

REBELS UNTIL THE END! JOËL'S CAMPAIGN

GENERAL NOTES –THE PC'S BACKGROUND

It is October 747. The heroes are Gundarakites, and based in Zeidenburg, Barovia (ex-Gundarak).

A few years before, Strahd XI sent his armed forces through a large part of Gundarak and conquered it in a bloody but short war. Barovian's occupying forces have installed repression and injustice. For example, a Barovian farmer settling in the area will pay fewer taxes than a native Gundarakite.

In Zeidenburg, the heroes have day jobs that provide them regular basic income, and to hide their adventurer's nature from the Barovian's occupying forces (By law, Gundarakites can't carry a weapon larger than a dagger).

All heroes were part of Ardonk Szerieza's closest friends in the rebellion, but they took their distance in the last months, as Ardonk is becoming more and more reckless and dangerous for his rebel troupers (*Kargatane's Book of Secrets*, by Stuart Turner. I changed a few dates to have the rebellion start earlier than canon timeframe).

A month before the campaign actually starts, the following events of the creation of the Effigy of Ivan Szimin golem (see the *BoSecrets* again) happened:

- Death of the boyar Ivan Szimin by the hand of Ardonk. Ardonk stole the boyar's medallion as a symbolic decoration for the effigy. The effigy is set on fire;
- Mysterious death of Stepan Klizera, one of the rebels who made the effigy: while the other rebels ran when the effigy was set on fire, Stepan stayed behind for his horse and was found dead the next morning, burned to char;
- Unknown to the players: the effigy is animated as a wood golem. It plans to stalk Gundarakite rebels and destroy them; and lastly
- Heavy repression of the Gundarakite by the Barovians followed the boyar's murder.

Four Gundarakites rebels participated in the effigy burning: Ardonk, Sako Vich, Alistair Deforêt (see *Barton Deforet*, from *Forgotten Children netbook*, yes, by Stu also! I changed his location and background to make him an active Gundarakite rebel) and the late Stepan Klizera.

So none of the heroes were involved in the boyar's murder and they only heard about it from their former associates. The death of Stepan and the repression were the turning points for the players to leave their active role in the Freedom Fighters. However, they are still friends with the rebel leader.

WHAT DO THE PLAYERS KNOW ABOUT RAVENLOFT

I haven't given my players the PHB for I think it says too much... You can hit me if you want!

They started as ignorant low level Gundarakites rebels, so my opinion is that I can't give them a book telling all about the setting ☺

Other than Borca and Invidia, they don't even know the name of the other countries around Barovia !

I prefer to give them the setting information slowly, by meeting knowledgeable persons. For example, when they think a PC might be infected by lycanthropy, I had them meeting with Tara Kolyana who told them what to do to be safe. It was a fun part of the game and they had a cool encounter with an NPC they can count as a trusted friend from now on.

It's much better doing it that way IMHO, then trusting players not to use information their PCs should not know.

So upon start, the only thing they got when they started is the Gazetteer chapter on Barovia (with many tasty bits removed, of course – no darklord info, dread possibilities sidebar, etc.), the madness / fear / horror checks mechanics and the restrictions to their spells / class. That's it. The rest, they learned from the games.

For those interested in the design of this campaign, I'd refer them to my article in the USS 2003: "Notes on the 'making of' a campaign."

PC SHORT DESCRIPTIONS

- ◆ **Mac Razbunare Kasscu** (Wiz2/Druid2) is a Gundarakite noble (his real name is Machiavel Machiavelescu) whose family was erased by Strahd's forces when Gundarak was invaded. He now lives anonymously as an herbalist in Zeidenburg. He has a small fortune hidden somewhere in the woods (player: Jean-François H.).
- ◆ **Exigu** (Halfling, Ranger2/Rogue2), a nature lover, lives as a hunter in the forest around Zeidenburg, with his dog Patu. His ranger mentor is Hobert Mannon (*Book of Secrets's Light in the Fog article*) This PC is often living as some kind of spectator in human societies and thus do not share the same ethics as his friends. (player: Sylvain O.).
- ◆ **Petrak** (Cleric3 (Ezra) / Fighter2) was an orphan raised by the church of Ezra. He has a second job in a Zeidenburg inn. He is a red head (player: Martin L.).
- ◆ **Varadan Kilucru** (Monk3/Sorcerer2) was raised in a monk order that was destroyed when Strahd's army took over the territory. His hatred of the occupying forces is immense. Also works in an inn (player: Jean-Guy M.).
- ◆ **Virevan Cheveudru** (Fighter3/Cleric3) a smith who repairs carts wooden wheels. His house is located near that of Mac Razbunare's) (player: Yvon T.).
- ◆ **Austizel Nailo**: an elf (wiz3/Ranger 2) whose Sithicus background remains to be developed (player: Benoit T.).

However for different reasons, they have in common that hate of Strahd and of Barovian's occupying force in general.

GAME SESSION ONE: EFFIGY OF IVAN SZIMIN (PART 1)

October 26th, 747

At noon, a small boy (Gusztav Demetriu) comes to deliver a message at the Bloated Leech Inn, where Varadan is working. In the message, Ardonk (their former partner in the rebellion against Barovians) request a meeting with the heroes tonight, at his home.

The players arrive there just after sunset. All the major figures in the Zeidenburg rebel movement are there: Ardonk, Ethelhild Szerieza (Ardonk's sister, a Morninglord cleric, to her brother's displeasure), Sako Vich, Stepan Klizera's widow, and Hobert Mannon (*Lights in the Fog, BoSecrets. He is in the mentor of Exigu*).

DM's note: still unknown by then is the fact that the effigy was now 'raised' as a wooden golem. The golem is in the nearby wood, watching Ardonk's house and taking notes of whom else is associating with Ardonk...

With his usual serious and passionate tone, Ardonk informs the heroes that a farm burned last night. The fire appeared in the roof of the farmhouse. It is the house of Sako Vich, one of the rebels that burned the effigy on that fateful night. He, his wife and six children are well.

Ardonk propose that some Barovians saw them the night of the effigy burning and are trying to hurt them. It is not official Barovian militia as they would have been arrested by now.

The players take these decisions:

- the Sako Vich family will stay a few days in Ardonk's house for their safety, but they have to find a new home as Ardonk is most probably watched by the Barovian government.
- Ardonk and Sako can take care of themselves. Ethelhild Szerieza is there also. The players will accompany Alistair Deforêt, the other rebel involved in the effigy burning, who live in an isolated house north of Zeidenburg.

Before going there, they retrieve from their home armour, shield and weapons, and stay away from patrol's eyes (by Barovian law, Gundarakites are forbidden to possess weapon longer then a dagger).

They arrive at Alistair's house by 10h30 pm. They are greeted by Alistair's oldest son from a first wedding, Bartolomeus, 17 years old. Six years after his former wife died, Alistair wed again with the lovely Anita. She is presently asleep. Alistair explains that she is tired as she is expecting a child very soon.

DM's note: unknowingly, the player's decision was excellent for me! I was able to sprinkle hints of the Deforêt house tragic past (see the Forgotten Children netbook 'Barton DeForêt' article and the adventure proposed with it. I planned to DM this short ghost story adventure in the near future. In a nut shell, Anita will soon deliver her child, but this child will be in fact the ghost of her first child, Barton, who died of wolves attack).

Alistair goes to sleep. They are left with Bartolomeus, who is very impressed of the player's hero skills.

The players watch the house's surroundings by the windows, watching for possible intruders in the property. One of them wants to go in the attic, to take position at a window he saw when coming from the road. But Bartolomeus seems awkward by that decision and say 'I'm not sure my parents would like you to go there...' The players convince him it's only for a better watch of the house.

At night they make the following observations:

- They see three wolves, pelt turning to white for the winter, curiously smelling at the house. Then they go near a tree, sniffing its base and scratching the earth for a moment. Then they are disturbed by Exigu's dog barking and they leave. The next day, the heroes will go out and see a small cross with the name 'Barton' on it. Out of respect for the family secrecy, they do not ask Alistair.
- Compared to the other very dusty objects in the attic, the baby crib has much less dust on it, suggesting it has been moved recently (may be less than a year ago).

October 27th, 747

The next day, they visit Sako Vich's burned house, to investigate. They find nothing of interest in the house, but around it, in the backyard, they find traces in the light snow: a snow sleigh was used last night.

The rangers of the group follow the traces: it goes in the wood, and it is lost when the sleigh user went in a creek's icy bed, north east of Zeidenburg. Farther, the traces leave the icy bed and goes to a rocky road where they are again nearly lost. This now forgotten rocky road was used by wood cutters and links the creek to the main road between Zeidenburg and Teufeldorf. There are many sleigh traces suggesting the one using the sleigh has done it often in the last days.

Nothing else happens that day. Sako Vich and his family are offered shelter by the widow of Stepan Klizera. The players help them move their things from Ardonk's to Klizera's. It is quite easy as Klizera is a neighbour to Ardonk.

They decide to get some sleep, as they will be investigating again at night. At 10pm, they go in the forest, near the icy creek, but hidden from it by the evergreen trees. They wait for the sleigh user.

DM's note: since they were waiting in the forest at night, in game, I then closed all lights in the gaming room but my own table light behind my screens. The only other source of light in the room was a candle on the player's side. Add mystery music and it was great. This trick worked well to make the players feel the atmosphere of being alone at night in the forest.

October 28th, 747

At 1am, they hear a sleigh noise, going very fast on the creek's ice toward their position. In the low night light, they see a very low crouching figure on a sleigh, propelling itself on the ice with a staff, like if in a canoe. The staff-like object makes a soft sound, like if a pillow was touching the ground. However the low and powerful 'thud' sound it makes when it 'rows' suggest great strength. They can't see in the dark so they can't identify the sleigh user. What strikes the observers is the angle of the members using the staff-like propeller – the angles are not right,

unnatural. Something golden flickered on the feeble moonlight but they could not see what it was (*DM's note: the boyar's medallion*). The nature of the sleigh user puzzles them...

Later, around 3 am, they see the light of a great fire in the distance ... in the direction of Ardonk's or Klizera's house! However, they decide to keep their observation post in the wood and have another look at the sleigh user when it will come back, and perhaps attack it...

Half an hour later, they hear a sleigh noise coming from the direction of the blaze. This time, it is very different: the figure on it is fiery red, like burning coal seen from a distance. The golden medallion with Strahd's heraldry is seen on it!

Eyes wide by horror, the hidden heroes realized that the creature is in fact the effigy that burned on the night the boyar died!

DM's note: It was near the end of session one. I then switched to the great 'Eyes wide shut' movie scary piano music, closed my own light, making the room very dark, and I told them the following cut scene – taken from Stu's article and saved for this purpose:

“Meanwhile, Ivan Szimin struggled to his window, desperate for one last look at his assailant. Holding one hand to his wound to stem the flow of blood, he used the other to pull his head up to the window. There, he saw the night lit up by a bonfire. No, not a bonfire—a burning statue, which appeared to be looking directly at him through a black knothole in the wooden head. As he caught a glimpse of gold on the torso of the construction, realization dawned upon him. Filled with a rage and hatred of Gundarakites like he had never known before, Ivan's last moments were spent staring into the eye of the effigy...”

It was great! The players were quite surprised by the story twist...

GAME SESSION TWO: EFFIGY OF IVAN SZIMIN (PART 2)

After letting the golem pass in front of them in the woods, they decide to follow its track to find the place where it hides during the day. It goes back again to the rocky isolated road, and to the main road, going toward Zeidenburg for a time, but quickly going toward the south, through the forest again.

While alone in the forest, pursuing the creature, they hear one wolf in the distance ...

(DM's note: instead of music, I used randomly placed single wolf howling sound as background sound from now on. That was excellent to make them uneasy – the Barovia woods are no safe place after all...).

The traces in the wood go near a large house, known to them as boyar's Cosmin Azlu's ! (*DM's note on my political Zeidenburg, there is a burgomaster, supported by three boyars overseeing the town's surroundings*). The traces pass over a high stone fence, and on the other side the players see it go to a barrack on the boyar's property, some kind of barn. The wolves are now nearer, and now more wolves respond to it ... Some lights are now seen in the boyar's house, and the players see guards looking in the forest direction, probably because of the wolves howling. They do not see the hidden heroes.

Because of the action nearby, the players do not enter the barrack to confront the golem, and instead enter the city, to get away from the wolf infested woods.

They pass in front of the Lyssa Von Zarovich manor, well lighted at this hour of night (around 4 am)... About five or six persons from this manor are looking outside toward the forest too ...
(DM's note: Lyssa is too cool not to let her linger in the background. I know her ghost age background is cheesey, but I think she is a cool 'pop star' character. I have nothing planned for her but she might pop in later!)

They know the wolves sometimes enter the outskirt of the city when they are hungry so they move to Mac Razbunare's house for shelter.

On their way, while avoiding the possible Barovians patrols, they see a crouching figure, close to the ground. They see its respiration fumes in the cold. After investigation, it is found to be Lazlo Sipulu, a well known drunkard, lying there. Knowing him to be easy meal for the eventual wolves entering the city, they try to move him, but then he starts to sing loudly drinking songs... They give him wine to quiet him, and leave him in the back court of a house, safe from the wolves.

After a short sleep at the druid's house, they go investigate the forest around Cosmin Azlu's property: no fresh sleigh traces leave from there, so the creature is still there...

Then they went to investigate the fire lights they saw yesterday night: Stepan Klizera's house burned! From the people hanging around the burned house, they learn that Sako Vich died from a fight with a fire monster! He was outside trying to fight the flames when a fiery monster attacked him.

One of Sako Vich's oldest kid, Betriu Vich, saw his father bravely fight the monster, but the burning monster kind of bear hugged Sako and burned him to death. 'My father should not have fought it, I think he should have run...'

Another witness is a Barovian neighbour, Mr Disleanu (*that they nicknamed Laraieducul to make laugh those who speak French :*)). Sneering, Disleanu said that as a Gundarakite, he most probably deserved what happened to him, with other insults on the same theme. The players suppressed their anger and replied nothing. However, in this one way conversation, they learn one important thing: Sako threw his water bucket on the golem, and that seemed to affect it.

They go at Ardonk's. He is there, drinking alone, depressed. 'What have we done?', he say over and over ... Because he is inebriated they can't really have a conversation, so they leave his home.

Both widows and their children are now sheltered by Ethelhild, in the Morninglord church at the center of the city. It is considered by everybody as a safe place from the golem.

Sako Vich's funeral are set at 3 pm the same day.

(DM's note: one of the player's father died a month or so before the game, so I didn't play the funeral as the depressing thing I could, out of respect for him. With background funeral music, I just said that the funerals were touching and they would remember Sako as a good friend, a little simple minded perhaps, but good hearted. It was enough to make them feel what I wanted).

