

GAME SESSION FIFTY FIVE: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 1

(played Dec 2nd, 2012)

March 28th, 748 – 10h00 am

The heroes put a table under the raised portcullis, to prevent it to close behind them after they passed under it. They anticipate that one of the evil spirits will be encountered in what looks like an oubliette, so they do healing before they enter.

Opened iron doors line the walls of this room. In the middle, a ten-foot-square metal grating lies over a dark pit in the floor. A thick rope has been tied to the grating and dangles into the dark pit below... Entering the room, they realize they are the first living creature entering this place for decades...

Suddenly, something gets out from the pit, *through* the metal grate and it shrieks madly, waving an axe over its head! His arms are very long and his legs bent at improbable angles. It's the Lopper!

Quickly, Austizel throws *ghost touch* arrows, and MacRazbunare hits it with a *disrupt undead*. But the Lopper hits Petrak and Varadan. The wounds from the ghost axe looks like profound cuts from a tiny hatchet, and it bleeds profusely. At their horror, the heroes notice some of the blood turning to smoke, and flying to the Lopper, and it seems to heal him!

More *ghost touch* arrows from Exigu this time, and another *disrupt undead* from Varadan. Tora wants to hit it with positive healing but he doesn't touch the Lopper.

Then Petrak identified the Lopper as not being a haunt, like the others, but as a sinister wraith!

More bleeding from the Lopper's cuts fly back to the killer, healing him... Patu runs away, because he just saw a swarm of ghostly rats pass through the wall and attack Exigu. The ghost rats look like if they were burned and acrid smoke drifts from the swarm. The swarm steals Exigu's force (3 points).

More spells are thrown at the Lopper (*Melf Acid Arrow* from Austizel and *Magic Missile* from MacRazbunare), but the Lopper hits Tora this time, then fly incorporeally through the floor. Again, some blood from Tora fly back to the Lopper! It seems his hit and run strategy is to hurt as many people he can, since the blood doesn't stop from bleeding, and it heals him...

Exigu is nauseated from the swarm, and he walks away. Varadan cast *disrupt undead* at the swarm. Tora cast a cure on Petrak, while the priest cast *spiritual weapon* on the swarm.

In the distance, they hear Patu barking at something in the cavern where they landed from the ground level to this underground level (see session 54). Later, Macrazbunare also hear a noise like if something big was thrown in the lake... But Patu is still barking.

The swarm's nauseating presence move toward Exigu and again steals the halfling's force (4 points). While they try to destroy the swarm, the Lopper appears from the floor and hits Tora and Petrak with his ghost axe. More spells are thrown to the Lopper.



Now it's the ghost swarm's turn to enter a wall and hides from the heroes. Austizel throws a *lightning bolt* at the Lopper, then a *magic missile* from Macrazbunare. The Lopper again hits Tora and Petrak. Tora tries to fight back with his sword but he misses it (incorporeal).

The rat swarm exits the wall and runs at Exigu again... Exigu is hit and he falls on the ground (strength of 0).

Another *lightning bolt* is sent, but it misses the Lopper (incorporeal). Petrak hits him with a cure of positive energy (16 points), Macrazbunare with a *magic missile* but Tora finishes the monster with a long sword hit. The Lopper vanishes, and many droplets of blood fall on the ground over where he was standing...

Petrak cast *lesser restoration* on Exigu and it heals him in part from the strength drain.

They walk to the room where Patu is still barking madly, to find the chain they used to drop to this level isn't there anymore. They think it might be Gibs or Vrood's acolyte. Varadan gets up there with a grappling hook, and notice the chain isn't there anymore. It was unchained, and dropped in the lake below. They all get up to the ground floor. Varadan scent an odor of slight putrefaction.

Austizel finds human boot traces, and they follow it outside to a place where a horse was attached. The horse's traces go back toward the village. Macrazbunare turns to a falcon and tries to reach this rider before he gets to the village, but it's too late, the rider escaped. The druid sees the village's population all gathered in the center. It's like if a riot will soon happen. Some even have pitchforks.

The heroes learn that a little girl was abducted from her bed last night, Evora Faravan. The mayor is talking to the crowd, trying to calm it. But when the heroes hear someone yells "it's the stranger's fault!", they discretely go back to Kendra's house.

They rest for remainder of the day. At one point an apple is thrown at the door, while someone shouted "strangers, leave!".

At the end of the afternoon, Kendra is back and tells what she learned about the little girl's disappearance. The window in her bedroom was forced open with some kind of tool, then she was snatched from her bed. The village is near riot, and some people pack their things to move to Martira Bay.

March 29th, 748 – 1h00 am

At night, they hear a loud knock at the front door. While the heroes awaken and gather a weapon, sleepy Kendra and Austizel gets to the door and open it. They find Kendra's father, as a hideous zombie, trying to enter the house! Its crushed jaw gargles and moans horribly while its dead eyes focus on his daughter. Kendra is paralysed from fright!

But the heroes close the door on this revenant. But seconds later, inside the house, Petros pushes the door from the pantry and exits from it! He attacks his daughter with filthy claws. She falls on the floor! The heroes kill the creature that was Petros Lorrimer and then heal Kendra. What was that? How come it had supernatural powers like this? Who sent it?

(DM note: OK, a little warp on Bend the land ability ;) On the spot, it seemed eerie and strange, what I needed for the event)

Macrazbunare cut the zombie's head (not in front of Kendra!) and burrow it in the backyard.

Back to sleep, after comforting Kendra.

Around 9am, some villagers come to ask if everything is alright (the rest of the zombie's body still lying on the porch). They learn that a man disappeared last night! Alendru Ghoroven was on watch when he went for a minute toward the river... He never came back.

The heroes burn Petros's body.

On the statue, another letter was added... Time is running up...



They see two families have hauled their belongings on a cart and they are leaving Harrowstone.

They learn that Alendru is found: he was killed from a vicious razor wound at the throat. Also, the mayor asked for a town meeting tonight at 7 pm, at the town hall.

They are back at the prison, and get to the underground level. The last room they have to investigate looks like the Lopper's oubliette, but on the other side of the complex. But this portcullis is closed and the players are not able to move it. The cast *knock* and it is unstuck. They open it and keep it open with a table stuck under it.

It is set like a mirror image of the Lopper's oubliette, but the wooden support timbers are partially burnt and a part of the room collapsed. Rivulets of water are slowly dripping in the room, and the oubliette in the center overflows with brackish water.

Tora tries *ghostsight* and sees that the room exists also in the ethereal plane, but there it hasn't collapsed. The two images superpose in his head and it's confusing.

Petrak sees drops of blood oozing from a wall... Varadan is struck with dread as letters appear on the brickwall, in front of him... "O", then "T", then "T"... *(DM note: you remember this player's real name is Ottar Von Zarovich!)*. It drains his wisdom! He tries to remove the blood from the wall with holy water... while Austizel and Varadan try a haunt siphon on this, and Petrak and Macrazbunare send positive energy (*cure moderate wound* each) on the wall.

The blood letters keep on coming, and the heroes throw as many healing spells at the wall as they can.

At one point, after a *disrupt undead* from Varadan, the room collapses! It seems the haunt was keeping it together and now it's gone. Many heroes get damage from the collapsing timbers and ceiling collapse. (DM note: The room is now considered difficult terrain. The design goal of this haunt encounter was to drain the PCs of precious positive energy spells before they met the real threat in this room... The Splatter Man!).

With *ghostsight* Tora scans the room. He sees letters of bloody flame on the brick wall where there were letters: "You are the next to die"!

It spells a deadly threat (which sadly will be proven true a moment later ...)

A ghost suddenly appears from the oubliette, right in the middle of the room! Its eyes glow red from hatred and magick energy crackles in its hands... The Splatter Man!



It sends a *magic missile* at Tora, and it does a ravaging 31 hp! The heroes believe it's an empowered spell.

Again, the launch of positive energy spells at the apparition from the heroes is strong – *disrupt undead* from Varadan, ghost trap from Exigu (attempt doesn't work), *Spiritual weapon* from Petrak, *magic missile* from Macrazbunare, while Austizel drinks a cure potion and Tora heals himself with a cure spell.

But the Splatter Man throws another *empowered magic missile* at Tora, who falls on the ground, dead! (-10!)

More *disrupt undead* and *magic missile* are thrown at this deadly ghost.



At his turn, he cast another spell. The heroes fearfully expect another *magic missile*, but this spell is different... *Wall of stone*! It seals shut the room, and the heroes are trapped! It moves out of the reach of the heroes, who have trouble moving to hit him because of the rubbles and timber on the floor.

Varadan tries to breach the wall, while Petrak cast *magic weapon* on his bow. MacRazbunare cures himself, which is a good idea because seconds later the Splatter Man cast a *magic missile* at him (21 hp). The heroes reply with spells too.

The ghost then summons a creature to put between him and the heroes, some kind of bloody skeleton! Blood drips from its yellowish bones... (DM note: a *Crimson Bones*). The heroes hurl spells at this new creature.

The Splatter Man cast another (regular) *magic missile* at Macrazbunare, but moments later, Exigu luckily hits him with his *ghost touch* arrows and the Splatter Man ghost vanishes with a shriek of rage ...



They destroy the bloody skeleton, which explodes in a gust of blood droplets when it is destroyed...



While they do healing, Petrak destroys the wall of stone.

They get back to the ground level and go see Vesorianna. She greets them with a smile and says “you succeeded, you are truly the heroes Harowstone needed.”

“I will be now able to destroy Harrowstone’s ghosts forever”. She takes her husband’s badge in her hand and concentrate. An eerie blue light emanate from her body, and these rays of blue light seems to pierce the walls.

After a minute, she opens her eyes and the light is gone. She has a puzzled look on her face. “It worked, Harrowstone is now as safe as any place... but why

am I still here? I thought I would vanish as well?”

MacRazbunare suggests that she might need excuses from Gibs?

She thinks at this for a moment, and then says “Yes, I want to see Gibs”.

At 12h30 pm, the heroes get back to the village and go to Gib’s wooden shack.

He is still sleeping and obviously smells of alcohol. The awake him and tell him they are going for a walk. They promise him beer to get him on the move.

But when they turn and walk toward the prison, he panics and the heroes have to drag him in this direction. “It’s not me!”, he shrieks, “it’s not me! It was like a dream! I didn’t want to kill the little girl!”



The stunned heroes then realize the murders were Gib’s actions!

“It’s wasn’t me!”, he continues, “I wasn’t myself, I killed that man and the dog too!” and he starts crying. “I don’t want to go to the prison!”

But they bring him to Vesorianna, who looks at him with pity. He couldn’t be more terrified of seeing this ghost from his coward past!

“Gibs Hephenus, you owe me excuses”, she tells him.

“I’m sorry”, Gibs cries pitifully, “I shouldn’t have let you inside the prison when the fire started. I should have done something, but I’m a coward. I’m not brave like these” while he waves at the heroes. “I’m a poor coward, if I could change the awful wrong things I did to you I would, but

now it's too late, I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry ..." He cries like a child while mumbling "sorry... sorry... sorry..."

She moves toward him. Some heroes expect her to kill him, but still they do nothing!

She looks at him in the eyes and says "apologies accepted, Gibs Hephenuus".

She turns her face toward the heroes. "I feel my time here is ending", she says, "thank you for the goodness of your actions", and suddenly she isn't there anymore...

The badge of warden floats in the air for a moment, glowing, then it gently falls of the ground, like a leaf. The heroes take it.

The heroes discuss the possibility of delivering Gibs to justice. Their conclusion is that they shouldn't, as Gibs was possessed during all this time. He could not have done all of this if he was himself.

They then try to guess the reason why the Whispering Way went to Harrowstone prison.

At one point, Gibs interrupt them: "are you talking about those guys who are always whispering?"

The heroes, surprised: "yes, what do you know of them?"

"They went to the monument the night Petros Lorrimer died", Gibs said, "They stayed there for half an hour, then they left by the main road. When they passed in front of my house, I heard one of them say *Long road until our next stop at Madame Montarri*"...

"Who is this Madame Montarri?", Gibs asks, while the heroes stare at him with surprise!

Send by email with the next game reminder (from the Lopper description in HoH):

Despite the indisputably violent nature of the Lopper's crimes, a number of bureaucratic complications kept pushing back his expected date of execution—unable to proceed with what he felt was a simple judgment, the warden instead had the Lopper dropped into this pit. With both of his legs broken, the Lopper malingered in these depths for months before salvation came in the shape of a potion of levitation smuggled into his cell as part of the Splatter Man's complex plan to engineer his escape from Harrowstone.

The Lopper waited until just before his daily feeding before he drank the potion. He floated up to the edge of his oubliette above, and when the cruel and hated night watch guard Gurtis Vortch came to dump the day's food into the pit, the Lopper was there to ambush him. He grabbed Vortch through the bars of his oubliette's grating and pulled him prone, then deftly disarmed the guard of his sword and, with a few expert cuts, decapitated him. After fishing the keys to the oubliette's lid out of the still twitching body's beltpouch, the Lopper was free. He quickly released the other prisoners from the nearby cells, and the growing distraction was enough to allow the Splatter Man to stage a similar coup to the south.

The riot spread quickly after that, ending only after 7 hours of violence in fire and ruin. Faced with death by fire or asphyxiation, the Lopper fled back to this oubliette, hoping to wait out the disaster in the depths below.

Yet while the Lopper's theory was sound and the smoke never did reach into the oubliette's depths, the rope he used to lower himself into the pit had been damaged in the fire. When, several hours after the fire burnt out, he tried to climb to safety and escape, the rope broke, dropping him back into the pit, breaking his legs anew, and consigning him to a lingering death from thirst.

Of the prisoners of Harrowstone, the Lopper may have lived the longest after the fire, yet in the end, he perished as well.

And to this I now add:

Sometimes, in the case of truly heinous crimes, executions were considered too merciful. In these rare cases, prisoners sent to Harrowstone were consigned to this cellblock, aptly named the "Nevermore," with the knowledge that those who were imprisoned in a cell here would never again see the light of day. These sentences were relatively rare, and as a result, this cellblock was often quite underpopulated. At the time of the fire, the only inhabitant of Nevermore was Professor Hean Feramin, the so-called Splatter Man.

