

# The Beast of Graenseskov

An Introductory Ravenloft® Adventure for 1st-4th Level

by Aaron “Quickleaf” Infante-Levy



*East of the village of Barovia lies the Graenseskov, a mist-shrouded borderland stalked by fearsome wolves. The wolves are kept at bay from the village by an old troth (agreement) and by the grizzled warriors of Volchikrov Manor. But in recent years the wolves have grown unnaturally aggressive, driven by a Beast of malign cunning that terrorizes the Barovians. Whether adventurers are freshly embraced by Ravenloft's Mists or native sons and daughters of the dread domain, uncovering the Beast's identity and ending its curse will take all the cunning they can muster.*

Requires the DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE® and MONSTER MANUAL®

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# The Beast of Graenseskov

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# Lands of Barovia

## Graenseskov

Svalich Woods

to village of Barovia

Gorgon's Grin

Old Svalich Road

Deadman's Creek

Gingerbread House

Ivlis River

Geist Caverns

Borderwood

Thousandfurs Bridge

Howling Hills

Svalich Woods

Werewolf's Hovel

Tree-with-a-Swing

Barrow of the Boyars

Volchikrov Manor

Graven Garden

Halan Witches' Circle

Wolves' Den

The Beast's Lair

Wending Byways

Vistani Camp

Borderwood

Grey Sisters' Tower

1 hex = 1/4 mile (0.4 km)

Ulvand River

N



Aaron 2016



## INTRODUCTION

**W**olves have always run in large packs through the Graenseskov (“Borderwood”, pronounced *grah-yen-sesk-off*), but as long as they were left alone, the packs avoided the village of Barovia, keeping to plentiful game, deer, and black elk. However, a fell force stirs the wolves to strange and violent behavior, a force Count Strahd von Zarovich does not yet understand, and therefore cannot control. While the knights of Volchykrov Manor once were able to keep the wolves in check, they are losing men and horses to the wolves faster than they can replenish. Dozens of peasants have had their throats torn out, and entire herds of sheep and goats have been slaughtered. Even a veteran monster hunter was presumably killed after failing to trap the Beast. Rumors are spreading of the “Beast of Graenseskov,” something far more intelligent than the worgs, and even fiercer than the dire wolves of the Borderwood.

What haunts Graenseskov is no werewolf, but a loup du noir, a skin-changer who transforms using the *cursed wolfskin*. The adventure entails discovering the loup du noir’s identity as well as finding a way to break the curse. Who is the loup du noir? That depends on the story the DM wants to tell. There are four NPC suspects for the DM to choose from: Ser Cedomir Volchykrov, Father Fiofan Kolotov, Merje the Seeker, and Ruzina Noskova. Each of these NPCs, and the clues exposing them, are described in **Chapter 2**.

*The Beast of Graenseskov* is divided roughly into a beginning, a middle, and an end. In **Chapter 1**, the PCs learn of the Beast, meet the NPCs of Volchykrov Manor, and explore the Graenseskov. In **Chapter 2**, they investigate recent attacks, examining the manor and nearby sites as they tighten their net about the Beast. However, attacks continue to occur until the PCs take decisive action to accuse a suspect. In **Chapter 3**, the PCs choose a strategy for confronting the Beast and face the hag who created the *cursed wolfskin*, ultimately deciding the Beast’s fate.





## BACKGROUND

For years, the aging boyar Borje Volchikrov fought to protect the realm of Barovia from horse thieves, goblins of the eastern mountains, invaders from the Mists, and wolves of the Graenseskov. He lives in both awe and terror of Count Strahd von Zarovich, but being at the fringes of Barovia affords the boyar a measure of independence in how he handles affairs.

The boyar had a complex relationship with the green hag Lagetha, whose prophecies helped him secure his power and whose magic helped him avoid retribution from the Vistani for a crime he committed against their people. At the same time, Lagetha brought out the darkness in the man, and even bedded the drunken boyar in the guise of his wife. The boyar realized the deception afterward, but kept quiet about it.

When Lagetha prophesied the boyar would displease Strahd and be beheaded, however, it was the final straw for Borje. The boyar nearly lit the woods ablaze hunting Lagetha down. At last the druid Merje, no friend of the hags and unable to stand seeing the slaughter the boyar caused, revealed the secret tower of the hags hidden in the Mists. Borje led a bloody assault that left the boyar scarred to this day. After losing many men and horses to his pride, Borje brought Lagetha in chains back to the manor to be executed.

The boyar was not without an ironic sense of humor, ordering the hag's beheading. A fine executioner's axe was fashioned of cold iron by the blacksmith's daughter Ruzina. The manor priest Father Fiofan blessed the axe and performed last rites for the hag. And the boyar's own son Cedomir hefted the blade and severed Lagetha's head from her shoulders. At the moment of Lagetha's death, the skies darkened and one of the onlookers revealed herself to be a most hideous hag with shriveled skin the color of midnight and eyes like twin balefires. She cursed those present before vanishing as if she'd never been there at all, speaking thus: *"You who've raised hand against my sister, I curse you to reveal your true self, turning against kith and kin. I curse you to show your monstrous self under the sign of the soul's true form."*

## THE CURSE

Curses in Ravenloft® are given life by the Dark Powers and are far more terrible than the relatively benign curses found on cursed items or invoked by a *bestow curse* spell. Channeled by vengeance or self-induced by committing a terrible transgression, such curses are not laid to rest with a simple *remove curse* spell. Breaking them requires true repentance, destroying the forces that created the curse, or finding a loophole in the curse's wording.

The Curse of the Soul's True Form was both invoked by Pretty Kolchya for vengeance, and it was self-induced by the boyar for violating his ancestor's troth (agreement) with the Grey Sisters. All four NPCs who had a direct hand in Lagetha's killing — Ser Cedomir, Father Fiofan, Merje the Seeker, and Ruzina Nostova — have been cursed, though only one of them begins as the Beast. However, should the Beast be slain without the curse being broken, then the curse "awakens" in another of these NPCs who becomes the new Beast of Graenseskov.

Technically, boyar Borje Volchikrov is also cursed. However, because the curse is strongest on those who had a direct hand in Lagetha's death, and the boyar merely *ordered* her death without raising a hand, he would only become the Beast in the unlikely event that all four of the other NPCs were killed first.

Each of the four NPCs possesses a wolfskin cloak, a sign of bravery and loyalty, that was secretly imbued with transmutation magic due to the hag's curse. Only one of these cloaks, however, is the *cursed wolfskin*.

Though the first transformation may have been involuntary, each subsequent night of transformation since then has been wholly of the afflicted NPC's volition. At first, the Beast's change was traumatic and it ravaged the land in a haze of bloodlust. The NPC gained a measure of control over the transformation, but it is a false security. Even as the afflicted NPC struggles to maintain some glimmer of their humanity, the Beast grows stronger each time they don the *cursed wolfskin*. Eventually, the NPC will cease to be and there will only be the Beast of Graenseskov.

## TIMELINE

**-740 years ago:** Sordje the Justifier, the first boyar of the Graenseskov, makes a troth with the Grey Sisters to protect his lands from wolves. In retaliation, Strahd condemns the boyars to undeath.

**-40 years ago:** Claes Volchikrov fights off barbarian invaders worshipping a wolf-headed god emerging from the Mists. During this time, the dwarf Fiofan stumbles into the manor and, appearing as one of the invaders, is stoned to death by the fearful manor folk. However, he does not stay dead. When Claes dies, his son Borje takes his seat as boyar and finishes his father's campaign against the invaders from the Mists.

**-26 years ago:** Lagetha the Spinner seduces the drunken boyar in the guise of his wife, and switches a hagspawn for their human child. The hagspawn is raised as Cvetlana, while the human child is named Erelida and she is raised by the hags to infiltrate the circle of Halan witches.

**-13 years ago:** Daria Nostova is killed by dire wolves; no one raises a hand to help her.

**-10 years ago:** Suffering from bandits made up of remnants of the "invaders from the Mists", the boyar attempts to withhold taxes from Strahd, and the wrathful Count demands the boyar's son Pyotr as a sacrifice. The boyar tearfully gives Pyotr over to Strahd; presumably the boy is killed by Strahd.

**-9 years ago:** The bandits are hung. Not all rest eternal.

**-8 years ago:** Katerina and Cedomir have an affair, but when Katerina learns that he plans to violently overthrow the boyar, Cedomir orchestrates her death by feeding her to dire wolves.

**-4 years ago:** Ser Cedomir eradicates a lair of mountain goblins, bringing the mongrel Krabka to the boyar court. Little do they know the mongrel had its eyes replaced with a *hag eye* by Pretty Kolchya.

**-1 year ago:** After Lagetha's prophecy of the boyar's death, the boyar destroys the Grey Sisters coven and orders Lagetha's execution. The hag Pretty Kolchya utters a curse of vengeance. Three days later, the Beast's attacks begin, ravaging the Graenseskov.

**-2 months ago:** The monster hunter Radke Iliev comes at the boyar's bidding to hunt the Beast, but he vanishes, presumably killed.

**-2 weeks ago:** The boyar's feast day. Lubomir is bitten by the Beast, but survives in the infirmary.

**-3 days ago:** The "knight" Jovich is killed by the Beast.

## SPECIAL EVENT TRIGGERS

**Sleigh Ride of Slaughter:** Three days pass; after the PCs investigate the knight Jovich's murder and the bite victim; or when the players flounder for what to do next (DM's choice).

**Mob Injustice:** Six days pass; after the PCs accuse the wrong suspect; or if draconian measures are taken to find the Beast (DM's choice).

**The Boyar's Wolf Hunt:** One week passes; after "Mob Injustice" in **Chapter 2**; or when the PCs reach 2nd level (DM's choice).

**Hanging the Vistani.** Ten days pass; or something happens to anger the boyar and he decides to take his wrath out on his Vistani captive Eris Corvara.

**The Star-Crossed Wedding:** Two weeks pass; a lull in the suspense occurs or the PCs take several days of downtime; or after the PCs explore the Gingerbread House and discover Cvetlana's secret (DM's choice).

**Death of the Boyar:** One month passes; the PCs go after the wrong suspect repeatedly or are otherwise unable to solve the mystery; or the PCs falsely think they've solved it (DM's choice).

## ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

While *The Beast of Graenseskov* is designed for a party of 4-6 low-level PCs, the mystery at the heart of the adventure can be adapted for most groups irrespective of party size or level.

### TO INCREASE THE CHALLENGE...

- Just add wolves! See the guidelines on "Creating Encounters" in the DMG pg. 81.
- An NPC betrays the PCs.
- Pretty Kolchya is a night hag.
- The Beast uses stats for an abominable yeti.
- Tempt the players with Inspiration for giving into their PCs' flaws.
- The Beast strikes at night!
- NPCs turn into monstrous allies of the hag, like the hagspawn Cvetlana turning into a green hag out of jealousy, or Eris Corvara accepting a curse turning him into a jackalwere after the hag saves him.



### TO DECREASE THE CHALLENGE...

- Use fewer wolves. See the guidelines on “Creating Encounters” in the DMG pg. 181.
- Just add *potions of healing*! Both Merje the Seeker and Mirsada Latrova of the Vistani can brew *potions of healing*.
- The boyar gives the PCs extra support (see “Audience with the Boyar” on page 23).
- Radke Iliev was slain but returned by the Dark Powers to continue his hunt, and possibly turning into a **revenant** aiding the PCs against the Beast... at least for now. Alternately, he may be found near death and join the party as a **scout** and expert in werewolf lore.
- Krabka the mongrel joins the party as their henchman and faithful sidekick.
- Pretty Kolchya is easily manipulated into making mistakes by clever PCs.
- A mysterious howl calls off the wolves!



### THE TAROKKA KNOWS...

If the DM wishes, the Tarokka deck can be used to determine which suspect is the **loup du noir\***, as well as the details surrounding their plight. To perform this reading remove the 14 cards of the High Deck, so there are just the 40 suit cards. Then simply turn over one of the suit cards — each suit refers to one of the suspects — and consult the corresponding table below.

#### Coins (Ruzina Noskova)

**The Rogue.** Ruzina originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to feel free of her onerous duties, but she has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

**The Swashbuckler.** Ruzina hunts down the rich and corrupt, anonymously leaving sacks of bloodied coins at the doorsteps of peasants.

**The Philanthropist.** Ruzina loathes the Boyar Borje Volchikrov who unfairly taxes her father, and received the wolfskin to avenge her family on the Boyar and his men.

**The Trader.** Ruzina is doing the bidding of Strahd, who has promised a way to “cure” her sister Cvetlana. In exchange, she is to hunt down the names that Strahd gives her.

**The Merchant.** Ruzina acquired the wolfskin from a Vistani merchant, completely unaware of the curse upon it.

**The Guildsman.** Ruzina's adoptive father Uri knows what she is, but he believes her to be a wholly innocent victim. To protect her he will even falsely admit to being the Beast.

**The Beggar.** Ruzina, the boyar's illegitimate daughter, seeks the love and recognition that the boyar would rather bestow upon his legitimate sons, driving her to frenzied rage.

**The Thief.** Ruzina is terrified of being caught and killed, and so she hunts down the boyar's knights, seeking the axe she fashioned to kill Lagetha - the one item most lethal to her.

**The Tax Collector.** Ruzina's sympathies are with the druids and Vistani, who she covertly arms with fine blades, in exchange for them covering up her monstrous nature.

**The Miser.** Ruzina doesn't realize what she is, and instead hordes various silver weapons and werewolf-hunting tomes to hunt down the monster that killed her mother.





### Glyphs (Merje the Seeker)

**The Priest.** Merje originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to fight the boyar's abuses, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

**The Monk.** Merje made a deal with Kolchya to take on the curse and spare the others, thinking his meditation could keep the Beast in check, but he could not.

**The Missionary.** Merje wishes to share the "divine gift of Hala" (the curse) with his fellow witches, and intends to initiate them one-by-one as new *loup du noir*.

**The Healer.** Merje secretly pays visits to a "healer" in the woods to sooth his inner Beast, but in reality she is the hag Kolchya who only exacerbates the curse.

**The Shepherd.** Merje is sworn to protect Ruzina from her half-brother Cedomir who may try to kill her if he learns that she is favored by Borje as his replacement. Merje uses the wolfskin to cloak to hunt down Cedomir's supporters.

**The Druid.** Merje has grown more concerned with the plight of the hunted wolves and mongrelfolk than with the people of Graenseskov.

**The Anarchist.** Merje plans to root out the corruption in Volchkyrov Manor in one fell swoop. Along with his wolf allies he intends to kill the boyar and drive the manor citizens into the purity of the wilds.

**The Charlatan.** Merje is the mongrelfolk Krabka's secret master and only friend, using the wolfskin to exact revenge on those who persecuted the mongrel in the past. He sees how one treats a beast as the truest test of character.

**The Bishop.** Merje maneuvers Cedomir and Borje into conflict with one another, hoping to lead the household he despises into its own undoing.

**The Traitor.** Merje blames the boyar for not killing Kolchya when he could and for bringing the curse down on them through his pride. Merje will stop at nothing to deliver the boyar into the hag's hands, hoping to end the curse and perhaps kill two birds with one stone.

### Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

**The Wizard.** Fiofan originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to help recall his shrouded past, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

**The Transmuter.** Fiofan has grown obsessed with returning through the Mists to the homeland that exiled him, and he deals with Vistani, witches, even hags to learn the secret.

**The Diviner.** Fiofan fears the boyar's beheading of Lagetha has set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy of the boyar's death, and he covertly works against the boyar's plans to save the boyar from himself, using the wolfskin for anonymity.

### Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

**The Enchanter.** Fiofan has convinced himself that he can end the curse when he desires, using the wolfskin only until he can unearth the truth about his past. Then, so he thinks, he'll be able to set the wolfskin aside and face justice.

**The Abjurer.** Fiofan believes his faith in the Morning Lord and his study of ancient texts protects him from the curse, but it slowly dawns on the dwarf that he is not in control.

**The Elementalist.** Fiofan hunts down all who entered Barovia through the Mists on the same stormy night he arrived, thinking one of them must know about the dwarf's past. However, each encounter is fated to end disastrously.

**The Invoker.** Fiofan desperately searches for forbidden lore that might illuminate his past, the Beast growing stronger the more he learns. The truth is darker than he imagined.

**The Illusionist.** Fiofan despises the boyar who "tricked" him into performing last rites for Lagetha (and thus becoming cursed) and withheld the scrolls the former boyar promised. He hunts for secrets that might ruin the boyar.

**The Necromancer.** Fiofan is remembering how the former boyar ordered him stoned (thinking Fiofan a werebeast), and he puts his learned mind toward revenge.

**The Conjurer.** Fiofan has learned the terrifying truth about himself and now he kills everyone who holds a clue about his true nature. Despite this, he is convinced that any price is worth paying (even his own lycanthropy) to depose Strahd.

### Swords (Ser Cedomir Volchkyrov)

**The Warrior.** Cedomir donned the *cursed wolfskin* to protect Barovia from invaders in the Mists, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

**The Avenger.** Cedomir seeks revenge on Strahd for taking his brother Pytor, even if it brings ruin to his family. Without the wolfskin's powers, Cedomir fears he'll never have justice.

**The Paladin.** Cedomir learned of the black annis that gave him the wolfskin through his father's subtle manipulation. Despite his evil, he retains a family code of honor.

**The Soldier.** Cedomir's attitude toward the wolfskin is conflicted, hating the power it exerts over him, but craving the animalistic might it can grant him.

**The Mercenary.** Cedomir wishes to share the "gift" of the Beast with his fellow knights, and intends to convince them one-by-one and initiate them as new *loup du noir*.

**The Myrmidon.** Cedomir was publicly humiliated at a recent wolf hunt that ended in the village of Barovia. Those he hunts are those who laughed at and scorned him.

**The Berserker.** Cedomir revels in the power the wolfskin grants him, especially enjoying challenging others.



### Swords (Ser Cedomir Volchykrov)

**The Hooded Man.** Cedomir stays hidden by feeding the PCs misinformation about the Beast and turning the sentiment of the peasants of Volchykrov against a decoy NPC.

**The Dictator.** Cedomir's driving purpose is to overthrow his father, and he grows increasingly brutal in suppressing the peasants, even ordering his knights to murder in cold blood.

**The Torturer.** Cedomir desperately wishes to be free of the curse placed on him by the black annis Pretty Kolchya, even if that means death.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Choose one of the following adventure hooks that best suits your gaming group.

### WHERE TO START?

The DM can play out the PCs' travel through the Wending Byways using random encounter checks. Alternately, the DM can simply narrate the party's journey through the disorienting Mists. Once they reach Volchykrov Manor, boyar Borje Volchykrov holds an audience with the PCs (see pg. 23) wherein their quest begins.

## THE COUNT'S BOUNTY

Strahd is displeased at the Beast's predations because he does not yet understand what the Beast is, meaning he cannot control it. Moreover, the wolves of the Graenseskov no longer respond to Strahd's command. Thus, he has issued a bounty worth 100 gold pieces on the head of who or whatever the Beast may be. However, the "bounty" also has an ultimatum implied by the Count. If no one rises to his challenge by the next full moon, Strahd will show his displeasure against the village, just as he did with the burgomaster of the past. Additionally, several Barovians who've lost loved ones to the wolves may offer small purses of silver, pigs, goats, and free room and board to characters who stop the Beast and avert Strahd's wrath.

## A GROOM'S DILEMMA

Ismark the Lesser (see *The Curse of Strahd*), son of the dead burgomaster of Barovia, faces a dilemma. He is to marry Cvetlana Volchykrov, the beautiful but vainglorious daughter of boyar Borje Volchykrov of the Graenseskov. This is an important political move to oppose the bandits and horse smugglers of Barovia, and it also ensures that both the burgomaster's and the boyar's family lines will go on. However, the boyar's expectation is that once Ismark becomes his son by marriage, Ismark will lead the hunt for the Beast. The thought terrifies Ismark, who is no brave warrior. He is looking for stout souls who can help him evade certain death against the Beast, keep his bride safe from the Beast's predations, and buoy his courage to go through with the wedding.

## A HUNTER'S LETTER

A messenger raven arrives bearing a letter from Radke Iliev, a monster hunter known to one or more of the PCs, who requests their aid.

*Though it has been many years, I find myself in need of your aid, my friends. I am hunting a Beaste most foul that vexes me at every turn with its cunning and evil like none I've encountered before. The contract came from boyar Borje Volchykrov, an old drunkard who governs lands known as the Graenseskov. Already, I've seen the savageries of the Beaste first-hand: slaughtered herds and eviscerated guards. I am told a fifth of the people of the Graenseskov have fallen to the Beaste's predations.*

*Follow the directions to the foot trail I have enclosed, and continue through the misty Borderwood. Do not give any mind to the will-o'-wisp in the woods, but continue until you reach Volchykrov Manor. I pray you come swiftly, for there are dark forces arrayed against me and I am uncertain how much longer I may keep them at bay.*

— Radke Iliev, Esq.

## MADAME EVA'S READING

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When Madame Eva (see *The Curse of Strahd*) performs a Tarokka reading for the PCs, she has a vision of four magical items in the Graenseskov that may be of use in the PCs' fight against Strahd. These are the *circlet of Hala* ("a crown of wise serpents"), the *ghost lantern* ("a lantern whose light does not frighten spirits"), *Sordje's sword* ("a blade from the time of the boyars"), and the *cursed wolfskin* ("a cloak of the wilds beyond Strahd's reach"). Though Madame Eva can't tell exactly where these items are located, she knows they are somewhere in the Graenseskov, and that the PCs' destiny awaits them there. Little does she mention the wolfskin's curse; defeating Strahd is more important to Madame Eva than the well-being of the PCs.

## A SQUIRE'S PLIGHT

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While traveling through strange Mists, the characters hear howls and screams echoing in the Mists, only to behold a screaming 12-year-old boy with braided blond hair running ahead of a pack of 4 **wolves** (CR 1/4) in hot pursuit. The boy is slowed by the large wooden shield he carries (emblazoned with a wolf charge rampant on a field of gold). When the characters pursue the wolves to intercept them or to rescue the boy, they are drawn into Strahd's realm at the Wending Byways (see pg. 21). The boy is named Dusan, squire to Ser Cedomir Volchykrov, and is prone to forgetting where he puts his master's things when he naps. The wolves only fight until badly wounded or half are dead at which point

the rest retreat into the woods. Dusan offers to lead the PCs to Volchykrov Manor and introduce them to his lord, boyar Borje Volchykrov.

## A VISTANI'S GAMBIT

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A young Vistani man named Eris Corvara was caught trying to steal the horses of a group of 3 **thugs** identifying themselves as "Knights of the Volchykrov family," though Eris refers to them derisively as "Hounds of the Borderwood" and claims the horses actually belong to the Vistani. The "knights" intend to exercise a rough justice by hanging the Vistani from a tree. Eris pleads for the PCs' intervention, claiming that he's certain the boyar Borje Volchykrov will dispense justice at his manor. Eris is counting on the *giogota* (half-Vistani) Ruzina helping him, but he isn't above attempt to steal a horse (again) and escaping to the Vistani camp (see pg. 19). Either way, the "knights" escort the PCs to the manor to audience with their boyar.

## WEREWOLVES IN THE MIST

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*The Curse of Strahd* presents an adventure hook called "Werewolves in the Mist" which has the PCs investigating recent werewolf attacks coming from the Misty Forest. The PCs may even be aware of the werewolf hunter Radke Iliev who went missing in the Misty Forest. However, what are assumed to be werewolves due to the intelligence behind the attacks turn out to be the Beast and its wolf packs.



## CHAPTER 1

# WOLVES OF THE BORDERWOOD

The Graenseskov is Barovia's frontier, with sparsely settled wooded foothills where snow covers the ground much of the year. Wolves dominant this landscape, their howls echoing though the chill mists at night, never so distant as one would wish them to be. The people of the Graenseskov are a hardy lot and accustomed to living alongside the wolves. While children may laugh at tales of the wolf-turned-bard Barking Piet, and stern parents may falsely threaten to leave an unruly child to the wolves, being inured to the threat doesn't mean they aren't aware of it. Every man, woman, and child of the Graenseskov carries at least a dagger or club, prepared to defend themselves from the wolves. In times of need they rely on the boyar's mounted knights known as the "Hounds of the Borderwood" to keep aggressive wolf packs at bay.

Mostly, however, man and wolf have lived alongside one another in the Graenseskov, the wolves' aggression mysteriously tempered. This unspoken troth (agreement) surpasses common sense protective measures like keeping an eye on young ones, not venturing out alone, and returning home when the horn at Volchikrov Manor is blown at sunset. It dates back to the first boyar of the Graenseskov, Sordje the Justifier, who raised a wounded wolf pup as his own. According to the folktale, when Sordje returned the beast to its pack, the pack leader — an ancient werewolf — was grateful for the return of the pup and ever since that day the wolves have given Volchikrov Manor and the surrounding farms and homesteads a wide berth. Regardless of how much stock one puts in the folktale, whatever supernatural providence kept the wolves in check can no longer be relied upon, with the Beast's presence twisting the wolves toward murderous ends.





## LIFE AMIDST THE WOLVES

The people of the Graenseskov are a hardy lot and accustomed to living alongside the wolves. While children may laugh at tales of the wolf-turned-bard Barking Piet, and stern parents may falsely threaten to leave an unruly child to the wolves, being inured to the threat doesn't mean they aren't aware of it. Every man, woman, and child of the Graenseskov carries at least a dagger or club, prepared to defend themselves from the wolves. In times of need they rely on the boyar's mounted knights known as the "Hounds of the Borderwood" to keep aggressive wolf packs at bay. When elders of the Graenseskov speak of the "troth", it is the understanding between man and wolf to respect one another's territories.

Mutual understanding, however, does not mean entirely peaceful cohabitation. Opportunistic wolves are the terror of every mother and shepherd unfortunate enough to call the Graenseskov their home. Hunters sell grey wolf pelts, gained during the boyar's wolf hunts, in the village of Barovia. These hunts, however, are never wanton nor unnecessarily cruel. Ancient traditions of the Graenseskov linger on in the belief that when an animal is killed, it goes on to tell others of its kind whether it was killed with the proper hunt rituals. To kill a wolf during a blessed hunt, so that its pelt may warm the body in winter and bring honor to the boyar is seen as a sign of great hunter. However, to cruelly or savagely kill a wolf and not take its pelt is seen as an ill omen, and while not considered a crime in the legal sense, is strongly frowned upon by the men and women of the Graenseskov. It is for this reason that facing the increasingly erratic wolf packs is especially terrifying to the peasantry.

Wolves are even a part of the rites of passage for youth of the Graenseskov. Every fourth autumn, youth at Volchikrov Manor and surrounding homesteads who are on the cusp of adulthood are gathered. They are given a task by the boyar: to hunt or trap a wolf and kill it. The one among them whom the boyar deems the bravest gets to keep its pelt which is turned into a wolfskin cloak. Dozens of these wolfskin cloaks are worn by various folk, a sign of their courage and the

boyar's favor. While folk of the Graenseskov generally know where to find lone wolves (thus avoiding the deadly packs) and are shrewd trappers, encountering a lone dire wolf or worg is a deadly prospect. Sometimes a young adult dies during the rite of passage, and these "blessed dead" are buried in the Graven Garden (see "Sites in the Graenseskov") where it is believed their spirits watch over the land.

However, whatever supernatural providence kept the wolves in check before can no longer be relied upon. The Beast's presence twists the wolves toward murderous ends.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Over the course of the adventure, the Beast grows more aggressive, and with it so do the wolves. Use the rules governing encounter frequency found in *Curse of Strahd*, but instead of the table included there, use the following table for encounters in the Graenseskov. At the adventure's onset, roll a d4 on the table whenever the PCs have a random encounter. Various events that transpire during *The Beast of Graenseskov* cause the encounters to become increasingly dangerous and terrifying, increasing the die rolled on the encounter table in the following escalating pattern:

d4 > d6 > d8 > d10 > d12

Escalating events include those marked in the text as well as the following:

- Two weeks or more pass while the Beast still stalks the Graenseskov.
- Boyar Borje Volchikrov leads the wolf hunt (described under "Special Events").
- A PC learns the Rite of the Dark Wolf from Pretty Kolchya's recipe book.
- The curse jumps to a new Beast after the last Beast is slain without breaking the curse.
- The PCs accuse the wrong suspect.
- The PCs steal or destroy the *cursed wolfskin*.
- The PCs assault the Beast's Lair or attempt to trap the Beast, successfully or not.



d4+	Graenseskov Encounter
1	Track and sign (with a d8, d10, or d12, roll again)
2	Hounds of the Borderwood
3	Victim
4	Wolf pack (small)
5	Lone dire wolf
6	Worg omen-bearers
7	Barking Piet
8	Wolf pack (large)
9	Dogs gone mad
10	Dire wolf pack
11	Kolchya's cur
12	Beast of Graenseskov

### BARKING PIET

A moody bard wearing a black cloak and a silver wolf mask, introduces himself as Barking Piet (like the folktale in **Appendix D**). Who is he really? The DM may make up his or her own explanation, or choose one of the following possibilities:

- The **arcanoloth** Inajira in disguise, subtly promising to fulfill a PC's heart's desire in exchange for their immortal soul.
- The **mongrelfolk** Krabka, inspired by the PCs' heroism to become an adventurer... and cast out of Volchkyrov Manor by the boyar in a drunken fit.
- A **wolf** granted intelligence and turned into a man or **jackalwere** by Pretty Kolchya's curse.

### BEAST OF GRAENSESKOV

The Beast of Graenseskov, a **loup du noir\***, comes after the PCs in dire wolf form, intending to kill one or two of them. It only fights until reduced to half hit points or less, at which point it flees to its lair (see "Hunting the Beast" in **Chapter 3**). The chase rules in **Appendix C** may be useful.