After the funerals, they go back to the creek, expecting the monster to go for Ardonk's house, and prepare their trap, with Ardonk's help: an unseen metal line wire across the creek to make it trip. They are ready with water bucket, weapons and armours and *magic weapon* spells.

October 29th, 747

Around 1h30 am, they hear the sleigh noise from afar, and start to cast *magic weapon* and other spells, making as few noise as possible. However, the golem hears them and thus do not fall for the wire trap. The golem attack and its high frame quickly begin to smoulder. In the second round, flames appear. The next round it is a flaming wooden golem, making those in combat suffer from the intense heat. The intense battle last 5 rounds and there is a casualty: Varadan the monk sorcerer falls dead near the end of the combat...

DM's note: I was quite surprised by the effectiveness of the players. I did not expect at all they would beat it. In fact, I expected them to flee the monster and leave the final combat for later, after more stalking from the creature.

The 'magic weapon' spell is definitively a good addition for well prepared low levels PCs!

Also, they learned that they are not always up to match with things I throw at them. That should (perhaps) make them more cautious next time. While it's not in my plans, it doesn't mean the golem can't be back later. In Ravenloft, dead things often come back! Mwahwahwah!

My suggested 3e stats for the golem:

This is in fact the first conversion I made from 2e to 3e, so it's probably not 100% by the rules as I wasn't very knowledgeable of the 3e books by then. The only thing missing is a few feats, I think.

Effigy of Ivan Szimin

Dread wood golem; CR 8; Large construct; HD 8+30; hp 55; Init +3 dex; Spd 30 ft (can't run), 60 ft on ice; AC 21 (+8 natural, +3 dex); Melee 2 slam +10 melee; 2d6+5 each; SA Fire damage, produce flame; SQ construct, spell immunity, damage reduction 10/+1, AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 13, Wis 2, Cha 3

Fire damage from immolation: see Stuart Turner's original article in the Book of Secrets

Produce flame 120 ft, as the spell

Zeitgeber: bonfire, see Stu's original article

Water weakness: throwing a bucket of water will inflict 1d8 points of damage

(for more info on the golem's ability and background, please refer to Stu's article in the [Book of Secrets](#)).

After the battle, they rush to Ethelhild's church, as per Ardonk's suggestion. Her only divine scroll is used to raise the monk back to life...

After the event of the night, the next day is spent sleeping at their job...

It is at the end of the afternoon that they see the new signs on the walls. Half-expecting another repression announcement from the burgomaster over the last day's event, they are pleased but puzzled to see instead announcements for a traveling show ...

The signs appeared in odd places, even on the front desk of the day sleeping Mac Razbunare, even if he and his pet wolf heard nothing entering or leaving the shop!

The signs said: 'The Carnival is coming' ...

GAME SESSION THREE: CARNIVAL IS COMING TO TOWN – THE NIGHT PEOPLE, PLUS AN ENCOUNTER WITH LORD VASIL VON HOLTZ.

DM's note: I'm introducing them to the Carnival, with the "Night People" adventure scenario (Carnival, p. 59). In another session, I introduced to Varadan's player the shy Blasse character: a shy, albino girl that nearly everybody shuns. Some even throw her small rocks or rotten fruits. Because of that, she seldom leave the Bloated Leech, where is exploited by the inn's owner. He makes her work hard for a meagre pay.

October 29th, 747

On the morning, the group is sitting at the Bloated Leech tavern, discussing the new signs. What is really odd is that nobody sees the same picture in the colourful, exotic drawings on the signs.

Just before going to bed, the druid summons rats and discretely sends these pests to Ardonk's Barovian neighbour, Mr Disleanu, to annoy him.

The next morning, they hear a commotion in town: many food shops of the market have been looted, of which Mr Natov's butcher shop. This morning, all the doors were locked as usual, so the merchants were wondering how the thieves got in.

One little boy, Jonas Demetriu, whose room window is on the market side, heard noise last night. He saw 'about twelve ghostly white dwarves' moving through the market. When the players investigate the back of the shops area where Jonas saw them, they find traces of small bare feet with short claws on them. And the traces often pass through solid walls of the looted shops!
(DM's note: the creatures are *Bakhna rakhnas*).

The druid's wolf and Exigu's dog smell something odd on the foot steps and they do not seem to recognize the odour.

They again follow the traces but they loose the path near the Gundar river. Back in the market, they find that the only looted places were food storages, even if traces are found behind other shops.

At night, at their usual hanging spot, they meet Hobert Mannon, and they share information on the day event. Hobert tells them he found similar traces near the other inn.

It is then that a grand carriage stops in front of the inn. A tall, blond person gets out of it walks in the Bloated Leech Inn. At first sight, this person is seen as an aristocrat that commands respect by his tall stature and the broad sword at his belt. He proudly bears Strahd's armoury on his vest and red velvet [cape](#).

After a moment of silence in the inn, a name is whispered while the newcomer looks around, as if searching for someone: 'Von Holtz! What is he doing here?'

After a moment, he sees the heroes and walk towards them ...

"Gentlemen, I am ... Lord Vasili Von Holtz, on a mission for Count Strahd, the eleventh to bear his grand name. We have heard of a battle in the forest, two nights ago. Tell me ... what you know of it ..."

The baffled heroes try at first to deny their implication in this matter, but Von Holtz is more and more inquisitive, giving more and more details about the Effigy fight.

They find Von Holtz is in fact looking after the boyar's medallion. Mac Razbunare gives the medallion to Strahd's messenger and tells him that he found it while taking a morning walk near the creek...

Von Holtz takes the medallion and tells Mac Razbunare not to be that humble, and that the group should be given public thanks about defeating such a threat to the town's safety. He thanks them on behalf of Strahd XI. He adds that they can ask him if they need the favour returned somehow in the future. He then departs the inn, leaving the players in awe and in fear of a Gundarakite public backlash over this Barovian mark of approval.

The rest of the inn do not seem to react badly to this encounter, and are in fact in awe that 'these guys defeated the flaming creature!'.

DM's note: the players never realised they met Strahd in person under the blond disguise of Vasili Von Holtz ☺. I planned this encounter to add a little public fame to the PCs, needed for later with the Evensong adventure.

Later, during the night, Varadan hears noise in the inn where he works. He spies white goblins looting the inn's pantry. As there are twelve goblins, he was planning to spy them and follow them to their lair. However, he hears noise from the stairs: an inn patron is coming down the stairs! The goblins hear it too and prepare their short weapons.

When the person is in view of the white goblins, they are struck in awe: Blasse the shy albino girl is as surprised to see them as they are seeing her. She let a loud horror cry that awoke the inn (and possibly a few houses around the Bloated Leech).

While shouts of surprises are heard from the second floors, Varadan attack the intruders with a *sleep* spell: four fall asleep. However, the others creatures start carrying them and they flee in the sleepy streets, in the Gundar river direction. The monk follows and a ten minutes street battle follows between him and the remaining goblins. In the end, five are killed and the monk brings one of them back to the inn to show the town what is looting the shops. When he goes back in the street to get the other killed Bakhna rakhnas, he finds the other bodies have disappeared...

October 30th, 747

The next morning, the monk shows everybody the dead Bakhna rakhna. The reaction of the town folk is anger: more shops have been looted this night and their reaction to the white monster is to make a link with Blasse. "They're all white! Like her! Like Blasse! She must call them here to avenge herself!" and so on.

Wishing to finish this enquiry, the players pass rest of the morning searching through the woods for the remaining Bakhna rakhnas.

Just before noon, when the players head back to town, they see an angry mob of about sixty persons in the market square. They are lynching Blasse! The rope is already tied on a tree, with the rope's end around her fragile neck. She is crying but do not resist the mob.

All this happens in front of Barovian soldiers, who clearly won't do anything to stop this lynching. They are in fact wagering how much time she will writhe on the rope.

The players try to save her by first negotiating her release but they are blocked by the angry mob, which is looking for seeing Blasse on the rope end. Before they reach her, someone kick the chair where she is and Blasse is now jerking on the rope, fighting to breathe.

It is then that a dagger is thrown at the tree branches and cut the rope. Blasse drops to the floor where Virevan gets her up and protects her. The mob had started yelling angrily when the rope was cut, but soon it was quiet on the market, as all the voices stopped nearly in unison.

Three strangers were now walking through the market square, and the angry citizens parted to let them pass. Two men with black and white painted faces were juggling menacingly with knives similar to the one that was thrown at the rope. But the one getting all attention is a tall lady, all dressed in men's clothes coloured black. In another occasion, all men would have been struck by her beauty and cascading long black hairs, but now all looked at her with fear: her battle sword was held in front of her and it was obvious she knew how to use it with deadly accuracy.

The Barovian soldiers looked at the newcomers in awe, and didn't really consider seizing her illegal weapon...

However, seeing the parting crowd, she sheathed the long black blade and takes Blasse's hands. She say "This is no longer your home. You do not belong here anymore. I can give you a new one." With that, the group leaves the market square and the mumbling mob disperses.

Passing in front of the heroes, she simply nod in appreciation of the help they gave Blasse. Walking with them through town, they introduce: the lady's name is Isolde and the pair is the Blade Brothers (the duo with sharp knives). The Blade Brothers look mute and Isolde isn't very talkative either, so they part quickly. Just before, she does not seem to recognize the Bakhna rakhna description made by the heroes.

Before leaving, Isolde tells them she is the Carnival mistress and she invites them to the Carnival tomorrow.

While the heroes look at the Carnival group walk toward the coloured tents being erected, they see Isolde walking to a post and grabbing a Carnival sign, and angrily tearing it to pieces, before resuming her walk toward the Carnival ...

The heroes then have a discussion over Carnival: should we let Blasse go in there? Are we sure it's safe? (*DM's note: one player had read the Carnival novel, and was assuming the Carnival to be an evil place led by an evil person ☺*).

In the afternoon, Virevan and Mac Razbunare have a surprise visit at the herbalist shop: Hermos the giant is at the door step! He is looking for Boccan Eyes mushroom (*DM's note: mushroom from Gaz I. One can see undead after consuming it*). It is for Isolde. This rare mushroom isn't sold at the herbalist shop, and it doesn't seem to surprise Hermos. He looks resigned.

They start talking about Carnival and Isolde. They learn from him that she is protecting Carnival since she arrived within the group, and that before that the Carnival was a bunch of refugees without any protection, badly welcomed everywhere and often never paid for their entertainment work.

Shown the Bakhna rakhna corpse, Hermos say he has never seen such a creature and offers that Dr Pacali of Carnival would be perhaps interested to stuff it and show it in his gallery of horrors? At the question about Blasse, Hermos answers that she will surely integrates well with the other troupers, and that everybody in Carnival is doing his part.

DM's note: Followed is a short visit of Carnival by the players. Simply said, it was a part of the game that turned bad... With the players bored ("A girl with squid arms? Ooooooh... OK, boring, next stall?"), it was a poor part of the game. They met Pacali but were not really listening to what he said about Isolde being evil, preferring to run around Carnival to see what the attractions were, but with the bored mood I described.

I tried like crazy to enter into dialogues with them but they were just running from a stand to another... I had a talk with the players afterward, telling them that they missed many cool role playing opportunities with this suspicious / bored attitude. I probably have my share of guilt in this, since I was the DM and didn't reach my players.

So let's forget this end of session three and up to session four!

GAME SESSION FOUR: HALLOWEEN, EVIL EYE INTRO AND BARON EVENSONG'S INVITATION!

The next in-game day was October 31th. I could not resist and here comes Halloween! I found an idea to retry the Carnival with the players...

October 31th, 747

On Halloween day, the kids parade in the street of Zeidenburg, disguised as soldiers and heroes. Many pumpkins fill the streets, with their crooked or happy smiles. The kids visit the house where they know the residents, in a trick or treat manner. They get home made candies, fruits, caramel apples and small home-made toys.

But tonight's celebration would be different: Carnival is in town, and these people love Halloween... So the Carnival gave a free show *in town*, posting themselves at major intersections, and scarring the kids a little, or gently chatting with them.

Hermos was a major attraction, lifting the kids on top of his arms.

The players encounter Blasse disguised as a 'ghost'. She hasn't found her definitive Carnival personality yet. She is accompanied with Amelia, the Vampiress, whose wings make people walk more quickly near her.

The snake mistress is accompanied by the Organ Grinder. She does not say a lot as she is very shy, preferring to awe people with her snakes.

They again chat with Hermos and the Squid Woman. They understand that people are *changed* when they enter Carnival for a long time. Hermos explains the story of Carnival, i.e. how it was before Isolde came in, in dreaded l'Morai, with Marie the juggler, the puppetmaster ("He is said to be still around, have you seen him?"), their run through the mists to find themselves in Falkovnia, where Isolde arrives and saves them from probable imprisonment or worse.

Hermos explains that he was given this size as a punishment for often trying to hide from his drunk parents in l'Morai.

After these discussions, the heroes decide that Carnival is indeed a strange place, however more friendly than deadly.

The rest of the night is quiet. Exigu and Varadan spend the night watching the market square for eventual return of the white goblins, but it seems they are gone for good.

November 1st, 747

The next morning, they are having breakfast at the Bloated Leech, when Virevan meets a competing Zeidenburg carpenter, Rognvald Naglu. He informs Virevan of a new smith in town, a lone vistani at the outskirts of the village. Naglu is badmouthing the vistani and wishes the newcomer bad luck.

Virevan goes to meet the smith, but the encounter is short as the vistani apparently do not like questions.

Later, Mac Razbunare tries his luck by bringing a copper pot that he wishes to see repaired. The vistani was holding his baby and the druid could notice that the baby was looking sick. Raul the vistani tells him to come back next day to get his pot.

Coming back to town, Mac Razbunare notices that the Carnival is gone...

When he arrives home, Virevan greets him with a letter he just received:

To the Esteemed and Honorable Company of AUSTIZEI Nailo, Mac Razbunare
KASSCU, EXIGU, Petrak, Varadan KILLICRU, Virevan Chevellaru - Righters of
Wrongs, Avenger of Evil, Purloiners of Treasure, Etcetera -

From the Worthy and Magnanimous Baron Lyron EVENSONG, Master of NEVERWERE
Manor, Benefactor of the Land, Lord of Lute and Lyre, Etcetera -

Greetings !

In praise and honor of your distinguished and valorous service in your late
adventure, I request the honor of your presence at a banquet tomorrow at noon at
my manor house. Please arrive at the stroke of noon and bring hearty appetites, an
temper for song and stories, and bags to bear away gifts. My resources are your
disposal.

