



THE MIST & THE WOOD

What belongs in the Mist?

The area surrounding the city of Phlan has been dramatically different ever since the Maimed Virulence, Vorgansharax, fought back against the combined efforts of the Harpers, Zhentarim, Emerald Enclave, Order of the Gauntlet, and the Lord's Alliance. Heavy mists crawled from the Quivering Forest and grip the land, choking out joy and happiness, and the elves have begun whispering of strange noises and a lack of woodland creatures.

An expansion for DDAL04-02 The Beast



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An Enchanted Forest

I WATCHED HIM CHANGE. His bones twisted and popped, his skin rippled as his inner being – his true being – began to tear free. The sound was horrific and my assistant had already begun to cower in fear, but I knew better: this man was ashamed of his ability. It was in his eyes, even after the lupine form shrugged free of the last few shreds of human flesh. His sadness could not be hidden beneath the gurgling screams and howls that would soon be issuing forth from his sharp-toothed maw.

I knew at last that I would learn much from his sacrifice, and I knew that although his life would save the lives of countless others as a result, I would never be able to return from the choices I was about to make.

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, “Van Richten’s Monster Hunter’s Compendium, lost appendix”

The Old Wood

The Quivering Forest has a proud history of protecting the lands near the city of Phlan. From serving as a barrier against the orcish hordes in Thar to serving as the home of the elves and even the dark fey to halting the advance of the Netherese army, this wood is seemingly empowered by unknown energies – perhaps of divine or arcane origin.

The land in and around the Forest is steeped in mystery and history, and elves represent the majority of sentient beings in the area. However, certain elements of the dark fey can also be found here: redcaps, faeries, quicklings, and even the legendary hag Jeny Greenteeth call this place home. While the elves and the dark fey are not openly allied, they are typically not in direct conflict with appear to even have a begrudging respect for each other.

Recent events in Phlan have thrown the status of the Forest into question, though: huge swaths of the wood are now shrouded in heavy fog, and unearthly howls can be heard on occasion. Winter is setting in and the cold, wet wind that comes out of the dark forest is at once both magical and full of impending dread.

For those that live in Barovia, life is different as well. Portions of their forest have grown disquiet and are alive with a new disturbance – one which the villagers are not ready to face. The Mists have transplanted entire chunks of both the Quivering Forest and the Glumpen Swamp over the Svalich Woods, and though the mountain villagers of Orasnou in Barovia have heard of neither, they know deep in their bones that the coming winter will be the likes of which they have never seen.

Ties to the Adventurers League

This supplement is designed to expand and enhance the experience surrounding DDAL04-02 *The Beast*. While this content does not change the XP, treasure, renown, or other rewards as presented, you may find that your understanding and appreciation of the environments presented in that adventure may be enhanced after reading this document. While this material is intended for DM use, players may enjoy reading it down as well – but be aware that it may spoil the experience of playing the adventure as well as others throughout the *Curse of Strahd* season!

Using this Supplement

This supplement assumes that the Dungeon Master has at least passing familiarity with the domain of Barovia as well as area surrounding Phlan in the Forgotten Realms. As this does suggest some juggling of campaign worlds, a Dungeon Master is strongly urged to review the following documents:

- [Season 1 Narrative Phlan](#)
- [DDEX01-08 Tales Trees Tell](#)
- [DDAL04 Curse of Strahd Player’s Pack](#)
- [DDAL04-02 The Beast](#)

You are by no means expected to have an encyclopedic knowledge of Ravenloft, nor are you expected to know the full history and details of the Forgotten Realms. The information contained here should serve as a sort-of primer for the environs surrounding the Quivering Forest, both in Faerun as well as in Barovia. You should be ready to provide cultural and ecological insight when your players ask for it, but please know that it is not the intention of the D&D Adventurers League to have your games turn into “history lessons” or “geography exams”. Have fun with it!

Lastly, it is very important to note that it is not uncommon for a Ravenloft game to enter some morally dark storytelling spaces. Please take care to judge the tone and temperament of your players, and be ready to adjust your storytelling tactics if they become uncomfortable. In a gothic horror game it can be just as effective to use vividly descriptive terms as it is to use graphic depictions of gore and baselessness. Proceed carefully, and remember that ultimately you are the DM – and it’s your job to guide people through YOUR story!

