

Jennifer Ravenloft Campaign (sessions 1 to 15)

Introduction

General Notes:

This campaign is my and my players first experience with Ravenloft, although all of us are experienced roleplayers. I have had the Domains of Dread Book for some time and I wanted to play a long running campaign again. So I got some people together and we started playing in February of 2004. I did not know everybody equally well and people did not know each other very well, but to everybody's delight everybody got along great outside of the game and everybody contributed to the game as well, which made my job a lot easier.

None of my players knew much of the Ravenloft world, background and themes, so I took some time to explain my ideas to them at length, so everybody knew what sort of campaign to expect.

The campaign started in march of 751 in the Domain of Mordent, in the little village of Potter's Field in the south of Mordent¹. All the characters are human and all with one exception came form Mordent as well. I wanted to start with an atmosphere of smalltown prejudice toward all things.

Then I made my players write up a past of their characters, to give flesh them out a bit more. Everybody really got into the spirit of the thing and my players all made beautiful backgrounds, which made my life a lot easier. So here follows an introduction of all the characters.

All characters start at level 1, to make it more exciting, one bad decision and they could be dead.

Accian of Potter's Field; played by Joost

Accian is a young male Arcanist (age 27) from the little village of Potter's Field. His mother Margareta of Potter's Field passed away 6 months ago and he never knew his father². His mother was the only one in a long time who left the little village for a while, when she came back, she was alone and pregnant. This has led to some teasing and finger pointing from the rest of the villagers. Now that she is passed away, Accian wants to find out more about his background, since she never wanted to talk about that.

Accian has been studying his craft together with Darien under the guidance of Charles the Great, a wizard who relocated from Mordentshire to the hopefully quieter village of Potter's Field. Charles has since taken on two apprentices.

Darien; played by Remco

Darien is a young male Elemental Mage (age 18) specializing in Wind and Air magic. He is not from Potter's Field and Darien is not his real name. He used to live in Crawford, with his parents and his younger sister. His parents died when he was six and his sister an infant in a werewolf attack. He cradled his sister and watched his parents be torn apart by the monsters. After that he was taken in by the rest of the villagers.

Later on, when his sister was five and recuperating from a disease, he threw her into a nearby lake to watch her desperately swim for the shore and drown. Although the other villagers did not know this, they became increasingly uncomfortable around him and after a while sold him to a travelling trader named Mercalus. Darien was regularly beaten by Mercalus. In time

¹ Many thanks to the good people of <http://www.gryphonhill.com/> for all their maps and hard work.

² The other characters have their problems, but they are as nothing compared to the problems Accian will have when he figures out his correct parentage.

Mercalus came across the wizard Charles the great who recognized the potential in Darien and took him in to educate him³.

Laurent Bellevoix; played by Sander

Laurent is a young male Bard (age 25) from Dementlieu. He was born there as Laurent DuChamps to a middle class couple from Port- A- Lucine. He has a younger sister Anna- Louisa and a younger brother Richard. His parents saw to it that he had a good education, which of course included musical lessons.

Music became Laurents passion and he want to spend his life making music. This did not sit well with his parents. They expected him to take over as the head of the family and bring the family to a higher social position. A uncertain career in music definitely did not fit with that. A series of fights followed and soon after that Laurent left home, changed his name to Bellevoix and apprenticed himself to a famous bard, Henri DeLucine.

Laurent worked some time with Henri and learned a lot from him. But one day it all went wrong. Henri and Laurent where hired by Marquise Valmont to play at the wedding of his daughter Michelle to Nicholas Grennol, the eldest son of a very rich trader. Laurent seduced a local girl in the gardens and it turned out to be Michelle. Henri DeLucine, Marquis Valmont and Nicholas were furious.

Laurent had to flee for his life and he fled to Mordent, to Potter's Field to get away. In Mordent he hopes to pick up some inspiration for new songs, perhaps about ghosts, as those stories are unknown in Dementlieu.

Samael of Potter's Field; played by Filip

Samael is a middle aged male priest of Ezra (age 43). He was attracted to the priesthood at an early age, but for some reason was never able to find peace with his vocation. His mentor, the very elderly brother Marec was always deeply troubled by Samael.

Samael reads a lot and is very knowledgeable about Ezra and her teachings, but he finds is hard to live by the simple demands of a village priest. He wants more of a challenge. So he and brother Marec have decided that it is perhaps best if Samael left Potter's Field for a while to travel the world and see if that will not bring him more peace.

Brother Marec has arranged for another priest of Ezra to come down from Mordentshire to assist him with his duties. This priest, brother Harun does not get along at all with Samael. Samael feels that Harun is too arrogant and patronizing toward an older and more senior priest as himself. Also Samael had a very disturbing experience. Brother Marec asked him to go to Harun's rooms to fetch a certain religious text. When Samael entered the empty room of Harun and got the text it seemed as if the ink of the text was running of the page, all the holy words were gone and a demonic presence seemed to inhabit the book. Samael took the book away with him and has kept it hidden on his person ever since. He has not told brother Marec his mentor, about this episode either, thinking it would be too dangerous⁴.

³ It is amazing what people will think of when they have time on their hands. The character background of this one freaked me out. After some discussion I consented to have Darien in my campaign. I was afraid he would prove to strange for the other characters to deal with. The other characters did not know about his history, but they would probably turn him in to the proper authorities (or kill him) if it became known he had killed his own sister. Remco however was fine with that scenario.

⁴ A very revealing passage I thought, Samael is being very secretive and convinced of his own power, he also does not deal well with authority figures other than his own.

Scott of Potter's Field⁵; played by Thijs

Scott is a young male Avenger (age 27). Scott has a very sad history. When he was younger he had a large family, he had 8 brothers and sisters and two loving parents. But when he was 8 disaster struck. In August the family had been working on their lands outside the village, when they returned home, they were brutally attacked by wolves.

Scott's whole family was killed and he barely survived. He was found by villagers who had gotten worried when Scott's family did not return to their home. He was taken care of and brought up by his uncle Oscar and his family. Scott always remained convinced that his family was killed by monsters, but the other villagers ascribed that to a traumatic experience and feverdreams. There were no monsters, only wolves and a very tragic event.

Scott developed a burning hatred towards these monsters, but he never found an opportunity to hunt them or discuss his problems with the villagers. As a result he has become rather withdrawn and shy.

Jennifer's Comments

The players really got into the Ravenloft spirit and did their best to come up with colourful backgrounds. I was very gratified as these backgrounds provided several hooks for me to tie adventures to. I was amazed that they came up with all of this themselves.

⁵ The players are not very good in thinking of last names, which is why they are (almost) all named 'of Potter's Field'.

Sessions 1 – 3

These are the first episodes of my first Ravenloft campaign. I have kept these episodes relatively simple and easy. They were intended for the players to get to know each other and the rules of the Ravenloft world and for me to get to know the players and the characters as well.

These episodes also focus heavily on the village the characters come from. A lot of people and their troubles are introduced. This is to make the world more real to the players. Actions of theirs have an effect on those they love and know and the players react to that. In later episodes they express desires to return or not to return to Potter's Field or to get in touch with certain people again. So I have another hold on the characters as well, they will certainly react if something threatens their loved ones in their village.

Session 1

Potter's Field, Mordent; 24 March 751 BK

This sunny spring day starts as any day in the tiny village of Potter's Field. People work their field, tend to their livestock or work their crafts. Brother Marec Priest of Ezra goes about his duties with his two junior Priests Samael (a PC) and Harun. Charles the Great, a famous wizard who relocated from the busy Mordentshire to the quieter Potter's Field, teaches his two apprentices Accian and Darien (both PC's). Now and then strange lights can be seen coming from his tower, but the Potter's Fielders are used to this sight and not worried. In the local inn a foreign Bard named Laurent (a PC) is tuning his instruments and hitting on the serving girls.

Some way away from the little village is a ruined estate, it used to belong to Rafael Foxgrove, a great-uncle of the current Lord Foxgrove. He left Mordentshire after a huge fight with his brother, the grandfather of the current Lord Foxgrove. He had quite a reputation and was known locally as the Bloody Baron, although no one knows why. Some strange ghost stories are told about him. His estate fell to ruins after he died, a long time ago.

This is one of the hottest days of the early spring and the day passes slowly and predictably. Then at the end of the afternoon, when people are finishing their work and are returning home for the day, one of the village children comes running and screaming into the village. It is little Julia who, together with the other village children watches over the small herds of cows, sheep and goats.

Julia is hysterical and it takes some time for her mother to calm her. By now everybody in the village is watching Julia and worried about what might make a girl so afraid and wondering where the other children are.

Sobbing Julia tells her story. That day she and the other kids were herding the animals in the eastern meadows. After midday it became very hot and the animals wanted to chew the cud. So the children led them to the edge of the forest, east of the village. After lunch the children must have fallen asleep under the cool shade of the tree.

Suddenly they were awakened by a very large and scary man with huge teeth. The children were tied and the scary man took them to the abandoned estate deep in the forest. There the scary man untied Julia and told her that he was the Bloody Baron returned and that he was angry because people had forgotten him. He would return their children to them in return for fifty golden pounds and their service. Then his monsters chased her all the way back to the village.

This news causes a lot of commotion among the villagers. Almost everyone has a family member abducted by the Bloody Baron, and they do not want harm to come to their children, nephews and nieces. But fifty golden pounds is a fortune, the village economy is not based on money, among themselves the people trade goods and services, money is only needed in dealing with outsiders. People doubt if there even are fifty golden pounds in the whole village. People are also afraid that the Baron really has returned.

None of the people suggest going against the wishes of the Baron, they feel that he might be from beyond the grave and therefore very powerful. Brother Marec and Charles the Great do stimulate their pupils to act against this unnatural tyranny. Soon a small band is formed consisting of Brother Samael the Priest, the wizards Accian and Darien, Scott a shy fighter and the foreign Bard Laurent, who wants to know more about the Bloody Baron⁶.

That same afternoon the party goes to the eastern meadows to find traces of the missing children and their kidnapper. They easily find the place where the children had their lunch and they can easily follow the trail of twelve kidnapped children and their kidnapper. They follow the trail deeper into the forest, towards the old estate. It must be because of the way the spring leaves of the forest block the light, but it turns to be very dark and chilly under the trees.

While the group follows the trail through the dark and silent wood, they are suddenly attacked by two horrible figures, two skeletons, completely denuded of flesh. Without fear⁷ the party attacks these two pitiful remains of once living humans. The group dispatches these two horrors without too much trouble.

After some more walking the group comes to an open place. By now it is completely dark. In the middle of the clearing is a ruin of a large mansion. It is completely ruined. The roof is gone, the first floor is uninhabitable, only the ground floor is still standing, but all the windows are gone. It is a sad sight, once this mansion could have housed a rich family and all their servants.

The party first makes a round of the grounds of the mansion. Soon they come to a small private graveyard. At first they think that the graveyard is a rundown as the rest of the property, but a closer look reveals that the graves have been purposefully disturbed. The six graves have been opened and the caskets opened and the bodies removed. The party is shocked and disturbed as well. They think that there are four walking skeletons left in the area.

The party goes around the back of the mansion, towards the servants entrance and the kitchens. They open the door there and enter an old and abandoned kitchen. Further in the hallway they see light and hear someone crying very softly. When they follow the light, they come upon a man they recognize. It is Stefan Jacobson!

Stefan Jacobsen is one of the few men not well liked in Potter's Field. He was lazy and untrustworthy, always spending other people's money on drink. He left Potter's Field a few weeks ago and nobody cared much why or where. Is this a new scam of his, or is the Bloody Baron really returned and is Stefan his servant?

Stefan screams for help and two skeletons lurch to his side. A battle ensues, after a few turns two more skeletons come to the aid of Stefan. The skeletons are not much of a problem, but Accian, Scott and Samael have trouble to kill a member of their community, even if he is not well liked. Scott then tries to knock Stefan unconscious with the flat of his axe blade, but instead slices his head clean off⁸. It lands with a sickening "thunk" on the flagstone floor of the kitchen and blood spurts from his neck all the way to the ceiling of the kitchen. The group is shocked by the sudden carnage⁹. The skeletons crumble into dust now that their creator is dead.

The party finds the children tied up in another room. They quickly free the children and then decide to take them that night through the forest home to the village. They do not want to stay in the mansion any longer than strictly necessary. They take the children out the front door and not through the bloody kitchen. Scott insists that they also take the body of Stefan with them to give to their family. A primitive sled is easily made.

⁶ My players can spot a plot when they see one. Nobly they went to the rescue of the kiddies.

⁷ Silly me, I forgot to make them roll fear checks. In my defence it was my first encounter in my first Ravenloft session.

⁸ Scott's player Thijs still had to roll an Attack Roll to hit Stefan with the flat of his blade. He rolled a 1. So instead of a fumble, it was a killing blow.

⁹ Scott's player Thijs then missed a Horror Check and had nightmares about this horrible scene for a month.

Session 2

Potter's Field, Mordent; 24 March 751 BK, late at night

Very late that same night they arrive back in Potter's Field and are welcomed as the heroes they are. Everybody is happy to have their children returned to them. Except for Widow Jacobson. It was her son they killed in the attempt to free the children. She weeps uncontrollably over his body. Darien tells her not to weep, because when his head was cut off, his blood spurted beautifully all the way to the ceiling¹⁰. Everybody is shocked by this heartless remark and a distance opens up between him and the other party members.

25 March 751 BK

Everyone tries to get some sleep and when they get up, everybody treats them as heroes. Everyone wants to buy them a drink at the local Green Dragon Inn at the end of the day.

Darien and Accian are told by their master Charles the Great that with this expedition they have proven that they are old enough and smart enough to hold their own in the world. He has nothing more to teach them that they could not learn themselves, so he tells them to leave his tower. Darien and Accian are a bit shocked, but they leave.

Later that day the party goes to the Green Dragon Inn, where they are treated by everybody. People ask them to tell the story again and again. After a while someone asks the Bard to sing some songs. Laurent complies and sways the audience. When he grows tired other people start telling stories. Most of these stories are about ghosts and the tragic circumstances which led to their existence. When people grow tired of that, the evening takes a nasty turn.

Elsie Simonson, a well known and well feared gossip, gets up and says: "I too have a ghost story to tell. There is a haunting at my neighbours, the Petersons. Sometimes I can hear Mathilde and Robby fighting and then he leaves. Then I can hear Mathilde crying, but after a while I can hear her laughing and talking again, and I know Robby has not returned yet. So it must be a ghost she is talking to."

The party is not stupid¹¹ and they realise that Elsie does not think that Mathilde is visited by ghosts, but that she has a lover over when Robby is out. This is her not so subtle way of telling everyone. However the party feels they should not get involved in this¹².

Someone else does feel they should get involved. Bart Peterson gets up and yells angrily at Elsie: "Elsie how can you be so unfeeling and tell such mean lies about Mathilde and Robby. They have just lost their daughter and still grieve for her and you tell everybody that Mathilde has another man and that Robby will lose his wife as well as his daughter. You are just jealous because you have no children. You are nothing but a mean gossip and no one should listen to what you have to say!"

A lot of people agree with Bart. Mathilde and Robby have lost their daughter last winter to a sickness. Besides the Petersons are very popular and well liked people. But on the other hand, Elsie is well liked as well, and is known to be a person of very high moral standing, her opinion is valued. She suffers from the fact that in her 20 year marriage she never had children.

Elsie tries to defend herself over the arguments that have broken out in the Inn: "You just do not want to know it, but I live next to the Petersons and I can hear what happens in their home. Something strange is going on there. Mathilde is having visitors when her husband is not there. You will see soon enough!"

¹⁰ This callous remark is typical for Darien. He has no regard for the feelings of others. It also earns Dariens player Remco his first powers check, which he automatically fails. That seems harsh, but it was also to account for the wilful murder of his sister. So Darien now has the status of unclean and the skin on his stomach, chest, back, arms and legs turns to a hard scale-like substance.

¹¹ Successful wisdom checks.

¹² And sometimes they do not spot a plot when they see one.

Then Elsie leaves. The mood is ruined after this fight and everybody goes home. Laurent is renting a room in the Inn, but his curiosity was peaked, so he goes out to investigate the house of the Petersons. He walks down the streets and sees that the lights are still on at the house of the Petersen family. He peeks through the window and sees that Mathilde is still up and playing with a little girl. The frightening thing is that the little girl is see-through. Laurent lets out a scream of fright, stumbles backwards and falls¹³. The lights in the other houses in the streets go on as well, Laurent decides to get up and walk away quickly, he does not want to talk to people about what he saw just yet.

As Laurent is walking away, Robby Peterson is leaving his home and goes to the Green Dragon Inn. At the Inn Darien is still awake and sitting in the common room¹⁴. When Robby asks for some strong drink from the bartender, Darien joins him and they talk for a bit. A depressed and increasingly drunk Robby tells Darien about his worries. Darien listens attentively and then responds with a remark so unfeeling and hurtful¹⁵, that it would seem the world has become a darker place, the lights in the Inn seem to give less light¹⁶. It almost comes to blows between Robby and Darien over this and Robby leaves the Inn to return home.

26 March 751 BK

This morning Laurent is asking around for information on ghosts. Since ghosts are rather common in Mordent most people know some stories. He soon comes into contact with brother Marec, the senior Priest of Ezra in Potter's Field. He tells something about ghosts to Laurent and orders Brother Samael to help Laurent in his investigations.

Laurent and Samael try to get the other members of the party together, because they have worked so well together in rescuing the children two days ago. Then they go to visit the house of the Peterson family. Robby is out, tending his fields. But Mathilde is home and as a gracious host, she let the party in. The party looks around for a bit and they spot the ghostly form of Marianna, the daughter of Mathilde and Robby. They are very shocked, as they attended her funeral last winter. Marianna died of an illness that always claims the weak and old in the wintertime.

Several party members do not react well to seeing Marianna, they try to hide under the table, start screaming or run away¹⁷. Mathilde is very insulted by this strange behaviour, but Laurent manages to keep his cool and apologizes for the behaviour of his companions. He tries to ask Mathilde some questions about her life and her family. Mathilde says she is very happy, her daughter is always around and is a great comfort to her, now that her husband has been acting so strangely lately, picking fights with her over Marianna, even though Marianna has been such a good girl.

Scott swallows his fear and tries to talk to Marianna. She is a very cheerful child and is willing to talk to Scott, whom she knows as a fellow villager. She does not seem to understand that she is dead, although she realises something is wrong. She is supposed to be in a happy warm fuzzy place, but her mother is so unhappy and keeps calling her. So on occasion Marianna goes to her mother to spend some time with her. She does not understand why this makes her father Robby so angry.

Then Laurent mentions Marianna's illness and funeral to Mathilde. Mathilde becomes angry and tells Laurent to stop telling lies, Marianna is fine and will be fine, she will grow and prosper. Mathilde becomes angrier and tells the party to leave her home.

¹³ A failed fear check.

¹⁴ Darien is so insensitive that he did not have the urge to go to bed after the scene with Elsie and the villagers.

¹⁵ And I cannot remember what it was.

¹⁶ A second powers check for Darien, failed as well. The scale like skin on his body turns in to real bright blue scales.

¹⁷ Fear checks wreaking mischief in social settings.

The party then tries to get in touch with Robby Peterson. He is very worried about his wife and daughter. He is afraid his wife is going mad and that his daughter can find no rest in the afterlife. He then mentions that his wife has never visited the grave of their little girl. He feels that such a visit would confront her with the stark reality.

The party thinks that this is a very good idea. Scott goes to Mathilde again to ask her to come with him. He is to take her to the village graveyard by any means necessary. Mathilde follows him for a little while, but becomes angry again when she sees he is taking her to the graveyard. Scott overwhelms the older woman and forcibly takes her to the graveyard.

At the graveyard Scott and Mathilde are greeted by the rest of the party and her husband Robby. Mathilde becomes very angry and starts screaming at Robby, she accuses him of betrayal of their love and their daughter. Then the ghostly form of Marianna appears and tells her mother to stop denying her death and start a proper mourning. Marianna tells her mother she can find no rest in the grave because of her mother problems.

Mathilde breaks down and cries and Marianna disappears for good¹⁸. Robby Peterson is very grateful towards the heroes for saving his family.

Session 3

Potter's Field, Mordent; 27 March 751 BK

This is an important day for Potter's Field, today the tax collector for Lord Daniel Foxgrove is coming to collect taxes, deliver letters and bring news from the bustling metropolis of Mordentshire. Since the people of Potter's Field are very law abiding and Lord Daniel Foxgrove not a very harsh ruler, they usually welcome the agents of his rule. So the tax collector Joshua Martinson is welcomed as he enters Potter's Field on his little cart pulled by a small pony.

Joshua brings a letter for Accian of Potter's Field. It is from the Notary Office of Morecombe, Morecombe and Smith in Mordentshire. The letter states that the Notary Office has recently learned of the death of his mother Margareta of Potter's Field. Twenty-seven years ago

¹⁸ This adventure was inspired by a Grimm Brothers Fairytale, The Shroud, it can be found here <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~wbarker/fairies/grimm/109.html> It is reproduced here:

109 / The Shroud

THERE was once a mother who had a little boy of seven years old, who was so handsome and lovable that no one could look at him without liking him, and she herself worshipped him above everything in the world. Now it so happened that he suddenly became ill, and God took him to himself; and for this the mother could not be comforted, and wept both day and night. But soon afterwards, when the child had been buried, it appeared by night in the places where it had sat and played during its life, and if the mother wept, it wept also, and when morning came it disappeared. As, however, the mother would not stop crying, it came one night, in the little white shroud in which it had been laid in its coffin, and with its wreath of flowers round its head, and stood on the bed at her feet, and said, "Oh, mother, do stop crying, or I shall never fall asleep in my coffin, for my shroud will not dry because of all thy tears, which fall upon it." The mother was afraid when she heard that, and wept no more. The next night the child came again, and held a little light in its hand, and said, "Look, mother, my shroud is nearly dry, and I can rest in my grave." Then the mother gave her sorrow into God's keeping, and bore it quietly and patiently, and the child came no more, but slept in its little bed beneath the earth.

From Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Household Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (London: George Bell, 1884), 2:97.

(shortly after Accians birth) she entrusted some documents and goods into the care of the Notary Office, to be given to Accian, after her death. The Notary Office now requests Accians presence, so they can give him his mothers legacy. Accian is of course very interested and wants to go to Mordentshire as soon as possible.

Joshua too wants to return to Mordentshire quickly. Potter's Field is the last village on his round of Mordent and there has been some bandit activity on the roads. He is afraid to go back alone with all the money he carries with him. So he wants to enlist the help of several brave men and women to escort him. He has been authorized by Lord Daniel Foxgrove to pay people 2 golden pounds a day for their protection, there will be an added bonus of 1 golden pound for every dangerous fight. The people of Potter's Field are not really brave enough to follow Joshua, but the party is, they volunteer to escort Joshua.

Joshua is very grateful. He tells the players that he will be leaving the morning of the 29th, and that he expects everyone to be prepared for rough weather and rough camping. The rest of the day and the next is spent with buying supplies.

28 March 751 BK

Today is a holy day for Ezra and Samael is required to attend the service which is preformed by Brother Marec and Brother Harun. Samael still cannot approve of brother Harun, but he can find nothing wrong with his service.

Darien is very worried about the changes on his body, his stomach, chest, back and arms and legs are covered in hard blue scales. If people find out they will be very afraid and perhaps aggressive. So he tries to hide them and asks his former master Charles the Great for advice on his condition. Charles is not well pleased to see his former apprentice again and when he sees the corruption of Darien's body, he becomes very strict and tells Darien that since he caused his own condition, he can probably think of a cure¹⁹.

Later that same night, when Scott is trying to sleep in his own home²⁰, someone knocks on his door. He gets up to open it. In the door stands the weeping figure of Rosalinde Willemson²¹. She throws herself crying at Scott, sobbing that she cannot bear him leaving and that she wants a token of their love²², to remind her of him when he is gone. Scott can only give in to the wishes of the woman he loves²³, so she spends the night at his home.

29 March 751 BK

When Scott wakes, he leaves Rosalinde sleeping and puts the wolf tooth, that was removed from his side after he survived the attack of wolves on his family, on a chain around her neck, so she has something to remember him by. Then he leaves and joins the rest of the party to leave Potter's Field for Mordentshire, with Joshua Martinson.

The party sets out and quickly reach the nearby village of Idlethorpe. People seem very strange here and they talk funny. Joshua will be collecting taxes here today and tomorrow.

¹⁹ Highly unlikely, since Darien is very self-centred and has no empathy for other people and hence knowledge of the crimes he committed against them.

²⁰ Scott is the only character with a steady job as a woodcutter for John Willemson, the owner of a wood processing craft hall and the richest man in the village. So he can afford his own home.

²¹ Indeed, the daughter of John Willemson and the secret love of Scott.

²² Poor Scott, he tried, really tried to give her a lock of hair, but she wanted something more substantial.

²³ Scott has (1) premarital sex (2) in a Ravenloft campaign (3) with a woman for DM. What do You think the chances of pregnancy are?

31 March 751 BK

Today the party leaves Idlethorpe for Mordentshire. Joshua is somewhat nervous as it is a long way to Mordentshire. He expects to arrive at Heather House in the late afternoon or the early evening.

After some time the party passes the turn to Waterford and Crawford, but they keep on going north. Some time later the open and sunny fields are replaced by trees, more and more trees crowd around the road, blocking the light and warmth of the sun and blocking the view. Suddenly the pony screams and starts to limp, he does not want to walk anymore. A investigation of the pony's legs reveal that he stepped into a caltrop, the road seems littered with it. As soon as the party has seen this, they are attacked by a party of bandits. As they charge the party, Laurent is particularly cool and collected and shoots their leader with two arrows, killing him instantly.

After that most of the other bandits lose their taste for a life of crime and flee. The remaining bandits are easily dispatched. Samael uses his healing powers to heal the pony's leg while the others clean the road of remaining caltrops. The party can go on without much ado.

Joshua and his escort reach Heather House without any more problems later that evening. He takes them to Lord Daniel Foxgrove to be paid. He give a very favourable account of them. At the Heather House the party also meet Gwynneth²⁴ Weathermay Foxgrove, who invites he party to visit her and her sister in the old herbal shop outside of Mordentshire. But this night they stay in the servants quarters of Heather House to spend the night.

1 April 751 BK

The party visits Gwynneth in the old herbal shop. There they meet Laurie as well. It takes some time for the party to realise that these women are twins. It takes some more time to tell them apart.

Scott has some questions for the women. He remembers the attack on his family so many years ago as an attack of monsters, man-sized wolves. But in his village they have told him that his family was killed by normal wolves. The sisters can put his mind at ease. Some time ago, between 731 and 741 BK there was a group of werewolves causing havoc in Mordent. They were finally driven out by Dr. Rudolf van Richten and a band of brave followers. The last battle was somewhere near Crawford.

Understandable Scott wants to know more about these vile monsters that have killed his whole family. The sisters tell him more. Lycanthropy is both a state and a disease. Some creatures are natural Lycanthropes, they cannot change who and what they are, but they can infect others by wounding them or other forms of intimate contact. These infected people will start to exhibit some of the powers of Lycanthropes, including shape shifting, murderous rampages and the ability to pass on the disease to others by wounding them or having other forms of intimate contact. The sisters further reveal that they want to investigate the area of Crawford, as the wilderness lair of the werewolves was never found, although it was believed by Dr. van Richten that the werewolves were all killed.

Scott and Darien become worried at these words. Scott's body is covered in scars from the attack he survived as a child. Darien watched his parents be devoured by werewolves, but he wonders if he was infected as well.

²⁴ I know she is called Gennifer, but my name sounds the name, so to avoid confusion I called her Gwynneth, also a nice Celtic name.

Sessions 4 – 6

In these sessions the party goes out of the village of Potter's Field for the first time. They encounter more strange things. Not only in the world, but also in themselves. The corruption of Ravenloft manifests itself in the characters.

Sessions 4 & 5

Mordentshire, Mordent; 1 April 751 BK; Late in the morning.

The party has spent the morning with the Weathermay Foxgrove twins and have learned a lot about the mysteries that surround them. Now they are on their way to the nearby city of Mordentshire. Accian the Arcanist seeks to know more about the past life of his mother and the father he never knew. He hopes he can find out more at the Notary Office of Morecombe, Morecombe and Smith, who hold his mothers legacy for him. He has also obtained a familiar²⁵, a raven he has named Quoth²⁶. Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra seeks to present himself to Bastion Mirella Haroldson, the leader of the Church of Ezra in Mordent²⁷.

Mordentshire is a huge city, the Potter's Fielders are gawking like the country cousins that they are. Only Laurent Bellevoix the Bard, who has lived in the great Dementlieuse cities thinks nothing of the little town. The party enters the town and they are overwhelmed by the sounds and sights. Thankfully Laurent has been here before and he knows the way. He leads them first to the Notary Office of Morecombe, Morecombe and Smith.

At the Notary Office they are immediately admitted. As soon as Accian makes himself known, Mr Morecombe himself comes down to receive Accian. In his opulent office he gives Accian a small package and then leaves him alone to open it in private.

As Accian opens the package, he finds a letter from his deceased mother Margareta from Potter's Field. In it she describes all the events that have led up to the birth of Accian.

In 720 BK the village of Potter's Field was visited by a caravan of Vistani. Margareta was curious and visited a fortune-teller. This old woman predicted that Margareta would bear a child, and that this child would be of utmost importance for the future of the world²⁸. Margareta broke off her engagement to John Willemson²⁹, left Potter's Field and travelled the world. She ended up in Barovia and entered the service of Boyar Alexei Petrovich near Vallaki. He assaulted her and Margareta fled to the small Church of the Morninglord³⁰, where she was well cared for by the priests and priestesses. When it became obvious that she was pregnant, the small Cult offered to take care of her and her infant.

Margareta declined the offer and returned home to visit her family and give birth to her very special son there, and raise him in the loving embrace of his family. Her family was very disappointed when she came home pregnant. They encouraged her to have an abortion or give the child up for adoption. Margareta stubbornly refused and insisted she raise her child herself.