Awaiting your arrival,

Baron EVENSONG

*DM's note: you can now see I do not like linear plot and like to mix things around, i.e. Carnival,
Evil Eye, a possible side trek involving Barton Deforet, and now the Book of Crypt adventure
"Dark Minstrel", featuring Baron Evensong.*

*When I planed my campaign, I viewed Evensong as a short side trek (or a very long one
depending on the results!), and made a few changes to this guy's status: he is now lord of a
pocket domain (his manor), that somehow shift from domain to domain after a few days in each
place.*

*Anyway, Evensong is a one-time adventure plot, so I really don't see why he is having his own
domain.*

*I also changed the adventure intro (no encounters with town folk warning them) and didn't need
to curse them with hallucinations to get to the Manor.*

November 2nd, 747

The next morning, Mac Razbunar goes back to Raul to get his copper pot. Mac Razbunar notices
that the repair is very well made, and Raul is indeed master in his craft.

Raul tells Mac Razbunar that his kid is sick and he fears for little Nikko. The reason is that his wife died when giving birth to his child, but she is back at night to haunt him. The ghost tries to take care of the baby but obviously can't give Nikko what he needs.

They promise him they will help him tonight.

Later, at noon, they arrive at Evensong's manor. They are a little suspicious but fall in his trap.

"Greetings!", he said. "You must be the heroes that fill our town's gossip of late. That fiery creature has been put to rest, thanks to you! And I see by the sun you are precisely on time! Come inside, the banquet waits!"

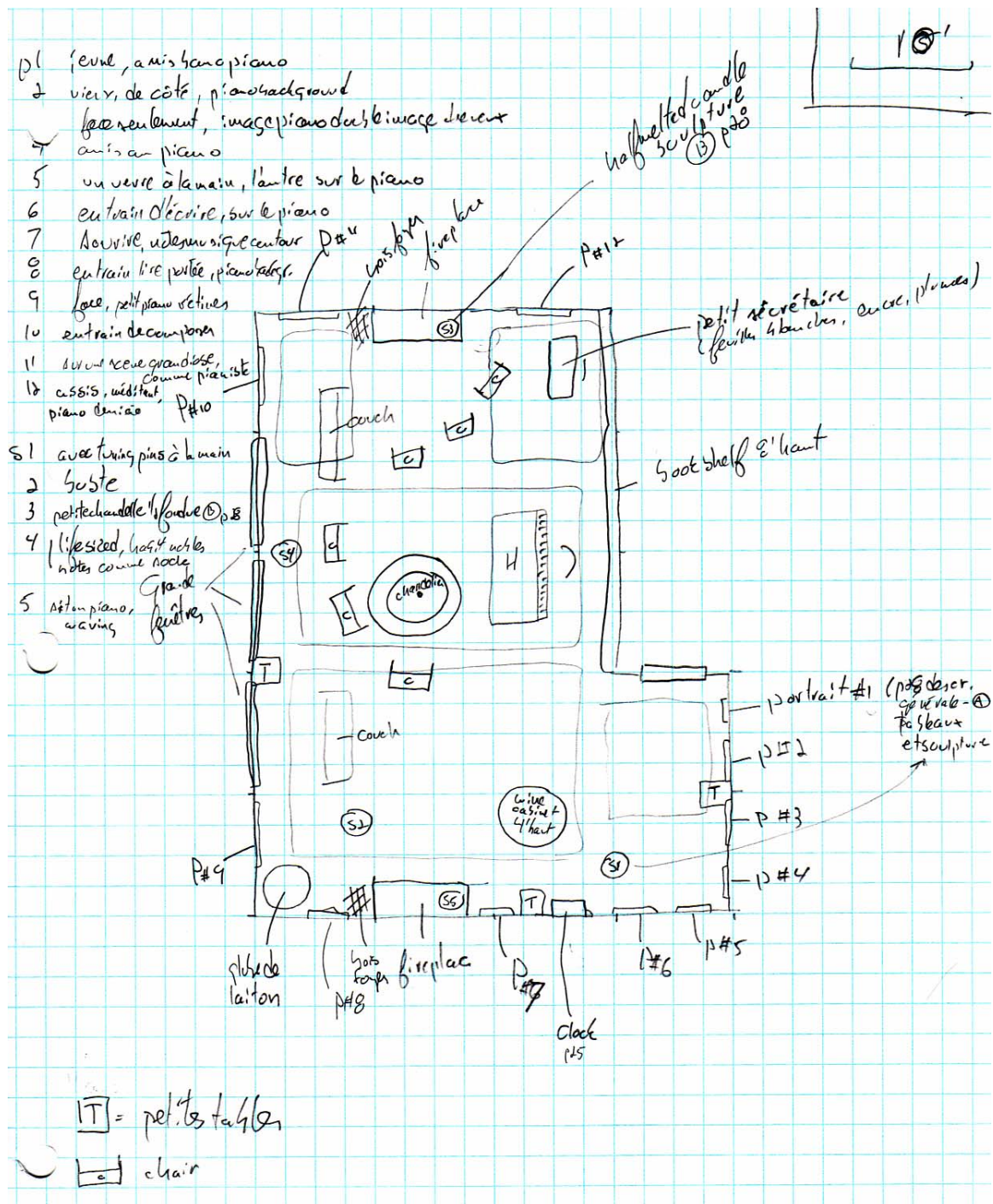
The magnificent mansion awes them and the food too. Surprisingly, none of the players question the lack of any servants.

The Baron invites them afterward to his study, to hear the latest song he has composed. They accept:

*There once lived a bard with a beautiful voice
And a harpsichord sweet as the sunrise.
He played it all day, singing songs of his choice,
Telling tales to the fools and the wise.*

It is at 3pm that the Baron tells them they are trapped with him for a hundred years. The door and windows of the study opens to impassable blackness! (DM's note: for sound background, I used a metronome after this part, endlessly tick tocking ...)

My map of the study, where they are locked in time:



(the notes on this map are in French but here's the translation:)

Some players investigate the portraits and sculptures, while discussing with the vain Evensong. Every portrait or sculpture contains the harpsichord, or has a reference to it:

#3: face portrait, a double image in his hair shows the harpsichord;
#4: sitting on the harpsichord's bench;
#5: standing up, a glass of wine in hand, the other hand on the harpsichord;
#6: writing on the harpsichord;
#7: smiling, with musical notes dancing around him. One of the notes is a small harpsichord;
#8: reading a musical sheet; harpsichord in background;
#9: face portrait, his retina mirrors the harpsichord;
#10: while composing on the harpsichord;
#11 on a grandiose scene, with him playing the you-know-what;
#12: sitting, meditating pose; harpsichord in the back

Statue #1: him with tuning pins in hand;
#2: bust of him on a harpsichord-like base;
#3: small melted candle (see adventure description p. 28);
#4: life size statue, with musical notes in the stand;
#5: seated on a harpsichord

However, Exigu and Petrak are quick to exploit the vast library.

DM's note: Knowing the players would look for clues in the books, I expanded the 20 book list from the adventure and made a 200 book list using the list of books from Book Of Crypts, the "netbook of books", the Book of Souls's Art in Ravenloft and the Book of Sorrows's A Kargatane bookshelf. People wanting that list of books compiled file can get it by contacting me.

And at about 6 am the next day (and much less than 24 hours after being trapped, did I told you they are bright, sometimes?), the heroes understand that they can escape this curse by destroying the harpsichord...

They attack it with their tools!

Lyron solidify and attack them, using his spell abilities.

DM's note: It took about 6 rounds for the players to make the needed 100 hit points damage on the harpsichord. Incredibly, meanwhile they luckily made their save to all his spells! It would have changed the game if one of them was paralysed or controlled...

Then the room was shook by a tremor, and the large chandelier drops on the floor, nearly hitting Varadan. The bookshelves fall on Exigu who barely escape. The books and the rugs take fire. It is then that they notice the windows are no longer black but now shows the normal countryside around the manor.

They run through the windows and fall to the ground. The mansion falls into rubbles...

It is the end of Evensong for them. He should not be back in the campaign.

DM's note: Finally, this adventure was mostly fun as a side trek, but after DMing it, I had some ideas to improve it: other NPCs should be invited too, some the PCs knows and some who do not. These PCs could be anybody - DM's choice for role playing eventual panic after the time trap is set, but also could be used by Evensong as hostage threatening to end the PC's harpsichord's destruction. The adventure would be less linear that way I think.

GAME SESSION FIVE: EVIL EYE PART 2 – MEETING NATHAN TIMOTHY

After, recovering and investigating the rubbles, the players run back to Raul and try to cure the baby. They learn that time passed differently while in Evensong's manor: they are still November 2nd, around 4 pm. Only one hour in real time passed.

They do healing skills and some curing spells. Nikko seems to get better but still look sick.

The group goes back to the village to get their forbidden weapons, which they hide while going back to Raul.

The diner at the vistani is simple, and Raul makes some tea. Sharing stories around the fire about the ghost haunting, Raul tells them that when his wife haunts his camp site, he can't do nothing but play his violin. The heroes ask him not to play tonight, if he can.

November 3rd, 747

At 2h30 am, Leyla appears. She is walking on the ground toward Raul's vardo. A few heroes and Raul are in awe over her gracious arrival.

They try to convince her to go back and that she is in fact hurting her child, but that makes her rage.

She then transforms into a floating, ethereal-like ghost, with hate filling her traits!

Her rage is immense when the heroes get between her and her baby and she lashes at them, making Varadan and Virevan paralyzed from her cold touch. *(DM's note: It is then that the players realized what incorporeality really means in 3rd edition ...)*

DM's notes: I had painted two miniatures for this encounter, one being the vistani (from the RL miniature boxed set); and another mini of a banshee for after Leyla's transformation into an angry motherly ghost.

You have of course noticed that both wear the same colors.

By the way, the scanner makes the ghost look quite eerie, no? ☺

Stat wise, I made Layla a 32 hp ghost, with the 'paralysing touch' and the 'entrancing appearance' abilities from the RL setting book.



The heroes finally destroy her, and her last seconds of existence before disappearing are spent uttering her curse: "I curse you, murderers, from the depths of my heart! From this night forward,

may you know how it feels to be separated from your love. May you never know the healing of compassion!" (In French: "Je vous maudis, meurtiers, au plus profond de mon coeur! À partir de cette nuit, puissiez-vous ressentir la douleur d'être séparé de votre famille. Puissiez-vous ne jamais plus connaître la compassion qui guérit! ").

She disappears like turned to shreds by the force of unseen winds.

After telling Raul that it should be over and making sure is and Nikko will be safe, the heroes go back to Zeidenburg; to find out they are surrounded by water! It is then that they notice the weather to be more humid and warm. It seems they are now on an island or a strip of land. They pass the night with Raul to see better with tomorrow's daylight.

November 4th, 747

With daylight, they find they are now on a narrow strip of land, in the middle of large river! Raul's vardo have been moved with him, but not Raul's horses. It seems the mists moved them to another location, but where? The nearest shore of the river is over 300 feet from their island.

With some calculation over the sun and moon position, and of his knowledge in botanic, the druid guesses that they are now in Invidia, the domain west of Barovia.

They try to cure themselves with spell, to find the spells making very low curing (*1 hp cured*). Raul explains that they have all been cursed by Leyla. He suggests that vistani could be able to provide help on lifting their curse. They know the nearest big town is Karina.

While the party is discussing how to cross the river (making a raft with Raul's vardo is the best idea), they see a deer come out of the forest, on the northern bank. It stops for a moment, and then flees westward. Moments later, a rich looking man arrives on a black horse. He look surprised to see the heroes stranded there and say "My," he says, "what have we here?"

He presents himself as Matton Blanchard, and is quite helpful to give direction to the group and tells them where they are now. While annoyingly snobbish, he is friendly.

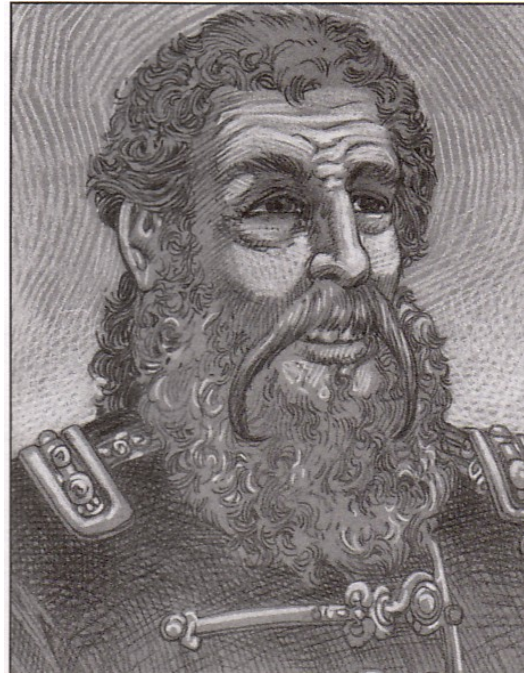
Then hunting dogs appear, with three henchmen carrying supplies. With that, Matton call it off and wishes the heroes a good day. He whips his dogs, and possibly his henchmen too (the heroes are not sure from the distance), and the deer hunting resume...

The heroes go back to their planning but sometimes later they hear singing. It is then that they see a small river boat that will pass near the island. The driver sees the heroes and makes his boat go to the island.

The Captain of the Virago look quite surprised too to see the group there. He frowns at the vistani. "Hey! My name is Captain Timothy, and this is the Virago. Do you need assistance?"

The sailor is going to Karina and he accepts bringing them there. But Raul and Nikko will have to ride behind in a rowboat and be towed by the Virago. The heroes negotiate the carrying of the vardo and of Raul's tools in the hold. Raul and the heroes dismantle his vardo in smaller pieces that are carried in the Virago hold.

The trip begins. Captain Nathan Timothy is a bawdy captain and the heroes do not need to talk a lot to make conversation. Meanwhile, Timothy is secretly planning his night attack on the party. He explains his hate of vistani by telling them the 'tale of the captain and the vistani' (*Evil Eye* p 18-19), and provides information on the Musarde river (*Gaz IV* p 41), of the difficult boat trip on river to go back to Zeidenburg (*Gaz IV* p 42), of outsiders in Invidia (*Gaz IV* p 52), of Invidian's perception of spells ('Do you make magic ? Not a good idea in Invidia, you know ...' - he is in fact inquiring for his planned night attack) (*Gaz IV* p 52), and of the small logging town of Valetta along the Musarde (*Evil Eye* p 56-57).



(Image from *Evil Eye*)

As the night comes, Timothy pulls the Virago close to shore, claiming that it is dangerous and hazardous to sail after nightfall, as the river dangers are hidden by darkness and when river trolls go hunting ("Oh yes, nasty ones. I saw one once").

Timothy makes a campfire and cooks spiced sausages from Zeidenburg, along with bread and cheese. Timothy even brings from the Virago a cask of brandy.

More chit chat is exchanged, and everybody goes to sleep. Timothy gets his bed sheet and leaves the party to sleep a little farther because of his snoring.

The group makes a night watch and it was a good precaution: suddenly a pack of ten wolves attack! They are led by a large grey dire wolf (*Timothy in wolf form*)! But the party and Raul are effective in battle and they push back the enemy. A few wolves are killed and the remaining, of which the large wolf flee.