This prison block is the final resting place of Hean Feramin, the Splatter Man. In life, Professor Feramin was a brilliant man, even after his corruption and descent into madness. His intellect served him well in devising brutal and sadistic ways to murder people, and while it wasn't enough to prevent his eventual capture, it aided him once he was imprisoned in Harrowstone. The loss of his spellbook was a significant setback for the insane wizard, but he hid from the guards the fact that, thanks to his Spell Mastery feat, he could still prepare a few spells each day. While some of these spells (specifically magic missile) could have given him the chance to do a fair amount of damage to the guards, Hean was smart enough to know that once he revealed his ability to still cast a few spells, the element of surprise would be lost. He refrained from using his spellcasting directly as a result, and the guards, thinking his lost spellbook rendered him nearly helpless, didn't monitor his activity as closely as they should have. Using his vastly reduced spell selection and good old-fashioned trickery and diplomacy, he scrounged together enough spell components and resources to put into action a daring escape plan by recruiting the aid of the prison's strongest and most violent murderer—the man known as the Lopper.

Working with components and resources smuggled in to him with his food and taking advantage of the near total solitude that imprisonment in Nevermore afforded, the professor was eventually able (after much trial and error) to concoct a single potion of levitation at the bottom of his oubliette. Trusting the Lopper to act according to his nature, Feramin summoned a small air elemental late one night and instructed it to ferry the potion to the north, passing through the two portcullises and avoiding detection by the guards by flying slowly and quietly near the ceiling, eventually delivering the potion down into the northern oubliette and into the Lopper's hands. After that, it was only a matter of time before the Lopper secured his own escape and began releasing the other prisoners.

When the fire came, the Splatter Man was in the thick of the mayhem. Soaked with oil and burning to the bone, he fled in searing pain back south and managed to return to his prison, but in his blind agony he stumbled into his still-open oubliette and died from the fall.

Soon thereafter, he made the transition from physical prisoner to spiritual prisoner, with his frustrated and evil soul rising as a ghost. Just as in life, the Splatter Man in undeath is the primary organizational force in Harrowstone—of the haunts and undead, he can be seen to be the “leader.” Yet until both the warden and Vesorianna’s influence over the region is removed, he cannot leave this chamber— which forces him to instead manipulate and influence things from afar. His greatest triumph—one that would have been impossible while the warden’s ghost guarded the dungeon, and that even today takes much of the Splatter Man’s will to effect, is the remote possession of one of Harrowstone’s most weak-willed citizens—old Gibs Hephenu.

Through Gibs, the Splatter Man is slowly eroding widow Vesorianna’s will by waging a campaign of spiritual terror, spelling her name out in blood in the same way he tormented his living victims before his capture...

GAME SESSION FIFTY SIX: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 2

(played Jan 27th, 2013)

March 29th, 748 – 1h30 pm

The heroes resume their discussion with Gibs. Gibs says he was controlled all those nights, and the next morning he was remembering things like if it was a bad dream. For the dog, cattle, little girl and man murder, he was using a razor. Two days ago, he found that bloody razor hidden in his house. Then he realized there was something going on but he didn’t know what to do. He was confused.

When asked, Gibs says he never went to the prison “in his dreams”, or during the day. So it wasn’t him who threw the chain in the water.

When asked again about the sinister people that mostly spoke in whispers, Gibs says he saw 6 or 7 people, and many of them were very pale “like if they slept all day and were only awake at night.” Two of them were women.

Macrazbunare thinks there is one of them still remaining in Harrowstone. Otherwise, who else would have dropped the chain in the lake under the prison? Who raised Petros? And there are also those rumors of strange lights in the cemetery.

They think the warden somehow kept his role when he died. His painful death was extremely full in emotions, so he may stayed around after death to keep his role and make sure the ghost of the prisoners were kept inside.

Back to the village. Again, a discussion on the culpability of Gibs. Again, the conclusion that he was controlled by an evil force and that he can’t be made accountable for his sins.

For the first time in weeks, there are a few sunrays piercing the black clouds...

They cast *detect magic* on the haunt siphon: nope. But Exigu's Ghost Trap is still magic. It will be useable again in a few hours.

In the village, the children are still singing the [haunting song](#)...

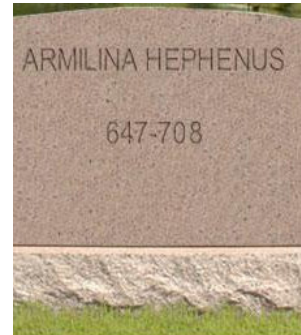
They tell Kendra what happened in the prison: the haunting of the prison and the troubles in the village are probably finished.

She asks if the heroes will bury Tora in the Restlands cemetery? (*DM note: Tora's player hated it of course!*). They tell her they instead plan to have a *raise dead* spell cast on him. She is surprised of that decision since the priests of Harrowstone are not of sufficient level to cast this spell.

They visit the cemetery, to check if everything is calm there. They try to investigate who could be animating zombies. They spy Gibs in front a tomb, crying.

They guess it is Gibs's mother?

They leave him alone and watch for strange traces outside and inside the cemetery – nothing. They check Petros's burying place. From the look of it, it seems Petros clawed his way in the dirt to exit his tomb... He wasn't digged out.



Gibs then catches them while they were going to exit the cemetery. "Are you going to the town meeting tonight? Are you going to tell what I did?" Petrak reassures him and answers negatively.

Back at Lorremor's house, Kendra tells them that she spoke to the mayor and told him the strange events and trouble was most probably over, after the heroes' actions. The town meeting has been postponed.

At 5pm, Sarianna Vai brings cookies to the heroes. She spoke to the mayor and learned of their good actions. She is the Inn owner. She compliments Macrazbunare on his witty conversation, and exits the house, a little bit shy. "Hopefully, this night will be quiet", she says when putting her coat.

They talk with Kendra, saying that if all was now safe in Harrowstone, they need to go to Mordent to get a *raise dead* spell for Tora. They ask her if it is all right if they do not stay in town the time asked by her father in his last wills (see session 51). She thinks a moment, and then says "I would not go against the last will of a man, if I were you. But I can go to Mordent with you, so you still escort me and it's as good as if you stayed here with me a whole month."

March 30th, 748 – am

The night has been quiet and no event disturbed it.

Petrak cast *gentle repose* on Tora's body.

They identify the warden's badge as a lesser ectoplasmic metamagic badge. (*DM note: similar to a lesser rod of ectoplasmic metamagic (Advanced players guide, Paizo). The wielder can cast up to three spells per day (3rd level or lower) that have full effect against incorporeal creatures as though using the Ectoplasmic Spell feat. It negates the 50 % miss chance.*)

The rope found in the warden's office is a *rope of climbing*. How ironic knowing this item would have helped the guards (or the prisoners) to reach the ground floor during the riot and the fire. Austizel will keep it. The wand found in the same place is a *wand of hold person* (11 charges). Petrak will keep it.

It's sunny outside! Around 8am, they get a delivery of eggs, bacon, sausages and freshly baked croissants from Miss Vai (still winking shyly at MacRazbunare) and Mr Zokrid (the bar owner). Still the paranoid heroes cast *detect poison* before eating...

They take one more day in Harrowstone, to really make sure all is safe. Austizel uses this time to learn *Magic Missile* and MacRazbunare learns *Detect Secret Door*.

Around 10 am, they get another visit, Gibs. He looks sober and cleaner than usual. "I'm not sure I did the right thing, and I want your advice...", he says. The heroes wonder what he did this time.

"I buried the little girl in the Restland this morning. I wasn't happy knowing she was lying there, alone, in the forest where I, well, had to kill her." He describes a place near his mother's grave. It has a little anonymous wooden cross.

The heroes ask him to show them where it was in the forest. They look for something strange, or traces, but there are only two set of traces going to the killing site (Gibs, when he killed her and when he retrieved her body for burial). They go to the cemetery and Petrak bless the site.

They tell Gibs he needs to tell someone that he found the little girl in the woods and buried her in the Restlands. It would be better for the family, they think. They convince him.

April 1st, 748 – am

They gather their thing and get on horses. They will travel back to Martira Bay today. Kendra will go with them, as discussed.

But first they have to put back the items they borrowed in Ezra's crypt in the cemetery (see end of session 51). Going there, they see that someone hung himself on a structure near the cemetery entrance. It is Gibs! Sad end for a sad existence.

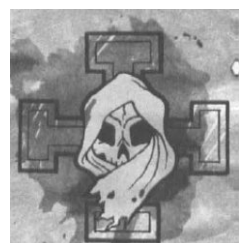
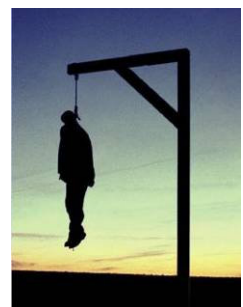
Petrak puts back the goods in Ezra's crypt, while saying the password phrase over and over. He has the impression the stone gargoyle's dead eyes are watching him.

Before leaving town, they go talk with the mayor. They tell him Gibs confessed to them of the multiple murders, and that they found him hanged this morning in the Restlands. The mayor thanks them for their help.

Then they leave Harrowstone and around 1pm, they are in sight of the Martira Bay metropolis.

They take three rooms at the Yawning Eddy inn. There, they learn Hazan left two days ago.

At the local Ezra chapel, they enquire about a *raise dead* spell. The priest, Walter Zanturian, said he can't do it, and instead recommends a nice spot in the local cemetery. From this priest, they learn that the Ezra faith in Darkon is spread through a multitude of small chapels like this one.



They check the Eternal Order church, but they are somewhat repelled by it. The church is opened from 9 pm to 4 am, and the priests get their spells at midnight... They do not investigate further this option.

They do not see other churches in town.

They look for a boat that's leaving for Mordentshire. There is the *SS Bonnaville*, a sternwheeler boat that makes the Martira Bay – Ludendorf – Port-a-Lucine – Mordentshire route.

(DM note: of course, this is the *Sea Wolf Dungen* mag (# 55) mini adventure.)

There is a few hours stop in Ludendorf and Port-a-Lucine, to get passengers and cargo. Each city to city trip is about one day. The cost for the whole Martira Bay – Mordentshire trip is 5 gp. It is a big boat and it can carry up to 60 passengers. Kendra know the boat's good reputation.

It leaves the next morning, at 8 am. So the heroes and Kendra register (DM note : I passed the form and asked the players to register their PC). Here's what they registered :

<i>Name</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>profession</i>	<i>Port of boarding</i>	<i>Port of landing</i>
<i>PETRAK</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>PRIEST</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>
<i>AUSTIZEL</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>ERUDITE</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>
<i>EXIGU</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>HUNTER</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>
<i>VARADAN</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>BUTCHER</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>
<i>MAC RAZBUNARE</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>HERBORIST</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>
<i>KENDRA LORRIMOR</i>	<i>5 GP</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>STUDENT</i>	<i>MARTIRA BAY</i>	<i>MORDENTSHIRE</i>

Also, the heroes declare carrying a dead body, but that isn't a problem with the captain (in a locked box, with the cargo).

When they register, they offer to open the rooms so they could spend the night on the boat. So they get their things and board the boat the night before they leave.

They sell the horses.

Around 9 pm, they are surprised as someone from the local police wants to talk to Petrak! They notice the boat staff is also anxious of this visit. These two guys take Petrak "for a walk" on the quays...

"What happened in Harrowstone?", one of them asks.

Petrak answers “After their ghost warden was taken away, a ghost prisoner wanted to liberate all the other ghost prisoners. We succeeded in preventing their evasion.”

What was very stunning was that they didn’t seem surprised at all of the answer. “And why are you now leaving Martira Bay?”

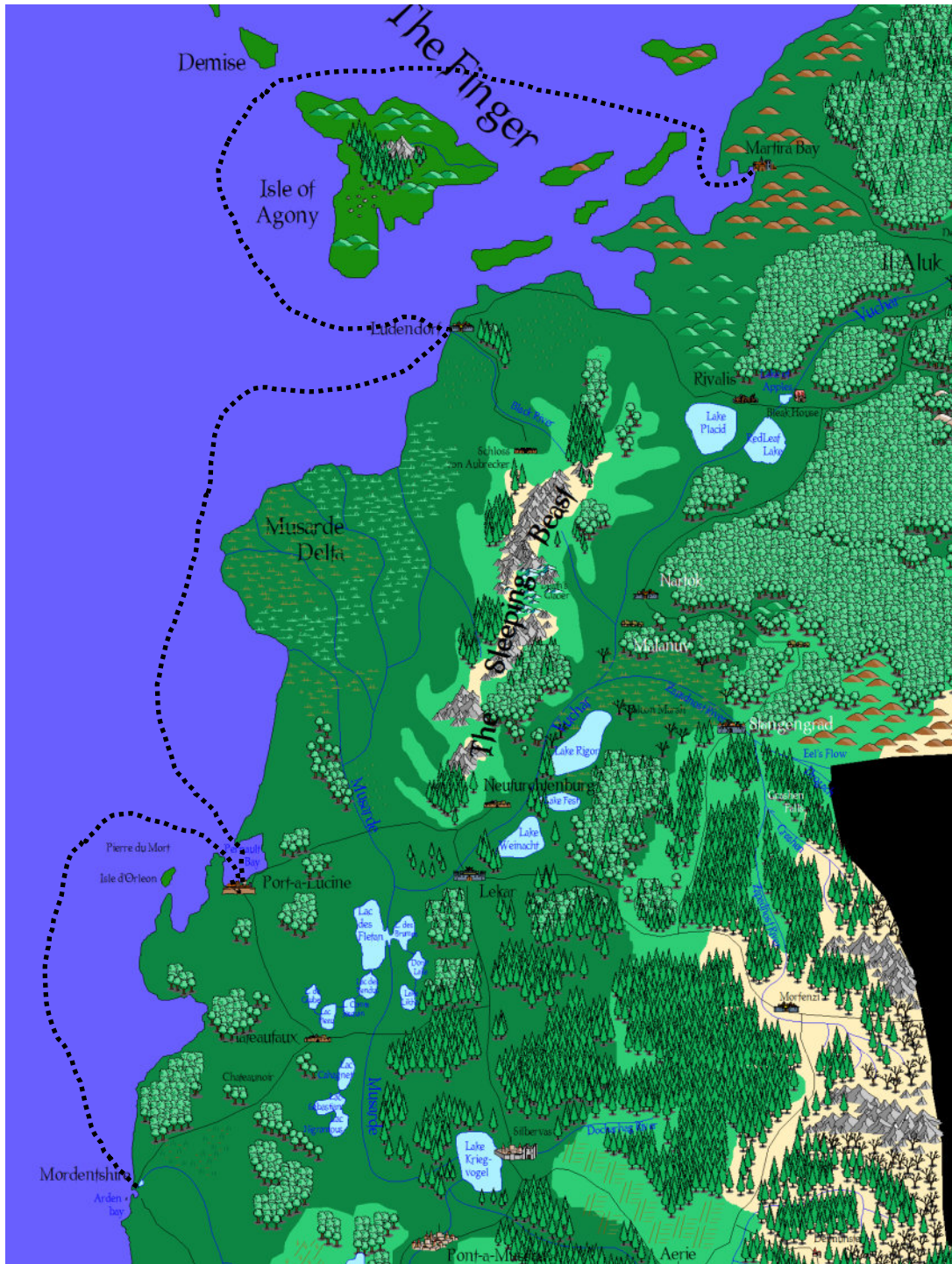
Petrak answers again truthfully “We have one of us who died. We are getting back to Mordent to have him raised from the dead”.