²⁵ A Ravenloft Pseudo Familiar of course.

²⁶ We have a very lame sense of humour.

²⁷ The Bastion and the whole Church of Ezra are directly from the Book of Secrets; Anchors of the Faith by J. W. Mangrum. I did not like the name of the Mordentish Bastion so I changed it.

²⁸ Accian's player Joost recently (a year after he first read the letter!) told me that he never read the sentence which said that Accian would be very special.

²⁹ John Willemson was introduced in Campaign Session 1 – 3 as the richest man in the village.

³⁰ The cult of the Morninglord is radically different in my campaign, but as the party will not have anything to do with them anytime soon, I will elaborate later. To the characters the cult of the Morninglord is unknown at this time.

Margareta ends her letter with the request that Accian go to Vallaki in Barovia one day to tell the Cult of the Morninglord what happened to Margareta of Potter's Field.

The other item in the package was a ring, a simple silver ring with a yellow stone set in it. Margareta asked her son to wear it always, as it would protect him. Accian does so, but it does not seem to have much effect³¹.

Understandably, Accian is very moved when he reads these words of his mother from beyond the grave. He is very touched by his mother's care for him and he is angry with the man who assaulted her and put her through such grief. He wants to go to Barovia soon to look for his father.

Then the party goes to the Church of Ezra in Mordentshire. Brother Samael wishes to present himself to Bastion Mirella Haroldson. Samael is granted a private audience. The Bastion commends Samael on his devotion to duty, but then asks him why he is not wearing the regulation Plate Mail all Anchorites should wear. Samael answers that the studded leather he is wearing is all he can afford. The Bastion maintains that all the Priests of Ezra must strictly adhere to all the regulations, especially such a small Church as the Church of Ezra in Mordent. So she puts Samael to the choice, either he goes without any sort of armour whatsoever, or he buys the required Plate Mail from the Church for 500 golden pounds.

Brother Samael has to swallow hard³² when he hears this and he does not like it one bit. He does not want to do without armour, but he cannot afford the price of the Plate Mail. The Bastion then unbends a little and suggests that Samael may get the correct armour if he performs a task for the Church. In the city stands the Cloister of Our Merciful Lady, it has some catacombs, and there have been some problems in the catacombs lately. Some priests have disappeared and no-one dares to investigate. If Samael is able to clean the catacombs of problems, then he can have the Plate Mail with the Church's blessing. Samael accepts this assignment, promising that he and his friends will clean the Catacombs³³. The Bastion is happy and gives Samael his Plate Mail on the condition that he goes to clean the catacombs immediately.

Once outside Brother Samael tells his fellow party members of their new assignment. They are upset. He did not consult with them first and if they help him, they get nothing for their trouble. Samael then promises³⁴ to help them out when they need that in the future. Grumbling the rest of the party consents to helping Samael with his assignment, as they see the benefits in having a powerful party member with such good armour³⁵.

The party goes to the Cloister of Our Merciful Lady to present themselves. The abbot is very pleased to see them. He takes Samael with him in a private audience, since the other seem too rowdy to appreciate the holiness of the cloister and the temple³⁶. In private he tells Samael that in the past 7 months several priests have disappeared. At first the cloister thought nothing of it. The cloistered life is not for everyone and some priests always abandon their duties. But this has gone too far. The abbot suspects that something is amiss in the catacombs, which are part of the cloister. No-one has used them for the last 100 years, as it had filled up and new graveyards were opened. The catacombs are probably 5 levels deep, the quicker Samael and his friends can get to it, the better.

³¹ It does have special powers, it reduces AC with 2 and on command it will emanate light (as the spell) and will repel undead. It has more sinister powers as well, but that is something for later.

³² Samael has a problem with authority figures especially when they are female.

³³ This is an extremely important passage. Samael promises to clean the catacombs, but he also promises the services of his fellow adventurers, who are not with him to give or withhold their assent. This is very typical of him.

³⁴ And another promise.

³⁵ The party is still level 1 or 2, and most have AC of 8 or 7, so Samael is suddenly a powerful character.

³⁶ Accian and Darien were very annoying.

Samael returns to his friends and they descend into the catacombs. It goes badly for them. On the first level they encounter fearsome rats and spiders who gnaw on the bones of the dead to survive. But they put up a ferocious fight. The party is so unsettled that the fights go badly and they have to retreat to the cloister and ask for healing³⁷. The wounds of the party seem more serious than normal, as they heal slowly³⁸.

2 April 751 BK

The next day, after the party is healed by the priests of the cloister, the party goes back into the catacombs. When they descend the levels of the catacombs, they see a very disturbing thing. After killing a few zombies, they suddenly come upon a ghost. It is a ghostly form of a man and it moves through the walls and the cramped hallways of the catacombs. The worrying aspect is that it reminds some of the party members of Brother Harun, Priest of Ezra, who currently works in the temple of Ezra in Potter's Field.

Brother Samael recognizes the ghostly form of Brother Harun and says that he killed Brother Harun by taking it³⁹, it was the only thing keeping him alive. Some of the others hear his remark and become worried. Is Brother Samael a murderer or merely very confused?

When the frightened party members have calmed down, they descend to the third level of the catacombs. There they have a fearsome fight with some more undead⁴⁰, feasting on the flesh of the people buried here. After this fight, Scott the Avenger wants to turn back for some rest and more healing. The others want to go with him. Darien however is having too much fun and walks on alone, he disturbs some more horrible undead monsters and the rest of the party is forced to come to his aid.

When the party has ended the last threat, they come upon a disturbing sight. A fresh corpse, well relatively fresh. Brother Samael guesses the body has been dead for at least 6 months. While he examines it, it turns out to be the body of the man they know as Brother Harun, who is currently alive and well and holding sermons and services in the name of Ezra in Potter's Field. He has done so for the last 6 months. Now the party is beset by all sorts of questions. Who is this dead man, whose ghost is haunting the catacombs, who is helping Brother Marec in Potter's Field⁴¹? What is the role of Brother Samael in all of this?

As the party examines the corpse further, they see that he suffered a very violent death. One of his legs is missing and he has suffered other massive wounds. He was ripped apart by something powerful. But what and is that being still here, or is it in Potter's Field? The party decides to return with the corpse to the cloister and ask some questions of the abbot.

The abbot is very worried when he hears the story from Brother Samael. Brother Harun used to be a member of the Order of Our Merciful Lady. He was a very devoted priest and spent his time studying the Legions of the Night to better combat them. Although this is dangerous, Brother Harun was a well educated adult and knew the dangers. Brother Harun specialised in studying the entities known as Demons. And then about six months ago, he was called to service in the little village of Potter's Field. Brother Harun of course complied and the Abbot has heard no unfavourable reports from either Brother Marec or Bastion Mirella Haroldson about him.

³⁷ This was so embarrassing. The party was seriously challenged by 5 huge spiders. I had introduced a critical hit and fumble table. The party was rolling so bad, with so many fumbles that they did more damage to themselves than the spiders.

³⁸ Accian's Ravenloft Familiar and his hit point sucking.

³⁹ Samael refers to the strange religious text he found in the possession of Brother Harun and took away with him, to protect others from its evil powers, this is mentioned in the Introduction.

⁴⁰ Ghouls this time, to make it more exiting.

⁴¹ I knew it would be a good idea to spend some time in Potter's Field, the players were very worried about what was going on there.

The party is very worried when they hear all this, mystical studies, dangerous entities. They do not like it at all. They present their theory to the abbot, that some dangerous entity killed Brother Harun, hid him in the catacombs and took his form to wreak horrible havoc on Potter's Field. The abbot finds this somewhat hard to believe, but to ease the minds of the brave party who have been of such help, he will send a messenger to Potter's Field to see if everything is all right there. The party goes along with this⁴².

Session 6

Mordentshire, Mordent 4 April 751 BK

The party has finally cleaned up the catacombs beneath the cloister of Our Merciful Lady. Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra is confirmed as a priest of Ezra by Bastion Mirella Haroldson.

Scott, the Avenger is going through some disturbing changes. At night he has strange dreams about running through forests and hunting animals. He also noted that he can now see in the darkness⁴³.

The party goes again to the Office of Morecombe, Morecombe and Smith, to see if any more letters have been brought for them. They are using the Office as a mailing address for those who know them. They are expecting a letter from the sisters Weathermay Foxgrove, to ask them to do some research on werewolves in Mordent. As they enter the Lobby of the Office, there is indeed a letter waiting for them from the sisters. They are asked to come to the old herbal shop, to discuss the assignment and payment.

At the Office they also meet a woman⁴⁴, she is in her thirties, has beautiful brown hair and has a strange effect on Scott. She attracts him like no other woman has ever done before, he is drawn to her like a magnet. Since he is very shy, he does not dare to approach her. Accian the Arcanist however notices his discomfort and interest in the woman, and he approaches her and asks her name. Celia introduces herself, after which Accian embarrasses Scott by shouting her name through the lobby at him. Scott fears the animal attraction he feels for the strange woman and tries to suppress his feelings.

As the party goes to meet the sisters Weathermay Foxgrove in the herbal shop, the sisters have a proposal for them. They have recently received a letter that the wilderness lair of the marauding band of werewolves has been found. When Dr. Rudolf van Richten had defeated them nearly ten years ago near Crawford, they were never able to find the wilderness lair. That has now been found by Piotr DiLisnya⁴⁵, he asks for the help of Dr. van Richten to investigate it, to solve the last mysteries of the werewolf band.

The sisters tell the party that Dr. van Richten has been missing for a while now, and they themselves cannot go, so they want the party to investigate the wilderness lair and find out all there is to find out, they will of course be paid for their troubles. The party is willing. Especially Scott wants to know more about the werewolves that killed his family.

Darien is not willing at all to go back to Crawford⁴⁶. He tells the others that bad people live in Crawford and that the party should avoid that place altogether. The rest of the party wants him to be more specific, but he does not want to tell them more, so the rest of the party decides to

⁴² I was amazed by that, they said ok, turned around and concentrated on other things. Oh well, so much for involved players.

⁴³ Scott has been infected by werewolves during the attack on him and his family so many years ago. He is now turning into one very slowly, he will fully change next month. His changes are brought on by the full moon.

⁴⁴ This is Celia Whitmoor from the Book of Souls by J. W. Mangrum

⁴⁵ An NPC of my own making, the last name is a very popular name in this area of the world.

⁴⁶ It is the place where he killed his sister.

go to Crawford anyway, and Darien can stay behind if he wants to. Darien does not want to be left alone, so he goes with them, but is constantly afraid and tries to mask his appearance. The other party members are suspicious about his behaviour, but as they do not really like him, they do not care too much.

Sessions 7 – 9

In session 8 a new character is introduced to replace a character that is phased out. I put the introduction here.

Raven of Helbenik; played by Remco:

Raven is a female Ranger from Helbenik in Valachan (age 17). She is currently a refugee from Valachan. She fears that the ruler of Valachan, Baron Urik von Kharkov. She knows that the Baron wants her to be his wife, she also knows that his wives rarely live longer than a year after the marriage. So she fled Valachan, leaving her family behind. She now tries to get as far away from Valachan as possible.

For security reasons Ravens travels as if she were a man, she wears men's clothing, pretends to shave and keeps her face as hidden as possible. She feels that the agents of the Baron, who are surely chasing her, will be fooled this way⁴⁷.

Raven starts out at level 1. This is to discourage my players from recklessly having their characters killed or removed from the game for some reason. The other characters are at level 3 when Raven joins them.

Session 7

Crawford, Mordent; 11 April 751 BC, Late in the afternoon.

The party approaches Crawford in the afternoon. In the distance they can see the roofs of the village and the smoke from the chimneys. They pass a small lake, on the nearby shore of the lake stand a very small chapel, not more than a little roof over a small statue and a little plaque. Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra, wants to see to who the chapel is dedicated and if he has a duty there.

As the party approaches the tiny building, they can read the plaque which says: "This is the place where Carolina Harmsen washed to shore, after she drowned in the lake, she is now with her parents Eric and Evelina Harmsen." The party concludes that a little girl washed to shore her, some time ago and that the statue in the chapel must be of her. Brother Samael says a small prayer for the soul of Carolina.

In the meantime, Darien the Elemental Mage walks into the water and whispers a private message to his dead sister. This triggers a response, the waters starts boiling and a ghostly image of a young girl of about 6 years old rises from the water, rushes at Darien and starts attacking and screaming at him for killing her all those years ago. The rest of the party is very surprised and steps back. When it seems that the ghost is going to kill Darien, Brother Samael intervenes and asks the ghost to stop and tell her story.

The ghost does so, she reveals that she is Carolina Harmsen and that the man she is attacking is her brother Christoffel⁴⁸, and her killer. He threw her in the lake and watched her drown many years ago. She now wants to kill her brother. The party is shocked when they hear this. They cannot believe that a man would kill his own kin. Darien is a lot stranger and more dangerous than they thought. Brother Samael does some fast talking and promises⁴⁹ Carolina that Darien's dark deeds will be punished, but that she must refrain from doing so. Scott the Avenger tells her that he will definitely see to it that Darien will not go unpunished. Grudgingly Carolina

⁴⁷ It took the other players some time as well to realise that Raven was a woman. In Dutch Raven is not a gender specific name.

⁴⁸ Darien's player Remco never told me the real name of Darien, so I was free to think up a suitable silly name.

⁴⁹ And the third promise of Brother Samael

accepts these promises and she disappears into the lake again. Scott is very angry with Darien, he killed his kin, while Scott has none left.

The party is further worried about the reception they will receive in Crawford, when they enter with a known murderer. Darien decides to keep a low profile and behave himself.

In the village of Crawford no one has noticed anything strange on the shores of the lake. The party quickly goes to their contact, Brother Piotr DiLisnya, Priest of Ezra. He greets them and tells them of the great fight between Dr. Van Richten and his party and the band of werewolves. The werewolves had been chased all over Mordent, and here in Crawford was the last battle. Brother Piotr promises to take the party to the wilderness lair of the werewolves in the morning.

That night both Brother Samael and Scott both wake up and see the ghostly image of Carolina Harmsen looking through their bedroom window at them. They are worried about this, they fully intend to keep their promises, but they do not like to be followed by a ghost, who is now apparently able to leave her lake.

12 April

A holy day for Ezra, Brother Samael joins Brother Piotr DiLisnya in his duties. They give a service together for the villagers of Crawford.

After the service Brother Piotr takes the party to see Karel. Karel was a member of the party of Dr. van Richten, when he hunted the werewolves in Mordent. During the fighting he was infected with Lycanthropy. Brother Piotr and Dr. van Richten attempted a ritual to cure Karel of the disease, but they failed, probably because the first werewolf, the original infector of the line was still alive. Karel is a horrible sight, he has gone completely mad, he is chained to a thick pole on the edge of the village. Then the party notices that Karel is shifting shape constantly. One of his legs is a wolf's leg and as they watch, it is changing into a human leg, while his ears are becoming wolf's ears⁵⁰.

Greatly subdued the party goes on to the wilderness lair, which is very well hidden, it is completely underground, with the entrance hidden by some thick shrubs. Once inside the players take a good look around. Ten years of neglect have not done the place any good. The party finds one well made chest, which is disintegrating due to damp. Darien forces it open and looks inside. He finds some old moldy clothes, which Laurent the Bard identifies as being Dementlieuse clothes, but they went out of fashion about ten years ago. Darien also finds a diary, which he reads out loud so all can hear it:

The diary describes the life of an unnamed werewolf, who together with his pack lived in Dementlieu for a while in the service of a man named Jacques Grennol⁵¹, but life became difficult there, due to a pack member who killed too much and too blatantly. The writer decides to lead his pack to Mordent, where they will have more room.

In Mordent they live very well indeed and the pack grows. The writer describes the killing of an entire family near Potter's Field. Eventually Dr. van Richten gets wind of their activities and starts the hunt. The pack is chased all over Mordent and many members are killed. The writer decides to flee back to Dementlieu.

⁵⁰ I showed them Karel to impress upon them how dangerous Lycanthropy can be, and how dangerous it can be to attempt a cure. It worked.

⁵¹ This is the father of Nicholas Grennol, who is mentioned in the Introduction, under Laurent Bellevoix

Session 8

Crawford, Mordent; 12 April 751 BC, Late in the morning

Scott goes into a violent rage after hearing the story of the werewolf and how he killed his whole family. With his axe he chops the remaining bits of furniture to little bits. The rest of the party looks on worriedly.

The party leaves the wilderness lair. Once outside the party wants to go back to Mordentshire as soon as possible to receive money from the Weathermay Foxgrove sisters and Scott wants to travel on to Dementlieu, to find Jacques Grennol to find out more about his contacts with a pack of werewolves, who were responsible for killing his family. Darien however does not want to go back to Mordentshire. He understands that he will be punished for his deeds against his sister. He feels no remorse for his actions and does not want to be punished, he correctly assumes that Lord Daniel Foxgrove will have him executed for his crimes. So he wants to flee and permanently destroy the ghost of his dead sister. So he stalls and makes excuses not to go back to Mordentshire.

Darien and his excuses and blatant attempt to wiggle out of his punishment really anger Scott. They start a shouting match and suddenly Scott draws his axe⁵² and attacks Darien. Darien tries to defend himself with a bolt of magical energy⁵³, Accian the Arcanist tries to intervene by casting a spell that holds people⁵⁴ in their place. It does not work on Darien and he flees into the forest. To aid his escape, Darien summons mists, to hide him from the sight of his former party members. The mists rise and rise and soon the whole little hill where the wilderness lair was is engulfed in mists, and the mists kept rising and rising until all people on the hill can't see a thing anymore. As suddenly as the mists rose, they dissipate and leave the party standing on the hill. Darien is gone⁵⁵.

The remaining party members are not too concerned with his disappearance, until they realise that Darien was holding the diary of the werewolf and now they have nothing to show to the Weathermay Foxgrove twins. Also Samael and Scott realise that it will be very difficult now to keep their promise to the ghost of Carolina Harmsen. How will she react to that?

14 April

The party has returned to Mordentshire and relate their adventures to the Weathermay Foxgrove twins. The twins find the story very interesting, as they never knew of the Dementlieu connection of the werewolf pack. The twins are disappointed that the party did not manage to bring the diary back with them, as it contained valuable information on the werewolf writer, his pack and the movements of his pack. Samael promises⁵⁶ to retrieve this diary from Darien and deliver it to the twins.

Gwynneth Weathermay Foxgrove asks the remaining party members to go to Chateauoir in Dementlieu, to find out more about the connection between the trader Jacques Grennol and the werewolves which ravaged Mordent all those years ago. She and her sister are willing to pay handsomely for the trip. At this point Laurent the Bard suddenly says he does not want to go to Chateauoir. He has been there before and did not like it there. The rest of the party reacts with

⁵² A failed WIS check.

⁵³ Magic Missile.

⁵⁴ Hold Person

⁵⁵ The Mists of Ravenloft have taken Darien for his sins. Since it became known that he killed his own sister, the others no longer wanted to spend time with him. Darien's player had also made it clear to me that Darien was not interested at all in atonement. So there was no room for redemption.

⁵⁶ Yet another promise from the priest, will he be able to keep them all?

suspicion, since he suddenly sounds like Darien, before the party went to Crawford. The rest of the party wondered what Laurent had to hide. Laurent was outvoted and the party decided to go to Chateau noir as soon as possible.

Before that they all decide they still have business to attend to in Mordentshire. Scott and Laurent want to buy some better armour in Mordentshire. While they are in a smithy to buy some, they see Celia Whitmore again, who buys some very strong looking shackles and chains. Scott follows her discreetly and finds out she lives in a little cottage just outside of Mordentshire.

Brother Samael is still worried about what might be going on in Potter's Field with Brother Harun. So he decides to write a letter to Brother Marec⁵⁷, telling him about his findings in the catacombs beneath the cloister of Our Merciful Lady.

15 April

The party leaves Mordentshire and travels north to take the road to Dementlieu and Chateau noir. Long before night falls the party makes a camp by the side of the road. They wish to spend the night here. They know that ahead of them lies a large marsh⁵⁸, which contains many dangers, they cannot pass it before nightfall and they do not wish to spend the night in the wet and dangerous marsh.

When the night falls however the party is disturbed by the sound of fighting. As they cautiously go to investigate, they see a slight young man fighting with several undead monsters. The party comes to his aid and together they dispatch the monsters. As the monsters are dispatched, the young man introduces himself as Raven, a traveller from Valachan looking for good deeds to perform. The others suggest that they travel together to Dementlieu from now on.

Session 9

Mordent 16 April 751 BC

The party has spent the night with new companion, Raven the Ranger, a young man from Valachan. The rest of the party rescued him the night before from some evil undead beings, and for now they have decided to travel together. So they set forth together towards Dementlieu.

The road takes the party through the swamps and marshes that make up this part of Mordent. The road is enforced and heightened, so that travellers will not get their feet wet. The swamp is only on the south side of the road, the northern side is the regular Mordentish landscape of heath and pine trees.

Brother Samael is intrigued by this strange feature of the landscape, and he tries to remember if he has ever heard of this strange swamp. Suddenly a memory comes to him⁵⁹. This used to be the estate of the powerful Wescote Family. Due to an unknown curse, the lands of the estate turned to swamps. Year by year the swamps expand, until the curse is broken. No one lives here anymore, as no one can work the land. The swamps are haunted by monsters, who attack anyone who dares enter the swamps.

As soon as Brother Samael realises this, he starts to run⁶⁰. He wants to leave the swamps immediately. He is afraid of the curse, which was no doubt brought on by Ezra, because of the

⁵⁷ Oh yes, you're worried an unknown entity has taken over the priest of your hometown, what do you do? Send a letter!

⁵⁸ This is the marsh caused by the developments in the adventures *Howls in the Night*. The marshes have expanded to encompass a lot of land.

⁵⁹ A successful local history check

⁶⁰ Without warning his fellow party members by the way.

ungodly actions of the Wescote Family⁶¹. The others are startled, but try to follow the priest, who they respect highly. Only Scott and Raven are able to keep up with the priest, but Laurent and Accian fall behind⁶². Accian sends his raven Quoth forward to make Brother Samael stop, the raven attacks the priest and nearly leaves him blind in one eye. This shocks both Brother Samael and Accian.

As Scott and Raven see that the others can't keep up, they make Brother Samael stop and wait for them. Brother Samael is very impatient to go on and does not want to wait for the ones who can not keep up in this very dangerous territory⁶³. Soon enough the party is complete again and they all want to know why Brother Samael started running without warning. Brother Samael does not want to explain, the situation is too dangerous he says⁶⁴. The others look around, and although the landscape is somewhat depressing with the swamps, the stagnant pools and the fog that swirls above it, there seems to be nothing dangerous in the area.

As the party presses Brother Samael for answers, he promises⁶⁵ to tell them all, as soon as they have left the dangerous area of the swamps. The rest agree with this and quickly they move on. Soon they hear some howling from large dogs coming from the swamps. A little later they see a small road going south from the main road⁶⁶. The party remains on the main road towards Dementlieu.

Soon the party leaves the marshes behind them, and they encountered no trouble at all. So they want to know from Brother Samael what worried him so. At first he does not want to tell them much more, saying they should be grateful to Ezra and him that they got out safely. This does not satisfy the others and they press him some more. Then he tells them that the swamp is the result of a powerful curse of Ezra to punish the wrongdoers of the Wescote Family.

Accian has heard of the Wescote Family and he remembers a very different story⁶⁷. He remembers that the Wescotes were a powerful family and that they had arranged a marriage with a daughter from another powerful Dementlieuse family, the Campbells. Something went wrong, a fight started between different members of the families, people died and the Estate went to ruin, the once fertile lands turning to marshes. The Wescotes all died or left and the Estate is now abandoned.

The party decides that something strange is indeed going on, but they are still unhappy with Brother Samael for abandoning them in an area he knew to be dangerous. The party moves on and late in the night they come to Chateau noir, where they rent a room in the Green Potato Inn.

In the Inn the party asks Laurent about his real reasons he did not want to visit Chateau noir again. He tells them that some time ago Marquis Valmont hosted a large party here because his daughter was getting married. At that party Laurent was also in attendance, because as a bard, he would enliven the party with his music. He met a nice serving girl there and they spent the night together, after that she wanted to marry him, he didn't, so he left her⁶⁸. Raven is very shocked when he hears this.

When everybody is asleep, Scott is wakened in his room. As he looks around, he spots the ghostly form of Carolina Harmsen. She seems to be crying. As she sees that Scott is awake, she berates him for letting Darien escape his just punishment. She implores him to go looking for her brother and bring him to justice for the crimes against her. Scott is understandably disturbed

⁶¹ Samael also draws incorrect conclusions from the information I gave him.

⁶² Failed constitution checks.

⁶³ Very unlike a lawful good priest of Ezra, these actions cost him a powers check, for leaving innocents in a dangerous situation, while only trying to save himself. He makes it however.

⁶⁴ He is being secretive again, this way he holds power over the others.

⁶⁵ Yet another promise.

⁶⁶ This leads to the remains of the Wescote estate.

⁶⁷ A successful local history check.

⁶⁸ The lying Bard! Check the Introduction for the real story.

and he goes to wake Brother Samael. Brother Samael is very disturbed as well, he did not think that the ghost of Carolina would follow them here, across borders.

17 April

Brother Samael is very disturbed that Scott was visited by the ghost of Carolina Harmsen. He decides to hold a service to appease the ghost⁶⁹, since it is a holy day. He quickly wakes the other party members and demands that they attend his service. This does not go down well with Laurent, he is not a follower of Ezra and does not appreciate being woken up early in the morning. Brother Samael holds a service in the common room of the Inn and the service is attended by Raven, Scott and Accian and some of the personnel of the Inn.

Later that morning they want to find out more about the whereabouts of Jacques Grennol. So they ask the owner of the Inn, Frans. He tells them that Jacques Grennol used to live in Chateauoir, but about 30 years ago, he moved to the town on Chateaufaux and he became very rich there. He even became so rich and influential that his son Nicholas has recently married the daughter of the Marquis Valmont, Michelle Valmont. The young couple now live with Jacques Grennol in Chateaufaux and the son now runs the business of his father. Marquis Valmont is the ruling lord of the area around Chateauoir and holds this area for Gouverneur Guignol. His son in law Nicholas will probably rule this area after him.

As the party talks about the information they just heard, they are approached by a man who introduces himself as Simon Bromet⁷⁰. He says he heard them talking about Jacques Grennol and he has some information they might be interested in. The first piece of information is that Jacques Grennol has made his money with some sort of criminal activity. His trading company is just a front for a network of smugglers of illegal goods. Which is the reason he went to live in Chateaufaux, where he could commit his crimes more easily.

The other bit of information he has concerns the marriage of Nicholas and Michelle. The couple lives in Chateaufaux and runs the business of the Grennol Family. Michelle is the only child of the Marquis Valmont. Nicholas would stand to inherit all of the property and probably the title of his father in law when he died, so why doesn't the young couple live at the Castle of the Marquis and Nicholas learns the ins and outs of ruling and being a lord?

The party decides that this new information fits with what they already know about the Grennol Family. They leave Chateauoir that same day for Chateaufaux.

As soon as the party has left the village, they spot a pigeon leaving the little village and heading straight north. Accian's raven kills the pigeon and as they inspect the pigeon, they spot a little note tied to one of its legs. It is from Simon Bromet and it is a letter to an unknown and unnamed master⁷¹. In the letter he relates his meeting with the party and their interest in the Grennol Family.

The party returns to Chateauoir to see if they can discreetly interview Simon Bromet. As they meet Simon again, Laurent engages him in some innocent conversation, while Accian tries to read his mind with a spell. All he gets as a result is that the mind of Simon is hopelessly scrambled by the overriding influence of another. Not being able to learn more, the party leaves again for Chateaufaux⁷².

⁶⁹ A double mistake, the ghost wants her brother and killer punished and the service that a priest performs are for Ezra.

⁷⁰ An Obedient.

⁷¹ Dominic de Honaire of course

⁷² Strangely enough they do not worry about the second pigeon Simon will surely send.

Sessions 10 – 12

In these sessions the plot thickens considerably. The party finds out more about the history of the werewolves and the corruption of Ravenloft manifests itself more and more in the characters.

Session 10

Chateaufaux, Dementlieu; 18 April 751 BC

The party arrived last night in the town of Chateaufaux. This is their first day in the town and they are impressed. Chateaufaux is a trade town, in a crossroads of several trade routes. Despite the obvious wealth, the party also sees a lot of poverty, misery, petty crime and prostitution.

The party is not sure what to do next and as they discuss matters over breakfast in an Inn, they let slip that they are hunting werewolves. Raven the Ranger is shocked when he hears this and wants to know more about their dangerous quest. Scott the Avenger tells him more and Raven is very moved by his story. He promises to aid Scott and the others in their noble quest to rid the world of the evil werewolves.

The party wants to get into contact with Jacques Grennol. They know he is a trader and they decide to go to him and his offices and pretend to be Mordentish traders in earthenware⁷³. They hope to get close to Jacques Grennol by pretending to want to close a deal with him about trade in traditional Mordentish earthenware pots.

The party asks around for a bit and are soon directed to the grand house of the Grennol Family. This is also the office of Grennol Worldwide Transport Company. When they approach the door, they see a strange knob to the side of the door. Only Laurent the Bard recognizes this as a doorbell and he rings it. Apprehensively he rings it, he is worried he will have to confront Michelle Grennol-Valmont and that his history with her will come out into the open.

Soon the door is opened by an older sour looking man in a green and gold livery. He asks the party how he can help them. Accian the Arcanist introduces himself as a Mordentish trader, his business partner Brother Samael the Priest of Ezra, his translator Laurent Bellevoix and his servants Scott and Raven. Accian further states that he has an interesting business proposal for Jacques Grennol and that he wants to discuss this with Jacques.

The butler informs the party that both Monsieurs Grennol are at the moment very busy, but that that same evening the family will host a party and that Accian and his business partner and other associates are welcome to attend and discuss business then. Satisfied the party leaves.