The druid has a doubt and sends his own pet wolf to Timothy's site, but the wolf find nothing...

A few minutes after, Timothy (in human form, of course) arrives from his bed site, panting, with a torch in hand ("Oh! Damned! It is finished! I had lit this torch to drive them back").

However the heroes guessed that Timothy was the grey wolf and they attack him!
(DM note: Wow, that's a twist I didn't plan!)

The following battle is fierce, with the heroes trying with difficulty to harm Timothy now in frighteningly powerful hybrid form: the werewolf appearing to be able to tear to shreds any of the heroes. Exigu moves to steal the boat from Timothy and escape with the group by the river, but Timothy leaves the group to get back his stolen property.

DM note: the total battle (with the wolves and with Timothy) lasted 13 rounds.

In my campaign, I made lycanthrope a little less predictable by changing the DR immunity to all weapon except a metal type, according to the clan. For example, various breeds (or families, or clan) of werewolves can have different DR characteristics.

*So in my campaign, Timothy's DR applies to all weapons except magical and gold. To make him tough, I also gave Timothy Mountain Loup Garou stats (Denizens of dread). He was tough, *grin*, but I didn't really plan a death fight so I was looking for ways to stop the fight. When Exigu's player tried to steal his ship to escape, I took this opportunity to remove Timothy from the fight.*

So the battle ended with the group stranded on the river bank forest, at night, and Timothy leaving in the Virago, howling at the moon from rage.

In the forest, other wolves howling answer him...

GAME SESSION SIX: EVIL EYE PART 3 – MEETING TOBEN THE MANY AND ENTERING KARINA

While watching for Timothy's possible return, the group discusses giving a cure to those who were bitten by Timothy in wolf form or in hybrid form: Virevan, Varadan and Raul.

They ask the druid for belladonna and he say he is carrying some with him. However, the druid (*knowledge check*) tells them that belladonna can be poisonous and that it isn't sure that it will remove the infection. Killing the werewolf is the best sure way to get rid of the curse.

Meanwhile, the wolves summoned by Timothy by vengeance arrive. The druid tries to calm them but fails (*druid's wild empathy check*). The group climbs to trees while the wolves' fierce teeth snap at them (*nice heroic scene there ;)*)

Virevan, Varadan and Raul tie themselves to the tree and eat a portion of belladonna root, hopeful it will help them against this vile affliction. It makes them dizzy and nauseous for a moment, but these bad effects do not last long.

DM's note: Belladonna does not work in Ravenloft. I played the DC 18 checks for lycanthropy and Virevan and Varadan failed it... Watch out for next moon ...

November 5th, 747

At sunrise, still on their trees, and watched by more then a dozen wolves, the group decides to attack the leading wolf with missile weapons. This one flees and the other wolves follow.

The heroes get off their trees and get rest all day long to recover some of the damage done by the night battle, but with Leyla's curse, this recovery is very slow. At the end of the day, they walk toward Beltis, assuming they will arrive there by night time. (*DM's note: that's perfect! Beltis is a ghost town! So I plugged at Beltis an encounter I had planned for elsewhere.*)

After a few hours of walking, they arrive at night time in view of Beltis hamlet (about 8 houses, a few barns and a chapel). The heroes are surprised to see no smoke anywhere from the houses. Coming closer, they realize the town has been deserted since a long time, and pile of logs are rotting near the water. A few traces on the quay show that a few passenger boats stop there once in a while.

Nobody lives in the houses nearby. The chapel's walls are made of river stone and they decide to pass the night at this place. After clearing it of the rotting pews, they secure the door and try to remove the damp humidity with a small campfire.

At 11 pm, surprise: the outdoor chapel bells start ringing! (*Sound of ghastly church bells used here*). The animals of the party now seem very uneasy and afraid of something outside (*good idea to let the players know their pet is scarred, it works making them uneasy*).

The door is shaken by unseen hands... but it is well locked and resists.

After a moment, the heroes inside the chapel notice oil being poured on the doorstep and passing under the door! Not wanting being burned alive, they remove the door's wooden barrier and rush outside, to see seven shambling corpses staring at them. They all have the same odd wide grin and bulging eyes (*the players first interpreted this resemblance as a family turned zombies!*).

The zombies attack the players, blocking the chapel exit. Oddly, they seem intelligent and difficult to turn by Petrak the priest. The zombies ask in unison 'Where are you from?' and 'Have you seen the Glutton?'

Later in the battle, Exigu shouts a battle cry 'You will all be destroyed, zombies!' and they reply, grinning 'oh, but we will *always* be there...'



(Image from VRGttWD)

DM note: They have absolutely no idea what kind of zombies these were. They think it was the domain darklord wishing them welcome on his domain ;). However, many educated readers of this journal have recognized Toben the Many. In my campaign, he was sending his minions to get information on the Glutton, a zombie Toben would like to add to his personal hive (both are from the VRGttWD RL accessory).

So with this encounter, I plugged Toben the Many (who should plague the PCs once in a while), and a future Glutton adventure hook.

During the battle, Austizel and Exigu are bitten by Toben's zombies. Will they get the Grinning Sickness?

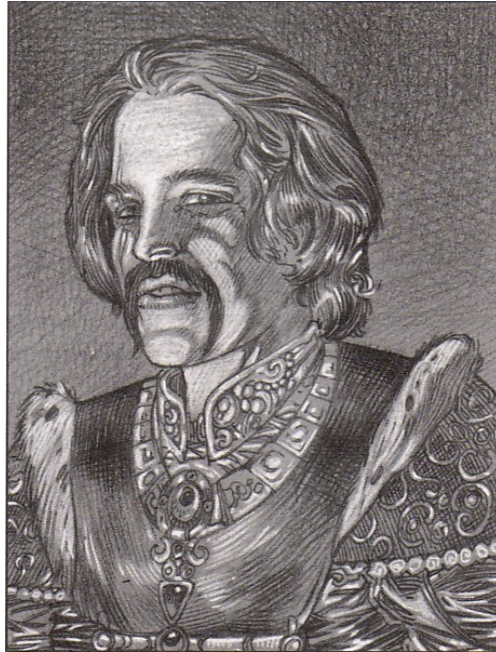
November 6th, 747

The next morning, they leave this cursed village and resume their walk to Karina. A few hours after noon, they arrive at the ferry and wave the other side barge for them to pick the heroes on the other side.

While the cable led barge comes to their side, they hear a horse emerging from the forest and going for the ferry quay. It is Matton Blanchard! A few minutes after, his henchmen and the dogs arrives, exhausted.

They chat a little with the snobbish Matton. They tell them what happened with the boat that rescued them, and ask Matton if they know of a certain Nathan Timothy. Matton frowns and tell them Timothy is 'special' (the players agrees) and that he is some kind of parasite in Karina. It is clear he do not like Timothy.

DM note: Matton didn't reveal his own nature (wolfwere), of course, and was encouraging the players to get weary and suspicious of Timothy. This will be helpful later: Matton knows the PCs are somewhat capable (they fought Timothy and survived!) and will use their hate of Timothy for his own needs.



(Image from *Evil Eye*)

Arrived on the other side, Matton wishes well to the heroes and leave everybody behind by having his horse galloping. The heroes overhear one of Matton's henchmen saying to his companions that 'the boss is eager to arrive quickly to his lover' (the other henchmen laugh).

They pass through the vineyards decorated with paper lanterns for the festival.

They arrive at the gate of the city and discuss with the guards after paying a toll to enter the town. The soldiers warn the heroes to stay out of West Karina after dark, as a Midnight Slasher haunts those neighbourhoods. They are also warned that the Falkovnian army has their own tough rules.

In town, they visit a little the Festival district, but their first concern is to get a cheap room near the river front, where they assume it will be less costly then in the Festival district.

However, the inns there look really seedy and they avoid the common city operated dormitory for the Festival.

Suddenly, in the crowded water front area, they see an ale cart driven wildly by panicked horses. One of the heavy wooden casks falls on a small boy playing in the street! The boy's companion will soon get hit too by another falling cask!

The druid rushes to the horses to calm them while Varadan and Virevan manages to get the other boy to safety. Petrak the priest look at the boy under the cask to see if he can do something but the little boy has been crushed to death...

After the horses have been calmed down, the ale cart driver explains that these horses are usually very quiet and that something like that never happened. City guards retrieve the remains of the small boy and surprisingly, very soon the neighbourhood is back to business as usual...

The heroes are not thanked for their actions. Instead, the gazes of the crowd toward them are rather hostile or annoyed. The ale cart driver adds that many strange deadly accidents happened in Karina recently.

Exigu notices a small boy in the crowd, dressed in black velvet. The boy watches them with a stern look and do not look pleased of the heroes. A cart passes in front of him for a short moment, and then he is gone... Exigu search the area where the boy stood and have no idea how the little boy vanished.



(Image from *Evil Eye*)

They try their chance at an Inn in the Festival district: the Clock's Tick. They have only one room, which isn't enough for all heroes. A second room is found at the nearby Golden Fields Inn.

Raul stays with Nikko in a room while the heroes go back in town to walk.

They visit the market to get some belladonna (3 doses) and take a walk in the dock area to see if Timothy is in Karina. After a while, they see the Virago! There are guards in the area but Exigu manages to get in the boat for a moment: Raul's vardo isn't there anymore... They assume Timothy threw it away at the first chance.

They also find a boat Captain willing to bring them back to Zeidenburg, the Casse Noisette, but at the end of the Festival only.

Tired, they are back to their respective room and quickly go to sleep. However, they have a similar dream ...

(following cut scene is from the intro of Evil Eye chapter 3:)

“Ral DeNonna had been more intoxicated in his life, but never had so much fun! The songfests of his village in Kartakass couldn't hold a candle to the revelry of Karina during Carnival! The day had been a whirlwind of dancing in the streets, scantily-clad women, and more wine than he thought existed in the world. It was past midnight now, and he staggered alone down Front Street, singing at the top of his lungs, enjoying the sound of his voice echoing off the walls of the buildings and that of the wine sloshing in the bottle he carried. Then he saw a fellow reveler, a slender man in a dark cloak and wide-brimmed hat. He called to the man, offering him wine and the opportunity to join him in song. The man raised an arm, in what Ral thought was a greeting... until he saw the blade flash in the moonlight. In his final moments, Ral was stone-sober. As Ral's blood mingled with spilled wine and flowed into the gutter *with all the money he stole that day*, the darkclad man merged with the shadows...”

DM note: Those very familiar with Evil Eye may have noted a change in this intro. I added a twist: Ral DeNonna was a rogue (the added the ‘with all the money he stole that day’ line). It is because I have slightly modified the Midnight Slasher character. Instead of a senseless random midnight killer, in my campaign the mad Midnight Slasher is killing people he ;) thinks are corrupted or evil – thieves, harlots, Falkovnian soldiers, etc. He ;) is more CN than CE.

In Midnight Slasher’s madness, Ral DeNonna was a parasitic rogue and so must be killed when met this night. I think it will bring more depth and later, even perhaps some sympathy to this character from the PCs, with the other planned cut scenes explaining the MS’s back history...

But for now, the PCs envision a psycho killer search.

GAME SESSION SEVEN: EVIL EYE PART 4 – ACTION IN THE CITY

November 7th, 747

The PC’s awake at 6am and do their religious devotions or spell preparation. At 7am, they gather at the Golden Fields Inn dining room for breakfast.

The dining room is uncharacteristically empty at this hour, thanks to the late Festival activities that took place the previous night.

Only three people are in the dining room: seated in a corner there is a solitary writer with a disgusted attitude and in another corner a man and a lady Elf clad in black share a table. The latter politely salute the players and return to their conversation.

The man and the Elf speak very softly, as if they do not want to be heard. They seem to be speaking Elvish. *(DM’s note: this is Patrick Connor and Lynnet, from Heroes of Light. I had the idea to mix these two werewolf hunter with the Evil Eye dog fights – later See session Eight – Dog Fights.)*

The group discusses the dream they had the previous night.

Then identical twin sisters come in from outside. One of them goes upstairs while the other discusses with the inn proprietor. They overhear that a murder was perpetrated last night on Front St by the infamous midnight killer. Virevan introduces himself and asks if she knew where most of these murders were committed. She answers that most took place along the river front or in the west part of Karina. She introduces herself as Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove. At first glance, it is obvious that she is well educated and from a well to do family.



(Image from VRA. I did cut the gun that Laurie is holding as the players do not know yet of these weapons!)

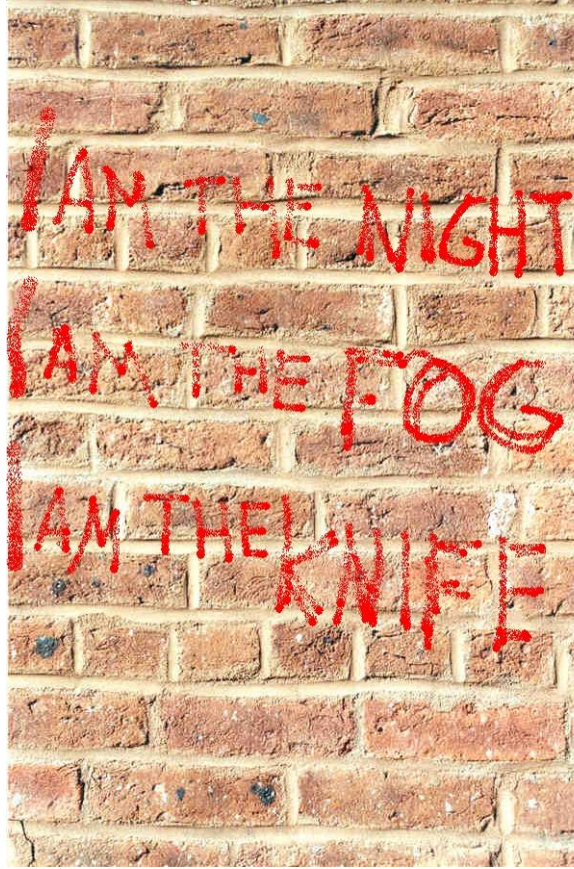
She then excuses herself and walks over to the lone writer. He doesn't invite her to sit down at his table so she remains standing. She tells him that she is glad to meet a well known writer such as himself. However, after thanking her, he brings down her enthusiasm with remarks about this "scandalous Festival... while poor people suffer, the rich don't care." It is then that her sister walks down the stairs and the twins leave the inn. *(DM's note: this is François de Pénible from CotN:D. I think it's better if they know the personage from a long time when the CotN:D adventure starts. Anyway, he's a great intriguing character to have around.)*

Petrak notices that the other twin came back down with a belt pouch that could be used for spell material components.