### DIRE WOLF PACK

3 (1d4+1) **dire wolves** stalk the land.

### DOGS GONE MAD

Kolchya's curse causes all domesticated canines in the Graenseskov to turn rabid and attack their owners. This indicates an encounter with 5 (2d4) **mastiffs** afflicted with **rabies** (treated as a disease like that borne by **giant rats**). However, it also entails changes to the entire region, with all hunting dogs at Volchkyrov Manor killed on the boyar's orders.

Regarding players whose PCs have canine familiars or animal companions, the DM should discuss with them what they see happening to their companion. If they agree for their companion to temporarily run wild in the woods, the DM can reward the player with Inspiration.

### HOUNDS OF THE BORDERWOOD

3 (1d4+1) **thugs** mounted on **riding horses** patrol the woods with 2 (1d4) hunting **mastiffs**. These "knights" serving the boyar's family are known as Hounds of the Borderwood, an unscrupulous lot made up largely of Barovian criminals. They may harass maidens, run small protection rackets, steal credit for the PCs' heroism, and send warning "messages" from Cedomir to those who've displeased him.

If Ser Cedomir is the Beast, these "knights" may attempt to lead the PCs into a trap, claiming they could use help hunting a dire wolf, only to lead the PCs to a dire wolf pack or even the Beast's Lair (see **Chapter 3**).

### KOLCHYA'S CUR

Pretty Kolchya sends a mangy **hell hound** after one of the PCs who she acquired a bit of hair, blood, or a precious belonging from (required for the ritual binding the hell hound to hunt down that PC). The hell hound is invisible to all creatures except the targeted PC until after it attacks. It single-mindedly pursues the PC whom the hag singled out to the exception of all others.

### LONE DIRE WOLF

A lone scarred **dire wolf**, a survivor of a wolf hunt or the rites of passage, attacks. It might be warded off with fire.



## TRACK AND SIGN

There are signs of recent wolf presence, including lays (compressed grass where the wolves slept), old kills, scat, and tracks. A DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check can follow the wolves to the Wolves' Den (see "Sites in the Graenseskov"), whereas a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check learns one of the following facts:

- Human remains indicate that the wolves uncharacteristically prefer attacking the throat.
- Their favored food appears to be elk but they have no qualms about eating human flesh.
- Large prints are mixed with the wolves' tracks, indicating a dire wolf is the alpha.
- Signs of abnormal aggression among the pack members, with traces of blood and tufts of fur.

## VICTIM

A villager has been, or is being, victimized by a wolf. This might be a child or lamb being carried off by a lone **wolf**, a dying "knight" bleeding out from bite wounds, or a merchant's sleigh being hounded by scrawny wolves easily scared off by fire or magic.

## WOLF PACK

An aggressive wolf pack hunts elk, sheep, villagers, or the PCs. A small pack has 3 (1d4+1) **wolves**, while a large pack has 7 (2d6) **wolves**.

## WORG OMEN-BEARERS

Three **worgs** bearing a subtle resemblance to the three Grey Sisters (one black, one misty silver, and one grayish-green) appear from the Mists to prophesy doom. They speak Goblin and Worg with trembling snarls and raspy growls. The DM should tie in their prophecy with any Tarokka readings done for the *Curse of Strahd*.

If a PC is encountered away from the party, the opportunistic worgs will attack. If the PCs attempt to fight them on even footing, the worgs split off in different directions into the Mist, attempting to divide and conquer the party. However, they flee into the woods once reduced to half hit points or less. If killed without using cold iron, they return to life in 24 hours.

## SITES IN THE GRAENSESKOV

### BARROW OF THE BOYARS

The Volchychkov family buries its boyars in a barrow mound north of the manor. Secret burial ceremonies were held with candlelight vigils for the departed boyar who would be interred in an unmarked barrow so his enemies couldn't desecrate his resting place. Thirteen barrow mounds with stone arches emerge from the mists that cling to the surrounding grassy lowlands. Unbeknownst to all, Strahd's reward for the boyars' service is transforming them into undead so they may continue to serve. At night, 3 (1d6) **specters** haunt the barrows, though they only attack those bearing bright light or who draw attention to themselves (e.g. by entering a barrow).

The barrows are sealed with unmarked stone slabs weighing 350 pounds (159 kg). Each holds a sarcophagus with the corpse of a boyar and funerary art objects worth 25 gp. Sordje the Justifier's sarcophagus holds a breastplate and *Sordje's sword* (see **Appendix B**), if one can determine which barrow Sordje lies in.

Robbing the barrows awakens one of the boyars as a **revenant** who won't rest until the funerary treasure is restored.

If the PCs use the *ghost lantern* (see **Appendix B**) in the barrows, it reveals Sordje's name on the door of his barrow mound. Within, the lantern's light reveals Sordje's spirit who will tell his true story (see **Appendix D**) and bestow his sword to a PC who swears to kill the three worgs that tricked Sordje into serving the Dark Powers.



## GORGON'S GRIN

An overgrown ruined farmhouse off the Old Svalich Road serves as the hideout for a gang of bandits calling themselves the Gorgon's Grin (named after the mark left by the garrotes they use to strangle their victims). Comprised of the few bandits who escaped the boyar's noose and a handful of "invaders from the Mists" who deserted, they prey indiscriminately on caravans and parties traveling between the village of Barovia and Volchkyrov Manor. 6 **bandits** are led by Black Dane (♂ HUMAN **BANDIT CAPTAIN**, NE), a cunning knave who stabbed Ser Branimara in the back and took control of the bandits. They relied on scout reports from Eris Corvara until the Vistani was imprisoned in Volchkyrov Manor. Now they spend much time arguing around the campfire.

Each of the bandits and Black Dane have subtle signs of having died — a noose scar about the neck, a side wound that aches at night, etc. Resurrected by the Dark Powers, each has a Dark Gift (as described in *Curse of Strahd*). Additionally, they have proficiency with Stealth and while in dim light or darkness can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

If a character who speaks Thieves' Cant comes alone wearing the *gloves of thievery* found under the Tree-with-a-Swing (see pg. 18), that character can make a DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check to pass him or herself off as a one of the bandits returned from the grave.

If Ser Cedimir is the Beast, he may approach the Gorgon's Grin to convince the bandits to work for him and to become loup du noir. While Black Dane will play along, he doesn't trust Cedimir. The "invaders from the Mist," however, view Cedimir as their wolf-headed god in the flesh.



## GEIST CAVERNS

Widely regarded as haunted after a series of strange deaths occurred here, the Geist Caverns are actually one large alabaster cave accessible by a narrow fissure and a steep natural stone staircase leading down. A dark pool of freezing water lies at the center of the cavern's floor, echoing with the constant dripping of water; an underwater tunnel 1/4 mile long empties into Deadman's Creek. Flowstones, stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, and other formations take on the vague likeness of tortured faces or bodies encased in stone. Tiny fissures that a small sized character could squeeze through wend their way to the surface.

A **giant lizard** (with Hold Breath & Spider Climb) lurks in the pool.

Any humanoid spending 10 minutes or longer in the cave begins to suffer hallucinations, seeing illusions of those who died acting out their final moments (known as "geists"). Every 10 minutes a character sees the geists, he or she must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or suffer short-term madness (see the DMG pg. 257).

Radke Iliev, the monster hunter, met his end here, overcome by a throat wound dealt by the Beast. His corpse, which lies slumped against a boulder carved in the likeness of three cloaked women, has the following items:

- A silvered scimitar, a longbow, 9 silvered arrows, a 10-foot silver chain, and a vial of holy water.
- A silver necklace with a sunburst pendant inset with a moonstone (50 gp).
- *Ghost lantern* (see **Appendix B**) in his dead grasp.

If the Boyar's Wolf Hunt (see pg. 30) has already taken place, and the Beast is aware that the PCs have ventured to Geist Caverns, then it will ambush them just outside the cavern's entrance. Trying to slip past the Beast while it blocks the cavern's entrance provokes an opportunity attack. A character knocked prone at the cavern's entrance must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or tumble down the stairs back into the cavern. The Beast attempts to keep the PCs trapped within the cavern, intending to let the madness of the Geist Caverns finish the PCs off.



## GREY SISTERS' TOWER

Long ago, a coven of three hags known as the Grey Sisters terrorized the eastern Old Svalich Road and preyed on the few villagers brave enough to call the Graenseskov home. The sisters included their “leader” Lagetha the Spinner (a green hag), Devishka of the Mists (a night hag), and Pretty Kolchya (a black annis). From their tower, the hags cultivated wickedness in mortals like arborists tending a pustulant fruit tree. However, the coven fell apart when boyar Borje Volchykrov, aided by the Halan witches, destroyed their tower and took captive Lagetha the Spinner. During the fighting Devishka escaped into the Mists and none has seen her since. With Lagetha’s execution, the last of the sisters remaining — Pretty Kolchya — retreated into the woods, leaving behind the ruined tower.

No denizens of Barovia dare go near the tower, believing it cursed by hag magic. The only threat is a **swarm of ravens** with red eyes roosting in the burnt rafters, once trained by the hags to peck out the eyes of intruders. The thatch roof and much of the interior was burned years ago, and razorvine creeps up the thick stone walls. Within the rubble an explorer will find a few gruesome spell components. When the winds of the Graenseskov pick up, the moaning timbers sound almost like the cackle of hags.

On top of the capstone of the stone archway’s interior is a loose brick. Behind the brick is a brass key that opens the chest in Kolchya’s lair.

## GRAVEN GARDEN



Graenseskov’s people observe a ritualistic dire wolf hunt as a rite of passage every four years. When a young adult dies on this hunt, the body is interred on hallowed ground in the woods just outside of Volchykrov Manor. Statues of angels, memorial markers, gravestones, and stone tombs are littered amidst midnight roses, celandine, and creeping ivy. This graven garden is protected by the *hallow* spell and dead bodies interred there cannot be turned into undead.

A small holy water font held by a cherub statue stands at the southern entrance to the garden. The cherub slowly weeps water which fills the font, its wings protecting the font from rains. This water acts as both holy water and a *potion of healing*. There is one vial’s worth in the font, though the trickle of tears is so slow it could take months before the font fills again on its own.

If the heart of a dire wolf is burned at midnight in the graven garden, the spirit of one of the young hunters animates a statue or tree, and will answer up to five questions as per the *speak with dead* spell. This power may only be called upon once every lunar month.

If PCs use the *ghost lantern* (see **Appendix B**) in the garden, it reveals an invisible urn made of white marble hidden amidst the statues. The urn contains the ashes of Amaliza, the Vistani mother of Ruzina; the boyar placed it here so she wouldn’t turn undead and haunt him. He asked the hag Lagetha for help making it invisible years before the boyar ordered her execution.





## THOUSANDFURS BRIDGE



Long ago, before the Old Svalich Road connected the Graenseskov with the village of Barovia, fur traders used to sell their pelts at a wooden bridge spanning Deadman’s Creek. According to local lore, Doctor Van Richten even purchased hides of werebeasts for his studies from the traders here. These days, however, fur traders travel to the village instead, and only use the bridge as a place to water their horses before hurrying on. They remember well the tale of one of their fellows, Vasily Holtsfoot. Strahd favored Vasily’s daughter, but the wicked Vasily coveted his daughter for himself and instead offered Strahd the pelt of any rare beast. Amused, Strahd demanded a unicorn’s pelt. Vasily tried to cheat the Count with a fake pelt, but his ruse was transparent. It is said Vasily was drowned in the creek by the very pelts he attempted to pawn.

The one-eyed bridge-tender — Old Man Vykov (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, N) — will relate this tale over pipeweed, as well as the others found in **Appendix D**, though he only mutters about “the hag” when asked about his missing eye. Old Man Vykov maintains a few basic provisions like horseshoes and wineskins that he sells, along with pelts from foxes, rabbits, and wolves.

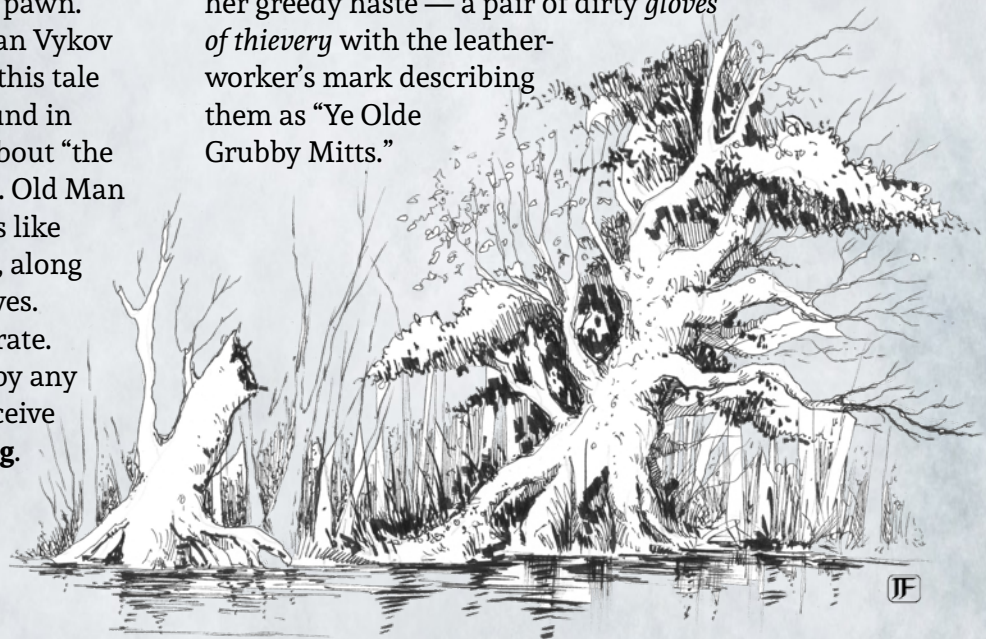
In this case, the folklore is quite accurate. Fur handled (or worn) near the bridge by any creature who has ever attempted to deceive Strahd animates as a **rug of smothering**.

## TREE-WITH-A-SWING

A monstrous oak tree swollen with gall hangs over the banks of a chilly pond, with numerous old ropes dangling from its branches. Twenty-four years ago, a gang of bandits was hung from this tree, as former boyar Claes Volchykrov ordered them hung above the stolen treasure they’d hidden in the murky water. The old oak was the only tree with limbs large enough to bear the weight. When the corpses were taken down, each was mysteriously missing its right hand, and the ropes appeared back in its branches after being cut down. A trick by Pretty Kolchya, it frightened off the villagers so the hag could retrieve the bandits’ treasure for herself.

Children of Volchykrov Manor who know nothing of the hangings simply call it the “tree-with-a-swing.” They come here to play on clear mornings when their parents aren’t looking, leaping off a rope swing into the pond. Sometimes, however, a child will find a bit of brittle, amandine (little chocolate cakes), or plum dumplings on a stump near the tree. Though they know well enough that such treats are the working of wicked witches and faeries, some children cannot resist. Any child following the trail of sweets reaches the Gingerbread House (**Chapter 3**) and is never seen again.

Underwater, entangled in the oak’s roots, is a bit of bandit treasure that Kolchya dropped in her greedy haste — a pair of dirty *gloves of thievery* with the leather-worker’s mark describing them as “Ye Olde Grubby Mitts.”





## VISTANI CAMP

The Vistani of the Graenseskov camp in the southern Borderwood between the Ivlis and Ulvand Rivers. When the seasons, supply of food, wolf attacks, or the boyar's mood necessitates the Vistani move, they pack their sleighs and *vardos* (carriages) and trek to a new site, singing songs of the road in their lively *patterna*. Their tribe, the Latrova, are horse traders and craftspeople. Their *raunie* (matriarch) is Mirsada Latrova (♀ HUMAN SCOUT, NG), an unusually young leader gifted with the ability to read the psychic impressions left on objects. Despite Mirsada's attempts to dissuade her tribesmen from smuggling and horse-thieving, plenty of young men and women rob caravans passing along the Old Svalich Road, coming from distant lands like Nova Vaasa. A few, however, honor their *raunie's* wishes that they live peaceably alongside the Barovians, finding work as guides through the twisting Borderwood.

Bad blood lingers between the Latrova and the boyars of Volchykrov Manor, and the current boyar in particular. Vistani are no longer welcome at the manor where public sentiment is against them, and most of the Vistani would prefer to leave those dwelling in the manor to deal with the Beast on their own. There are three issues which led to the current misgivings. First, the Latrova have a history of horse thieving and the boyars of encouraging harsh treatment of Vistani. Second, boyar Borje Volchykrov had a tryst with Amaliza, the *raunie's* older sister, who had a child (Ruzina) by him; however, Amaliza died in childbirth, and instead of returning her body to the woods or to her people, the boyar burned her corpse in a fit of drunken grief. He still keeps the ashes. Third, Mirsada warned the boyar against his attack on the Grey Sisters' Tower, foretelling that only suffering would come of it, yet the boyar ignored the *raunie's* counsel. In recent years, only desperation, bravery, or foolishness cross the cultural line that separates the Vistani from the manor-folk. The only exception to this are wanderers in the Mists, who the Vistani extend cautious hospitality toward.

## SEEKING OUT THE LATROVA

The PCs might seek out the Latrova camp to:

- Create a *potion of greater healing*.
- Learn Ruzina's true parentage.
- Negotiate for the return of the "missing" torsion spring to the manor's ballista.
- Receive an object reading from Mirsada.
- Return the imprisoned Eris Corvara to his tribe.
- Return the urn with Amaliza's ashes.
- Track down the Gorgon's Grin bandits, who are working with Eris Corvara.

## THE SLEIGH RACES

The Latrova Vistani are fond of handling disputes and all manner of conflicts through an old tradition of horse-drawn sleigh racing. Typically, this involves a mutually agreed upon course a few miles long which the contestants are not supposed to deviate from, though rough play and cheating are par for the course. If the PCs end up sleigh racing, use the chase rules in **Appendix C** as well as guidelines for the "Sleigh Ride of Death" in **Chapter 2**.





### THE RAUNIE'S OBJECT READINGS

If the PCs are on fair terms with the Latrova, their *raunie* Mirsada will perform psychic readings on various objects they find during the adventure.

**Beast's molar tooth.** Mirsada has a vision confirming the Beast's true identity, but she falls into a nightmarish catatonic state for 24 hours during which she is unable to communicate.

**Cold iron greataxe.** Mirsada sees the moment of the hag Lagetha's execution, but she also feels the vengeance of the smith Ruzina who forged the axe, the indignation of Ser Cedomir who wielded it, and the pride of the boyar who displayed it in his hall.

**Cursed wolfskin.** Mirsada witnesses the hag Kolchya enchanting the wolfskin, as well as the Beast's transformation and its overwhelming bloodlust, confirming that the wolfskin is the Beast's. Though she doesn't see the Beast's true identity, she gains a glimpse of its lair and can direct the PCs there.

**Ghost lantern.** Instead of having a psychic reading, Mirsada is temporarily possessed by the ghost of Katerina Volchykrov, the spirit of monster hunter Radke Iliev, or any restless spirit that has pressing words to share with the PCs.

**Hag eye.** Mirsada sees the hags carve the original eye from Old Man Vykov of Thousandfurs Bridge, imbue it with magic in a cauldron, and surgically place it into the screaming mongrel Krabka's eye socket. She also glimpses the approximate location of the Gingerbread House in the Borderwood, and sees Pretty Kolchya preparing a terrible curse using a large recipe book full of foul incantations. However, the burden of the vision prevents Mirsada from using her object reading powers for 24 hours.

**Old cradle in manor.** Mirsada sees the green hag Lagetha swap the human child for her own hagspaw child, the only clue that the new child was hagspaw being a red glow in her eyes and a mottled green birthmark behind her neck.

**Pretty Kolchya's dream bundle.** Mirsada sees the hag's nightmares, both of Strahd and of the cold iron executioner's axe. She can reveal how terrified Kolchya is of the axe. However, the burden of the vision prevents Mirsada from using her object reading powers for 24 hours.

**Sordje's sword.** Mirsada sees a worg speaking a prophecy she cannot understand while a hag cackles in the background, then three wolven statuettes on a windowsill exploding, and then the mangled corpse of Cvetlana, the boyar's daughter, in her father's arms.

### AMALIZA'S SAD FATE

Amaliza, older sister of the *raunie*, fell in love with boyar Borje Volchykrov even though he was already married to Katerina. When Amaliza became pregnant with Ruzina, she desperately wanted to return to her people. However, the boyar refused, fearing his daughter Ruzina would be taken by the Vistani. Despite the *raunie's* protestations, Amaliza stayed at the boyar's request, ultimately dying in childbirth. The *raunie* blames the boyar for her sister's death, claiming it wasn't the childbirth that killed her but being forced to stay in one place contrary to Vistani wanderlust. Her ashes were burned and hidden by the guilt-ridden boyar.

### CAMP TRADER

Iancu Silvertongue (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, CG) handles most deals with outsiders, offering an assortment of simple goods, tack, bridles, saddles, and fine riding horses. Quality metal goods are rare, as the boyar takes the highest quality ore, so Iancu is willing to pay full price for such items. The trader isn't above buying stolen goods, though anything he suspects was taken from a grave or corpse he will avoid like the plague. However, if PCs manage to distract Iancu or search his stall when the trader isn't looking, they will find weapons bearing the mark of Volchykrov Manor and the missing torsion spring from the manor's ballista. The weapons were smuggled by Ruzina.

With characters who conduct honest business, Iancu will share the story of his missing brother Iulian who ran off with an exceptionally tall raven-haired beauty named Lady Molot Kosti who claimed to be from Nova Vaasa to the east. However, Iancu can find no trace of a Lady Kosti, and he fears his brother may be in danger.

### POTION SIDE QUEST

Mirsada can craft a *potion of greater healing* in 10 days if the corpse of a "mountain lizard" (**giant lizard**) is brought to her. Such lizards dwell in the Balinoks and Howling Hills, favoring wet caves. One is located in the Geist Caverns (see pg. 16).



## WENDING BYWAYS

The eastern Borderwood is criss-crossed by a labyrinth of foot trails. These trails crawl over fallen logs, up embankments, and over moss-covered boulders without rhyme or reason. Some double back to where they began while others climb foothills to a dead end at steep bluffs. Traversing the byways is made all the more difficult by the Mists which lay heavy about the birch trees, covering the ground between hills in thick fingerlings of fog. Sound travels strangely here, such that distant howls may sound closer than they are and voices may seem to come from a different direction than they originated in. The only certain path through the byways is marked by faded red tassels and bits of yarn hung from the trees roughly every 300 feet (90 meters); this path, originally created by horse smugglers, leads to Volchykrov Manor.

Of all places in Barovia, the byways are most touched by the Mists and are regarded by the Vistani with a hushed reverence. 3 (1d4+1) **will-o'-wisps** bob and weave in the distance, attempting to distract travelers into leaving the trails, but remain harmless if left alone. Newcomers to Strahd's domain most often emerge from the Mists here, wandering the maze of foot trails for hours before realizing they are a long, long way from home.

## WEREWOLF'S HOVEL

Lovrenk Kosar (♂ HUMAN, WEREWOLF, N) once served the former boyar until he was afflicted with werewolf lycanthropy while rescuing a girl held ransom by bandits — none other than a young Katerina Volchykrov. Refusing to embrace the curse, Lovrenk retired from his lord's service and retreated to a cabin in the woods overlooking Cailleach Falls where he lives till this day, still fighting the bestial urges that torment him.

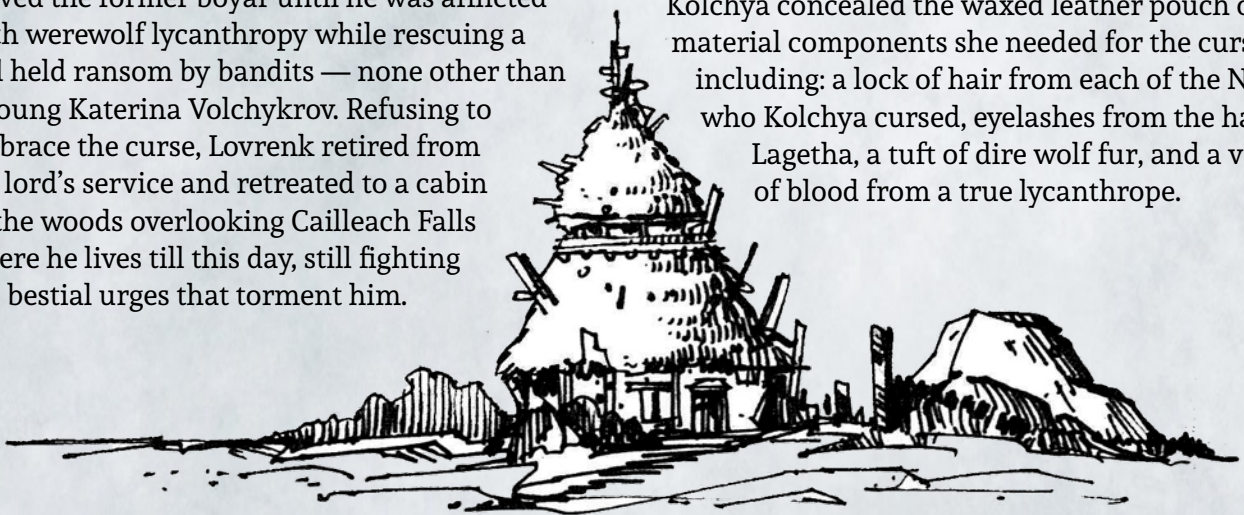
When the monster hunter Radke Iliev came to the Graenseskov, he quickly discovered Lovrenk's secret and attempted to ascertain the truth... by stabbing Lovrenk in the hand with an iron blade. No blood flowed from the wound. His secret revealed, Lovrenk fought Radke until the two were exhausted and could fight on no more. Realizing that Lovrenk was not the Beast, Radke promised to come back the next day to kill him. Whether this was meant as a warning or genuine threat, Lovrenk never knew. That was the last he ever saw of the monster hunter.

Among Lovrenk's humble possessions and old military effects are the steel dagger and silver arrow that Radke attacked him with, as well as many strange elixirs.

## WOLVES' DEN

Dug out beneath the roots of an oak grove on an embankment, the wolves' den shelters 3 (1d4+1) small wolf packs with 3 (1d4+1) wolves each. At any given time there are roughly 10 adult **wolves** along with several cubs. If humans approach, wolves will snarl and dart at them before retreating back inside the den. Passages between the roots are barely big enough for humans to pass through in single file. With so little room to maneuver, attacks with bludgeoning and slashing weapons weighing more than 2 pounds (0.9 kg) have disadvantage to hit, whereas attacks with two-handed weapons, longbows, and shortbows are impossible.

Deep within the heart of the den, Pretty Kolchya concealed the waxed leather pouch of material components she needed for the curse, including: a lock of hair from each of the NPCs who Kolchya cursed, eyelashes from the hag Lagetha, a tuft of dire wolf fur, and a vial of blood from a true lycanthrope.



## VOLCHYKROV MANOR

Built into a lowlands pass through the Howling Hills, the pale stone manor of the Volchykrov family lies in the shadow of the Balinok Mountains. It has weathered storms, invaders from the Mists, horse thieves, mountain goblins, and now the Beast. The only bastion of civilization in the haunted Graenseskov, the manor is built between stony cliffs, using natural caverns in the rock to supplement the thick walls serving as its main defense. The manor is surrounded by a handful of homesteads scattered in the wilderness. Though the manorfolk are accustomed to strangers stumbling out of the Mists, this has done nothing to lessen their superstitions. If anything, they've grown more cautious, lest they welcome the Beast into their midst unwittingly. Denizens of the manor maintain a nervous vigilance against the Beast, as if the manor stones themselves whisper doom.

### VOLCHYKROV MANOR

*"Wolfenblood stands strong against the Mists."*

**Population:** 99 humans, most in surrounding homesteads, and occasional visiting merchants or travelers ensnared by the Mists.

**Government:** Boyar Borje Volchykrov governs the manor and surrounding lands, adjudicating disputes and collecting taxes for Strahd.

**Defense:** The "Hounds of the Borderwood" include 9 mounted thugs led by Ser Cedomir. A kennel of 12 trained mastiffs can be used for defense, and an old nonfunctioning ballista could be repaired.

**Commerce:** Only the most essential supplies are available for sale, though weapons and horses are traded in great variety and quantity. Travelers find room and board at the Weary Horse Inn.

**Organizations:** Father Fiofan covertly spreads the faith of the Morning Lord, while Merje operates an infirmary tied to the Halan witches.





## AUDIENCE WITH THE BOYAR

Once the PCs come before boyar Borje Volchkyrov, he serves them ale in silver goblets (a test for lycanthropy) and inquires of their experience with monsters. In his circuitous boisterous manner, during which he'll show off his daughter Cvetlana trying wedding gowns and command Krabka to mimic animal calls, the boyar relates the tale of the hag's curse and the Beast stalking his lands (see the **Introduction**). Even the monster hunter Radke Iliev, who took an advance from the boyar, mysteriously vanished, presumably slain by the Beast.

The boyar will offer the PCs either 150 gold pieces or a sleigh/carriage drawn by 2 riding horses (their choice) if they rid the Graenseskov of the Beast.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

The boyar will answer whatever questions the PCs have with his usual bluster. He can provide the following information.

### ***When did the attacks begin?***

The Beast first struck three days after the hag Kolchya uttered her curse over one year ago.

### ***What have the attacks been like?***

Since then, there have been countless attacks at the fringes of the manor, with many homesteads barely surviving winter due to the loss of their sheep and goat herds compounded by the Count's taxes. All the attacks occur at night irrespective of the moon's phase, leaving the victim with their throat torn out. To date there have been approximately 40 people killed by the Beast, including 32 peasants, 4 merchants, and 4 of the boyar's "knights."