Later that same evening the party returns to the Grennol home to attend the party and learn more about his connections to the werewolves. Scott and Raven are dismissed to the kitchens as the servants they are. There they can wait with the other servants until their masters are ready to return home. This is the first time Raven takes off his cloak and hood. This is also the first time the other party members can get a good look at his face. They all feel there is something wrong with Raven's face, he seems a bit ill⁷⁴.

The rest of the party is escorted into the luxurious ballroom. This is an enormous room, with inlaid wood on the floor, mirrors along the walls and huge chandeliers illuminating the room. The room is filled with a lot of men and women. Servants in the green and gold livery rush to and fro to supply everyone with drinks and delicate foods. Huge potted plants, statues and

⁷³ Why earthenware? I have no idea.

⁷⁴ Raven is a woman pretending to be a man. She looks odd, because she has applied make up to seem more manly with her hood off.

couches have been arranged in such a fashion that private conversations can take place in the large well lit room.

In the kitchens Scott and Raven talk to the servants and they hear about the sort of parties the Grennol Family hosts. Jacques Grennol always had his fingers in the crime world of Chateaufaux. Lately he has been branching out into the world of legal business. The guests upstairs consists of all the male business associates of Jacques and his son Nicholas. The women are all high class prostitutes in the employ of Jacques and Nicholas. The women will tempt the men to indiscretions, so Jacques and Nicholas can later blackmail them with that into deals with the Grennol Family.

In the ballroom the perceptive Accian comes to the same sort of conclusion⁷⁵. He notices that all the men are in their forties and fifties and all the women in their middle twenties. He also sees that there is more going on than conversation in the private corners of the ballroom.

While Accian is making these observations, a woman in the livery of the Grennol Family approaches Brother Samael. She tells him that she is sent by her mistress, Michelle Grennol, and that she is in great spiritual need and needs the guidance of a wise man. She asks Brother Samael to follow her and attend her mistress. Brother Samael willingly obliges and excuses himself from Laurent and Accian.

The maidservant takes Brother Samael into the hall, up the stairs and into the boudoir of Michelle Grennol. The boudoir is very richly decorated, there are beautiful salmon pink curtains matching the expensive wallpaper. Satin cushions cover the bed and the couches in the room. A sweet and heavy perfume permeates the air.

Michelle asks Brother Samael to sit next to her on one of the couches. Michelle starts to cry and tell Brother Samael her unhappy story. Some time ago her marriage to Nicholas Grennol was arranged by her father the Marquis Valmont. During the preparations for the marriage, she went into the gardens to escape the pressure of all those people. In the garden she met a young man. Cunningly he wooed her and then stole her honour. At the moment of her greatest shame, she was discovered by a gardener of her father.

The untrustworthy lover immediately fled, so she alone had to bear the brunt of her father's wrath. Thankfully Nicholas was still interested in marrying her for her connections and inheritance, otherwise her father would have certainly disowned her or worse.

Nicholas was not interested in raising a bastard child, but after almost two months he is convinced she is not carrying the child of her lover. So now Nicholas visits Michelle every night to conceive a heir as quickly as possible.

Michelle ends her story by saying: "So even though I have lost my honour and have been a married woman for almost two months, I have never known real love." With those last words she looks straight at Brother Samael, her full bosom heaving with emotion, her eyes moist with unshed tears and an inviting smile on her lips⁷⁶.

Brother Samael blushes furiously as he realises the full extent of her words, that she wants him to teach her about real love. But he gently tells her that he is a Priest of Ezra and therefore devoted to his goddess first and that she is a married woman, bound to another man. Therefore, he must deny her tempting request⁷⁷.

Pretending nothing happened, Michelle continues her story, she tells Brother Samael that as soon as she has given Nicholas a male heir, she will have outlived her usefulness to her husband. Through her son, born to Nicholas in wedlock, he can lay claim to her father's title and estate, when her father dies. So she fears to die at the hands of her new family, they have no love for her since she came to Nicholas in disgrace. Her father will not help her either, since she lost

⁷⁵ Successful INT check.

⁷⁶ When you lead your players to their doom, pardon, to temptation, overdo it and then lay it on even thicker.

⁷⁷ A successful WIS check at a -4 penalty. The priest has a natural wisdom of 18.

her honour. In the mighty nation of Dementlieu there is no one who will protect her interests. Brother Samael promises⁷⁸ to protect her as well as he can from harm.

Then Michelle continues. She says that women are vulnerable in Dementlieu, as young maidens they are beholden to their fathers, to marry as their fathers direct. As married women they are beholden to their husbands, to do as they instruct. Only widows no longer have a man to tell them what to do. They are free to do as they please. But as the situation is now, it is unlikely that she will be a widow soon, her husband is still young and strong. She looks at Brother Samael again, to see what he will say to that.

It takes some time for Brother Samael to realise what Michelle just said. Then it hits him, she is asking him to make her a widow by ending the life of that evil man Nicholas, who torments this beautiful woman so. Suddenly Brother Samael is overwhelmed with love for this poor young woman, he will protect her from her husband, who does not deserve her and then he will marry her and make her happy.

Brother Samael falls to his knees and pledges his love to Michelle, he also promises that he and some people he knows, will take care of her problem for her, implying that they will kill her husband Nicholas Grennol⁷⁹. While he makes his promise, he seems to sink into the beautiful eyes of Michelle, and a cold shudder seems to pass through him⁸⁰.

In the ballroom and the kitchen the other party members decide that they cannot learn much more there. They decide to investigate other parts of the house. They meet in the hallway on the upper floor. They converse for a bit and decide to investigate the private rooms of the Grennol Family members. They search the suite of rooms belonging to Nicholas, but they find nothing of interest there.

As they leave the room, they run into Brother Samael, who leaves the rooms of Michelle with a starry eyed look. As soon as he sees Laurent, he accosts him and snarls that they have a lot to discuss and that Laurent is in a lot of trouble⁸¹. The party is a bit troubled by this violent outburst, especially since they are in a place where they should not be and can be discovered any moment.

Brother Samael prevents the party from searching the rooms of Michelle, so they search the rooms of Jacques Grennol. In his rooms they find several diaries. They read the entries which concern themselves with the werewolves. They find out that Jacques Grennol ran a smuggling operation and that he first hired the band of werewolves to protect himself and his family from assaults of competitors. In time the werewolves became uncontrollable, so he sent them away, they went to Mordent.

Ten years later, one of the werewolves returned, Fredeck Yurgovitsch, the leader of the pack. His whole pack was killed by the Doctor and he was on the run. Jacques arranged for Fredeck to be brought to Pont- A- Museau in Richemulot, to hide there. Jacques has not heard from Fredeck since.

In the hallway another fight between the party members immediately erupts. Laurent Scott, Raven and Accian want to leave with the diaries, claim their reward from the Weathermay-Foxgrove sisters and go on to Richemulot to end the threat of the werewolf. Brother Samael

⁷⁸ I have really lost count of all the promises Brother Samael has made.

⁷⁹ Wow. Brother Samael decided this on his own, I did not have to force this issue at all with failed WIS checks or something like that. Also note that Samael again promises the services of himself and his companions. The promise to kill the lawful husband of a woman to be able to marry her himself and to try to drag innocent and unsuspecting bystanders into this, is such a base act that I considered it an act of ultimate darkness, and so the first sign of corruption will soon manifest itself.

⁸⁰ Samael's corruption manifests itself. He is on his way to become a wraith. He now has infravision, but on the downside, every time he becomes frustrated his eyes will grow red. This is from the Book of Shadows, Terrible Transformations; Track of the Wraith by Wes Schneider.

⁸¹ Although Michelle hasn't said it, Brother Samael realizes that the seducer of Michelle must have been Laurent. It pains him that Laurent has gotten to Michelle first.

however wants to remain in Dementlieu and protect his one true love Michelle. When the rest of the party disagrees with him and tries to leave, his eyes glow red with his frustration. This is spotted by Laurent, Raven and Accian and they are deeply disturbed and more determined to leave the home of the Grennol Family.

Laurent, Accian, Scott and Raven leave the home of the Grennol Family discreetly by the servants stairs and exit. A grumbling Brother Samael follows them.

Session 11

Chateaufaux, Dementlieu 19 April 751 BC

The morning starts in turmoil, Laurent, Accian, Raven and Scott are very disturbed by the erratic behaviour of Brother Samael. Quoth, the raven familiar of Accian tells Accian to support his long time friend Brother Samael as he now needs the help of his friends.

As the party enters the common room of the Inn for breakfast, a letter is delivered to brother Samael, by a woman waiting in the common room, wearing the livery of the Grennol Family. He secretly reads this, but his fellow party members know the content of the letter through the use of an ESP spell by Accian.

It is an anonymous letter, signed by M⁸². and it seems to be a love letter. The writer wishes to coordinate some plans with Brother Samael to secure the future of the writer. The writer mentions a threat to his (or her) life. Furthermore the writer urges Brother Samael to destroy the letter⁸³ and to not visit the writer as her husband might become suspicious.

Brother Samael does as the letter bids him and destroys it, then he writes a letter back and the rest of the party manages to read that too. In that letter Brother Samael states that he is passionately in love with Michelle and that he wants nothing more than to marry her in the great Cathedral of Ezra in Mordentshire. He further states that he has a plan so that Michelle can indeed marry him. Brother Samael sends this letter with the waiting servant woman.

The rest of the party concludes that Samael has some sort of clandestine relationship with Michelle Grennol-Valmont, the wife of Nicholas Grennol. This worries them deeply as they know that Michelle is married. If Brother Samael wants to marry her, Nicholas must first be dead. They are afraid that Brother Samael will want to kill Nicholas, they oppose a cold blooded murder. They are also afraid of the influence Michelle and her husband might have in Dementlieu. They know she is the daughter of a powerful nobleman and that Nicholas is the son of a very rich trader, who is not afraid to use criminal methods to get what he wants.

The party members discuss their worries with Brother Samael. He states that he will want to challenge Nicholas Grennol to a duel for the hand of Michelle in marriage⁸⁴. The rest of the party opposes this, they feel it is morally wrong and they think that Brother Samael will die in the duel. They urge him to forget Michelle, to consider other options such as a divorce between Michelle and her husband, perhaps on the grounds of abuse. The discussion becomes very passionate. Brother Samael shouts at Scott that Scott does not know what love means. This deeply hurts Scott, as he does know and only left is love to find out more about himself and become a worthy partner for her.

In the middle of this heated public discussion, a second servant from the Grennol Family arrives and delivers a second letter. As Brother Samael reads this letter, he is shocked to find out that Michelle suggests that he should kill Nicholas as he visits 'The Blushing Mermaid' a house

⁸² Michelle Grennol-Valmont of course

⁸³ Thus destroying evidence.

⁸⁴ A lawful good priest wants to force a duel to be able to kill a man so he can marry the widow of his victim. Wow. Brother Samael is running down the path of corruption and accelerating.

of ill repute. The area is known to be very dangerous and the murder will be blamed on locals. She again asks him to destroy the letter, which he does.

Brother Samael is very shocked when he hears this, as he did not expect Michelle to be so cold, calculating and ruthless. Then he realises that she must be very afraid and for a weak woman this must seem the only way out of such a dangerous situation⁸⁵, she only wants to protect him from what seems to her a powerful man. He decides to ignore this letter and he sends away the servant.

Brother Samael discusses the nature of the second letter with his companions. During this conversation he lets slip that he promised Michelle to remove her husband and that he has promised the aid of his companions in this endeavour as well. They are outraged. They wish to be in no way connected to the murder of a man.

Accian suggests that they bring charges against Nicholas Grennol and so have him convicted to death for his crimes⁸⁶. The Grennol family is known to be associating with werewolves, the party holds proof of this and this would be a good way to remove Nicholas. Brother Samael and Accian decide that they can even fabricate more evidence and plant this in the Grennol Family Home.

Laurent, who is from Dementlieu, informs Brother Samael on the ins and outs of duelling in Dementlieu⁸⁷. Duelling in Dementlieu is legal, but only in very special circumstances. If those rules are not followed it is merely a fight, perhaps with fatal consequences, the authorities of Dementlieu will definitely persecute the perpetrators. First of all, a duel is to the death. Second, a duel starts with an insult, the insulting party must insult another man in front of at least one witness. Then and only then has the insulted party the right to call for a duel to take away the insult. The insulting party cannot call for a duel. Then the arrangement is made for the duel to take place, the insulted party makes all the decisions regarding weapons, time and place. Both parties must show up with two seconds.

Brother Samael barely listens to what Laurent has to say, he wants to go off to challenge Nicholas. Brother Samael goes off to challenge Nicholas Grennol, with Accian and a stable boy as his seconds. Laurent and Scott remain behind, as they want to have nothing to do with this folly.

At the home of the Grennol Family Brother Samael speaks to Nicholas and starts to insult him. Nicholas remains quiet, after which Brother Samael also challenges him to a duel⁸⁸. Nicholas then makes an appointment for a duel, early the next morning. Back at the Inn, Accian no longer wants to be a second, and he steps back. Brother Samael then finds another stable boy to be his second.

The rest of the party is in turmoil. Their priest will duel with a local, will he live and what will happen if he dies? Scott especially is worried. He knows about the strange book that Brother Samael carries with him and the unfinished business in Potter's Field with the false priest Brother Harun. Scott is also worried about the safety of the woman he loves, Rosalinde Willemson, is she safe? What will happen to those people when Brother Samael dies in a foreign land?

20 April

⁸⁵ He is wrong, Michelle is very cold, calculating and ruthless. She intends for Samael to take the fall for the murder of her husband. When he is gone, she can take over the management of the Grennol Worldwide Transport Company. She will be free of her father and husband and have her hands on a lot of money. Also note Brother Samael's disdain for the power of a woman. Even the woman he loves is considered weak.

⁸⁶ Accian suggests to frame someone for a crime, hardly a good deed.

⁸⁷ In real life duelling was bound with many rules. I tweaked the rules a bit to reflect the evil of Ravenloft.

⁸⁸ Thereby breaking the rules for duelling. What follows next will not be a duel.

Early in the morning Brother Samael leaves with his two seconds, two stable boys and Accian, who has decided to accompany him, to the appointed place of the duel, a crossroads just outside the town of Chateaufaux. The rest of the party remains behind to worry about the outcome.

As the little group approaches the crossroads, Brother Samael is approached by an unknown man in a blue and silver uniform. He is armed with firearms. He asks Brother Samael who he is. Brother Samael answers that he is Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra and that he is waiting for Nicholas Grennol, to fight a duel to the death. The man in the uniform then immediately places him under arrest for wanting to participate in an unlawful duel and attempted murder of Nicholas Grennol. As he says this, more men in the same uniform appear from behind the trees and bushes, they all point their guns at Brother Samael⁸⁹.

Brother Samael resists his arrest by trying running away. Accian tries to save him by casting a spell on the uniformed guards. This does not work very well, some of the guards stand confused, but others start shooting, badly wounding Brother Samael. Accian and Brother Samael manage to flee invisibly on the conjured mount of Accian.

Accian and Brother Samael race back to the city and their friends. As soon as they are all together again, they all pack quickly and try to flee the city. On their way out of the city, they run into more guards. The party does not want to draw attention to themselves by starting a fight. Brother Samael gives himself up to the authorities as a martyr. He is taken away to the local prison, to wait for his trial.

The rest of the party visits Brother Samael in prison. They try to decide what to do. Laurent knows that Brother Samael is guilty of the charges and the rest feel that Brother Samael landed himself in this trouble. Since he has not been a very good priest or very kind to them lately, they want to leave him there⁹⁰. They also don't think that they can break Brother Samael out of the well guarded and sturdy prison. Brother Samael feels like a martyr and puts his faith in his Goddess Ezra, he is convinced she will save him and see him reunited with Michelle⁹¹. So he bids them to leave him and to take his backpack with them. He entrusts the care of the strangely cursed book *Lectio Divina*⁹² into the care of Scott, a man he knows can't read. He thinks that the *Lectio Divina* will have no influence on Scott. He asks Scott to promise not to show this to anyone and to deliver it to Brother Marec of Potter's Field. Scott does so.

Then the party leaves, leaving Brother Samael behind in the prison.

Session 12

Chateaufaux, Dementlieu 20 April 751 BC

The party leaves Chateaufaux deep in thought. Their thoughts dwell on Brother Samael who they left behind in a Dementlieu prison. Scott thinks that Brother Samael can't be trusted, Scott watched him lie and cheat. Brother Samael does not truly care about his priestly duties, such as care for the poor, the weak and the sick. Furthermore Scott still feels deeply insulted by the remark that he does not know what love is.

Laurent has similar thoughts. He was not one to care too much for the words of priests. Brother Samael struck him as particularly unstable, he lied, cheated and broke his word several

⁸⁹ Brother Samael was badly disappointed. He wanted to fight, he wanted victory or death and now all he has is an arrest. Not very glorious.

⁹⁰ The party was not blind to the several transgressions of the priest. In the last sessions, he lost a lot of goodwill.

⁹¹ Not very likely.

⁹² This is the book that Brother Samael has stolen from Brother Harun.

times. His behaviour the last two days was dangerously erratic. Laurent is content to leave Brother Samael in prison.

Scott and Laurent are also worried about the behaviour of Accian. Accian supported Brother Samael throughout his strange behaviour, even though they never really got along.

On the way between Chateaufaux and Chateau noir the party meets Tara Kolyana⁹³. They talk for a bit and then decide to travel together to Mordentshire together. It turns out that Sister Tara is also a Priest of Ezra. But this Priest of Ezra seems very different from Brother Samael, she does not have the urge to strive and lead as Brother Samael had. For instance, she travels without any form of armour, only trusting in Ezra, this contrasts sharply with Brother Samael, who was very attached to his Plate Mail.

Laurent and Scott are glad to travel with someone else, but they are reticent with asking Tara Kolyana questions, they are afraid she will ask questions in return and they do not feel comfortable with telling her about their hunt for werewolves or the sudden imprisonment of Brother Samael.

When they have camped for the night by the side of the road, Scott suddenly awakens⁹⁴. As he looks around in his tiny tent he sees a strange purple light coming from his backpack. Curiously he takes a look. It comes from the book that Brother Samael entrusted to his care, the *Lectio Divina*. As he picks up the book, the light disappears. He opens the book and he sees three pages filled with writing, as he looks through the rest of the book, he sees that the fourth page is being written as he looks at it. Scott does not know what to make of this⁹⁵.

Scott gets out of the tent to wake Laurent and tell him about the strange book⁹⁶. Laurent is very curious and asks to see the book. Scott shows it to him and Laurent reads it and then tells Scott what the letters mean.

The pages seem to be some sort of diary of a being that is held prisoner. He seems to be very powerful and not happy about being here. He is able to travel however and is moving around to recruit soldiers for the Great War that he participates in. He mentions that he stays in a village and that he has found fertile ground for his teachings. He has also obtained a position of trust and people come to him with their problems.

The writer of the pages also mentions the Grand Scheme and the place that Good and Evil, Light and Dark and Virtue and Sin hold within the Scheme. The writer claims that these are all part of the Grand Scheme and that to deny Dark, Evil and Sin is to deny the Grand Scheme, this will lead to chaos. Therefore people should be aware of their darker impulses and they should follow them.

The writer then goes on to describe the rules by which people abide, which restrain them. He sets forth to encourage people to leave those rules behind them and to fully experience all their impulses. But the silly people cling to the rules as frightened children cling to their blankets in the dark.

Scott and Laurent find all this very strange. They think that the writer is perhaps the person who now impersonates Brother Harun in Potter's Field. Scott is worried that the breaking of the rules as this writer advocates will lead to chaos. They both recognize the term 'Grand Scheme' as a part of the teachings from the Church of Ezra, so the writer must be familiar with that. They also worry about the possibility that a noble and good being is being held prisoner somewhere near Potter's Field.

Scott worries that there is a connection between the writer of the text and the false Brother Harun in Potter's Field. He worries if his beloved Rosalinde is all right. He also feels

⁹³ Straight from the Champions of the Mists.

⁹⁴ Successful CON check.

⁹⁵ He really does not, as he does not know how to read.

⁹⁶ Thereby breaking his promise to Samael.

frustration, as he does not want to return to Potter's Field and Rosalinde, before he has gotten his inner demons under control.

21 April

On this new day, Accian starts telling the newcomer Sister Tara, Priest of Ezra all about the adventures of the party in Dementlieu, including the strange behaviour of Brother Samael and his subsequent imprisonment⁹⁷. Sister Tara is very surprised and shocked by this.

In Chateau noir the party only uses a lunch. During lunch in the Green Potato Inn, the meet again with Simon Bromet, the man who told an unknown person all about the party. Accian tells him that they met the Grennol Family and that Michelle is very pretty⁹⁸. After lunch the party moves on.

The party and Tara travel on towards Mordent. They stop for the night just over the border into Mordent, but well before they enter the marshes. Just as they have gone to sleep that night, they are awakened by a horrible stench. Soon after a group of horrible undead⁹⁹ walk into the camp. They approach the party, all the while mumbling something. Laurent and Accian believe that the undead horrors are mumbling the name of Raven. Just as the party gets ready to have a terrible fight with the horrible things, Tara disperses them with her priestly might¹⁰⁰.

As the horrible monsters leave, the party wants to leave the site immediately. As they are breaking camp, they hear an bloodcurdling scream splitting the night. The scream sounds very frustrated. The party only leaves quicker.

22 April

The morning starts with a fiery sermon by Sister Tara. She extensively preaches on the values of Ezra concerning love and care for the poor, the sick and the weak. Later that same day the party moves again through the swamps. Sister Tara comments on the strange swamps. Accian tells her more about the story behind the swamps. As she hears of the cursed family and the yearly growth of the swamps, she suggests that is their duty to investigate this curse and perhaps break it or lift it and bring peace to the Wescote Family. The rest convinces her to postpone this to a later date, when they have all rested and have brought other matters to a close. Sister Tara concedes the point and they travel on to Mordentshire.

⁹⁷ Accian's player Joost joined us later in the evening, and therefore did not tell Tara earlier about their adventures. Accian apparently had no problem with betraying the confidences of his fellow party members.

⁹⁸ And again Accian tells people things he shouldn't.

⁹⁹ Ghasts

¹⁰⁰ Tara performs a successful Turn Undead.

Sessions 13 – 15

In these sessions Brother Samael is returned to the rest of the party. He seems to be changed somewhat by his experiences and has to adjust to changes in the party as well. Furthermore the party finally decides to return to Potter's Field to investigate the being posing as Brother Harun. By now the party members are around 3rd or 4th level.

Session 13

Mordent, between the Wescote Marshes and Mordentshire; 23 April 751 BC

On the morning of 23 April the party, still together with Sister Tara Kolyana Priest of Ezra, breaks camp to head for Mordentshire, which they expect to reach later in the morning. As they want to leave, they all hear a strange moaning sound. As the party investigates, they find a sleeping Brother Samael Priest of Ezra sleeping a few meters from their camp. The party cannot believe their eyes, after some prodding Brother Samael wakes normally.

The discovery of Brother Samael is followed by a lot of talking. It turns out that after the party left Brother Samael in his prison cell in Chateaufaux, he went to sleep. He then had some strange dreams in which Ezra spoke to him and told him that she felt that he was on the wrong path. She urged him to find a new path, a way back to her. She then seemed to freeze and turned into a stained glass window. Then the dream dissolved into mist. And then he woke up¹⁰¹.

Laurent the Bard realises that Brother Samael still thinks it is 20 April, the day he was left behind in the prison. But the rest know that it is in fact 23 April. So Brother Samael was moved not only through space, but also through time. This is truly a miraculous occurrence.

Accian the Arcanist answers some questions from Sister Tara. He tells her that the man they just found is the same as the man they left behind in the prison of Chateaufaux. He further tells her that this man is also a Priest of Ezra, and that he has spent his last days trying to duel with a man for the hand of his lawfully wedded wife, breaking the rules of duelling and then resisting arrest. Sister Tara is very concerned with the behaviour of a man supposed to carry out the will of Ezra.

Brother Samael wonders what really happened to him¹⁰², what the words of Ezra meant and how he can follow her will. And then he realises that he is now without his armour. The armour he worked so hard for and gave him such status within the group¹⁰³. It is probably still in the prison in Chateaufaux, in the custody of the guards.

Scott the Avenger tells Brother Samael about the attack on Raven the Ranger by the undead horrors. The powers of Sister Tara saved them all. Scott then tells about the new travelling companion the party has, Sister Tara Kolyana, a colleague of Brother Samael. Brother Samael is jealous about the arrival of Sister Tara¹⁰⁴, especially after Accian tells him that Sister Tara is a much better and much kinder Priest of Ezra than Brother Samael ever was.

¹⁰¹ Samael experienced a very strange dream. Was it truly Ezra's voice he heard or the voice of a more sinister entity?

¹⁰² A lot actually, his alignment shifted from lawful good to true neutral, and as a result the spells he received changed as well.

¹⁰³ The loss of his armour worried him perhaps most of all. Without his armour he cannot fight and cannot work the will of Ezra in the world, is his idea.

¹⁰⁴ As mentioned before, Brother Samael has serious issues with authority figures other than his own and with women as well. And now he meets a woman who is higher in the hierarchy of the priesthood than himself, she is younger and better liked by his fellow party members. He really was frothing at the mouth on several occasions.

Sister Tara is very curious about Brother Samael and his adventures and all the things she heard from his fellow travellers. She asks him a lot of questions and several old subjects come up. Subjects such as his passion for a married woman, his failed duel with her husband, his arrest and imprisonment, his promise to Darien's dead sister to bring Darien to justice. Then Sister Tara tells him that she was on a mission for Bastion Mirella Haroldson, and that she is now returning to Mordentshire to report to her superior. Brother Samael does not like this one bit. Confronted with this very good and pure woman he realises that he has not been a good priest.

The conversation returns to the Wescote Marshes and Sister Tara tries to convince the others that they must check out the rumours of a curse and the poor souls living under the curse. Brother Samael however is afraid to go there, as he knows that hunting dogs drove young girl to her death in a bog¹⁰⁵.

Scott and Accian also start to wonder where the armour of Brother Samael now is. They also wonder if the escape of Brother Samael from the prison was sanctioned by Ezra if she did not see fit to send his armour with him as well. Is Brother Samael's new way supposed to be a lot more peaceful than before?

Still worrying about several problems the party moves on towards Mordentshire. Sister Tara leaves them there to return to her rooms at the Cathedral of Ezra in Mordentshire. The rest goes on to the old herbal shop to meet with the Weathermay Foxgrove twins again. They report on their findings in Dementlieu en give the Gwynneth and Laurie the diary they obtained from Jacques Grennol. The sisters then pay Scott, Laurent and Accian for their services, 52 golden pounds and 50 silver pennies¹⁰⁶. They don't pay Raven because he was not part of the group when they got this commission from the sisters.

Brother Samael does not get any payment because the other quickly remind him that he declined payment for his services because he would be doing good work, combating the Legions of the Night. Brother Samael becomes very disappointed. When he left for this mission he had some money and a nice armour and now he is destitute and without his pretty armour. He needs the money now. He then asks the sisters if they could pay him after all, because he is so poor. The sister decline, he offered to perform the service for free and now he wants to go back on that agreement, they don't want to go along with that. Brother Samael gets no support from the other party members as they feel that Brother Samael got himself into this mess and they don't want to get him out.

Deeply frustrated because he does not get his due and he does not get the respect he feels he deserves as a priest, he starts to beg¹⁰⁷ for the money. To put an end to the embarrassment the sisters give Brother Samael 5 golden pounds. Brother Samael accepts with bad grace.

Then the sisters discuss the future with the party. They would like the party to go after Fredeck Yurgovitsch in Richemulot. But Gwynneth and Laurie know that the party has no silver weapons, so they will be powerless against a werewolf, who can only be hurt by silver weapons. So the sisters and the party part on the promise that as soon as the party has secured silver weapons, they will be commissioned to investigate the werewolf in Richemulot.

Scott goes into Mordentshire to find a good silversmith. Such a man is hard to find. Eventually he is directed to a very short man¹⁰⁸, by name of Snorri Glodson. This man claims he is one of the very few who know how to work silver into weapons. All the others in Mordentshire who busy themselves with silver and other rare metals are jewellers and makers of trinkets.

Scott hopes to be able to commission Snorri to make some silver weapons. Snorri then tells him he is being boycotted by the other smiths in Mordentshire, they buy all the ore before he

¹⁰⁵ Woops, unwilling to help the poor and needy out of fear.

¹⁰⁶ I am very tight with money in my campaign, so this was the first time they had a sizeable amount of money in their hands.

¹⁰⁷ As my fiancé always says, whining is not sexy. It pains Samael deeply that he is at the mercy of women.

¹⁰⁸ A dwarf really, but the Scott has never seen a dwarf before, he thinks it is merely a malformed human.

can. He used to have an exclusive contract with an ore merchant from Lamordia, but he has not shown up Mordentshire for quite some time. So at the moment it is impossible for Snorri to make new weapons for anyone. Scott leaves disappointed. He hopes he can convince the Weathermay Foxgrove sisters to ask their father, Lord Daniel Foxgrove to put an end to the boycott of Snorri.

Brother Samael also has an idea to obtain the silver needed. He wants to borrow silver candlesticks from the Cathedral of Ezra and melt and reshape them into weapons¹⁰⁹.

Accian wants to return to Potter's Field, he wants to find out what is going on with Brother Harun. He also wants to tell Charles the Great about the fate of Darien.

Session 14

Mordentshire Mordent 23 April 751 BC

The party is very divided on what to do. On the one hand, they want to go after the werewolf Fredeck Yurgovitsch, who lives in Richemulot. But they do not have the silver weapons they need for that. Brother Samael mentions to the others that he has a way of obtaining the silver needed for the weapons. As they press him for more details, he says they don't need to know where he gets it, just that he can get the silver. The party immediately dismisses his ideas. Especially Raven and Accian believe he is up to his shady plots again and don't want to get involved.

On the other some party members want to go to Potter's Field to find out what is going on there and expose Brother Harun as an impostor. But they don't really know what they will be getting into. So they worry¹¹⁰.