After breakfast, the druid Mac Razbunare goes outside the city limits to make some *goodberries*. *Goodberries* are a convenient way to overcome the curse inflicted on them by the ghost Leyla.

Raul and the heroes walk through town in search of Vistanis but do not find them. They see wedding decorations being put up at the Clock's Tick Inn for an event later in the day.

They walk to Front St to have a look at the crime scene. The killer has left a signature message:



A priest from the church of Ezra is on the scene, talking with bystanders. The priest is in his mid-50's and largely overweight. He wears a worn priest tunic and his oily black hair is short but uncombed. He is pale, his eyes don't appear to focus in the same direction and there are two large warts on his left cheek. However, many local people look at him respectfully, as they seem to think highly of him.

The priest notices the Ezra symbol that Petrak is wearing and introduces himself as Keith de Lalune, head of the Ezra church in Karina. *(DM's note: see this article in USS 2002 for more on this NPC)* The players ask to speak to him in private. He walks with them to l'Église de Notre-Peindre-Dame church. On the way, he shows them an orphanage he has founded.

While going there, the players can appreciate how well liked de Lalune is from the people of Karina. He seems to know every person's name and is very kind. *(This made the players confident he is a very good person... *grin*)*

He lets the players talk but sometimes asks questions about their business in Karina. (*Unknown to the players, he is gathering information about them for Azalin's kargatane*). The players tell him the story of their encounter with Leyla's ghost and of Nathan Timothy. They reveal to de Lalune that Timothy is a lycanthrope and that he has bitten three of them. De Lalune tells them that while he isn't very knowledgeable about lycanthropy, a visitor in town might know more on this topic – Tara Kolyana, a priestess visiting the town on her way to Levkarest. Because she is currently praying, they have to wait to talk to her, so they discuss the recent murder.



Keith tells them that not one person was killed, but three! Two other murders happened in the western part of the town. The Midnight Slasher (as he is known in Karina) has been active killing people for about 4 years, always around midnight.

(from Dion's drawing, I removed with Photoshop the sinister dark onlookers in the back in order not to give hints to the players that something is wrong with de Lalune)

They ask him about the series of odd accidents occurring during the Festival. He says he heard these rumours about the accidents, and of a little boy in black often seen near them, but he doesn't know a lot more. One story he heard is of a circus bear gone wild. The bear was usually gentle, and wore a muzzle and leather covers on its front claws. For a fee, his master made the bear fight strong men, as a kind of attraction. However, on that day, the bear lost his muzzle and went berserk: he attacked the man he was fighting with and nearly killed him. The bear had to be killed by the militia as he was out of control. The bear owner has no idea what happened to drive the bear mad (*DM's note: idea adapted from Ron Laufer's Evil Eye journal*).

Meanwhile, Ms Kolyana (*Gazetteer 1*) has stopped praying and the players meet another stunningly beautiful lady.

Tara Kolyana is waiting for a friend, Marek Crawford (*Book of Secrets, Light in the Fog*), to escort her to a meeting at the Grande Cathedral of Ezra in Levkarest (Borca). She shares as much information she can on lycanthropy (*all from RLCS 3e p 189*). She tells them how the first monster she ever met was an innocent man cursed with lycanthropy and how she helped cure him.



(from *Champions of the Mists*. I prefer this drawing to the one in the Gaz. She seems 'purer' somehow)

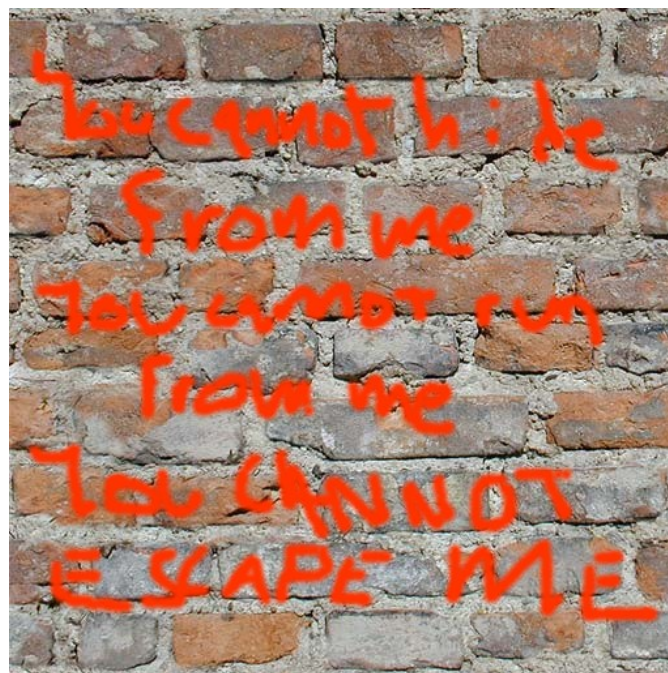
They establish the following: Timothy is a natural werewolf as they saw him in three different forms: human, hybrid and wolf. Only natural lycanthropes can have three forms. To remove the possible affliction, they need to kill the natural lycanthrope, and then have clerical spells cast on them while they are in werewolf form. Also, Timothy, if he detected their presence nearby, could trigger their transformation and control them. Otherwise, the transformation trigger is most probably the full moon, but it could be something else, like seeing blood or being angry.

They then discuss Timothy's possible weakness: it must be silver (rejected, as the player tried it when they fought Timothy), cold iron or gold. They plan to make gold tipped arrows in the near future, and get cold iron weapons (iron that hasn't been forged from melted iron).

Now that they know that they possibly have to defeat Timothy before the next full moon (November 16th) they are quite anxious...

Near the end of the morning, they walk in town to see the other two murder scenes in the western part of Karina, a sector called the Maze. This poor part of town smells of human excrement and garbage.

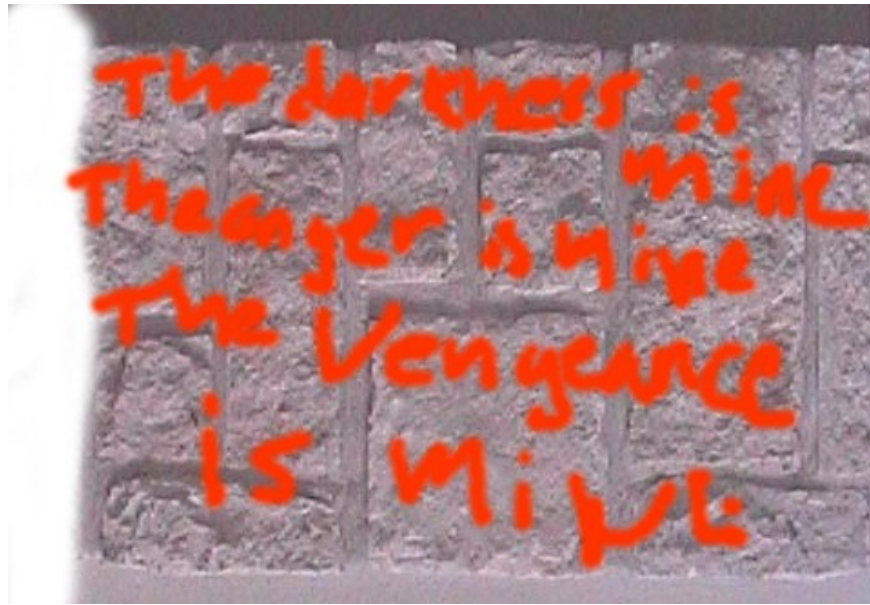
The first murder scene is that of a prostitute named Giselline. On the wall near her body, the murderer wrote:



(You cannot hide from me - you cannot run from me - you cannot escape me)

From conversations with other people in the crowd, they understand that the murdered woman was a very nasty person, often bullying other prostitutes for their meagre pay. It seems nobody will miss Giselline.

The third murder scene is that of a young man. Apparently without criminal connections, one can still wonder what this man was doing outside after midnight. On the wall, a new message:



(The darkness is mine – the anger is mine – the vengeance is mine)

They see Laurie and Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove at the third crime scene. They are busy discussing.

The players turn their attention to Nathan Timothy and the Virago. They need to spy on him. At first, Mac Razbunare sits by a nearby tavern window, looking at the Virago and taking notes of activities there. He hears one sailor talking about upcoming public executions.

Because the tavern owner harasses him to order drinks, the players decide to get a room in one of the seedy inns instead. But they are all fully booked because of the Festival. Mac Razbunare and Petrak see a sailor walking down the stairs from his room. They talk to him about exchanging his room with their expensive one in the Golden Fields Inn in the wine district. He refuses, thinking something is wrong with this offer. He says that he won't stay in a snobbish hotel.

They change strategy and “buy” a room from another sailor – they give him 5 s.p. to vacate his room. The sailor agrees, having more money to drink and party.

So the players install themselves in their bug infested room and take turns watching Nathan Timothy: At 2h pm, Nathan Timothy walks back to the Virago, slightly staggering. He goes inside the boat. At 2h30 pm 3 Falkovnian soldiers visit him. They go inside the boat, and come out 45 minutes after. Timothy and the soldiers shake hands when they leave. Timothy goes back below deck.

Meanwhile, at the Clock's Tick, Varadan the monk is witness to a surprising event at a wedding celebration at the Inn's terrace: the bride's brother is called upon to give a toast. Instead, the man throws wine at his new brother-in-law's face, and angrily calls him a cheater and a scoundrel for bringing dishonour to his sister's name. Then the groom's father shouts for his son to avenge the insult. The brother slaps the groom in the face and challenges him to a duel. Swords are found and the crowd moves to the street, making a circle around the groom and the brides's brother. The bride passes out. The fight starts.

The monk sees that they do not have any fighting skills. Out of pity for the bride who is caught between two people she loves, he casts *color spray* to calm down the duellists: both fall on the ground, unconscious!

However, the crowd doesn't appreciate the duel's abrupt ending and is angry at the monk. He is very close to being lynched! "How could you do that? It isn't your business!" People are grabbing his clothes.

Then the groom's father shouts that there is poison on the brother's blade. The crowd's attention moves away from the monk. Both families start yelling insults at each other. A man starts attacking another with his fists. The monk uses this opportunity to move away and watches from a distance.

As the conflict escalates into a brawl, in the confusion, a lady approaches the monk and thanks him for stopping the fight. She is one of the bride's cousins. She is from Levkarest and her name is Celestina. She is horrified by the brutality of Invidians. *(DM's note: this is Gabrielle in disguise, of course. After having seen the fruit of her evil manipulations, she moves to another prey).*



(From Gaz 4)

She is quite charming... She warns him not to do spells in public, that most people are very superstitious about magic here.

The militia arrives and disperses the crowd... Varadan and Celestina go each on their separate way.

They plan for the upcoming night: Varadan, Raul and Virevan will sleep at the Clock's Tick while the rest will continue spying on Timothy.

On the other side of town, around 9h00 pm, Nathan leaves the Virago. Petrak follows him. Nathan walks to a Front St. tavern, the Black Dog. There are no windows to this tavern. The players do not feel very confident about entering the place...

Meanwhile, at 10h00 pm, the monk sees Celestina again at the Clock's Tick inn. She waves at him and sits at his table. They share a drink – she drinks white wine. She tells the monk he is very heroic for having stopped the fight. She finds him interesting and asks him questions about his business in Karina. He lies and says he is only in town for the Festival. She is in town for a few days more only, and is eager to party until her departure. She is staying at the White Swan Inn.

Suddenly, she looks horrified and turns around in order not to be seen by a man entering the inn. The man looks wealthy, in his fifties, quite large, with broad shoulders. He has a long sword at his belt.



*(‘Aged warrior’, by Katrin Weigold.
Found on elfwood.
All rights reserved by the author.)*

Celestina has tears coming to her eyes. She says she was kidnapped, beaten and abused by this man when she was in her teens. He's a slave trader. He sold her to a brute, but she was able to escape. She is very afraid of him.

(DM's note: this man is in fact Radu Gerdanok, a noble who has not fallen to Gabrielle's evil eye. He was recently reunited with his wife, and now Gabrielle wants the heroes to slay this "abominable monster." He is a good hearted man, having opposed Invidia's lord Bakholis).

She asks the monk to avenge her! Varadan is hesitant. He instead proposes to occupy him while she leaves the inn so he would not notice her. Later, they could talk some more about this man.

So Varadan walks to the bar and speaks with the man about the Festival. The monk pretends to be drunk. The noble is surprised at first and tries to brush away the annoying drunk. Meanwhile, Celestina walks to the door but a noise catches the man's attention and he turns toward Celestina. *(DM's note: Gabrielle did it on purpose, of course).* She lets out a panic cry from behind her Carnival mask and runs outside. The man shrugs and turns back to the monk, but the monk has left the bar and is casually walking to the door. Outside, he doesn't see her in the street... Varadan goes back to his room at the Clock's Tick and shares the event with Virevan.

November 8th, 747

At 4h00 am, Timothy walks back to the Virago and goes below deck.

In the morning, Raul, Virevan and Varadan find a blacksmith too busy to party who agreed to rent them his shop for the day. During the day, they make two cold iron maces and 20 gold tipped arrows.

Mac Razbunare doesn't find any Vistani camp around Karina. *(DM's note: I plan to introduce vistani only when the other side treks will be completed. If the players meet vistani now, they will focus on getting Leyla's curse lifted and will neglect other adventure hooks).* The Midnight Slasher wasn't active during the night.

At noon, Timothy emerges from his boat and walks to a warehouse. He is followed by Petrak on the crowded Front Street.

Petrak also witnesses an odd accident: four cables on a warehouse lift broke at the same time, sending a heavy box plummeting to the ground, nearly hitting a warehouse worker...

At 1h00 pm, Timothy comes back to his boat with another man. At 3h00 pm, this man leaves the boat but come back a few minutes later with a small barrel of brandy under one arm. He and Timothy sit on the boat deck, drinking and enjoying the sunny day. At 7h00 pm, they leave the boat and walk to the Black Dog Tavern.

The players decide it's an opportunity to explore the Virago. A *pass without trace* spell is cast on Exigu, and hiding in the shadows while on the street and the quay, he enters the boat. A search through the cargo hold shows nothing important. Exigu picks the lock to a kitchen and pantry gallery, and another lock to Nathan's cabin. After a meticulous search he has found a chest and a hidden compartment. In this compartment, Exigu finds Timothy's treasure: 4 lady's jewelry pieces (20 gp each), six tiny emeralds (50 gp each), a silver whistle (25 gp), a sack filled with 110 gold Falkovnian coins, and a woman's handkerchief bearing the initials DLB, embroidered with small pearls (20 gp) at the bottom of the same sack. *(DM's notes. Exigu ignores the chest,*

for fear of it being trapped or containing only clothes. Too bad for him, it included the Captain's journal, in which it would have confirmed Timothy's vulnerability to golden weapons)

Exigu leaves the boat. Mac Razbunare does not detect magic or poison in the loot. They bury all identifiable items except the gold and the emeralds.