### ***What did the monster hunter learn?***

The monster hunter Radke Iliev was exceedingly tight-lipped about his work, only recommending that Krabka the mongrel be imprisoned or killed, though he gave no explanation as to why. Out of respect for his wife's memory (she had the boyar spare the mongrel), the boyar merely added a chain to Krabka's collar. Fortunately, the monster

hunter left his journal in the room he'd been staying in at the Weary Horse Inn, and the boyar gives this to the PCs (see **Appendix D**).

### ***What does the Beast look like?***

The boyar will summon his bodyguard Ser Branimara, a stout woman with dark blonde braided hair and the side of her head shaved revealing a nasty scar. She describes an attack the Beast made against the boyar's hunting party earlier in the year. It was the size of a draft horse with black and mottled grey fur, fangs the size of knives, and blazing yellow eyes. Mists engulfed the hunting party and then the Beast's howls seemed to come from multiple directions at once. Amidst the chaos, Branimara saw it tear out the throats of several men and a horse. She struck it only to have her old sword shatter against its hide before the Beast vanished back into the mists.

### ***What do you know about the hag?***

The boyar will relate the tale of his sacking the tower of the Grey Sisters, believing the sole surviving hag to be Pretty Kolchya. Beyond that, he directs the PCs to speak with Merje the Seeker who led the boyar's men to the hag sisters' tower.

### ***What leads do you have?***

First, the "knight" Jovich was killed three days ago, and his throat was torn in the manner of the Beast. Second, the servant Lubomir — bitten by the Beast two weeks ago — is at the infirmary being watched for signs of "werewolfism." Third, the monster hunter left a trail after vanishing a month ago.

## THE BOYAR'S SUPPORT

If the PCs ask the boyar to provide them resources to aid their quest, the stodgy boyar will hear them out. He favors those who don't humiliate themselves, but negotiate from a position of strength. While he has several "knights" as well as a stable of riding horses and snow sleighs, the boyar values those too greatly to give them to newcomers he scarcely knows. The boyar may provide any of the following resources if he is so inclined:

- A letter of introduction on the PCs' behalf.
- One of his trained hunting dogs (a **mastiff**).
- Two pack **mules** with saddle bags.
- A variety of weapons ranging from longswords and maces to heavy crossbows.
- A *potion of healing* brewed by Merje.
- The cold iron great axe used to behead the hag Lagetha hanging above his fireplace mantle.

#### COLD IRON & SHADOW FEY

In Barovia, there is a type of monster known as the shadow fey, including evil sprites and all kinds of hags (such as night hags and black annis). Weapons forged of pure iron (not steel) in the old smithing traditions (called "cold iron") bypass resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing weapons that a shadow fey may have. However, on an attack roll of '1' a cold iron weapon breaks.

## FACES OF THE MANOR

The boyar keeps Ser Cedomir and Father Fiofan (see **Chapter 2**) in his court where he can keep an eye on them, as well as a few trusted confidantes, bodyguards, and preening sycophants.



### BOYAR BORJE VOLCHYKROV

A prideful warrior long past his prime, Borje Volchykrov (♂ **HUMAN VETERAN**, LN) is a descendant of the boyars, aristocratic warriors who fought in Strahd's campaign to drive out the Tergs centuries ago. Borje's eyes show the weight of years, for he lost his first wife Tea to plague, his second wife Katerina to dire wolves, his mistress

Amaliza to childbirth, and he even turned his youngest son Pyotr over to Strahd who requested the boy as recompense for Borje attempting to evade taxes years ago. Though terrified of Strahd, Borje seeks to honor his ancestors' loyalty to the Count with his own loyalty (and a slightly pompous title). Borje maintains a rough frontier sort of law in eastern Barovia, and plenty of thieves have him to thank for their missing hands.

Frightened that his son Cedomir may be the one cursed by Pretty Kolchya, the boyar is fully in denial, and will become furious if the PCs suggest that Cedomir might be the Beast.

#### THE BOYAR

Owing to his age, his girth, and his war injuries, Borje suffers disadvantage on his attack rolls, and his speed is only 20 feet (6 m). Additionally, he wields a longsword and shield, and wears a breastplate instead of splint; this doesn't change his AC, but it does prevent him from making extra shortsword attacks. His CR is 2.

**Bond.** Volchykrov Manor is his lifeblood and honor, and he'll do anything to protect it.

**Flaw.** Borje drinks to forget the horrific death of his wife and the sacrifice of his youngest son. When drunk, he's prone to aggressive outbursts.

**Ideal.** Loyalty. The bonds of blood and fealty run thicker than any high-minded ideals, and treachery is the worst of sins.

**Personality Trait.** Boisterous and cocksure, the boyar rarely approaches an issue directly, preferring a bit of bluff and bluster first.

### ACO "FOUR-EYES", THE VAMPIRE'S SPY

Aco "Four-Eyes" Koslov (♂ **VAMPIRE SPAWN**, NE) is Strahd's spy in the Graenseskov who arrived at the manor ten winters ago and wormed his way into the boyar's confidence as his favored drinking companion. His guise as a glasses-wearing unassuming coffee and spice merchant explains his periods of absence when he reports to Strahd. A shrewd information broker, Aco knows where various Vistani clans can be found at different times of year and which members of the manor are most susceptible to bribery. He is under strict orders to feed judiciously and then only outside of Volchykrov Manor to avoid raising suspicion.



### SER BRANIMIRA, THE OLD GUARD

Ser Branimira Syrncevic (♀ HUMAN **BANDIT CAPTAIN**, LN) once led a gang of bandits but she was betrayed by her fellows and was found by the former boyar who spared her life. In exchange, she swore an oath of fealty and fought for him. Despite her misgivings about his son, Borje Volchykrov, the stoic Branimira serves loyally, only giving voice to her disagreement with the boyar when he drinks. She holds little trust for the Hounds of the Borderwood, who she sees as little better than bandits. Ironically, Branimira is enamored of Ser Cedomir even though she knows he's a heartless bastard; she attempts to keep her affections hidden.

### CVETLANA, THE HAGSPAWN BRIDE

Cvetlana Volchykrov (♀ HAGSPAWN **NOBLE**, N) is the boyar's youngest child, an astute young woman whose hand in marriage is promised to Ismark the Lesser. A dark omen of misaligned stars occurred at her birth, yet as she grew into a hearty and hale girl, her parents hoped the omen was false. Little did they realize that the boyar had been seduced by the hag Lagetha in disguise, and the hag stole the couple's child, replacing the babe with the hag's spawn. Besides prima donna vanity and constantly quarreling with her father, Cvetlana appears to be none other than a human. Indeed, she herself doesn't realize she is a hagspawn.

### ERELDA, THE SCHEMING HERBALIST

Erela (♀ HUMAN **BAROVIAN WITCH**, N) is the true daughter of the boyar and Katerina who was switched at birth with the hagspawn Cvetlana. Raised by the Grey Sisters, Erela was taught dark magics and grew to believe the boyar's pride and dishonesty were the source of all woe and misery in the Graenseskov. Foreseeing the destruction of their coven, the hags sent Erela to the manor to infiltrate it and undo the boyar from within. She found a place among the Halan witches who'd sworn loyalty to the boyar, serving as an herbalist and root-worker. All the while, however, she looks for ways to undermine the boyar's authority and instill doubt in his rule.

### KRABKA, THE MONGREL

Krabka (♀ **MONGRELFOLK**, NG) is a pitiful but mostly gentle creature who the boyar's men found in chains when they destroyed the lair of the goblins in the eastern hills. The boyar spared the mongrel's life only because his wife pleaded for him not to kill it. Krabka lurks in the shadows of the boyar's hall, wearing a deep hood to cover its face, groveling, cleaning up after messes, and wrestling with the dogs for scraps. Little does anyone know that Krabka is an unwitting spy planted in the boyar's manor by Pretty Kolchya who carved out one of its eyes and replaced it with a *hag eye* (see the *Monster Manual*).

### KATERINA'S GHOST

The **ghost** of the boyar's wife haunts Volchykrov Manor, appearing as young as she did the day of her death. Not a malicious spirit, she doesn't have a Horrifying Visage (unless she so chooses) nor does she yet realize how to Possess a living creature. Instead, she appears on stormy nights when the wolves' howling is loudest, preferring her old bedroom in the manor house (Area 3) or the chapel library (Area 2). She attempts to make contact to warn others that her death was no accident, rather a murder orchestrated by her scheming stepson Cedomir who covets his father's position above all else. Katerina had an affair with Cedomir, and thus she was able to glimpse firsthand the depths to which her stepson is willing to descend.

Unfortunately, she can scarcely speak more than a single whispered word at a time, and she can only assume a visible form for a few minutes at night. However, in the light of the *ghost lantern*, Katerina's ghost can speak normally.





**MAP KEY**  
**VOLCHYKROV MANOR**

1. Barracks & Kennels
2. Chapel
3. Gustav's Turret
4. Halan Infirmary
5. Manor House
6. Old Quarry Tunnels
7. Rookery Tower
8. Smithy
9. Stojanovic Home
10. Weary Horse Inn & Stables

## AREAS OF THE MANOR

### 1. BARRACKS & KENNELS

A squat three-story tower overlooking the eastern gate serves as barracks for the Hounds of the Borderwood — the boyar's “knights.” The Hounds occupy the wider ground level, which houses their sleeping quarters and cooking pit. Nine **thugs** are all that remain of the so-called Hounds. They follow the boyar in name, but are divided roughly in half between those who are marginally loyal or in it for themselves, and those who are unswervingly loyal to Ser Cedomir. Twelve trained hunting **mastiffs** also roam the lower level, using the common space around the fire pit as a makeshift kennel.

The second level, accessed by a spiral stair, houses their armory, including 11 suits of leather armor, 11 shields, 11 maces, 11 heavy crossbows, and 110 crossbow bolts. Arrow slits look out in each direction.

The third level is covered but lacks any walls, serving as a lookout tower.

The small dungeon below holds Eris Corvara.

### 2. CHAPEL

Hewn from the rock face, this astoundingly quiet modest chapel is devoted to no single god, but instead used as a contemplation and prayer space by a few of the manor-folk. Red votary candles are wedged into the rock alcoves along with tokens of those who've been killed by the Beast in the last year.



A small library of books and scrolls, mostly pertaining to history of Volchkyrov Manor and geography of the Graenseskov, is housed in the southern end of the chapel. Father Fiofan (see pg. 34) can often be found here pouring over old tomes or leading small groups in prayers to the Morning Lord.

**Fiofan's Alchemy Lab.** Hidden behind a tapestry is a hollowed nook where Fiofan conducts his alchemical research. A thin fracture barely a foot wide in the rock leads to the rocky hilltop surface; this provides a current of chilly air, which someone investigating the tapestry might notice. Searching the lab reveals the following concoctions:

- A vial of holy water.
- A *potion of poison* (see “Death of the Boyar”).
- A contact poison made of a dead water weird emulating running water (see “Mob Injustice”).
- A sulfurous brown elixir which allows a lycanthrope to resist its next transformation within 1 hour, or grants a non-lycanthrope advantage on its saving throws against contracting lycanthropy for 1 hour.

### 3. GUSTAV'S TURRET

Built atop an island of stone overlooking the western Old Svalich Road, this 20 foot tall turret was named after the old captain of the boyar's “knights” who was slain by invaders from the Mists. The turret provides a 360° view of the surrounding area, though visibility is often limited by the Mists. It is accessed via spiraling stairs carved into the rock. A ballista as old as the manor itself rests here, however it is missing its torsion spring thanks to a bit of Vistani mischief, making it in-operational. If the torsion spring is replaced by a character proficient in smith's tools, thieves' tools, or tinker's tools, the ballista (see DMG pg. 255) can be repaired.

### 4. HALAN INFIRMARY

While the witches worshipping Hala prefer to keep to their own, their mandate is to help the meek, and so they established an infirmary at the manor under the former boyar Claes Volchkyrov. The witches trained young women in healing

herbs and simple medicine, and these healers were put to the test during the fighting against the bandits, goblins, and invaders from the Mists. Four **commoners** proficient in Medicine and herbalism kit — Lala (Tulip), Ljerka (Lily), Nevena (Marigold), and Vres (Heather) — tend a dozen cots separated by muslin drapes. They actively seek out anyone in the village who needs treatment and invite them to the infirmary. While Merje the Seeker (see pg. 35) is in charge of the infirmary and all medical decisions made within its walls, when he is away hunting down clues about his mortal hag enemies, he entrusts the infirmary into Erelde's capable hands.

However, the hags' spies have infiltrated the infirmary. The master herbalist Erelde (see pg. 25) handles collecting rare ingredients and researching unknown conditions, though she secretly serves the hags. Additionally, the middle-aged Ljerka also secretly serves the hags; a barber whose thieving son Narsden (see pg. 60) was captured by Pretty Kolchya, Ljerka gathers hair and fingernail clippings from manor-folk for the hag's spell components.

### 5. MANOR HOUSE

Built in the style of old aristocratic homes in the Balinok Mountains, the boyar's manor house boasts a grand lower story built of gneiss stone, and a slightly larger upper story built of wood. The lower story contains the great hall, a north wing for servants, and a south wing for the boyar's family, while the second story contains the bedrooms.

**Great Hall.** The boyar receives guests, hosts feasts, and tries criminals in the great hall. Measuring some 20' by 40', it is accessed via double doors leading from the foyer. Stone busts of deceased boyars are placed in elevated alcoves which are under-lit by candles so their shadowed faces silently watch all who enter the hall. A rectangular fire pit spans half the length of the hall, and it is often spanned by juniper boughs which are believed to ward off evil spirits. At the far end is a stone platform raised by a few stairs where the boyar's faded lacquered mahogany throne rests. Hanging behind the throne is the



cold iron greataxe used to execute the hag Lagetha. The boyar spends much time in the great hall, along with the other NPCs described in “Faces of the Manor” (see pg. 24).

**North Wing.** Connected to the Weary Horse Inn & Stables (Area 10) by a breezeway covered in ivy, the manor’s north wing houses the servant’s quarters, kitchens, and storerooms. The wine cellar is also accessed through this wing.

**South Wing.** The south wing houses the boyar’s trophy room where he keeps the pelts and stuffed corpses of his greatest hunts, an art gallery where the boyar’s deceased wife Katerina used to practice her painting and is now used as an office for storing the boyar’s records, a fencing hall where Cedomir practices swordplay with various “knights”, and a small estate room for private functions and family dinners. The boyar’s record room contains a small locked treasure chest, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity (thieves’ tools) check to open; within are old scrolls with notes about the invaders from the Mist which describe how they view lycanthropes like Fiofan as being “blessed” by their wolf-headed god.

**Upstairs.** Four bedrooms fill the manor’s second floor, radiating off a central lobby surrounding the stairs — the boyar’s, Ser Cedomir’s, Cvetlana’s, and one that used to be Katerina’s that the boyar keeps just as it was out of nostalgia. Ser Cedomir is careful not to leave anything incriminating in his bedroom (including the *cursed wolfskin* if he is the Beast). There is one more room upstairs that has been relegated to storing Cvetlana’s extra dresses, and that is the nursery with the old cradle that was used when Cvetlana and Pyotr were infants.

## 6. OLD QUARRY TUNNELS

Granulite gneiss used to be harvested from this quarry before the miners went mad and an accident collapsed the lower sections of the mine. Whatever they encountered down below that drove them mad has been long since buried and forgotten. The upper tunnels are used to access the western ramparts connecting to Gustav’s Turret (Area 3) and the eastern ramparts connecting to the Barracks & Kennels (Area 1).

## 7. ROOKERY TOWER

Hunters legends claim that wolves and ravens work together, ravens revealing the location of prey to wolves whose scraps the ravens feast upon. Nowhere is this legend felt more keenly than the Graenseskov with its red-eyed ravens. The “black birds of death” were long believed to presage vicious wolf attacks. Centuries ago, however, a wandering wereraven taught the boyars how to train the red-eyed ravens to serve them. Since then, the rookery has stood at Volchykrov Manor as a monument to man’s ability to tame the wild-lands...or his hubris in thinking that he can.

At any given time 3 (1d6) **swarms of ravens** can be found roosting in the rookery. The ravens are tended by Vasilija Gavrauh (♀ HALF-ELF **COMMONER**, NG), a falconer whose age is only revealed in her curly black hair streaked with silver. While Vasilija handles training the ravens as messengers and hunting aides, it is Father Fiofan who has honed their use to deliver encrypted messages and intelligence for other worshippers of the Morning Lord scattered throughout Barovia.

### WHAT RAVENS KNOW

The ravens are able to mimic sounds they’ve heard, and are unusually astute if *Speak with Animals* is used. If the players are stumped at any point during the investigation and think to consult the ravens, the DM can have the ravens recite a simple cryptic clue. For example, if the PCs suspect Cvetlana may be a hagspawn and decide to ask the ravens about her, the ravens might reply: “*envy green, envy green!*” Alternately, if the PCs have trouble finding the hunter Radke Iliev, the ravens might reply with their next step: “*Vistani!*”

## 8. SMITHY

Uri Nostova (♂ **HUMAN GUARD**, N) runs the manor’s smithy responsible for producing nails, horseshoes, and simple metalworks as well as weapons for the boyar’s men. Years ago, Uri lost his wife Daria to the predations of dire wolves. Years ago, Uri has struggled come to terms with the resentment he felt when no one came to her aid; however, he still is unfriendly with the boyar,



who he holds responsible. Ruzina (see pg. 36) assists her father at the forge, though she is prone to daydreaming and is more interested in making exquisite weapons that are pieces of art rather than shaping common iron goods.

The small second floor above the forge houses the bedrooms of Uri and Ruzina.

**Ruzina's Bedroom.** Ruzina keeps a hidden cache under the floorboards, which can be found with a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The cache contains her Beast-hunting paraphernalia:

- Three silvered weapons — dagger, longsword, and handaxe.
- Silver hunting trap.
- Locket with a picture of Ruzina's mother Daria.
- Sketches of werewolf anatomy and bundle of dried wolfsbane.

## 9. STOJANOVIC HOME

The Stojanovics have long served the Volchkyrov aristocracy, ever since Bosko rescued Sordje the Justifier's horse from a sinkhole. Since that time they identify themselves with birthstone rings passed down through the ages, allegedly gifts from Sordje, first of the boyars. Their family home has grown over the years into a ramshackle thing with protruding additions, three stories, and numerous dormer windows looking toward the manor. The house is a constant flurry of activity, with sleighs being repaired outside, servants coming and going with pots to clean or dishes to stack, carriages being cleaned or new wheels shod, and cupbearers staggering between the two buildings in the dead of night reeking of ale.

Household servants, cupbearers, carriage drivers, and sleigh-tenders, the Stojanovics are an assiduous family who has suffered too much from the Beast's predations. Ratimir Stojanovic (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, LG), head of the family and master carriage and sleigh driver, in particular feels the loss of his three cousins Milvan, Rade, and Stanz (see pg. 38) who tried to hunt down the Beast. Meanwhile his wife Jelica (♀ HUMAN COMMONER, LG), who oversees the servants of Volchkyrov Manor, bemoans her missing sister Ivanka and her niece Anya. Her brother-in-law

Bozidar (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, NG) is a bit of a simpleton who keeps at bay the thought that his family is dead by clinging to false optimism. He serves as the boyar's cupbearer, a somewhat humiliating task he takes great pride in.

The Stojanovics are actively looking to hire anyone willing to search for Ivanka and her daughter Anya, offering a 10 gp reward for the whereabouts or fate of either.

## 10. WEARY HORSE INN & STABLES

The rustic Weary Horse Inn always has a fire in the hearth, the ale is cheap but plentiful, and every night the proprietor Stravko Nosek (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, N) entertains guests with his viola. Despite Stravko's charisma and skillful storytelling (he knows the tales in **Appendix D**), there is a wearisome malaise that hangs over the inn. Travelers, ranging from passing merchants to horse thieves in disguise, seem burdened by some nameless thing, as if they'd trudged one mile too many. The occasional traveler from beyond the Mists who finds their way to the inn receives a suspicious eye, but will be served beet soup and bread all the same.

The ground floor holds a common room built around a masonry hearth, kitchens, storerooms, and the adjoining stables, while the ten guest rooms are located upstairs. Among the current guests is merchant Vitomir Alkaev (see pg. 44).

Stravko's wife Emilika (♀ HUMAN COMMONER, N), his daughter Evdoyika (♀ HUMAN COMMONER, N), and his son Jakso (♂ HUMAN COMMONER, N) all help manage the inn and stables. The family suffered the loss of their prized horses to an attack by the Beast which also cost the life of their eldest son Kostadin. This loss weighs heavy on Stravko and Emilika, so heavily that during the "Mob Injustice" event in **Chapter 2**, Stravko will lead the mob's persecution of an innocent believed to be the Beast.

**Radke Iliev's Old Room.** Searching under the mattress of the room the hunter Radke Iliev stayed in, or spending 10 minutes searching and succeeding a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, turns up a silver dagger and a note that reads: "*Don't trust the boyar.*"

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### BOYAR'S WOLF HUNT

**Triggers.** One week passes; after “Mob Injustice” in **Chapter 2**; or when the PCs reach 2nd level (DM’s choice).

Borje Volchykrov declares a wolf hunt, organizing his “knights” and hounds, able-bodied men with sleighs, a few villagers invited from Barovia, and potentially the PCs. Ser Cedomir accompanies his father so long as Cedomir is not the Beast. Roughly 4 mounted **thugs** (“knights”), 4 **scouts**, and 10 **commoners** on sleighs make up the hunting party. Leaving at dawn, the party enters the Borderwood south of the manor with much fanfare. After a slow morning, they reach a mist-shrouded gorge echoing with howls. The foolhardy boyar insists on entering the gorge, whereupon the hunting party is swallowed by mists and the cackling of a hag echoes around them. Half of the hunting party (though not the boyar) are transformed into wolves by evil magic. Was this Deviskha of the Mists at work? The Dark Powers themselves?

When the mist clears, the boyar sounds his horn and gives enthusiastic chase to the “wolves,” exhorting his men to avenge themselves for the slaughter of the Beast. However, it should be evident to any PCs present that there is something strange about how these wolves are behaving. Each wolf retains a bit of its human personality or costume, so a surly “knight” might growl in a grumbly voice and have scraps of leather armor hanging off its back. Without the PCs’ intervention, the boyar foolishly kills most of the polymorphed hunters, their bodies returning to human form only once the party returns to the manor, at which point the boyar flies into a rage seeing how he’s been tricked.

If the PCs are not with the hunting party, Merje or Finka Franic of the Halan witches can warn them that wicked magic is afoot in the Borderwood and the hunting party needs help. Merje or Finka reveals a hag’s bundle of wooden figurines, fingernails, hair, and wolf’s fur used to cast a powerful hex on the hunters.

### HANGING THE VISTANI

**Triggers.** Ten days pass; or something happens to anger the boyar and he decides to take his wrath out on his Vistani captive.

Having indulged too much in drink, Borje Volchykrov’s mind turns toward foolishly blaming the Vistani for his grief. Convincing himself that the curse came from the Vistani for how he treated Amaliza Latrova, the drunken boyar decides to have justice done. If Eris Corvara is still in custody, the boyar bodily hauls the Vistani horse thief to the gallows at night, drunkenly berating the man along the way. If Eris escaped or was already killed (e.g. during “Mob Injustice” on pg. 46), then boyar had several men round up a Vistani at random...who just happens to be Iancu Silvertongue (see pg. 19). Despite admonition from some of his more sensible staff, the boyar remains determined to hang the Vistani.

The PCs may be alerted by yelling in the square at Volchykrov Manor or by Ruzina awakening them to help with her out-of-control father. As several “knights” prepare the gallows and put a hood over the Vistani, an exceptionally tall raven-haired woman dressed in fashionable black lace steps out from the gathering crowd and identifies herself as Lady Molot Kosti, the boyar’s latest drinking companion visiting from distant Nova Vaava. In actuality, Lady Kosti is a guise of the **black annis hag\*** Pretty Kolchya.

Regardless of who specifically is about to be hanged – Eris or Iancu – both recognize the woman as a sorceress who has visited the Vistani camp on occasion and are frightened of her. Lady Molot Kosti offers the boyar a purse of 70 gp if he will remand the Vistani into her custody alive, cautioning that to draw the ire of the





Vistani *raunie* would be against the boyar’s best interest. However, the boyar is insistent that the hanging is going to happen, and so Lady Molot Kosti revises her offer to 35 gp for the hanged Vistani’s corpse. In his drunken state, the boyar impatiently agrees.

If the Vistani is slain, the *raunie* Mirsada Latrova and her clan swear vengeance and begin a campaign of guerilla warfare terrorizing the manor folk.

If Pretty Kolchya (as Lady Molot Kosti) takes the Vistani’s corpse, she turns it into a **zombie**. If she takes the Vistani alive, she tries to seduce him into being her spy at the Vistani camp, succeeding with Eris but failing with Iancu (who she kills and turns into a **zombie**).

There are several ways the PCs might intervene:

**Brawling with the Boyar.** A successful DC 13 Charisma check can convince the boyar to an unarmed one-on-one combat, the winner deciding the Vistani’s fate. Though Borje is drunk, the DM can give the rough-and-tumble boyar the Tavern Brawler feat (see PHB pg. 170) to make the brawl more interesting. His vindictive men begin to hoist up the Vistani regardless, and if the boyar isn’t brought down to half hit points (29 hp) within 10 rounds, the Vistani is hung to death.

**Revealing Lady Kosti as a Hag.** If the PCs devise a way to reveal Lady Kosti’s true identity (Pretty Kolchya) to the boyar, then Pretty Kolchya uses her “Pretty’s Bower” lair action (see pg. 63) to teleport back to her Gingerbread House. Realizing that the hag dredged up his grief, the boyar orders the Vistani released.

**Violence.** If the PCs resort to violence to free the Vistani, the boyar’s men respond in full force. Though the boyar is drunk, he joins in the fray as well. If the boyar is alive when the fighting ends, he banishes the PCs from the Graenseskov on pain of death.

## STAR-CROSSED WEDDING

**Triggers.** Two weeks pass; a lull in the suspense or the PCs take several days of downtime; or after the PCs explore the Gingerbread House and discover Cvetlana’s secret (DM’s choice).

After much preparation, the time has come for the boyar’s daughter Cvetlana to marry Ismark the Lesser, the burgomaster’s son in *Curse of Strahd*. Everyone seems happy about their union, looking forward to the benefits it will bring, except for the bride and groom. Far from a match made in heaven, they take to intensely quarreling whenever in one another’s presence. Ismark considers Cvetlana a stuck-up prima donna while she thinks Ismark is a drunken ass spending too much time with tavern wenches. Without the PCs’ intervention, this quibbling reaches a fever pitch on the wedding day and triggers Cvetlana’s transformation. She begins literally steaming, consumed with bitterness at her father and envious of Ismark’s affections directed at other women. Before the wedding party’s very eyes, Cvetlana’s skin turns green and she transforms into a **green hag**! She promises to make her father rue the day he tried to force her to marry and then turns invisible.

If she escapes, Cvetlana flees to the Grey Sisters’ Tower (see pg. 17) to bemoan her fate. After a few days, Pretty Kolchya comes to her and makes plans to renew the old covenant.

If Cvetlana is defeated but left alive, the horrified boyar imprisons his daughter in the dungeon below the barracks, uncertain what to do with her. She uses her Illusory Appearance to haunt anyone visiting her cell.

## QUEST REWARDS

XP	Quest
200	Save most of the hunting party from the hag's polymorph curse during the Wolf Hunt
200	Prevent the boyar from hanging Eris Corvara and incurring the wrath of the Vistani, while also preventing the hag (in the guise of “Lady Molot Kosti”) from taking Eris as her own.
200	Prevent Cvetlana’s transformation into a green hag during the Star-crossed Wedding
100	Find a way to communicate with Katerina’s ghost and learn that Cedomir orchestrated her death

## CHAPTER 2

# THE INVESTIGATION

As the characters explore the Graenseskov, they conduct an investigation into the nature, identity, and motives of the Beast. While multiple NPCs were targeted by the hag's curse, the DM must choose one of the following suspects who begins as the Beast. This decision influences the tone of investigation and will determine which clues the PCs receive.

**Ser Cedomir**, the boyar's son, schemes to overthrow his father, and as the Beast he only becomes more cruel and fixated on power.

**Father Fiofan**, a dwarven exile ensnared by the Mists years ago, is driven to discover the tragic truth of his past, but as the Beast the dark secrets he unearths turn him against the manor-folk.

**Merje the Seeker**, a priest of the old ways, is an enemy of the hags, but as the Beast he takes his fight too far and is willing to sacrifice too much.

**Ruzina Nostova**, a *giogota* (half-Vistani) smith, seeks love from her birth father the boyar, but as the Beast what she learns turns her against him.

The investigation can be divided into three distinct yet interwoven aspects:

**Nature of the Beast.** First, is determining exactly what creature the PCs are up against, comparing what they learn from witnesses, hearsay, and crime scenes against the monster hunter Radke Iliev's hunting journal (see **Appendix D**).

**Face of the Beast.** Next, is identifying which of the four suspects is the Beast. This involves gathering clues over the course of the entire adventure, using a process of elimination to hone in on one of the NPCs. Most of **Chapter 2** is concerned with this aspect of the investigation. What the PCs do once they know the Beast's identity, however, is up to them and resolved in **Chapter 3**.

**How to Break the Curse.** Lastly, is figuring out a way to break Pretty Kolchya's curse. The principle sources for this information are the Halan Witches' Circle and the Gingerbread House of the hag herself, though the PCs will need to exercise their own creativity in devising a suitable ritual. Various approaches to breaking the curse are described in **Chapter 3**.