The two guys leave Petrak to discuss privately. Exigu, with his good hearing, hears the words “Lady Kazandra” and “help”.

The two get back to Petrak. “If ever you need help in raising Tora Vimus, you can ask Lady Kazandra.” (but Petrak never mentioned that it was Tora who was dead!).

“Have a safe trip...”

Petrak gets back to the others. He is under the impression one of them was a undead? But he isn’t sure as it was dark...



April 2nd, 748 – am

The boat leaves for Martira Bay. Exigu is under the impression that there are other guys on the quays, watching them leave...

The trip is quiet, and there are about 40 passengers on the boat.

During this day, MacRazbunare is in his room, writing a scroll (two *neutralize poison*, -300 gp)

At 4pm, they are in sight of Ludendorf. It's a large but quiet city, compared to Martira Bay. They see many boats and buildings made for fishing, whaling and shipbuilding.

At the port, they see some people leave the boat and some people hop in. Petrak sees a large wooden crate, obviously containing a large animal, being hauled in the cargo.

They check on Tora's locked wooden case, and all is as they left it.

The boat leaves Ludendorf at dinner time. They are surprised to see again a police officer wanting to talk to Petrak and Austizel! But this time, it's different. Inspector Lafeuve is a police officer from Ludendorf. He has a brusque demeanor, and wears his police uniform. In hand, he has a tell tale police notebook.

He says he saw their profession in the registration book and tells them that he is searching for a woman in connection with a brutal murder committed a few days ago in Ludendorf. The victim was torn to shreds, as if attacked by a wild beast. Just before the murder, witnesses heard a woman trying to persuade the man to join her on a boat trip to Mordentshire. The inspector believes this woman may have witnessed the killing and that she may be aboard this ship. He asks the heroes to keep an eye on things and report to him should they see or hear anything. As he leaves, the inspector says he will question the women who boarded in Ludendorf.

They want to check on Tora's box, but the cargo is locked for the night.

April 3rd, 748 – am

In the morning, Petrak checks on Tora's wooden crate. All right. He checks the case that contains an animal. It is like a big dog, or a wolf dog. It growls at him menacingly. The druid talks to the dog, and give him sausages.

During this day, MacRazbunare takes 3 hours in his room, writing a scroll (*neutralize poison*, -30 xp)

At breakfast, Exigu is extremely surprised to find Maekon on the boat with them (session 12-13, then 31). She rolls her eyes. "What a renewed pleasure to find you guys, on such a place where I can't leave quickly ...", she says, sneering. "What brings you on this boat?"

Exigu "We're going to Mordentshire, one of our friends is dead. And you?"

Maekon "Oh me? Just traveling and playing luth to those who want to hear me. Tell me, honey, do you still have in your possession Rozaleen's tarokka deck?" She pouts when Exigu answers negatively. "Ah, too bad, I wanted to check it about something ..."



But the conversation is interrupted by shouts. A murder on the boat!

A crewmember noticed blood seeping under the cabin door of Suzette Filmont (Cabin 22). Inside is the inspector Lafeuve, dead, and whose body has been torn to shreds. Beside him is an

unconscious woman, raked with claw marks and barely clinging to life. She is Suzette Filmont, a young dressmaker from Mordentshire. Blood is splattered everywhere!

The heroes investigate. The inspector's clenched fist holds a tuft of brown hair. Close inspection reveals it to be from an animal, probably a dog or wolf. Varadan, with his scent, finds it smells wolfish.

Petrak heals Suzette (*cure moderate wounds*). She remembers nothing of the attack; the horror of seeing the inspector torn apart has left her in a state of mental shock where she forgot everything. "There was a knock at the door, and I don't remember anything after that".

Nothing has been searched in the room, so theft doesn't seem to be the motive. On Lafeuve, they do not find his notebook, but in a pocket there is a list that Lafeuve made:

Women who boarded in Ludendorf :

*Suzette Filmont
Martinique and Clarice Albert
Frances Frazee
Antoinette Depardien
Céline Montrenil
Paulette Rideaux*

It seems Lafeuve was interrogating the first name on the list.

Petrak says that Suzette is possibly a werewolf by now ...

Maekon is standing in the corridor and watches the bloody mess. "It's crazy how trouble finds you all the time..."

Humbel, the first mate, tells her "You should not see this, Miss *Courtois*"... With a wink to the heroes, she leaves. Why did she use a false name to register this boat?

Detect magic finds nothing. There are no traces exiting the cabin. They find nothing else in the room.

They go to cabin number 4, which was Lafeuve's. There is a note passed under the door...

Quit asking so many questions or you're next!!!

In the cabin, they do not find his notebook. That was probably stolen by the murdering beast, they think.

They tell the captain to avoid stopping in Port-a-Lucine, so they have time to catch the killer. But he replies that they should have noticed they are stuck in the fog, and that, by experience, it is much too dangerous to navigate when they see nothing...

The boat is stopped...

Lunch is served. Varadan asks Daniel Humbel, the first mate, to discretely point to the women in Lafeuve's list. Martinique and Clarice Albert are two elderly sisters, very old school. Frances Frazee is an artist, and Gilles Pettigrew is traveling with her. He is her boyfriend, the steward thinks. Gilles isn't there now and she eats alone. She looks sad. Antoinette Depardieu is a young woman the heroes have noticed because she often plays the piano in the lounge. She plays well and many people gather to hear her virtuoso playing. Céline Montreuil is a teenager, closely watched by her father, Bertin Montreuil. Paulette Rideaux is a woman about 40 years old, a weaver from Ludendorf going to Port-a-Lucine to sell her fabric.

At 8pm, when some of the guest returned to their cabin, other shouts of murder! Pocklin Brown, a steward, was bringing fresh linen to Gilles Pettigrew's cabin, when he found Gilles dead. But Pocklin saw a wolf like form bending over Gilles' mutilated corpse. As it rushed out the door, the creature slashed at him, opening a terrible gash in his leg before disappearing into the fog. Pocklin is just able to stagger into the dining room and describe what he has seen before collapsing.

The heroes search Gilles's room and find another note in the garbage can...

Mind your manners or you're next!!!

The writing seems feminine. The wounds on Gilles's corpse are claw marks, and bites. They find nothing else of note in the cabin. He was with France Frazee and they had a spat over dinner: he didn't want to marry her anymore. It was somewhat pathetic. Gilles even said the pianist was not good before leaving...

They ask Humbel to have access to the boat registration book. They compare the writing of the threatening notes to the registrations, and they do not find the same writing. They ask to keep the book for a couple of hours.

In the salon, the old Albert women are comforting Frances over her boyfriend's death.

They find Maekon in the common room, where she is playing with a tarokka desk. "Can you help us?", they ask.

"You again the knights in white armor! I always had a soft spot for good guys, you know...", she sneers.

They show the papers to Maekon. She studies it a moment, and replies "the woman who wrote the note didn't sign the register. I don't think any of the woman that signed is now changing her handwriting for the threat notes. It's flowing too naturally to be faked or altered."

Maekon add that at the time of murder, Antoinette was playing piano, Clarisse was out to see Pat Dunn et Frances was reading.

9 pm. They ask Humel to unlock the safe's access. They go down to check the box with the dog. It is closed shut with nails. There is no secret door they can see, or hidden compartment. The dog growls...

Back to the salon, Barnabé, a young steward, brings them a portrait of Gilles, but it was ripped in two. In the back, it is written "until death do us apart". This casts a doubt on Gilles and Frances's love?

(DM note – but strangely no investigation on this clue here?)

They go to their room to rest. Kendra double locks her door.

April 4th, 748 – am

In the morning, Petrak casts *Immerse Mind* and *Epiphany* on Suzette. While it visibly helps her get better, she still doesn't remember a thing from the murder.

They ask if there was a change of staff at Ludendorf, but Humel answers negatively.

At breakfast, the heroes witness an argument between Frances and Daniel Humel, the ship's first mate. Frances wants to get Gilles' gold watch out of the ship's safe, but Humel is refusing to give it to her. "I can only release it to his next of kin," he says.

"It isn't fair!" Frances cries. "We were to be married. The watch should be mine."

Paulette, who is passing by, takes Frances' side, telling Humel, "You should do as she says. Show some compassion!"

Humel then insists that this permission will have to come from the captain himself. "I will go talk to him" and he leaves.

Fearing for him, the heroes follow him to the watch room. The Captain agrees with his first mate's decision over the watch, and then Exigu hears this conversation between Humel and the Captain: "She's as crazy as that other one," Humel mutters. "First she wants her locket in the safe, then she wants to wear it. Then she wants it back in the safe again."

Later, the heroes ask Humel to see the content of the safe, saying it might be important for the murder case. Humel opens the safe and shows them its content.

Exigu takes the only locket in the safe. The front of the heart-shaped locket is inscribed with the name "Depardieu." Inside it are two portraits. One is of an older woman. The other shows two little girls, obviously identical twins. They bear a clear resemblance to Antoinette...

It explains the change of idea over the locket. One wants it in the safe, the other one wants to wear it?

They think that the other twins might be a clandestine passenger...

Back in their room, they find a note ...

Mind your business or you're next!!!

DM note: cool cliff hanger until the next session!

When preparing for this little adventure, I made the list of the 40 or so passengers on the boat, with complete names and a few words to describe them. Here it is, for those wanting to play it.

I toyed of adding NPC they knew, and added Maekon, because the heroes have a love-hate relationship over her (they haven't figured out what exactly she is, but think it's for no good).

I also added Vorkstag in disguise. There to spy the PC and we'll see if he attacks during the werewolf fight!

List of passengers :

For the names I used <http://nine.frenchboys.net/randboy.php>

*(Those without direct link to the adventure *, and those with a link are **in bold**)*

The five PCs

Martinique et Clarice Albert, elderly sisters, very old England. « Shoking! » « Bloody mess »*

Barthelemy Bayol, 17, acne*

Denise Bellec, 25, clumsy*

Bellamy Chenevier, 28, bright blond hair. He looks good and he knows it.*

Edouard-Jean (bushy mustache) and Marie Chevrier (large woman), 45*

Jeanne Courtois (aka Maekon!), luth player*

Arsène Dechesne, halfling, young*

Antoinette Depardieu, 22, plays piano with passion and concentration, few smiles (and Yvonne as clandestine passenger)

Etienne Dupuis, curly brown hair, always reading a book*

Suzette Filmont, 35, tall and thin (cabin 22)

Aline Fleury, 40, sneer, carry cudgel*

Frances Frazee, 30, artise, travels with Gilles Pettigrew, 33, artist, but they have two contiguous rooms

Fabien (38, crooked teeth) and Adèle Gaudet (28, red hair, freckles)*

Jean-Louis LaBranche (smells!), 70*

Bruce Lacroix, very short, brushy brown eyebrows, aloof*

Inspector Lafeuve, short and stocky, brusque demeanor (cabin 4)

Jean-Jacques Lafontaine, 70, hard of hearing*

Joseph Lejeune, 30, gold tooth, from Blaustein (thin veneer)*

Donatien et Rustine Lessard, young, in love, often in their room*

Celine Montreuil, teenage, checked closely by her father

Bertin Montreuil, 40, aloof

Achille Prevost - old and always complaining.*

Jean Pelletier, elegant, spice merchant*
Paulette Rideaux, 40, green eyes, weaver, go to Mordentshire to sell fabric
Jean-Jacques Tissot, wart, greasy hairs, speaks few*
Joseph-Abel Thibodeau, 22, hairy arms, go to Mordentshire to work*

Capitaine – Alphonse Hubert, black beard
First mate – Daniel Humbel, thin mustache
Chief steward – Pat Dunn, very helpful
8 young mate – Matt Decker, Damien, Serge, Barnabé, Tanguy, Claude, Patrice, Eugene (the only one with age, 50 ans)
4 old stewarts – Pocklin Brown, Emile Olivier, Ernest Leclerc, Georges Jouvin
2 cooks – « Pots », « Finch » rarely seen outside the kitchen

GAME SESSION FIFTY SEVEN: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 3

(played April 21th, 2013)

April 4th, 748 – 11h00 am

The heroes discuss what to do next, and one part of the puzzle is perhaps using these wolfsbane herbal solutions.

They go for breakfast. On the outside corridors, the vision is limited to 20 feet because of the fog. They hear the big dog barking in the cargo. They decide to check, and the dog is very aggressive. Finding nothing, they go to the dining room.

Later, at lunch time, the heroes see a table with Antoinette, both sisters Albert and ... Maekon! There are a few spots left so Varadan, Petrak and Austizel sits with them. The discussion is about the gruesome killings, of course. Antoinette does not say much, keeping her eyes to her plate, eating fast.

Exigu speaks with Humbel and asks him the room number of Antoinette Depardieu. Uneasy, Humbel refuses to give him the room number of a woman traveling alone. He asks the Captain, and convinces him that it's for the murderer affair. He reluctantly gives them the number: 14.

Then at one point, Antoinette excuses herself to go to the bathroom. One has to go outside to reach the bathrooms. Varadan goes out to check on her. After a minute, Antoinette goes back to the dining room. But after another minute, Varadan sees another Antoinette coming out of the bathroom!