At 8h30 pm, Nathan comes back to his boat, accompanied by a lady of the night. However, she leaves the boat soon after getting onboard and walks back to Front St. Nathan looks very angry. In the shadows, he transforms in wolf form and looks for scents but the *pass without trace* blocks all traces of Exigu's passage.

He walks on Front St, looking for possible suspects. From their hotel room, they see him walk by a few times, looking angry. The players discuss the possibility of attacking him this very night.

Just before 10h pm, they see Falkovnian soldiers talking to everyone on Front St. They enter a tavern nearby and exit a few minutes after with the sailor whose room the players tried to exchange the day before! The sailor seems to be describing someone (he met Mac Razbunare and Petrak). The players discreetly leave their inn through a back door.

They arrive at 10h30 pm at the Clock's Tick. They discuss the night's events and the precautions they should take now that they stole Timothy's hoard. They try to think about details they may have missed that could lead to their being caught.

At 11h, surprise! Someone knocks at the door and slips a note under the door!

It isn't related to their theft as they had feared; it is a note from Celestina!

DEAR VARADAN,

PLEASE MEET ME QUICKLY IN THE DINING ROOM AT THE WHITE SWAN.

C

Varadan rushes out to the White Swan Inn. Celestina isn't in the dining room. Varadan asks for her room number, and then goes upstairs. Her door is partly opened, as is the back door at the end of the hallway. Varadan cautiously pushes Celestina's door open: her room is empty. Her luggage is on the floor and the drawers are opened. It seems she left while she was packing her things. There are no signs of violence. Varadan then checks the back door: nobody. He goes down the stairs and goes to the back of the inn.

He walks around the inn. He sees a drunkard in the alley, near the street. Varadan questions him and is told that he saw a lady running a few minutes ago. She was in a hurry and seemed scared.

Still unsure of what to do next, Varadan goes back to the Golden Fields inn to inform his friends of the events. As midnight approaches, they fear for her and decide to track her with Exigu's dog and Mac Razbunare's wolf. They follow her scent from the White Swan inn up to High Street, where they lose her track (High St is a road with stone pavement).

Then the Goldfinger clock strikes the 12 strokes of midnight, but nothing breaks the ensuing silence...

They go back to the hotel.

November 9th, 747

Today is the wine contest and this is what everybody is talking about. It's one of the highlights of the Karina Wine Festival.

Raul goes back to the blacksmith and makes some heavy iron handcuffs in case they are needed to restrain those that might be werewolves in the group.

At noon, at the Commons market, they meet Matton Blanchard. He seems glad to see them and tells them he has a mission for them. The love of his life, Gabrielle, has disappeared. He could not find her when he came back from hunting. He has good reasons to believe she is being held prisoner somewhere. He also heard that she had been seen with a mysterious new lover. He has to meet an informant tonight at the dogfights but it is a dangerous place. He offers them 100gp to escort him as bodyguards. Since they proved themselves by fighting Nathan, they can be trusted in a fight, Matton explains.

The players agree: they will meet tonight at 1h00 am in front of the Goldfinger clock tower.

They go back to the hotel to prepare supplies and prepare. At 5h pm, they see the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins. They tell the players that they spent the day perusing the militia archives at the Citadel looking for information on the Midnight Slasher. They found that the common acknowledged date for the start of his killings is probably wrong. Instead of 3 or 4 years ago as often suggested, it might be as much as 10 years ago! The crimes were more spaced out back then and no wall signatures were found. The murders started in the West part of Karina, but the killer has been more active in the East part during the last 3-4 years and it's probably then that the Slasher got more attention.

According to these archives, nearly all victims have a link to underground activities or street crime, or are Falkovnian soldiers. Exigu makes a comment regarding the rightfulness of this mysterious dispenser of justice. Laurie quickly replies that he is wrong; the Midnight Slasher should be stopped, and his victims tried and put in jail instead of being arbitrarily killed. Some of them could also be rehabilitated.

The conversation switches to the topic of the Falkovnian enclave in Karina. As the players do not know anything about it, the twins inform them that this neighbourhood of about 150 soldiers was established by a trio of wealthy Falkovnian wine merchants to protect their trade. But the fact that the local government tolerates them seems strange to most people in town. Perhaps it's the additional protection they provide.

The enclave is under the command of Anton Regess, a very tough and mean man. The Falkovnians dispense swift military "justice" on the spot when apprehending offenders. They have been known to sometimes impale their prisoners.

The players go to sleep early. Just before being awakened at midnight, they all get a similar strange dream:

(following cut scene is adapted from RLMCII Midnight Slasher's background story:)

“You are a child, may be 8 or 10 years old. You come back from the market with your mother. You are carrying sweet smelling bread. It is a very sunny day and you are happy. When you arrive home, your mother and yourself surprise your father with another woman. This woman is incredibly beautiful. As this woman stands by laughing mockingly, the young couple starts a violent fight. Prompted by the beautiful woman, your mother grabs a knife and the argument escalates into something that neither of them can control. In the end, husband and wife kill each other, utterly consumed by their overwhelming rage. When it is over, both are lying on the floor. The beautiful lady laughs and before she leaves the bloody scene, she pauses on her way out just long enough to kneel beside the almost catatonic child and kisses you gently on your forehead”

The dream ends with this image:



(image from *Batman, Hush Volume 1*, DC Comics: I thought it is a very cool image, very appropriate with the Midnight Slasher's backstory)

(When the players awake, I tell them that they saw a “generic” mother, a “generic” father, etc., i.e. they do not or could not recognize anybody from this dream)

Oddly, they rush to the twins' room to ask if they had a similar vision. No, they didn't. They do not appear angry about being awoken for this reason and ask the players if they could meet in the morning.

November 10th, 747

At 12h45 am, they meet Matton at the clock. He pays them in advance.

On the way to 123 Bog St, they see a dark figure in a distance, right under a street lamp. It is the Midnight Slasher!

He drops an object on the ground and then he seems to vanish in the darkness. They run to the area and find a paper scroll. It contains a bloody severed finger! On the finger there is a Falkovnian silver signet ring.

On the paper, a message is scrawled in blood (the bloody finger was used as a pen).



(from *RL MC II*)

LET THOSE WHO LIVE IN FILTH TREMBLE
 LET THOSE WHO WALK THE STREETS WEEP
 LET THOSE WHO HURT THE CHILDREN DIE

They read the message but let the paper and the finger there on the street. They don't want to be caught with it. Matton visibly grows pale at this sight, but he does not say anything except to urge the party to hurry.

They arrive at the warehouse which is in fact an ancient converted theatre. The front door appears condemned. Matton leads them to the back entrance and knocks on the door. A small trap opens. Matton gives the following password "Verbrek lives," and the door opens...

General notes on this session: As you saw, in that type of game, I like to introduce many NPCs in order to make the town dynamic and lively. I find it less interesting and realistic in a game when all the people PCs meet in town are related to the current quest.

The thumb rule I use is one important NPC to two NPC that will not play a role in the current quest. The trick for the DM is to "appear" to give the same importance to all NPCs! In fact, the Karina Festival event was the perfect excuses to have the PCs meet many interesting NPCs from other Core domains.

Allow me to quote myself ("Notes on Making Of a campaign", USS 2003):

Other objectives of that 'diversion':

- It is somewhat predictable if **all** the NPCs they meet are to be important in the current adventure / quest (and you will receive less remarks from PCs such as "OK, she is the next to die")
- I often use them to seed future adventure hooks (*Just in session seven, I threw seeds for an eventual Borcan side trek with Tara Kolyana, the François de Pénible CotN:D, eventual Verbrek side treks, Mordent information gathering with the twins, etc. I like to 'open parentheses' in the campaign that eventually will get closed but later*)
- To meet many "irrelevant" NPCs makes them less prone to have suspicions on **everybody** they meet. The great majority of NPCs they will encounter are in fact neutral or good aligned! *When a bad guy arrives, he slips in more smoothly. In session seven, the PCs cared enough for Celestina / Gabrielle to go outside in spite of possible encounters with angry Nathan Timothy or the Midnight Slasher ...*
- It is an excellent way to provide information, conversation, etc. and a cool way to introduce characters you will be able to use afterward, whether you have plans for them or not.

So now let's move to session 8, for the infamous dog fights!

GAME SESSION EIGHT: EVIL EYE PART 5 – DOG FIGHTS

Thanks to Jennifer for helping me with English and grammar scrub with this session!

DM's note, before we start: I changed the Evil Eye warehouse floor plans to that of an ancient theatre. Looking at the maps supplied in Evil Eye, I just could not believe that the Midnight Slasher could save people from the pit and run away carrying them without real problem from the werewolves.

Making the warehouse an ancient theatre provided height, backstage, understage and many physical layers of machinery, cables, etc. that the Slasher could use in his ;) exploits at the dog fights.

But he :) won't be alone ...

November 10th, 747; 1h30 am. Warehouse district

The entrance room in the back of the ancient theatre (*area 1 on the map – see later*) is guarded by five Falkovnian soldiers and four vicious looking dogs. The dogs are held at the entrance and their trainers make them sniff out possible invisible intruders when the doors are opened.

One of the soldiers tells the halfling (Exigu) that he is very ugly, but Exigu doesn't react to this provocation.

They hear dogs in the next room but they can't see them as the areas are separated by heavy black curtain.

Then the guards open a door to the main room, and wave for the heroes to descend a few stairs to get down to the main room, where the seats used to be in this theatre, now converted to a warehouse.

The warehouse is a large 90' x 110' room. Tonight, it is a smoky room, dimly lit by candlelight from candelabras and a few chandeliers. There are about a hundred persons in the room, mostly men. The chatter of the men in the room is loud and many seem inebriated.

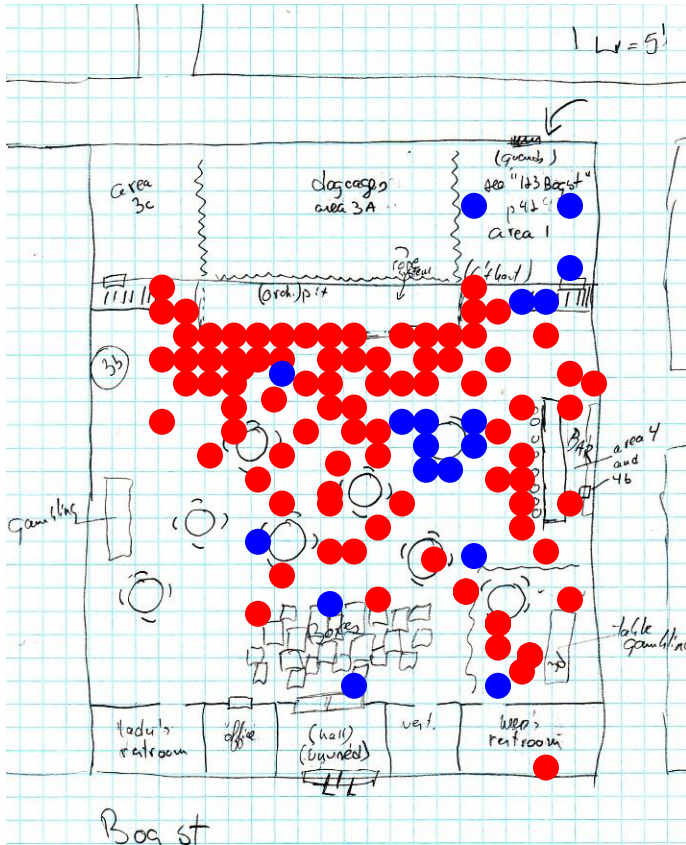
The ceiling seems very high and dark.

Near the old theatre stage, a pit is located in the old orchestra pit. It is more profound then it was originally, and it is surrounded on the remaining three sides by a low iron railing.

A large number of spectators are around it, blocking view to the pit. The players hear ferocious growls and barks from it.

DM's note: I had the players draw the theatre on a miniature-sized table map (only the rooms they could see, of course) and I put pennies with number on them in the main room. Each penny was a patron. – see red dots on the map for approx. location of the crowd.

The Falkovnians, highly visible, had their number on a glued small round sticker – see blue dots on the map. The werewolves, about 15 of them, had the numbers starting in the twenties and thirties.



(room numbers are off as they are taken from the Evil Eye description and adapted from it)

As Matton enters the main room, a large man dressed in black studded leather approaches him, and shouts "You know you are not welcome here! Get out!" Surprisingly, considering the snobbish character, Matton calmly explains that he will not stay long, and only wants to speak with Tabor. The man agrees with a menacing smile.

In the room, Matton attracts angry stares from many of the room patrons.

Varadan goes to the busy bar and ask one of the two lovely barmaids "why is Matton not welcome here?" She frowns and asks him if he wants to drink something. He asks for a beer, gets two and it cost him 1 g.p. He pays her double that amount (2 g.p.), hoping to make her talk. He repeats his question about Matton. She smiles and tells Varadan that: "a piece of dung is just a piece of dung. It smells bad."

One man at the bar hears Varadan talking about Matton and turns toward the monk. He looks aggressive and for a split second his face switches into a half-wolf face!



(from *Evil Eye*)

The barmaid tells him to “leave this one alone! You're cutting into my tips!” and the man turns back to his conversation. Varadan again asks about Matton and she tells him “it’s his nature, he can’t change it”. Varadan tells her that he isn’t from town and came here with him. She replies coldly “you didn’t associate with the right person” and she leaves him to take care of other customers.

At the bar, everybody seems to be spending a lot in drinking and wagers on the dog fights.

About twenty of the room patrons are Falkovnian soldiers, with the falcon brand on their forehead.

Half of them are gathered around the table closest to the bar, where a man wearing shining plate armor with a hawk on it is sitting on a comfortable chair. This man seems happy with himself and looks like the man in charge of the place.

Later this evening, they will hear his name: it is Anton Regess, the man in charge of the Karina Falkovnian enclave.



(from *Evil Eye*)

Meanwhile, Matton walks across the room and searches for Tabor but he hasn’t arrived yet (*DM note: he will arrive later, of course, leaving plenty of time for some cool dog fights related events to happen!*).

In the south eastern corner of the room, curtains separate the main room from a gambling area. There, Virevan sees people playing cards. The minimum amount to enter the table seems very high (at least 10 g.p.). Oddly, it is there that the men’s room entrance is located.

Near this area, at the far end of the entrance room, in the dark, many dusty boxes and wooden crates fill a section of the main room, hiding two large double doors (the theatre main doors on Front St). These doors are guarded by a Falkovnian soldier.

One dusty cloak room is empty. After exploring all the room behind the boxes, Virevan goes back to Matton.

Many patrons hit Matton viciously with their shoulders while he walks in the crowd but he coolly ignores them.

Most men in the room look like a motley crew of rabble, making the players slightly uneasy. They decide to take a table in a quiet part of the main room (the side opposite from the bar) and quietly wait there with Matton for Tabor's arrival.