## CURSED SUSPECTS

### SER CEDOMIR VOLCHYKROV

*Male human thug, neutral evil*

Cedomir is a handsome golden-haired youth, whose outward beauty conceals a wicked heart. He spent his youth berated by an overbearing father, the boyar, and his adult life attempting to prove himself a worthy successor by every underhanded means at his disposal. However, a tragic affair with his stepmother Katerina and a failed venture wherein several “knights” turned to banditry left a stain on his honor. Cedomir views the boyar as a doddering drunken fool and resents him for sacrificing his youngest son Pyotr (Cedomir’s brother) to Strahd. He plans to usurp his father, and many among the “Hounds of the Borderwood” dissatisfied with boyar Borje Volchykrov’s drunken belligerence are ready to follow the young lord.

During the execution of the hag Lagetha, Ser Cedomir wielded the cold iron axe used to behead her. In so doing, he became one of the cursed ones.

#### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Bond.** Volchykrov Manor and the Graenseskov need a better ruler... a ruler like Cedomir.

**Flaw.** Cedomir is obsessively competitive and if he loses at something he takes it far too personally.

**Ideal.** Survival. Only the strong can survive against the horrors of Barovia.

**Personality Trait.** Cedomir’s vanity rivals hags; he must have shiny hair and pristine clothes.

#### THE POLITICAL BEAST

If Ser Cedomir is the Beast, he uses his newfound powers to further his plans to oust the boyar. He reveals the truth to the “Hounds of the Borderwood” who continue following him out of fear, and he may even reach out to the Gorgon’s Grin bandits seeking an alliance. His victims include those loyal to the boyar, “knights” who behaved cowardly, anyone associated with the sacrificial offering of his younger brother



Pyotr to Strahd, and all who have humiliated or embarrassed him. Should he learn about Father Fiofan’s true origins, Cedomir will attempt to murder the dwarf. Over the course of the adventure, Cedomir grows increasingly brutal, vain, and consumed with “proving himself.”

#### ZONE OF TRUTH

If the PC have access to *zone of truth* or other truth-telling magic, firstly Cedomir won’t willingly submit to it, finding the premise offensive. Even if the PCs conceal their use of *zone of truth*, Cedomir answers direct questions like “are you the Beast?” evasively with counterpoints. For example, he might reply: “Well, if I were, you’d think I could find better prey than killing the very peasants who till my family’s lands.”

#### SPECIAL CLUE

If Cedomir is the Beast, several of the “knights” will outright lie about his presence throughout the boyar’s feast day (see pg. 40). However, if confronted, Cedomir will claim he actually was slaughtering a goat for his father’s feast. Though he has no alibi, others did witness him return halfway through the feast.

## FATHER FIOFAN KOLOTOV

*Male dwarven spy, lawful neutral*

Father Fiofan is a mendicant sage who came to the Graenseskov along with other “invaders from the Mists” one stormy night 40 years ago. These invaders were wild men who worshipped an evil wolf spirit and viewed werewolf lycanthropy as the greatest of blessings. As one of the afflicted who refused to embrace lycanthropy, Fiofan was an outcast among the wild men who brought him in shackles on their raiding ventures. When the invaders entered Barovia, Fiofan escaped his bindings and stumbled into Volchykrov Manor. Terrified of the dwarven “invader from the Mists,” the manor-folk stoned him to death. However, the Dark Powers saw fit to resurrect Fiofan and in the process he lost his memories, including his memories of being murdered.

Seeing Fiofan’s tortured soul, the former boyar introduced him to the faith of the Morning Lord and through his dedication Fiofan expunged his lycanthropy, and became the boyar’s sage. In time the manor-folk’s suspicion of him lessened. The former boyar claimed to have a set of scrolls that was found on the dwarf when he “stumbled out of the Mists” which might restore his memory, promising to give them to Fiofan in exchange for his service. However, when the old boyar died prematurely, Borje Volchykrov refused to honor his father’s promise, continuing to use the scrolls as leverage over the long-suffering dwarf.

During the execution of the hag Lagetha, Father Fiofan performed her last rites and anointed the executioner’s axe in holy water. In so doing, he became one of the cursed ones.

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Bond.** Discovering the mystery of his past drives the amnesiac dwarf to great lengths.

**Flaw.** Fiofan is slow to trust, seeing the work of evil powers and hidden forces everywhere.

**Ideal.** Prudence. Care must be taken whether in the boyar’s court or fighting evil in the shadows.

**Personality Trait.** Despite his great wisdom and patience, when frustrated Fiofan suffers an animalistic tic and is prone to snarling.



### THE QUESTING BEAST

If the amnesiac Father Fiofan is the Beast, he believes his old lycanthropy has returned, triggered by some hidden agent of Strahd’s within the manor who knows his past. Fiofan hunts down any scrap of information about his past. His victims include those withholding information about his past or trying to leverage that information against him, “invaders from the Mist” who entered Barovia during the same storm, and all who stoned him to death prior to his resurrection by the Dark Powers. Over the course of the adventure, Fiofan becomes increasingly paranoid and reclusive.

### ZONE OF TRUTH

If the PC have access to *zone of truth* or other truth-telling magic, Fiofan willingly submits. If asked direct questions like “are you the Beast?” he provides tangential information to distract the PCs. For example, he might reply: “We all have a beast within us, I suppose. If the peasants had their way they probably would lynch that werewolf who lives in the cabin in the woods even though he never shows his face here...”

### SPECIAL CLUE

Fiofan devised a contact poison made from a dead water weird that simulates the effects of running water against vampires (see pg. 27 & 47).

## MERJE THE SEEKER

Male human **druid**, chaotic neutral

A long-bearded priest of the old ways, Merje leads a small coven of witches dwelling in the Borderwood who worship the moon goddess Hala. Enemies of the Grey Sisters, these witches have long kept the hags at bay, fighting in the shadows. Though Merje has little respect for the boyar who doesn't fear the gods or the old ways, he is sworn into the boyar's service twice over. First, Merje swore to act as a healer for all at the manor in exchange for the boyar not interfering with the witches' faith. He maintains the manor's infirmary. Second, he swore to look after the boyar's illegitimate eldest daughter Ruzina after her mother died in childbirth. Moreover, Merje suspects the hags left behind a hag-spawn somewhere in the manor and he looks for signs that he might smite the vile creature. This leaves Merje in a constant tug-of-war between his duties to the manor and his yearning for the wilds.

In regards to the execution of the hag Lagetha, Merje revealed her location to the boyar's forces, breaking an unspoken agreement between the Halan witches and hags to keep their fight secret. In so doing, he became one of the cursed ones.

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Bond.** The hag Kolchya is a scar on the Borderwood and her threat must be ended, even if we must excise it from our midst.

**Flaw.** Constantly torn between two worlds, Merje is unnecessarily gruff and curmudgeonly.

**Ideal.** Nature. The natural world's laws govern us all, and we should heed them over man's law.

**Personality Trait.** Wielding a withering wit, Merje is a master of terse humor and back-handed compliments.

### THE WILD BEAST

If Merje is the Beast, he attempts to exacerbate conflict between Pretty Kolchya and Volchikrov Manor, hoping to lead one or both to ruin. He reveals the truth to his coven, hoping to gain their aid in helping him control the curse to use as a weapon against Kolchya, but they are



vehemently resistant. His victims include those who disrespect the "old ways" of witchcraft, any slaughtering wolves unnecessarily or persecuting mongrelfolk, and anyone he suspects of being in league with or appeasing Pretty Kolchya. Should he learn of Cvetlana's true nature as a hag-spawn, he will attempt to murder the young woman. Over the course of the adventure, Merje grows increasingly taciturn and wild, preferring the company of beasts to men.

### ZONE OF TRUTH

If the PC have access to *zone of truth* or other truth-telling magic, firstly Merje won't willingly submit to it, claiming such magic is only as valuable as the integrity of its caster and likely to cause more harm than good. Even if the PCs conceal their use of *zone of truth*, Cedimir answers direct questions like "are you the Beast?" by rejecting the premise. For example, he might reply: "What makes you think the Beast knows what it is?" or "Are you certain it's a beast?"

### SPECIAL CLUE

If Merje is the Beast, then the dead knight Jovich (see pg. 39) left superstitious offerings of sweets to the hag Pretty Kolchya. Merje angrily disapproved of Jovich and those like him who observed evil pagan practices.

## RUZINA NOSTOVA

*Female human scout, neutral*

Raised by Uri and Daria Nostova, the down-to-earth blacksmiths of Volchykrov Manor, Ruzina's skill at the forge surpasses her adoptive father's, but she is constantly running late on work as she daydreams of adventure. It is no secret that Ruzina does not share Uri's blood; in fact, Ruzina is a *giogota* (half-Vistani), the illegitimate daughter of the boyar and the deceased Amaliza. What Ruzina doesn't know is that the boyar was inadvertently responsible for Amaliza's death and moreover that he exploited debts Uri owed him to compel the kindly smith to adopt Ruzina, thus spare the boyar's family dishonor and allowing the boyar to have a relationship with his daughter on his own terms.

Despite the prejudices of the manor-folk against the *giogota* Ruzina, her adoptive parents loved her deeply. When Daria died to a dire wolf attack, and none of the manor folk found to courage to help (owing to Daria's association with the *giogota*), Ruzina grew bitter and began training in swordplay, planning to hunt the wolves and show the manor-folk she is better than them. She also defied Uri's wishes and began smuggling weapons to the Vistani.

Leading up to the execution of the hag Lagetha, Ruzina drew upon old smithing techniques to craft the cold iron greataxe used to behead the hag. In so doing, she became one of the cursed ones.

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Bond.** Deep down, she knows there was something "wrong" about her adoption, and she needs to find out what.

**Flaw.** Ruzina judges herself for Daria's death even more harshly than she judges the manor-folk.

**Ideal.** Family. Caring for, and being loyal to, one's family matters most.

**Personality Trait.** Ruzina plays up prejudices about Vistani, letting others believe she can see the future and traverse the Mists.



### THE GUARDIAN BEAST

If Ruzina Nostova is the Beast, she strikes against those who hurt her adoptive and Vistani families. Her victims include the rich and corrupt, all who stood by while her adoptive mother was mauled by dire wolves, and anyone who knows too much about her weapons smuggling to the Vistani. Should she learn about the boyar's scheming involving her family, she will attempt to murder him. Over the course of the adventure, Ruzina grows increasingly hot-tempered and prone to violent outbursts.

### ZONE OF TRUTH

If the PC have access to *zone of truth* or other truth-telling magic, Ruzina submits but tries to get the PCs to do a favor for her in exchange (e.g. delivering something to the Vistani). If asked direct questions like "are you the Beast?" she plays up her own guilt, mixing just enough truth to fool the spell. For example, she might reply: "It's my fault, isn't it? If I never crafted that axe the Beast would never have come!"

### SPECIAL CLUE

Ruzina claims she lost a molar when her recent sparring match with Ser Branmira got heated (see pg. 45). While Ser Branmira only remembers striking Ruzina's face, drawing blood but no tooth, she corroborates Ruzina's story out of guilt.

# RUNNING THE MYSTERY

## CLUES

Clues about the Beast take two forms: **critical clues** necessary to solving the mystery beyond a shadow of a doubt, and **secondary clues** which are additional flavor that may help PCs form a fuller picture of the the Beast.

Critical clues require no skill check to learn; they are simply part of the narrative which PCs learn if they investigate the corresponding area or NPC. If the players are using a logic grid, similar to the table below, these are the clues they plug into the table. By process of elimination, no matter in which order the PCs gain critical clues, they hone in on the Beast's identity.

Critical clues are designated with a dashed box.

## SPECIAL CLUES

There are four special clues (marked in **bold red text** in the table), one for each NPC. The DM only uses one special clue, the one associated with the NPC he or she has chosen to be the Beast. This ensures that there is only one NPC to whom all four critical clues apply — the Beast.

## DM TIPS

When running the mystery, here are some DM tips to keep things going smoothly:

- Be generous with clues. There are lots of clues in this chapter, so don't feel you need to withhold them to "maintain the mystery."
- Divination spells like *Speak with Dead* are covered in the text, but in corner case situations remember that a dead person can't disclose the Beast's identity if all they saw was a dire wolf or they were attacked from behind.
- Encourage the players to create a logic grid similar to the "Critical Clues by Suspect" table below to keep track of clues.
- The Insight skill can help determine a creature's intentions, reveal personal characteristics like ideals or flaws, or pick up on changes in mannerism, but it does not function like a magical lie detector. If a player asks "is he lying?" never answer "yes" or "no."
- NPCs don't need to answer questions directly, and it may make more sense for them to avoid certain questions, answer a question with a question, or otherwise be evasive.
- Introduce the suspects and clues at a pace your players can digest and enjoy. Don't overwhelm them with too much, too fast.

### Critical Clues by Suspect

	Cedomir	Fiofan	Merje	Ruzina
<b>Motive to kill Jovich</b>	Jovich's cowardice nearly cost Cedomir victory and life	Jovich was one of the manor-folk who stoned Fiofan	<b>Jovich left offerings to Pretty Kolchya, Merje's nemesis</b>	Jovich stood by when wolves killed her adoptive mother
<b>Opportunity to kill Lubomir — no alibi for boyar's feast</b>	<b>The boyar is his alibi, unless he is the Beast</b>	No alibi; claims he was at the rookery tower tending ravens	No alibi; claims he was performing a sacrifice in the woods	No alibi; claims she was sulking at the smith after argument
<b>The Beast's molar tooth is lodged in Vitomir's sleigh</b>	Cedomir lost a molar due to an infection as a boy	Fiofan had molar knocked out when he was stoned	Pretty Kolchya stole Merje's molar while he slept	<b>Claims Ser Branimira knocked out molar while sparring</b>
<b>Means to kill the vampire Aco Koslov</b>	Knows trapping, and knows about underground stream	<b>Devised contact poison simulating running water</b>	Transcribed a <i>scroll of control water</i>	Knows trapping, and knows about underground stream



## PEASANTS OF GRAENSESKOV

Several peasants in Graenseskov have had close encounters with the Beast, some tragic and some simply sightings. The boyar can inform the PCs of these three families, though the DM should sprinkle rumors liberally in with their accounts.

### THE NOSEKS (INNKEEPERS)

Stravko and Emilika Nosek (see pg. 28) lost their eldest son Kostadin, as well as their prized breeding horses to the Beast earlier that year. The Beast devoured the horses, and Kostadin was killed when he tried to intervene. Since then, the innkeeper couple have watched and listened for signs of the Beast, scrutinizing all travelers passing through the Weary Horse Inn and Stables. They've heard the Beast has grown craftier in how it attacks travelers, collapsing trees to direct its victims into ambushes and using other tactics indicating it is as intelligent as a man.

### THE PAVLOVICS (OX HERDERS)

While many shepherds have suffered the thinning of their herds due to the Beast's predations, Jagoda and Ilyna Pavlovic have suffered crippling financial setbacks at the loss of half their oxen. The Beast seems to have a taste for cow flesh. Each time, the cattle bay horribly, and when they've run out to check on the herd, they find a half-eaten corpse. The only hints of the Beast's presence are large wolf prints around the kill, that then vanish at the forest's edge where strange sweeping arcs are found in the snow, like a cloak being swept about the shoulders or a broom dusting the snowy ground.

### THE STOJANOVICS (SERVANTS)

Milvan, Rade, and Stanz — cousins of Ratimir Stojanovic (see pg. 29) — were brutally killed when they set out to trap the Beast. They tried luring it out with a lamb in a wooden cage, but the Beast overwhelmed them. Mortally wounded, Milvan managed to hide himself in the cage, surviving long enough to tell the boyar's men who found him that the Beast was completely unharmed by their arrows and steel blades.

## RUMORS

There are many rumors about the Beast, and while the peasants of Barovia and Volchykrov Manor may not know much, there are kernels of truth behind their fearful tales.

d10	Rumors
1	Hanging a wreath of birch and wolfsbane on the door will protect a home from the Beast, and a diet of wolfsbane will ward the Beast away from one's herds. (false)
2	The Beast is a werewolf living in a cabin in the southern Borderwood where it smokes human flesh and eats babies. (false, but hints at the non-evil werewolf Lovrenk Kosar)
3	Werewolves have long haunted the Graenseskov and the Beast is their king, come to wage war upon Count Strahd von Zarovich. (false)
4	A year ago the Beast killed indiscriminately, but now it selects its targets with malign cunning to devastate Barovia. (mostly true)
5	The Beast suckled on the tit of a hag growing up and her curdled milk turned it into a monster, but if the hag is killed the curse will be broken. (false, but hints at how Pretty Kolchya created the curse and thus may know how to remove it)
6	The Beast is Strahd's murderous bastard son freed from 750 years imprisonment in Hell. (false)
7	Whatever foul witchcraft birthed the Beast, the peasants of the Graenseskov have had enough. Soon, they'll take the law into their own hands, with torch and pitchfork. (true)
8	The Beast's claws are sharp as iron, its gaze inspires terror, and its hide is so strong any mortal blade will shatter against it. (mostly true)
9	The boyar's wives are doomed to die in the jaws of the Beast which kills each woman the boyar comes to love. (false, but hints at the terrible ends each of the boyar's loves has met)
10	Leader of bandits hung years ago, the Beast conjures their missing right hands to exert his foul will upon the Graenseskov. (false, but hints at Kolchya's creeping claws)

## THE KNIGHT'S MURDER

The most recent attack by the Beast was particularly troubling to the boyar. Three days ago, one of his oldest “knights” named Jovich Fedorov was found just outside the manor grounds with his throat torn out. This is the closest an attack has been to the manor. Jovich would walk a half-mile to a little lake northwest of the manor to go fishing, so the narrow window of opportunity suggests the Beast was familiar with Jovich’s routine.

**Critical Clue:** The Beast had a motive to murder Jovich. It wasn’t a random attack.

### Possible areas of investigation include:

- Body of evidence (Jovich’s corpse)
- Relations (Hounds of the Borderwood)
- Relations (Jovich’s widow)
- Scene of the crime (the pond)

### BODY OF EVIDENCE: JOVICH’S CORPSE

Jovich’s corpse has been buried at the manor graveyard. Exhuming the corpse, though likely to trouble the manor-folk, reveals Jovich was a tall, solid man who had his throat precisely torn out.

#### SPELLCASTING: SPEAK WITH DEAD

A *Speak with Dead* spell cast on Jovich’s corpse reveals all he saw was a fearsome dark-furred dire wolf with blazing yellow eyes. However, the Beast spoke to him! While the Beast’s voice was inhuman and genderless, its words, the last words Jovich ever heard, were clear: “*And now, Jovich, you shall reap what you have sown.*”

### RELATIONS: HOUNDS OF THE BORDERWOOD

Though his fellow “knights” are reluctant to say anything bad about the dead man, buying them a round of ale at the brewhouse or clever roleplaying might get them to loosen their tongues. Jovich was a horrible coward, and during the fighting against the mountain goblins he fled as soon as the boyar’s horn sounded a retreat, leaving Ser Cedomir flanked by goblins.

There’s been bad blood between the two ever since.

**Followup.** Ser Cedomir admits to wanting to kill Jovich, but points out there’d be no reason for him to kill Jovich secretly when, as the boyar’s son, he had the power to sentence Jovich to hang.

### RELATIONS: JOVICH’S WIDOW

Jasna Fedorov (♀ HUMAN COMMONER, NG) wears the black of grief. Even though she knows her husband was a coward, she also knew him as a penitent man whose only peace from his wicked ways was fishing the pond. His deepest most shameful secret, which he divulged to Jasna, was that he helped in the stoning of Father Fiofan because he feared the dwarf would report back to the “invaders from the Mist.”

**Followup.** Fiofan either has no clear memory of the events or feigns having no memory.

#### SPECIAL CLUE: MERJE

If Merje is the Beast, searching Jovich’s home, or asking Jasna about it, turns up a carved idol of a hag. Jasna will grudgingly reveal the superstitious Jovich left offerings of sweets to Pretty Kolchya in the woods, in the hopes that it would protect him from the hag. She adds that while it’s not an uncommon practice among manor-folk, Jovich was especially concerned that he attracted the ire of the old druid Merje who disapproved of such practices.

### SCENE OF THE CRIME: THE POND

Searching the pond across from the Tree-with-a-Swing (see pg. 18) at the area where Jovich used to go fishing reveals a crude wood shrine erected to appease restless dead. If the PCs chat with children at the Tree-with-a-Swing, offering either sweets or making a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, the children reveal they saw the smith’s daughter Ruzina arguing with Jovich earlier on the day he was killed.

**Followup.** Ruzina admits to loathing Jovich, who stood by while her adoptive mother Daria was mauled by dire wolves when he is supposed to be a “knight.” She ruefully points out that if she were going to kill everyone who stood by and did nothing, she’d have to kill half the manor-folk.



## THE BITE VICTIM

Lubomir Pavlovic (♂ HUMAN GUARD, N) is a retired guardsman who tends the ox house where oxen and ploughs for tilling the fields are kept. Two weeks ago, during the boyar's feast day (birthday) which had drawn most folk to the manor house, Lubomir was leading a pair of oxen back to the ox house at sunset when the Beast attacked. Terrified, Lubomir tried to fend it off with a torch but he was bitten by the Beast. Lubomir hid underneath one of his slaughtered oxen as the Beast feasted on it. He was found in the morning and brought to the Halan Infirmary.

**Critical Clue:** The Beast had the opportunity to attack Lubomir, and thus no alibi at the boyar's feast day.

### Possible areas of investigation include:

- Body of evidence (Lubomir)
- Relations (Erelida, the herbalist)
- Relations (Stepjan, his father)
- Scene of the crime (the ox house)
- Suspects & Alibis

### BODY OF EVIDENCE: LUBOMIR

A churlish bushy-bearded man of 55, Lubomir rests in the Halan Infirmary (see pg. 27), recovering from a grievous bite wound to his neck and shoulder. Whatever bit him was Large size. His physical wound is mostly healed, but he suffers fitful dreams and intermittent violent fits where he froths at the mouth and gazes about wildly, uttering what seems like gibberish. Lubomir can offer an accurate, if feverish, physical description of the Beast's dire wolf form (see pg. 23).

### RELATIONS: EREIDA, THE HERBALIST

Erelida (see pg. 25) grudgingly treats Lubomir's wounds. She reveals that Lubomir accosted her several weeks prior to the Beast's attack in a drunken stupor, accusing her of working witchcraft against the boyar's family. Thankfully, Merje intervened and was quite angry with Lubomir.

### RELATIONS: STEPJAN, HIS FATHER

Over 90 years old, Stepjan Pavlovic (♂ HUMAN GUARD, LN), master of the ox house, is the eldest person at the manor. He'll relate how his quarrelsome son is extremely loyal to the boyar and before his injury often was getting into fistfights with those Hounds of the Borderwood who favored Ser Cedomir. Stepjan will also admit that Lubomir isn't actually his son; he found the young man 40 years ago after the "invaders from the Mists" attacked, huddling frightened in the shed. Keeping the boy's origins secret, he raised him as his own, but Father Fiofan deduced Lubomir's origins.

### SCENE OF THE CRIME: OX HOUSE

A thorough search of the ox house finds degraded dire wolf tracks leading to the woods, and a secret stash of metal weapons bundled in an oiled canvas under the hay. The colored string the bundle is wrapped with is actually a secret message to the Vistani describing a site outside their camp where the next shipment would be left. The weapons clearly bear the mark of Uri the smith, though were actually forged by Ruzina who used the ox house to stash the weapons.

### SUSPECTS & ALIBIS

**Cedomir** has an alibi in his father the boyar, unless Cedomir is the Beast (see sidebar).

**Fiofan** claims to have been in the rookery tower, tending to the ravens, though he has no alibi.

**Merje** claims to have been in the woods performing a sacrifice to bless the boyar's family.

**Ruzina** got into an argument with her father about letting her go on the wolf hunt, and she stormed off early. She claims she sulked in her room at the smithy, but has no alibi.

#### SPECIAL CLUE: CEDOMIR

If Cedomir is the Beast, several of the "knights" will outright lie about his presence throughout the boyar's feast day. However, if confronted, Cedomir will claim he actually was slaughtering a goat for his father's feast. Though he has no alibi, others did witness him return halfway through the feast.



## THE HUNTER'S TRAIL

Radke Iliev, the monster hunter, left behind a trail during his own investigation that the PCs can follow, beginning with the lead to Lovrenk Kosar in *Radke Iliev's Hunting Journal* (see **Appendix D**).

## THE WEREWOLF'S HOVEL

Lovrenk Kosar (see pg. 21) is a long white-haired woodsman retired from the service of the former boyar. Afflicted with werewolf lycanthropy years ago that drove him to kill his family in a rage, he lives in self-imposed hermitage. While Lovrenk attempts to keep his nature hidden, if the PCs provoke him with violence or otherwise taunt him, there is a 25% cumulative chance he shifts into **werewolf** hybrid form, attacking for one round before fleeing into the woods, only regaining his senses 24 hours later.

Lovrenk will reveal that Radke Iliev came by two months ago to speak of Lovrenk's past encounter with werewolves (see "Werewolf Den" in *Curse of Strahd* for details on the werewolves). He will also share that Lovrenk asked him about his dealings with the Vistani and seemed to think the Vistani *raunie* was keeping secrets about the Beast. However, he attempts to conceal that Lovrenk thought he might be the Beast, just as he attempts to conceal his own werewolfism.

Close examination of the hovel, however, will reveal the truth:

- Wolfsbane charms and crescent moon holy symbols of Selûne are littered throughout the house; a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes these items being used to keep werewolves at bay.
- A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the silver arrow and iron dagger of Radke Iliev amidst Lovrenk's old military gear.
- A character proficient in alchemist's supplies, herbalism kit, or poisoner's kit who examines the elixirs will recognize them as a low-grade belladonna mixture intended to slow the advancement of werewolfism.

Once the PCs reveal they know Lovrenk's secret, will he tell the whole truth.

## THE VISTANI CAMP

The monster hunter visited with *raunie* Mirsada Latrova (see pg. 19) seven weeks ago, questioning her about the warning she gave to the boyar not to attack the Grey Sisters coven. Mirsada claims she had a vision given to her by the Tarokka, but a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) recognizes she is playing on commonly believed stereotypes about Vistani. In fact, she was visited by the hags who demanded she deliver the false prophecy to the boyar; the hags both threatened to curse the Latrova tribe and offered the truth of what befell her sister Amaliza: that the boyar didn't permit Amaliza to leave the manor even when she begged.

During her meeting with the hags, Mirsada noticed that worgs and dire wolves seemed to be at their beck and call, and that the hags bore bundles of fine wolf fur on their hunched backs.





By asking leading questions, Mirsada was able to deduce that the hags planned to afflict the boyar with a crippling curse, and were confident of the trap they set for him at the Gingerbread House because they had a spy in the manor. This is all she knows, but she recommends the PCs first go to the Halan witches' circle if they plan on tracking Radke into Pretty Kolchya's lair.

### HALAN WITCHES' CIRCLE

When asked about Radke, the witch Finka Francic informs the PCs that the hunter possessed a *ghost lantern* which could be a helpful weapon against the hag Kolchya. She also advises the PCs of a command word the Halan witches learned from spying on the hags. If the rhyme "*Show me once, show me twice, has \_\_\_\_\_ been naughty or has \_\_\_\_\_ been nice?*" is uttered in the right part of the Gingerbread House, it activates a magical painting of a horse being attacked by wolves. The person in question's name is used in the rhyming command word. The painting then reveals the last visit that person made to the Gingerbread House.

### GINGERBREAD HOUSE

If Finka's advice is used with Radke Iliev's name, the painting in the play room (Area 2) animates, oil paints bleeding to reveal a likeness of Radke quickly searching the room for something. He appears to be injured, and suffering some kind of nervous twitch. Radke frantically draws out a map marking potential lairs of the Beast at three caves: Geist Caverns, the Wolves' Den, and a cave in the southeastern howling hills (the actual Beast's Lair). He looks up sharply, startled, and quickly leaves the hag's house.

### GEIST CAVERNS

The search ends with the PCs discovery of Radke Iliev's corpse in the Geist Caverns (see pg. 16). He succumbed to wounds inflicted by the Beast, particularly a bite to his throat. There are many small pecks from some kind of bird over his face and hands. If the Beast is Cedomir, the corpse may also have a sword wound from a "knight's" blade.

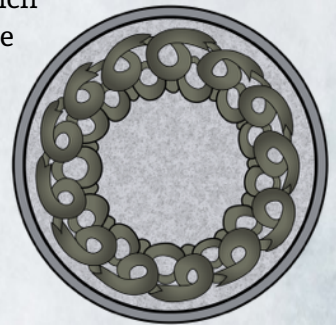
## THE WITCHES' CIRCLE

At the eastern edge of the Svalich Wood, on a hill overlooking the Ivlis River, is a circle of mossy standing stones engraved with gruesome motifs of skulls and beasts transforming into men.

At the center of the hilltop clearing is a stone covered in serpentine Druidic runes, with two gaping holes from which roots emerge. A hissing sound emanates from within the the holes, which vaguely sounds like whispering at night. This is a sacred site for Halan witches who come from across Barovia to worship at the so-called "Whispering Stone" which they believe issued the commandments of their goddess Hala.

Finka Francic (♀ human **priest**, NG) leads a group of 6 female **acolytes** year-round to care for the sacred site; they live in cottages in the nearby woods. Though Finka and Merje (see pg. 35) share the same faith, they do not see eye to eye, and Finka is concerned that Merje is leaning towards extremes. This is doubly true if he is the Beast.

She is convinced that the PCs are foreordained to help the worshippers of Hala defeat the hags of Barovia, and Pretty Kolchya in particular. Finka refers to the PCs as "Hala's Chosen" when in private conversation with them, and will seek to make this official by ceremonially bestowing one of them with the *Circlet of Hala* (see **Appendix B**).



