 (-3)

Condition Immunities poison, charmed, sleep

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800)

Multiattack. Gorok makes two attacks with his tentacle arm and can try and grapple one creature a round.

Life Suck. On a successful melee attack Gorok can attempt to grapple a creature. A grappled creature must make a constitution save of DC 13 or lose 1d6 max hitpoints. A grappled creature can attempt to break the grapple on their turn. Gorok can grapple up to two creatures but then he loses his ability to attack.

Actions

Tentacle arm. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit* 9 (2d6 + 3)

JOURNAL ENTRY ST. BRAGOYAVICH

It is the third day of the devils' siege. He will not have chidera, I don't care who she looks like. His spawn kept coming and we pushed them back. But now there are very few of us left. It is hopeless but we can't stop fighting.

The devil himself is here, my men are dead, but I stopped him. I took from him the one thing he wanted. Chidera thanked me as my blade slipped through her heart. Now I go out to face him. It will be my last act, and even though I die here today, victory was ours. Strahd might rule this land but our hearts and souls will never be his.

JOURNAL OF KATERINA

These peasants don't understand me, don't realize how much better than them I am. My beauty shall never fade. A girl in town tried to tell me that it all fades, that I should be worried that the Devil might come for me. Let him come I thought, I will wrap him around my finger. She persisted though, so I followed her, the small knife from my chores gripped in my hand, I showed her what it was to not be pretty.

"Darvin has spurned me, that isn't even possible. The gods have talked to me again. They said I could be more beautiful, more powerful. Already the magic they have given me has helped take care of Darvin's ill fated lover.

"MY FACE! What have they done to my face, I shall burn this town, burn them all to the ground! Their lives I can feel them, and they burn at my soul, ending their existence will be a pleasure.

JOURNAL OF GOROK

I heard your voice again my sweet. I know that once you Bestow your gifts upon me we can be together as a family again. Dragomir is already with ya I know and for that I am happy.

~ The mushrooms talked to me again, they gave me my first name. It is a horrible thing that they are asking me to do. But! if it gets me back my family than it is a small price to pay.

~ It is NOT my wife! But it is too late. I have already MURDERED! and will continue to do so. The power they offer is real and there is bound to be more of IT!