The Heart of the Wood

The Quivering Forest

General Features

The Quivering Forest is located due north of Phlan, and it has long a distinct wedge shape. It is bordered to the west by the Stojanow River, while its eastern border holds back the scrubland of Thar. The forest extends far to the north and into the mountains.

The trees appear to be old growth, but in reality many of them are only a few decades old. An enchantment pervades this place and causes vegetation to grow far faster than normal. The canopy overhead is thick and tangled with strong tree limbs, causing very little light to ever hit the ground. The undergrowth is snarled with briars and thorns in most areas, though a few paths wander through the tree trunks.

There are a small number of clearings in the Forest, and several of them have monoliths with ancient fey symbols carved into them. Whether they serve as territorial markings, warnings, or perhaps even serve as places of worship to long-forgotten deities is unknown.

By and large, the Quivering Forest is foreboding but does not necessarily present any immediate threat to travelers that stick to the path and do not dally. Those that would enter this place with the intent of logging, hunting, or otherwise exploiting the natural resources are rarely ever seen again.

Key Personalities

Aya Glenmiir. female elf sorcerer; Aya lived in Phlan until very recently, and has been her time investigating the curious situation that is unfolding within the Quivering Forest. She has no affinity for the elves of Greenhall and prefers to live her life in the open world, but understands that the choking mists and sudden rise in the number of dangerous creatures that have been spotted in the area needs to be investigated. Curious almost to a fault, she often finds herself in precarious (and sometimes dangerous!) situations. Her capricious nature can often be confused with flirting (no matter the sex of whomever she is interacting with), and her hair changes color depending upon her mood and any spells that she has recently cast.

Jeny Greenteeth. female green hag; Few creatures command respect the way that Jeny does. She initially presents herself as a welcoming grandmotherly-type figure, offering sweets, drinks, and other refreshments to weary travelers that find her home deep within the forest. Her patience grows thin, though, and if crossed or disrespected she quickly dispatches the offensive party. Despite her externally helpful demeanor, her true motives remain to be discovered. She and her coven-sisters appear to be content to offer aid and succor to the lost, but as with any hag, though, her assistance always comes with a price – and no price should be dismissed as too small!

Locations of Note

Greenhall. village; population approximately 150; elves only. Greenhall is a self-sustaining elven village that exists within the enchanted forest. They cautiously welcome trade with members of the Emerald Enclave, but rarely make themselves available for non-elves. They have a severe distrust of citizens of Phlan, the dark fey, and the orc tribes from nearby Thar.

Stojanow River. The river runs along the western border of the Quivering Forest. Its waters run murky and it is riddled with a chaotic rainbow of oily colors thanks to runoff from the nearby Sorcerer's Isle. There is a treacherous undertow as the river run over and around huge stones, fallen logs, and the remains of untold civilizations. Prolonged exposure to the waters of the river is not recommended.

The Svalich Woods

General Features

The forest outside the village of Oraşnou is dotted with gnarled pines, tall oak and poplar trees, and large stones. Thick mist clings to the ground at all times of day, and the leafy canopy far above prevents direct sunlight from hitting the soil except in very rare circumstances. The Mists of Ravenloft have transplanted a significant portion of the Quivering Forest from Faerun into the domain of Barovia, bringing along landmarks and creatures alike.

Tales have existed for generations about the fell creatures that stir in the forest, and the recent geographic upset has only served to exacerbate the

issue. Rats scurry from the deep shadows into fallen tree trunks, and blights futilely attempt to take root in the damp, soggy soil. Branches, leaves, and logs all lie in heaps, slowly rotting away in the half-light. Travelers that enter the wood often find themselves growing hungry and thirsty quite quickly, as if the land itself were drawing sustenance from their bodies.

The section of the Svalich Woods that surrounds the village of Oraşnou has been interwoven with portions of the Quivering Forest from Faerun, and is now home to several very scared and confused elves, transplanted animals, and a few fey creatures that are cut off from their homelands and the crossings and ley magics that kept them safe previously.