### SEEKING OUT THE WITCHES

The PCs might seek out the witches' circle to:

- Have the witches perform the holy water ritual.
- Have the witches bless a weapon.
- Investigate Merje the Seeker.
- Learn the Graven Garden's special ritual.
- Learn information about Radke Iliev.
- Learn the basic principle to break the Curse of the Soul's True Form.
- Receive a healing charm to ease Lubomir's nightmares and restore his sanity.
- Receive spellcasting services.

## SPELLCASTING SERVICES

Finka and her fellow witches can cast the following spells. They will accept the listed gold price or service.

- *Bless* or *cure wounds* (1st level): 10 gp, or promising to come to them first if Merje is found to be the Beast, and making it clear to the boyar the witches had nothing to do with the Beast.
- *Lesser restoration*: 40 gp, or deliver several pounds of healing herbs to the Halan Infirmary without arousing suspicion. An herbalist realizes some of the herbs are poisonous.
- *Dispel magic*, *remove curse*, or *speak with dead*: 90 gp, or retrieve a holy symbol of Hala stolen by Pretty Kolchya.

## CEREMONY OF HALA

If one of the PCs accepts the offer to receive the *Circlet of Hala*, then on the next clear night Finka will perform a ceremony under the moonlight. If Merje is no longer under suspicion, he will also be in attendance. If Pretty Kolchya is already dead, then the ceremony occurs without incident. However, assuming the hag is still alive, Finka warns the PCs that she is likely to try to interfere.

As soon as the hour-long ceremony begins, howls echo through the woods. The PC attuning to the *circlet* receives a vision through Krabka's *hag eye*. If Cvetlana's wedding hasn't occurred yet, then the vision is of the boyar helping her try on dresses and Cvetlana growing increasingly angry at her father's patronizing tone, her eyes flashing red and her skin turning green momentarily. If the wedding already occurred (or the PCs stopped it), then the vision is of Krabka's *hag eye* witnessing events from a year ago with the boyar making a secret deal with the green hag Lagetha to hide the urn of Amaliza's ashes from the Vistani in exchange for owing the hag a future favor. Additional information may be learned through the ceremony at the DM's discretion.

Pretty Kolchya sends 10 (3d6) **crawling claws** to attack on orders to disrupt the ceremony midway through. The attuning PC can take no action or the ceremony ends, but the DM may let that player run an **acolyte** or Finka Franic.

## MERJE'S VENGEANCE

If Merje is the Beast, he approaches Finka and her acolytes to join him as **loup du noir\***, but his offer is vehemently turned down and he is forbidden from returning to the circle. Seeking vengeance, Merje launches an attack on the circle one night of the DM's choosing. He intends to slaughter all of them, first sending 7 (2d6) **wolves** before he himself sets forth. Finka will send an urgent *sending* asking for help to a PC attuned to the *Circlet of Hala* or a PC she knows to be a person of faith.

Whether the PCs make it in time to save the witches can be determined using the chase rules in **Appendix C**, treating it as a race between the PCs and the Beast. They begin roughly equidistant from the witches' circle, and are on separate tracks during the race. During this race, the PCs are attacked by 7 (2d6) **wolves**. If the PCs arrive first at least 60 feet ahead of the Beast, they can organize defenses against the Beast. If the Beast arrives first 60 feet ahead of the PCs, it slaughters half the witches by the time they arrive. If the Beast arrives first 120 feet or more ahead of the PCs, all the witches including Finka Franic are slain by the time they arrive.

Even if Finka dies, she will try to leave a clue (perhaps scrawled in her own blood) revealing that Merje is the Beast. The Beast breaks off attacking once reduced to half hit points, fleeing to its lair (see pg. 51).



## SPECIAL EVENTS

### SLEIGH RIDE OF SLAUGHTER

**Triggers.** Three days pass; after the PCs investigate the knight's murder and the bite victim; or when the players flounder for what to do next (DM's choice).

Overcome by guilt and wracked by nightmares, the portly merchant Vitomir Alkaev (♂ HUMAN NOBLE, N) staying at the Weary Horse Inn confesses his sins to the PCs and offers to hire them as his bodyguards for 50 gp.

Vitomir is a merchant of Valliki town who came to Volchykrov Manor to trade ale for furs. He has tried to leave the manor by sleigh twice, but each time has been forced to turn back by dire wolf attacks, narrowly escaping back to the security of the manor. He even spent money to send out decoy sleighs to no avail. Vitomir will admit to being guilty of the following crimes:

- Following the boyar's commands 10 years ago, he drove the sleigh turning the boyar's son Pyotr over to Strahd von Zarovich. This was before he became a successful merchant.

- Vitomir witnessed Father Fiofan return from death, and he blackmailed the dwarf with this information, threatening to reveal it publicly unless Fiofan used his contacts and ravens to gain information on Vitomir's rivals.
- Years ago, he savagely beat the mongrelfolk Krabka for spooking his horses. Vitomir recognizes Krabka because of the mongrel's swollen eye and scars he gave it.
- He took advantage of the blacksmith Uri years ago in a crooked deal that left Uri's family drowning in debt.

Despite his wrongdoings, Vitomir claims he just wishes to return safely to his family in Valliki. If the PCs refuse his offer, Vitomir is found dead the next morning. In either case, the following clue will be found by the PCs in the aftermath.

**Critical Clue:** One of the Beast's molar teeth was lodged in the frame of Vitomir's sleigh. The NPC who is the Beast will be missing a molar.





## THE SLEIGH RIDE

Vitomir has two sleighs, each drawn by 2 **riding horses** and tended by a **commoner** servant. Each sleigh can hold a total of five medium-sized passengers. He intends to leave at dawn with his goods divided between both sleighs, but will adapt his plans according to the PCs' approach. The PCs only need to accompany him to the Thousandfurs Bridge where 8 **guards** and carriages await once the snow and ice runs out; this is roughly a 2.5 mile (4 km) journey which will take 1 hour.

Twenty minutes into the sleigh ride, as they enter the Howling Hills, a chorus of wolf howls echo across the land. 7 (2d6) **wolves** rush through the woods, beginning 60 feet behind the lead sleigh. A PC or NPC knocked prone while riding a sleigh topples off and grabs onto something (a loose strap, webbing, a runner, another PC) at the last second, getting dragged along. Each round a creature ends its turn being dragged, it takes 1 bludgeoning damage. Pulling oneself back into the sleigh requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check as an action, though an ally can take an action to automatically pull a creature back into the sleigh.

A round after the wolves are spotted, the Beast (**loup du noir**\*) emerges from the Mists ahead of the lead sleigh where it was hiding. It makes an attack against the lead sleigh (losing its molar tooth), and regardless of the outcome of its attack, the Beast slides down an embankment, beginning the chase 60 feet behind the lead sleigh.

If the PCs try to outpace the Beast, the DM can use the chase rules in **Appendix C**. The DM can represent the chase as four 10-minute rounds during which the PCs must keep the sleigh moving, and the wolves and Beast at bay; if they survive for all four rounds, they reach Thousandfurs Bridge and the Beast withdraws.

If the PCs stop to fight the Beast, then it only fights until reduced to half hit points, at which point the Beast flees to its lair (see pg. 51). However, during this fight, more wolves may pour from the surrounding wooded hills, at the DM's discretion. Their objective is to kill Vitomir; if this is accomplished, the Beast and wolves obeying it only fight a bit longer before retreating.

### SLEIGH

**Speed:** 60 feet (equal to riding horses drawing it), can only move over snow and ice, ignoring any difficult terrain due to snow or ice.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 5 **Cargo:** 1/2 ton

**HP:** 50 **AC:** 11

## CLUE FOLLOWUP

Now that the PCs know the Beast is missing a molar tooth, they may wish to directly ask the suspects or devise a duplicitous test (e.g. bobbing for apples during the wedding and examining the bite marks) to determine which NPC is missing a molar.

**Ser Cedomir.** Ser Cedomir lost a molar due to a tooth infection when he was a young boy. In fact, Merje was the one who pulled the tooth.

**Father Fiofan.** Fiofan had a molar knocked from his jaw when he was stoned by the manorfolk. His memory of this event is cloudy, however.

**Merje the Seeker.** Merje had one of his molars stolen while he slept by the hag Pretty Kolchya, so she could use it to cast a hex on the old druid.

### SPECIAL CLUE: RUZINA

If Ruzina is the Beast, she claims she lost a molar when her recent sparring match with Ser Branimira got a little heated. All Ser Branimira remembers is pommel striking Ruzina and leaving blood. Branimira feels terribly guilty for this, especially because Ruzina is the illegitimate daughter of her liege the boyar. Out of guilt, and seeing no reason for Ruzina to lie, the grizzled warrior corroborates Ruzina's story.

## OUTCOME

If Vitomir dies, it serves as a black stain on any future employment the PCs seek with merchants of Barovia. If Vitomir lives, he will welcome the PCs at his shop in Valliki, allowing them to sell treasures to him at full price, and offering his "special stock" of rare liquors and *potions of healing* for sale.

## MOB INJUSTICE

**Triggers:** Six days pass; after the PCs accuse the wrong suspect; or if draconian measures are taken to find the Beast (DM's choice).

A mob assembles to lynch someone the superstitious manor-folk wrongly believe to be the Beast. The mob's ringleader is the innkeeper Zdravko Nosek (see pg. 29), whose rage has been fueled by the Beast (in NPC form) whispering in his ear over an ale. The mob targets Lovrenk Kosar, Krabka, Father Fiofan, or Eris Corvara, depending on the Beast's influence, dragging them into the street for a very public execution.

The Beast, in NPC form, uses the violence to flush the **vampire spawn** Aco Koslov from the manor and kill him covertly. Aco is getting dangerously close to uncovering the Beast's identity and secret. To prevent Aco (and therefore his master Strahd) from learning this, the Beast acts first. Knowing Aco would be hard to kill, the Beast devises a cunning method to destroy the vampire spawn. During the lynching, Aco sneaks out with a horse and flees toward Castle Ravenloft. However, he doesn't get far.

Refer to the "Machinations of the Beast" table below to determine who the Beast tricks the mob to go after and what means are used to kill Aco.

**Critical Clue:** The Beast had the means to kill the vampire spawn Aco Koslov.

## DISBANDING THE MOB

Convincing the mob to disband requires undermining the support of the families being led by Zdravko. Talking a family down requires reasoning appropriate to that group, which allows a DC 10 Charisma check to convince them to disband. If the PCs meet certain conditions, however, making a check isn't required and simply using the right reasoning automatically disbands that family or group. Three failed Charisma checks (or a lack of PC intervention) results in something terrible happening (see the table below). Once all three families/groups are disbanded, the threat of the mob is over.

**Pavlovics.** Led by old Stepjan (see pg. 40), the Pavlovics want blood for what was done to Lubomir. An argument proving the victimized NPC had an alibi during the boyar's feast allows a Charisma check. If the PCs have already healed Lubomir's dreams with the charm from the Halan witches, then no Charisma check is necessary.

**Stojanovics.** Led by Ratimir (see pg. 29), the Stojanovics want blood for the three cousins killed by the Beast. An argument asserting that the victimized NPC should be able to better fend off a mob if it could kill three men at once allows a Charisma check. If the PCs have already rescued Anya from the Gingerbread House, then no Charisma check is necessary.

**"Werewolf hunters."** An eclectic group of young men led by either Ruzina Nostova (if she is not the Beast) or Dusan (Ser Cedomir's squire). An argument showing the victimized NPC is no werewolf using a silver or wolfsbane test allows a Charisma check. If the PCs saved the merchant Vitomir during "Sleigh Ride of Slaughter" or gave Radke Iliev's corpse a proper burial, then no Charisma check is necessary.

## FIGHTING THE MOB

Even if the boyar's men are ordered to intervene, they only will intercede if the PCs take violent action against the crowd, otherwise letting the mob take their "justice." Anything shy of violent action, such as subtly casting charm spells, elicits no response from the boyar's men. However, if violence occurs, the Hounds of the Borderwood intervene with up to 9 **thugs** (or however many are still alive at this point in the adventure). The "knights" attempt to subdue the PCs with crossbow fire. Meanwhile, a group of up to 26 **commoners** (the DM determines their exact numbers) splits their attacks between the PCs and the victimized NPC.

As long as no peasants or "knights" are killed, the unhappy boyar is willing to forgive the PCs, though from that point forward peasants in the manor are hostile or unfriendly toward them. If peasants or "knights" are killed, the boyar will sentence the PCs to hang, going so far as to dress one of them as the Beast to assuage his peoples' fears!



**Table: Machinations of the Beast**

Beast	Who is targeted by the mob?	Means to kill Aco	3 failed Charisma checks
Ser Cedomir	The penitent <b>werewolf</b> Lovrenk Kosar (see pg. 21), who Cedomir disdains for weakness	Spiked pit trap above an old well with an underground stream running through it	Lovrenk turns into hybrid form and goes berserk, slaughtering peasants
Father Fiofan	The <b>mongrelfolk</b> Krabka (see pg. 25), who Fiofan realizes is the hag's spy	<b>Special Clue: A contact poison which simulates running water was smeared on the reins of Aco's horse</b>	A <i>fog cloud</i> engulfs mob, and Kolchya takes Krabka away, making him loyal to her
Merje the Seeker	Father Fiofan (see pg. 34), whose ravens spied Merje turning into the Beast	Hunting traps and a <i>spell scroll of control water</i> used to create a flood of running water	Fiofan is beaten to death, but later the Dark Powers resurrect him...
Ruzina Nostova	The Vistani rogue Eris Corvara (see pg. 11 & pg. 30), who Ruzina learns abandoned her birth mother Amaliza	Spiked pit trap above an old well with an underground stream running through it	Eris is beaten to death, and the Vistani swear a blood debt against the manor

### TO KILL A VAMPIRE

Meanwhile, Aco Koslov flees on horseback from the manor, knowing all too well what angry mobs usually mean for his kind. However, he encounters the trap the Beast set for him. Taking 20 points of damage from running water each round, Aco dies on the 5th round. If any PCs witness the vampire in agony, he will promise to share his knowledge of the Beast and Castle Ravenloft if they save him. Of course, Aco is not to be trusted, so any information he shares will be incomplete, distorted, or misleading.

After the vampire spawn's death, all that remains are his glasses, his clothing, his horse, and a puddle of viscous black goo. If the PCs aren't aware of the vulnerability vampires have to running water, they can learn of it from books in the manor's chapel or the DM can include a bit about vampire weaknesses in the hunter Radke Iliev's journal. The circumstances of Aco's death should make it clear he was, in fact, a vampire.

### CLUE FOLLOWUP

**Ser Cedomir.** Trained in siege warfare and setting pit traps, Ser Cedomir also knows the surrounding manor lands well. In fact, he fell into the underground stream while exploring as a boy, being the first to discover it.

**Merje the Seeker.** Searching the Halan Infirmary discovers the desk where he copied the *scroll of control water*, and a faint impression of the spell was left on the desk's surface. A character proficient in Arcana recognizes this as a *control water* spell. Merje claims he often copies scrolls for the Halan witches, and this is nothing out of the ordinary. Conferring with Finka of the Halan witches, however, reveals that most of their scrolls are far less powerful, and Merje never told Finka he intended to transcribe a *control water* scroll.

**Ruzina Nostova.** Ruzina learned the art of trapping from Radke Iliev, who she sought to teach her how to hunt monsters. Moreover, after the death of her mother she ran away for several days and hid by the underground stream. Searching her bedroom at the Smithy reveals designs for a spiked pit trap folded up in the back of her dresser.

#### SPECIAL CLUE: FATHER FIOFAN

Searching the Chapel discovers that Fiofan has been researching various concoctions. A character proficient in alchemist supplies, herbalism kit, or poisoner's kit (or a casting of *identify*) recognizes an experimental contact poison made from a dead water weird intended to duplicate the effects of running water. Fiofan claims he was investigating a new method of field irrigation.

## DEATH OF THE BOYAR

**Triggers:** A month passes since the adventure's beginning; the PCs are unable to solve the mystery of the Beast after gathering all the clues; or the PCs falsely think they've solved it (DM's choice)

In many ways, the boyar's pride is equally responsible for the curse as the hag Pretty Kolchya. Over the course of the adventure, the Beast slowly comes to believe the boyar is the architect of all his or her pain, and perhaps is even deluded to believe that killing the boyar will undo the hag's curse. The Beast attacks the boyar in his hall, in the most horrific manner, revealing its identity in the process. In storytelling, this technique is known as the "horrific reveal." The DM should devise this encounter for maximum shock value. Here are some possible ideas for how the Beast's attack might play out:

**Ser Cedomir** launches a coup, with as many of the "knights" (**thugs**) as he has been able to sway to his side. They violently attempt to seize control of the manor, Cedomir instilling himself as the brutal new ruler if successful.

**Father Fiofan** uses his *potion of poison* in the boyar's wine glass, taking the opportunity while the boyar coughs up blood to condemn the boyar reneging on his father's agreement with Fiofan. A **swarm of ravens** breaks through the windows to assail anyone aiding the boyar. Once the poison has run its course, Fiofan will assume dire wolf form and move in for the kill.

**Merje the Seeker** plays upon the boyar's guilt conscience, whispering into his ear that his time has come and promising to spare his family if the boyar surrenders. The overwhelmed, drunk, and weeping boyar then lays his head down on a platter. Merje then turns into a dire wolf and devours the boyar. He can call upon a pack of 3 (1d6) **wolves** to keep anyone interfering at bay.

**Ruzina Nostova** meets with the boyar in private, but soon an argument escalates into shouts of terror. Anyone entering the hall finds Ruzina in dire wolf form tearing the boyar limb from limb in a paroxysm of blood and gore. If her father Uri tries to intervene and stop her, Ruzina may slay him in her frenzy.







## THE PLAYERS DID WHAT?

While it is impossible to cover all the unexpected and wild ideas players will come up with, this section will address some possible scenarios that can throw the investigation for a spin.

### ACCUSE THE WRONG SUSPECT

If the PCs accuse the wrong suspect, there are repercussions depending on the NPC involved.

#### SER CEDOMIR

The Hounds of the Borderwood come to Cedomir's defense, while the boyar publicly denounces the PCs, banishing them from the Graenseskov. If they are to find the true Beast, they'll need to continue their investigation covertly and without the boyar's support.

#### FATHER FIOFAN

The boyar reveals that Fiofan was once cursed with lycanthropy and that the PCs' have arrived at this conclusion without knowing that secret "proves" Fiofan's guilt. He orders Fiofan to be hung. However, soon after the hanging the Beast's attacks continue. The guilt of sentencing an innocent dwarf to die is only made more haunting when Fiofan is resurrected by the Dark powers again, with no memory of the PCs wronging him, but this time as a **werewolf** with a red-eyed **swarm of ravens** at his command.

#### MERJE THE SEEKER

Merje bitterly surrenders, claiming the PCs are fools deserving of whatever fate awaits them. The Halan witches rise to his defense in a series of escalating actions: First, threatening to close the infirmary. Second, threatening to reveal the true nature of the boyar's daughter Cvetlana. Third, (falsely) threatening to curse Volchykrov Manor. Until Merje is released, the Halan witches will not help the PCs in any capacity.

#### RUZINA NOSTOVA

Uri intervenes on his adopted daughter's behalf, giving a false confession that he is the Beast. His

story is just convincing enough, however, that the boyar may buy it and sentence Uri to hang. Should this occur, Ruzina swears vengeance on the PCs and works to thwart them for the rest of the adventure. If the PCs convince the boyar that the Beast is indeed Ruzina (and not Uri), the boyar orders his bastard daughter imprisoned.

### GO AFTER THE WOLFSKIN

Once the PCs are aware they're hunting for a loup du noir, a reasonable strategy is to start casting *detect magic* on every wolfskin cloak they run across in the hopes of finding the *cursed wolfskin*, and thereby the Beast. Unfortunately, the hag's curse has invested the wolfskin cloaks of all four of the main suspects with transmutation magic. Deciphering which cloak's magic is latent from which cloak is the *cursed wolfskin* requires further investigation or the object reading powers of Mirsada Latrova (see pg. 20).

Pragmatic PCs may want to simply burn all the magic wolfskin cloaks. While this is likely to earn them the enmity of the NPCs whose cloaks they burn (Remember: the cloaks are a sign of bravery and loyalty in the Graenseskov), it will buy the PCs a week without the Beast. However, as described in **Appendix A**, a loup du noir can fashion a new *cursed wolfskin* from a slain dire wolf given a week.

### KILL A FUTURE WITNESS

If the PCs' actions lead to the death of a NPC who'd witness one of the murders in **Chapter 2**, simply replace that witness with another reasonable NPC.

## QUEST REWARDS

XP	Quest
300	Correctly identify the Beast
150	Each murder that the PCs prevent, either directly or through identifying the Beast early
100	Keep peasants from mobbing the wrong suspect
50	Discover Radke Iliev's corpse

## CHAPTER 3

# BLOOD AND WOLFSKIN

Once the Beast's identity is discovered by the PCs, the focus of the adventure becomes bringing down the Beast. Should the Beast become aware the PCs know its identity, it will begin to push back. At this stage of the game, there is little mystery left, and the PCs are pitted on a collision course with both the Beast and the hag Pretty Kolchya that created it. These conflicts may play out in different ways depending on the PCs' approach, however. Nothing is certain, not even breaking the curse, as there are multiple ways to go about doing so that require both investigation as well as creative interpretation. While this is likely the deadliest part of the adventure, it is also the part with the greatest amount of choice given to the players as to how they tackle the challenges presented in *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

## THE BEAST PUSHES BACK

In addition to being the underlying cause of escalating random encounters (see pg. 13), the Beast will push back as described below:

- If the Beast's Lair is attacked or robbed by the PCs, the Beast repays the favor by attacking the PCs (or their horses or hirelings) at the Weary Horse Inn & Stables.
- If the PCs stockpile silver or blessed weapons, the Beast sends underlings to steal, destroy, or sabotage the weapons (**thugs** for Cedomir, Gorgon's Grin **bandits** for Fiofan, **acolytes** for Merje, Vistani **bandits** for Ruzina).
- If the PCs' investigation is moving with alarming speed over a day or two, the Beast visits Lovrenk Kosar and triggers his werewolf lycanthropy, creating a false trail of dead herd animals to throw the PCs off its trail.
- If the PCs publicly decry the Beast or assemble a mob, it attempts to escape to its lair, killing a PC or other enemy in the process if it can.





# Lair of the Beast

1 square = 5 ft (1.5 m)

1

6

7

2

5

3

4

### MAP KEY

#### LAIR OF THE BEAST

- 1. Steep Descent
- 2. Spiked Pit
- 3. Cave Paintings Chamber
- 4. Bone Pit
- 5. Macabre Gallery
- 6. Unholy Cave
- 7. Petrified Wolf-God



## HUNTING THE BEAST

Once the PCs identify the Beast, there are three strategies they can pursue to hunt it down. First, they can track the Beast to its lair and slay or subdue it there. Second, they can set a trap for the Beast and lure it out. Third, they can trick the Beast to separate it from its *cursed wolfskin*, allowing them to subdue the NPC with ease.

## LAIR OF THE BEAST

The Beast's lair is located in a cave on the western slopes of the Howling Hills. The closer one gets to the lair, the more twisted the land becomes, with wolfen eyes peering from the mists and every other shadow seeming to be a wolf waiting to pounce. Bones, of animals and humans, are strewn about the entrance to the cave, crudely hidden beneath tufts of moss.

**Ceilings.** Unless otherwise stated, the cave's ceiling is 12 feet high.

**Dire Wolves.** If the PCs explore the lair while the Beast is absent (and doesn't return while the PCs are in the lair), then a pack of 3 (1d4+1) **dire wolves** lies in wait at the entrance when they try to leave.

**Light.** The cave is naturally pitch black with no ambient light.

## FINDING THE LAIR

1. Tracking the Beast after driving it away in battle can lead to its lair. At several points in the adventure, the PCs may cross blades with the Beast, which flees when reduced to half hit points or after accomplishing its murderous goals. A DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check should be sufficient to track it to its lair, though the DM may wish to extend this into a longer series of ability checks and exploration.
2. Bringing the *cursed wolfskin* or the molar tooth of the Beast to the *raunie* Mirsada Latrova will grant Mirsada a vision of the Beast's lair which she can share with the PCs.
3. The magic recording of Radke Iliev in the Gingerbread House depicts him sketching three potential lairs of the Beast on a map: Geist Caverns, the Wolves' Den, and the actual Beast's Lair.

## WHERE IS THE BEAST?

Unless the DM already has an idea where the Beast is, or the PCs have made plans to lure the Beast out or pursued it to its lair, the following table can be used to determine the Beast's location when the PCs come to the Lair of the Beast. Roll a d4 or draw a card from the Tarokka deck.

d4	Tarokka suit	The Beast's location
1	Coins	The Beast is tending to mundane affairs at the manor, where it will spend the night.
2	Glyphs	The Beast is visiting another area of the Graenseskov, and won't return until sunset or sunrise.
3	Stars	The Beast is out hunting and killing, and it will return in 1d6 x 10 minutes.
4	Swords	The Beast is in its lair, mostly keeping to Areas, 3, 5 and 6.

## 1. STEEP DESCENT

The yawning entrance to the Beast's lair is easily overlooked due it being concealed by heavy mists and a rocky ledge overgrown with moss and tree roots. Rivulets of water seep along the dark stone which disappears into darkness 50 feet in, thanks to a 10-foot ledge dropping down midday through the long chamber.

The slope of this chamber is about 55°, requiring a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to traverse safely. Quadrupeds generally have advantage on this check. On a failed check, the creature drops prone and slides down the chamber, only arresting their fall after the midway ledge and taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the drop. If a creature fails the check by 5 or more, it slides off this ledge and continues sliding all the way toward the Spiked Pit (Area 2). One creature that slides in this way may arrest itself by clutching an outcropping of stone; however, doing this causes a cascade of rocks to tumble below, the sound alerting the Beast of their presence.

## 2. SPIKED PIT

A 5-foot ledge separates this 15-foot deep open spiked pit from the adjoining long chamber. Any creature falling into this pit takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) piercing damage. The skeletal corpse of an adventuring cleric is impaled in the pit; the corpse has a blessed mace, a ruined chain shirt, a heavy crossbow and 6 blessed bolts, vial of holy water, and a water-damaged field notebook. Casting *mending* on the notebook (or otherwise restoring it) reveals the following:

*Meant this to be a survey of the Beast's suspected lair, but dire wolves have trapped me here. Going to explore till dawn comes. Thankfully, I brought holy water, which the Morning Lord has revealed will weaken the Beast's resolve against my magic should I have the misfortune of encountering it alone. If only the rest of my party had survived to see me get this far.*

## 3. CAVE PAINTINGS

This roughly 30-foot wide chamber has a vague S-shape and its walls are adorned with extensive cave paintings. If Cedomir or Ruzina is the Beast, most of these paintings are fairly crude, while if Fiofan or Merje is the Beast there is a level of sophistication to the art that resembles illuminated medieval manuscripts. The scenes depict wolves and men working in unison to kill the boyars of the Graenseskov, hunters passing down a wolfskin cloak through their family line, three hags boiling a wolf in a cauldron, and other ghoulish paintings of the DM's choice that illustrate the adventure's themes. What's striking is that every rock surface is covered in the paintings, and some faded paintings have even been painted over... implying that the curse of the Beast has afflicted the Graenseskov in ages past.

Any creature besides the Beast spending 10 minutes or more in this room must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or feel the urge to cast off their equipment and descend into savagery while within the lair and for 10 minutes thereafter. Indulging in this urge grants that PC Inspiration.

### OPTIONAL CLUES

At the DM's discretion, some of the paintings may be unique to the NPC who is the Beast or even hint at targets like Jovich, Vitomir, Aco Koslov, or the boyar.

**Ser Cedomir.** If Ser Cedomir is the Beast, the paintings may depict the Beast wearing the boyar's crown flanked by knights wearing wolfskins and tabards with the Volchkyrov family crest.

**Father Fiofan.** If Fiofan is the Beast, the paintings may depict the Beast rising from an open grave flanked by ravens and cherubs.

**Merje the Seeker.** If Merje is the Beast, the paintings may depict a pack of wolves standing over bloody witch corpses, with the robed Beast at their center.

**Ruzina Nostova.** If Ruzina is the Beast, the paintings may depict the Beast flanked by Vistani menacingly wielding exquisite swords above the necks of peasants.

## 4. BONE PIT

The bones of the Beast's victims are piled high in this slightly depressed chamber, making it difficult terrain. A **swarm of centipedes** lurks beneath the bones, feasting on whatever the Beast did not devour. Searching the bones for 10 minutes discovers the following items:

- The turquoise birthstone ring of Ivanka Stojanovic (25 gp).
- A dungeoneer's pack with the rations eaten.
- A random trinket, rolled by the DM.

## 5. MACABRE GALLERY

Slightly elevated by 5 feet from the surrounding passages, this cave displays gruesome trophies of creatures killed by the Beast. The Beast doesn't take trophies from any kill, but only from from truly hated creatures, and each trophy displays a perverse sense of poetic justice. See "Cursed Suspects" in **Chapter 2** for a description of the preferred types of victims for each NPC suspect. The Beast keeps this gallery in part out of a twisted sense of vengeance and glorification of its own cruelty, and in part to frighten away any trespassers.

**The Talking Head.** Among the least grisly of the trophies is the severed head of Bruno Herzeg, once the wealthiest merchant in Volchkyrov

Manor who put a bounty on the Beast's head. The Beast attacked Bruno's carriage, killing his family and guards, and hung Bruno's headless corpse outside the manor as a warning. Little did the Beast know that Bruno had his own curse — the Grey Sisters coven cursed Bruno to utter the praises of those he despised until the end of time. Thus, his head animates when any creature enters the gallery and lauds the Beast, the hags, and the boyar in the most acidic flowery prose possible. Bruno's head has an acerbic personality, and though he knows the patterns of the Beast and layout of the lair, he'll only be helpful for those who promise to end his curse or who flatter him so thoroughly he is disarmed.