They understand the twins just made a swap, so the other one could go to eat. The second Antoinette is uneasy seeing Varadan there, and asks him if everything is all right. "I just needed fresh air", Varadan answers. She walks to the salon.

Meanwhile, Antoinette-2 seats at a table and help herself to a second service. She is identical, in appearance and in dress. She speaks much more then the first one. And takes more wine. After a moment she and Maekon are having a lot of laugh.

A few heroes take this opportunity to visit room 14, that Exigu unlocks easily. There are two beds, and both are undone, like if someone slept in both. There is an open trunk in the room, and Exigu notices that all the clothings are in sets of two... At a quick glance, no trace of Inspecteur Lafeuve's notebook. But there are many damp towels.

Meanwhile, they see that Maekon is now alone with Antoinette-2, and they seem to have a serious discussion. But the heroes are too far to hear what this is about... Antoinette-2 in the dining room leaves the room and walks on the boat's outside corridor, and is quickly hidden in the fog.

Meanwhile, Antoinette-1 in the salon plays piano, while Maekon tunes her luth...

The heroes walk the outside railing to their cabin, and, as they half expected it, a female werewolf appears from the fog and attacks!

She tries to bite the first one in line, Petrak, but she misses. They see her lick her claws, like if she was putting saliva on them in the hope of having more chance to give them lycanthropy!

Austizel throws a *magic missile*, and Exigu hits with a silver arrow. Macrazbunare summons a black bear behind her, to forbid her from fleeing. Varadan and Kendra also hit her with *magic missile*. Petrak invokes his Ezra *shield of faith* to protect him.

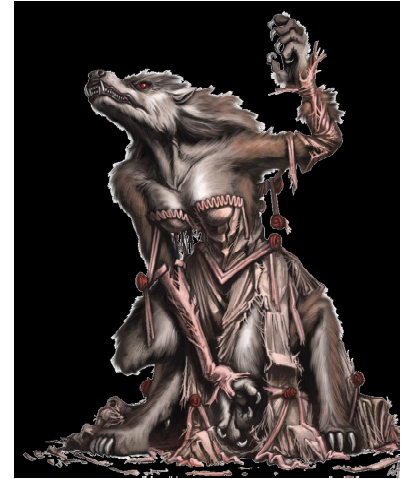
The werewolf attacks again, the claws misses and the bite too, thanks to the *shield of faith*. Another *magic missile* from Austizel, an arrow from Exigu, and a *scorching ray* from Macrazbunare, and the beast falls on the floor, dead! She transforms and returns to the form of "Antoinette".

The heroes wonder what to do with the dead girl in torn clothings. This can look bad for them! Should they throw her in the water? They decide to fetch the captain and tell him all the proofs they have. They show him the body, saying she was a werewolf, and she attacked them. They show him the second "Antoinette" playing piano. He is very surprised. They tell him about the locket with the portrait of the twins, and the trunk with a double set of all the girls' clothing. He agrees to put this body in the safe room.

He asks "do you think the other is also a werewolf?" The heroes say they do not know, but they will enquire right now! Back in the salon, Maekon plays her luth, and Antoinette drinks tea with the old women. There are many other passengers too, talking, reading or playing table games. The captain comes in and check on Antoinette and the heroes' next actions.

MacRazbunare talks with Maekon. They reveal they plan to test Antoinette with wolfsbane herbal solution. Meakon answers she would be surprised if it worked, since this girl usually doesn't have the outgoing personality associated with a werewolf. Well, most of the time...

MacRazbunare tells her there are two Depardieu sisters, and Maekon says it explains the sudden shift of personality Antoinette has... She is mostly quiet, but at dinner time, she is sometimes different, louder... Macrazbunare asks Maekon if she could charm Antoinette so it would be easier to test her with the herbal solution. Maekon answers that she cannot do that...



Macrazbunare notices that Maekon seems younger than an hour ago, like if more energized.... The source of this puzzles them.

DM note: Maekon is a Verteig; she feeds from chaos and violence.

Petrak tries to act like if he tripped and spills some of the wolfsbane herbal solution on Antoinette's hand. One of the old ladies is shocked, "what do you think you're doing, young man? He did it on purpose!"

Quickly, they see Antoinette developing a rash on her hand, and she scratches her hand. Petrak excuses himself for being clumsy to Antoinette, but she looks at him in the eyes and say "I think you know exactly what you are doing, monsieur." Petrak offers to go elsewhere to talk. "Do I have a choice?", she answers nervously.

The group moves back to the dining room, where on the other side of the room, the waiters are preparing the tables for dinner time.

"She is my sister. I could never reason her, she is like my mother. She likes spilling blood and the thrill of the hunt", she says. "Me, I'm like them but I never had this blood passion."

Petrak tells her of the fight, and that her sister is now dead after she attacked them. "I always knew my sister would end that way", she says, sad, "but I guess my life will now be much simpler. I'll be able to concentrate on the piano, instead of following my sister everywhere on her bestial urges. Her name was Yvonne, by the way."

DM note: a twist I'll add later to the player – They just killed one daughter of Natalia Vorishkova! The girls go by the name of their father, Astor Depardieu. And they will soon hear of Antoinette's fate as a renowned concert piano player.

At one point of the discussion she even says "but you keep him with you", while waving at Varadan (a lycanthrope! She smelled him?)

Back in the salon, Maekon is now reading a "Dead Travel Fast" novel. From Maekon's face, it seems to be very comical. Antoinette is back on piano, playing sad music.

Dinner time. There is a rumor among passengers that all the trouble is over, while nobody knows what really happened.

Antoinette doesn't eat much.

MacRazbunare sits at Maekon's table and tell her of their discussion with Antoinette. "Oh, I'm relieved that you found the murderer, it made me anxious", she says, but Macrazbunare do not perceive that from her. She says she will exit at Port-a-Lucine.

Macrazbunare finds Maekon younger, or like if she was somehow energized by the recent events...

The rest of the night is quiet.

April 5th, 748 – 7 am

The fog on the sea has lifted, and the heroes hear the first mate says he will soon start the engines. The heroes learn spells and go for breakfast in the boat's dining room.

The Captain announces that they should be in Port-a-Lucine around 11h am, and the short there will be short. They plan to go on the sea again, to be in Mordent around 11hpm tonight.

In the morning, they bury Yvonne at sea, in a private ceremony where Petrak blesses her soul. Antoinette doesn't say much. Kendra cries, as it reminds her of her passing father.

In Port-a-Lucine, Maekon exits the boat with a very small traveling bag. "May you stay out of trouble," she says to the heroes.

Antoinette also exits. She salutes the heroes and leaves the boat. She walks like if a weight has been removed on her shoulders.

The boat leaves Port-a-Lucine and around 10h30 pm, they dock at Mordentshire after a safe trip. The first mate Humbel tells everybody that those wanting to stay on boat can do it, since the inns do not open their doors at this hour.

April 6th, 748 – 7 am

They take breakfast on the boat, and the Captain expresses his thanks to the heroes for solving this werewolf problem. "Without you on board, there could have been much more murders"

They go to the Ezra church. Tara Kolyana is happy to see the heroes are back, especially Petrak. James Martigan comes to the group and the heroes tell them of their Darkon adventures, the fate of Virevan (dead) and that a new friend (Tora) needs a *raise dead*. James agrees to cast the spell the next morning, for free, since the heroes saved his life in Levkarest. They also buy some holy water (three, at 20 gp each).

Van Richten is visited next. He looks tired and Mrs Polk looks worried about his health. Van Richten says he sleeps badly, thinking about all those friends lost in battles against the creatures of the night. "If they didn't meet me in their lives, most would still be alive", he says.

He tells that he was born in Darkon and was successful doctor / herbalist, happily married with Ingrid, he childhood sweetheart. They had a son, Erasmus, but his son was killed by a vampire and one day, Van Richten had to put a stake in her son's vampiric heart. "This is the toughest thing a father can do, killing his son at his request", he muses.

So he sleeps badly, thinking over and over about these stories. But it doesn't have any link with the Nightmare Court, he tells the heroes reassuringly.

The heroes tell him of the death of Petros Lorrimer, and it saddens Van Richten. "Another fallen friend...". He takes the two books Lorrimer wanted the players to bring to Van Richten.

The heroes ask him about the Red Vardo Traders. Van Richten tells them that they are finders of anything, and they cover the whole continent, as well as the islands in the seas and the islands in



the mists. They seem to be very good to travel the mists. "Like vistanis?", asks Petrak. The herbalist nods. "But I never met personally these traders and their leader, mistress Montarri."

Van Richten tells them that the Weathermay-Foxgrove left a week ago, on the trail of something they called the Glutton. They didn't say much to Van Richten, not to make him worry, he thinks.

They take a room at the Old Blackard Inn. Shortly after their arrival, they meet Clanartus Viliras, in the uniform of the local militia (the "Lamplighters"). "Should you need anything", he says, "ask me".

DM note: meeting Clanartus in advance, and establish trust, would get things more easy for the later assassination attempt, heh heh ;) Clanartus is a NPC from Wake of the Watcher (Pathfinder's Carrion Crown #4) and his is Agatha, a new NPC using the Whispering Way Curate stats (Pathfinder's Carrion Crown #3).

At 9 pm, the heroes finished dinner and were soon to be going in their room when Clanartus came back to them. "There is something weird in the cemetery, weird lights, can you come with me to investigate?"

They walk to the cemetery, led by Clanartus. Kendra stayed at the Inn. Indeed, there are three candle lights seen in the middle for the Mordentshire cemetery. It smells like sulphur too. Suddenly, six skeletons appear from behind tombs and they move toward the heroes!

Petrak cast *prayer* while the undead move toward them. Exigu sends two sling bullets. Austizel cast a *lightning bolt* and a few skeletons falls. Varadan cast a *magic missile* at the closest undead.

Then they see a woman gets from behind a tomb, near the candle lights, and she cast a spell! The heroes are enveloped in a kind of greasy miasma (*unholy blight*). Petrak is sick from the spell's action, as is Clanartus, who retreats in the back of the group.

DM note: Claratus isn't sick, but he uses that planned excuse to move to the back and continues studying his assassination target, Macrazbunare. My deception plan worked!

Macrazbunare sends *magic missile* at the woman, but it seems she is protected by some kind of magic.

The heroes concentrate on the undead first: *turn undead* by Petrak, bullets by Exigu, another *lightning bolt* by Austizel. The woman casts *bestow curse* but Austizel succeeds shaking off the effect of the debilitating curse. Macrazbunare replies by a *call lightning* on the woman.

Then Clanartus takes a mean looking bone dagger and hits Macrazbunare in the back! It is an assassination attempt! Clanartus was positioned to flank Macrazbunare and there is an oily black stuff on the blade... But Macrazbunare succeeds and survives both assassination and poison.



The skeletons flank the heroes and attack. Petrak cast *spiritual weapon* on Clanartus. Exigu continues throwing bullets at the skeletons. Varadan hits twice. The woman cast a *hold person* at Macrazbunare but it misses too. Macrazbunare *summon nature's ally* and three wolves circles the assassin.

Clanartus attacks Macrazbunare twice with his dagger. Petrak isn't sickened anymore and he attacks Clanartus. Austizel throws a *magic missile* at Clanartus.

Varadan finishes the skeletons. The woman cast another *hold person* and luckily the save is again successful. Macrazbunare cast *invisibility* on himself. The wolves kill the assassin. They see a weird purple light around Clanartus's head, and they see his lower jaw dissolves (to prevent *speak with the dead*). The light lasted a few seconds.

And another *lightning bolt* by Austizel finishes the woman. Again, a purple light surrounds her head for a short moment ... Around her, they find a few disturbed tombs, where the skeletons were animated.

On her body, there is a medallion of a skeleton head, gagged. She has four magical things: a breast plate, two potions (cure serious wounds), and a pearl (*of power, 1st level*).

On him, a potion (*shield of faith*), a disguise kit, 4 black vials (poison) and a magical dagger (+2). Clanartus also had a black ceramic egg. They notice a crack in it and they succeed to find the mechanism to open it. It is a sculpted skeleton egg, also gagged...

They are back to the Inn at 9h30.

April 7th, 748 – 7 am

They go to the church, to find Tora was already raised! But Tora seems confused: he explains he was born and Tepest (and not Darkon as he previously said). He left for Darkon a year ago to give a message to Petros Lorremor, where Darkon's memory change affected him.

They check the magical items found yesterday night – a pearl of power (1st level), a dagger +2.

They take a day off to prepare for their trip to Krezk.

April 8th, 748

Travel – Mordentshire to the forest south of Falkovnia.

April 9th, 748

Travel to Pont-a-Museau.

April 10th, 748

Travel to Mortigny.

April 11th, 748

Travel to Levkarest. During all this travel, Macrazbunare checks for rare plants but it is too early in the season to pick anything interesting. There are many strange mushrooms in Borca, but he doesn't really know what they are, and their eventual herbalist property.

April 12th, 748

They go to the market to sell some of their stuff.

They also go to the Cathédrale and talk to rent a cell for one night (full moon soon, a danger for Varadan the werewolf).

There is also a rumor of a Falkovnia invasion. But the question is which country will be invaded?

7h pm. They are in the Cathédrale, and Varadan is locked in a cell. He isn't happy about it and would prefer to be unlocked. Kendra stayed at the Inn.

Eventually he feels to pull of the moon and transforms into a beast! (DM note: missed control shape save) He tries to open the cell door but it is sturdy. He wants to exit the cell and shakes the door.

Then, out of nowhere, they see Clothilda Taroyan, Ivana's accountant! She has a burning torch in one of her gloved hand and slowly walks toward the heroes...

"Goodnight, gentlemen", she says. "Nice teddy bear, you have there" at the jailed werewolf. But she doesn't smile at all.

"It's been over a month now since you *agreed* to work for Lady Ivana, but we are extremely saddened that we didn't receive any reports from you. Perhaps we were not clear enough last time. We *want* a report from you about once per month: who you meet, and who is a threat to Lady Ivana." (*see session 43*)

Austizel says "It isn't what she said and...", but Clothilda interrupts bluntly: "Really, your perception means nothing to us. Just do as we say."