As a compromise the party first goes to the Cloister of Our Merciful Lady, where they first encountered the ghost of Brother Harun and later his dead body as well. The abbot of the cloister promised to send a messenger to Potter's Field to find out what was going on there. The party wants to know what came of that.

At the cloister Brother Samael manages to secure a meeting with the abbot. As soon as the party is allowed in his presence, Accian immediately tells the abbot all about Brother Samael's misconduct in Dementlieu¹¹¹. The abbot is very shocked about this and tells Brother Samael to go to the cloister chapel to reflect on his sins.

The remaining party members explain to the abbot why they have come and what the abbot had learned regarding their hometown. The abbot tells them he sent a young priest to Potter's Field, Brother Richard, to find out what was going on. Brother Richard sent a letter back to the abbot that all seemed fine in Potter's Field. So the abbot concluded that the party must have been mistaken about the identity of the ghost and the body in the catacombs.

Laurent then holds a very impassioned¹¹² speech about how the party braved the dangers of the catacombs, saw what was going on and identified the body correctly as that of Brother Harun and that the innocent people of Potter's Field are now under the possible influence of a dangerous entity. The abbot is very impressed with this speech and realises he put believers of Ezra in danger by his lazy attitude. He asks the party to go to Potter's Field and investigate matters.

The party is willing to comply, but they want something more. Accian mentions that he would like Sister Tara Kolyana Priest of Ezra to accompany them, Accian feels they might be up against something powerful and would like to have a powerful Priest with them. The party also

¹⁰⁹ Since he terms this borrowing I suppose he will bring them back when he is done with them.

¹¹⁰ Worried quite a bit, and talked the subject to death. At times a feel I am not running a ravenloft game, but a soap opera.

¹¹¹ Accian really enjoys betraying his fellow party members, I shall have to do something about that.

¹¹² Successful Charisma check

mentions that they need silver weapons for another quest and that they would like the Church of Ezra to help them obtain it, it will be used in a fight against the Legions of the Night. The abbot promises them to write a letter to Sister Tara to ask her to accompany them and that if they return successfully, he will also write a letter to Bastion Mirella Haroldson and ask her to loan the party some of the silver weapons that are kept by the Church.

As the party leaves, the abbot shows them out and he talks some more with Brother Samael and tells him to adhere more to the Will of Ezra. Brother Samael then reveals that Ezra has appeared to him in a dream and talked to him. The abbot is very impressed and exhorts Brother Samael to listen very closely to Her Will.

Once outside Brother Samael thinks some more on this and discusses his insights with his party members. He feels he should find a new way, just as Ezra told him in his dream¹¹³. He decides to do good more often and to pay less attention to the strict rules. Furthermore he promises¹¹⁴ to no longer sin. Raven hears this and says he will take care that Brother Samael no longer sins.

Then the rest tells Brother Samael that they will travel together with Sister Tara Kolyana. He is very hurt and disappointed. This is a clear message from the rest of the party that they no longer trust him and that they think that he is no good in protecting the party. As they go to meet with Sister Tara, he keeps on grumbling. In the presence of Sister Tara Brother Samael wonders out loud why they travel with a woman, why they take on another Priest who cannot be much good and who is merely a stupid girl.

Sister Tara then confronts Brother Samael, stating that she does not wish to travel with a party that is not united and is not welcoming her fully. Brother Samael is taken aback by her words and by the reaction of the party. The party forces Brother Samael to apologize and to state loudly and clearly that he welcomes the presence of Sister Tara. Especially Raven is forceful in pressing Brother Samael to accept Sister Tara.

Brother Samael caves in under the pressure of his fellow party members¹¹⁵ and tells Sister Tara that he welcomes her presence and will gladly travel with her. Sister Tara is somewhat mollified by this and agrees to travel with the rest of the party towards Potter's Field to see what they can find out there. To cheer him up Raven tells Brother Samael about the deal they struck with the church of Ezra. If all goes well in Potter's Field, they can have access to silver weapons to use for more good deeds.

As Scott watches the impassioned speech of Raven he realises¹¹⁶ what has been bothering him about Raven all this time. Raven is way to feminine to be a man, or even a young boy. He realises that Raven must be a young woman, posing as a man for some reason. For reasons best known to himself, he tells no one of his suspicions.

The party rests in several rooms in an Inn in Mordentshire. That night Scott awakens because a strange light emanates from his backpack. It is the *Lectio Divina* again and another page is being written. Scott goes to Laurent again to show him this.

The page about the restrictive rules people live to. The writer wants to free people from these rules, so they are better able to adhere to the Grand Scheme. But he is having serious trouble with that. Scott and Laurent don't know what to make of this. They decide to keep the book and the information they gained from this from Brother Samael. They do not entirely trust him.

¹¹³ Interesting interpretation. I intended the dream to mean: "Brother Samael you are on the wrong way by not adhering to the Lawful Good ethos, adhere closer to the tenets of the lawful good religion." But Samael's player interpreted the message as: "You adhere to the tenets of lawful good, that is not good, find another way."

¹¹⁴ Another promise.

¹¹⁵ Poor Samael, his spirit and ego were suitably crushed after this episode.

¹¹⁶ Successful Wisdom check.

24 April

On the way out of Mordentshire, the party passes the herbal shop of the Weathermay Foxgrove twins again. They ask them to look into the boycott of Snorri Glodson by the other metalworkers in town, so he can do his work again. The sisters promise to pass on the problem to their father.

Once outside the town Brother Samael asks Scott to return the Lectio Divina to him, as he would be the proper owner as a Priest of Ezra. Scott plainly refuses. He tells Brother Samael that he gave the book to Scott for safekeeping, to pass on to Brother Marec in Potter's Field. Scott no longer has much trust in Brother Samael and wants to keep the book. This has not been a good day for Brother Samael, he is deeply frustrated and his eyes glow red again, much to the consternation of the rest of the party. But this only convinces Scott not to give the book back.

Later that day the party travels through to woods between Mordentshire and Idlethorpe. Suddenly Accians raven Quoth flies of into the woods. A worried Accian follows the raven into the woods, but cannot find him. The rest of the party did not like the raven and they wait out in the road. Soon enough the raven returns to Accian, bearing a small wand in his claws.

Accian takes the wand from his familiar and studies it. In the name of scientific experimenting, he waves the wand and points it at the mightiest oak tree he can find. An enormous fireball shoots forth from the wand and ignites the tree¹¹⁷. Soon enough the trees around him are all burning. Accian flees back to the road, where his fellow party members have seen the explosion and the smoke. Everybody starts running to the south, towards Potter's Field. Since it is spring the forests are very wet and the fire does not spread fast. Raven estimates that the fire will burn itself out soon enough as the first heat of the spell dissipates, the other trees will be too wet to catch fire.

The party moves on and think they have left their troubles behind them. Suddenly everyone is covered in a horrible mucky and sticky silvery substance¹¹⁸. Only Sister Tara and Laurent are able to move¹¹⁹. A horrible looking old crone steps from among the trees and starts attacking Accian, all the while screaming at him. Sister Tara knocks her out with a command after which Laurent is able to subdue her. The old woman then tells them that Accian is a thief and stole something of hers and she wants it back. Accian returns the wand to the old woman, much to the chagrin of Quoth, who feels unappreciated.

The woman disappears again. Accian was seriously injured by the magical attacks of the old woman and asks Brother Samael for some healing. Brother Samael refuses¹²⁰ to heal Accian, as Accian has not shown him proper respect. Accian feels justified in his feelings of disdain for Brother Samael and asks Sister Tara to heal him, who complies.

The party reaches Idlethorpe and stay there for the night.

25 April

The party reaches Potter's Field in the early afternoon and they are welcomed as heroes. Everybody has heard how they killed the bandit gang of Robin and his men and how they made the world a safer place. Relatives of Brother Samael, Accian and Scott are also happy to see them alive and well again.

¹¹⁷ At this point I decided never to give my players any powerful objects of any kind ever again.

¹¹⁸ A web spell.

¹¹⁹ Successful saves vs spell.

¹²⁰ Even though Accian was less the polite, Samael still must adhere to the tenets of his lawful good church. He denied treatment to a wounded man who asked for it out of wounded pride. A powers check I am afraid. He made it however.

The party immediately investigates Brother Harun and they hear that he is very popular. Attendance in the temple is definitely up since he started to preach the message of Ezra to the people of Potter's Field. But some strange things seem to be going on as well. Accian notices that a lot of married women are pregnant. They were pregnant when he left of course, but now that he pays attention, a lot of women will have their babies at exactly the same time, about two months from now. This means that they got pregnant about 7 months ago, the same time that Brother Harun arrived in Potter's Field. This could be a coincidence of course.

Raven visits the temple of Ezra and he walks in on Brother Harun who counsels a very pregnant married woman. Raven does not want to disturb them and is very quiet. The couple does not seem to notice him and as Raven keeps watching, he feels that Brother Harun is conversing way to intimately with the woman. Raven leaves the two alone, very disturbed.

Meanwhile, Brother Samael asks Scott again to return the book *Lectio Divina*. Scott again refuses and asks Brother Samael what this book is all about. Brother Samael then says that he thinks the book will open a gateway to the Legions of the Night¹²¹. Aside from that he believes that the book will corrupt the owner and strengthen the bad character traits of the owner¹²². As Scott and Laurent digest this, Brother Samael suddenly agrees to let the book remain in Scott possession¹²³.

The others now wonder is Brother Samael has changed under the influence of the book. Did the book make him prideful, selfish and unkind?

Brother Samael is hatching a new plan however. He wants to confront Brother Harun with the book. He hopes that on seeing the book Brother Harun will reveal himself as the horrible corrupting demon he is. The rest wonders if this is workable. They worry that Brother Harun will simply accuse them of theft of his book. They also wonder what Brother Harun might already know and what he might suspect about them.

Scott tries to see his one true love Rosalinde Willemsen. When he approaches her home, he is rather rudely rebuffed by her father John Willemsen and he must leave again without seeing her.

Session 15

Potter's Field, Mordent; 26 April 751 BC

The party is together with Sister Tara in Potter's Field. They wonder what to do next. After one afternoon of investigation everything seems to be fine. Brother Harun is very popular and none of the villagers have anything bad to say about him, his actions and his sermons. They start to wonder if they were wrong after all, were they too upset by finding a dead body and were they imagining things in the admittedly frightening catacombs of the Cloister of Our Merciful Lady?

Then Sister Tara tells them that Brother Harun seems to be a very perfect priest. He is kind, popular and knows how to make people enthusiastic about the faith. If he was this good a priest in Mordentshire, the heart of the faith of Ezra in Mordent, the higher clergy would have never sent him out to a small and isolated village such as Potter's Field. Brother Harun would have risen in the hierarchy of the church in Mordentshire and a more junior priest would have been sent to Potter's Field to assist the aging Brother Marec in his duties. So something is odd.

¹²¹ Samael makes this up from whole cloth.

¹²² You don't say. He makes this up as well, but I don't think he appreciated the irony of his own statements.

¹²³ Samael has no problem with letting a corrupting influence remain in the hands of an innocent who has no defence against it.

At the words of Sister Tara Accian remembers¹²⁴ that there are certain monsters who can take the shape of humans at will and use their disguises to wreak havoc on innocent people. Perhaps Harun is one such creature. The real priest lies dead in the catacombs and a fake has taken his place.

The party decides to remain in Potter's Field and keep an eye on Brother Harun, to see if he does something strange. Sister Tara and Brother Samael decide to keep an eye on Brother Harun. Laurent, Scott, Accian and Raven decide to investigate the belongings of Brother Harun. They decide to break into his rooms, which are part of the small temple to Ezra.

In Brother Harun's rooms the party finds a diary. It spans several years and contains the following.

In the year 740 BC a troubled Harun enters the order of Our Merciful Lady in hope to find peace and to work the will of Ezra. He has trouble however to find peace and concentrate on his duties. He is continuously distracted by his fellow priests, who even enter his dreams, he is deeply ashamed about those dreams¹²⁵.

In the years that follow Brother Harun finds himself more at peace and becomes an expert on the Legions of the night known as demons. He also finds a strange reference to the demons known as Incubus. They seem weak, but Brother Harun decides to be cautious anyway as only the overly prideful think that any demon can be weak.

In the year of 750 BC Brother Harun focuses more on the study of Demons and especially Incubusses. He knows they tempt people through their lusts and try to take their souls from them. Incubusses take the form of very attractive men and focus especially on women, as women are morally weaker than men, easier corrupted, and then those women spread the corruption to men, so the demon is able to corrupt many people easily¹²⁶. Brother Harun feels that there is much that he wants to know about these demons. But the only way to find that out is to summon a demon and ask him.

Brother Harun feels that he is safe from the temptations of these Demons, since as a man he is made of morally sterner stuff than those weak women. He feels the Incubus won't be able to tempt him with its gorgeous body, burning eyes and whispered promises of ecstasy¹²⁷.

Then Brother Harun is ordered in 751 BC that he has to go to Potter's Field to become an assistant to a village priest. He is very irritated about this. He decides to reschedule his ceremony to summon an Incubus, so he can ask his research questions before he has to leave for Potter's Field.

There is one more entry in the diary, Brother Harun claims success. He has summoned an Incubus called Herdilix¹²⁸, and Brother Harun is definitely under his influence.

In the mean time Brother Samael speaks with Brother Harun during his duties in the village. Brother Samael praises Brother Harun for his hard work and says that his fame has even reached to Mordentshire, which makes Brother Harun nervous.

Later that day Accian shares the information he found with his fellow party members. Everybody is deeply troubled. They don't wish to confront a demon. Even though the threat to their village is enormous. Sister Tara warns them to be careful, the bevery sure what they are up against before they try anything stupid.

¹²⁴ A successful Intelligence check.

¹²⁵ Brother Harun is homosexual and confused about his sexuality he entered a cloister, he thought he heard the voice of Ezra calling him. Homosexuality is virtually unknown in Mordent, as everyone is expected to marry and have a family.

¹²⁶ Brother Harun detests women, mainly out of unacknowledged feelings of jealousy. Women can have what he can never have, the love of a man. Although he does not fully understand his own impulses, he is very unhappy with his lifestyle in the cloister.

¹²⁷ At this point Brother Harun is already fully seduced by the promises of the demon, which he has only read about.

¹²⁸ The party now knows the name of the Incubus that is loose in the world.

At that time a messenger enters Potter's Field with a message for Brother Samael. He accepts and reads it. And then he becomes very worried. The letter contains the following.

The letter is from Bastion Mirella Haroldson, she says that she has heard a lot of Brother Samaels exploits since 1 April 751 BC, when they first met. She further states that she is very disturbed about what she has heard about him. She orders him to return to Mordentshire within a week and give an account of his actions. If he does not show up, she will be forced to take steps¹²⁹.

Brother Samael is very worried, he knows who has been talking about him, namely Sister Tara¹³⁰. He also knows that his behaviours has been very bad on occasion. He decides to write a letter back to the Bastion, to explain his behaviour and to tell her that he will be with her as soon as he can. That letter contains the following¹³¹.

Brother Samael starts by praising the name of Ezra and the Bastion. Then he tells her that he is currently busy with his fellows to rid Potter's Field of a terrible curse and a creature of the Legions of the Night. He also wishes to hand a book of darkness to the Bastion for safekeeping. In the next sentence he mentions that he also wants to discuss his armour with the Bastion. He has lost it and wants a replacement.

Then Brother Samael mentions his affair with a married woman, which was purely based on feelings of courtly love and not on base lust, he wanted to free her of an unhappy marriage by starting a duel with her husband. As a result of that he landed in prison, but was freed of that by the hand of Ezra, who also spoke to him. He implores the Bastion to believe him and not to be lead by the slander of people who wish to harm him.

Brother Samael then ends the letter trying to convince the Bastion that Sister Tara should be stationed in Potter's Field to assist Brother Marec.

Brother Samael now wants to return as quickly as possible to Mordentshire, he wants to lure the false Brother Harun to Mordentshire, by forging a letter, so it seems Bastion Mirella Haroldson has sent for him¹³². They others don't think this is a good idea, they don't want to travel with a possible demon or other creature of the Night in the lonely stretches between Potter's Field and Mordentshire.

Accian and Laurent decide to pay a visit to Charles the great to inform him about the fate of Darien and to ask him about the possibilities of a monster posing as Brother Harun. Charles is not very shocked about the faith of Darien. He knew that his deficiencies would land Darien into trouble. He does give them some advice on handling the false Brother Harun, namely to assume nothing and to keep an open mind. Then he tells them that it would be unlikely that a powerful creature such as a demon would want to spend time in a backwater such as Potter's Field for long.

The night falls and the party decides to rest in Potter's Field. Raven decides to be very brave and he goes to check out Brother Harun all by himself. He goes to Brother harun in the temple of Ezra and spends some time talking to him. Raven does not get the urge to take off all her clothes and do strange and exotic things to Brother Harun and therefore decides that he cannot be an Incubus in disguise¹³³. Satisfied she goes back to the inn.

That night Scott is again awakened by the Lectio Divina. A new page is being written as he watches. He thinks that perhaps he should investigate this writing stuff a bit more, it might be handy one day. He takes the book to Laurent and they read it together, they tell Borthel Samael nothing. The page contains the following.

¹²⁹ Leaving those steps a bit vague makes it more threatening.

¹³⁰ Only partially correct, the abbot Rudulfus Vahls of the Cloister of Our Merciful Lady also sent a report.

¹³¹ Big mistake! I poured over that letter and found all sorts of things the Bastion would be unhappy with. No player of mine will ever write letter again.

¹³² Will he never learn! Forging a letter by his superior. I'm so disappointed.

¹³³ Raven is a woman in the disguise of a man. She keeps this hidden from her fellow party members, who think her a man.

The writer says that he has to move on, as people have become suspicious of him. He is not strong enough to battle them all. He finds it hard to admit defeat.

The writer then mentions that the very land of this strange new place seems to call out to him and to support his battle. He wonder whether he should accept the offerings of this strange place full of deceit.

27 April BC

The next morning Raven wants to share his conclusions with the rest of the party. They do not believe him when he tells them that he has done some research and that he has found that Brother Harun is definitely not an Incubus. They want to know how he has found this out. Then with a lot of hesitation Raven reveals that he is actually a she. Everybody is shocked.

This revelation immediately leads to a fight with Brother Samael. He claims that she has kept important secrets from the rest of the group and wonders what else she has kept hidden. Raven is deeply insulted and states that she has not kept anything secret, but that the party assumed things and never asked questions and never cared enough to find out who she really was.

Now that the party is convinced that the false Brother Harun is not a demon, they are willing to attack him. They ask the help from some other prominent inhabitants of Potter's Field and then go to attack the false Brother in the temple of Ezra. They bring Brother Marec and Charles the Great as backup forces and John Willemsen and Oswald of Potter's Field as witnesses.

In the small temple of Ezra they find the false Brother Harun attending his duties. sister Tara uses a spell to reveal his true nature¹³⁴. The form of Brother Harun melts away to reveal a strange looking humanoid shape¹³⁵. The skin is grey and show no gender specific features. The creature knows it is under attack and immediately tries to attack the party. A short fight ensues in which the strange but strong creature is slain.

The people in the village are deeply shocked. They all loved Brother Harun and it would seem they were all cruelly betrayed by him. Everybody wants the body removed from the village as soon as possible and leave this mess behind them.

Brother Samael wants to leave as soon as possible as well. Sister Tara supports him, saying that the church should know about this devious monster. Perhaps there are more of these things in Mordentshire where it came from. So she wants to take the body to the Bastion. Accian is very suspicious about Brother Samael's urge to go to Mordentshire. He correctly assumes that he will be reprimanded there.

The party is still worried about the several pregnant women in the village. They wonder who they are pregnant by and what they are carrying. As these women are rather far along in their pregnancy an abortion would be too dangerous and morally wrong, as they could be pregnant by there husbands and carrying a normal human baby. Should the party wait for another two months and then smother malformed infants. This also horrifies them.

The party informs Brother Marec of their worries, but he also does not know what to do. He does promise however to keep everyone informed and will send letters to the Notary Office of Morecombe, Morecome and Smith in Mordentshire¹³⁶.

¹³⁴ Dispell magic.

¹³⁵ A doppelganger.

¹³⁶ Strangely enough, the party does not care about the Incubus anymore, who is also loose in the world.

28 April BC

Scott tries one more time to meet with Rosalinde. Her father John Willemson rebuffs him again, saying that although he is very grateful for Scott's help in uncovering a threat in their village, he has other plans for Rosalinde and a simple woodchopper and vagabond have no place in those plans. Saddened Scott leaves, but he is resolved to show John Willemson that he too can be worthy of Rosalinde.

The party gets a small cart and a small pony to move the body of the false Brother Harun and they leave for Mordent.

Jennifer's Ravenloft Campaign Sessions 16 – 18

Session 16

Mordentshire, Mordent; 29 April BC, late in the afternoon.

The party has travelled from Potter's Field to Mordentshire with the body of the strange grey skinned creature who posed as Brother Harun for the last seven months. They immediately go to the cathedral of Ezra, where they are expected. Several Priests of Ezra take care of the body of the false priest and another priest leads the party to the office of Bastion Mirella Haroldson.

When the party arrives in the office, the Bastion informs them that she wishes to interview Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra. The rest of the party is not required to be there, but Brother Samael requests their presence. The interview between Bastion Mirella Haroldson and Brother Samael does not go well. First he tells her that he thinks that people think he is a demonworshipper¹³⁷ and that Accian the Arcanist has spread malicious rumours about him out of jealousy¹³⁸. Brother Samael further thinks that his incarceration in the prison of Chateaufaux has contributed to the idea that he might be on morally shaky ground¹³⁹.

Then Brother Samael starts talking about the book *Lectio Divina*, which he took away from the false Brother Harun in Potter's Field. He tells the Bastion that he thinks it might be the source of all evil and especially the reason for the corruption of the original Brother Harun, who studied in Mordentshire. He then admits he freely gave this book in safekeeping to Scott the Avenger, an innocent person, and did not inform him of the possible dangers of the book. Brother Samael hopes this book will safe in the hands of the church of Ezra.

The interview then turns to Brother Samaels missing armour. He says he lost this when he was released from prison by Ezra. He feels he needs an armour to perform his duty to Ezra better. So he wants Bastion Mirella Haroldson to give him a new one. She does not agree with him. She feels that there are many ways to serve Ezra and that he can take an example from Sister Tara Kolyana, Priest of Ezra, who serves Ezra without any armour at all and she avoids fighting and concentrates on other good works. Brother Samael keeps trying to beg an armour off the Bastion, but it does not work¹⁴⁰.

Then the Bastion asks for an account of the events in Dementlieu. Brother Samael gives a truthful report. The Bastion asks if Brother Samael looked for other, legal ways to end the marriage, like trying to get a divorce. The Bastion also asks for the exact events surrounding the duel and the imprisonment. Brother Samael then must admit that he did concern himself too much with the rules of duelling, as he felt that rules were not that important. At this remark the Bastion has a fit. She tells Brother Samael in no uncertain terms that Priests of Ezra must always adhere to Her tenets and must always strive to adhere to the laws and try to do good at the same time. Especially in foreign lands where every priest is an ambassador for the faith.

At the end of the interview Bastion Mirella Haroldson states that she thinks that Brother Samael is lead by his pride and arrogance. He must learn to control those impulses to be able to work the will of Ezra. She further states that she wants Brother Samael to return to the Cathedral in two months to give an account of his actions and his progress¹⁴¹.

¹³⁷ I have no idea where he got that idea.

¹³⁸ Partially true, Accian has been spreading true stories, but to harm Brother Samael, not out of jealousy.

¹³⁹ You don't say.

¹⁴⁰ Whining still is not sexy.

¹⁴¹ A light punishment, but I feel I should not burden characters too much, if Samael wants to change his ways he must do so because he wants to, not because he is forced. And 6 months of hard labour in a orphanage would delay the plot too much.

The Bastion then gives several silver weapons to the party on the conditions that these are only used to battle the Legions of the Night and that these are returned when their task in Richemulot is finished.

The Bastion then asks politely if Scott is willing to turn over the book to the church. She says that Scott can in no way be forced to do so since he is not a follower of the faith. Although he has been misled by Brother Samael on this subject, the church as a whole intends to be truthful, and wants to study this possibly dangerous book. Scott hands over the book.

Once outside Brother Samael does not seem to be very impressed. He decides to behave himself for the time being. At 30 June he must present himself in Mordentshire again and give an account of his behaviour.

Sister Tara decides to leave the group. She has been travelling for a long time and desires some rest before she travels again. She does promise to keep in touch with the party and asks them to consider checking out the marshes surrounding the Wescote Family Manor. She wishes to solve that problem. The party promises to stay in touch.

The party goes to meet with the Weathermay Foxgrove twins, who are delighted that the party got some powerful weapons. They commission the party to go to Richemulot to find out what they can.

Scott worries about his love Rosalinde. He was not able to see her, what if she was also pregnant by the false Harun? He does plan however to become very rich to show her father that he is also a serious marriage candidate.

30 April

The party leaves Mordentshire for Richemulot. As they approach Waterford Accian says to Laurent the Bard that he wants to learn more about the craft of Bards. Brother Samael hears this and makes some derogatory remarks about bards and their bawdy songs. This of course does not sit well with Laurent.

Scott does not want to spend the night in Waterford. The other disagree, it is safer to spend the night indoors. Brother Samael adds that the Weathermay Foxgrove twins pay them by the day¹⁴².

As a full moon rises over the land, the party goes to bed in their rooms in a Waterford inn.

1 May

Scott wakes up very early in his room and he notices that he is quite naked and covered in mud and blood. He suspects that he has turned into a wolf and that he has run wild in the night. He dresses and goes out to trace his own wolf trail to see where he went. To his immense relief his traces go straight to the forests surrounding the village and disappear there.

Quoth, the familiar of Accian has seen the transformation of Scott into a wolf and his hunt into the wilds surrounding the village. He informs Accian of this in the morning. Accian immediately goes on to inform Laurent of this¹⁴³. Laurent is very disturbed by this development.

Brother Samael is in the common room having breakfast when Scott enters from his early morning investigation of his own trail. Brother Samael is very suspicious and wants to follow Scott, but can find no way to do so undetected. Brother Samael thinks that perhaps Scott is plagued by the memories of Caroline Harmsen.

¹⁴² I'm not even surprised anymore.

¹⁴³ Accian just loves betrayal.

Later that day the party travels on to Crawford. When they pass the little lake where Caroline Harmsen was murdered by her brother Darien, they stop to hold a small service for her. Brother Samael reaffirms his promise find her killer and bring him to justice¹⁴⁴.

Scott does not want to stop in Crawford either but is stopped by his fellows, they want to have the safety of an inn. As the full moon rises again, Accian becomes afraid of what Scott might do and he puts an alarm spell on his room and tells his familiar to guard him¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴⁴ Not mentioning he has no idea how to do that and has spend exactly no time in trying to find out where Darien might be.

¹⁴⁵ The coward, instead of trying to help Scott, he hides.

2 May

Scott again awakens early covered again in mud and blood. He is still very worried and does not know what to do. He goes out to visit Karel, the man who was infected and never properly cured from his disease. As Scott watches this victim of the horrible disease he is overcome with depressing thoughts. Will that be his future, chained like a beast to a pole, for ever a danger to his fellow man?

At the breakfast table a discussion about the nature of the Lectio Divina again takes place. Brother Samael says that the Lectio Divina originally was a theological text, it is very popular and practically every priest of Ezra has read and many, including himself, have copies of their own. But this one was different, in it he saw a gateway to hell. Laurent says that he has read the book, together with Scott, although he can't read. They saw no title, gates or hell. They only saw something that looked like diary entries. The writer described himself as a prisoner. It spoke of the Great War and the Grand Scheme.

Brother Samael concludes that this book must have corrupted Brother Harun and then consumed him. He wonders if it was wise to leave the book with the Bastion, what if it corrupts her?

Session 17

Crawford, Mordent; 2 May 751 BC, midmorning.

After breakfast it is time for a service to Ezra. Brother Samael joins with Brother Piotr DiLisnya in a service for Ezra. Laurent Bellevoix sings a beautiful and moving Hymn to the greater glory of Ezra which quite moves the people attending the service.

After the service the party leaves Crawford and heads for Richemulot. Soon they cross the border and leave Mordent and move into the new country. It seems somewhat strange to them. It is warmer in Richemulot, the trees seem taller and more deciduous instead of the pinetrees in Mordent. The air seems more humid as well.

Soon the party comes upon the large river Musarde. It is wide and much traffic moves along the river. The party comes on a crossing in the road. A road sign says that Ste. Ronges lies to the south and can be easily reached before nightfall. Pont-A-Museau, where the party has to go, lies to the north and cannot be reached by nightfall. The group hesitates. Scott convinces them that they can move north and sleep rough for one night in this peaceful land. Raven the Ranger backs him and the party decides to follow their advice.

The party moves north and as the daylight wanes, they make a camp some way away from the road. Brother Samael takes the first watch and sits outside and takes his job seriously. Scott does not feel at all well. As the moon rises he leaves his tent, says Brother Samael that he does not feel well, probably something he ate. He moves between the trees and soon Brother Samael can not see him any more. Brother Samael thinks that Scott suffers from some bowel ailment and decides to give him some privacy.

As Brother Samael listens to the cries of pain from Scott, he also hear someone nearing the camp from the other side. This worries him. Soon a horrible smell of decaying flesh hits his nose. He knows this smell, undead horrors are approaching the camp and Brother Samael gets up to wake the other party members.

As the party gets ready to face this threat, they all notice Scott missing. Soon they must confront undead horrors again. Again they seem to be mumbling the name of Raven. Raven steps to the forefront to attack them. Laurent and Accian keep to the beck to use their long range bow and spells. Brother Samael rushes in to aid Raven. The fight goes badly, none of Laurent's arrows seem to hit, Accian's spells do little damage, Brother Samael gets beaten severely without his

armour. And Raven gets hit and then finds she can no longer move. The presence of Scott is sorely missed.