## 6. UNHOLY CAVE

Consisting of a smaller "foyer" cave and a larger main cave, this unholy chamber is adorned with three dire wolf pelts on the walls, which the Beast either keeps as potential replacements should its *cursed wolfskin* be destroyed or, in the case of Cedomir or Merje, stockpiles in the hopes of turning its allies (knights for Cedomir, witches for Merje) into loup du noir. When resting in its lair, the Beast prefers to rest in this cave.

There is a palpable aura of evil here that clerics and paladins can sense, and such characters must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or are stricken mute while in the cave. A *detect magic* spell reveals the cave is protected by an unholy version of *hallow*. A cleric or paladin can use Channel Divinity to negate the magical conditions (see below) until the end of that character's next turn.

**Magical Conditions.** While in the cave, the Beast cannot be charmed, frightened, or possessed, and when it enters the cave any of those conditions on it immediately end. Additionally, while in the cave it regenerates 1 hit point at the start of each of its turns so long as it has at least 1 hit point.

## 7. PETRIFIED WOLF-GOD

A narrow wending passage, requiring Medium or larger creatures to squeeze, leads to a horrific weathered "statue" of a wolf-headed man trying to tear himself free of something, perhaps the

rock itself. The statue bears an uncanny likeness to depictions of the wolf-headed god of the invaders from the Mists (visible at the ruined farmhouse occupied by the Gorgon's Grin, see pg. 16). Anyone gazing at the statue must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or suffer short-term madness (see the DMG pg. 257).

If the PCs return later (once they're of higher level) and cast *greater restoration* on the "statue", it is up to the DM to determine the nature of the creature returned to flesh:

- The **arcanoloth** Inajira, petrified by Strahd after it came to Barovia hunting for the *Book of Keeping*. A collector of debts and souls, Inajira seeks to win Strahd's damned soul.
- A **glabrezu** polymorphed into an alternate form, it attempts to tempt mortals with offers of power and wealth which always require some other creature holding said power or wealth to be dealt with first.
- An incarnation of Fenrir, or another divine wolf of Norse legend like Sköll (Mockery) or Háti (Hatred).
- An incarnation of the demon lord Miska the Wolf-Spider.





## FIGHTING THE BEAST

While the Beast will attempt to force any final violent conflict to take place in its lair, its curse continues to cloud its mind with bloodlust, making it possible for the PCs to goad the Beast into a conflict in conditions more favorable to them. If compelled to fight away from its lair, the Beast may try to flee to its lair if reduced to half hit points. If unable or unwilling to flee, it will instead attack without mercy, going so far as to single-mindedly attack a hated enemy and tear out the throat of fallen characters.

### LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the Beast takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects, though it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- **Bloodcurdling Howl.** All non-wolves and non-loup du noir in the lair must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the Beast until the start of the Beast's next turn. In addition, 2 (1d4) **wolves** come to the Beast's aid, though only a maximum of 6 wolves may be called this way within a 24 hour period.
- **Formless Beast.** The Beast moves 10 feet without provoking opportunity attacks and can move through the spaces of enemies without treating them as difficult terrain. However, it cannot end its turn in an occupied space. It can attempt to grapple one creature whose space it enters, the *cursed wolfskin* cloak flaring out to engulf them. While grabbed, a creature suffers half the damage dealt to the Beast (rounded down).
- **Keen Scent.** The Beast pinpoints one invisible or hidden enemy within its lair. If the enemy descended in advance (e.g. rubbing wolf skin or feces on itself), the Beast can't pinpoint it.
- **Jaws of the Wolf.** The Beast make a Shove attempt against a creature within 5 feet. If the creature is knocked prone, so long as the Beast remains within 5 feet of it, any attempt by the creature to stand up provokes an opportunity attack from the Beast.

## REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing the Beast's lair is altered by its supernatural predations, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- **Wild Wolves.** Within 6 miles of the lair, wolves behave with growing aggression toward humanoids and settlements, even turning on their pack leaders.
- **Haunted Howling.** Within 3 miles of the lair, when wolves howl, it is impossible to tell which direction their howling comes from, as if echoing from multiple directions at once.
- **Shadows and Mist.** Within 1 mile of the lair, wolfen eyes seem to lurk in the mists and the shadows of gnarled trees seem unusually wolfish at the corner of one's vision.

### BLESSED WEAPONS

A weapon can become "blessed", and thus as effective as silver against the Beast, in several ways:

- The *bless* spell can be cast on a single weapon or 10 pieces of ammunition instead of three creatures.
- A 10 minute ritual by a cleric or paladin expending Channel Divinity makes a weapon "blessed" for 1 hour.
- Dousing a weapon or 10 pieces of ammunition in holy water as an action makes them "blessed" for 1 minute or until used to hit a creature (whichever comes first).
- Some weapons forged on holy ground or with holy components are considered innately "blessed."
- At the DM's discretion, a magical weapon is "blessed" when wielded by creature of profound goodness.

## TRAPPING THE BEAST

### SETTING THE LURE

To lure the Beast out requires one of the following NPCs to be used as bait: the boyar, Aco Koslov, Lubomir Pavolic, or Vitomir Alkaev. Convincing the NPC to go along with the PCs' plan should present a roleplaying challenge. Alternately, the PCs may forcibly abduct the NPC and make him play the role of unwilling bait, though this may present complications such as family members opposing the PCs or the NPC holding a grudge later.

## SELECTING THE AMBUSH SITE

No matter how tempting the lure, the Beast won't attack a site that is clearly highly fortified like the manor unless it has good reason to feel safe and confident there. If the PCs select one of the existing Graenseskov sites in **Chapter 1**, use its description to set the scene. Otherwise, a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check made as an hour long search determines how advantageous the ambush site is. Each PC contributing to the search makes a check, and each success gains one of the following advantages:

- Ample 1/2 and 3/4 cover provided by boulder, trees, or ruined buildings.
- Gully some 20 feet deep with deadfall trees above making excellent hiding spots.
- Hazardous terrain like loose rocks or snow that could trigger an avalanche.
- Open clearing with great line of sight for ranged attacks up to 300 feet.
- Steep slope that acts as difficult terrain to ascend, and requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to descend without falling prone and sliding.

## DEVISING THE TRAP

While the players can devise whatever sort of trap they can imagine, there are some guidelines to help the DM adjudicate how successfully their trap is implemented.

**Attack and Saving Throw.** If the trap involves an attack roll, it equals the lead trap-designer's proficiency bonus plus Dexterity or Intelligence modifier. If the trap involves a saving throw, the DC equals 8 + the lead trap-designer's proficiency bonus plus Dexterity or Intelligence modifier.

**Damage.** The base damage dealt by the trap is 1d10 of an appropriate type. For each of the following special components incorporated in the trap (or other components at the DM's discretion) the damage increases by 1d10, to a maximum of 4d10:

- Ballista torsion spring (see pg. 20).
- Silver hunting trap (see pg. 29).
- A blessed weapon, like blessed crossbow bolts.

**Escaping.** The base DC for the Beast to escape a mechanical trap is 8 + the Dexterity or

Intelligence modifier of the lead PC + the proficiency bonus of a PC proficient in smith's tools, thieves' tools, or tinker's tools. For each clever idea (e.g. using a silver chain or dousing the Beast in holy water), the DM can increase the DC by an additional +2.

## EXECUTING THE TRAP

To execute the trap without a hitch, the PCs need to consider three steps, making checks as determined by the DM.

**1. Keeping it Secret.** The PCs need to keep their plan secret from the Beast. This may involve keeping a tight circle of trust, disseminating false information, a Charisma (Deception) check opposed by the Beast's passive Insight, or a Wisdom (Survival) check to camouflage the trap.

**2. Spotting the Beast.** At least one PC must make a Wisdom (Perception) check opposed by the Beast's Dexterity (Stealth) to spot it and make sure it is approaching from the right direction and with enough time for the PCs to react. If this check fails, then the Beast either is noticed too late or approaches from an unexpected direction, requiring the PCs to improvise.

**3. Triggering the Trap.** If the trap requires a mechanical trigger by a character, then a Dexterity check may be required or even a ranged attack to sever a wire. Alternately, the trap's trigger might be a Charisma check to lower the Beast's guard so it triggers the trap. If this check fails, a character must put him or herself at risk to trigger the trap manually.

## TRICKING THE BEAST

If the players devise a means by which to trick the Beast out of its *cursed wolfskin*, the DM is firmly in the realm of improvisation. As a guideline, this should involve the following steps:

1. Identifying the *cursed wolfskin* correctly.
2. Stealing the *cursed wolfskin*.
3. Keeping the *cursed wolfskin* hidden from the Beast while resisting the urge to use it as a weapon of their own.
4. Repelling any efforts by the Beast to retrieve its *cursed wolfskin*.

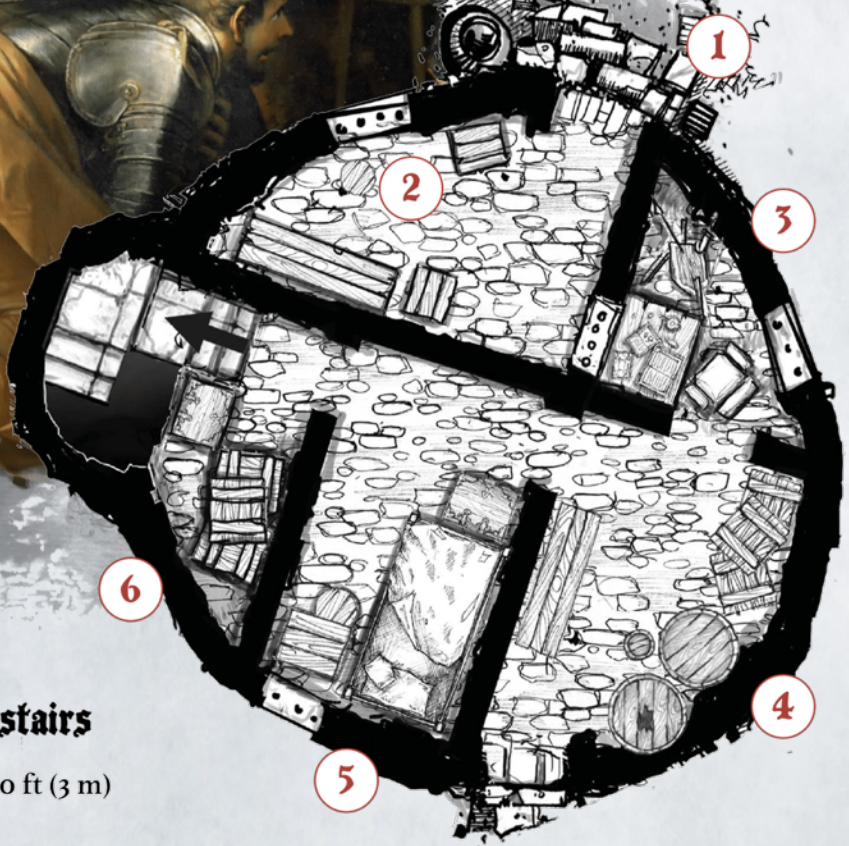




### Upstairs



## the Gingerbread House



MAP KEY	
THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE	
1.	Front Door
2.	Playroom
3.	Scriptorium
4.	Kitchen
5.	Hag's Bedroom
6.	Broom Closet
7.	Larders
8.	Punishment Room / Guest Room
9.	Treasure Room

### Downstairs

1 inch = 10 ft (3 m)



## THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Pretty Kolchya's lair is a rotund decaying cottage built 20 feet (6 m) up in the branches of an ancient gnarled lightning-blasted maple tree oozing black sap that reeks of iron. The porch around the treehouse is festooned with shiny baubles, children's shoes and caps, dangling sweets, and whimsical totems. Parts of the exterior are even edible, like the sugary "icicles" dangling from the eaves. A warm inviting light glows thru the windows and the smell of baking gingerbread wafts through the air. However, closer inspection reveals the facade: skulls are hidden among the totems, the ravens pecking at the sweets actually nibble on severed fingers, and the white "snow" clinging to the roof is actually bleached hides of human flesh.

**Archways.** Archways in the house are designed to just barely allow Pretty Kolchya to slip through without needing to squeeze.

**Components.** Fingernails, hair, and teeth (such as Merje's molar) are scattered through the house.

**Light.** Scattered candles burn with pale blue *continual flame* that only provide dim light.

**Sweets.** Every room of the house has sweets in it, either on display or part of the house itself.

**Windows.** All windows have metal bars and are enchanted with an illusion depicting rainy stormy weather no matter the actual weather outside.



## WHERE IS PRETTY KOLCHYA?

Unless the DM already has an idea where the hag is, or the PCs have made plans to lure her out, the following table can be used to determine Kolchya's location when the PCs come to the Gingerbread House. Roll a d4 or draw a card from the Tarokka deck.

d4	Tarokka suit	Pretty Kolchya's location
1	Coins	Kolchya is snoring as she sleeps in her bed (Area 5) after gorging herself.
2	Glyphs	Kolchya, in an illusory guise, is elsewhere in the Graenseskov, and won't return until sunset or sunrise.
3	Stars	Kolchya is out in the woods dragging dinner or treasure back to the house, and she will return in 1d6 x 10 minutes
4	Swords	Kolchya is in the kitchen (Area 4) or adjoining areas tormenting Anya.

## REACHING THE HOUSE

Reaching the Gingerbread House is a challenge in and of itself, as it lies deep in the mist-shrouded Borderwood. Clever PCs might track Kolchya or one of her minions back to the house, or even let her steal an item only to cast *locate object* on the stolen item. However, by far the most common method is following the trail of sweets.

## TRAIL OF SWEETS

Pretty Kolchya leaves trails of sweets in the Borderwood to lure children: walnut brittle, amandine (little chocolate cakes), or plum dumplings being her favorites. Viewing these sweets with *detect magic* reveals they are imbued with divination and enchantment magic. While Kolchya is at the Gingerbread House she has a vague sense whenever creatures are following her trail of sweets, though she learns nothing about the creatures, only that guests are coming. Any creature consuming a sweet must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or be compelled to follow the trail all the way to the Gingerbread House.



## THE THREE WORGs

If the PCs have not already dealt with them, then the 3 **worg** omen-bearers (see pg. 15) bar their path to the Gingerbread House. The worgs can smell if the PCs carry any cold iron weapons, and are hostile towards such PCs. Otherwise, they cryptically ask the PCs to break three wolfen statuettes in the hag's bedroom (Area 5). In exchange, they reveal Kolchya must play a riddle game if she is challenged.

## TREE, TREE, I CALL TO THEE

Once at the tree, there is no obvious means to reach the front door some 20 feet (6 m) above besides climbing the tree. However, a moss-covered boulder near the tree is engraved thus:

*Tree, tree, I call to thee  
knee  
key  
me*

If a character recites a rhyming poem, using the end rhymes engraved on the boulder, a spiral stair case made of hardened shelf fungi sprouts from the tree leading up to the porch.

However, any character climbing the tree without reciting the poem notices the oozing sap begin to harden. They may jump off (taking falling damage) to avoid being stuck, otherwise they must make a DC 10 Strength saving throw or find the sap sticking their hands to the tree like *sovereign glue*. A character wearing gloves or gauntlets can slip them off to continue climbing, whereas characters stuck skin-to-tree must rely on their companions to find a concoction in the Gingerbread House to free their hands.

## PORCH RAVENS

At night, the surrounding trees may be filled with red-eyed ravens trained by Pretty Kolchya to guard her house from adults. If Medium sized characters spend more than a minute on the porch or attempt to circle around the house to gain access through the roof or windows, a **swarm of ravens** attacks.

## AREAS OF THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Within the cluttered house the black annis keeps trophies from her most delicious meals, a cupboard stocked with spices, a bubbling cauldron, and an oven with a heavy metal door.

### 1. FRONT DOOR

Barely hanging on its hinges, the front door is composed of blistering oak stained olive green and is roughly 6 feet (1.8 m) wide and 8 feet (2.4 m) tall. The handle is black iron sculpted into the shape of a tongue emerging from a wolf's face. There is no keyhole and the latched door is unlocked. A crude placard by the door reads: "*No shoes.*"

**Trap.** Any creature opening the door while wearing shoes triggers *alarm* and *magic mouth* spells which manifest as the wolfen door handle animating to howl so loud all creatures within 1 mile can hear (a small pack of **wolves** may come after 20 minutes or so). After howling, the door handle says: "*Salutations, children. No need to be scared. You you like puppies, don't you? Pretty likes puppies, and kittens, and children. Come inside...*"

**Chimney.** A hammered iron chimney, which wraps around half of the house, emerges above the door. It is large enough for a Tiny creature to squeeze through, but it leads into the blazing fires of the oven. If the PCs make any loud sounds while on the porch, the character nearest the chimney hears a muffled voice (Narsden from the oven in Area 4). A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check makes out Narsden's pleas for help and warning about the door being trapped.

### 2. PLAYROOM

Garishly painted wooden children's toys litter this cozy quarter-circle shaped room. Two tray of sugar cookies are set out on one of the children-sized tables. A crooked painting of sleigh races hangs in the corner of the eastern wall. There appears to be no other exit.

**Cookies.** Two trays of gingerbread cookies are set out on the table, one marked "nice" and the other "naughty." Eating a cookie requires a character to make a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or be affected according to which tray they



ate from. A “nice” cookie affects the character as per the *calm emotions* spell used to make hostile creatures indifferent towards Pretty Kolchya for 1 hour. A “naughty” cookie causes the character to enter a barbarian’s rage (see the PHB) for 1 minute, but also causes the character to act as if under the effects of a *confusion* spell while raging.

**Toys.** Among the toys are four in particular that Kolchya uses to determine who is currently the Beast — the toy corresponding to that NPC appears corroded. These toys include:

- A tin soldier with a shield bearing the wolf crest of the Volchukrov family (Cedomir).
- A bald rag doll stained with black ink (Fiofan).
- A bearded snake marionette (Merje).
- A wooden matryoshka doll with an endless number of increasingly unhappy faces (Ruzina).
- A crowned wolf sock puppet (the boyar).

**Painting (Concealed Door).** Close examination of the painting reveals two “eye holes” poked out, and gazing through these reveals a small dingy room cramped with a writing desk (Area 3). Removing the painting reveals a locked interior portcullis, with an independently hinging unlocked window. Unlocking the entire door requires a character proficient in thieves’ tools to make a DC 15 Dexterity check to unlock it. The window is sized for small creatures, so Medium creatures must squeeze to pass through.

**Painting (Magical Recording Device).** A painting of a horse being attacked by wolves (see pg. 42).

### 3. SCRIPTORIUM

This dingy quarter-circular room has a lopsided writing desk which is attached to its chair with a ball-and-chain connected to a prisoner’s leg manacles. A stack of papers rests by a jar of black ink that smells of sulfur, and several crumpled papers are littered about the floor. A curious collection of weapons, swords mostly, rest in a rack next to the scribe’s desk, their tips pointed up instead of down as is customary.

**Crumpled Papers.** Each is scribbled with unfinished rhyming riddles.

**Hidden Trap Door.** A thorough 10 minute search and a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a trap door above the weapon’s rack;

this trap door leads to Area 9, and opening it dispels the illusionary chest there.

**Scribe’s Desk.** The desk itself is scrawled with obsessive engravings and blood stains which read: “*Must escape...the pen is mightier...must escape...*” A stack of sinister charcoal sketches displays children eating sweets in the playroom. One page contains ink blots that periodically magically form into various reminders the hag left for herself: “(1) *Broom closet fickle. (2) Rats in larders need the sickle. (3) A room for my niece? (4) Break next scribe’s knees.*”

### 4. KITCHEN

Dead chickens and slabs of unidentifiable meat hang from hooks on the ceiling of the kitchen. The main table holds a hide-bound recipe book and massive blood-stained chopping block. A set of cleavers, clubs, and torture implements hang from a rack above the table. A large iron oven is built into the southern wall. A hallway to the west runs past a bedroom and broom closet to a squeaky wooden spiral stair going up. *Pretty Kolchya’s kovsh\** rests next to the stovetop.

An ashen-haired girl named Anya Stojanovic (♀ HUMAN COMMONER, N) toils here, keeping a foul stew boiling on the stovetop, baking bread, and sweeping the floor. Anya is in a fugue-state, barely responsive, and will mutely obey any commands given to her. If rescued, she regains the ability to speak after a few days and can reveal Erelida (see pg. 26) works for the hags.

**Caltrops.** Caltrops are placed at the kitchen’s egress points (the hallway and Scriptorium door). Any creature entering the kitchen must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or stop moving this turn and take 1 piercing damage. Taking this damage reduces the creature’s walking speed by 10 feet (3 m) until the creature regains at least 1 hit point. A creature moving through the kitchen at half speed doesn’t need to make the save.

**Man-in-the-Oven.** A muffled man’s pleading voice comes from the iron oven. Opening the oven door reveals an extra-dimensional space with crackling flames and hissing embers; the baying of hell hounds echoes in the flames. Within this space a grubby human man is



crammed, as if forced inside a box; though he sweats profusely he doesn't seem to burn. He is Narsden (♂ HUMAN SPY, NE), the treacherous sole survivor of a party that perished in Castle Ravenloft. Unfortunately, his luck did not temper his foolhardiness and Narsden attempted to steal from the hag. He was caught and thrown in the oven, to cook slowly over 199 days. A sphere of force mostly protects him from the flames, but if *dispel magic* is cast on the oven, the force field disappears and he is consumed by fire. Narsden believes a way to free himself lies within the house and tries to convince the PCs to find it.

**Recipe Book.** Resting on the kitchen table is Kolchya's recipe book (see the handout in **Appendix D**), which contains an explanation of the Curse of the Soul's True Form and the Rite of the Dark Wolf, as well as many foul hag recipes. The following two scrolls scrawled on tanned human flesh are used as bookmarks:

- *Spell scroll (friends)* recorded as "Pretty is as Pretty says she is."
- *Spell scroll (vicious mockery)* recorded as "Tasha's scurrilous retort."

## 5. HAG'S BEDROOM

A dingy cot sized for an ogress fills most of this room which reeks of hag's breath. An unlocked chest at the foot of the bed contains several tattered cloaks for a Large creature.

Underneath the pillow is a pouch containing a handful of sand, a dab of ink, and writing quill. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check made by a bard, druid, warlock, or wizard recognizes the components for a *dream* spell. Kolchya has long suffered nightmares of Count Strahd von Zarovich, which her sisters soothed with magic (though the line between "soothe" and "manipulate" is thin for hags). Since Lagetha's execution, however, Kolchya's nightmares changed to being killed with the same axe that killed her sister.

On the windowsill next to the bed are three wolf statuettes carved of gemstones symbolizing the three hag sisters: hematite (opaque black, 10 gp), malachite (opaque striated light and dark green, 10 gp), and quartz (translucent smoky grey, 50 gp). If these statuettes are destroyed, the **worg** omen-

bearers are freed from service to the hags and prepare to hunt down Cvetlana the hag-spawn.

## 6. BROOM CLOSET

Behind a heavy burgundy curtain is a filthy broom closet full of dust and cobwebs. Dozens of old shoes and gloves, mostly children's sized, line the shelves of the closet. 4 of the adult-sized gloves conceal **crawling claws**. Several mops and buckets lie amidst the macabre shrine to Pretty Kolchya's cruelty, as does a sickle and her ironwood broom (which acts as a maul).

The broom closet is also a one-way portal leading to the Grey Sisters' Tower (see pg. 18). To activate the portal one must recite this poem: "*Sisters three, sisters thrice, I shall be with ye in a trice.*" The portal stays open for one round. However, due to the damage caused to the old tower, there is a 5% chance each time the portal is used that it ceases to function.

## 7. LARDERS

Most of the second floor is dominated by the hag's larders, full of sacks of wheat, jars of fat, barrels of ale, and hanging slabs of venison. A lone **homunculus** fashioned of molasses and mandrake root guards the larders, magically conveying what it senses to Pretty Kolchya who issues commands to it telepathically. In addition, 4 **giant rats** have infested the larders.

The shelves are lined with all manner of foul concoctions and odd trinkets, but PCs searching will find the following magical items:

- *Dust of sneezing and choking*, labelled as "Lagetha's Seasoning for Little Ones." An *identify* spell identifies it incorrectly as *dust of disappearance*.
- *Oil of slipperiness*, a black unguent with several leeches clinging to the bottle.
- *Potion of climbing*, a brown liquid with a hairy spider suspended inside it.

## 8. PUNISHMENT ROOM / GUEST ROOM

This ominous room has walls covered in smeared chalk with the message "*I promise to be nice*" written over and over again. A table littered with



potato peelers and buckets full of fingernails has the names of several children carved onto the bottom of it. A lone chair is turned to face the corner, with a wool spinning wheel next to it. Some effort has been made to wash the walls and scrub the floor, and Kolchya even placed a bouquet of dead flowers in a vase. Several marionettes — one of her dead sister Lagetha’s favorite things — are slumped against the walls. The hag usually tormented “naughty” children in this room, but she anticipates Cvetlana’s transformation into a hag soon, and so she is in the process of readying the room for her “niece.”

The restless spirit of Iulian, ne’er-do-well brother of the Vistani trader Iancu haunts this room as a **poltergeist (specter)**. He was smitten by an exceptionally tall woman who was actually Pretty Kolchya in disguise. Iulian went to his death oblivious to the fact that Kolchya was poisoning him and fattening him for her odious stew. Iulian used to play with the children Kolchya captured, offering them a bit of solace. His spirit is tortured because he knows something wasn’t right, but can’t comprehend that Kolchya wasn’t what she claimed; revealing this to him ends Iulian’s undeath. The poltergeist will attempt to play pranks using the marionettes, tossing them violently if ignored.

## 9. TREASURE ROOM

This cramped room has four similar treasure chests, however only one contains treasure. The other three are decoys. Any character besides Pretty Kolchya opening the door to this room triggers a *magic mouth* which appears as admonishing hag’s lips oozing black slime: “Naughty, naughty, naughty...”

**Illusionary Chest.** A fine oaken treasure chest with a gilded padlock, it is placed above a spiked pit trap (see DMG pg. 122) that drops any character getting close enough to touch the chest onto the swords in Area 3. A character taking an action to visually inspect the chest can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to see through the illusion.

**Chest of Bugs.** A worn oaken treasure chest with a padlock engraved with arabesques holds a **swarm of centipedes** which scurry forth.

**Hungry Chest.** A worn oaken treasure chest with a black iron padlock is actually a **mimic** which attacks only if tampered with.

**The Real Chest.** A sturdy oaken treasure chest flecked black from mold is locked by a masterwork padlock bearing the seal of the burgomaster of Barvoia. Kolchya hid the key to the lock in the ruined Grey Sisters’ Tower (see **Chapter 1**). A character proficient with thieves’ tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. However a failed check triggers a hidden poison needle (see DMG pg. 122).

Within the chest are a fine set of silver cutlery (25 gp), a brass candelabrum done in a “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” motif (25 gp), a stack of gold-trimmed dinner plates (25 gp), a bloodstained silver holy symbol of Hala depicting thirteen snakes devouring each other by the tail (25 gp), and a sack holding 50 gp.

Also within the chest is a sparkling smooth dark grey moonstone that radiates conjuration magic. *Identify* reveals it is a *stone of recall* which, when broken, teleports the wielder to a certain place the creator is very familiar with. In the case of this *stone of recall*, the destination is the courtyard of Volchukrov Manor where Lagetha was beheaded.

### HORROR OF THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

How the DM describes the Gingerbread House can go a long way toward building suspense and giving the players the thrilling sort of creeped out feeling that should come with exploring a hag’s lair. Consider some of the following descriptive elements:

- A sickly sweet smell fills the room and rendered fat drips from the rafters.
- A raven on the windowsill caws out seemingly nonsensical phrases like “*little cakes! little cakes!*” only for the PCs to later make a horrific discovery the raven’s words presaged, like discovering little cakes in the kitchen made from ground human bone meal.
- A curtain lit by candelight from behind depicts the twisted silhouette of a giant rat-faced hag wielding a cleaver, actually an illusion distorting a giant rat gnawing at a chunk of sweet cheese.
- A trio of marionettes or toy soldiers marching through the house, chanting in children’s voices “*it’s play time! it’s play time! momma’s home!*”

## FIGHTING THE HAG

While the **black annis\*** hag is overconfident that no man can beat her in a fight, she also recalls how the boyar's forces destroyed the coven and executed Lagetha. Thus, Pretty Kolchya is careful to avoid facing a group of warriors all at once. If encountered out of her lair, she will use *fog cloud* to disorient and attempt to pick PCs off one at a time. However, she won't hesitate to use Pretty's Bower to teleport back to her lair where she makes optimal use of her lair actions and the various hazards in the Gingerbread House.

If a character wields the cold iron greataxe used to execute Lagetha, then Pretty Kolchya begins the first round of combat frightened, though by the start of her next turn the fear wears off.

## LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Pretty Kolchya takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects, though she can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- **Long Enough to Reach You.** Pretty Kolchya extends her claws through a patch of shadows in the Gingerbread House, and her claws emerge from any other shadow within the house, allowing her to attack any creature within 5 feet (1.5 m) of a shadowy surface or area. If she cannot see the creature she attacks, then she gropes blindly. However, if she grapples the creature, then on her next turn she can pull the creature through the shadows as a bonus action.
- **Off the Porch, Into the Oven.** An object in the Gingerbread House animates and makes a shove attack (using the black annis' stats) against a creature, pushing them up to 15 feet (4.5 m). If this pushes them into the oven, the oven door opens and the character takes 1d6 fire damage and is lit on fire, taking 1d6 fire damage at the start of each of their turns until an action is taken to extinguish the flames. If this pushes them off the porch, then they fall 20 feet (6 m) for 2d6 bludgeoning damage.
- **Pretty's Bower (1/long rest).** While in dim light or darkness, Kolchya teleports to either the

kitchen (Area 4) of her Gingerbread House. However, this imposes a level of exhaustion on Kolchya, and she cannot use this lair action again until she takes a long rest.