"So, where were we. Dates, names, threats, opportunities. It is valuable for us, to plan future ... commercial ... ventures of the Boritsi Trading Company. It is of extreme importance to *your* mistress, especially since you seem to travel often outside Borca. We also want to know what you learn about the Weathermay family and Van Richten, what are they doing, where and with whom."

"Mail these report to me or Nostalia Romaine, or leave them, sealed, at any office of the Boritsi Trading Company. Any question?" The heroes stare at her, saying nothing. The werewolf growls.

"Now, gentlemen, I wish you all a quiet night", and she leaves.



GAME SESSION FIFTY EIGHT: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 4

(played May 5th, 2013)

DM note: Varadan's player succeed his Human Heart transformation save (he is a lycanthrope and changed at the end of last game – full moon).

April 13th, 748

Around 5 am, Varadan is back to his human shape. He is relieved to exit this cell and says hopefully it's the last time he has to do this.

The heroes go to the Defraya Manor and sleep until noon. Then they leave for Krezk. They take the ferry to the little outpost of Caina, and then take the road toward Barovia. They pass quickly in front of Misericordia Manor (Ivana's home)...

They take the Old Svalish Rd, a somewhat busy trade road linking Barovia and Borca. They remember that this road is attracting brigands. Eventually, MacRazbunare tells them they are passing in Barovia: the vegetation type is slowly changing (less mushrooms, more pines).

They remember that in Barovia, gundarakites are forbidden to carry a weapon larger then a dagger. MacRazbunare and Petrak are clearly gundarakites (Kendra is from Darkon, Tora is from Tepest, Exigu is a Halfling, and Austizel is an elf). Macrazbunare and Petrak give their long weapons to other members of the group.

On the road, they talk to a merchant, but he has few to say: nothing special is happening in Krezk, and the road was uneventful for him.

Near 8 pm, they arrive near Krezk. The little town is located in a beautiful valley, between the Balinoks and the Dreadmounts mountains. They notice that large fortifications around the town are now crumbling. In the center, they notice a tower with a minaret on top. They remember the barbarian tergs came for the east and invaded Barovia. After a few dozen years, the Tergs were driven out of Barovia by the tactical war genius of Strahd Von Zarovich the first. That the local power allowed the minaret built by the tergs to remain there is however a mystery.

They were about to enter the town when they noticed a group of vistani vardos half hidden from the road, about five hundred feet from the road. They go to them. There are many animals around the vardo: horses, mules, pigs, chickens. One vistani man come forward to meet them "the market is closed, please come tomorrow." Petrak shows him his giogoto mark. "Greeting to you, friend", the vistani replies, "This is really a bad time, as we are celebrating the funerals of a fallen friend, please come back tomorrow, we'll still be there."

They enter the town and quickly find the town square, with the towering minaret (see map at the end of this section). They see two inns, and two unnamed taverns. There are many stores and merchants. One small sign attracts their attention on a small building: "Red Vardo Traders". That is the reason they came to Krezk!

They take a room at the Balinok Inn, since it will be easier to check the Red Vardo Trader's office from there. The greeting is neutral, and not very friendly for Petrak and Macrazbunare (gundarakites). A Barovian jostle Petrak on purpose, but Petrak stays calm. During dinner, they listen to the conversation, without trying actively to question the patrons. Nothing important,

most conversations are about trade. One merchant is complaining about the vistani outside, because he will soon receive pigs and these vistani are now competition. But he doesn't say more on the subject. The heroes remember the few laws of Barovia, all punishable by death:

- 1- Never enter Castle Ravenloft.
- 2- Never harm vistanis.
- 3- Pay your taxes to the state – theft to the state is considered treason.

Around 10 pm, the inn starts to get quieter, all the patrons leaving except those with a room in the inn. The tired heroes go to bed.

They watch the RVT office all night, but it's quiet and nothing happens.

April 14th, 748

The city square awakens before the first rays of the sun, around 5h30 am.

At breakfast, they hear that there was a burglary a week ago at the Morninglord church.

When they come out, the city square is animated, and they see the vistani who spoke to them, trying to sell his animals. The heroes go to him and enquire about the RVT. His name is Besnik. He spits on the ground. "The Red Vardo Traders? Why do you need them? You are that stuck in manure?" But Petrak tells him it's more an enquiry they are doing, and that they do not need their service. He explains the only thing they seem to want is money, whoever is paying them. Montarri is surrounded by a permanent group of adventurers, that she calls the Vardo Crew. And she also hires mercenaries on occasion.

The heroes tell him that the RVT can control the mist for traveling, and that they possibly have an anchorite in their group, but Besnik says this is unlikely.

Petrak asks her about Madame Eva (Petrak lost charisma points to Godefroy's cane), but Besnik cryptically says he doesn't know where, or when, she is. Should he crosses her path, he will tell them Petrak is looking for her.

Tora also tells him they went to Harrowstone prison and there they heard of the Whispering Way. Besnik is surprised, as he thought this old cabal wasn't active anymore.

Besnik says that yesterday were the funerals (by burning) of Bireli, his brother. He was attacked by Invidian merceneries near the country limits. They tricked him into this meeting and killed him. He had a missing ear, so the mercenaries are probably bounty hunters.

Petrak asks him about Maloccio. Again, Besnik spits on the ground. The fiend is using most of his time in the Falkovnia enclave of Karina, and is rumored to plan a siege of Castle Hunadora (Gundar's castle, where Lady Gabrielle Aderre is now hiding with allied Gundarakites Freedom Fighters).

Back on Montarri, Besnik says their services are so valued by the merchant community, that they close their eyes on their methods and underworld dealings. Mme Montarri is well respected in the merchant community.

Then he takes Petrak away and whispers that “Mme Montarri is extremely wealthy, more than you can imagine. But profit isn’t what she is after. She lives under a vistani curse, inflicted on her by Mme Eva when she murdered the old vistani seer years ago!” And he adds, “If you get the chance, take a look at her cellar, you’ll understand... I’ve said too much already...”

Besnik and Petrak are back with the others. In the discussion, one hero mentions the ball of iron that they threw at Maloccio (the Sphere of Binding, see session 9). Besnik is surprised, “you are the one who did this? Wow, I’m impressed.” “If Maloccio could have walked the land freely, it would have been very dangerous to us everywhere, but now he is a prisoner in Invidia. He can’t exit this country. He is a dukkar, some kind of antichrist to us. Only vistani women have the Sight, and when a man is born with the Sight, he is a dukkar. Iskosa was another dukkar years ago.”

They thank him for this information and explore Krezk main road. They pass in front of Morninglord’s church, the “Sanctuary of First Light”. A bit farther, near the town’s exit, they see a smaller Ezra chapel. They meet the anchorite Emma Savill. Petrak offers his help, should there be something that needs enquiry.

He asks her about the theft at Morninglord’s church. She says that many sacred relics were stolen, among them a chalice and the mummified Hands of the Healer – the hands of the first Morninglord priest, said to carry miraculous healing, including lycanthropy.

They go to that church, and Tora speaks with a priest, Gauwyn Talbot. Tora tells him he thinks it is scandalous that those relics were stolen and offers his service. Talbot asks him why he’d be more skilled at finding the thieves than the church. Tora tells him that he is a paladin, hunter of the dead.

“But why a paladin is needed to find ordinary thieves,” Talbot asks. Tora replies by telling him briefly of their adventure in Darkon, and says he suspects the same evil organisation to have commissioned the theft.

Talbot asks him if the relics in Darkon could heal, like the Hands that could heal nearly anything once per year.

“Do you think it might be the Red Vardo Traders?”, Tora asks. Talbot answers he doesn’t know.

It was stolen in the night of March 28th. The side door was unlocked by a thief, or someone who had the key, and the same for the tabernacle where the relics were kept. Divination spells have thought us nothing so far.

They get introduced to Samuel Valentin, the priest in charge of the whole Morninglord church. Tora again offers his help. Valentin confirms everything Talbot said. When asked directly about the RVT, his eyes show he shares the same suspicions, but he replies “we are in the fog in this affaire... we have nothing in fact.”

The heroes learn that a council of eight choose which person will get the annual miraculous healing by the Hands. The next healing will be soon, he said, in about a month.

(DM note: hint hint, there is still one lycanthrope in the group)

They leave the church and then enquire about the location of Jacqueline Montarri's manor. They follow the road leading to it from the town central square. It lingers on the side of the RVT's office. They notice a small garden on the back of the office building, a three floors high building.

The Manor is surrounded by a 12 foot high stone fence, with glass shards in the mortar, to prevent climbing. There are four guard towers at each corner. There are guards in each of the towers, and at the entrance too. The domain is quite large, about 400 feet by 400 feet. They notice also that no building is constructed less than 30 feet from the manor walls.

They go back to the hotel, and Macrazbunare changes to an eagle and fly over Montarri's manor. He sees that it is a huge building, and it is a fortress disguised as a distinguished manor. There are no windows on the ground floor. All the second floor windows have bars. There is a fifth guard tower on top of the manor.

A little before noon, back at the room, he tells the other of his findings. Then they see two men and a woman in a red cloak exit the RVT office and walk to the Smoldering Ember Inn. It must be her! Her head is hidden under a hood.

They decide to have lunch at this place too. Before they enter, they notice a small plaque on the inn wall, boasting that the inn was built on the bones of the first Terg killed by War General Strahd Von Zarovich the First.

They get a table right next to Montarri and her friends. The trio met there another man, a gundarakite. They are drinking hard liquors.

The inn fills with patrons. They try to listen to the conversation at Montarri's table, but all they seem to discussing about is the best recipe to bake the best raisin bread! Exigu explains this is thieves Innuendo, a coded language.

At one point, Jacqueline Montarri removes her hood. She is a pretty barovian blonde, with a red velvet ribbon with a green gem around her neck.

Later in the meal, she takes a look around and notices the heroes. "Hey, I know you! I have already crossed your path..."

Thinking a moment, she adds to her friends at the table, "Friends, I present you the Zeidenburg heroes!" The heroes gasp!

The third man, the gundarakite, hails, "Long live Zeidenburg! Long live fr..." but he is interrupted by Jacqueline. "No trouble here, stop this."

Back to the heroes, she asks "and what are you doing in Kresk?", and Petrak answers "we are traveling back to our home." She says "come see me at the Red Vardo office," and then turns back to her conversation. The heroes notice the group is still speaking in innuendos, but is now talking less loudly.

An hour and a half after arriving, Jacqueline and her friends leave the Inn, without a glance to the heroes. The gundarakite remains there, writing in a note book.



At 1h30 pm, they go to the Red Vardo Trader's office. They are introduced by a man in studded armor to a small waiting room where a second man is standing, watching a door. Tora notices he is watching them closely, one by one, as if he is scanning the heroes... This man leaves the room through the door he was watching.

After a minute, they are asked to enter a discussion room, with a round table. There are many mirrors on the wall. Jacqueline is already seated, with the man who was watching the room besides her.

"Ah", Jacqueline says, "the Zeidenburg heroes! Those who defeated the monstrous Effigy of Ivan Szimin! Those who returned the heretic documents to the Ezra Cathédrale in Levkarest! Those who conquered the terror from space in Delmunster! Those who destroyed the wooden golem Azenwrath! In our travels, we've heard your names often in the last months!"

"I'm really pleased to meet you. Tell me, my friends... what brings you here in Krezk?"

The heroes refrain from telling all and explain that "we've been attacked by a group of people and the traces lead us here. We were in Darkon for ..."

"Harrowstone?", she interrupts.

The heroes uneasily say "well, there were strange things in Harrowstone and ..."

"Let's cut the nonsense between us, so you do not waste my time," she interrupts. "You were in Harrowstone and you are now running headless after the Whispering Way."

Pleased with herself, Montarri lets a moment pass so the heroes gather their thoughts after this blunt interruption, and she asks "What are your questions for me?"

"What kind of information do you have on them?", they ask.

"Ah, I see. But that kind of question makes me thirsty. Vasile, bring us the palenka", she said. Moments later, the manservant in studded armor who opened the door is back with a bottle of palenka (hard distilled liquor) and glasses. He serves everybody, including himself, Jacqueline and the man besides her.

"To doing business with you", and she drinks all at once. The others do the same, except Exigu and Austizel who pretend they never drink.

"And pray tell, why would I be so nice as to tell you all that I know? Do you have money? Items of interest? Informations perhaps?"

The group was totally unprepared for this. Petrak says that they need to think about it and that will come back later after they had a private discussion.

Back to the hotel room. "We could give her Arcanus's dagger (session 32), or the Tome Tales of Terror (session 25)"

(DM note: Arcanus's dagger is Aggarath ;) and the book is cursed)

They discuss also that “she knows a lot... She is extremely chaotic, so extremely dangerous... It is clear she spoke recently to the Whispering Way, so she knows a lot and may be guessed the rest.”

Austizel said he remarked that she often looks at herself in the mirrors.

2h30 pm, back to the RVT.

The heroes: “we might have something to trade. You, what do you have?”

“The plans of the Whispering Way. Aurélien Vrood speaks too much, for a whisperer. I hate these guys, they creep me out, but they pay well. Let’s see, may be you have some information I might need... What do you know of the Deathstone in Misericordia’s cellar?”

The heroes tell her all that they know about this mysterious item (see session 15): they provide a description of it, they add that Van Richten once saw it, it is the property of Ivana’s family, and it was the reason Ivana was very angry at the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins once.

“So you never saw it, OK. Next question. Where is Gundar?”

The heroes say they do not know where he is now. They tell him how he came to be again walking the earth (see Arcanus’s travelling show, session 32).

“Do you think he might be strong enough to confront Strahd?”, she asks, but the heroes say they do not know. “It would be nice if he could get us rid of that tyrant”, she whispers.

“Interesting. Do you know where Natalia Vorishkova is?”, she asks, “or perhaps you know her by her first husband’s name... Natalia Depardieu?” She is pleased to see the reaction of surprise in the heroes’ faces.

The heroes understand the twin sisters in the boat (see last session) were may be Natalia’s child! They explain what they know: she was Nathan Timothy’s bride, and we killed Timothy. She ran away. We may have killed one of her daughter on a boat recently. Her harmless twin sister, also a dormant lycanthrope, Antoinette Depardieu, left the boat in Port-a-Lucine.

“So you think you killed one of the bitch’s many children. We’re getting there. Nathan Timothy, you say? Interesting, as I’ll tell you more about him later.”. She thinks and asks “Do you know where Tara Kolyana is?”