Key Personalities

The Vaduva clan. Deep in the forest a clan of human woodsmen and hunters have survived for several generations. Deeply reclusive, these hardy people do not welcome outsiders. About two years ago, however, their youngest daughter Alina arrived in the village of Oraşnou with no plans of ever returning to her family. The oldest residents of Oraşnou know of the family, but do not know any specific facts – though they are happy to tell visitors that “those savage men have the blood of the wolf in them!”

Jeny Greenteeth. A hag from Faerun, her true motivations are not yet known. She offers help to those that find her, but her price for help can vary greatly from person to person. More information on Jeny can be found in “The Quivering Forest”.

Glovia Falinescu. The matron of the Falinescu family, Glovia has taken to helping the people of Oraşnou with herbs, poultices, and other nonmagical healing tactics. Her only child died many years ago, and she has thrown herself wholly into helping the other residents in an attempt to focus on anything but her loss.

Villagers of Oraşnou. The villagers rarely travel outside of their small homes, as they rely on a very small group of individuals to forage and hunt for their families. The village operates on a concept of “everyone helps”; so while two or three people may spend their days in the forest hunting, others in the village spend their time baking, mending gear, or smelting meager -- yet functional -- iron tools for everyone else. Without this teamwork, they would be unable to scratch out their hard-won existence.

The Vistani. The Vistani travel through the forest, and much like their ability to travel the Mists of Ravenloft it appears that they can navigate the paths of the wood without much, if any, physical harm. They learned long ago to not delay their journey and, if

pressed, will offer only this advice to those that ask: “Beware the ties of blood; behold the ties of love; and at their behest should you run without question.” They are aware that the environment of the Svalich Woods has changed, and while they do not know that the new land and features hail from Faerun they all know that this adjustment makes them very uneasy, as sudden changes like this often serve as precursors to disastrous events on the near horizon.

Locations of Note

Not much is known about the contents of the surrounding forest, but the foremost location amongst these dark and terrifying trees would have to be the mountain village of Oraşnou. Comprised of only about three dozen residents, the villagers have long relied on the monthly Vistani trading visits. Rarely do they have any reason to explore very far outside the village limits.

The villagers occasionally share stories about the things they have heard of out in the misty woods. Sometimes they discuss the roving groups of zombies or large packs of wolves, but as the story-swapping evenings roll on and the drinks flow, darker tales emerge: trueblood werewolves – sometimes referred to as “skinwalkers” - that retain their full human faculties even when they have changed their shapes; ruined Vistani wagons that have been reclaimed by the trees; and rings of huge, ancient standing stones that had once been dedicated to some dark fey lord.

The village of Barovia is only a few short miles to the south, but the journey follows treacherous paths and winds through a long, thick stretch of the Svalich woods, and uncomfortably close to Castle Ravenloft.. It is only in the direst of circumstances that anyone other than the Vistani would dare to make that trek.

Tooth & Claw

Fauna of the Quivering Forest & Svalich Woods after the Mists

Elves

Aya Glenmiir and her fellow elves do not hail from Greenhall, but instead from Phlan. They tend to keep to themselves, but the recent transposition of the Quivering Forest into Barovia has forced them to explore their new environs. In the past they had been content to remain mostly to themselves with only a few secretive trade meetups with merchants from Phlan and beyond, but the new creatures from the Mists have brought their food stores and available game to dangerously low levels. The elves are keenly aware that the wolves are larger and fiercer, and that the small game has nearly been exhausted. The forest is now overrun by rats, and they are quickly stripping the vegetation from the area.

The neighboring village of Oraşnou has become a bit of a point of intrigue for them. The humans appear to a broodish and backwater lot, but some of the more troubling stories from the woods have the elves looking for allies where ever they may be found. Chief amongst these stories is that of the skinwalkers: larger than a traditional werewolf, these mighty beasts are equal parts man and beast, and their savagery is only surpassed by their desire to feed.

The elves have yet to formally reach out to the villagers, but that day will likely happen – and soon. They sensed a sort of kinship with a small Vistani troupe that passed through but after a brief interaction found very little to trust in them. In fact, the coy answers that the Vistani gave when the elves asked about their new surroundings left them with more questions than answers and even instilled some fear that the skinwalkers may actually be the Vistani. This accusation came out during a heated discussion between Aya's party and several Vistani; incensed, the travelers abandoned camp immediately and told the elves that they "deserve whatever the Devil Strahd sends their way".