Just when the party seems doomed, a strange voice calls out. They all hear it, but only Raven can understand the strange language. And the monsters turn back, leaving the surprised party members standing. They don't wonder long about their good fortune. Brother Samael needs help and they try to give it to him as best they can.

Then the party turns on Raven. They want to know why she is hunted by strange undead monsters who seem to be under the command of a strange voice. This is after all not the first time this happened. Raven avoids their questions, but she does not really lie to them, she dares not risk alienating them.

Then the party worries about Scott, where did he go? Brother Samael can tell them that he saw Scott go into the woods in his underwear and that he seemed to be in some pain. Brother Samael thought he had some sort of bowel ailment. Accian stays behind with Brother Samael, to take care of him and protect him if the undead come back. Raven and Laurent decide to go into the woods to look for Scott, perhaps he is in trouble and needs help.

In the woods the tracking abilities of Raven come in very handy. They soon find the tracks of Scott and they follow them into a small clearing. There they come upon a patch of disturbed ground. It seems as if a struggle has taken place. Raven investigates the clearing thoroughly. She finds tracks of Scott going in, signs of a struggle and tracks of a large wolf going out. Raven and Laurent realise that this is the place where Scott has changed into a wolf and went on into the woods to hunt.

As soon as Laurent realises this, he is gripped by fear and spurts back to the camp. Laurent is from civilised Dementlieu. He never believed all these strange stories. He thought that his friend Scott was deeply disturbed by the attack of bandits on his parents and family. His fragile mind could not handle the horror and he made up a story of monsters attacking him and his family. All the developments of the last month were readily explained by human bandits terrorizing the Mordentish countryside. Karel, the poor man in Crawford, was merely suffering from a disease or allergy. The claims of Accian concerning Scott came from a man who talks to his bird. The false Brother Harun was perhaps suffering from another disease or changed by magic. Now that Laurent is confronted with irrefutable proof that Scott really can change into an animal and that other people can do so too, he is gripped with fear.

As soon as he reaches the camp, he screams out his findings to his fellow party members. Accian already knows, as he had the word of his raven. Brother Samael finds it hard to believe, he does not want to, but now he must accept that something very strange is going on with Scott. Raven arrives a little later in the camp and can confirm the story of Laurent. Furthermore she has found Scott's underpants, the only thing he was wearing when he left the camp for the woods.

Now that Raven has returned, she is questioned on the events of the evening. The party asks her to tell all about herself. She tells her fellows that she left Valachan because she had learned that the nations leader, Baron Urik von Kharkov, had taken an interest in her, he wanted her for a wife. Since she knew that Urik's wives never lived long, she decided to leave as quickly as possible. She thinks that Urik sends the undead horrors to hunt her and return her to him. She thinks that is why the creatures left after they had hurt her, she is not supposed to be hurt.

Brother Samael doubts all this. He doubts that Urik would kill all his wives, he doubts that Urik would chase one woman so far. He further wonders about the connection between the undead and Urik. Brother Samael decides he does not believe Raven. She has never met Urik. He labels her worries as brainless womentalk, insulting Raven deeply¹⁴⁶. He does not feel her story is a plausible explanation for the events of this evening. Laurent also has trouble believing all this, but he feels he is in a shaky state of mind and does not ask too many questions.

¹⁴⁶ And having nor regard for the plight of the needy.

3 May

The morning dawns and a very naked Scott wanders into the camp. Laurent is angry with him for not being there to take his watch. Raven tries to stop Scott from dressing himself. She accuses him of being a werewolf, which he hotly denies. Raven tells him she still thinks of him as a friend¹⁴⁷. Laurent also accuses Scott of being a werewolf. Scott denies the charges. He says he went into the woods because he fell ill and he stayed there all night. He is sorry he was not there to keep watch and to defend the camp from attackers.

Laurent wants to use magic to ascertain if Scott is speaking the truth. Scott is insulted that he is not trusted. He claims that he cannot be a werewolf because he hates werewolves for killing his closest kin. Brother Samael says that Scott could have gotten infected during the attack on his family, as he was severely wounded in that attack.

Scott keeps denying the claims of his friends. Raven tells him that the proof is irrefutable. He will have to accept his situation and make the best of it. Scott does admit it is strange that he was away all night, but keeps denying he is a werewolf and he goes to get dressed.

While Scott is dressing, Laurent wonders if it is possible if Scott really has forgotten what happened to him. It has become interesting to test if Scott has become allergic to the touch of silver. The party wants to keep Scott with them, because they are his friends, but they feel increasingly uncomfortable around him. They are aware that this was the last night of the full moon, so they speculate that they should be safe for a month. Brother Samael is worried. What is Scott has been killing people in Crawford and Waterford? They left those villages very early each morning. If it turns out he killed people there, he must be brought to justice.

Session 18

Richemulot; 3 May 751 BC

Scott wants to leave for Pont-A-Museau, to hunt the killer of his family. The rest of the party still wishes to discuss his strange behaviour of the night before and his possible infection with the werewolf disease. Scott forces the issue by packing his bags and saying that he will leave and hunt down the killer, if the rest do not want to follow him, that is fine with him. The rest don't want him to go towards a certain death, so they follow him. To appease them Scott says he is willing to sleep outside towns and villages to keep the peace of mind of the other party members.

Later that day the party reaches the large city of Pont-A-Museau. It is huge and made out of stone. They see how busy the town is as well, boat dock and leave the harbour, people move along the roads to and from the town. Soon the party enters and they are overwhelmed by the city.

Laurent approaches a man and tries to ask him some questions about the town. The man tells him that a large part of the town is not inhabited, so they can stay in the town cheaply. But they should be careful about the rats, many of them inhabit the town and are especially numerous in uninhabited houses.

The party is intrigued by the abandoned houses and wonders if it is caused by a sudden drop in population, such as a horrible disease. They also notice all the rats watching them from the shadows of the alleys. They approach another woman to tell the more. As soon as she starts to talk, Brother Samael says they can learn nothing from such an old crone. Insulted she leaves them again. Exasperated Laurent approaches yet another old woman.

This old woman will tell the party all in exchange for a meal. At the instigation of the old woman, they take her to one of the most expensive restaurants in town, where they ply her end

¹⁴⁷ The session deteriorated a bit and started to be a sort of confrontation therapy. It didn't work.

themselves with a three course meal and some fine wines. She tells the party about the empty building, which have always been there, she tells them about the rats, which are such a problem and who prey on the weak such as infants and she tells about the refugees from other nations, who fled the wars started by Vlad Drakov, King of Falkovnia.

Laurent also asks her about a man called Fredeck Yurgovitsch. The woman says that everybody knows about him. He is somewhat of a folk hero among the people of Pont-A-Museau. A few years ago he killed a whole bunch of vermin in the town. They were terrorizing the people and a body was not safe on the streets at night. And he put a stop to that. He was strong and used his powers to slay the vermin. Everybody is still very grateful about that. Fredeck now lives with his wife¹⁴⁸ a little outside the town of Pont-A-Museau. With this information the party takes their leave of the old woman.

Brother Samael and Scott immediately want to go out and find the home of Fredeck and kill him to put an end to this horror. The cooler heads of Laurent and Raven prevail. They feel that the party should rest first and go and look for Fredeck in the morning, when they are rested and can actually see where they are going¹⁴⁹. The group looks for an empty house to spend the night.

Brother Samael and Raven move into a neighbouring house looking for more firewood. There they are surprised by monstrous ratlike beings. They walk on their hind legs and use their forepaws as arms, but they are very ratlike, with a snout and a tail. Raven and Brother Samael are attacked. As they defend themselves, they notice that their normal weapons can not harm the monsters. They switch to their silver weapons and these seem to work well.

Laurent and Scott hear the ruckus next door and quickly come to investigate. They are shocked when they see the monsters, but attack real quick. They too notice their normal weapons not working. They switch to their silver weapons as well. Soon they have killed one horrible rat. Then the other one starts to change, to shrink. Under the eyes of the shocked party it turns into a normal albeit huge rat. It scampers across the floor and leaves the building.

The group is very surprised about the existence of these changing rats. Could it be that Fredeck Yurgovitsch works with these creatures? Could it be that normal rats work together with these creatures?

4 May

The party rises early and after a quick meal they move off to the east in search of the home of Fredeck. They follow a path and soon they come upon a small home. It is made of wood and bricks with a thatched roof. A small vegetable garden surrounds the home. In the garden they see a blonde man chopping wood. As they watch, a small blonde girl in a blue dress comes from behind the house. Her hair is braided in two braids, she has freckles¹⁵⁰. She shouts: "Daddy, mommy wants you to come in, breakfast is ready."

As soon as Brother Samael sees the little girl, he grips his silver mace and vows: "She is mine." As the words leave his lips, a strange blackness seems to follow them, it spreads over his lips, his face, his body and eventually his extremities. He is now completely black, but not in the way Raven is black, merely darker skinned, but completely black, as if he was dipped in soot¹⁵¹. He and the others don't notice it, as they are very busy.

Scott and Brother Samael run for the house and rush into the front door. They are in a small room. A family consisting of the blonde man, a dark haired woman and two small children,

¹⁴⁸ They did not ask who his wife was, which they will regret.

¹⁴⁹ It should be noted that both Brother Samael and Scott can see in the dark, due to their curses.

¹⁵⁰ Think Pippi Longstockings, but a bit younger, cuter and not quite as strong.

¹⁵¹ Brother Samael failed his second powers check. He vowed to kill an unknown child, while still being a member of a lawful good religion.

the girl and a younger boy, sit at a breakfast table set with porridge, eggs, sausages and tea. They are mainly very surprised. Brother Samael rushed at the table, upsetting it, splattering the porridge and tea everywhere. The man angrily rises. The mother grabs her children and tries to move away. The children start crying. Scott moves to the back door, so no one can escape through there. Brother Samael starts to brutally intimidate the man, he forces him against a wall and starts punching him with the silver mace. He shouts at the man to confess he is Fredeck Yurgovitsch, a horrible werewolf.

At this point Laurent and Raven enter the home. They see what is going on. Laurent guards the front door and Raven takes the woman and the children outside. She does want them to see the horror of their husband and father being killed by Brother Samael.

As soon as Raven leaves with the wife and children, the man admits he is Fredeck Yurgovitsch and he transforms into a terrible hybrid form, halfway between man and wolf. He tears into Brother Samael, who has trouble defending himself. Brother Samael soon drops to the floor, bleeding and unconscious. Then Scott sees his chance, he charges Fredeck and splits his skull with his silver axe¹⁵². Fredeck dies on the floor. And as he dies he reverts to his human form again.

Outside Raven and the rest of the family can hear the fight inside the house. The mother tells her children to run and hide. As the children flee the grasp of Raven, the mother transforms into a huge wolf and attacks Raven. A shocked Raven attacks the beast with her silver short sword. Quickly she manages to drive her sword deep in the flank of the beast, killing it. As it dies, it reverts to the form of a dark haired woman.

When everybody has caught their breath again, Raven and the others go look for the children. Raven's tracking ability enables her to find the children easily. They are hysterical and are crying. They call for their mommy and they don't want to be near the bad people at all. Raven has no other option than to bind and gag them. Bound like that she takes them back to the house, taking care the children do not see the heavily mutilated bodies of their parents. Raven, Scott and Laurent want to take the children to the Weathermay Foxgrove twins, to turn them over to them.

Laurent and Scott try to bind the horrible wounds of Brother Samael who hovers on the brink of death, he was horribly mauled by the werewolf. After his wounds are taken care of, Laurent searches the rest of the house. In an upstairs bedroom he finds a diary, 30 golden Richemolaise francs and little silver image of a wolf. It has a small ring attached to it, so it can be worn on a chain.

The party decides to leave quickly. They set fire to the building, Raven drags the still weeping children along and Scott has put the still unconscious Brother Samael in a small wheelbarrow to move him.

¹⁵² A very lucky critical hit, the fight was going badly for the party up until then.

Jennifer Ravenloft Campaign Sessions 19 – 21

In these sessions most characters reach level 5, so they are getting a bit stronger and I can soon confront them with some stronger foes.

Session 19 marks a year of roleplaying this campaign once every two weeks. To mark the joyous occasion we had a little celebration. We watched the movie “Macbeth” by Roman Polanski. I can recommend it to anyone. Lord Macbeth is definitely tempted into evil by the dark powers in the form of the weird sisters. After his first sins he quickly descends into greater and greater atrocities. Lady Macbeth is first consumed by her ambition and later driven insane with guilt over her actions. A good movie.

In session 19 Brother Samael is phased out. After his second failed powers check in session 18, Filip and I both felt he could no longer be maintained in the group and would encounter too much trouble in the larger world. In session 21 a new character is introduced. I will give an overview here.

Demjana Farfar, played by Filip

Demjana Farfar is a very young (age 18) human female thief from Barovia. She is an ethnic Gundarakite and hails from the town of Zeidenburg. She is a beautiful, charismatic red-haired young lady¹⁵³. Her parents both died during the invasion of Gundarak by Barovian forces. She was 8 at that time, she was raised by her three older brothers Nikolas, Georg and Mikail.

In the course of time her brothers became involved in the Gundarakite resistance movement led by Ardonk Szeriesia¹⁵⁴. She was not allowed to join in the men’s work. But one night she was able to distract a Barovian guardsmen with her stunning smile¹⁵⁵ and so save her brothers from discovery. Since that night she is a member of the resistance movement and her help is highly valued.

Demjana has cultivated an image of being very beautiful and kind, but also very stupid. As such she is able to gain people’s trust and can get a lot of information that way. If she is discovered somewhere she should not be, she merely has to smile or giggle and men will believe she really was lost. In reality she is quite smart¹⁵⁶ and she uses her looks, charisma and image to the utmost to aid the cause of the Gundarakites.

At the moment both her youngest brother Mikail and her fiancé Boris languish in the dungeons beneath Castle Ravenloft, deep in the heartland of Barovia. She despairs of ever getting them out of there.

Ardonk Szeriesia has sent Demjana to Borca to see if she can find ways there to strengthen the resistance movement. He hopes she can find Gundarakites in exile who will support the movement financially or with manpower. In the city of Levkarest she ran into a group of four strong foreign men who were very willing to follow her to Zeidenburg.

Session 19

¹⁵³ Demjana has a Charisma of 18 (a natural roll, Filip is very lucky, Brother Samael had a Wisdom of 18 as well.), a comeliness of 18 and is 18 years of age. In the group this became known as the ‘unholy triad of 18’. Filip does not know too much about the Ravenloft setting and had no idea of what happens to beautiful redhaired young women in Barovia. He will find out soon enough.

¹⁵⁴ From the Book of Secrets by Stuart Turner.

¹⁵⁵ Due to Demjana’s extremely high charisma and comeliness, all unrelated human males she meets must make a Save versus Spell or fall under her influence as per the Charm spell. Demjana is not fully aware of this, she only knows people like to help her out.

¹⁵⁶ Demjana has a Int of 13 and Wis of 12, so that is well above average.

Richemulot; 5 May 751 BC

The group flees the burning home of Fredeck Yurgovitsch and his dead wife. They take the children of Fredeck with them. They dare not leave them behind. The group tries to flee back to Mordent and they will avoid people and villages on their way back to the sisters Weathermay Foxgrove. They fear they will be held accountable for the deaths of Fredeck and his wife and now they have no way of proving that they were werewolves.

During the flight there is much arguing among the party members. Raven the Ranger feels responsible for the well being of the innocent young children. They children cannot be let loose, but they must be treated as well as possible. Unfortunately it is necessary to bind and gag them. Otherwise they would run away and scream for help.

Brother Samael, Priest of Ezra and Scott the Avenger feel that the children should be killed¹⁵⁷. As children of a natural werewolf, they are probably werewolves themselves. Soon enough they too will change into hungry beasts that will wreak havoc among innocent humans. It would be only prudent to kill them now then to wait until they are grown. The rest feels that that would be unacceptable, they will have no part in the killing of young humans.

Laurent the Bard shares the findings of his search of the home with the rest of the party during the midday meal. He reads the diary he found out loud.

In the diary Fredeck describes his flight to Pont-A-Museau and his weariness with the hunting and killing of humans. He mentions time he spent in Valachan and how happy he was there. He also mentions a little amulet he got from a mage named Horst, it was never any use to him, but Horst thought it might be.

The diary goes on to relate how he battled the rats that infested Pont-A-Museau. Fredeck believes he dealt them a mighty blow, but is certain they will return as no one ever managed to kill all the rats. During these fights he also met his future wife. They are soon to be married as she is pregnant by him.

The diary further relates the happy family life of a very happy man. With his wife and two children Christabella and Iago he has found the happiness and peace he could never find with his birth family.

Laurent is a bit disturbed to find that the werewolf they killed was a happy family man. He is further worried by the dates in the diary, according to those the children should be 8 and 7, but they look more like 11 and 10¹⁵⁸. Then he becomes really worried as he realises that nowhere in the diary does the writer refer to himself as a werewolf. It could also be the diary of a very powerful man. Now the party really has no proof other than their word that the Yurgovitsch Family were werewolves.

At the end of the day the party reaches the Musarde River. They decide to push on into the night in spite of the dangers of travelling in the dark. They want to put as much distance between themselves and the home of the Yurgovitsch Family. When everybody is ready to drop from fatigue, they decide to make a very small camp. That night they are again bothered by the undead monsters that seem to follow them everywhere. The cool headed Accian the Arcanist confronts the monsters holding his ring for all to see. He invokes the name of the Morninglord and the ring starts to glow with a bright yellow light. The undead monsters scream and retreat from the light.

The night is again split apart by chilling scream of frustration. Scott wants to charge into the night and find that horrible voice that seems to follow them everywhere and always knows

¹⁵⁷ Brother Samael forgets that as a member of the lawful good branch of the church of Ezra he should of course try to cure them. I am no longer keeping track of his atrocities.

¹⁵⁸ According the monstrous manual werewolves mature quicker than humans, at age 12 or 13 they are adults.

where they are. The others manage to convince him that they are in enough trouble already and cannot take more risks.

In the meantime Accian and Brother Samael enter into an argument over Brother Samael's sudden black skin. Accian accuses Brother Samael of corruption, of which this black skin is certainly a mark, as it is so different from Raven's dark skin. Brother Samael counters this by saying he was no doubt cursed by the wolfish abomination they have just killed.

6 May

The party awakens bleary-eyed after a short nights rest. Brother Samael is deeply concerned that his black skin is still not cleared up to its normal colour.

They party spend the day by making a rough raft, they put the children and the children on it and then try to move it across the Musarde river. Laurent uses a spell to change himself into a sort of fishman, so he can swim across the river. After a harrowing swim across the fast running current, they finally make it. Deeply fatigued the group moves on towards Crawford in Mordent.

At the end of this day the party tiredly makes a camp. Accian again needles Brother Samael about his black skin. Brother Samael starts a tirade against Accian, Bastion Mirella Haroldson and the church of Ezra in general. He claims he does a lot of good work, he is actually out there fighting the Legions of the Night, and he gets punished with an undeserved curse, while people like the Bastion just sit in their safe office and do nothing¹⁵⁹.

The undead monsters approach the camp again, but dare not attack, due to Accian and the ring he got from his mother.

7 May

Today is a holy day for the Mordentish church of Ezra and the Mordentish party members expect Brother Samael to hold a service for their goddess. Brother Samael however refuses to hold a service, he wants Ezra to take away his curse first. He demands her to restore him to his former self, or he will not perform a service for her. The rest of the party looks in shock as Brother Samael screams more and more blasphemies to the skies. While he denounces his duties, his faith and his goddess, the early morning mists above the Musarde river rise and rise and soon engulf the small hill on which the party camped. Soon no one can see anything anymore. Just as suddenly as the mists rose, the dissipate again, leaving everything as it was. Brother Samael is missing however¹⁶⁰.

The rest of the party wonders briefly where Brother Samael has gotten to, but they are not very worried. They feel Brother Samael was increasingly unreliable and probably got what he deserved.

The party moves through the woods back towards Mordent and towards the little village of Crawford. When they reach Crawford, they are afraid to enter it. They cannot explain why they carry two bound and gagged children with them, and this will certainly cause unwanted comment. And they are also worried about a reaction from Richemulot for their actions there.

Laurent and Scott go towards Crawford, trying to hide from prying eyes and try to get a look at Karel, the poor man who was never properly cured of his Lycanthropic ailment. They see no improvement in his situation. They had hoped it would have cleared up, since they killed the progenitor of the disease.

Back at the camp Laurent finally feels he has the time to cast Identify on the little image of a wolf he found in the Yurgovitsch home. The information he gets from his casting is very strange and contradicts itself. First it seems as if the image represses Lycanthropy, then it seems

¹⁵⁹ The end is very near I think.

¹⁶⁰ The end came as a shock even to me, I never thought he would actually denounce his faith.

as if the image causes lycanthropy. When he uses his spell some more he learns that the image represses lycanthropy by wearing it on a chain around the neck. Then he learns that to repress lycanthropy the image must be ground into dust, dissolved in red wine and then drunk¹⁶¹. Laurent does not quite know what to think of this, so he puts the amulet away for a bit.

Later that night when Scott is on guard duty, he hears a horse galloping from the Richemuloise border, straight into Crawford. Then someone causing a horrible ruckus at the village inn and being admitted at this late hour. Scott wakes Raven and asks her to do some investigating in the village, Raven obliges. At the stables of the inn she finds a very tired horse. She then sneaks a look through one of the windows into the common room, she sees a very tired man talking to a sleepy innkeeper. She returns and tells Scott what she has found. Scott is worried and tells her that she should have poisoned the animal, so that the late night traveller would not have been able to move on in the morning. A shocked Raven tells him that she would never do such a thing.

8 May

Very early in the morning, when the party is still asleep after these harrowing days, they are wakened by the sound of hoofbeats leaving the village for the interior of Crawford. Bleary eyed they see a man on a horse leaving the town. They are certain that it is a messenger and that they must hide even more.

Laurent decides he wants to test the strange wolf amulet on Karel, to see what it does. He wants to know if it cures lycanthropy so he can give it to Scott. So he sneaks to the villages and puts the amulet around the neck of Karel. The intelligence seems to return to his eyes, but all the parts of his body that are in wolf shape start to twist and smoke. Karel makes no sound but seems to be in pain. Laurent takes the pendant away again, dissatisfied that he got no definitive result¹⁶².

When Laurent returns to the camp, Raven is very disappointed that Laurent experimented in such a cold fashion on an innocent being. Accian is disappointed that Laurent did not invite him along. The party breaks camp and moves on towards Mordentshire.

Session 20

Crawford, Mordent; 8 May 751 BC

The party leaves Crawford and moves towards Waterford. They wait for nightfall to cross the bridge near Waterford and spend the night camping rough just outside Waterford. All this time they have been dragging the two small children of Fredeck along, bound and gagged.

9 May

In the early morning the party leaves the Waterford area and arrive at the herbal shop in the late afternoon. They hide out of plain sight and Laurent approaches the herbal shop. He tells

¹⁶¹ The result of some very strange rolls for an Identify spell. I rolled for the identify checks and strangely enough I only rolled for correct information or incorrect information. The amulet is actually an amulet of the beast and represses lycanthropy, it would be ideal for Scott, but due to his denial and the strange readings no one wants to use it.

¹⁶² A powers check I am afraid. Laurent tested an unknown item with possible negative effect on a (formerly) human being who could not be informed about the procedure and the risks and not give or withhold consent. Aside from that, even if it worked and cured Karel, Laurent intended to take it away again to give it to Scott. Laurent does not seem as stable as I thought.

the twins that he and his party have returned. As he sees that he is alone in the shop with Gwynneth and Laurie, he motions to the others that they can safely approach.

When the sisters see the two bound and gagged young children, they blanch. They tell that party what has passed in the last few days. Yesterday a messenger from Richemulot arrived at Heather House with a message for their father. In that message he was informed that a gang of bandits have brutally attacked the home of Fredeck Yurgovitsch, hero of Port-A-Lucine, killed him and his wife Maria Yurgovitsch Valle, the daughter of a leading man in the nation of Richemulot, Señor Christobal Valle. To make things even worse, the two children of Fredeck and his wife, Christabella and Iago were abducted. Señor Valle has sent out messengers to all the nations surrounding Richemulot to warn them of these base and cowardly bandits. He has set a very generous reward indeed for those who can present Señor Valle with more information about these bandits, he wishes to see them hang¹⁶³.

The sisters go on to say that their father is a very honourable man and will certainly oblige Señor Valle, as he does not wish to protect known murderers and kidnappers. The sisters propose the following, they will take the children and return them to their rightful guardians, which will be their grandfather Señor Valle. They will also pay the party for ending the werewolf threat on the condition that they leave the country immediately. Lord Daniel Foxgrove will not be happy with the conduct of his daughters, but he will be mollified that the innocent children are returned to their families. The party does not like this very much, as they are almost certain that the children are werewolves as well, but they see no other options.

Accian mentions that the party still needs to return the silver weapons to the church of Ezra and that he wishes to do soon before they leave Mordent.

Laurent shows the strange wolf image to the twins. They examine it for some time and conclude that it must be some sort of figurine of wondrous power. But not of an image that they have ever seen before. As Laurent tells them about his experimenting with Karel in Crawford, they are very shocked, they knew Karel as an associate of 'uncle' Rudolph van Richten and know of his tragic fate. The cold rational experimenting on him does sit well with the sisters.

The party reports on their deeds in Richemulot. They tell of the killing of Fredeck and his wife, also a werewolf. They also say that Brother Samael was lost to them during this time¹⁶⁴. The twins pay the party for their efforts in Richemulot as agreed. Everybody receives another 90 golden Mordentish pounds. The party never had this much money before. Accian asks if the sisters would be able to send the money that Brother Samael would have gotten, had he returned from this trip, to his elderly parents in Potter's Field. The party agrees with this request and is strangely touched as well, perhaps they all remember a better time, when Brother Samael seemed so much happier. The sisters vouch that they will send 70 golden pounds to Potter's Field.

Suddenly the party has a lot to do in little time. Since they now have some much money, they decide to invest in horses. That way they will be able to travel much faster.

The party drops by the Notary office of Morecombe, Morcombe and Smith. There they find a letter from Bastion Mirella Haroldson to Laurent Bellevoix. She invites him for a visit. Later on the party visits the cathedral to return the loaned weapons and to inform the Bastion of the demise of Brother Samael. She does not seem to be very surprised, as he had already proven to her that he was led by other things than his love for Ezra and his fellow men. The Bastion then makes an offer to Laurent. She asks him to enter the service of Ezra as a singer of hymns, she received a very favourable report from Brother Piotr DiLisnya, and wants to make the church more attractive by enhancing the service with beautiful hymns to Ezra. Due to Laurent's current problems he politely declines.

¹⁶³ It's never a good idea to randomly kill people.

¹⁶⁴ The party is vague about how they lost Brother Samael, they let the sisters think he died during the last fight.

That same day the party leaves Mordentshire, they go towards Dementlieu. The night falls quickly and the party makes camp by the side of the road. That night they all have strange dreams about wandering through endless fog and falling without ever landing.

10 May

The party wakes up in the woods alongside a road. But they immediately notice something is wrong. This is no the place where they fell asleep the night before. In this place the air is colder and thinner. The trees that surround them are much mightier pine trees than those in Mordent. A huge mountain range lies to the west and is only now touched by the rising sun. The road they camped next to is much broader and better kept than the road in Mordent. The woods around them seem wild and untamed, the land is much rougher, with bedrock breaking through the soil.

Accian suspects the party is in Barovia, his mother described this sort of country in detail to him in her letter to him. Raven seems to be the only one who is worried that they seem to have travelled halfway around the core in a single night. The others all take it in a stride. Raven is uncomfortably reminded of the way Brother Samael left the prison in Chateaufaux, he too was suddenly transported through space and time. Were they as well, what will they find, when they find people?

As Accian shares his suspicions with the rest of the party he tells them some more about his mother. When she was younger she travelled the world a bit and ended up in Vallaki in Barovia. There she was assaulted by Boyar Alexei Petrovich, and she came away pregnant from that encounter. She was then lovingly sheltered by the priests of the Morninglord.

The road next to their camp runs from North to South, on a whim the party decides to follow the road towards the North. They break up camp and leave. Soon they come to a large valley with a large city in it. The valley floor is covered in grasses and spring flowers. Birds, butterflies and other animals move around the valley floor. As they move into the valley the air becomes warmer and their nostrils are filled with the sweet smell of all sorts of blossoms. As they approach the city from their high vantage point, they are impressed by the sight of the town, it is huge, much larger than anything they have ever seen. They can also see a huge cathedral in the centre of the town.

Quickly the party moves towards the city and there they find out what sort of problems they can encounter here. The city guards check everyone who goes in and they demand a price. Laurent tries to bargain to lower the price, but he is still horribly ripped off and pays a whole gold piece to enter the city with his three friends.

In the city party approaches a man and ask him where they are. He tells them that this is the grand city of Levkarest in the nation of Borca. He further tells them that today is 24 May of the year 751 BC.

24 May 751 BC

The party is deeply disturbed about this revelation. It means that they travelled halfway around the known world and 14 days in only one night. Scott especially is worried. This means that there are only 4 more night until the full moon of the 28th. Although he denied all claims of being diseased earlier, he full well knows he is in deep trouble. And now he has to face his problem a lot earlier than he expected.

The party moves around Levkarest for a bit to get to know their surroundings. They remark how poor people seem to be here. Borca is definitely not as developed as Mordent, but in spite of that a lot of people seem to be very poor indeed. A large part of the houses seem to be very poorly maintained, people seem hungry and dressed in rags. They expected a somewhat higher standard of living for a larger part of the population.

Session 21

Levkarest, Borca; 24 May 751 BC

The party has lunch in the Inn the Poisoneress in a better part of the city of Levkarest. Accian finally tells the party a bit more about his mother. Margareta of Potter's Field travelled the world for a bit. During that time she also travelled through Barovia. She entered the service of Boyar Alexei Petrovich. This man assaulted her and she fled to the monastery of the Morninglord near Vallaki. The priests and priestesses there took her in and cared lovingly for her. Eventually she returned to Potter's Field to bring her child into the world there.