Petrak is displeased. He answers that the heroes know her, but that they do not want to put her onto trouble.

“We just happen to know people who would like to speak to her, head to head”, Jacqueline says.

“You can leave a message for her, we’ll carry it to her, but it can take a while before she gets it”, Petrak says.

“Don’t worry about it, it’s been very long since our client wanted to speak to her”, she replies.

(DM note: of course, Jacqueline knows who Tara really is, and her worth for Strahd. She thinks she could eventually use this information in bargaining with the vampire).

“My turn”, she says. “Aurélien Vrood and his creeps came here on March the 25th for *business*”.

“I have no idea of what they are trying to achieve, but they are fanatics and tremendously motivated! They are trying to gather half a dozen objects for some kind of a ritual. They got a statuette from an ancient deity in Souragne (The SeaSage Effigy, stolen in Martira Bay), they got the soul of a prison warden, they got the Hands of the Healer from the Morninglord church. And don’t ask me, I’ve no idea how they got this last one...”

She resumes: “They need the soul of a fey changeling, of a human that willingly gave his soul to a fey. I happen to have one on hand.” (The heroes know that she has Zail Zeenat as a prisoner. This fey has Martha Ward’s soul – session 33) “But I do not know yet how to make this nasty fey give back the soul.”

“They are now in Verbrek to steal the preserved heart of a powerful werewolf pack Leader... The heart of Nathan Timothy!” she says.

“Some of the Whisperers are now crafting some kind of skull made with the bones of a hundred slain innocents. Of course, you know I could tell you where... if you had something in exchange?”

They put the Arcanus’ evil dagger on the table. The man besides Jacqueline announces that he will cast a spell. He casts *detect magic*. His eyes widen. He nods.

“They are hiding in the Abbey of Sante-Lyrimin. I know it is located near Karina, but I do not know exactly where”, she tells.

Austizel is under the impression that she hasn’t said all that she knows and there might be other components to the Way’s ritual that she didn’t tell the heroes.

The heroes also ask Jacqueline about the ermordenungs, “as a bonus question”. She says they are Ivana’s creation, and are very dangerous. They tell Jacqueline that some ermordenungs might be rogues that escaped Ivana’s control.

“Huh?”, she says, surprised. “I hope Ivan didn’t find the way to make his own ermordenungs!”

“Oh, I almost forgot”, she adds, “do you know a guy by the name of Viktor Hazan? The Whispering Way almost negotiated a contract on his head, but then Vorkstag said it could wait... If you know him, tell him to contact me to see what he can offer for his safety.”

(DM note: players understand that shape changing Vorkstag (see session 47-50) is in the Whispering Way?!)

“So this is all that I know”, she said, “but I think it was worthwhile, no?”

Now it is Macrazbunare that is under the impression that Jacqueline is keeping other information from them.

She concludes their dealings by saying “It is a pleasure doing business with you. But understand that next time we can be in opposed camps...” She smiles like a cat watching a mouse.

3h30 pm, back at the hotel room where they discuss their meeting with Kendra, who stayed behind. (DM note: a good idea, she has a pretty head ;)) She asks the heroes if they plan to buy from Jacqueline the soul of Martha Ward. “Because in this ritual, the soul will likely be consumed!”

They think of giving her the *Tales of terror* book in exchange of the fey holding the soul. But if we get away with the fey, the Whispering Way might give the RVT a contract on us?

Varadan goes back to the RVT, knowing they have about 4 000 gold pieces. He asks for the fey price: 5 000 gp, or an item of quality. Jacqueline tells her she could part with the fey, even if it was promised to Vrood, as she knows the Whispering Way has another option to get a changeling soul. But it is more complicated and it would delay them.

Varadan asks them if she would take a Whispering Way request to take back the fey from us if Vrood paid for it. She says “A price for your head? No!” This makes her somewhat smiling, like if she had told a joke. “Vrood creep me out and they are too unpleasant and haughty. And come to think of it, I do not think they are very rich either.”

Varadan says that should she need to speak to the heroes, they should leave a message at the Old Blackard Inn in Mordentshire. And he leaves.

Macrazbunare knows a little about feys (a roll of 31 in knowledge nature!). To have her soul back, they will need to bargain with the fey. He knows it might involve somehow spitting an item containing Martha Ward’s soul, or, if she is there in person, it might involve sewing back her shadow to her body...

They decide to let the soul in Jacqueline’s hand for the moment. They think that “they should let the Whispering Way with the soul, and when they liberate Martha’s soul, we attack them and take back her soul”. (DM note: wishful thinking, if you ask me)

So they plan to go to Karina and they ask Besnik if there is a bounty on the heroes’ heads there. Besnik doesn’t think so.

They decide to leave tomorrow for Karina and Kendra agrees to follow them.

They pass the day quickly and go to sleep ...

April 15th, 748

They enquire about the travel time to go from Krezk to Zeidenburg. It is about 2 ½ day. What most people do is travel to Vallaki the first day, and sleep there. Then go they go back about an hour on their track, and then travel through the Dreadpass for a day then sleep on the south side of the mountains. The third day, it is about 4-5 hours to reach Zeidenburg.



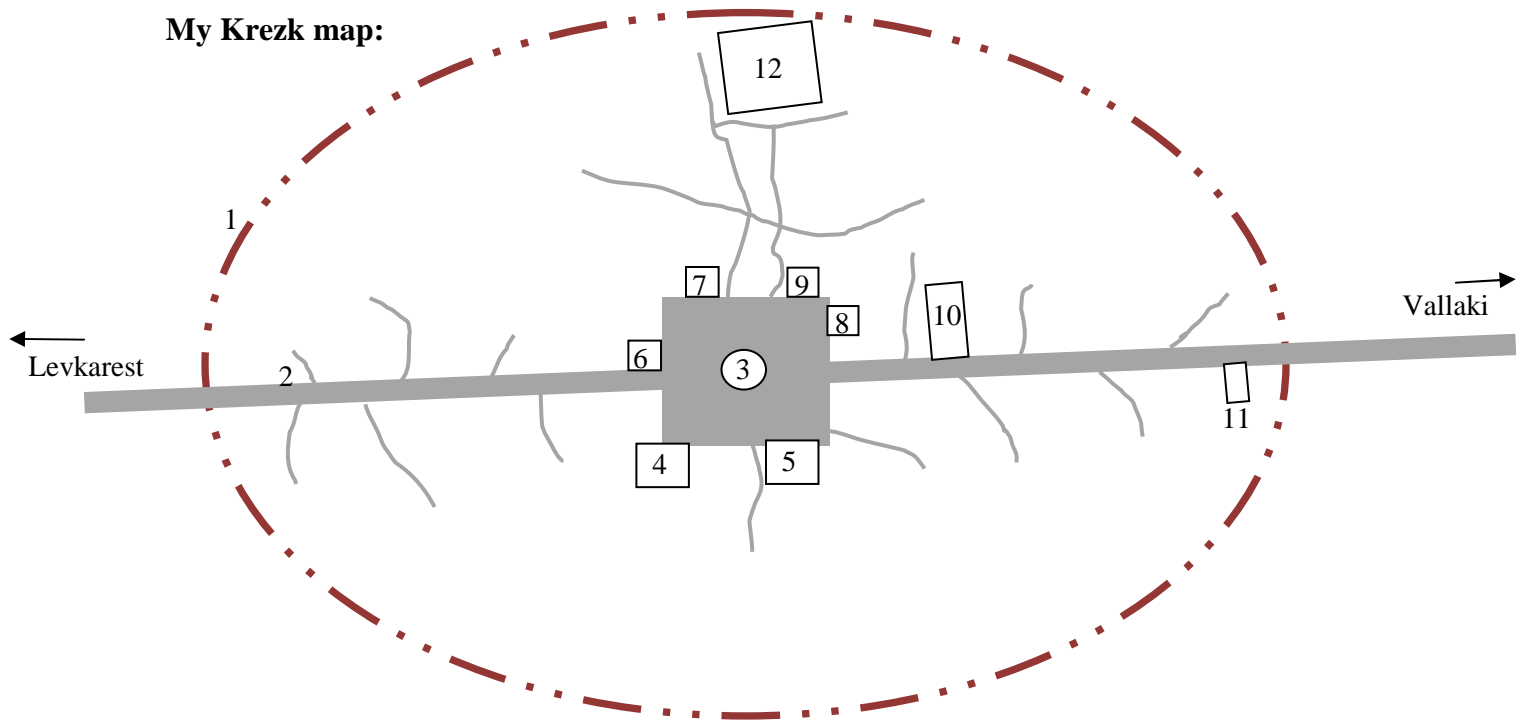
The heroes travel toward Vallaki, but around 4 pm they are at the crossroad leading to the Dreadpass. They decide to turn and go through the mountains and sleep there.

The road reaches some kind of narrow passage which they know is not opened on winter for horses and carts. The hours pass and they notice there are very few places in the Dreadpass where travelers can rest or sleep. The road is consistently about 8 to 12 feet wide, and they do not see a cavern or shelter.

Too late to come back. The sun is quickly out of the narrow passage and darkness sets in early. They travel another hour to try to find a shelter, but there are none. Around 8 pm, it is very dark and the only thing they find is a place where the road is wider (about 15 feet wide, on 20 long).

They decide to sleep there, on the side of the road...

My Krezk map:



(not all secondary roads are shown)

- 1 crumbling fortification walls
- 2 Main Rd (Old Svalish Rd) – a road with many commerces and merchants, especially near the city square.
- 3 minaret : « The Needle of the Ghaddar »
- 4 Inn : Smoldering Ember
- 5 Inn : Balinok Inn
- 6 unammed tavern 1
- 7 unammed tavern 2
- 8 Boritsi Trading Co
- 9 Red Vardo Traders
- 10 Morninglord church
- 11 Ezra chapel
- 12 Jacqueline Montarri's Manor

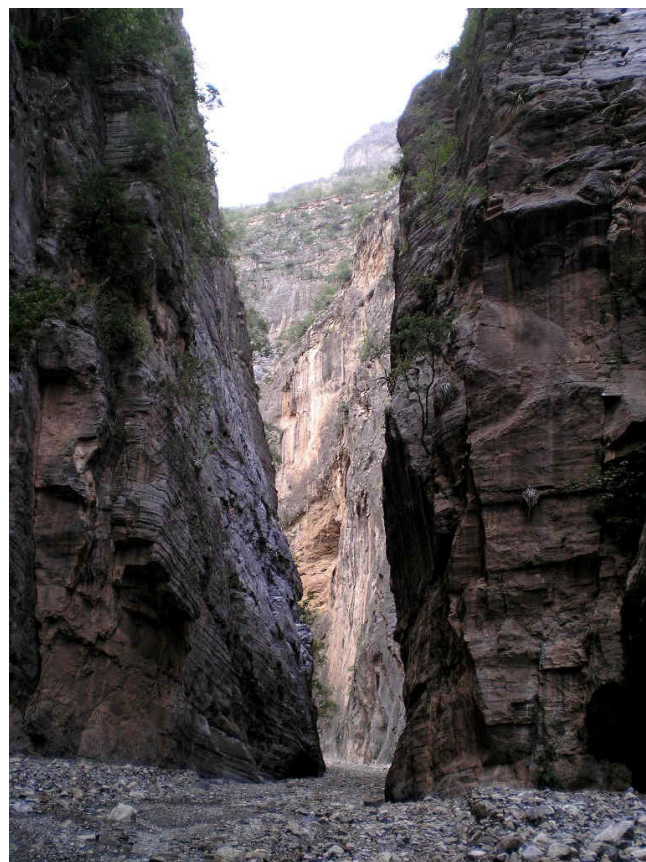
GAME SESSION FIFTY NINE: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 5

(played Sept 8th, 2013)

This session starts in the Barovian Dreadpass, where the players have decided to sleep. Thanks to all on the FoS main board for your ideas (Ron, alhoon, Rotifer among others), a combination of these ideas gave them a good spook! I also recycled a ghost prison cart encounter from Harrowstone. Add some thunderstorm and wind noises mp3s, as well as some zombie moaning, then galloping horses, that was perfect! They now fear the Dreadpass at night :)

April 15th, 748 – 8 pm

Picture of the Dreadpass: make the walls double that tall, and add snow on the ground!



In this narrow Dreadpass, the heroes try to get some sleep at one point where the road is a bit larger. They light torches on each side of their camp. MacRazbunare takes the first guarding turn. There is now a little cold rain, but it does nothing to melt the accumulated snow in the pass.

The rain quickly turns to a thunderstorm. The horses are uneasy.

Varadan smells something close to rotten flesh. The horses are now very shaky and noisy.

In the flash of a lightning strike, Varadan sees a shambling undead horror coming toward the group. As he calls to awaken his companions, the lightning flashes again, and for a moment, silhouetted against the rocky horizon, he sees dozens of them approaching....

The heroes decide to gather their things and run from the horde, but it's difficult in the wet snowy pass. Once in a while, they see the undead monsters, and the distance between the shambling creatures and the heroes seems steady.

At one point, there is a problem: a pine tree fell from the top days ago, and it blocks the way! All the humans can pass through the branches, but that means leaving the horses behind. They try to move the tree out of the way and save their horses from an horrible death.



At the nearest curve, undead monsters appear but Petrak turns six of them away. But there are more coming behind.

They hear the zombies are moaning something... It sounds like "Strahd... Strahd"! They are now in Barovia! What sinister trick is now being played?

Meanwhile, Tora turns more zombies, and the heroes use this time to push the tree on the cliff wall, and the horses pass on the other side. The heroes retreat behind the dead tree and Petrak casts *produce flame* and it makes the tree burn, hoping that will make the undead waste time before they can resume their pursuit.

After a while, they are back between two dark cliffs, and they do not see any undead pursuing them.

But thinking it's a bad idea to sleep there anymore, they decide to walk in the dark passage by night, hoping to eventually get out of it on the other side of the mountains.

Half an hour later, they hear a noise coming at them, from the direction they are facing. It's like large horses galloping! But they know it's nearly impossible, as they are moving half speed in the deep wet snow! They get their back to the cliff, side by side, hoping the horses will pass and leave them untouched in the narrow pass.