- **Sweets Are for Eating.** One creature in the Gingerbread House must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to eat one of the sweets, becoming charmed by the black annis for 1 day or until she takes hostile action against that creature.

## REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing Pretty Kolchya's lair is warped by foul magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- **Trail of Sweets.** Within 6 miles of the lair, trails of sweets, nuts, or fruits lead to the Gingerbread House.
- **Naughty Children.** Within 3 miles of the lair, children have any character flaws exaggerated.
- **Corrupted Forest.** Within 1 mile of the lair, trees exude a sickly sweet black sap that smells of iron, and fog is both common and dense.



## RIDDLING WITH THE HAG

Kolchya cannot refuse a riddling contest. If challenged, the hag will brew a tea of worms and bark which she insists on drinking along with any PCs challenging her. Refusal to drink the tea frees Kolchya from the obligation to engage in the game of riddles. Drinking of the tea acts as a ritual binding Kolchya and any PCs drinking to observe the rules of the riddling contest.

Violating any of these rules causes all creatures on that side to suffer a level of exhaustion.

### RIDDLE GAME RULES

- 1. No Cheaters:** Only those who drink the tea are allowed to contribute to the game, both in terms of providing answers and asking riddles.
- 2. No Magic:** Using *detect thoughts* or other divination spells to figure out the riddle's answer is not allowed.
- 3. No Stalling:** After a riddle is asked, the other side has 5 minutes to answer.
- 4. Rule-of-Threes:** The first side to answer three riddles correctly wins. Three violations of these rules forfeits the riddling game.
- 5. Terms:** Whatever terms Kolchya and the PCs agree to resolve through the riddling game become binding. Anyone breaking those terms is severely cursed. For example, the curse might be to suffer disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until making restitution to the other side.

### 1ST RIDDLE: MOP

*Long and thick my hair grows,  
And when wet tis heavy,  
At morn I dunk my head  
In the well till water's grimy,  
Yet whether up or down I goes,  
Ground-ward my hair hangs pretty.*

**Optional:** Tell me my name, from bottom to top?

### 2ND RIDDLE: SILVER

*Weighed before the liar's tongue,  
Trusted after honest palm,  
Best served before fishy platter,  
On clouded day, a welcome balm.*

**Optional:** Of what I speak, are you familiar?

### 3RD RIDDLE: MOTHER GOOSE

*When my name is called your children run screaming,  
But if you think to find me then surely you're dreaming,  
Down your spine I send pin-pricks as if some chill  
Had sapped your strength and roasted your will.  
I come at night to take the name of your mother,  
For what's fair for the one is fair for his brother.*

**Optional:** And now my name can you deduce?

### 4TH RIDDLE: FAME

*Alive beyond death,  
Neither truth nor lies,  
Given yet claimed,  
Watched by hundred eyes.*

**Optional:** Can you speak its name?

### 5TH RIDDLE: MAPLE TREE

*Though the blood in my veins flows not blue,  
Prince and pauper bow before me.  
When my blood boils, I am no wroth  
But instead I leave the sweetest of kisses.  
And when I weep it is never in the darkest hour,  
But tears of blood for a new spring.*

**Optional:** What could I be?

### 6TH RIDDLE: CRACKED THE RIBCAGE, SUCKED THE MARROW

*Twenty-four soldiers with curved swords,  
Stand facing half and half in symmetry,  
One by one, broken are their lords,  
And beasts feasted on their chivalry.  
Hound ate the hindquarters,  
Mouse got the toes,  
Ravens ate the entrails,  
And worms the nose.*

**Optional:** Now answer on the straight-and-narrow!

#### RIDDLING CLUES

The DM may, at his or her discretion, provide clues to players making Intelligence checks. Additionally, Pretty Kolchya might use an optional leading question at the end of each riddle which rhymes with the answer.





## BREAKING THE CURSE

Breaking the hag's Curse of the Soul's True Form requires performing a ritual that both replicates yet inverts the original circumstances under which Pretty Kolchya cursed those who had a hand in killing her sister Lagetha. This basic principle can be learned by consulting Finka Francic, head of the Halan witches (see pg. 42), or by reading *Pretty Kolchya's Recipe Book* (see **Appendix D**). Likewise, a PC with the ability to cast rituals might arrive at this conclusion through their powers of deduction, at the DM's discretion.

For example, holding an "execution" of the boyar, with the NPC who is the Beast appointed to be the executioner, and other cursed NPCs taking on supportive roles in the "execution." However, the Beast needs to be convinced or manipulated to spare the boyar at the final hour. This breaks the curse.

The DM may decide that other ideas from the players meet the principle that it must replicate yet invert the original circumstances of the curse. For example, perhaps the Beast is the one who must put his or her head on the chopping block and an NPC grievously wronged by the Beast must take the role of executioner and show mercy.

### GETTING THE BEAST TO THE TABLE

Getting the Beast to agree to the ritual should be a challenge that involves first subduing or tricking the Beast, followed by lots of roleplaying to convince the Beast to join the ritual.

**Ser Cedomir.** Getting the boyar to reveal his human foibles and reconcile with his son will convince Cedomir to join the ritual, as will implying that this is his chance to demonstrate his superiority as ruler instead of his father the boyar.

**Father Fiofan.** Revealing the truth about Fiofan's past and getting the manor community (and the boyar) to at last accept him and show contrition for what they did will convince Fiofan to join the ritual.

**Merje the Seeker.** Killing or defeating Pretty Kolchya and preventing Cvetlana's transformation into a green hag will go a long way toward

convincing Merje to join the ritual, though forging a lasting peace between the followers of the old ways and the manor-folk will be necessary too.

**Ruzina Nostova.** Showing Ruzina that the manor-folk can work together for good and ensuring the safety of her father Uri will convince Ruzina to join the ritual.

### DEAD OR MISSING NPCs

If any of the cursed NPCs are dead or missing, their energetic presence can be magically invoked using a bit of hair, fingernails, or blood from their corpse, or an object they cared about greatly. These components must be present at the ritual to undo the curse.

### PRETTY'S REVENGE

If Pretty Kolchya is still alive, she becomes aware of the ritual either through the *hag's eye* or through a supernatural connection to the curse. She uses her *stone of recall* to teleport into the courtyard where the ritual is held, appearing to be covered in a cloak of dead hands which she unleashes as 10 (3d6) **crawling claws** to disrupt the ritual. Pretty herself attempts to goad the Beast (or whoever plays the role of executioner) into making the killing stroke, and otherwise does everything in her power to ensure the curse continues in perpetuity.

### RESOLUTION


If the Beast executes the "victim" in the ritual, then the Beast is trapped in its form permanently. If the "victim" is spared, the Beast's curse is broken.

## QUEST REWARDS

XP	Quest
400	Undo the Curse of the Soul's True Form, thus ending the threat of the Beast
50	Discover Erelde's true identity and turn her back to the side of humanity
50	Free Anya Stojanovic from Pretty Kolchya's grasp
50	Retrieve the birthstone ring of Ivanka Stojanovic



## EPILOGUE

ictory may be bittersweet when the PCs finish *The Beast of Graenseskov*, for the Beast and its curse cast a long shadow across Barovia, reaching even into further adventures.

## A TALE OF FOUR ENDINGS

### THE BROKEN CURSE

With the curse successfully broken, the dead are put to rest, and life slowly returns to how it was before. However, should the Beast's identity become common knowledge, the mob the PCs averted may return with renewed vigor, demanding punishment of the NPC who caused so much woe. It will be a long time before the people of the Graenseskov forgive, and they will never forget.

Furthermore, without legends of the Beast to keep them at bay, a new wave of invaders from the Mist may make ready an invasion of the Graenseskov. Alternately, Strahd may bring the wolves of the region to heel, turning them toward dark ends hunting down his enemies.

### CURSED BUT REDEEMED

In some scenarios, the PCs may be able to redeem the Beast but be unable (or unwilling) to break the curse. Perhaps the Beast thinks they can use the power of the *cursed wolfskin* to keep their enemies at bay. Perhaps the PCs never discover how to end the curse, but do a terrific job roleplaying their efforts to turn the Beast from evil. Perhaps the PCs make the sorrowful choice not to grant the Beast an end to its curse, but to use the redeemed Beast as a weapon against Strahd.

Whatever the case, the Beast will constantly struggle against its evil urges, its redemption being an ongoing struggle rather than a clearly defined line between evil and good. If Pretty Kolchya is still alive, she will surely seek to lure the Beast back to the ways of evil.

### THE CURSE WITHOUT END

Should the Beast be slain, there is much rejoicing at Volchykrov Manor, though it is short-lived. Soon, murder most foul strikes the Graenseskov again, as the curse awakens in a new Beast. Each time a new Beast emerges, it is a bit more vicious than the last, and manor-folk's fears a bit more volatile. The Beast takes on legendary proportions, and the sense that the Beast always has been and will always be makes it feared across Barovia. Those who can afford to flee the Graenseskov for fairer pastures.

Over time, the Graenseskov periodically overlaps with other realms beyond Barovia, allowing the Beast to emerge through the Mists to terrorize distant villages, causing its legend to grow beyond the confines of Barovia. Should the boyar himself become the Beast, the Graenseskov descends into chaos and may even splinter to form its own domain of dread apart from Barovia. This may pit Strahd against the boyar-turned-Beast, as the vampire lord takes a dim view of any attempting to secede from his reign.

### TAKING ON THE WOLFSKIN

A truly self-sacrificing (or power-hungry) PC may take on the curse him or herself but donning the *cursed wolfskin* and performing the Dark Rite of the Wolf. Refer to the rules in **Appendix B** governing the *cursed wolfskin's* corrupting influence. The cursed PC now has a short window of time to achieve their goals before the curse overwhelms their humanity and turns them wholly into the Beast. Moreover, the cursed PC is likely to draw the ire of the mob should they remain in the Graenseskov.

The cursed PC's companions may find themselves taking on the role of monster hunters in pursuit of their former friend. A great opportunity for tragic pathos, this scenario presents the dilemma of whether the Beast is beyond redemption or if some spark of humanity still remains. Answering that may involve delving into ancient Barovian lore suggesting the Beast has stalked the lands for centuries.

## FUTURE ADVENTURES

### CHOOSING A NEW BOYAR

Should the entire Volchikrov line perish or be corrupted during the adventure, then the Graenseskov risks being overrun by dire wolves, worgs, werewolves, and other monsters like vengeful mountain goblins, bandits, or a new wave of barbarian invaders from the Mists. The PCs may be charged with either locating a long-lost heir or passing a series of tests to prove one of themselves worthy of taking the boyar's seat. Of course, as with all who hold power in Barovia, becoming boyar comes at a price that only time will tell.

### LAGETHA'S PROPHECY

Before her execution, the green hag Lagetha predicted boyar Borje Volchikrov would earn Strahd's displeasure and be beheaded. If the vampire spawn Aco Koslov was killed during "Mob Injustice" and Strahd learns of his death, the Count is likely to hold the boyar responsible. Likewise, if the Beast is not stopped but the boyar survives, Strahd himself may make an appearance to express his displeasure... ideally beheading the boyar using the very same cold iron greataxe used to behead the hag Lagetha in a stroke of poetic retribution.

### THE MISSING HAG

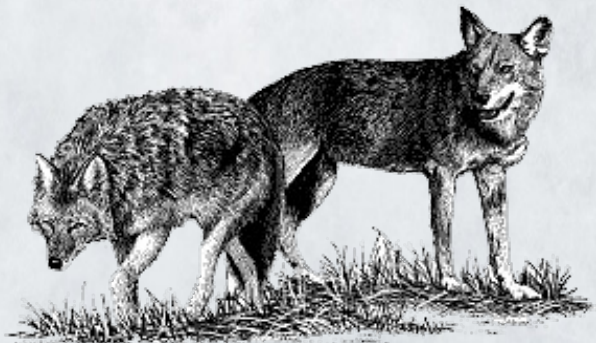
Devishka of the Mists went missing when the boyar attacked the Grey Sisters coven. What became of her? Perhaps she is merely one of the many guises of the night hag Morgantha in *Curse of Strahd*? Perhaps she died and became a ghost bound to the misty border of Strahd's realm? Perhaps she fled to Nova Vaasa or another neighboring domain of dread, plotting her vengeful return one day? Perhaps, relieved to be out from under her sisters' control, she possesses an NPC and stays hidden, hoping to outlast any would-be hunters? Perhaps she seeks to corrupt young women to form a new coven?

### REBELLION IN THE GRAENSESKOV

Strahd is responsible for much of the suffering in the Graenseskov, directly and indirectly. Though it may be ill-fated, a rebellion to Strahd's rule might emerge here, especially with PCs leading the movement. A key step to secure the boyar's support and legitimize the rebellion, however, will be to discover the fate of his son Pytor who was sacrificed to Strahd. If the boy is dead, this means recovering his body from Castle Ravenloft. If the boy is a vampire spawn, this may mean giving him merciful rest or bringing him captive for the boyar to perform the sorrowful deed. If the boy is miraculously alive and held captive under Strahd's thrall, this means rescuing Pyotr and returning him to Volchikrov Manor.

### WEREWOLVES UNLEASHED

Though werewolves and loup du noir are vastly different creatures, it's possible that the werewolves of Barovia take interest in the *cursed wolfskin* as a way to delve further into their primal power or even a false hope of ending their curse. Perhaps werewolves view whoever dons the *cursed wolfskin* as some kind of tribal leader? If Cedomir was the Beast, then it's entirely possible he inducted one of his "knights" as a loup du noir, who goes on to drive the wolves of the Graenseskov mad with unearthly hunger. It's also possible during the course of the adventure that Father Fiofan or Lovrenk Kosar had his werewolf lycanthropy triggered, sending that NPC in to a bloody downward spiral. Perhaps the PCs feel responsible and swear to hunt down the werewolf... only to find he made allies with a the pack of werewolves in *Curse of Strahd*.

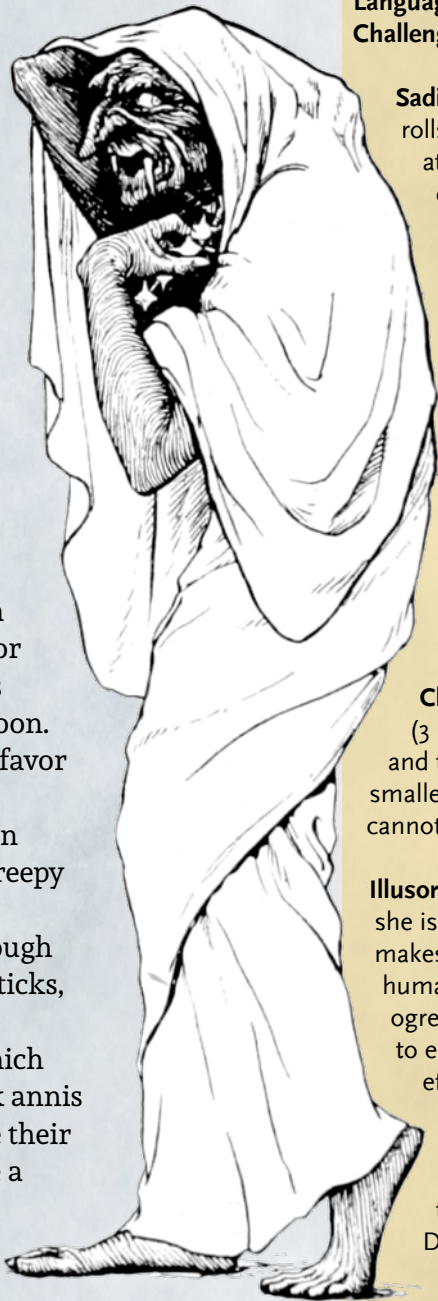


## APPENDIX A

# MONSTERS

## HAG, BLACK ANNIS

Black annis, also known as night witches, are the most vicious and sadistic of hags. They appear as hideous seven to eight foot tall crones with bloated dark indigo or blackish aquamarine flesh, hooked noses, glossy black hair and nails, and malevolent yellow eyes. Embodying children's nightmares of wicked witches waiting to carry off the naughty ones to be cooked or eaten alive, black annis indeed have an insatiable desire for human flesh. Legendarily vain, black annis can't sustain covens amongst themselves, though they may with other hags and some black annis congregate in temporary groups peasants call "sabbaths" to hunt down a particularly special child or during inauspicious times like an eclipse or blood moon. As their lairs, black annis favor ruins, abandoned villages overcome by plague, sylvan caves called "bowers" or creepy tree-dwellings known as "gingerbread houses." Though they do not fly on broomsticks, some fight with magical ironwood broomsticks which they wield as mauls. Black annis like to deceive and torture their victims, preferring to take a creature captive rather than kill it on the spot.



## BLACK ANNIS

Large fey (shapechanger), chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 68 (9d10+24)

**Speed** 30 ft. (9 m)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't forged of cold iron

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft. (18.2 m), passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Giant, Sylvan

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Sadistic Grappler.** The hag has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by her, and her attacks deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage against creatures grappled by her.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The hag's spellcasting ability is Charisma. She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:  
3/day: *fog cloud* (cast as if using an 8th-level spell slot creating 160-foot-radius sphere)

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The hag makes a bite and claw attack.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft. (3 m), one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) slashing damage, and the target is grappled by the hag if it is Medium or smaller. If the hag has two creatures grappled she cannot make claw attacks.

**Illusory Appearance.** The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like a creature of her general size and humanoid shape (e.g. a tall human, a small giant, or an ogress). The effect ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have no claws, but someone touching her hand might feel the claws. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

## LOUP DU NOIR

Most lycanthropes have no choice in what they are, either born with lycanthropy or afflicted by another lycanthrope's bite. Not so for the loup du noir. Also known as skin-changers, loup du noir don a magic wolfskin to assume the form of a dire wolf. The dark sorceries of the transformation drive the skin-changer mad with murderous urges.

### ANCIENT CURSE

Loup du noir are bestowed with lycanthropy in cabalistic rites passed down through the ages by other loup du noir, by fiends, and by hags. Each loup du noir chooses to accept its curse, seduced by the wolf's strength. While the curse is not heritable, it is often passed down as a family tradition among hunters.

### OUT FOR BLOOD

No matter a loup du noir's intentions in taking on its curse, its mind grows clouded by an intense bloodlust. Far exceeding the normal predations of a dire wolf, the loup du noir will become a threat even to friends and innocents.

### MAGIC WOLFSKIN

See the *cursed wolfskin* in **Appendix B** for details.



## LOUP DU NOIR

*Medium humanoid (shapechanger), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 11 (or by character) in humanoid form, 13 (natural armor) in dire wolf form

**Hit Points** 71 (11d8+22)

**Speed** 30 ft. (9 m) (40 ft. (12 m) in dire wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +4

**Condition Immunities** charmed, paralyzed

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered or blessed

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical weapons that aren't silvered or blessed

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft. (18.2 m), passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common (can speak in dire wolf form)

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The loup du noir has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Magic Resistance.** The loup du noir has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. However, dousing it with holy water strips it of this trait until the start of its next turn.

**Magic Wolfskin.** Nonmagical weapons that are not silvered or blessed break after striking the loup du noir while it wears its magic wolfskin.

**Shapechanger.** The loup du noir can use its action to polymorph into a Large dire wolf, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics may be the same (besides AC, speed, and attack options), or its statistics may change to an NPC's in its humanoid form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. The loup du noir reverts to its true form if it dies.

**Vicious.** Against a creature granting the loup du noir advantage on an attack, it deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage.

### ACTIONS

**Bite (dire wolf form).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8+3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. On a natural 20, and when it reduces a target to 0 hit points, the loup du noir tears the victim's throat, dealing 9 (2d8) bleeding damage to the target at the start of each of its turns until a creature takes an action to bind the wound or the target receives magical healing.

**Longsword (humanoid form).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage.

## APPENDIX B

# MAGIC ITEMS

### CIRCLET OF HALA

This *headband of intellect* appears as a braided leather circlet geometrically interwoven with copper snakes. It was made by the early witches devoted to Hala as a weapon against hags, and hags who see the circlet become hostile to its wearer (though hags are such malicious creatures anyway their hostility may not be immediately apparent).

While attuned to the circlet, you experience cryptic and troubling dreams from Hala at the DM's discretion. Additionally, during a short rest you can meditate with the circlet and sense the direction to the nearest *hag eye* present within a 5 mile radius sphere. This awareness lasts until you take a long rest. While aware of the *hag eye*, you can use an action to see through it as a hag would. However, any hags attuned to the *hag eye* may make a Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by the your Charisma (Deception) check to sense you watching. If the *hag eye* is destroyed while you are looking through it, you suffer 16 (3d10) psychic damage and are blinded for 1 day.

### THE CURSED WOLFSKIN

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

This wolfskin cloak functions like a *cloak of protection*, though when you are presented an opportunity to act in a selfish or malevolent way, it subtly heightens your urge to do so.

**Curse.** If you learn the Rite of the Dark Wolf, you can attune to the wolfskin. Attuning to the wolfskin curses you. Thereafter, while wearing the wolfskin you can use an action to polymorph into a dire wolf, gaining **loup du noir**\* stats. This curse is unaffected by *remove curse*.

However, you develop the urge to transform every night and indulge in murder. Resisting this urge requires a DC 10 Charisma saving throw, increasing the DC by 1 for each day that has passed since your last transformation. If you fail this saving throw you can no longer resist the

urge and you transform to go on a killing spree that lasts 1d12 hours.

If you are driven to attack someone or something you are familiar with and care about, you may repeat the saving throw to resist killing them. No matter how long you resist the murderous urges, over time your alignment shifts toward chaotic evil.

### GHOST LANTERN

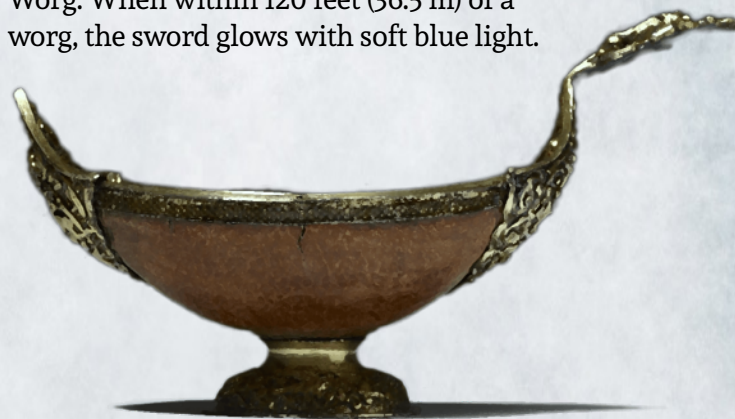
A *lantern of revealing* that sheds a ghoulish washed out blue-tinted light, the ghost lantern is forged of black iron that feels cool to the touch. When used to shed dim light it also reveals ethereal creatures like ghosts. The origins of the lantern are shrouded in obscurity, though it is believed Dr. Van Richten's contemporary Emilion Lacousto wielded the lantern in defeating the Phantom Army.

### KOLCHYA'S KOVSH

This *alchemy jug* is a traditional drinking vessel in the shape of a boat, carved of buoyant wood with a gilded rim. In addition to the liquids an *alchemy jug* normally yields, it can produce 2 gallons (7.5 L) of blood, 2 gallons (7.5 L) of rat stew, 1 gallon (3.25 L) of green slime (see DMG pg. 105), or 1 ounce (30 mL) of salty paste which dissolves the hardened sap from the Gingerbread House's maple tree.

### SORDJE'S SWORD

Sordje's sword is a *longsword +1* with a handle fashioned of elk antler and the blade of cold iron (see pg. 24 for details on cold iron and shadow fey). It grants you the ability to speak and understand Worg. When within 120 feet (36.5 m) of a worg, the sword glows with soft blue light.



## APPENDIX C

# CHASE RULES

While the chase rules in the DMG are suitable for simple scenarios where an enemy flees a fight and initiative sequence carries on as normal, they may prove insufficient for a DM wanting a fast, dynamic, and tensely cinematic chase that involves quick decision-making and an opportunity for limited conflict between pursuer and prey. *The Beast of Graenseskov* includes several run-ins with the Beast that require evading it, and later on those tables may be turned if the PCs opt to hunt the Beast down. Sleigh races also may take place to beat the Beast to a location, or in a deal with the Latrova Vistani. In these cases, the following chase rules may provide a faster, more gripping scenario for the group.

1. **The DM determines the starting gap and other conditions of the chase.**
2. **The chase should last between 3 to 6 rounds, which may be anywhere from a normal combat round to 20 minutes in length. It depends on the scale of the chase.**
3. **“Initiative” is side-based and determined by bidding on Difficulty of the “chase check.”**
4. **At the start of each turn, each side makes a special group ability check (a “chase check”) according to the nature of the chase.**
5. **One creature representing each side of the chase then rolls 1d12 on the Chase Events table, which may affect just that creature, all creatures on its side, or all creatures in the chase depending on the results. On the players’ side, a different PC should handle this roll each round.**
6. **Creatures in the chase may opt to take actions or try unusual strategies, which may change their individual position.**
7. **This process repeats each round until the chase’s end conditions are met, typically: finishing all rounds of the chase, the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey doubles the starting gap.**

## STARTING THE CHASE

Determine who is on which side of the chase. Generally, creatures are clumped together on their side, but a creature whose speed is different from others on its side by 10 or more, certain complications, and outlandish strategies may involve a creature being tracked separate from the rest of its side.

A good starting gap is twice the speed of most creatures in the chase (e.g. a mounted chase might start with pursuers and prey 120 ft. apart).

The DM determines other conditions of the chase, like visibility, cover, and line of sight. Especially if there are spellcasters with crippling spells like *hold person* or *sleep*, consider placing terrain that limits line of sight.

The DM determines how long the chase lasts. A good length is one round per PC, though the DM can also use other end game scenarios (see “Ending the Chase”).

## CHASE CHECKS

Each round, both sides makes a chase check, a group ability check that does not require creatures on the same side to use the same ability or skill. For example, during a foot chase through the woods, one creature might make a Strength (Athletics) check, while another makes a Wisdom (Survival) check to quickly navigate the path of least resistance. Which checks are permissible are left to the DM, though this is a great occasion to say “yes” to the players.

The Difficulty of this check begins at a value determined by the DM (e.g. 12), and is then increased via a bidding process by both sides. The side to bid the highest Difficulty chooses whether to go first or last.

If at least half the group succeeds, then that side may widen or close the gap by a number of feet equal to d10 per 10 feet of movement (rounding up). For example, a speed 25 halfling would 3d10 feet. Thus, it is possible for both pursuers and prey to succeed the chase check, causing the gap to widen and close on the same round.



## ENDING THE CHASE

In the case of a chase to a safe haven of some kind, the chase ends when either the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey reach the safe haven by keeping the gap above 0 for the entire chase.

In the case of a race to a finish line, the race ends after the last round. However, who is pursuer and who is prey may change as the chasers jockey for the lead position.

In the case of a chase with no specific end point, instead of a set number of rounds, the chase ends when either the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey increases the gap to twice what it started at. Alternately, the chase might end if the prey deceive or hide from the pursuers.

Depending on how a chase ends, it could represent the prey being driven into a dead-end.

## ACTIONS DURING A CHASE

During a chase, most creatures focus entirely on evasion or pursuit, and are assumed to take the Dash action each turn. However, a creature moving independently (i.e. not on the same horse or vehicle as another) may forgo taking the Dash action, in which case its position in the chase drops by an amount equal to its speed (or the speed of its mount). The creature is then free to take any action it pleases, such as making a ranged attack if it has line of sight.

Additionally, there are a few special actions unique to chases:

- Create a Complication
- Lookout
- Outmaneuver
- Reckless Sprint

### Getting a Clear Shot

In situations where line of sight is in doubt, a Wisdom (Perception) check may be called for to determine whether a creature can get enough sustained line of sight to get a clear shot. This check should begin very hard (DC 25) or nearly impossible (DC 30), but each round the chase progresses the DC should lower by 5, representing creatures looking for an opening to take a shot or cast a spell.

## CREATE A COMPLICATION

Creatures in a chase may be able to create a hazard or obstacle to afflict the opposite side as an action. The DM should adjudicate such situations on a case-by-case basis.

## LOOKOUT

During a chase, creatures are assumed to be moving at a fast travel pace (-5 passive Perception). Additionally, in most chase scenarios opportunity attacks are not possible due to the focus required.

By taking the lookout action, the creature does not suffer this penalty to passive Perception and may take opportunity attacks as normal. In addition, the DM should provide forewarning of the next upcoming complication or chase event.

## OUTMANEUVER

A creature may attempt to outmaneuver its pursuers or its prey.

For prey, this usually involves a Dexterity (Stealth) check opposed by the pursuer's passive Perception, though other checks may be possible at the DM's discretion. If successful, the prey may improve the cover available to their side by one degree for that round (i.e. no cover > half-cover > three-quarters cover > total cover).

For pursuers, this usually involves an opposed check associated with knowledge of the terrain, like Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (History), though other checks may be possible at the DM's discretion. If successful, the pursuer begins forcing the prey into a disadvantageous route, dictating which skill must be used in the chase checks next round.

## RECKLESS SPRINT

Pushing itself (or its mount or vehicle) to the limit, the creature's gap closes or widens twice what it otherwise would that round. However, it suffers disadvantage on any ability checks to navigate chase events. At the end of the round, the creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or accrue a level of exhaustion.