Then Accian reveals that his mother thought that he would grow up to be very important to the future of the world¹⁶⁵. The others are surprised by this revelation. They certainly do not think of Accian as some sort of saviour. But who knows what can happen in this world? When the conversations stall, a woman comes down from the stairs. She is simply gorgeous. She has beautiful light red hair, a creamy skin and beautiful eyes. She approaches the party and introduces herself as Demjana Farfar. Laurent and Accian are immediately impressed with her¹⁶⁶, but she does not impress Raven, who is immediately disgusted with Demjana's forward nature and her insipidness and vapidness.

A conversation starts in which it becomes clear that Demjana is not too bright, as witnessed by the following conversation.

Laurent: "Let me introduce myself, I am Laurent, let me Laurentisize your world.

Accian: "I am Accian, I am a wizard."

Demjana: "Oh Accian, really? Can you do some magic for me?" (Clapping her hands excitedly like a small girl.

Laurent (not to be outdone): "I am Bard you know!"

Demjana: "Bart? But I thought you said your name was Laurent¹⁶⁷."

The men of the party try to impress Demjana with wine, magic and song. Disgustedly Raven removes herself from the table and goes to talk to the innkeeper. She asks him if there are laws against prostitution in public areas in this city, wanting to cause trouble for Demjana. The innkeeper misunderstands her and tells her that with her looks she can make a tidy profit but that he expects a quarter of all her profits she makes in his Inn. Raven is deeply shocked, even more so when she realises that she is still in her manly disguise and that the innkeeper thinks her a young man. Disgustedly Raven leaves the inn for a walk through the city.

Demjana tells the rest of the party her story. She is a Gundarakite, from Gundarak, which is now subjected to the harsh rule of Barovia and Count Strahd XI. During the Barovian invasion her parents were killed and one of her brothers is in a Barovian dungeon. At this Accian says that he is very interested in Barovia, as he has a Barovian father. Demjana then asks him if he is a Barovian as well. Accian denies this, but claims he is willing to travel to Barovia to find his father and to meet with the priests of the Morninglord. Demjana claims she knows these people and that they are very nice.

Then Demjana says she is on her way back to Barovia and mentions that it would be safer if they travelled together. Laurent and Accian feel this is a good idea. They want to leave the next day. Accian asks Demjana a lot of questions, especially if she is married and if she has brothers. She answers that she has three brothers, one of them, Mikail, is in a Barovian dungeon under Castle Ravenloft. She wants to free him.

¹⁶⁵ The letter in which this was explained to Accian was delivered to him in session 4. Almost a year ago in real time. He never read it properly and missed it all. Sometimes I wonder why I bother.

¹⁶⁶ They failed their Saving Throws vs Spell and are now under her influence

¹⁶⁷ In the name of correct role-playing Demjana has since then consistently called Laurent Bart.

In the meantime Raven has visited the Cathedral of Ezra in the centre of the city. This part of the city is a lot less poor. In the Cathedral she asks questions of a priest, in exchange for a donation to the church. He tells her about Duke Gundar, his tyrannical rule of Gundarak, the death of the Duke, the invasion by the Barovian forces and the new repression of the Gundarakite people by Count Strahd XI. This is a sad history indeed.

25 May

The party leaves for Barovia the next morning. Accian makes a magical mount for Demjana, which she finds fantastic. Raven takes the lead and scouts ahead, very far ahead, so she does not have to listen to the brainless talk of Demjana¹⁶⁸. The men of the party pay a lot of attention to Demjana and try to get to know more about her. She easily evades questions about her background and her reasons for being in Borca and now returning to Barovia, by more chatter. Laurent however does notice she never answers questions properly and nobody knows too much about her.

As soon as the party enters the small village of Zeidenburg Demjana leaves them. She does not want to take unannounced visitors to her home. The rest stays behind and tries to find rooms in Zeidenburg. They notice how poor most people are and how simple the village is. They also notice the armed guards patrolling the street and how much better off they are with their spanking new uniforms.

When the party tries to get some directions, they realise that they can not communicate with the people of Zeidenburg¹⁶⁹. They do know that there seem to be two distinct sort of languages. With some trouble Accian manages to obtain directions to an Inn and rent a few rooms there.

26 May

This morning the party goes to the Farfar farm and presents itself to Demjana and her brothers. Demjana is not happy to see that the party has managed to find her farm. Her brothers are not happy either and although they welcome the party, the eldest, Nikolas, tells Demjana that she took an unacceptable risk by telling the party of strangers about herself. Only Accian picks something up of this. He understands that her brother tells her something about a secret and a danger. He suspects that the Farfar Family is connected to the Gundrak resistance.

Nikolas Farfar tells his younger sister about all the things that have happened here in the four weeks since she has been gone. First some good news, Boyar Ivan Szimin was killed in his own home, that tyrant will no longer oppress the locals. But on the other hand some of their friends and acquaintances have been horribly killed by some very strange fires¹⁷⁰. Demjana is very shocked by these stories. She tells the party members about this sad news. Accian is now certain that the Farfar Family is connected to the Gundrak resistance.

Demjana thinks that her burned friends were killed by Barovians. She wants to march with the rest of the party towards the village of Barovia and Castle Ravenloft. So they can free the prisoners. Laurent and Accian rashly say that they want to help.

¹⁶⁸ Demjana is an embarrassment for women everywhere.

¹⁶⁹ Raven realises with a sickening feeling that they will need Demjana.

¹⁷⁰ The effigy of Ivan Szimin from the Book of Secrets by Stuart Turner.

Jennifer Ravenloft Campaign Sessions 22 – 24

In these sessions the party becomes more involved in the Gundarakite resistance movement and they get to know Demjana Farfar better. Demjana has a lot of power since she is the only one who speaks the local languages. She uses this power to increase her own power over the party and to isolate them from the rest of the world.

Session 22

Zeidenburg, Barovia; 26 May 751 BC

The party is at the family home of the Farfar family. They are having breakfast with Demjana the Thief and her brothers. During breakfast a young man with dark hair and a dark beard enters. He is thin and seems nervous. He introduces himself as Ardonk Szeriesia¹⁷¹ and after some small talk, tries to talk to Demjana in private. He speaks to her in Luktar and the rest of the party cannot follow what he has to say to her. Laurent tries to keep an eye on them and gets the impression that there is a burning passion between the two of them, he is filled with jealousy¹⁷².

Ardonk wants to know how Demjana's mission in Borca went and if she was able to find support for the struggle against the Barovian repression. Demjana responds that she was able to find four brave foreign warriors who will support the struggle. They are brave, compliant and foreign, so they do not know too much about the details of the situation in Barovia.

Ardonk goes on to tell Demjana about the death of Boyar Ivan Szimin¹⁷³. He was killed about four weeks ago in his own home, Ardonk tells Demjana he does not know who the brave Gundarakite was who killed this Barovian tyrant. He goes on to tell her that some of the Gundarakite resistance agents were killed as well in the last few weeks. They were horribly burned to death.

Since the bodies were found in strange places, Ardonk suspects that the Barovian soldiers are behind this. He fears that there is a leak in the Gundarakite resistance movement and that someone is informing on them to the Barovians. Ardonk now wants that Demjana, who was away during the murders, together with her foreign friends, conducts a search for the leak and to kill the spineless person who is responsible for these killings. Demjana complies.

Demjana mentions that she wants to go to Castle Ravenloft to free her imprisoned brother and lover¹⁷⁴. Ardonk strongly advises against that, as it is too dangerous, no Gundarak has ever returned from Castle Ravenloft.

Demjana immediately suspects that Ardonk is responsible for the murder of Boyar Ivan Szimin. She admires him for it, at least he has the guts to do something about the horrible oppression of the Barovians.

As Ardonk leaves, Demjana turns to the group and tells them that Ardonk has just risked his very life to come and tell her that it was no longer safe to stay in the Farfar home and that the group must leave. Barovian soldiers are hunting them¹⁷⁵. Demjana suggests that the group must eliminate the responsible party, but first they must hide. Demjana leads the group to an abandoned hut in the forests surrounding the village of Zeidenburg.

¹⁷¹ Ardonk Szeriesia is straight from the article 'Ardonk Szeriesia' by Stuart Turner from the Book of Secrets.

¹⁷² A WIS check gone wrong.

¹⁷³ Again straight from the article 'The effigy of Ivan Szimin' by Stuart Turner from the Book of Secrets.

¹⁷⁴ Not to worry, these are two different men.

¹⁷⁵ Demjana immediately starts lying to the party.

When they are at the hut, Laurent the Bard suggests that the group leaves the country as it is no longer safe to remain in Barovia. Demjana corrects him and says that Ardonk told her that the borders of the country were closed¹⁷⁶ and that they cannot leave.

Demjana then tells the party about the death of the hated Boyar Ivan Szimin and the horrible murders of her friends. Her friends are all part of the secret Gundarakie resistance movement. She tells the party that she suspects a leak in the resistance movement and she is afraid that everybody she knows and loves is in danger of being arrested or murdered by Barovian soldiers.

Laurent promises a crying Demjana that he will help her. Not only will he help to free her imprisoned brother Mikail, he will also help her solve the mystery of the betrayer in the ranks of the resistance movement¹⁷⁷. Demjana is very grateful, the only people they can now trust are her brothers and Ardonk.

Laurent would like to help. For that he will need Demjana, with her knowledge of the country and the language. He would also like a meeting with Ardonk and other members of the resistance movement. But Demjana deems that to dangerous, she does not want to attract any attention to herself or to the movement.

Demjana decides to tell Laurent more. She tells him about the death of Boyar Ivan Szimin at the hands of some brave Gundarakite. And then the strange murders of the people of the resistance movement. These poor people were all burned to death. This all took place in the time she spent in the neighbouring nation of Borca.

Laurent thinks that member of the resistance have killed Boyar Ivan Szimin and that the Barovians are now looking to revenge themselves on the perpetrators. This could all be a coincidence, the murder of five people does not need to signify a leak and a conspiracy. Demjana then mentions that she would have wanted to kill Boyar Ivan Szimin. Laurent is very shocked when he hears this, but dismisses it as the fevered talk of a high strung girl¹⁷⁸.

Demjana then tells him that the murdered and horribly burned bodies of the resistors of the Barovian regime were found in strange places, who but another member of the resistance would have known they were to be found in these strange places? Laurent worries that anybody in the resistance movement could be the leak, he is afraid that the traitor will be very difficult to find.

Then Laurent convinces Demjana to lead them to the home of Boyar Ivan Szimin. Laurent hopes to find out more about his death, even though the Boyar has been dead for at least four weeks. During the walk to the home of the Boyar, Demjana tries to be inconspicuous, but she is not very good at it, to the amusement of Laurent¹⁷⁹.

When the party reaches the home of the Boyar, they see it is closed up. The windows are shuttered and the doors are locked. In the front garden, in front of one of the downstairs windows, they see a large patch of very burned grass. A very large and hot fire must have burned here.

The party then tries to find a way to enter the home, but everything is locked very securely and they cannot enter. Laurent tries to open one of the locks of the backdoor with his knife, but he cannot open the lock. Demjana asks Laurent to give her a leg up onto the roof and Laurent helps her. When Demjana is finally on the roof, she plaintively asks Laurent what she is supposed to do next. Cursing all women and this one in particular, Laurent climbs onto the roof as well to see what troubles Demjana.

Once on the roof, Laurent has the bright idea to remove some of the tiles and climb through the hole into the attic of the house. The party moves around in the attic for a bit. They

¹⁷⁶ Another lie.

¹⁷⁷ Demjana's gorgeous looks at work. She only has to cry a bit and Laurent complies with all her wishes.

¹⁷⁸ Demjana messed up badly, she is supposed to seem an innocent and stupid girl, not a seasoned killer. Luckily Laurent was very distracted by her natural charms, to take too much notice.

¹⁷⁹ A successful INT check by Demjana, by appearing incompetent, she lulls the suspicions of Laurent.

note all the strange stuff people can keep in attics and they are a bit spooked to walk around in a home where no one lives anymore.

Once they find the door and move down through the house. One of the rooms is a study. As they go through the administration of the Boyar, they find evidence that he was indeed discriminating against the Gundarakites who lived on his property and were beholden to him.

Later the group comes into the living room. It is very dark there because of the shuttered windows, but they can still make out an enormous bloodstain on the floor and the windowsill. Laurent and Demjana realise that the bloody windowsill belongs to the window in front of which the huge fire in the garden was lit. Demjana thinks that the murder of the Boyar and the fire happened at the same time.

Laurent opens the shutters and the window and steps out into the front garden to investigate the burned spot. He finds that the wood used to fuel the fire was worked wood and not branches or something like that. He finds a piece of planking and a burned chair leg.

Demjana and Laurent try to understand what could have possibly burned in front of the house. They consider it unlikely to have a bonfire of some sort, as people here do not have much to celebrate. Laurent thinks that perhaps some sort of evidence or incriminating material was burned here, but then he realises that the home has several large fireplaces to burn anything you might want to burn. Then Demjana comes up with the idea that the fire was a message of some sort to the inhabitant of the house, a message from the resistance that said: we know where you live and can walk in your garden with impunity .

In the home the party starts to look for loot. They find a small chest with 150 Barovian golden thalers. Laurent keeps 15 and promises to donate the rest to the Gundarakite resistance movement. Then the party finds something that is missing. The chain of office of the Boyar is missing. The other signs of his power and might are still in the home, so where is the chain of office?

As it is getting late, the party leaves the home to return to the little hut, to spend the night there. Laurent wants to talk to the rest of the Farfar family, but Demjana manages to dissuade him from that.

27 May

Demjana wants to show the party where the body of Stefan was found. He was the first to fall victim to the strange burning murders. While on their way, the party runs into a lone Vistani man and his Vardo. Demjana fearlessly approaches him and asks him some questions¹⁸⁰. She wants to know what he does here and if he knows about the death of Stefan. During this conversation, Demjana also mentions the name of her lover Boris and Laurent notices this.

The Vistani man introduces himself as Bela Zarovan. He cannot tell Demjana much that she does not know already. But he does ask her name¹⁸¹.

Laurent has understood nothing of this conversation in Luktar, but he did pick up the name of Boris, he tries to ask Demjana about this, but with her natural charms, she manages to steer the conversation away from this subject and Laurent forgets it¹⁸².

Demjana leads the party to a strange piece of scorched earth by the side of the road. Not too far from the house of Boyar Ivan Szimin there is a spot in the grass which is totally blackened in the shape of a fallen man. The arms and legs are recognizably burned into the grass. It seems as if a man was lying in the grass and burned where he lay. Some more searching reveals a few burnt footprints as well. Stefan caught fire and fell over to die here.

¹⁸⁰ Few people would approach a Vistani, alone or not.

¹⁸¹ To pass on to his true master, Count Strahd, as he has recognized in Demjana the incarnation of Tatyana.

¹⁸² Demjana does not want the party to know that she has a lover, she feels that she will be less effective in manipulating them, when they know she can never follow up on her implicit suggestions.

The party is shocked by this. All of the dead resistance members were burned to death. Laurent wants to talk to people about this, especially the Farfar brothers and Ardonk, the leader of the resistance. Demjana can no longer resist Laurent's requests and tells him that they can meet with Ardonk, as soon as she is able to arrange a safe meeting.

The party returns to Zeidenburg, Demjana leaves them in the little hut and goes alone towards the house of Ardonk to meet with him. He tells her of five different victims¹⁸³. Demjana realises that Ardonk must know more about the death of the Boyar, the great fire and the death of his friends. She forces a confession from him. Ardonk confesses he and a few friends wanted to steal the chain of office and burn an effigy of the Boyar. During the theft they were surprised by the Boyar and Ardonk was forced to kill him.

Demjana sees in the fiery deaths of the resistance members the hand of a higher power, called to life to punish evildoers, as the killing of the Boyar in his own home was certainly an evil deed. Demjana is also very disappointed in Ardonk. She used to idolize him as a hero, but it turns out that he is a very small man who sees the death of his fellows as a necessary evil, he cares not for their loss at all. On top of that he keeps suspecting the Barovians of killing his fellows. He strikes Demjana as obsessed and unstable.

Demjana returns to the party and tells them that Ardonk was too busy to meet with her.

Session 23

Zeidenburg, Barovia; Late in the afternoon 27 May 751 BC.

Laurent discusses his doubts about Ardonk Szeriesia with his fellow party members. He feels that Ardonk tries to frustrate their investigation, which makes him suspicious in Laurent's eyes. And Ardonk seems to be very vindictive and obsessed with the Barovians. Lastly Ardonk does not seem to be very worried by the deaths of fellow Gundarakites.

While the party is confined to the small hut, while Demjana is away, Accian the Arcanist tries to identify the amulet again, he figures out that the amulet suppresses lycanthropy.

As Demjana returns, she insists that the perpetrators of the heinous crimes against the Gundrakites must be found among the Barovian soldiers and that Ardonk does not want to have any contact with them, out of security concerns.

As the night falls, Accian wants to put an alarm spell on the hut. Raven the Ranger is irritated due to grating presence of Demjana. She refuses to take a watch, which leads to an argument with Scott the Avenger. He feels that she has duties and that she should stick to them. This leads to a shouting match in which Raven accuses Scott of not sticking to his duties during the full moon. Tensions run suddenly very high and Raven decides to take a walk outside alone.

While Raven is outside, listening to the sound of the wolves in the forests surrounding Zeidenburg¹⁸⁴, Raven sees a large fire in Zeidenburg. Quickly she wakes her fellow party members and they rush to Zeidenburg. Demjana sees that it is the home of her own family that is on fire.

When the party arrives in Zeidenburg, they see it is indeed the Farfar home that is on fire, the blaze is raging. Some people are watching the fire, but most stay inside, to the surprise of the party. As they wonder what to do next, Nikolas and Georg Farfar stumble out of their homes, badly burned.

As Accian sees the wounds of the two men, he is overcome by the strange urge to lay his hands on them. He does so and under his very eyes the burned men heal without scars. Quoth the Raven looks on smugly.

¹⁸³ A lie, he knows there are more, but these were not members of the resistance movement, so they do not count.

¹⁸⁴ Outside, alone, at night, in Barovia, I am way to merciful for my players.

Raven comments: "Wow, even better than Brother Samael." Accian is deeply worried by this development however.

The party wonders how this horrible fire got started in the small home. Then they see a burning figure moving away from the blaze and into the forests. The figure is about 2 metres high and has a rainbarrel for a chest. It seems to walk on a small tree-log and pole ending in a little crate. The figure is ablaze and the flame reach high above its bucket shaped head.

Demjana grabs a bucket of water and chases after the figure. The rest of the party follows. Soon they catch up to the slow moving thing and a horrible battle ensues. The thing sets Demjana on fire, and Laurent bravely puts her out again with her own bucket of water¹⁸⁵. In the end it is Raven who smashes through the barrel chest of the thing with a mighty sword blow, killing it instantly. As the party searches through the debris, they find the chain of office that was missing from the house of Ivan Szimin.

On their way back to the village of Zeidenburg the party discusses the implications of what they just experienced. Was this Ivan, somehow risen from the dead in this strange form. Was the construct made to represent Ivan, but by who? Was the construct inhabited by the spirit of Ivan? Laurent wonders who gave the chain of office to the construct, was it given by Ivan's killer?

Scott decides to inspect the surroundings of the Farfar farm a bit more. He discovers strange tracks which can have only been made by the strange construct. Scott concludes that the construct has been watching the farm for several days.

The brothers Nicholas and Georg Farfar despair as they look on their ruined farm. They tell the party that they were surprised by the fire and woke just in time to get out. The stairs were already on fire when they tried to get out. In the smoke filled kitchen they lost their way, but got out just in time. Georg mentions he saw a figure moving through the house as he tried to get out.

Accian asks through Demjana if her brothers were in any way involved in the killing of the Boyar. Demjana denies this hotly. Scott wants to know where Ardonk was, did he not come and help his fellows when they are in trouble.

The party returns to their hut, although this is pretty useless, as enough people have seen them now.

28 May

Accian uses his newfound powers to heal Scott and Demjana from the injuries they sustained the night before. They are very grateful to him.

Scott is very irritated with Ardonk, For a leader he seems to be too cowardly and too self-involved. He did not show himself at all last night, when the home of staunch supporters of his cause went up in flames. Under the influence of his words, the group decides to ignore Demjana's protests and they go to Zeidenburg, to do some research there.

In Zeidenburg the group goes again to the burnt out farm of the Farfar Family. The two brothers Nicholas and Georg wander aimlessly through the smoking ruins. They mourn the loss of their home and all their worldly goods. The party tries to help, but there is not much that they can do.

At this time two people in black robes approach the farm. It is an older, portly man with a short grey beard and a plump younger woman with black curls. They introduce themselves as Andrei and Natasja, priests for the Lord of the Morning. They ask if they can help the poor dispossessed brothers if there is anything they can do to help.

As soon as Demjana has translated to the group that these are priests for the Morninglord, Accian is immediately interested, as his mother spend some time with them after she was

¹⁸⁵ The heroics of the occasion was spoiled by Laurent's player shouting: Wet T shirt contest!

assaulted by Boyar Alexei Petrovich, who lives near Vallaki¹⁸⁶. The priests are very interested in this revelation. Adrei even remembers Margareta and urges Accian to come and visit the temple near Vallaki in the near future. Accian promises to do so.

The party asks the priests by way of Demjana if they can shed any light on the strange happenings of the last few weeks and of last night. The party knows that they were battling some sort of construct and they know that it takes a powerful priest or wizard to animate such a thing. So they now worry that there might be a powerful magic user of some kind on the loose. The priests confirm that powerful magic can bring to life things which have no life of their own, but powerful emotions or particularly evil deeds can imbue lifeless things with a malignant form of life.

Then the priests hear of Accian's sudden powers of healing. They are deeply impressed with that. They start to talk excitedly among themselves. Accian only hears the word Prophet. Demjana who understands Barovian, hears Andrei and Natasja talk rapidly about prophecies and the arrival of the savior. Demjana immediately interprets these remarks as a promise that Accian will save her brother and lover from the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft¹⁸⁷. She enthusiastically hugs him at this news.

Accian asks Andrei to explain his remarks. Andrei reveals that Accian is a very important person. The gifts he has recently manifested can only come from the Morninglord. He must come to the temple to introduce himself to the rest of the congregation, as all priests would really want to see such an important personage as himself. Unheeded, Quoth looks very smug indeed.

Demjana takes the time to see her two remaining brothers on their way to Invidia, as she has heard that Gundarakites are welcomed there.

Session 24

Zeidenburg, Barovia; Late in the Afternoon, 28 May 751 BC

The party has left the priests behind and returned to the abandoned hut to converse among themselves. They decide that it must have been the brutal murder of Boyar Ivan Szimin that brought the effigy to life and that it were some men from the resistance who committed this evil deed. When it had killed all the participants of the murder, the thing started randomly killing people¹⁸⁸. They decide to meet with Ardonk Szeriesza and tell him about their findings, since he originally commissioned them to do so.

Demjana is, again, against this, but after some smooth talking from Accian¹⁸⁹, she relents and goes out to fetch Ardonk. She returns with him sometime later. Accian's raven follows her, so that Accian now knows where Ardonk lives.

When Ardonk comes to the party, he is very piqued by the actions of Demjana and the foreigners. With their actions they have drawn way too much attention to themselves. This way they have brought danger to all of the resistance movement. But perhaps that is exactly what they wanted...

The party reacts irritated because Ardonk seems to mistrust them. Then they tell him their findings of the last few days. They think that it all started with the murder of Boyar Ivan Szimin. He was horribly killed by one or several members of the Gundarakite resistance movement. This evil deed brought to life the effigy that was already constructed in the front yard of the Boyar's

¹⁸⁶ This was all revealed in the package which Accian received from his mother from beyond the grave. It also contained the ring he now wears. This was all revealed in sessions 4 & 5.

¹⁸⁷ Demjana is very fond of manipulating random events in her own favour.

¹⁸⁸ I was lenient with some INT checks. The players do not know too much about the workings of Ravenloft and they just could not make the last connection concerning the murders.

¹⁸⁹ Successful CHA check.

home. The effigy then tried to avenge the death of the Boyar by killing all the participants and then started to randomly kill other people. They further state that they think Ardonk as the leader of the resistance was intimately involved in the attack on the Boyar and so he is indirectly responsible for the deaths of his fellows.

As these accusations hit very close to home for Ardonk, he blanches. He rallies magnificently by stating that these are all lies. It are the Barovian soldiers who are responsible for the deaths of the Gundarakites, as Barovians always are. The Boyar only got what he deserved. By spreading confusion and dissension as the party does, they are undermining the Gundarakite cause. This can only mean that they are in league with the Barovians.

At these counteraccusations the party and Ardonk face each other, both frothing at the mouth. Then Demjana tries to intervene and calm everybody down. Ardonk does not appreciate this and starts yelling at Demjana in rapid Luktar: “Keep out of this woman, this is men’s business! You do not understand the wider implications of this! You and your friends have almost ruined it all!”

Although Scott does not understand what Ardonk says, he does understand that Demjana is yelled at for no good reason. He punches Ardonk mightily¹⁹⁰. Before this can deteriorate in a brawl Laurent steps in smoothly, he sums up one more time all the evidence against Ardonk and his movement¹⁹¹. When Ardonk hears this, he breaks down and confesses. He and a few friends wanted to scare Boyar Ivan Szimin by burning an effigy of him in his garden and stealing the chain of office from his home. Just to show him how powerful they were. But Ardonk was caught in the act by the Boyar and Ardonk had to kill him.

The party looks down the spineless creep Ardonk turned out to be. They are willing to just let him go. Demjana mentions another solution to their problem. They could turn Ardonk over to the proper Barovian authorities, so that he too would be imprisoned in Castle Ravenloft. Then, when they go to Castle Ravenloft to free her brother, they would have a man on the inside to open doors for them¹⁹². As Ardonk nearly fouls himself at the casual mention of his horrible death by a former ally, the other party members tell her that this a silly plan.

When the party boots Ardonk out of the hut, they see that night is falling quickly in this mountainous nation. Fear grips them as they realize that soon the full moon will rise and that Scott will transform in a ravenous beast, while he is in a small hut with them. Laurent tries to convince Scott to take some precautions, while Accian tries to tell Demjana what is going to happen. Demjana however is very dense and says she only wants to sleep.

As Demjana crawls in her blankets, Laurent goes through her stuff to find a mirror to use as a primitive sort of confrontation therapy on Scott. By this time Scott is visibly changing, his beard grows, his eyes become yellow and his teeth longer. Since he is also very deeply in denial, he smashes the mirror from Laurent’s hands, breaking it and runs from the hut into the night. Accian has the presence of mind to send his raven after Scott. Rather worriedly the rest of the party remains behind, listening to the howling of wolves.

By now Demjana realizes that Scott really changes into a wolf and that he has just broken her mirror. She has a hysterical fit and must be calmed down¹⁹³. When she is calmed down somewhat, she tries to sleep again, but soon enough she awakes screaming from a nightmare. She has nightmares for the rest of the night. The others do not dare leave the hut, so no one gets any sleep that night.

¹⁹⁰ My Hero!

¹⁹¹ Successful CHA check.

¹⁹² Demjana manipulating events again. She wants to use Ardonk, her former hero as a pawn and manipulates the group further into thinking she is extremely stupid.

¹⁹³ Demjana failed a horror check and now is obsessed and suffers from nightmares. She was horrified by the realization Scott is a ravening beast, but strangely enough focused on him breaking her mirror. The mind plays strange tricks.

29 May

Very early that morning Quoth returns to his master and reports that Scott turned into a wolf, ran through the woods, found his prey in the form of a small child, hunted, killed and ate it¹⁹⁴. Accian becomes deeply concerned when he hears this. He immediately tells Laurent, who is likewise deeply concerned.

Later that morning, in a small clearing in the endless pine forests of Barovia, Scott awakens. Naked but not alone, next to him lies the form of a woman on her stomach, partially dressed, her blond hair arranged around her. As he tries to wake her, she limply rolls over. She is dead, her throat is torn out, her belly ripped open, her guts spilled out and one of her thighs chewed away. Scott is deeply shocked by this, and wonders for a bit on what to do next. He lifts the body onto his shoulders and tries to find his way through the morning mists back to the hut, where his friends have spent the night.

At the hut, everybody is shaken from their thoughts by a loud knocking. Laurent opens the door a little bit. A naked and dirty Scott forces the door open and steps inside. He lifts the body from his shoulders and puts it on the floor saying: "Guys, we have a problem."¹⁹⁵ The party is shocked when they see the heavily mutilated body of the young woman. Demjana has hysterics again. Laurent tries to hide behind Accian.

As soon as Laurent has swallowed his fear, he starts to question Scott: "Do you know what this means? Do you finally admit you have a problem." Scott admits he fears that someone or something controls him at some nights. Laurent goes on, pointing at the dead woman: "Aren't you going to introduce us?" He goes on: "Do you know where you have been, where you have left your clothes, what you saw in the mirror yesterday. Accept that you are a werewolf Scott!" Scott still denies that.

Accian suggests that the group burns the body of the dead woman to hide any trace connecting her to them. The rest finds a reprehensible idea and after some thinking, so does Accian. Then Scott accuses the group of negligence, as they knew or suspected that he could be dangerous, they should have restrained him¹⁹⁶.

Laurent goes on with interrogating Scott. He says he does not blame Scott for the killing, because he was not fully in control of himself at the time of the murder of the woman. He continues that he already has a solution for the woman. He proposes to dump the body of the woman in the woods, away from the paths, where no one will ever find it and it will be eaten by the creatures of the forest soon enough.

The rest do not go along with this, this is as bad as Accian's proposal. After some discussion the following plan is arrived at. The body will be taken to the proper authorities, where the party will make a statement that Scott found the body on his travels and decided that it should be returned to her family. Strictly speaking this is all true, although they decide to hide the fact that Scott killed the woman.