The noise is nearer and nearer ... and with ghostsight Tora sees a cart coming at them! The rest of the group see nothing. The ghostly cart is driven by two men hidden in cloaks and hoods. It seems like a prison cart and the cart is driven reckless, without any concern to those prisoners inside.

Hearing this eerie noise, the heroes' horses panic and they run in both directions. Only Macrazbunare the druid succeeded in calming his horse.

The cart passes without touching the heroes and the ghostly tracks in the snow are purplish in colour, then they faded from view...

The heroes are a bit shaken! Varadan and the druid decide to run after the horses that went in the direction they are coming from, while the other heroes wait there. Hopefully they will get to the horses before the zombie horde gets there!

While the rest of the heroes are in wait, they hear the sound of a child's crying and the sobs of a woman in the distance, where a soft light shines. Out of thin air, 30 feet from them, appears a crying woman, her nightgown bloodstained and a crying infant in her hands. The child is too

small to be actually on time birth, and is still attached to an umbilical cord that goes under the woman's dress.

She tells them "help me please"! They move toward her and the baby starts crying. Hearing this causes *confusion* to the heroes, who remain there, babbling incoherently!

Kendra throws a *magic missile* at the woman, but it passes through it, leaving her unarmed. Exigu launches an arrow... at Austizel! They see the woman seems to be fearing her baby, and that she is holding it as if saying "take this away from me!"

Kendra throws another *magic missile* but this time at the baby, and it strikes! The baby shrieks in pain! Austizel also tries to strike Exigu with his weapon but misses. Exigu, still confused, replies with another arrow!

Petrak and Tora eventually shakes off the confusion and they attack the baby with sword. After Tora's strike, the woman and the baby vanish!

Meanwhile, Macrazbunare and Varadan are back with the reassured horses.

They resume their walk to the other side of the Dreadpass. Varadan thinks he heard a cry of pain from a woman in the distance...

All of this and it is only 9h20 pm!

They resume their walk toward the end of the Dreadpass... They hear their walking noise reflected as a weird echo on the walls. The path is less snowy and more rocky (and unstable it seems).

It seems the whole pass is a sentient evil, watching them and blocking their travel... a small rock falls on Exigu's head... the scraggly bush branches clutch at their packs and the bridles... even the shadows thicken at some place to mask ankle-trapping holes in the path! It seems the very rocks of the Dreadpass hate trespassers! A small branch falls on MaRazbunare.

They cast *detect magic*, and find nothing. Tora tries *ghost sight*, and sees nothing...

Eventually, the pass widens at 20 feet and the snow cover thins... They are able to mount the horses instead of just dragging them.

At 10h30 pm, they are descending on the other side of the mountain and the sinister supernatural effects happens less and less often...

Later, they get out of the canyon and see the moon. Behind them, they see dark clouds and thunder noises over the Dreadpass ...

They resume their trip toward Zeidenburg, their hometown, where they arrive at 2 am. Zeidenburg is surrounded with old fortifications, and that makes the town look soewhat disturbing. Last time they were here was in November.

April 16th, 748

They enter MacRazbunare's house. They notice that Virevan's house does not have a cart repair sign. Madame Cioban came regularly to clean the place and all is in its place. They sleep for 8 hours.

Macrazbunare leaves enough money for Mme Cioban (6 gp). Petrak check his home church, but there is nothing new.

They see that Virevan's house is now occupied by Lazlo Sipulu the drunkard! He tells them that "Virevan came in town last week and gave him his house"! "Oh", he adds, "and Ardonk, your friend, is in town!"

They go see Ardonk. He is happy to see them, and gets a bottle of palenka and many glasses. the heroes introduce Tora to him, and explain that Virevan is dead. Ardonk is in town to get as many help as he can for Hunadora. The heroes refuse his call for help, telling them they are pursuing an evil cult.

Ardonk is in Hunadora with many of his troops, supporting Gabrielle Aderre against his evil son. "We are about 200 gundarakites!", he says proudly. Also in Hunadora are other people the heroes know: Ethelhild Szerieza (Ardonk's sister, a Morninglord cleric) and Hobert Mannon is there too, once in a while (*S: Lights in the Fog, BoSecrets*. He is in the mentor of Exigu).

Matton Blanchard and his friends are there too (it is clear when he says Blanchard's name that Ardonk doesn't like Matton).

"Because we know Malloccio is gathering troupes to attack Hunadora, of which mercenaries and falkovnians. It's not a rumour, it's a question of weeks, perhaps days!", says Ardonk.

"There is also a rumor that Lord Gundar is back? He was supposedly seen on the roads of Invidia, between Karina and Hunadora... We were praising him in our propaganda against Strahd", Ardonk notes, "but I'm not sure it's a good thing that he is *really* back... But anyway he never got in contact with us."

"Have you heard?", he says, excited, "They replaced that Ivan Szimin pig by this slug, Bucatar Disleanu! He augmented again the taxes for gundarakites farmers!" The heroes recognize this name, having met him during the Ivan Szimin affair (see session 2). "Even Lyssa Von Zarovich said publicly it's a bad choice!", he adds.

Ardonk has is usual serious and passionate tone, but he looks more tired than before.

"Hunadora is a dangerous place", he says, "we haven't explored the full of it because there are deadly traps in it! We lost four men, so the rest of the troops are unwilling to enter the places that haven't been secured!"

"Yes, everybody you know is now in Hunadora. Only Alistair remained in Zeidenburg. His wife finally gave birth ... but there was nothing, just the liquids, according to Ethelild. The baby vanished! It is very very strange. She is very weak since then ..."

DM note: Barton Deforet's adventure, which I sprinkled hints a while ago. Other hints here, but the PCs didn't took it.

“So we fear Malloccio will come to invade Hunadora with the help of magic, which we have nearly nothing to oppose to. One night eight days ago, strange runes were inscribed on the walls of Hunadora! It looked magical. We erased it and they did not return.”

The alarmed heroes describe the runes they saw at Harrowstone prison, and Ardonk says they were similar.

“Are these magic users dangerous for Mme Aderre?”, Ardonk asks.

“Yes, very dangerous. They tried to assassinate us”, replies the heroes.

“I see”, he says, “then we will probably move her to safety... you see I’m having a ... relation ... with madame Aderre. She is pregnant, you know!”, he says proudly.

One of the heroes replies “but we thought she was with Matton?”

“No”, says quickly Ardonk, “that’s something of the past for her”, but the heroes feel this is perhaps wishful thinking and Ardonk himself is unsure. Tactfully, they do not question him more on the subject.

Ardonk tells them that Malloccio’s war against vistani is also bringing him trouble with another neighbour in the South, Sithicus.

Ardonk tells them that should need be, he will leave messages at MacRazbunare’s house.

The heroes leave Ardonk to prepare for their trip to Karina. Ardonk tells them the password should they meet gundarakite control “death to Strahd the bloody tyrant”.

They gather their things and leave Zeidenburg by Duke’s road, toward Karina. Quickly, they are near the invidian border. A sign near the Invidian border says “All vistani will be killed on sight.”

At 3h pm, they pass a gundarakite check point. The heroes give the password, and they pass untroubled by the militia. They noticed afterward there were many warriors with bows, hidden behind trees. The guards tell them to watch for Malloccio's ogre patrols.

They pass at a crossroad, where a road leads to Hunadora. That once large road is now neglected, and a once-mighty stone sign signaling the castle has been demolished.

They continue toward Karina. The sun sets and they decide to stop there for the night. Near the road, they find the body of a gundarakite woman, probably a scout. She has two punctured holes in her neck, but no blood ... Exigu fails to stay in control and is in fear. The heroes cut off her head, to prevent her coming back as a vampire.

They are nervous and take watching turns, but their sleep is uneventful.

April 17th, 748

Back on the road at 6 am. At 10 am, they arrive at the ferry on the Musarde. They divide in two groups in case their group profile is being on watch, by order of Malloccio.

The road between the ferry and Karina is familiar, and they see many wine estates, of which Haptmeyer estate, where they once saved Gabrielle Aderre from the Midnight Slasher.

Near the city gate, they see a large tree with corpses hanging from its branches. All are vistani.

At the walled city of Karina entrance, they get the usual questions: “What is your name? Where were you born? Where do you live? Why do you seek to enter Karina?” And the last question: “Have you seen or spoken to vistani recently?”

They go meet Keith de Lalune, head of the Ezra church in Karina, who is glad to see them again. He looks even fatter and greasier than the last time they saw him.

He brings them in a quiet chapel. They ask him where is the Sante-Lyrimin abbey. Keith tells them it’s an old abbey dedicated to Hala, that has been converted to a winery. A rich woman, Mme Calivasso bought the abbey and turned it into a winery about 50 years ago. Her wine is very good, and sells out quickly. Mme Calivasso lets the property to the Dubless sisters, Etna and Haïssa, well known Hala followers.

“What kind of business do you have with the Dublesse sisters?”, Keith asks. The heroes explain that they are fighting an ancient necromantic cult, which will soon do a ritual they hope to stop.

“Both Dublesse sisters were living with an old unpleasant woman, named Oothi. We do not know where she came from. She was recently accused of black magic by Malloccio, jailed, and due to be executed. But the day it was supposed to happen, it is said she transformed into a carpet of spiders that crawled away. That was three months ago. The Dublesse sisters said they were magically charmed and forced by Oothi, and now became big donators to Malloccio’s mercenaries campaigns. The power in place leaves them alone.”

They ask him about the church of Hala – “in their faith, the goddess Hala returned to the world to ease its suffering. She gathered together thirteen women and thirteen men and taught them the secrets of the Weave, an ancient form of magic. Unfortunately, this brand of magic is also known as witchcraft and provokes widespread, superstitious fear. The Church of Hala is a secretive and highly mystical faith. Her clerics — who call themselves witches — operate a number of hospices scattered throughout Ravenloft where they offer rest and healing to anyone who comes to their door. The church does not actively seek new followers, however, and nowhere is the Church of Hala the predominant religion. Their symbol is a ring formed by thirteen serpents, each devouring the tail of the one before it.” (*Source: RL3E*)



They ask him what is new in town. “Falkovnians have in their sights the Midnight Slasher. People in the know said they found something to trap him. This vile serial murderer will soon be taken and he will pay for his horrible crimes. They will hang or impale him slowly and painfully!” The heroes wonder if they should warn *her*. “There are more and more Falkovnians in Karina: they were about 150 last time you were here, now their number is close to 800!”, adds Keith.

“Hell happened south in Verbrek recently”, Keith continues, “Tribes of werewolves tear each other apart. Something important happened, but we do not know what. This war is now overflowing in the various werewolves in Karina. It is this serious that the upcoming Dog Fights are canceled for now.” The heroes think that now that Nathan is gone, the tribes are fighting to get his spot in hierarchy.

At 3pm, they thank Keith for their help and exit the church. They exit the city and go spy on Abbey Sante-Lyrimin from the road and the nearby woods. Macrazbunare changes shape to that

of an eagle and flies over it. The building is sturdy, showing its war history. The abbey was an avant poste with a military purpose. Its main tower has a bell that can be heard from Karina, warning the city if there was an invasion. There are no windows on the ground floor, and only stained glass windows (Hala imagery) on the second floor.

The Abbey is very close to the Noisette river. There is a small quay with a little rowing boat attached to it. On the other sides, the abbey is surrounded by wines, and there is another building nearby, which they think is the winery.

The main building is two floors high, but has a second floor terrace on the east side (one floor high only).

The road leading to the Abbey shows many recent tracks - a cart and horses.



Exigu notices two wolves, hidden in the vines, and they are watching the heroes. He gets *invisible*, and get closer to the wolves... and hears them talking! They are looking at the other heroes and they are clearly speaking about them, while he can't hear clearly what they are saying. Exigu gets back to the group and tells them what he saw. They think this could be druids?

Macrazbunare get closer to the wolves, both males, and say to them “We noticed you, we want to talk to you, we are not hostile”. The wolves show themselves.

Macrazbunare asks “you understand me?”, and the wolves nod.

“Do you live here?”, and the wolves shakes their head negatively.

“Are you watching this place?”, and they nod.

“Do you know Matton Blanchard?”, and they shake their head.

“Do you know us?”, and the wolves look at themselves, puzzled, then again they shake negatively.

“Have you seen the sisters?”, to which they growl and nod.

“You do not like them?”, and they nod.

“Because they support Malloccio?”, and the wolves clearly do not understand the question.

“Because they do black magic?”, and the wolves nod.

“Where are you from?”, and one answers with a low scratchy voice “Ulphland”. Macrazbunare understands they are from Verbrek, south of Invidia.

One of the wolves asks “Why you here?”, and Macrazbunare answers “we think there is evil magic here. Did they steal something in Ulphland?”, and the wolves nod.

“And you want to get it back?”, and the wolves nod.

“Are they in the house now” and one wolf answers “some do”

“Are you here to attack them?”, and the wolf shakes his head.

“Are you here to help someone who will attack the house?”, and again the wolf speaks with its strange voice “Not our role, we here for information. For watch them”

“Do you want to take back what was stolen from you?”, and the wolf answers “We think it’s gone. Not here now.”

“Why do you think that?”, and the wolf says “now is quiet”

“And those who left, did you follow them?” The wolf answers “Not us. Friends did.”

And the wolves talk between themselves in verbrekian, which Macrazbunare do not understand. Then one tells the druid "Sister executed in city, is spider. Day she executed, comet fell on this house, broke into many star pieces, fell around house"

Macrazbunare asks "and that happened three months ago?", and the wolf nod.

Macrazbunare thinks those sisters might be part of a coven?

Varadan comes nearby and smells the wolves. According to him, they are not from Nathan's pack. Macrazbunare asks the wolves if his friend Varadan smells something. "Ulph!" answers one of the wolves...

GAME SESSION SIXTY: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 6

(played Oct 20th, 2013)

April 17th, 748, 5 pm

They resume their conversation with the wolves. MacRazbunare describes Aurélien Vrood and the wolves seem to recognize him: "Yes, he was here".

"How many were they?", the druid asks. "Six"

"When did they leave?"

"Eight days ago, by boat, in the direction of ", and the wolf point his head toward the east.

"And who is in the house with the sisters?"

"Humans with hammer, and metal armors"

"Do they have tattoo in the front head?"

"no"

"And the Dublesse sisters, what are they doing?"