The man who told Matton he wasn't welcome, is known as Pitmaster Fran. A dog fight is finished, and Fran kills the winning dog with a crossbow! He then descends into the pit and gets the two dead dogs on his strong shoulders. He announces the winning bet with a strong voice. He then walks toward the second set of stairs heading backstage, drops the dead dogs in a pile (*room 3b on my map*), and unlocks the door to backstage (*room 3c on my map*). He reappears on the stage and from behind the curtain, with a winch hauls two crates, each filled with a barking dog. The crates are slowly lowered into the pit while Fran announces the next bet details (mainly who is the dog trainer), waits a moment for the bets to be registered, and then a release mechanism opens the door allowing the dogs to spring out and attack.

A large group of persons watch the dogs tear each other to pieces and yell at them wildly. The fights are surrounded by an imposing curtain of people, so they are kept out of sight from the players for a long part of the night.

The bets are taken by the second lady behind the bar. A person wishing to bet goes there and simply tells her which dog he is betting on. He can pay now or later. At the end of the night, or when they leave, each person has to pay his debt or collects from the "bank", behind the bar. Suddenly, a drunk Falkovnian soldier gets close to Exigu and makes loud remarks on the size of the halfling and the possible salacious use of it. Again, Exigu ignores the provocation while the soldier shouts "If we were in Falkovnia, you would be impaled!" Exigu walks away.

A dog fight is over and Pitmaster Fran gets two other dogs.

At 2h30 am, surprise! Nathan Timothy arrives and is greeted as a hero by many of the patrons! He kisses both barmaids on their cheeks and goes for a chat with Anton Regess! The players keep a low profile from now on, trying not to be seen by Timothy. Timothy leaves Regess's table and gets to the pit where people leave him plenty of room to watch the dog fights... He shouts and seems to enjoy the show.

Meanwhile, Exigu discreetly goes to the second set of stairs going backstage and he hears faint sounds of weeping and crying! People are held there!

The players are afraid for their own safety and Virevan tries to go outside, pretending he needs fresh air. Before he leaves the main room, two Falkovnian guards at the bottom of the stairs (going to area 1, the entrance) stop him and get the attention of the barmaid in charge of betting. She waves him as "OK" and they let him go outside.

Virevan crosses a group of Falkovnian soldiers, escorting another high rank Falkovnian. One of the soldiers greets him as “Marcos Vedararak” (from Nathan Okerlund, article in the Book of Sacrifices). All Falkovnians salute him and are impressed to see him there. He goes to get a seat at Anton Regess’s table.

Some Falkovnians show a provocative, loud, patriotic side at the entrance of their leader and start singing a Falkovnia military song (*DM’s note: a patriotic WWII “Panzer anthem”, in German, complete with marching boots sounds*) that they accompany with a beer.

Some of the patrons sneer more or less openly at the Falkovnians. It seems not all welcome them in Invidia.

Pitmaster Fran announces a change in the fights and lowers a large cage surrounded with a veil along with a second dog cage. Fran announces with an evil smile that there is a change in the bet from now on: one can bet on the numbers of dogs it will take to ... get to the second fight, or the time it will last. The truly monstrous nature of the event becomes frighteningly clear when the veil is raised and a woman screams! The dog barks furiously as he is about to attack the defenceless woman...

The atmosphere in the main room gets really wild as many people now scream their pleasure at this evil show.

(DM’s note: I had scheduled a special music piece for this unveiling: from The Ravenous soundtrack, a piece called “the cave”. It is eight minutes long and starts with a mysterious repetitive music (mystery and stress combined, slowly changing to stressful mood at about 3:20 minutes). I had timed my description of the evil change in the fights with Fran’s announcement so that at 4:13 minutes of “the cave”, it was perfectly timed with the stressful mood taking over completely: it was revealed to them that a woman was lowered in the pit with a war dog while the music changed to a bass sound, more and more frantic, with jungle-like drums a few moments later. And dread-like acid guitar sound at 5:43. Highly recommended! The anxiety of the players was near palpable.)

After this event, a patron, afraid of the sudden turn of events, tries to leave but he is intercepted by the Falkovnian guards. The barmaid in charge of betting waves “no” at them! He hadn’t paid his betting debts!

The sweet looking barmaid moves to the man, held by the guards. While she is holding him up by the collar, he is stripped naked and thrown in the pit! The war dog that “fought” the woman attacks him!

However, it seems the man is able to defend himself somehow and a patron next to Timothy jumps in the pit. They hear a terrible roar (*A Light in the Belfry audio CD track # 67 – werewolf roar, the players can’t see it, but hear it*) and the man caught not paying his gambling debts screams... (*track # 75*). The time before its stops is very short ... The man who jumped, emerges from the pit, laughing, naked and splattered with of the other man’s blood. Many people give him approving nods while he gets back into some clothes.

The players tell Matton that it is too much and that they are leaving this evil place! He tries to convince them to stay a few minutes more.

“Did you knew there were werewolves here?”, they ask him. He lies and says “I had doubts, but wasn’t sure...”

(DM’s notes: I rushed the next encounter (meeting with Tabor) as the players were really going to leave, afraid for their own safety. Too bad, as I had planned the following additional “events”:



(from *Gaz IV*)

- Some of the werewolves would howl in unison when someone shows in public a painting of the Verbrek Wolf God;
- An encounter with Vedarak; and
- Arrival of Natalia Vorishkova (Black Box). Like some kind of famous pop star, she would be acclaimed. She was going to laugh loudly at the “silly twins in town”.



(from *Black Box*)

Next time!)

A man Matton recognizes as Scar Tabor (*finally ☺*) arrives (with two bodyguards).

Matton walks to him, tells him a few words, and they go to a private room in the back of the main room to talk (the room named “office” on my map). While the heroes stay outside and protect the room’s entrance, Matton drops a pouch of gems on the table and has a discussion with Tabor. After a time, Matton seems to learn what he wanted and he gets out of the room.



(from *Evil Eye*)

However, when Matton gets out, two angry patrons attack him! Screaming with rage, they change to werewolves hybrid form while other people come to see the fight. Some even bet on this fight. To the heroes’ surprise Matton transforms too! Into a large wolf!

The heroes stay away from the fight, but help Matton with missiles and spells. Matton, with the heroes’s help, is victorious.

They are watched by Nathan Timothy who just smiles, thinking he will get them later. However, meanwhile near the end of the fight, Mac Razbunare notices a hidden shape walking without making noise on a beam in the dark ceiling! The figure came from the area over the old stage and walked unseen over the main room until it is standing right over pile of crates and boxes. Mac Razbunare uses his *flare* spell to see more of that person and hopefully to get the

other heroes attention (the second objective fails, as it didn't get the other player's attention). He sees a lady dressed in a dark green cloak (he is surprised as he was expecting this person to be the Midnight Slasher). The cloak's hood hides her face and the druid thinks (*perhaps with some hope ☺?*) that it might be one of the twins?!?

The lady on the beam seems to hesitate after the *flare* as many in the rooms did see her and are now shouting at her. But moments after, she lets a lighted oil flask drop on the dusty crates! The fire starts and quickly spreads out of control.

After that, many things happen at once! (*DM note: I tried to make the game frantic from this point, making the game go fast and stressing the urgency of the growing fire and closed exit route*).

The lady on the beam runs to the back of the theatre while avoiding a few crossbow shots from the Falkovnians soldiers under her. Still hiding her face, she gets safely to the other side of the curtain.

Petrak notices that the two bodyguards of Tabor leave the office room where Tabor and Matton had their meeting. But Tabor is not in the room and is unseen! He probably turned invisible! He tells others to watch their back.

Seeing the fire and smoke, the patrons get up and move to the backdoors, where they entered the theatre (to pass through area 1).

The two barmaids are looking very angry about the turn of events, and are yelling at anybody coming too close to the bar and their safe.

Varadan and Mac Razbunare see with surprise that the two Falkovnian guards posted at the bottom of the stairs during the night are now at the top of this stair and banging at the door to get to the entrance room! From inside, somebody locked the door (to area 1)!

With the smoke coming from the blaze, people start to panic and they mass near the locked door, unable to get out. The Falkovnians use maces to try to break the door.

Also, two more Falkovnians soldiers lift another to get him onstage. He runs behind the curtain, and he is heard shouting something in Falkovnian.

Meanwhile, in the back of the old theatre, near the blaze, Virevan and Exigu unlock the door and get in the entrance front hall, to find the front door locked with chains! A few patrons are with them, helping as they can. But most patrons didn't see this possible exit route and stay grouped in panic in front of the doors to the back entrance (area 1).

The fire gets bigger and bigger, spreading quickly in the old crates and dusty boxes!

Mac Razbunare and Varadan try to exit via the second set of stairs to backstage (to area 3c on the map). It is now unlocked. In this room, many cut ropes are lying on the floor and a roped old man is looking dead on the floor. They check for vital signs to make sure he isn't alive, but he is truly dead. They guess the proposed victims of the second phase of the infamous dog fights were kept here and this man died here.

They run to the old stage to see the green lady stuck on a rope as she was descending because the Falkovnian soldier who was lifted onstage is now menacing her with his sword. They notice the Falkovnian soldiers are equipped with silver blades, most probably as a precaution against lycanthropes?

But before the heroes can do anything, a man, clad in brown leather and green cloak too, gets on stage from area 1 and quickly slays the Falkovnian! He turns to Mac Razbunare and Varadan and asks “Which side are you on?” Virevan answers that he hates werewolves. Satisfied, the man tells them to get out quickly as they will soon lock the doors to this building. He plans to trap these evils patrons in the flaming building!

The lady in green has removed her hood: she is an elf! The heroes realize they are the same couple seen in the morning at the Golden Fields Inn, the ones that were speaking in elvish in the main room!



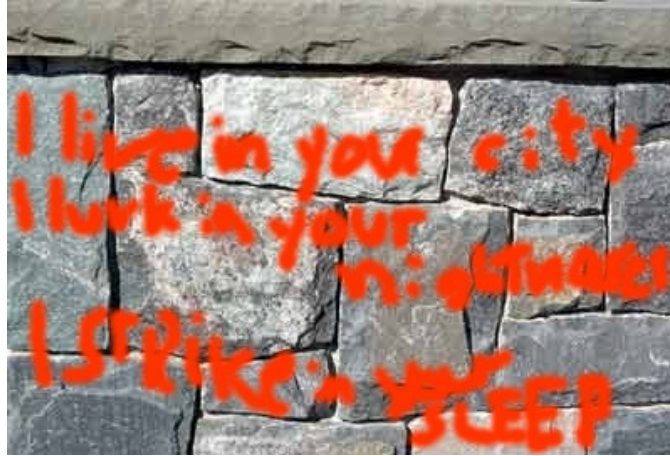
(DM's notes: these NPC are from Heroes of Light: Patrick Connor and Lynnet, his partner in fighting Verbrek werewolves. For Lynnet, I had no images, but I took Cyan's Silverleaf image. It matched the character well IMHO. Also, the matching pictures of both character looking over their shoulders is nice!)

At the front door, Virevan and Petrak are able to destroy parts of the heavy door and they squeeze to get out on the road, with a half dozen patrons and a Falkovnian soldier, who doesn't know what to do...

On stage, Mac Razbunare blocks the way to the Falkovnian soldiers trying to lift another soldier onstage, and Varadan blocks the backstage door *(the one from the main room to room 3c)* with a web! Unknowingly to Varadan, this spell blocks Matton who was going to follow the heroes!

(DM note: for the first time in this campaign, I rolled a 1% power check here for "assault" (the closest thing I found to helping trapping these people in a flaming building), but it was successful)

The two heroes then run to area 1 to find the Falkovnian guards there have been killed. There is a message drawn with blood on the walls! *(They assumed the man and the woman in green are making it look like the Midnight Slasher struck!)*



I live in your City – I lurk in your nightmares – I strike in your sleep

The door from the main room to area 1 is now struck with blows of great strength and it will probably break in less than a minute, releasing the trapped patrons.

However, meanwhile, the elf lady is now busy lighting something that looks like a mummified wolf foot. It emits a greenish smoke and she drops the item in a corner of the room (area 1). She explains to Varadan and Mac Razbunare that this magical item of warding will forbid any lycanthrope from passing in this room. “Humans will be able to leave the building”, she says. (DM note: this is an item inspired by the VRA’s Wolfspaw, but making it a one use item)

Varadan suddenly feels very dizzy but he feels better as soon as he goes outside. Mac Razbunare notices his strange behaviour and realizes with horror that Varadan is affected by the fumes of the warding item against lycanthropes! Varadan is infected by Timothy’s curse!

They run outside as the door to the main room is falling down from the blows. The man says “From now on, it’s every man for himself, see ya you know where”, and the pair run and disappear in the alley.

Varadan and Mac Razbunare run to the front of the warehouse as the first human patrons emerge from the building.

Most of the heroes run in the night to the Golden Fields Inn while Exigu and Austizel take a watch position in front of Timothy’s boat, to see if he gets out alive from the blaze.

The other heroes discuss the chances of all werewolves getting killed, hopefully killing Timothy as well. They also wonder why Matton is hated that much. One guesses that “Matton is probably too much on the snobbish human side for these rustic shapechanging beasts, so that’s why they hate him”.

At 5am, they see a large wolf walking in the shadows and entering the boat ...

Exigu and Austizel go back to the Inns and get some sleep.

Around 9 am, they get up after a short sleep and go downstairs for breakfast. The man and the elfen lady are there, in a corner. They wave at the heroes to join them.

Virevan stays at the counter for a moment and enquires to the Inn owner about today's rumors. He confirms that a warehouse burned to the ground. Most people think that it was burned because of illegal activities, and another gang of competing ruffians set fire to it.

Also, today is the last day of the Wine Festival, and the public executions are held this afternoon.

Meanwhile, the man introduces himself as Patrick O'Connor, and the lady as Lynnet Tharel. During the conversation, she is not saying much, if anything. She instead looks inquiringly at the players. Patrick explains that they stayed in the area of the warehouse, hidden, to check on the success of their actions. Most of the humans were able to leave. About half of the werewolves were killed when the roof fell. Then the Falkovnians made a hole in the building walls with explosives, freeing about half a dozen werewolves. The heroes inquire about Matton, but Patrick and Lynnet saw them leave in wolf form, so he doesn't know who was able to leave. Patrick also says that Scar most probably ran away in the confusion with a large sum of money. The bartenders are close associates of Nathan Timothy and like Fran, come from Verbrek. They sometimes work at the Black Dog tavern.

The heroes inform them that Timothy was able to leave, as they saw him in wolf form enter his boat. That disappoints Patrick, and he tells them that Timothy is one of the organisers of these dog fights. The heroes tell Patrick and Lynnet that they fought Timothy once, and that they fear three of them (including Raul) might be infected with lycanthropy.