Without strong allies, the elves in Barovia know that their days are limited – but so far, they have found more to fear than to trust in this strange new land.

The few elves that remain on the Faerunian side of the Quivering Forest have not fared much better.

Their usual game and foodstuffs have grown scarce, and many of their peers are no longer present, having been siphoned away by the Mists. Those that remain are not entirely certain about what has happened, but they are terrified by the situation that is unfolding and they have begun reaching out through the Emerald Enclave, the Harpers, and other allies – erstwhile or otherwise – in order to preserve their way of life.

Fey

On Faerun, the fey were plentiful. Quicklings and redcaps danced around the fey crossings, dryads nestled into their trees, and treants would stand as sentinels in the old groves. Barovia, however, has changed these expectations. An exceedingly small number of their kind got transposed; those that made the journey are likely to be at least a little unhinged as their world has been completely replaced.

Of the few fey creatures that were transported to Barovia, the most well-known of them would certainly be the hag Jeny Greenteeth. While she presents an outwardly helpful appearance, her cost for assistance can be quite costly in the long run. Her motives for providing such assistance are unknown, though she does not hesitate to explain that she is trapped in this strange place just like so many other travelers.

Natural Creatures

The animals native to the Quivering Forest have experienced a decisive shift in their environment ever since the assault on Phlan by Vorgansharax and his minions. Rats began to appear in great numbers and quickly drove out the other small game, such as chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits. This in turn caused many of the predatory animals to seek out richer hunting grounds, and before long the Forest was largely clear of owls, falcons, foxes, and other hunters were gone. Even the bears had begun to retreat.

The herbivores did not fare much better. Deer, moose, and elk were finding the few remaining food stores to be despoiled by the greatly increased number of rats and were slowly being driven off as well.

Any creatures that remain are half-mad from hunger. There is a palpable sense of dread that has filled them, and they are evacuating the area as quickly as possible.

Undead

This section of Barovia is far enough removed from Castle Ravenloft that any undead to be encountered are likely to be of minor power at best. Zombies are the most common, but these abominations rarely come near the more populated areas, as even the woodland creatures recoil in fear and attack them out of desperation.

In some rare circumstances a more advanced undead creature such as a revenant or wight may be found. The creation methods for these vile beings are difficult to achieve, however, so these creatures are little more than legend and myth to most denizens of Barovia and Oraşnou.

Oraşnou

The Sleepy Mountain Village

General Environment

The village of Oraşnou has certainly seen better days. The paint on most of the buildings is peeling and many of the exterior wooden window shutters are splintered and warped. Many of the villagers are reserved and hesitate when speaking to outsiders – they simply do not receive many visitors.

Situated several miles to the north of the village of Barovia, through difficult and twisting paths through the Svalich Woods, the village has long forced to remain self-sufficient. Despite the presence of multiple shops, their economic status is perilous. There is a severe distrust of Burgomaster Ivan Randovich as well, as the residents believe that he has not been completely honest with them all in regards to the status of their tax payments to Count Strahd. It is really only the Vistani that bring news and goods to this remote place, and though the villagers know that they need the assistance of those travelers in order to survive the difficult mountain winters they are still quite reserved and almost reluctant to see the often-rowdy traders.

The cold and damp from the mountain and surrounding woods has left a pall of misery over the village, as if the life had slowly been leeches out. A few hardy souls yet remain and do their best to keep the morale of the other villagers high, but more and more of these sad residents fall prey to the dour environment as each season passes.

Villagers

Alina Vaduva (uh-LEEN-uh vuh-DOO-vuh). Female human. She and her husband Laszlo do not spend much time in the village, but they are loyal to it. They are both excellent hunters, though some of the townspeople swear that Alina has the natural instincts of a true hunter. She and Laszlo fell madly in love shortly after their first meeting and have been inseparable ever since. She has recently become pregnant but still insists on helping with the hunt, as she knows that everyone in the village has to pull their weight or they will all struggle through the winter. She refuses to discuss her family beyond her husband; the Vaduva clan lives deep in the Svalich Woods and are a reclusive, fiery bunch. They

are quick to anger and very passionate. Unknown to the people of Oraşnou, they are a family of trueblood lycanthropes – their curse is not passed through bites or wounds, but instead is passed on to their offspring. Alina has only admitted her status as a werewolf to Laszlo, and has not told anyone, including him, of her family's curse.