Demjana is very opposed to this plan, she does want to have anything to do with Barovian authorities and she tells the party that as foreigners they will get into very deep trouble when they bring in a dead body. She wants to bury the body somewhere and then forget about it. Accian manages to convince her that the group's way is best.

Peeved Demjana goes outside. Once there she finds a small bouquet of flowers with an attached note. The note reads:

For the most beautiful woman.

¹⁹⁴ A lie, Quoth tries to goad Accian into something rash and drastic.

¹⁹⁵ Nice phrase. Scott is deeply in denial over his monthly problem, he rebuffs all the efforts of his friends to help him with this, but when it gets him in to deep trouble, he wants them to help solve it.

¹⁹⁶ Oh, nice one. Scott seems to be more and more influenced by the beast inside during daily life as well.

S.

Demjana immediately thinks this bouquet is for her and that it must have been given to her by Scott¹⁹⁷.

Inside Scott wraps the body in a blanket. He also hears that Accian has sent his raven to follow him and spy on him. He is not too happy with that and feels that the raven might not be a natural creature. Laurent reminds Accian that he told him that his raven reported that Scott had killed a child. Accian corrects him and says that he never said any such thing, he reported that his raven saw Scott chasing and killing an adult woman¹⁹⁸. Laurent is confused by this answer but has no reply.

The rest then moves out to get the horses from Zeidenburg. As they do so, they see Demjana playing with a bunch of flowers and with a goofy grin on her face. The others recognize the flowers in the bouquet as conveying a message of romantic interest. They wonder who could have given her the flowers.

Then the party moves off towards Vallaki, as Scott remembers coming from that direction. The raven confirms this. They hope that they can find family of the dead woman there.

As the group wants to enter Vallaki, Demjana stays behind. She does not want to enter a village of Barovians. In the village the party looks for some sort of authority figure. They are directed by a surly old man to the temple outside of the village. As they leave the village again to go to the temple and the other buildings, Demjana joins them again.

The temple is a very small one, not much bigger than the temple of Ezra in Potter's Field, but this is the main temple of the faith of the Morninglord, so this is a very small faith indeed. The temple is surrounded by a few small buildings used as sleeping quarters and storage space for the believers.

Brother Andrei welcomes Accian and his fellows. He is very happy that Accian has taken the time to visit the temple. He especially exhorts Accian to meet with Fyodor, the high priest of the faith of the Morninglord. Accian first tells Andrei of the body of the young woman they found in the forests. Andrei suggests that Accian leaves the body with the temple, they will then take further care of it. Accian insists on bringing the body to the proper authorities however. Andrei tries to dissuade him from that, he tells him that the authorities will not look favourably on foreigners bringing in dead bodies, Accian will most certainly get into trouble.

Accian insists on taking the body to some sort of authority figure. Andrei relents and take Accian, Laurent and Scott to see the burgomeister of Vallaki. Demjana stays behind as she still does not want to enter the village.

The burgomeister Ivgeni is willing to help Andrei and his visitors. He identifies the dead body as Nerina, wife to Eric. She was always a wild woman who stayed out late. She must have stayed out too late last night and met her doom at the hands of the wolves. Ivegeny is quite accepting of the story told by the party and the death of this young woman. He thanks the group for bringing the body back to Vallaki, so she can be buried.

The party returns with Andrei to the temple of the Morninglord. Accian goes inside the temple with Andrei to meet with the high priest Fyodor. The rest stay outside with Demjana.

As Scott inspects his horse, he notices a small bouquet of flowers attached to his saddle. There is a small letter to go with it as well. As he cannot read, he shows this to Laurent who reads it for him. The note says:

Dear Scott,

Thank you for the flowers and I forgive you for smashing my mirror.

Demjana

PS. You are cute for a werewolf.

¹⁹⁷ Muhahahaha!

¹⁹⁸ More manipulation by the raven. He now makes Accian forget he told him something else.

Scott and Laurent are flabbergasted. They both know Scott gave Demjana no flowers.

Inside the temple Accian looks around and sees beautiful mural reflecting the glory of the Morninglord. Then his eye fall on a very old man, very thin and with white hair, this must be Fyodor. Fyodor slowly approaches Accian and greets him warmly. He well remembers Accian's mother Margareta and he is saddened to hear of her death. Accian feels that Fyodor really reminds him of someone, he just can't remember who.

After some small talk Accian tells Fyodor that he has other duties to perform, but that he would like to return here. As he leaves he passes to other priests. As they see him, they start to whisper among themselves in Barovian. Accian only catches the words hiero gamos.

Jennifer's Ravenloft Campaign Sessions 25 – 27

Session 25

29 May 751 BC; Just outside of Vallaki, Barovia.

The party stands just outside of the buildings of the temple of the cult of the Morninglord. Accian the Arcanist is rather shocked by the revelations he had inside the temple. He suspects that the figure of Fyodor, the High priest for the Morninglord might be his father. He wants to leave Vallaki to think in all quiet about the revelations he just had. Demjana the Thief also wants to leave Vallaki, as she is not at all at ease in a Barovian village. Raven the Ranger wants to stay in the village to able to keep a better eye on Scott the Avenger, as he will turn into a werewolf this night. She even contemplates handing Scott over to the proper authorities as he is a danger to others at this time of the month. Scott feels terribly betrayed by his friend.

Laurent the Bard offers the amulet of the little silver wolf to Scott, so he can wear it and suppress the impulse to change into a werewolf. Scott is willing to try, but he does not believe it will work. He puts the amulet on a leather thong around his neck. Laurent too prefers to spend the night outside the village.

As Demjana sees the pretty amulet of the werewolf being handed to Scott, she immediately tries to ask him to give it to her. As Raven sees this she becomes very forceful with Demjana. She insists that Scott needs this amulet and that Demjana is not to take it away. If she does so, the troubles of last night will start all over again.

The party wants to leave Vallaki. But first they want to buy some stuff. Demjana buys a kitten she calls Pussy. Raven invests somewhat more sensibly in 6 hunting dogs. It is becoming late in the day and the sun is sinking behind the mountains, which throw their shadows over the landscape. The full moon rises as the party sets up camp on a small hill on the southern shore of Lake Zarovich. To everyone's relief, Scott remains human.

The party prepares for the night. Raven trains her dogs. Accian prepares some Accian cocktails, mixtures of explosive elements. As Demjana falls asleep, it becomes clear she still suffers from nightmares, within 15 minutes, she awakes screaming about mirrors. The rest is not happy, as they are very tired as well. Demjana decides to stay awake and keep Accian company while he is on guard.

As the others fall asleep, Accian and Demjana hear the wolves howling in the forests. They are not very worried, as the wolves howl all the time. But the howling seems to come closer. Soon 5 enormous wolves step out of the bushes and into the camp. They are huge monsters with red eyes and drooling jaws.

In fear Demjana tries to climb a tree with her cat, but this fails. Accian yells for everybody to wake up now. The rest awaken and look on the wolves with fear. Everybody gets ready for a fierce battle. Laurent tries to convince Scott that he must put off the amulet, turn into a powerful werewolf and send these puppies packing. Scott refuses to do so and focuses on the wolves. Laurent sees an opportunity, he grabs his knife and grabs that cord that Scott uses for the amulet and cuts it¹.

The amulet drops away and almost immediately Scott transforms into a huge grey wolf. He is at least as large as the other wolves in the clearing. He loses no time and attacks

¹ I was very shocked! It also means a powers check for Laurent, which he failed. He gains the ability to pick pockets as a level 1 thief, but his face gets a very pinched look, costing him one charisma point. He will turn into a wererat. See also the article "Track of the Wererat" by Mark Branson in "Terrible Transformations" in the Book of Shadows.

them immediately. Growling and biting he drives the wolves away. The fight moves back into the bushes and there the heroes hear the sound of a ferocious fight.

Then the party hears yelping. Suddenly the wolf that is Scott bursts from the bushes with his tail between his legs. He crosses the open hill at full speed and disappears in the night. Then a huge black wolf steps out of the bushes onto the hill. His attitude is that of a very dominant wolf. With his red glowing eyes he takes a very long look at Demjana. Then he turns around again and disappears in the woods, taking the rest of the pack with him.

The party stays behind deeply shocked. They are very sure that a normal wolf, no matter how big would give Scott pause. They think that the big black wolf is a local werewolf, one more powerful than Scott. They also wonder how it could be that he turned in a werewolf, although he wore the amulet. By now Accian has noticed that Laurent seems to look different. His nose seems pointier and his looks seem more unfriendly.

Demjana notices that the amulet has fallen in the grass. She wants to take the amulet for herself now and the following conversation develops.

Demjana: "Can I have the amulet now?"

Laurent: "No, because the cord is broken."

Demjana: "Then I can't wear it anyway."

Later that night Laurent keeps a watch, again accompanied by Demjana, as she still has her nightmares. He tries to seduce her, but she tells him to go away, which causes some ill will between the two.

30 May

The morning dawns. Quoth wakes Accian with the message that Scott has again hunted humans and was successful². This morning Demjana finds another bouquet of flowers and a short letter and a silver knife to go with it as well.

A naked Scott walks into the camp again and this time he is wounded as well. Accian uses his special powers to heal him. Raven tells him that the amulet worked all right until Laurent cut through the cord. Laurent did this to protect the rest of the party from an attack of mighty wolves.

Scott is very angry with Laurent for manipulating him so. Laurent admits he did the deed, but refuses to apologize as he feels he did the right thing. Scott punches him a black eye.

Session 26

30 May 751 BC, near Lake Zarovich; Barovia.

After the fight between Scott and Laurent, the rest of the party tell him what has happened in the rest of the night. Scott changed into a ferocious wolf, attacked the other wolves. But was then beaten by one that was a lot stronger than he was. This other wolf sent him running. This big black wolf then came into the clearing, and looked them all over, especially Demjana. And then the wolf left.

Scott finds this story very sinister. He is piqued by the betrayal of Raven (to have him locked up) and Laurent. But he decides to keep wearing the necklace and amulet as it seems to work. He also feels that the other wolf beat him and he wants to do something about that.

Laurent has revived somewhat from the blow that Scott dealt him. He discusses the working of the amulet with Scott. Scott admits that it seems to help with the blackouts he had.

² Again a lie.

He decides to keep wearing it. On a chain this time. Laurent gives the amulet to Scott and asks him to wear it always. Scott promises to wear it as long as it seems a good idea to him.

This morning Quoth has told Accian that Scott killed and feasted on a family of woodcutters. Accian immediately believes this story and decides to keep this information to himself. He is torn between two courses of action. On the one hand he wants to report Scott to the proper authorities for murder and find and bury the poor family. On the other hand, he does not want to betray his friend Scott.

Demjana tries again to push her agenda to go towards Castle Ravenloft. The rest of the party is less than enthusiastic. Scott wonders why they need to go to Castle Ravenloft. Demjana reminds him that they are on a quest to rescue her brother from the dungeons of the Castle. Laurent does not feel like doing so after she rebuffed his advances last night. Raven never liked Demjana anyway and sees no reason to accompany her on this dangerous mission. Even Accian, who always liked Demjana best, is irritated with her, because her nightmares caused him to lose sleep as well, so he cannot memorize new spells.

When the party is ready to break up, they suddenly hear the baying of hounds. They are hunting dogs, by the sound of it. A bit later a pack of big dogs enters the clearing on the little hill. They are soon followed by an older man on horseback. He is a Barovian and richly dressed. He barks at them: "What are you doing here, who are you? Have you camped here at night, that is very dangerous, as you no doubt noticed."

The party is at first rather intimidated by this man on his horse, in his expensive clothing, his wolf-fur cape, and his hunting spears. Raven is the first to politely introduce herself. The older man then introduces himself as Dimtrys Petrovich, the eldest son of Boyar Alexei Petrovich, who rules over Vallaki and the surrounding lands in the name of Count Strahd of Zarovich the XI.

Raven tells him that they have indeed spent the night in the open. But they were little troubled by the wolves. One of their company kept the party awake with her recurring nightmares. Dymtris then sees how tired the party is and he invites them to the home of his father, for a breakfast at least. Raven quickly accepts this invitation on behalf of her and the party, as she knows that Demjana will never comply to enter the home of a Barovian Boyar. She wants annoy Demjana.

Dymtris leads them to the home of his father. This is a large estate along side the shore of Lake Zarovich. It looks a lot like the home of Boyar Ivan Szimin, which they entered near Zeidenburg. During the trip to the estate it turns out that Dymtris is a rather simple man. He knows what he likes and shows it. He lets Demjana know that he is very attracted to her in a rather condescending way. He keeps calling her "the little lady".

The party arrives at the estate and with speed Dymtris takes care that the horses are stabled and leads the party into the large kitchen. With a few barked commands he has arranged places for the party at the large kitchen table and soon each party member has a huge breakfast in front of them in the shape of baked eggs, sausages, goat's milk, bread, honey and slices of smoked ham on fresh bread. The hungry party eats the meal quickly. Accian and Demjana are so satisfied with this meal, that they fall asleep at the breakfast table.

Dymtris sees this and insists with the other party members that they stay here, at least for the day, as the little lady is so tired. The rest of the party entertains guilty thoughts of leaving Demjana with Dymtris for ever, but then decide that they could use a good rest in a safe place. Laurent offers to pay for their stay by entertaining everybody with his arts. Dymtris highly appreciates this and he arranges two rooms for the guests. One for the men and one for the little lady.

Laurent and Accian worry when they hear this; they do not want Demjana to sleep alone in the house of this man who shows such an interest in her. They both know that the Boyar, the father of Dymtris assaulted Accian's mother in this house, with Accian as the re-

sult. Raven reveals her identity as a woman and claims a place in the room for Demjana. She immediately asks for a sleeping potion for Demjana, as she suffers from nightmares and wakes everybody with her screams.

Dymtris complies with all the requests of the party and they all enjoy an afternoon of peaceful and uninterrupted sleep³.

At the end of the afternoon, the party is wakened by a servant and told that dinner will be served soon. The party tries to take baths and look presentable. Then they go to the dining room where they meet the rest of the Petrovich household. Boyar Alexei Petrovich, a man in his early sixties and his wife of the same age Karina welcome the party to their home and their table. At the table are also his oldest son Dymtris, who is in his forties and his wife Laila. They have three children, who are also at the table, Alexei, Dafyd and Anuska.

Accian sees no common characteristics between himself and the elder Alexei, who according to his mother Margareta should be his father. He suspects that his mother was wrong and that Boyar Alexei is not his father. He suspects that Fyodor, High priest to the Morninglord might be his father.

Dinner is served. It consists of a large side of deer, a vegetable stew, bread and dark beer. The Boyar cuts the side of deer and serves his guests. Demjana studies the women at the table. She sees that they are well dressed, but not opulently. She guesses that the riches that the Barovians stole during the occupation of Gundarak must have gone straight to Count Strahd himself.

During the meal Scott and Laurent get drunk on the dark beer. Laurent sings off colour versions of existing songs, to the embarrassment of the others, but thankfully the Petrovich family does not seem to understand what he says. Scott has to giggle unstoppably at the songs and at one point slides off his chair.

While everybody is paying attention the antics of Laurent and Scott, Accian asks Demjana to accompany him to a more private place, as he has something important to tell her. She follows him. Once outside the dining room, he tells her that Boyar Alexei Petrovich is known to be a rapist and that Demjana is not safe here. She must be careful not to be alone in this household. Demjana becomes very frightened as she hears this. She immediately wants to retreat to the safety of her bedroom. She asks Raven to come with here. Raven insists that Demjana is provided again with a sleeping potion. Karina, the Boyar's wife sees that Demjana receives another portion.

While Demjana goes with Karina for the potion, Accian tells Raven about his suspicions concerning Boyar Alexei.

Then Raven and Demjana both go to bed. Demjana does not dare to take her sleeping potion. She is afraid that the Boyar will take advantage of her when she sleeps too deeply to be awakened. Raven warns her that she had better not wake anyone with her nightmares and screams.

The men retreat to a smoking room to smoke a pipe and drink some of the local liquor. Accian is the only one who tries to remain sober. He has to field some questions by Boyar Alexei, who seems to have a limited grasp of the Borcan language, which Accian can understand. Accian tries to admit nothing to this man. He tells the Boyar that he and his friends are merely looking for adventure. After a bit of questioning, he admits to finding the body of Nerina, a local woman, who was savaged by wolves. He and his fellows have returned that body to the authorities of Vallaki.

In the women's bedroom Raven is snoring gently. At the same time Demjana keeps walking up and down in the small room. She does not dare fall asleep. When she turns to walk

³ I was amazed the party did this all. They knew that the Petrovich family had something strange going on and that the Barovian nobility was not particularly trustworthy. Yet they accompany one to his home, eat his food, take a potion with unknown qualities and all fall asleep. I am not nearly cruel enough for my players.

back to the window, she suddenly sees a very handsome, dark haired man outside her window⁴. She is not at all worried about the fact that she is on the first floor of the building. The man asks her to open the window for him, as if in a trance, she does so. She then falls into a passionate embrace with this older man. In his arms she is so happy she seems to lose consciousness

Sometime later Raven awakes suddenly from a nightmare. It seemed to her as if some sort of evil entity was in the room with her, menacing her. She looks around and sees that the window is open and the icy cold night air is streaming into the room. She gets up to close the window and sees that Demjana is sleeping peacefully. The sleeping potion really seems to work.

When Accian goes to bed later in the evening, his raven Quoth tells him that Demjana had an unknown gentleman visitor in the night. This man met her through the window. It was an older dark haired man.

31 May

Demjana wakes and feels rested and happy. She had some sort of wonderful dream she has now forgotten. But she slept well even without her sleeping potion. She has completely forgotten about the man outside her window. She still wants to go to Castle Ravenloft however. Laurent and Raven still have their doubts.

At the breakfast table in the dining room, Accian sees an engraving with the portrait of Count Strahd von Zarovich XI. He looks somewhat like the handsome older dark haired man that Quoth described. Was Demjana visited by the Count, is he some sort of wizard?

Session 27

This session Filip could not attend, so Demjana was taken over by Arvid, who did very well.

31 May 751 BC; The Petrovich Home, Barovia

The party is at the breakfast table of the Petrovich family. Laurent states that he does not want to go to Castle Ravenloft, as he feels that it would be much too dangerous and that there is no chance of rescuing Mikhail and getting out alive. Demjana tries to talk him into it, but Laurent remains adamant, he does not want to go on a suicide mission. Scott agrees with him.

Demjana insists that she would appreciate it when the party would save her brother. She says that they could gain entry to the Castle as a musical band, to accompany Laurent.

In the meantime Boyar Alexei and Dymtris are conversing on what to do about the wolf problem in the area. A local woman Nerina has been killed and the rather larger party of their guests have also been menaced. They decide on a hunt. Laurent, Scott and Raven decide to go with them. Accian and Demjana volunteer to stay behind with the women of the household.

As the hunting party leaves, Demjana asks Accian to keep the women amused while she searched the Petrovich house for some sort of incriminating evidence. Demjana searches every room in the house, but does not find anything of note. Then she searched the library. Among the other books she finds a very small old book titled "The word of the true God".

⁴ The Count coming to take a look.

This little book is at least a hundred years old; Demjana can tell this by the use of archaic Barovian.

As Demjana leafs through the old book, she sees that it is some sort of religious text. It talks about the will of the true god and how the believer should behave towards the true god and his fellow men. The advice in the book is all rather nice and filled with love to your neighbours and other generally good practices. Demjana has never before heard of the true God and has no idea who or what is meant by this. She takes the little book with her.

Then she sees a beautiful long sword hung over the hearth. Curious as she is, she tries to take it. As she moves it, the hearthstone in the hearth moves with a deep grinding noise. A hole appears, with a small ladder leading into the dark unknown depths.

Fearlessly Demjana descends the ladder into the unknown. The ladder goes down only for a small way and then she stands in a small damp cramped hallway. She follows it for a bit and after she turns a corner she stands in a small room. The room is build to be some sort of place of worship. Close to the far wall stands a small altar with one burning candle on it. E few rows of benches face the altar. Along the walls hang several tapestries. The depict nothing in particular, just lines and geometric figures. There is nothing here to identify the object of worship. Demjana wonders who or what is worshipped here and why this must happen underground.

Demjana leaves again, closes the hearthstone by fiddling with the sword again and joins Accian and the women of the Petrovich household.

In the meantime Laurent, Scott and Raven have been hunting wolves. They have managed to kill a few and return with the rest of the hunting party to the estate at the end of the afternoon, tired and dirty.

While the hunters are refreshing themselves, Demjana tells them all about what she discovered in the household today. She thinks that the Petrovich family for some reason or other worships a God of goodness, for some reason this must happen in secret, which would explain the underground chapel. She finds this hard to reconcile with her image of Boyar Alexei the scary rapist of Accian's mother.

Scott doubts the story of Margareta being raped by Boyar Alexei, as he has been nothing but kind to them in the past two days. He wonders if Margareta told Accian the truth. But why would she lie about this? Everybody thinks that this is all very strange. Scott wonders if perhaps Count Strahd is more tyrannical than they thought, perhaps he suppresses the worship of certain Gods. Could this be the reason for the underground temple?

Laurent suggests that he turns the raven of Accian invisible, so that Quoth can keep an eye on the access to the temple. This works and now nobody can see the raven. Suddenly Laurent feels that perhaps this was not a very good idea.

Demjana tries to tempt the grandson of Alexei, the 18 year old Dafyd, to tell her more about his faith. He tells her that he feels that religion is more something for the uneducated villagers. They need some more guidance in their lives. Then Demjana wonders if Dafyd knows anything at all about the underground temple.

It is time for dinner again and just like last night, the meal consists of a large piece of roasted meat, a vegetable stew, bread and beer. While the Petrovich family and their guests are eating, a servant enters, announcing a man wearing the livery of the von Zarovich family. This is a messenger and he has an urgent message from his master, the Count Strahd von Zarovich XI for his most loyal Boyar Alexei Petrovich.

Boyar Alexei takes the message and orders a meal to be prepared for the messenger in the kitchens. Boyar Alexei reads the message at the table. The party looks on with dread; they wonder is the message had anything to do with them. While Alexei reads, he blanches. Then he abruptly breaks off the meal and asks the party to come with him to his study.

Boyar Alexei takes the party to his study, the library that Demjana searched earlier in the day. Alexei tells the party that the missive from his master concerns them. He hands Demjana the letter and leaves so the party can discuss the contents in private. Demjana tells the party what is in it.

Count Strahd von Zarovich XI wants to get married and orders his vassal Boyar Alexei Petrovich to find him his wife. He wants to take Demjana Farfar of Zeidenburg for a wife, as it is time he should get married and since she is a Gundarakite, a marriage between the Barovian lord and a Gundarakite subject might lessen the tensions between the two peoples living in his country.

Count Strahd further knows that Demjana is staying with her travelling companions at the home of Boyar Alexei Petrovich. He orders the Boyar to keep the party there until a carriage comes to take them all to Castle Ravenloft, for the wedding⁵.

The party is flabbergasted when they hear this. Demjana feels honoured when she hears this. The highly placed Count has let his eye fall on her, the commoner Demjana. She has her doubts too, she does not really want to marry the Count, she wants to marry her lover Boris, who languishes in the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft, together with her brother Mikhail. Demjana wants to flee the grasp of the Count and the rest of the party agrees with her. They find this highly suspicious.

Raven however suggests that Demjana accepts Count Strahd's proposal. She suggests that Demjana can vastly improve the lot of the oppressed Gundarakites if she marries the Count and influences him. Demjana's resolve wavers when she hears this idea. But then she thinks that it will not work and she wants to flee.

Then Boyar Alexei returns. He warns against a marriage to the Count, as he is known to be a harsh and cruel man. A marriage to him can never be a happy one. Demjana does not dare to refuse however, as she knows that a refusal of the wishes of the Count will be punished harshly.

Laurent suggests that Demjana follow Raven's example, and dress up as a man to avoid notice and then flee. Demjana decides that she does not want to flee, but wants to keep the Count dangling, letting him think she is considering his proposal, while she makes a dash for the border. The Boyar offers to write a response in which he makes it clear that Demjana is too overwhelmed with the honour of this proposal to immediately answer. That way the party has some respite to flee. Gratefully the party accepts this.

⁵ This is all broadly true. The Count indeed wants to marry Demjana, but not to lessen tension between the two nations. He has a new idea in which he will try to convert her into a vampire only after she is his wife. He will restrain himself and not take advantage of her before she is his wife. The missive from the count does not mention Demjana's travel companions at all. That is an invention of Demjana.

Jennifer's Ravenloft Campaign Sessions 28 – 30

Session 28

In this session Filip could not attend. His character Demjana was taken over by Arvid, who also did so in session 27. He did very well.

31 May 751 BC, late at night; The Petrovich Home, Barovia

The party has just received the message that Count Strahd von Zarovich XI wants to take Demjana the Thief to wife. Demjana does not want to marry him.

Raven the Ranger wonders how it could be that Count Strahd von Zarovich XI, the ruler of Barovia has heard of Demjana by name¹. Raven and Accian the Arcanist get involved in a discussion concerning the nature of Quoth the Raven, Accian's familiar. Raven does not trust the raven and thinks it is an unnatural creature, as it does not behave as a normal raven. Accian maintains that his raven is completely normal. Any unusual behaviour can be attributed to the fact that it is also a familiar and as such endowed with special powers, such as telepathy and heightened intelligence. Raven insists that the raven is unnatural, to which Scott the Avenger adds: "And any unnatural thing we met, we killed."

Demjana wants to flee immediately, leaving the house of the Petrovich family. Raven reminds her of what happened the last time the party spent the night outside. Raven wants to leave as early as possible the next morning. The discussion gets out of hand. Demjana has her will thwarted and starts to cry. The rest is tired of her manipulations and leaves her to cry all alone. Demjana immediately stops crying as soon as she is alone.

As soon as Demjana is alone, she realises that the silver knife she got was of course a gift from Count Strahd. He has been stalking her for longer than she thought. As she is still in the library of the Petrovich family, she puts the knife behind a few books on one of the shelves. Quoth the invisible raven is still on guard duty in the library and he sees this all.

Accian tries to convince Laurent the Bard to search for the hidden underground that Demjana supposedly found. He does not trust her and her reports any longer and wants to see for himself.

Later that night Accian and Laurent go to the library. The raven is still guarding the area and he immediately tells his master about the knife that Demjana hid here. Accian finds the knife soon enough and pockets it. Quoth goes on to tell that the temple is currently in use. Accian sees that the hearthstone is moved and that there is a little ladder leading down into unknown depths. On and off some murmuring can be heard coming from the opening.

Accian sends his raven down the hole to report on what is going on. The raven reports that the complete Petrovich family is attending some sort of grisly service to an unnamed God in the dank underground room. The family is fascinated by Boyar Alexei Petrovich, who is butchering a small animal on the altar, probably a piglet. He is wearing sinister black robes.

Accian wants to take a look for himself and he descends the stairs. He can hear the singing of several voices. Then his feet slip on the tricky steps of the ladder. He falls and lets out a loud yell of pain². The singing abruptly stops. Boyar Alexei comes from the temple. He looks angry in his black robe and he is rubbing at a red spot near his mouth. He is very angry with Accian for spying on his host.

¹ He knows because Demjana has not been very smart.

² Failed dexterity check.

Boyar Alexei takes Accian rather roughly with him, into the temple. There he sees the rest of the Petrovich family. Accian attends the end of the service. Boyar Alexei speaks some last words of the duty to take care of your neighbour, while a chalice with red wine is passed around all the attendants. Everyone takes a sip. Accian forgets the earlier report of his raven. This scene is exactly what his familiar reported to him.

When the service ends, the members of the Petrovich family leave the underground temple. Laurent is still keeping guard outside the library and he hears their footsteps coming up the ladders. He hides in the hallway. Boyar Alexei leads Accian out, still very angry, he closes the hearthstone and the entry to the temple and suggests very strongly that Accian goes to bed right now.

As Accian goes to bed, calm returns to the Petrovich family home. Accian is plagued by bad dreams that night. His mother Margareta appears to him, crying. She tells him she is very disappointed in her son. He enjoys the hospitality of the man who has caused her so much hurt, she wants him to avenge her in the blood of Alexei.

1 June

This very early morning the party meets in the kitchen, where they breakfast and pack foodstuffs for the rest of the day. Accian is rather upset about the dream concerning his mother. He actually got along with Boyar Alexei and he doubts the claims of his mother.

The party leaves quickly. They want to travel past Vallaki to the north shore of Lake Zarovich and then north towards the border. That border is the closest³. They want to cross the border and never return to Barovia.

During the trip towards Vallaki, Demjana tries to patch up her problems with Scott. She says that she now understands that Scott had not been wooing her with letters and flowers. After that however she mentions his werewolf affliction. As this is still a sore point with him, he gets angry and leaves her alone.

Accian tries to return the knife he found to Demjana. She at first denies that it is hers. Then she admits it is hers, but she does not want to accept it. She thinks it is a gift from Count Strahd and is afraid that he might use it to track her. Accian claims that this cannot be the case. He has checked the knife with his mighty arcane powers and found that it is indeed magical, but that it cannot be used to track her. He tells her that the knife protects against attacks, against curses, deals more damage than a person might expect and glows in the dark. Demjana knows for certain that it does not glow in the dark and suspects that Accian's other conclusions might be wrong as well. She no longer trusts in his abilities.

Now that Raven knows that Demjana is being stalked by a powerful man, just like herself, she feels somewhat more friendly towards her and tries to build a friendship with her. Demjana stops that rather rudely by saying that she cannot believe that an influential man would ever be interested in someone like Raven. Raven is deeply insulted and leaves Demjana to her own devices.

When the party nears the village of Vallaki, they want to travel around it, to avoid attracting attention to themselves. As they do so, they meet with Brother Andrei. He recognizes them and greets them with a solemn "Hail Accian".

Brother Andrei approaches the party and starts to talk to Accian rather rapidly. Too rapidly, for Accian does not understand what is being said. Demjana steps in and translates for him. According to Demjana Brother Andrei was charged with finding Accian and his friends on the orders of Fyodor the High Priest himself. Apparently Accian and his friends are in great danger, and the Morninglord ordered Fyodor to find Accian and grant him safety in the

³ It will let them end up in the Shadow Rift, but they don't know that.

temple of the Morninglord. It is Count Strahd himself who is a threat to Accian and his friends.