Patrick confirms that they will have to kill Timothy before trying to cure the infected persons. He also reveals that he knows well the son of Timothy, Alfred, another werewolf. According to Patrick, the weakness of Timothy's werewolf clan is gold plated weapons.

Patrick agrees to eventually help the heroes fight Timothy, but puts two conditions. First, he and Lynnet will be part of a good plan, not a simple fight. Considering the dreaded curse of lycanthropy, he won't take all the risks for the heroes. Second, he and Lynnet absolutely want to stay anonymous. They have been fighting werewolves for a long time, and always were able to avoid reprisals to themselves or the ones they try to protect.

They part for the day and Raul finds a vistana in the public market. He is located near other attractions: Fire-Eaters and Fred with his Singing Salmon.

"Come one, come all, to the terrifying House of Mists!", (does removed)the vistana says. "Test your courage and skill of arms!" He stands in front of a 7' tall wooden box painted black. A green parrot sits on his shoulder and is echoing the barker.

The vistana is now looking at the heroes and he says "Welcome to the House of Mists! Come, brave the ghosts of your past!" "Ghost from the past, wraagh!" adds the parrot.

He sees Raul and tells him a few things in a language only known to vistani, the patterna. After, he introduces himself as Vincenzo. He invites the heroes to step into the box and battle fearsome creatures of the Mists.

The heroes ask Raul about this, and Raul tells the House of the Mists is safe and interesting, and the parrot adds "Perfectly safe, wraagh!"

The heroes have to enter one at a time. Varadan is first. He enters the box and Vincenzo closes the door after him, muttering something, possibly a magic formula. Varadan then finds himself in

a large area, and the door he just used isn't behind him! The place is dark, humid and full of mists. After a while, he hears footsteps. In front of him appears a werewolf! Varadan fights the creature but it all seems like a dream, slow and unreal. The creature defeats Varadan and the door opens: Varadan is back inside the black box. He exits and Petrak enters.

Petrak sees a similar scene, (to see removed) a very large barbarian goblin emerges from the mists and attacks him (Petrak's family was decimated by goblins). Petrak slays the creature and is struck with a new certitude: he has a sister somewhere. It is a surprise as he thought that the whole family except him was dead.

Virevan enters the box next, to battle a werewolf. When Virevan has slain the beast, it is back to human form: the werewolf is his friend Varadan! After he exits the box, Virevan asks Vincenzo about the vision he had. Vincenzo answers that he has experienced something either in his near past, or is near future.

Mac Razbunare enters the box, to fight a werewolf changing to Strahd, then changing to Varadan! *(DM's note: this is a hint for something later. With Legacies of the Blood, I had planned to make orphan Varadan a part of the Von Zarovich family. Varadan's character really hate Barovians so I decided to have him know eventually of conflicting ancestry ...)*

Austizel's turn: a werewolf changing to Virevan after its "death".

It is Exigu's turn, who closes his eyes whatever happens. He feels attacked but keeps his eyes closed. After a few hits, the door opens. He gets no visions. *(DM's note: this is strange behaviour, indeed. This player acted in meta-game thinking and in fact wanted to know what kind of illusion this was, and was surprised to be affected by this "illusion" even if he didn't see it...)*

Vincenzo thanks the heroes for trying the House of Mists. Then, leaning forward and lowering his voice to a conspiratorial whisper, he adds: "The help you need can be found in Vulpwood, come there tonight." He adds a few more words to Raul in patterna. Raul nods. Vincenzo steps back to his black box and close the door with a loud snap! In the blink of an eye, he is gone! The place occupied by the House of Mists is now empty. In the public market, nobody around seems to have noticed anything odd ...

While some go back to the Inn for more sleep, Petrak, Virevan and Raul are back to the forge, to make some gold plated mace and bullet slings.

During the afternoon, Petrak hears something strange. He hears violin music, not unlike the music Raul plays. The others hear nothing. Petrak searches the forge but no violin player is found... Back at the Inn for diner, they meet again Patrick and Lynnet. Patrick inquires for the heroes business at the dog fight. They say they were there to protect Matton, who was there to search for information. After more discussions, they guess that Matton is a wolfdene (a wolf changing to man), and that is why werewolves hate him.

They leave early after diner for the Vulpwoods, a wooden area a few miles north of Karina. They see a fire in the distance: there is the vistani camp! But a few moments after they are attacked by a ghost! It's Leyla again! She looks different, angrier. She attacks Petrak and paralyzes him, then Virevan! She then turns her attacks on Mac Razbunare. But she won't paralyze more heroes. The fight is over after the spell casters used many *disrupt undead* spells on her.

During the fight, Raul, glazed eyes, got his violin out and started to play wildly. They notice that Leyla ignored her baby, Nikko.

After the fight, Raul is emotionally shaken. Petrak and Virevan shake off their paralysis after a few more minutes. They resume their walk to the vistani camp. They see there are seven vardos around the fire, and one of them is Raul's! Raul shakes hands with Vincenzo and says a few words in their secret language. Another mystery ...

An elderly woman stands beside Vincenzo. She is attired in a dark flowing dress with a parrot-green shawl wrapped around her sturdy shoulders... She introduces herself as Eva, and invites them to join their campfire. She assures them of their safety from Leyla's ghost.

Joining other vistani seated around the fire, the heroes are offered hot, fragrant tea. This tea makes them feel warmer and wash away the last traces of ghost-fear.

Meanwhile, the moon has risen high over the campsite and the stars shine brightly in the evening sky. "Moonrise," offers Vincenzo, "is the finest hour of the day."

Two beautiful young vistani girls begin to feed the flames, laughing and chatting to each other in their colourful tongue. It is obvious they are discussing about the heroes.

At Eva's request, Raul produces his violin and starts playing. A look of surprise appears on the elderly woman's face, but it quickly gives way to a knowing smile. Like if switching her thoughts, she begins clapping in time to the music. Soon, all the Vistani are clapping and singing. One of the two girls rises and begins to dance around the fire, shaking a tambourine to the rhythm of the music. She spins and twirls her skirt round and round. Suddenly, she comes to a stop before the group. Gently she waits before you, a smile upon her lips. "Who will dance with Gitana?" asks Vincenzo.

Funnily, Exigu the Halfling is the first to jump on his feet at this request. He offers an interesting performance that the vistani watch with good hearted laugh.

Raul stops playing and puts back his violin in his case. The other vistani do the same. Meanwhile, a vistani in her teen years walks to Madame Eva and discuss with her in their foreign tongue. She is dressed in layered skirts of many colors and intricate patterns. Her narrow face is framed with night-black hair and her eyes burn like smoldering coals.

Raul whispers "She is the future raunie, she will eventually replace Madame Eva when the old lady exits our world"

The young lady approaches the fire. "I am Marcella", she says with a commanding tone, "And it's time for the doroq."

After a moment of silence where only the cracking fire is heard (even the forest noise seemed to shut down), she started her tale with a large smile.

(Following is quoted from the VRG to the Vistani)

The War for All time

In peace and joy, all mortals lived among the gods, in a land of eternal light in the void. Together they shared a love of creation. Together they made the universe, in which to

dance the prastonata and multiply. The gods created all the lands, while mortals forged many an artifice with which to tend them.

But the gods reserved the creation of time to themselves, saying it was not a mortal's lot to have power over the past and future, but only to live in the past and future, but only to live in the present. Mortals were content with that lot, for the universe held everything they ever needed to live in peace and joy.

Out of the void came dark powers, the shadows of the gods, who whispered in mortal's ears, telling them they would be gods themselves if they controlled the past and the future. They inflamed mortal's hearts with visions of power, and made them fearful of the gods, fearful of their lack of control over time. At last, the mortals and the dark powers joined to make war against the gods for all time. Only Manusa, mother of our tasque, defied her mortal kind and stood with the gods.

Though the mortals and the shadows of the gods lacked the power to overthrow the gods, their destruction across the universe was terrible, which smote the gods to their hearts. In the end, the gods enabled Manusa to see the past and the future, that she might walk among the mortals and forecast the doom of their creation, at the end of the universe.

Then the mortals were ashamed. Then they rejected the whisperings of the dark powers. They begged forgiveness of the gods, and the dark powers were driven back to the mists.

When peace and joy returned to the land of eternal light, the gods regretted telling the secrets of time to Manusa, but they could not take back what had been freely given. So they joined with the mortals and drove Manusa from the land, cast her into the mists, and gave her to the dark powers who clamoured for revenge.

But Manusa would not give up. Manusa would not die. Manusa wandered in the mists alone, fearless of all beings, for she could see the future, and she foresaw that the gods and mortals would not coexist forever. Manusa saw that the spiteful gods would eventually cast all mortals from the land of eternal light, and abandon them in the universe they had created, and she laughed at the miserable fate of both gods and mortals.

We are the children of Manusa! We are neither mortal or divine. We are wanderers in the world and through the mists. We are unknown to mortals and unfettered by gods. We are merchants on the road of time, selling the past of gods and the future to mortals.

We are the children of Manusa!

After which all Vistani shout "Koorah!" Raul explains that it means "Utterly true!"

Marcella smiles at the heroes and starts another tale. This time, soon all happiness left her face and she is very serious...

(Following is quoted from Stu's journal, which was quoted from Evil Eye, and I also added some changes for emphasis from me for my campaign taste)

As a young girl Gabrielle Aderre was warned by her mother Isabella that she may never have children: "A man, a babe, a home - these things can never be for you, Gabrielle, for tragedy will be the only result." The mother and daughter wandered the land for many years, and all that time Gabrielle pressed her mother to know more of her mysterious father and of her future, though Isabella forbade it.

And so Gabrielle learned nothing more until her nineteenth year, on the eve of her mother's death...

This night, while travelling in a forest infested by wolves, Isabella allowed Gabrielle to set the warding circle around their camp. They had argued that day, as they had many other days, and Gabrielle has lost against her mother's will, as usual.

Tired and seething with anger, Gabrielle wove the protective charms hastily.

As the light of the rising moon bathed the camp in ghostly radiance, a werewolf leaped from the shadows and breached the protecting ward to their horror.

Before she could ready herself, the monster knocked Isabella to the ground, and ripped her leg with its jaws. Crawling away, Isabella turned an evil eye upon the creature, blasting it with the full force of her hate and malice. It fell dazed to the ground as the enchantment tightened its grip. As the blood pulsed from her torn leg, Isabella called to her daughter for aid, but Gabrielle saw an opportunity...

"Tell me of my father," Gabrielle bargained, "and I will save your life."

Isabella was furious. "The charm will not hold the wolf for long! His strength will return, and he will slaughter us both!" But Gabrielle would not be swayed, and as Isabella's vision began to blur, she told her daughter of her past. Though her life's blood spilled onto the ground below, Isabella's voice was eerily calm and strong in the cool night air...

"I was captured as a child and sold as a slave in Falkovnia. My master was a sadistic monster. For amusement each night he would gather a group of slaves and impale them before his castle. Their dying screams would mingle with the chamber music and polite conversation. But because of my beauty and Vistani gifts, I survived. However, many nights I wished he had slain me like the others... Years later, when I finally escaped, I was two months pregnant with you."

"I have told you enough of your father. Bring my healing potions before the wolf beast kills us both."

Gabrielle was stunned, her romantic dreams of her mysterious father rent like rotten cloth. She stumbled away from her mother into the vardo. There she packed her mother's prized tarokka fortune telling cards and potions into a sack, whilst the wolf convulsed in its ensorcelled state, helplessly held by the power of the evil eye.

Gabrielle returned to her mother and said. "I don't believe your lies, mother. I'm leaving to find my father." Gabrielle turned and fled into the darkness.

Her mother pleaded frantically for her daughter to return, but the beast stirred and soon the screams came. Before she fell from the claws of the beast, Isabella uttered a curse that Gabrielle heard through the dead leaves of the forest, like if it was carried by the trees...

“The Mists take you, traitor. May you know your child's betrayal and realise too late the depths of its evil!”

A strange mist closed about Gabrielle, and she was gone from this forest.

Gabrielle found herself in the wilds of Invidia. She soon fell afoul of a guard patrol and was brought in chains before the Lord Bakholis in Castle Loupet. Proud and confident, Bakholis sought to enslave Gabrielle. But the witch was strong, and inflicted the evil eye charm upon Bakholis, who fell just as the wolf beast in the forest. Gabrielle stepped forward with her dagger, and as Bakholis writhed, slit his throat.

Yet her victory was short lived, for soon she found she could not pass the borders of Invidia, her new dominion and prison.

Years passed and though the bitterness welled within her, Gabrielle became accustomed to her imprisonment. She took many lovers, but the passage of time could not erase the memory of the curse laid by her mother. Gabrielle was careful to use the medicinal arts taught by her mother to prevent her bearing child. She treated her lovers as thralls and with disdain, enslaving them with the power of her evil eye and discarding them when she grew tired or bored. None were able to comfort her terrible, aching loneliness.

One day a dark traveller appeared at the gates of Castle Loupet. From the moment he locked eyes with Gabrielle in the great hall, her heart, which had never been touched, melted under his hypnotic gaze. She soon invited the handsome stranger into her boudoir. Before they had mounted the stairs, however, the couple was confronted by Matton Blanchard, the lover that Gabrielle had just discarded.

Matton was the only one who had felt genuine affection for Gabrielle, and he had not succumbed to the power of her eye. Now hurt and jealous, he hurled himself at the stranger. The gentleman caught him and then hurled him to the ground with terrific force.

Leaving Matton convulsing on the floor, they climbed from the great hall into her private chambers.

In the privacy of her bedroom, Gabrielle succumbed to the infernal power of the stranger. Even when the stranger disrobed to reveal a pair of black, bat-like wings unfold into a canopy of darkness, she thought it hardly strange. She welcomed him into her embrace ...

When it was over, he told her, “You will remember me only as the handsome stranger,” before leaving. And then he was gone.

Marcella stopped. Her face was grim. Then, Madame Eva turned and spoke directly to the heroes, piercing them with her gaze: “From that monstrous union, an abomination was born, a creature now in the guise of a child, known to us as the Dukkar. It is this creature we have come to defeat here in Karina. Its very presence gnaws at us like a cancer, as it is a gaping wound in our Sight.

We ask that you assist us in our endeavour. As giorgio you may walk about Karina unnoticed, and learn of its lair. He should be where his mother is.”

After more questions by the heroes, she explains “The Dukkar must be stopped, for he has the power to move across the land and breach borders. If this happens, this will unleash a wave of evil. The only way to prevent this is to tie him to the land. Find this information and come back here. Meanwhile, we will get Raul’s skills to build the Dukkar a chain. For this, we will be grateful and help you with Leyla’s curse.”

Knowing that Matton has the answer to Gabrielle’s location, they decide to go back in town and look for him...