Crina Grelon (KREE-nuh GREE-lawn). Female human. Crina and her husband Marku own the Seven Tables Inn & Tavern. While he handles a lot of the customer-facing business, Crina practices her passion: she runs the rest of the business. From handling their finances, paying the tax collector and burgomaster, reviewing their inventory, and preparing the meals for their patrons she is typically very busy.

Fillar Esven (FILL-er ESS-ven). Male human. Fillar is the owner of Eye of Midnight, a curiosity and trinket shop in Oraşnou. He has dark, beady eyes and long, thin fingers; though prone to making less-than-scrupulous business decisions, he harbors no truly ill will towards any other villager. He is very protective of his wares, and sometimes has difficulty selling the shiniest of his baubles.

Glovia Falinescu (GLOW-vee-uh FALL-in-ESS-coo). A heartbroken mother and healer who lost her infant child to disease. Blames her own lack of ability for the child's death. Highly educated in anatomy. The Falinescu family owned a large mansion southeast of the village, but it is unclear if any other members of the family beyond Glovia still survive.

Gregori Wurlbach (gre-GOR-ee VURL-bok). Male human. Gregori is a soft, balding man with gnarled hands. He has worked hard for the comforts that he enjoys in the village – chief among these being that his food and drink is provided free of charge thanks to his ability to host the Vistani when they arrive every few months to peddle their wares. He is fair minded and often overlooks his own profits in favor of his community and friends. Unlike other denizens of the duchy, Gregori is friendly and welcoming of outsiders. He owns the general store, "The Hare & Hair".

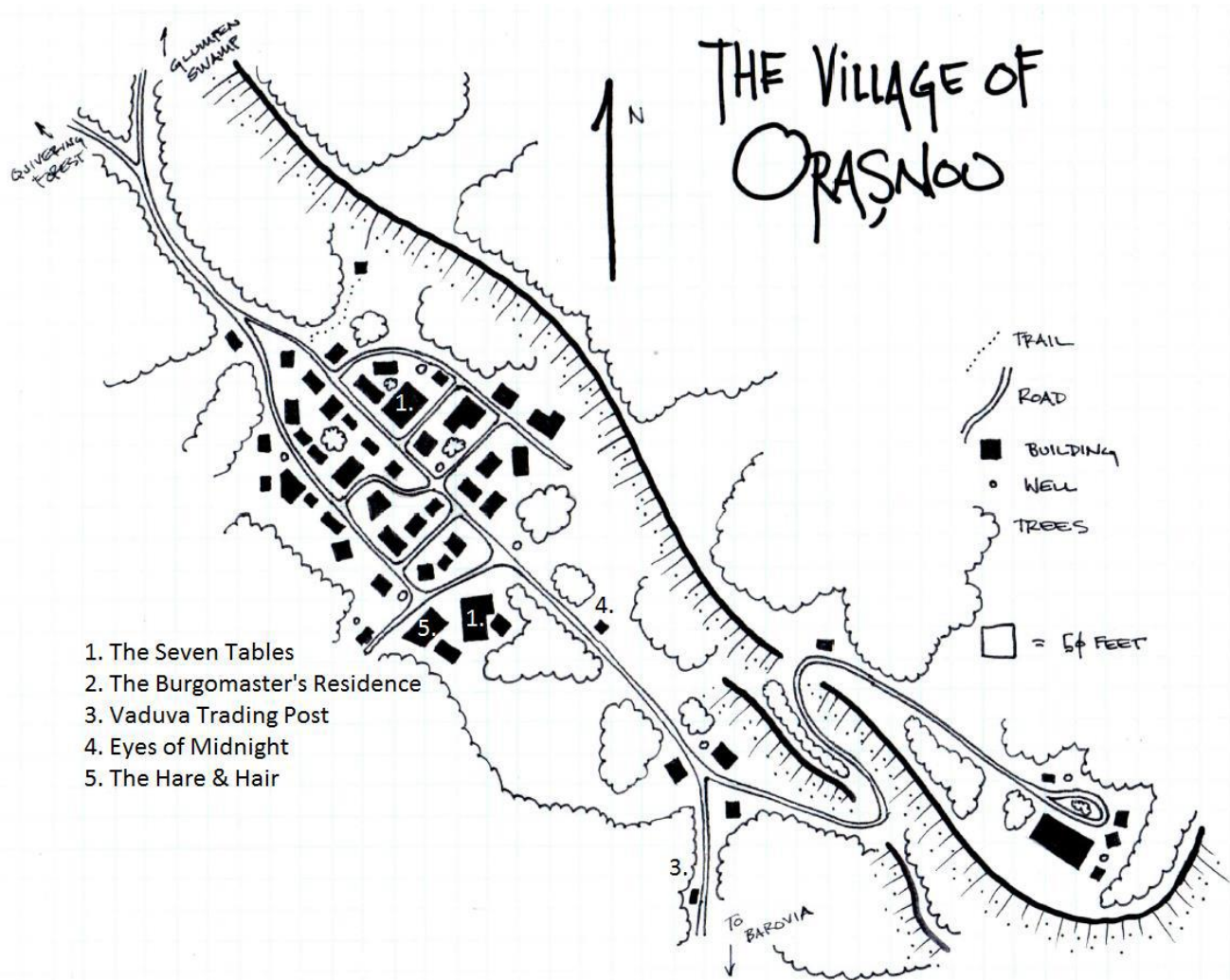
Ivan Randovich (EYE-vun RAN-doe-vitch). Male human. Ivan is the Burgomaster – a role similar to mayor – of Oraşnou. He has grown fat, vain, and rich due to his position.