## CHASE EVENTS

d12	Chase Events
1	<b>Convolved Terrain.</b> Neither side has line of sight to the other this round, and the prey may attempt a group Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide from the pursuers, who make a group Wisdom (Perception) check. If the prey succeed, the chase ends as they can't be found. If the pursuers succeed, reduce the gap to equal to the average speed of the chasers.
2	<b>Crowd/Herd.</b> A group of creatures impedes the progress of that side. One or more characters on that side may attempt to influence the group to assist them (DM discretion), or clear a path, on a DC 13 check. On a failed check, the opposing side rolls to close or widen the gap.
3	<b>Difficult Terrain.</b> Creatures (determined by the DM's judgment) face difficult terrain, moving at half speed unless they have a means to circumvent or avoid the difficult terrain. The difficult terrain lasts the entire round.
4	<b>Dilemma.</b> The creature who rolled this result, and possibly others on its side, faces a dilemma: if they don't alter course to a harder path, something bad happens (e.g. innocents hurt, mounts or vehicles damaged, supplies lost, they're spotted by other enemies). This harder path might increase the DC of all checks by 2, require intermittent Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to avoid falling, prevent line of sight, or change the chase's length.
5	<b>Hazard.</b> Some kind of hazard suiting the terrain requires all creatures on both sides to make a saving throw determined by the DM. A result of less than 10 results in "dangerous" damage, a result of 10-14 results in "setback" damage, and a result of 15 or higher indicates no damage. Refer to the Damage Severity and Level table in the DMG pg. 249.
6	<b>Obstacle.</b> A physical obstacle suiting the terrain bars passage. Each creature on that side must make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) group check to surmount the obstacle. If the group check fails, the opposing side rolls to close or widen the gap.

d12	Chase Events
7	<b>Opportunity.</b> The creature who rolled this result can take an extra action that turn, though the DM should require the decision on how to use the action be made quickly. If the action is used to make a ranged attack, consider lowering the DC of the Wisdom (Perception) check required to get a clear shot.
8	<b>Paths Converge.</b> The creature who rolled this result and one creature on the opposing side of the DM's choice cross paths momentarily, coming into melee range. They can each make an attack against one another, before they are forced to resume their former gap by circumstance and terrain.
9	<b>Risky Shortcut.</b> A shortcut presents itself to the creature that rolled this result. It can pursue the shortcut alone or convince its side to follow. The creature makes a DC 13 ability check of the DM's choice to avoid whatever risk is associated with the shortcut. If the creature succeeds, it rolls twice to widen or close the gap. If it fails, however, the other side rolls twice instead.
10	<b>Separated.</b> The creature who rolled this result is somehow separated from the rest of its side. If prey, it begins tracking its gap from any pursuers breaking off to pursue it separately from the main chase. It must make a DC 10 Wisdom check to reunite with the rest of its side next round, otherwise it is on its own for the rest of the chase. If a pursuer, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom check or become lost and drop out of the chase.
11	<b>Straightaway.</b> Each creature in the chase can opt to push itself, closing or widening the gap by an amount equal to its speed. A creature pushing itself must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw; on a failure it accrues a level of exhaustion. Additionally, both sides have unobstructed line of sight to one another this round.
12	<b>Twist.</b> The basic conditions of the chase change. This may include adding creatures on either side (or perhaps adding a third side), swapping who is pursuer and prey, altering the end conditions of the chase, changing what will happen when the chase ends, or radically changing the environment, visibility, cover or line of sight.



## GRAENSESKOV CHASE EXAMPLES

### Convoluted Terrain

- Misty criss-crossing woodland trails
- Gully with many passages

### Crowd/Herd

- Herd of spooked deer
- Pack of wolves (may join in chase)
- Vistani campsites

### Difficult Terrain

- Dense gnarled woods
- Patches of ice or soft snow
- Steep hillside

### Dilemma

- Wolves endanger an innocent nearby
- Mount is tiring, or sleigh is breaking up
- Pack of wolves lies ahead of direct path, but haven't yet noticed the PCs

### Hazard

- Brambles and thorns (Strength)
- Trees weeping black acidic sap (Constitution)
- Unstable slope (Dexterity)

### Obstacle

- 10-15 foot wide chasm, spanned by log
- Old logging site
- Narrow gap in between gully walls

### Opportunity

- The mists part momentarily
- Ascending a rise gives a view of the scene

### Paths Converge

- High road swoops down into low road
- Sliding down a slippery mossy hill
- Mists confound actual distances

### Risky Shortcut

- Unsteady snowy embankment
- Downhill with a chasm below
- Log spanning waterfall pond

### Separated

- Miniature avalanche
- Falling rotted trees
- Forest floor drops abruptly into gully

### Straightaway

- Wicked bend of the woodland trail
- Ice-slicked hillside
- Tunnel carved through thick canopy

### Twist

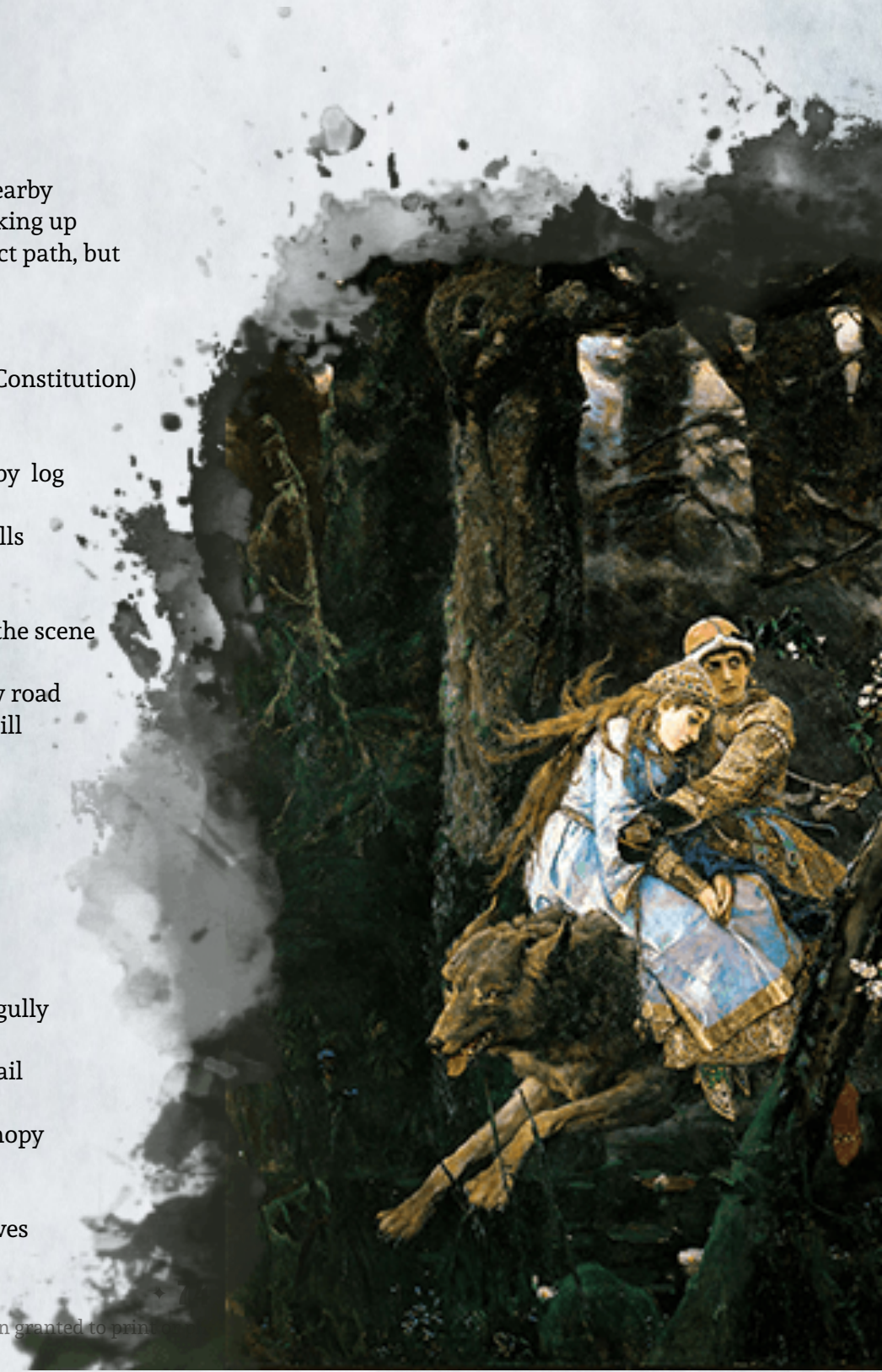
- Snow or opaque fog moves in
- Safe destination overrun by wolves

### SLEIGH

**Speed:** 60 feet (equal to riding horses drawing it), can only move over snow and ice, ignoring any difficult terrain due to snow or ice.

**Crew:** 1    **Passengers:** 5    **Cargo:** 1/2 ton

**HP:** 50    **AC:** 11





## APPENDIX D

# FOLKTALES & HANDOUTS

## BARKING PIET

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Once upon a springtide, the boyar called a gathering of bards to lift the malaise that had fallen over his daughter Malena. No matter how pleasing the melody, or raucous the jig, nothing would stir the boyar's daughter. All she ever did was sigh and slip deeper into despair. Blaming the odious music of the bards, the boyar commanded each have his tongue burned by coals or his fingers eaten by pigs. Knowing the punishment that awaited should they fail, the bards stopped coming to Volchykrov Manor.

Years wore on and Malena became a young lady. Catching sight of her one day, the poor bard Piet swore he'd marry her, but he knew he had no talent with the viol and was sure to be tortured or killed. Sneakily following Malena on a walk through the woods, Piet spied her playing with a grey wolf, and the delight on her face enchanted him. Determined to learn the secret of how the wolf lifted Malena's spirits, Piet waited until she left and then laid a trap for the hound. Once he had the wolf in his snare, Piet held a sword to the wolf's neck and demanded to know how to make Malena laugh.

"Making Malena laugh is simplicity itself. You simply must get on all fours and bark and growl like a hound!" Explained the wolf with a smile.

The very next day, Piet put the wolf's teachings to practice, and sure enough Malena broke into unwitting laughter. Astonished, the boyar demanded that Piet return the next day to make his daughter smile. Piet returned to the wolf.

"Making Malena smile is easier than growing tulips," assured the wolf. "All you must do is respond to any question asked of you by barking."

Uncertain but undaunted, Piet returned to Volchykrov Manor and put the wolf's teachings to practice. So furious did the display make the boyar that it seemed certain he'd order Piet's head removed, but once Malena caught onto the trick, she smiled broadly and pointed out the

ruse to her father. Again, the boyar was astonished at his daughter's sudden cheer, and demanded Piet return one final day to make his daughter eternally happy. Piet went back to the wolf and explained his dilemma.

"Why, making Malena eternally happy is the simplest task of all, dear bard," explained the wolf with crossed paws. "You simply must behave like a wolf in every way. And, if you would be so kind, bring me to the boyar's manor so that I might enjoy life as your pet."

Distraught but determined, Piet brought the wolf to the manor. At first the guards wouldn't let him in, but Piet had a way with words and the wolf was on its best behavior. Before the boyar's court, Piet nervously acted like a wolf in every way. His performance was so convincing that Malena proposed her father should lead his men on a merry hunt of Piet! Glancing at the wolf nervously, Piet was uncertain, but the wolf gave him an encouraging nod.

So Piet ran and ducked and dodged and weaved, trying to escape the boyar's archers and hounds. The more he ran, the more like a wolf he became, and meanwhile the more like a man became the wolf. As it turned out, the man was a beautiful prince who'd been cursed into the form of a wolf by a wicked hag. Thus freed, he and his true love Malena were soon married.

And Piet? Though he escaped the boyar's huntsmen, he fell victim to the curse the prince had tricked him into taking on himself. Till this day Piet wanders the villages and byways of Barovia, still no better with the viol than he was, hiding his wolfish face behind a silver mask. However, his true identity is always revealed because Piet is only able to speak with the voice of a wolf, trapped by his own foolishness between being a wolf and being a man.

**Morals:** Beware who you trust.

Don't try to be like what you're not.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

You can't please everyone.

You can't take the wolf out of the man.



## SORDJE AND THE DIRE WOLF

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There are two version of *Sordje and the Dire Wolf* — the commonly known popular version and the true version known only by Sordje’s spirit.

### POPULAR VERSION

Sordje the Justifier, the first boyar of the Graenseskov, was a close confidante of the von Zarovich family and general of their forces. Returning home from battle, he found a wolf pup wounded by a stray arrow. Weary of battle and taking pity on a creature, Sordje swooped the pup up in a bundle and carried it home. As fate would have it, the wolf was a dire wolf, feared by all inhabitants of the Graenseskov. In his later years, Sordje and the dire wolf pup were close companions, and though it was trained to love all the boyar’s family and defend them, none trusted the dire wolf like Sordje.

One day, the von Zarovich nobles called upon their trusty general one last time to root out dire wolves plaguing the realm. Donning his old armor and bearing his old magic sword, Sordje took his dire wolf with him to face whatever evil was causing unrest among the dire wolves. After many dire wolves were slain, Sordje and his faithful companion reached the heart of an ancient werewolf’s sanctuary. So old was the werewolf that its hair had turned silver and its eyes cloudy with age. “Have you come to kill me, boyar of the Graenseskov? Or have you come to return my wayward child?” Asked the werewolf, gesturing to Sordje’s dire wolf companion.

Seeing the truth in the werewolf’s words, Sordje sorrowfully said goodbye to his faithful companion, but made the werewolf swear to leave the settlements of the Graenseskov in peace. Thus, they struck a troth (agreement), and the dire wolf returned to its kind, and Sordje went home to live out his final days.

Ever since Sordje’s sacrifice, the wolves of the Graenseskov have restricted their attacks to the wilderness, not venturing too close to manors, villages, and homesteads.

### TRUE VERSION

The secret of Sordje’s military success was an unholy pact made with two seemingly undying worg omen-bearers. In return for not interfering in the affairs of the worg’s hag masters — the Grey Sisters — Sordje would be gifted with respect and victory in battle. For many years, Sordje thought he’d outsmarted the hags and reveled in his good fortune. However, when he brought home the dire wolf pup his fortunes seemed to change. Try as he might to convince himself to return the dire wolf pup to the wild, Sordje grew to love the animal, trusting it as he trusted none other save his own flesh and blood.

Venturing to the Grey Sisters to learn why his fortune was failing him, Sordje implored them for an answer. The Grey Sisters told Sordje that by bringing a creature of the wild to be civilized he had intruded on the hags’ demesnes, and to put matters right he must bring the dire wolf to the worgs who he’d made the deal with as a sacrificial offering of peace.

Tearful, Sordje did as the hags bid, bringing the dire wolf to the worgs, whereupon the worgs tore into the dire wolf’s flesh and tore it to pieces. To Sordje’s horror, a black worg crawled from the dire wolf’s corpse, ushering in the completion of the Grey Sisters’ ritual to give birth to Pretty Kolchya, the black annis and third of the sisters. Realizing he’d been tricked into serving the Dark Powers, Sordje swore vengeance upon the worg omen-bearers but could find them no more.

## KOLCHYA’S RECIPE BOOK

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- The notes at [top left](#) are about the additional properties of *Kolchya’s kovsh*.
- The Rite of the Dark Wolf at [top right](#) describes how to attune to the *cursed wolfskin*.
- At the [center](#) is a description of the Curse of the Soul’s True Form with clues on how to break the curse.
- The riddle in the [bottom left](#) refers to the key to Kolchya’s treasure chest hidden in the Grey Sisters’ Tower, behind the archway’s capstone.
- The command word at [bottom right](#) activates the broom closet portal in the Gingerbread House.

Kovsh, kovsh, blessed be,  
Gifts bestowing eternally:  
Blood of one that need not rhyme,  
Neither stew of rat, nor green slime.  
But salty paste that sets us free,  
Needs rhymes to break from  
auld maple tree.



## RITE OF THE DARK WOLF

The wolfskin may only be reborn in the blood of its former slave. A circle of smokeless flame must be lit under the moonlight, and the supplicant must stay awake through the night, focusing on the vengeance and wrath that makes it draw breath. Thereupon, in the morning it shall awaken blessed by the sign of the Dark Wolf.

## CURSE OF THE SOUL'S TRUE FORM

"You who've raised hand against my sister, I curse you to reveal your true self, turning against kith and kin. I curse you to show your monstrous self under the sign of the soul's true form."

Beware, pretty, the creatures who make the cursed ones kind, wise, temperate, and generous. They are enemies of the Curse.

Beware also the witches of accursed Hala who devise magic at cross-purposes to your sisters. The Curse will endure so long as how it came to pass is not inverted with a stroke of mercy.

Lastly, beware the fools who would claim the Curse as their own, for though surely great wickedness will come of them, the bloody boyar and those who harmed your sister may not be the ones who suffer as they should.

Beware. Beware. Beware.

## LOCKED CHEST

I wear a cap,  
but neither gnome nor man I be.  
A poor troll too,  
for I let men pass without a fee.  
Keeping to my sister's house,  
I am a watchful ghost.  
Many pass beneath me,  
but fall ones I like the most.



Be pretty, not forgetful!  
The portal's command word is:  
"Sisters three, sisters thrice,  
I shall be with ye in a trice."



## Journal of Radke Iliev, beaste hunter

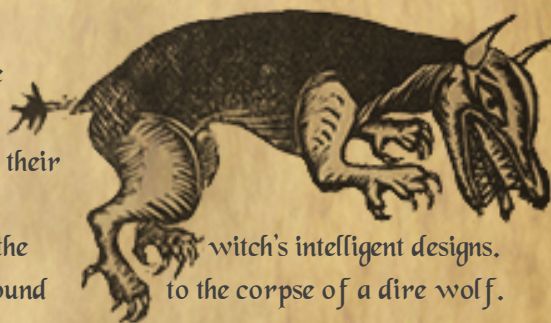
Barovian Year 735

Countless reports by peasants and guards alike, and I feel no more certain of the nature of the Graenseskov Beaste than before when the boyar hired me. I can only pray that my visit with the olde knight Lovrenk Kosar by Cailleach Falls bears more fruit. Owing to the Beaste's great size, territory, and the influence it seems to exert over wolves of the region, I have limited my inquiry to four specimens of malevolent beastes surpassing the 'common' werewolf in cruelty.

### DREAD WOLF (of unusual size)

The Vistani tell of witches who can animate undead wolves to serve as their eyes and will, by means of a foul ritual binding a shadow to a wolf corpse. Dread wolves regenerate all injuries like a trolle and their bite inflicts a rotting disease which may cause madness. As the witch

controls the dread wolf, it may act according to the  
It is feasible a powerful shadow could be bound



witch's intelligent designs,  
to the corpse of a dire wolf.



### GREATER WOLFWERE

Children of Harkon Lukas, Lord of Kartakass, greater wolfweres are exceptionally cunning and charismatic, able to take the form of a man, large man-wolf, or dire wolf. The greater wolfwere resists weapons not crafted the old way of cold iron, and it has an allergy to wolfsbane.

Ancient enemy of werewolves, the greater wolfwere is a solitary creature opposed to humanity whose greatest weapon is its charming gaze and somnambulant song.

### LOUP DU NOIR (skin-changer)

Dark sorceries allow the loup du noir to transform into a dire wolf by donning a magic wolfskin, though the price of this dark magic is a terrible bloodlust. The loup du noir cannot be harmed by weapons unless silvered or blessed; all others break against it. The wolfskin also fortifies it against magic, though a priest's benediction may be of use here. Whether solitary or in a pack, the loup du noir closely guards its magic wolfskin for without the skin, it is but mortal.



### LOUP-GAROU

Fearsome creatures born of the union of two werewolves, loup-garou are thankfully rare and I've heard few tales of them beyond Barovia. The loup-garou can assume the form of a man, large man-wolf, and a worg or dire wolf. Like its lesser cousin, the loup-garou cannot be harmed by weapons unless silvered. Its bite inflicts lycanthropy and its howl makes the blood of men curdle while it evokes obedience in wolves. Some ancient feud between the loup-garou and wolfwere cause them to murder one another on sight.

## APPENDIX E

# DESIGN NOTES

*The Beast of Graenseskov* is my love letter to Ravenloft® and I hope it provides your group with a several nights of great gaming. The adventure owes its creative origins to three rather different sources.

First, there is the historical tale of the Beast of Gévaudan which attacked hundreds of people in the Margeride Mountains of France during the 1760's. *The Beast of Graenseskov* borrows its basic premise from this tale.

Second, there is the 1819 Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Allerleirauh*, or Thousandfurs, which tells of a woman who escapes marriage to her wicked father by finding true love. No matter whether she wears fine dresses or a tattered fur cloak, her true love sees her for who she is. This motif influenced the NPCs Borje and Ruzina in *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

Third, there is the 2001 film *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, itself inspired by the Beast of Gévaudan. The unique mix of brooding horror, intrigue, a detective story, and fantastical action bled into my work on *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

## DESIGN GOALS

Hopefully, I've crafted an adventure which emphasizes investigation, exploration, and role-playing. 1st-level characters can be particularly fragile, as groups running the *Death House* have found. While *The Beast of Graenseskov* certainly has climactic moments where death is possible, it focuses more on challenging the players' wits and decision-making skills. Do they trust the boyar? Is the risk of using the *circlet of Hala* worth the reward? How do they choose to lift the curse, if at all? These are the sorts of questions I hope the adventure evokes during play.

## LEVELING UP & MILESTONES

Experience points in *The Beast of Graenseskov* can be broken down into four roughly comparable chunks: XP from quests, XP from random

encounters, XP from the Beast (loup du noir), and XP from Pretty Kolchya (black annis). My intention with *The Beast of Graenseskov* is that the PCs can gain XP for defeating the main villains — the Beast and the hag Pretty Kolchya — without necessarily engaging them in a fight to the death. That's one approach they can take, absolutely, but there are others like trapping or tricking the Beast or besting Kolchya in a riddling game.

For DMs using "milestone leveling", consider leveling the party up to 2nd level either after the wolf hunt (see "Special Events" in **Chapter 1**) or after they learn the Beast's identity. By the end of the adventure, after they break the curse or slay the Beast, the characters should reach 3rd or 4th level.

## TREASURE

Treasure is scattered throughout the adventure, amounting to five rolls for treasure hoards on the Challenge 0-4 table in the DMG. In addition to silvered weapons, art objects, gems, and gold, the following magical items appear in *The Beast of Graenseskov*. Note that none of these items is "just a sword +1," rather each has a place within the adventure's story. If you decide to add or modify magical items in the adventure, keep in mind the gothic horror motif.

- 2 *potions of healing* and a *potion of greater healing*. One can be provided by Merje the Seeker and the other can be found in the font in the Graven Garden in **Chapter 1**, while the *potion of greater healing* can be brewed by Mirsada Latrova.
- 2 *spell scrolls*, a *potion of climbing*, *dust of sneezing and choking*, *oil of slipperiness*, and *Kolchya's kovsh* (an *alchemy jug*) can be found at the Gingerbread House in **Chapter 3**.
- *Gloves of thievery* can be found at the Tree-with-a-Swing in **Chapter 1**.
- *Sordje's sword* (a *longsword +1*) can be found within the Barrow of the Boyars in **Chapter 1**.
- The *ghost lantern* (a *lantern of revealing*) can be found by PCs exploring the Geist Caverns in **Chapter 1** or during **Chapter 2**.
- The *circlet of Hala* (a *headband of intellect*) will be bestowed upon one of the PCs when they go to the Halan Witches' Circle in **Chapter 2**.



# INDEX OF NPCs

NPC Name	Brief Description	Appears on...
Aco "Four Eyes" Koslov	Insidious vampire spawn merchant spying for Strahd, drinking companion of the boyar; potential victim of the Beast	p. 23 p. 44
Amaliza Latrova (dead)	Vistani mother of Ruzina, elder sister of Mirsada, "killed" by the boyar or died in childbirth depending on one's perspective	p. 19
Anya Stojanovic	A missing girl held captive by the hag Pretty Kolchya	p. 57
Black Dane	Vengeful captain of the Gorgon's Grin bandits	p. 15
Boyar Borje Volchkyrov	Boisterous ruler of Volchkyrov manor and a vassal of Strahd	p. 23
Boyar Claes Volchkyrov (undead)	Former boyar who fought off barbarian invaders and bandits	p. 7
Boyar Sordje the Justifier (undead)	Spirit of the Graenseskov's first boyar cursed as a specter	p. 14
Ser Branimira Syrncevic	Bandit leader turned bodyguard for the boyars	p. 24
Bruno Herzeg (undead)	Early victim of the Beast whose severed head still speaks	p. 51
Ser Cedomir Volchkyrov	<u>Cursed</u> son of the boyar and leader of the boyar's "knights"	p. 31
Cvetlana Volchkyrov	Concealed hag-spawn daughter of Lagetha and boyar Borje Volchkyrov	p. 24
Devishka of the Mists (?)	Hag who vanished during the boyar's attack on her coven	p. 16 p. 64
Dusan	Squire to Ser Cedomir and potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 10 p. 44
Eris Corvara	Vistani horse thief in league with the Gorgon's Grin bandits, who once loved Amaliza but abandoned her; imprisoned in manor barracks	p. 10 p. 30 p. 45
Father Fiofan Kolotov	<u>Cursed</u> dwarven sage from the Mists who serves the boyar	p. 32
Iancu Silvertongue	Vistani camp trader missing his brother Iulia	p. 19
Ismark the Lesser	Son of Barovia's dead burgomaster, he is to marry Cvetlana; appears in <i>Curse of Strahd</i>	p. 9 p. 29
Iulian (undead)	Iancu's brother who ran off with the disguised Pretty Kolchya, and has been cursed as a poltergeist	p. 19 p. 59
Ivanka Stojanovic (dead)	A missing woman mourning her lost sons killed by the Beast	p. 28 p. 51
Jasna Federov	Widow of the murdered "knight" Jovich	p. 37
Jovich Federov (dead)	One of the boyar's "knights" murdered by the Beast	p. 22 p. 37
Katerina Volchkyrov (undead)	Ghost of the boyar's wife slain by dire wolves	p. 19 p. 24





NPC Name	Brief Description	Appears on...
Krabka	Mongrelfolk in the boyar's court with a hidden <i>hag eye</i>	p. 24
Lagetha the Spinner (dead)	Green hag executed by order of the boyar; Cvetlana's mother	p. 6 p. 16
Lovrenk Kosar	Werewolf hermit fighting his curse, once loyal to the old boyar	p. 20 p. 45
Lubomir Pavlovic	Ox tender bitten by the Beast and under observation at infirmary	p. 22 p. 38
Merje the Seeker	<u>Cursed</u> priest of the old ways leading Halan witches	p. 33
Milvan, Rade, and Stanz Stojanovic (dead)	Three cousins of Ratimir Stojanovic who went out to trap the Beast only to meet their grisly end	p. 36
Mirsada Latrova	<i>Raunie</i> of the Latrova Vistani gifted with psychic ability to read objects	p. 18-19
The Noseks	Family tending the inn and stables who witnessed the Beast; include Stravko, Emilika, Evdoyika, and Jakso	p. 28 p. 36
Old Man Vykov	Caretaker of the Thousandfurs Bridge, whose eye was taken by hags	p. 17
The Pavlovics	Ox caretakers outside the manor and witnesses of the Beast; include Ilyan, Jagoda, Lubomir, and Stepjan	p. 36 p. 44
Pretty Kolchya	Black annis hag who bestowed the curse creating the Beast, sometimes uses the disguise of Lady Molot Kostj	p. 6 p. 30 p. 60-61 p. 65
Pyotr Volchukrov (dead?)	The boyar's youngest son sacrificed to Strahd to appease his wrath	p. 7 p. 23
Radke Iliev (dead)	A monster hunter who was hired by the boyar to kill the Beast	p. 10 p. 15
Ratimir Stojanovic	Loyal servant of the Volchukrov aristocracy who feels betrayed by boyar's inability to handle the Beast; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 28 p. 44
Ruzina Nostova	<u>Cursed</u> <i>glogota</i> blacksmith who is also the boyar's illegitimate daughter; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 34
Stepjan Pavlovic	Eldest man at the manor, adopted Lubomir as a young man; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 38 p. 44
The Stojanovics	Peasants serving the Volchukrovs for a long time and witnesses of the Beast; include Anya, Bozidar, Ivanka, Jelica, and Ratimir	p. 28
Vasilija Gavrauh	Half-elven caretaker of the ravens in the manor's rookery	p. 27
Vitomir Alkaev	A guilt-ridden merchant who the Beast tries to kill	p. 42-43



# The Beast of Graenseskov

*The Beast of Graenseskov* is an 80-page Ravenloft® adventure for characters of 1st-4th levels focused on mystery and exploration. It can be used in conjunction with *Curse of Strahd*, either as an introduction to Barovia or adapted as a side quest, or it can be used as a stand-alone horror adventure-setting independently of *Curse of Strahd*.

In the mists at the edge of Count Strahd von Zarovich's realm lies the Graenseskov, a land of deep woods and bleak hills overrun with wolves. A Beast haunts these misty lands, leaving bloody corpses and terror in its wake, the product of a hag's curse placed upon the boyar's manor. But the Beast is no arbitrary killer. The PCs find themselves drawn into the mystery of uncovering the Beast's identity and breaking the hag's curse before the Beast's final victim gurgles their last breath and the Beast is beyond any hope of redemption.

#### Features:

- The DM (or the Tarokka) determines the guilty suspect and their motives, offering a different experience for each group's play-through.
- A vivid cast of characters with a NPC index.
- Escalating random encounters, special events, and techniques for DMing a mystery.
- New monsters: black annis hag & loup du noir.
- All units given in SI & metric.
- Handouts and maps for DMs and players.