Demjana goes on to translate that the faith of the Morninglord is involved in the struggle against the devil Strahd and his foul minions, such as the Boyar Alexei Petrovich, who terrorizes the countryside around Vallaki.

The party decides that it is probably best to take the cult of the Morninglord up on their promise and try to get some safety their, but for a short time only, they still want to cross the borer as quickly as possible. As the party nears the temple, they suddenly all feel slightly nauseous, or perhaps a bit dizzy and drunk. After a while this feeling passes completely. The party mentions this strange sensation to Brother Andrei. He answers that it is the presence of the Morninglord. He is truly present at the temple and his divine aura affects mortals.

As the party approaches the clearing between the several buildings of the temple complex, they see Nikolas and Georg, the older brothers of Demjana. She had sent them across the border to Invidia, as she had hoped they would be safer there. She asks them immediately why they are not in Invidia. They tell her that they went on their way to Invidia, but when they approached the border, they were met by a priest from the Morninglord, who told them that since they were the first to be saved by Accian the Saviour, they were very important to the temple of the Morninglord. So they came here instead.

The Farfar brothers have spent two days in the temple complex. Demjana is sceptic; she is not sure if Accian is a saviour for the Morninglord and if he should be involved in this cult. She is immediately rebuffed by her brothers. "Do not mingle in men's business Demjana, they are too complex for you, keep to your womanly tasks!" Although the rest of the party could not follow this conversation, they are happy to see Demjana get her just deserts.

In the meantime, Accian has gone to visit the High Priest Fyodor to ask him some questions. He still has questions about his mother's past and his own future. He suspects that it is Fyodor who is his father. He also wonders why his mother could not have told him the truth outright.

Fyodor tries to convince Accian that he special, despite his horrible parentage. Accian believes Fyodor is lying. Accian gets no real answers and wants to leave the temple complex as soon as possible, to create a distance between himself and his past and between himself and Count Strahd.

Session 29

1 June 751 BK in the afternoon; Temple of the Morninglord, Barovia

The party is in the temple complex of the Morninglord. They hope that here they will be safe for a while from the machinations of Count Strahd von Zarovich XI. Accian exits the temple, where he has spent some time with Fyodor. As he approaches the party, Raven asks him if she can hold Quoth for a bit. Accian hands his bird to her.

As soon as Raven touches the bird, she knows that it is not a real animal, but a strange and evil construct of the mists. Quoth realises that he is being unmasked. He immediately alerts Accian to the fact that Raven is trying to kill him. Accian gets angry, grabs his familiar from Raven's hands and accuses her of trying to kill his pet. Raven backs down.

Raven tells Scott of her suspicions. She knows that the bird is unnatural and evil and definitely dangerous. Scott agrees to help her kill the raven at the first transgression. They further decide that the influence of the raven does not mean that Accian is not dangerously insane. They fear for his mental wellbeing since he makes strange claims of being a chosen saviour and having a bird talk to him. They wonder what the nature of the raven can be, is it alive, undead or something very different?

Although both Demjana and Accian have important ties to Barovia, they are both in favour of abandoning these ties and leave Barovia.

Accian wonders what makes him so special, a saviour even. He knows he is the product of a Holy Marriage, having pressed Fyodor into translating the words Hieros Gamos he overheard two priests uttering. He wants to leave the complex to think things over. The rest of the party does not want leave, since they think that they will be safe there from Count Strahd. At the refusal of his friends, Accian gets his horse, gets up and leaves.

The priests see him leave, and although they do not follow him, they do go into the temple to warn Fyodor. Brother Andrei comes out of the temple and he immediately asks the rest of the party where Accian went. They answer that they don't know. Immediately Brother Andrei orders 5 priests to get on their donkeys and find Accian. After all, it is dangerous to travel alone in Barovia.

The party asks Brother Andrei why Accian is seen as the Saviour and what that means. Brother Andrei tells them that the coming of the Saviour was predicted long ago by the Morninglord himself. By curing the Farfar brothers, Accian has proven that he has extraordinary powers, which can only come from the Morninglord. Furthermore, the Saviour will save the faithful from the oppression of Count Strahd. He will lead them to paradise and save them from their suffering. Accian will make it possible for them to leave this cursed land⁴.

When Demjana hears all this, she immediately wants to use Accian to oppose Count Strahd. She wants to use him to free the oppressed Gundarakites from Barovian rule. Raven tells her yet again that she can aid the struggle of the Gundarakites immensely if she marries Count Strahd and has his ear. Scott is against this and repeats that even Boyar Alexei, a vassal of Count Strahd advised against a marriage.

Demjana suggests that the party leave Barovia without the disappeared Accian. No doubt Accian can solve all the problems in Barovia, since he is the Saviour. Raven asks her if she really believes in the predictions of an unknown God. Demjana replies: "Oh well, we can always give Accian a few weeks."

Scott wonders if Accian's gifts of healing truly come from Accian himself, or from his mothers' ring, which he has been wearing for some time now.

Laurent, Demjana and Scott want to enter the temple and to speak to Fyodor the High Priest directly. The temple is rather smallish. There is room for about fifty people. Laurent and Demjana immediately approach the elderly priest who seems to be dozing on one of the benches. Scott takes the time to take a look at the decoration in the temple. He sees a lot of pictures of a golden figure, much bigger than all the other figures. He assumes that this must be the Morninglord. He also sees pictures of other people. He has trouble interpreting them. It seems as if they are all involved in very selfish pursuits. This deeply disturbs him. He wonders what these people would need to be saved from.

Laurent speaks to Fyodor. The old man looks a bit like Accian, but a lot older, skinnier and his nose is somewhat pointier. Laurent asks Fyodor if Accian is really the Saviour and what this entails exactly. Fyodor answers that Accian is the Saviour for the followers of the Morninglord. He was sent by the Morninglord to save His followers from their suffering and to lead them to paradise. Then they will be finally able to leave this accursed land.

Scott asks what Fyodor means by this cursed land. Demjana answers that it is because of Count Strahd, he oppresses the Gundarakites.

Fyodor interrupts Demjana and says that the land itself is a prison, you can enter it, but you can never leave it. Only the Saviour will be able to lead the chosen people away from this accursed land. The whole world is one big prison. Most of the inhabitants cannot even see the

⁴ This is what worries the party and Accian. They all worry that paradise can only be reached after you're dead.

bars, but for those in the know, it is clear that this is a prison. The Saviour will lead the chosen people to paradise.

Demjana can't keep her attention on the droning voice of the old man and she wanders outside. In the courtyard she sees Raven training her hunting dogs. Then she sees how five Barovian soldiers enter the courtyard. She flees into the temple, rushes through and exists through a backdoor. Raven also spots the soldiers. She enters the temple as well, to warn her fellows.

As Raven enters the temple, she sees Laurent and Scott talking to an old man and Demjana exiting through a back door. Raven takes the time to warn Laurent, Scott and Fyodor. Laurent quickly flees as well. He takes the same door as Demjana and then stands with her in a small alley between the temple building and the stables.

Fyodor tells Scott and Raven that he will protect them from the Barovian soldiers, as he is protected by his God. Together with Scott and Raven he walks into the courtyard to confront the soldiers. In quick Barovian the soldiers bark at Fyodor. Scott and Raven can't follow the rapid angry words; they only pick up snatches such as: "Count Strahd", "Demjana Farfar of Zeidenburg" and "decapitation". Fyodor keeps the soldiers at a distance. Then one of them grabs his sword. A worried Scott and Raven also reach for their weapons. But Fyodor takes action first. He mumbles a bit and then makes a gesture with his hand at the soldiers, as if waving them away. Without another word the soldiers turn around and march away, they leave the temple complex.

Scott wonders how Fyodor was able to turn the soldiers away. He must be more powerful than he looks. Now the group understands that they are safe again, they come out of hiding. They gather at the courtyard and wonder what happened exactly.

Demjana says: "Count Strahd must be very much in love with me." To which Scott replies: "And how often has he seen you exactly?" To which her answer is: "I don't know."

Scott and Laurent want to remain at the temple for the moment, since it seems that Fyodor is able to keep Count Strahd and his minions at bay.

The party asks Fyodor how he was able to keep the soldier of the Count at bay. He tells them that he ordered the soldiers to leave. They will not return for some time. He adds that: "Demjana is one of the disciples of Accian the Saviour. She may not fall into the hands of the devil Strahd. As long as she and the rest of the followers of Accian remain in the temple, you will be safe from the devil Strahd."

In the mean time, Accian has retreated to a quiet place in the woods surround the village of Vallaki. He went in a southerly direction, back to the area of the Petrovich home. By means of his ring he tries to make a connection to the Morninglord. This works and an unworldly voice talks to him.

Accian has a short conversation with the Morninglord through the ring. He asks after his background and descent. The Morninglord tells him that Accian is the only true son of the Morninglord, but Fyodor and Margareta are his true worldly parents. Due to a sacred ritual Fyodor was filled with the divine essence of the Morninglord when he made a sacred marriage with Margareta.

A very impressed Accian asks the Morninglord what He wants with his son. He tells Accian that he is the Saviour and that his first task is to gain more followers. As he will lead the followers of the Morninglord into paradise, it would be best if there were many followers. Accian is very impressed with this important task.

Session 30

1 June 751 BC; Temple of the Morninglord, Barovia.

The party is still the guest of the cult of the Morninglord and is in their temple complex. Demjana wants to leave, even though it seems as if High priest Fyodor can protect her from the advances of Count Strahd. She does want to stay in a place where the soldiers know where to find her.

Laurent wants to go look for Accian. It is very unlike him to just take off. He is worried something will happen to Accian. On the other hand, Accian disappeared into the woods of his own free will and Laurent does not want to risk himself for the adult and supposedly responsible Accian. Scott agrees with him. Raven suggest to search for Accian anyway, but return to the safety of the temple before dark.

The party sets out to go and find Accian. Raven takes her dogs. When they set forth, they can find the tracks of Accian's horse without problem, but they cannot see the tracks of the priests that set out after Accian.

The party follows Accian's tracks to the south. After a while they meet with Dymtris Petrovich, who is very surprised to meet them. He thought that they were on the run from Count Strahd. He saw Accian earlier, who was very brusque and did not want to talk to him. He wonders if the party had a fight with Accian.

The party follows the tracks of Accian and leaves Dymtris behind. Raven wonders if Accian is somehow enchanted so he does not want to leave this place. Demjana wonders if Accian can be found at all. Raven wants to leave Accian behind. He got himself into this trouble. The party wants to give up the search as the darkness approaches. Demjana worries that they will never find Accian again. Laurent says that he will not miss Accian. He does not want to spend the night outside. Demjana asks Laurent if he cannot use his magical powers to find Accian.

The party returns to Vallaki and the temple. They regret the fact that they have not found Accian and that he seems to be lost to them. As they approach the temple again, they again feel slightly nauseous again. They notice that the temple is about 750 meters away. Raven wonders about this strange feeling and she tries to test by riding a circumference around the temple. She concludes that at a distance of about 750m. around the temple there seems to be a sort of area that causes nausea. She wonders if it is some sort of barrier. Is it supposed to keep things in, or out? She wishes for the presence of Accian, as he could explain all of this. Laurent wants to share this discovery with Fyodor.

The party wants to search for Accian in the morning. If he is still alive by then.

Fyodor explains that the feelings of nausea and dizziness are caused by the presence of the Morninglord in the holy temple. The Morninglord is present in the temple and Accian is His instrument. The party is somewhat impressed with these words.

Laurent realises suddenly that their plans of escape are a bit problematic. He realises that towards the north of Barovia lies the Shadow Rift and that no one who has entered that strange place has ever returned.

Demjana wonders what she must do. She can never beat Count Strahd on her own, yet the party seems reluctant to help her in her noble mission of freeing the Gundarakites from his oppression.

Then, just before darkness falls, Accian returns to the temple complex. His friends are very worried about him and ask him a lot of questions. He tells them that he needed a little privacy to think things over. Raven says: "You are starting to sound as weird as that Fyodor and that nasty Morninglord." Accian replies: "I find the Morninglord to be very nice and kind. I summoned Him and He spoke to me through my ring." The party reacts with great surprise to

this statement. Raven says: “Your raven talks to you, your ring talks to you, are you feeling all right?”

Accian goes on to reveal that the Morninglord told him that Count Strahd was an undead vampire, who lived off the blood of living victims. The women in the party become very upset at this revelation. Especially as Demjana understands the full horror of the marriage she almost entered into.

Accian wants to speak to his father Fyodor. Laurent follows him into the temple. Accian reveals to Fyodor that he has spoken directly to the Morninglord. He revealed to Accian that he is the Morninglords' only son, brought into the world by Fyodor and Margareta. Fyodor is surprised that the Morninglord has revealed this to Accian, but he does not deny it. He tries to convince Accian to obey him, since he is Accian's father. This does not work. Although Accian has gotten signs on all sides that he is special in some way and has a great future before him, he still feels rebellious and wants to fight his destiny.

Laurent is very impressed by all these revelations. Accian wants to know what it means to be the Saviour and the son of the Morninglord. Fyodor says that they must wait for the revelations of the Morninglord. Accian will lead the faithful from this prison into paradise; how he will do that will be revealed in time. Accian is deeply distrustful, he thinks that he is being used and that paradise is some sort of afterlife. He does not want to die just yet.

Accian and Laurent join the rest of the party again and tell them what they just heard. Raven says: “I don't like gods, the only man of god I even encountered was Brother Samael and he was very corrupt.” Accian says: “I want to keep my promise to Demjana; I want to help her free her brother, or help her find a way out of this country, whatever she wants.” Accian further states that he thinks that the wolf, who badly beat Scott a few days back, was none other than Count Strahd himself. He wants to do some further research into vampires in Borca. He thinks that they will be safe from the Count there.

Demjana says: “It is still not too late for me to accept the marriage proposal of the Count. That way I can sacrifice myself to his dark lusts and you can rescue my brother.” Raven replies: “What a good idea!” Accian wonders how the rest of the party will be able to leave Castle Ravenloft with Demjana's brother in tow. Demjana wonders if it would be possible to ask for amnesty for her brother as a wedding gift from her husband to be. Accian wonders if it is possible that Count Strahd might have an Achilles heel, where he can be hit and incapacitated. Demjana answers: “I am the weak spot in his defences.” She further feels that it is up to Accian to find the weapon which will kill the count.

Demjana wonders whether the information that the count is a vampire is correct, since he has not yet tried to bite her. She goes further to state that marriages are made for the purpose of having legitimate offspring. If the count wants to marry her, it is because he wants an heir, and therefore he does not want to kill her.

Raven recaps the arguments: “Demjana will accept the marriage proposal from Count Strahd. She and the rest of us will enter Castle Ravenloft as the bride and her entourage. While Demjana is busy consummating the marriage, we try to rescue Mikhail from the dungeons and then we run like hell for the border.” Laurent condemns this as a suicide mission, but it would be a heroic mission, worthy of a ballad. It would be all for the best if Accian could come up with a way to really hurt the count.

Demjana wonders if the party could count on the support of Fyodor or Boyar Alexei in this mission. Accian thinks that they will not be able to help much. Accian however wants to know more about the strange knife that Count Strahd gave to Demjana. He looks through his belongings for the dagger, but he is unable to find.

Accian decides that he wants to go to Levkarest in Borca to do some more research into the nature of vampires. Demjana wants to leave as soon as possible to be safe from the

count. She wants to leave immediately. The rest of the party forbids her to travel by night. She suggests to leave in the morning, but to avoid the usual paths.

The party finally goes to sleep on the beds that are made available to them in the sleeping quarters of the temple complex. Soon they fall into a deep sleep. Then around midnight, they are suddenly roughly awakened by a thunderous roar, as if lightning has struck the temple.

Everybody wakes up. Demjana runs screaming from the building into the courtyard, dressed only in her nightgown. The rest follows her quickly. Then they notice the earth trembles as with an earthquake. This is followed by another thunderous roar.

The priests and priestesses all run towards the temple, which emits a glow which seems to promise safety. The party soon follows. In the temple Fyodor stands before the altar. He leans heavily on his staff and seems to be lost in concentration. The light that comes from the temple seems to be coming from him. His followers kneel around him and start to pray to the Morninglord to grant strength to Fyodor. Fyodor seems too weak to acknowledge the presence of the party.

Another thunderous roar strikes the temple; the ground starts to shake again. Fyodor seems to sag under the onslaught, but he manages to stand upright again, but he leans more heavily on his cane. He mumbles: "Oh he is strong; I must not let him through."

Accian asks one of the praying priests what is going on. The priests stop praying to answer Accian's question: "Hail Accian, it is the devil Strahd, he tries to enter our temple, but Fyodor holds him back."

Another strike of power lets the temple tremble. Fyodor sags to his knees. Accian goes to help his worldly father. As he touches the shoulder of his father, Fyodor finds the strength to rise again. The light that emanates from Fyodor also starts to emanate from Accian. The light grows even stronger. The continuous shaking of the earth stops and so do the strikes of power. From the darkness outside the temple sounds a terrible scream.

Accian and his father Fyodor still stand in the warm golden glow. Then the voice of the Morninglord sounds: "Behold my one true son, Accian the Saviour!" Then the glow abruptly disappears. All the priests and priestesses fall to their knees and shout: "All hail Accian, our Saviour!" This display of divinity and loyalty also inspires Laurent; he falls to his knees too and declares himself to be a follower of Accian the Saviour.

The rest of the party looks on in astonishment.

Jennifer's Ravenloft Campaign Session 31

Introduction

With great sadness I must say that this will be most likely the last session ever with my Ravenloft group. After more than 18 months of playing with a group of 6 people, who became friends in that short time, the mists are finally lifting in Nijmegen and our little Ravenloft group will be no more. Three of the five players had less and less time to play and after such a long time of playing once every two weeks I did not feel like removing old members of the group and finding new members. So we decided to disband the group. Perhaps I will start a new Ravenloft group in the future, but for now this is the last time I write up a session.

So as you read this, let your thoughts also dwell on the characters, old and new, brave and cowardly, good and bad. Who remembers Samael the corrupted priest, or Darien the weird wizard? The accomplishments of Scott?

Session 31

1 June 751 BC, The temple of the Morning Lord, Vallaki, Barovia.

It is midnight in the night of 1 and 2 June. The party is still dumbstruck in the temple of the Morning Lord. The Morning Lord has protected the congregation from the attacks of Count Strahd⁵ and has spoken to announce Accian the Arcanist as his true born son. Laurent the Bard was so impressed by that that he has announced that he will be a disciple of Accian for the rest of his life⁶. He lies on his belly on the temple floor and tries to kiss the hem of Accian's nightshirt, much to Accian's embarrassment.

Demjana the Thief thinks it is sweet that Laurent has converted to the faith of the Morning Lord. She is very grateful to Accian and the Morning Lord for protecting her from the assault of Count Strahd. Raven the Ranger and Scott the Avenger are deeply disturbed. They worry about Accian and the prophesy surrounding him and the Morning Lord. What will happen to Accian? And they also worry about the sudden conversion of Laurent.

Scott: "Out there it is Count Strahd and in here it is Accian, I do not know which is worse!"

Demjana: "We have nothing to lose if we follow Accian, he is after all, the savior."

Raven wants to go back to bed as it becomes clear that the show is over for tonight. The rest follows her example. That night Raven has a dream. She sees a man who wears the sword of the Petrovich Family on his back. In Barovia the man battles against evil forces, but he cannot win. Then he builds an altar and prays. A powerful creature appears and helps the man in his battles and he seems to win more and more of them. Then the dream changes. The man has grown old, weary and worried. He sits by his altar and the creature seems to have disappeared⁷. Then Raven wakes up.

Raven worries a bit. What did this strange dream mean? Does it have to do with the Morning Lord? But the Morning Lord is a creature of pure gold, as can be seen in the temple friezes. Raven puts her worries behind her and goes to look for a breakfast. There she has an-

⁵ But not really, it was all illusion to trick Accian and his party. It would be useless for Strahd to attack a temple which was so well protected.

⁶ A true conversion.

⁷ The old man is the first of the Petrovich family, a paladin from a strange world, he summoned a celestial being to his aid, which of course was no longer able to leave. In search of an escape, it left the old man.

other shock. She sees Accian and he is completely bald! He has lost his hair, his eyebrows and eyelashes and his facial hair, all in one night, what could have caused this?⁸

Demjana is surprised when she sees Accian's new look and worried, will this happen to her as well if she stays long here? Laurent is impressed by this sacrifice Accian made. As a disciple of Accian he decides to shave his hair off completely as well.

Suddenly Demjana grabs a knife from the table, threatening the rest of the party, she is afraid they will force her to shave her hair as well. Then she sees that she is not holding a simple eating knife, but the beautiful silver knife she was gifted by Count Strahd. She has a screaming fit⁹. Scott thinks that this is all due to the manipulations of Quoth the raven, who he still does not trust.

Demjana is still in the throes of her fit. Screaming on the top of her lungs she demands that everything returns to normal. She wants to leave this temple right now! She starts to attract the attention of the priests and priestesses in the refectory. Raven grabs Demjana and puts her under her arm and carries her, still screaming, outside. Outside Raven threatens to throw Demjana into the well to cool down¹⁰. With the threat of wet clothes looming over her, she calms down again.

When Demjana is calmed again, she tells the rest how she came by this knife. She got it from Count Strahd and as she realized that she left it behind. Accian fills in the bits she leaves out and tells the rest that Demjana tried to abandon the knife in the library of the Petrovich home, when they were guests there.

Raven: "You left your knife behind at our gracious hosts?"

Demjana: "Well, the knife is able to take care of itself!"

Then Raven suggests to make for the border as fast as possible again. Scott wants to discuss this knife with Father Fyodor, as he seems to be rather knowledgeable. The party goes to visit Fyodor, who still rests in his rooms after the ordeal of last night. A priest only wants to admit Accian. For a moment it seems as if Accian will go along with the wishes of the priest, but then he says with a thunderous voice: "Stand aside! I am the son of the Morning Lord, your saviour and if I want to visit my earthly father with my followers, you cannot stop me!" Rather shocked the priests stands aside. The rest of the party follows Accian, surprised about this explosion¹¹.

When the group stands in the suite of Fyodor, they can see that he lives a lot more luxurious than they might have expected from the looks of the rest of the temple. His suite is furnished with all comforts, with pillows and tapestries and rich curtains¹². Fyodor looks old and weak as he lies among the thick blanket and fluffy pillows on his large bed.

Now that Demjana understands how rich he is, she looks at him with different eyes. Scott and Raven are not surprised, after their adventures with Samael, they have little faith in religious figures and this decadence does not surprise them.

Demjana presents Fyodor with her knife and her problem. He tells her about Count Strahd and vampires. Demjana now thinks that perhaps she can wound Strahd with this knife. Even though it is dangerous, she now wants to keep this knife.

Fyodor wants to send Accian into neighbouring Invidia, and rally the Gundaraks there with words of the Morning Lord. He will be able to gain more followers there, spread the word and be safe from Count Strahd. Demjana also wants to return to Gundarak. With the help of the Gundarak resistance movement and Accian, she might take up the battle against

⁸ A failed powers check actually. Accian reached level 5 last session and an Arcanist has 5% chance every level to fail a powers check. He will slowly turn into a were-snake, for his traitorous attitude.

⁹ Failed fear check.

¹⁰ Poor Raven, she always threatens and really hates Demjana, but she is too honorable to follow through.

¹¹ Quoth the Raven slowly takes over Accian, substituting his own wishes for those of Accian.

¹² And still they do not pick up that this cult is not all it seems.

the Barovian oppressor again and rescue her brother and lover from the dungeons of Castle Ravenloft. She declares herself to be a follower of Accian as well¹³. Raven wants to travel to Invidia, which lies west of Barovia.

Laurent: "Lets think rationally about this, what would Accian do?" Accian wants, just like Raven to travel to Invidia, away from Barovia. He wants to meet up with the Gundarak enclave in Invidia.

Demjana drops her knife from Count Strahd in the well, so she will be rid of it. Unseen by the rest of the party, she has kept the knife and threw another knife into the well.

Then the party leaves for Invidia. They reach Zeidenburg after dark, but they decide to push on into Invidia well into the night. As soon as they have crossed the borders, they feel the difference. The air seems to be warmer here. There are more deciduous trees and the smell of pine is less prominent.

The party makes a camp by the side of the road. As soon as they have finished their dinner, they hear the sound of a small group of marching men. A bit later a group of five uniformed men walks into the camp. They wear the uniform of the Gundarak army, so long defunct in Barovia.

Demjana thinks fast and takes the initiative, as she is also the only one to speak Gundarak. She introduces the party as fugitives from Barovia. She is very happy to find evidence of an organised army. She hopes to be able to use this army in her battle against Strahd.

The leader of the patrol is happy to have found and tells them to follow him to Castle Hunadora, where they will meet the rest of the army and the leader of their struggle against the evil usurper Mallochio Aderre. After some questions from the party the leader tells them the following. Gabrielle Aderre ruled Invidia. Then one evil day her son Mallochio rose up against her. After a fierce battle Gabrielle was beaten and suffered a sort of breakdown due to the betrayal of her son. With the help of her lover Matton she became strong again. Since that day she battles her son from Castle Hunadora together with the help of the Gundarak enclave.

Demjana tells the leader of the patrol that Accian is the son of the Morning Lord. The Gundarak soldiers hardly react, they have only vaguely heard of the faith of the Morning Lord, which is mainly a Barovian cult. The rest of the party doubts joining with the soldiers, Raven thinks they will soon be 'saved' by Barovian troops. Demjana does not think it a good idea of Gabrielle to use the soldiers to battle her son. She should use the Gundarak troops to do battle against Count Strahd. She will work to bring this about. Scott is happy to see the soldiers are normal people and not vampires or werewolves and as such will die normally.

Very late in the night, the party arrives at Castle Hunadora. In the dark they feel more than they can see the castle loom over them. Once inside they see the organisation is efficient. Their horses are taken by servants and they are taken to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle is a beautiful woman, she is colourfully and revealingly dressed. She seems to be about 30. There is an instant animosity between Demjana and Gabrielle, the castle is not big enough for two gorgeous women. Scott and Raven wonder how it is possible that she has an adult son able to lead men in battle against his mother¹⁴.

Demjana takes the initiative again. She kisses the hand of Gabrielle and introduces the group. Gabrielle tells them she leads the Gundaraks in Castle Hunadora to victory over the Usurper, her son Mallochio. She is happy that the party will aid that cause. Then she sees it is late and the party is tired. She lets a servant take the party to rooms to sleep.

On the way to their bedrooms, Demjana tries to pump the servant for information on Gabrielle. He tells her that there has been conflict between Gabrielle and her son for the past 6

¹³ Not a true conversion, as Demjana is extremely selfcentered.

¹⁴ And then they drop it, instead of thinking this through. Even if Gabrielle had this son when she was 14, he can now be only 16, rather young to be a general leading troops.

years¹⁵. After this long day everyone falls deeply asleep. Raven has another dream. She dreams of the man she has seen before. He is still old and worried. But now he is attacked by the winged being he summoned. The being kills him. It tries to take the sword, but he cannot touch it. Then the being leaves. After a while the family of the old man approaches and take him and sword away¹⁶.

3 june

The next morning the group wakes and has breakfast in the kitchens of Castle Hunadora. Raven asks Demjana if it is possible for her to teach Raven Barovian, to help in the battle against Strahd. Demjana does not want to comply at first, since she feels it would be better to learn Gundaraks, to help in the battle against Strahd. Then Demjana thinks again and offers to teach Barovian in return for an unnamed favour. Raven is not as stupid as she looks and declines this offer.

A servant appears to take the group to Gabrielle again. In the same room where she had received them yesterday, she receives them again. Demjana immediately tries to take the initiative again. She introduces Accian as the saviour from the faith of the Morning Lord. She goes on to say it is the duty of all Gundaraks to support him in his battle against the Barovian oppressors.

Gabrielle takes this as an attempt to wrest power away from her, which she will not tolerate. She does not plan at all to sacrifice her small army in a battle with the powerful Count Strahd. She addresses Accian directly, seeing that he is the most powerful person in the group: "Welcome Accian the saviour, I am honoured that you want to tie yourself to the battle that I and the Gundarak forces in Invidia waga against the Usurper, my son Mallochio. Your powers will tip the scales of the balance in our favour."

Accian says that he and his group of followers are a neutral party in this conflict between mother and son. He wants to remain so¹⁷. Then Gabrielle squints at him and tries again to win him over¹⁸. Then she tells him of the cruelties of her son and tries to offer Accian and his followers her protection against her son. Accian does not fall for that either. Then Gabrielle tries to get Accian to deliver a message to an agent of hers, Matton, who is on a mission in Karina. Accian agrees to this.

Throughout this exchange Demjana tried again and again to interrupt and to get the conversation back on track to the was against Barovian oppressors. Finally Gabrielle snaps and commands Demjana to be silent¹⁹, to which she complies. After that Demjana pushes her luck even further and gives Gabrielle a note in which she says that Gabrielle has a bad sense of dress²⁰.

The end

Unfortunately the ending is rather abrupt. Perhaps we can come together one more time to see how this all plays out. What is going on with the Petrovich Family? What is the connection to the Morning Lord, if any? Is the Morning Lord cult a good cult, as they try to appear to be? Will we ever find out?

¹⁵ And no-one picks this up. If we go with Gabrielle a mother at 14, the boy must have been 10 when the battle started. This would be impossible, so what is going on? No one asks.

¹⁶ A clear hit, the celestial went mad, killed the man that summoned him, and left. The being cannot touch the Petrovich Family sword. So what is going on with the Petroviches? With their secret underground religion.

¹⁷ Quoth steps in to protect Accian from this woman.

¹⁸ Failed evil eye attempt.

¹⁹ With the evil eye.

²⁰ Demjana the suicidal.