Laszlo Vaduva (laz-LO vuh-DOO-vuh). Male human. Laszlo is a relatively recent arrival in the village. A skilled tracker and woodsman, he and his wife Alina provide much of the meat for the village and together they tan all of the furs that the Vistani purchase from the people of Oraşnou. He does not

speaking much about his time before arriving in the village, and the other residents believe that he is ashamed of his past. For reasons known only to him, he took Alina's surname when they married each other. Rumors around the village have labeled him as one of the Barovian guards, and possibly even the bodyguard of that village's Burgomaster at one time.

Marku Grelon (MAR-koo GREE-lawn). Male human. Marku and his wife Crina own the Seven Tables Inn & Tavern. He has a short, graying beard

and wears a small hat on the back of his head. He is a social enough person, and always seems to know just a little more than what he says he does. Gossips and verbal sparring matches are some of his favorite pastimes.



Linking to DDAL4-02 *The Beast*

Story Hooks by Faction

Linking This Supplement

The story hooks in this section assume that the characters are still in the Forgotten Realms. The hooks are themed for specific factions, but feel free to tailor any of them to fit the goals and desires of your players. If the characters are already in Barovia (perhaps because they've already played DDAL4-01 *Suits of the Mists!*), please see the "Vistani Connections?" or "Other Characters" sections.

General (no character faction)

Thick mists cling to the Quivering Forest now, and there is a general sense of dread woven into the very air. Word has reached you that a group of brightly-colored wagons were spotted in the Quivering Forest, but as the mist roiled and later cleared, no trace of those wagons could be seen. A low, mournful howl can be faintly heard, however, coming from somewhere deep inside the forest.

Emerald Enclave

The thick choking fog that is coming out of the Quivering Forest has the Emerald Enclave very concerned. They have lost contact with the elves of Greenhall, and have heard reports of a huge wolf-like creature stalking between the trees.

Harpers

Survivors of the atrocities in Phlan need a place to live once they escape, but despite their fear many of the former citizens of the town refuse to move far away. Instead, they have begged Harper agents to help them relocate to a safe place across the Stojanow River. Before the Harpers will assist the townspeople with resettling, they have asked you to investigate the reports of tainted meat coming out of the Quivering Forest.

Order of the Gauntlet

Protection and safety: the guiding tenets of the Order. Before the expatriates from Phlan can resettle

in the farmland outside the town, it must be declared safe... but it is not. You have been tasked with surveying the Quivering Forest and eliminating any lingering threats that the found there.

The Lord's Alliance

The assembled nobles of Mulmaster, Phlan, and Hillsfar have a vested interest in securing the lands around the Moonsea. Your task is to explore the Quivering Forest, as strange creatures have been reported there. Anything that threatens the trade routes can put the economic futures of the Alliance in jeopardy – you are to secure the passage through that enchanted forest.

