

RAVENLOFT & THE DUNGEON MASTERS GUILD

Introduction

Adventurers find themselves trapped within Barovia, where they encounter a Vistani fortuneteller named Madam Eva. Using the power of the tarokka deck, she sets them on a dark course that takes them to the corners of Barovia, culminating in a fantastic vampire hunt. As the adventurers explore Barovia, they find that the wilderness hides many secrets. Forgotten ruins and ancient battlefields tell the story of Strahd's life as a warlord and conqueror. Adventurers exploring the wilderness find the remnants of Strahd's ancestral enemies, not all of them as dead as one might expect. Once Strahd becomes aware of the adventurers' presence in his realms, he and his spies watch them closely. When the time is right, Strahd invites his "guests" to Castle Ravenloft. He aims to turn them against one another, torment them, and kill them, as he has done with so many other visitors. Some will become undead thralls. Others will never rise again. The adventurers' best hope of defeating Strahd is to learn his secrets, for he is no ordinary vampire. Guided by Madam Eva's cards, they must scour his domain and his castle for magic items that might weaken or slay him, all the while trying to stay alive. Although the adventurers can escape by slaying Strahd, he cannot be truly destroyed. Barovia is the vampire's prison, and not even death can free him from his curse.

Tone

- **Mystery.** Barovia is mysterious, and adventurers should feel as if they have stepped into the middle of an eerie realm where everyone is hiding a terrible secret.
- **Horror.** Barovia is infused by evil and its characters, creatures, and landscape are warped and twisted by it. Anyone traveling here will instantly feel its sinister influence.
- **Threat.** Upon their arrival in Barovia, the adventurers draw the attention of Strahd, who will seek to put them to the test. The land itself will also challenge the integrity of their souls.

Themes

- **The Unknown.** In Strahd's realm the truth is shrouded in shadows, locked behind doors, or buried in the soft earth. Even light seems to struggle to penetrate the darkness here.
- **Tragedy.** Travelers soon realize that Barovia is cursed. The vampire Strahd uses his dark powers to corrupt the good and awaken the evil that lurks within everyone.
- **Redemption.** Almost everyone within Barovia holds the hope of redemption, but most are doomed to damnation.
- **Transformation.** Nearly every character here has undergone or is undergoing a transformation. Most are becoming warped and ruined by the evil that is all-pervasive here.

Surviving Strahd's Domain

- **Imprisonment.** There are toxic mists that surround Barovia, imprisoning everyone within.
- **Corruption.** Travelers from other lands draw the eyes of Strahd. He takes special pleasure in corrupting or destroying those who claim to uphold law or are beacons of righteousness.
- **Confrontation.** The only way out of Barovia is to confront Strahd and destroy him. His death brings fleeting salvation.