Zhentarim

When rumors of a large half-man, half-beast creature reached the opportunistic ear of Chaab, the local Zhentarim ranking operative, he was quick to reach out to other subordinates: fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on your opinion), he found you. You've been asked to enter the forest, subdue the creature, and bring it back to him... "for reasons".

Vistani Connections?

If the characters have built connections with the Vistani in a previous adventure, one of those capricious travelers reaches out and tells them that a strange group of elves has recently appeared in the Svalich Woods. These elves are blaming the Vistani for the presence of a horrific man-beast, and the Vistani feel that they face enough persecution from the various villages of the domain. Would you please seek out the elves and tell them of their Vistani's true and helpful nature?

Other Characters

Your travels have not yet brought you to a remote mountain village, and although your hopes of securing an escape from these lands remains slim, you may be able to eke out a few safe days before continuing your search. There is a set of tracks from what appears to be a large pack of wolves, though, and these tracks are dangerously close to the village. With winter coming, the animals may be desperate – warning the villagers may be a wise decision.

Adventuring in the Demiplane of Dread

Further Adventures

Though the environment surrounding Oraşnou is located inside the domain of Barovia, Strahd's influence is remarkably light. Perhaps it is because of the relative isolation of this tiny village or the relative newness of the recently transplanted sections of the Quivering Forest and Glumpen Swamp, but the dangers are still very much present for unwary travelers. Aggressive wildlife, scruffy woodsmen, a tribe of true werewolves, and more – there are dangers a-plenty in the woods!

Please be sure to review the Curse of Strahd Player's Guide for more information about the land!

DDAL04-02 *The Beast*

Level 1-4

Something strange is afoot within the Quivering Forest. So much so that even the elves of Greenwood have left their homes to seek out help from their newfound neighbors. But, their tales of a strange beast are not earning them any favors; especially among the Vistani, whom the elves suspect are to blame for their ills. Return once more to the Quivering Forest and learn the terrifying truth! Part Two of Misty Fortunes and Absent Hearts.

NOTE: this is an official D&D Adventurers League adventure.

DDEP04 *Reclamation of Phlan*

Level 1-16

For too long, the Maimed Virulence has held Phlan in its grasp. The factions have begun to muster and sounded the call to battle throughout the Moonsea. Allies new and old will be called upon to aid in their attempts to reclaim the ancient town. Are you one of the few bold enough to answer the call to battle?

NOTE: this is an official D&D Adventurers League adventure, and is exclusive to conventions. It is **not** available for general distribution.

... and future adventures from the D&D Adventurers League: Season 4 (*Curse of Strahd*)!

Levels 1-10

Acknowledgements & Apologies

Many people have contributed to the history of the Quivering Forest in the Forgotten Realms. Ed Greenwood certainly leads that charge, but many other talented designers have also lent their talents: Brian & Matt R. James wrote a significant adventure entitled "Monument of the Ancients" in Dragon Magazine #170; Travis Woodall created some amazing maps for the D&D Adventurers League content in the Tyranny of Dragons season; and Teos Abadia wrote the very first Adventurers League Epic entitled "Corruption in Kryptgarden". Greg Marks is the keeper of Barovian lore, and has been hugely instrumental in helping us work on the Curse of Strahd storyline for the AL. The administrators and designers for the entirety of that first season of Adventurers League games set the table for this supplement, indeed.

And of course the Demiplane of Dread has seen a lot of writing and direction, and it is all thanks to the wonderful Tracy and Laura Hickman. Their original adventure for this – the classic I6 *Ravenloft* – started as a private annual Halloween game for their closest friends and later became the inspiration for everything that we know and love about Ravenloft. The list of designers grew significantly in the 1990s and early 2000s, and I freely admit that I am a *huge* fan of all of their work. Maybe someday I'll even take a visit to Bluetspur and drop in on some of the ancient experiments that yet linger in that desolate mountain.

I have had the great fortune to work with many of the people listed above. It was only a few short years ago that I would sit at my weekly game and daydream about the worlds they had created, and now... I can only hope that I have done their playgrounds justice, and I am at once both honored and flattered that I am among such esteemed company.