"One we don't see, never gets out. Other search something around the house, does hole in earth"

"Do you have any problem with us entering their house?", asks the druid. "No", the wolves reply.

"They have the heart of Nathan Timothy?", and the wolves nod.

"If we bring it back to you, will it be helpful for your kind?"

"Yes! War in Ulphland not good!", one wolf answers.

"Were you in Nathan's clan?", and the wolves answers negatively.

"Are there many individuals in Nathan's clan?". The wolves think for a moment and answers "no".

"Are there wolfwere too?", and the wolves growl. "We do not like them".

"How will bringing back the heart will solve the war?"

"We know elders will solve this problem", the wolves say.

"Other wolves will soon replace us. We back to Ulphland. If you want to know, then we will know where those that followed the boat which left the Abbey."

The heroes think and decline the offer, that is too many days and the cultist are too much ahead already. They decide to attack the abbey and find where did the cultist went with their boat.

The wolves tell them good luck and they retreat to the nearby woods.

It is 5h30 and heroes wait in bushes until darkness to approach the Abbey.

At 7pm, it is darker. Lights can be seen on the second floor and there are humanoid shapes passing in front of the windows once in a while. The tower stays dark.

They pass near a patch where vines are tended. The druid notices they are all of different grape species, so this is probably a test patch for the wine growers.

They go to a door but it is locked. Exigu the thief opens it. It is some kind of workroom. It is dark and they do not open a light source. They hear voices inside the Abbey. They understand there are about 4 men, playing cards.

After some preparation, they enter a wide dining hall and they attack the guards. They move and circle the surprised guards, who take their warhammers. Exigu throws a volley of arrows, while Varadan and Austizel attack with *magic missiles*. MacRazbunare does the same, then Kendra too, with her wand.

Then Kendra shouts "look at them (the guards), they are charmed!" The heroes switch to non-lethal damage. Petrak casts *prayer*.

But after a guard attacks Tora with his hammer (-15 hp), Tora angrily replies with real damage and it kills the guard. He didn't listen to his friends repeated call for non-lethal damage!

After a while, all the remaining guards have been subdued, and Varadan attach them. With cantrips, Petrak cures those that fell unconscious to stabilize them.

They return to the workshop, this time with a light, and notice a piece of parchment on the table. It looks like a crude drawing of the Abbey and its surroundings. There are red "X"s made on this map: two on the ground floor inside the Abbey, one in the winery building and one in the wine test patch. They think it might be the sister that does searches that marks her progress on that map? Or maybe it shows where there are traps, other think?

They explore the ground floor - a kitchen, a pantry (well stocked), and a storehouse with four barrels of wine marked "Calivasso 747". We are year 748, so this is the new estate wine.

In the warehouse, a door leads to a stable.

The pantry has a cool fog seeping on the ground, and they scan it with *detect magic* - moderate conjuration. They scan the rest of the ground floors as well as the attached guards - nothing.

They climb the tower stairs to reach the second floor. They hear guards talking behind a door. Through an opened door, they see liquids bubbling in cauldrons and other glass lab material.

The heroes open the door and see three guards. They attack them with spell (Austizel's *Melf Acid Arrows*) and plan to finish them with non-lethal damage.

But while they were attacking the guards, a woman arrive at the open door opening. She is strangely dressed but extremely beautiful. She doesn't seem distressed by seeing the heroes invading her house. The heroes think this is one of the Dublesse sisters.

So she moves at this door and cast a spell: a purple bolt of lightning erupts from her hand and strikes Macrazbunare, his wolf and Austizel. The bolt is very strong: -43 hp!

DM note: music switch to Varttina, the song aijo (which Ron once suggested in his campaign IIRC). It is strange, slightly demonic, very witchy and unexpectedly cheery. It succeeded in making the witch look very confident, and players uneasy! This cool witch image is from [Deviantart](#).

Kendra cast a spell and there are 6 images of her acting in unison.

Macrazbunare cast *summons nature's ally* and two badgers appear on each side of the witch-looking woman to surround her. But the badgers fall on the ground, sleeping! Her smile shows so much confidence!

DM note: Cloak of Dreams, from Pathfinder Advanced Players guide.

Meanwhile, Tora and Varadan continues attacking the guards, leaving the group's spell caster to deal with the witch.

Austizel casts a *magic missile* on the witch, and Exigu throws her three arrows.

She replies by casting a spell at Exigu, who misses his saving throw: he is polymorphed into a toad! (*Baleful Polymorph*) After that, she makes a move inside the house and is now unseen from the heroes...

Kendra give a potion at Macrazbunare (+ 15 hp), and the druid cast *call lightning* on a guard. Varadan eventually put down the last guard.

The witch moves and cast a spell: *mass pain strike*. Varadan, Petrak and Tora are affected, and Petrak is sickened.

Kendra cast a *magic missile* at the nearby sleeping badgers, to waken them. It works and the badger move to attack the witch. But as soon as they come near her, they fall asleep again!

Macrabunare throws another *magic missile* at the witch, and Austizel launches an *lightning bolt* at her. She takes it hard and looks wickedly at the elf. Petrak hits her with a *spiritual weapon*, and Varadan the monk closes on the witch and hits her with his stunning fists.



She then cast a spells on Austizel, but the effect is unknown until Kendra hits the witch with a *magic missile* ... and it hurts Austizel too! Macrazbunbare throws a *magic missile* at the witch, and again Austizel is hurt too.

DM note: Unwilling Shield, from Pathfinder Advanced Players guide.

Varadan falls asleep at the feet of the witch! She cast a *web* to slow down other heroes that would otherwise reach her soon. Kendra sends a *magic missile* at the witch, and one on Varadan to awaken him. Petrak casts *produce flame* on the web.

It is then that a swarm of spiders appears. It came from on an upper floor of the tower. It strikes Patu (Exigu's dog).

Macrazbunbare casts *shield* and move, and Tora delays his actions until the web has burned completely.

The witch closes on the heroes, but oops, she then sees that Tora and Varadan are running at her. She cast *dimension door* and vanishes... Macrazbubare destroys the spider swarm with *call lightning*.

They run, trying to find the witch. In the tower, a weakened floor crashes to the ground, sending Varadan down to the ground floor among wooden debris (- 25 hp).

They check the main room where she was hiding: it's a laboratory. Macrazbunare cast *detect poison* and keep a bottle that he identified as poison, after saying to the rest of the group nothing detect poisonous...

Petrak cures himself with a spell.

There is a bubbling cauldron in the fireplace and it contains a foul smelling brew. Macrazbunare identifies that it is made with blood. Nearby the cauldron is a rack with four bottles of the same substance, but there is place for 12 bottles in the rack. These bottles label bears one word: « Hunadora ». The heroes know this is Gundar's old castle, now occupied by Gabrielle and Ardonk's gundarakites.

On the table, there is a wooden box enforced with iron bars. It is filled with straw. Inside the straw, the heroes find a bottle that contains hairs, and it has a label « M.G. ». They think the hairs are very old, and from a blond child.

They check the remaining of this floor, looking for the vanished witch. Another room is the bedchamber of two woman, which the heroes think might be Hetna and Aisa, the witches.

Another bedroom has a coffin in it, but it is empty. Tora's *ghostsight* find nothing.

In another room, large bookshelves cover the walls of this room, broken only by an occasional window overlooking the abbey's grounds. A headless skeleton stands erect in the northwest corner, lashed to a long wooden pole, its bones tied together with bits of string.

The heroes know that the skeleton is much bigger and fiercer than a human. They think it might be the skeleton of a hag. The heroes wonder if what the witches are searching might be the head?

Seeing the vanished witch lady is not on this floor, they go back to the laboratory. Numerous research notes are also scattered about the lab. Most of these are from two woman (most probably Aisa and Hetna ?), detailing their work in searching for an elixir of youth at the behest of a noble patron of Karina, Mme Calivasso, and of her recent angry request that the witches stop being lazy and get her some results quickly.

Other necromantic notes from the witches are about an alchemical way to create blood of a creature from a body sample like a bone, a nail or hairs.

Several more notes from a different penmanship were also in the pile and each of these pages bears the initials « AV ». They realize those could be from Aurélien Vrood! His work is about the extension of life through both magical and alchemical means... and the blood key to open a gate in Hunadora!

DM note - later, by email, I did send an history course to the players. I thought they would remember it from a game we played in the 90's, but they didn't. They needed it to make the links for the rest of the story.

From numerous unions, Duke Nharov Gundar had two children (well, that he recognized as his), Medraut and Gewena. While Gewena was quiet and gentle and was only interested in reading, Medraut was a cruel and unruly child, who had a gift for magic. Nharov at first encouraged this taste for magic, but later much regretted it as Medraut scared him because of his impressive talent in magic coupled to his cruelty and madness. Nharov feared his son.

Medraut remained in the body of a 12 year old child after an experiment gone awry. But no one could confuse Medraut with a child: his eyes were cruel and reflected ancient madness. His teeth were rotten and his face ravaged by diseases related to his experiences. He loved to reduce people and trap them in mazes with rats and snakes, then set fire to the labyrinth to add wicked fun.

One day in 596, Medraut killed his sister during an insignificant argument. Medraut and his father then noticed with awe that the blood of her sister opened a magic portal in the hall of Hunadora's castle.

There was a legend that the blood of Gundar's family opened a magical portal, but nobody had believed it before (or perhaps nobody found the way or the location where to open it).

Medraut used foul necromancy to bring his sister back to life and he kept her alive, in intense pain, for over ten years, so that her blood continued to flow from her body and thus kept the gate opened for experiments.

But neither Medraut or Nharov could not pass through this strange portal. Their interest fell one day and Medraut dropped his sister in the moat while she was still alive. The gate was thus closed in 608, and no one knows to this day where this portal was leading to.

Years later, in 720, Medraut was killed by adventurers who invaded the castle Hunadora to use this legendary portal. His father did not cry his son's death.

Years later again, in 736, Nharov Gundar was killed by a traitor, Dr. Daclaud Heinfroth. The duchy of Gundarak was then partitioned between Invidia and Barovia.

GAME SESSION SIXTY ONE: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 7

(played January 12th, 2014. Yvon plays Exigu, Martin plays Varadan and JF plays Austizel)

DM note: last game, Yvon's paladin behaved rashly and killed a man where non lethal damage was more appropriate, and called for.

Guess what, he missed a power check! The first one of the campaign!

I told him to adjust his Strength by +2 and I did send him this message: "In the Abbey, when you killed that guard you knew you had to subdue, even as the others were yelling at you to use non lethal damage, well, it felt ... good. Not good, but you are OK with it: we don't know for sure, but this guard could have been evil and deserved to get killed. Anyway, the guard shouldn't have hit you first, as this is a perfectly good reason to get people enraged. He should have noticed the group was trying to subdue them, the idiot!"

April 17th, 748, 8h30 pm

The heroes fear that the vanishing witch could heal and come back. They resume their search of the laboratory. In the notes with the "AV" initials, they understand that a solution to an unknown problem is opening a gate in Hunadora. Also, his quest to become undead isn't finished, he hasn't set all the pieces yet. Tora takes the bottle with the blond hairs (bottle "MG").

They think Vrood left with 8 of the 12 blood vials.

Austizel cast *immerse mind* on the skeleton they think might be of a hag. Austizel has a vision of being on a gallows, with a rope around his neck. He recognizes the place as being in Karina. At one point, he hears someone in the crowd shout "die, Oothi!", and with this he has the confirmation that the skeleton is Oothi's. At that precise moment where the executioner was going to pull the lever and send Oothi to be hanged, Austizel sees he is becoming a swarm of spiders! He sees a spider passing over his eyes and his point of view gets down to floor level. The swarm kills the executioner and then gets in the crowd and disperses, where it is squashed by the many boots of the crowd. Austizel has the feeling the swarm dispersed in the crowd on purpose, to get destroyed!

The outdoor terrace is searched by the players. Nothing but sturdy stone furniture, medicinal and cooking herbs, and small bushes of local flora varieties, growing in pots.

At 9h45 pm, they light a wooden fire in the fireplace and plan to burn Oothi's skeleton, to prevent her from coming back. They estimate that burning the bones in this oven will take about 3 hours.

DM note: good guess, that will destroy her forever. From a cremation source on the net, I estimated that there would remain about 8 pounds of brittle bone in the end of the three hours.

Meanwhile, they go talk to the subdued guards, those on the second floor. They learn they were there to protect the sisters Dublesse. Hetna is blonde and Aisa is dark haired. So it is Hetna that they fought in the laboratory. They get their orders from Hetna. They do not remember the date when they started working for the sisters. They think it might be months.

10h00 pm The druid's wolf hears a noise, getting Macrazbunare's attention. He hears a faint noise coming from downstairs: a girl's shout of pain!

Tora empties the blood cauldron over the earth of the terrace, but keeps the four vials of blood. They throw flour on the ground, in front of the burning bones, to check if someone went there while they were away downstairs. Macrazbunbare adds caltrops.

They get to the main floor through the demolished staircase (see previous session), then get through another stone staircase going underground.

They reach a large room, lighted by half a dozen braziers. The domed ceiling is 30 feet high. The large statue of a winged Hala (as an angel, 9 foot high) stands on the side.

But what surprises them most is that they see the blonde witch on the floor, face down, unmoving! Austizel cast *detect magic* in her direction, and it is positive. Varadan sees a small bat hanging at her cloak. They think this could be a vampire!

DM note: bad guess, it's the witch's familiar, disoriented now that her mistress is dead. After the battle, Hetna fled the PCs (see game 60) and was then killed by her sister, Aisa. Aisa is a new vampire and used this occasion to turn her sister Hetna to vampirism, and to control her.

While Hetna tried hard to try to resurrect Oothi the hag to reform their coven, Aisa came to the conclusion that the sisters were now more powerful than the hag, and that they should instead try to find a less powerful and more controllable hag for their coven.

Varadan asks around "is there anybody that wants to talk to me?", without answer. He then asks specifically to "Hey, the bat!", again without answer.

In the room, they notices traces on the ground, coming from a marble pantagram on the floor and exiting this room. It seems like something large was dragged out of the room, something that dripped flesh, blood and human patches of hairs... These traces are about a week old.

Kendra casts a protective spell, *mirror image*.

Tora tries to approach the unmoving witch with a blanket, with the intention of catching the bat. The frightened bat flies away. The heroes then think that could be a familiar.

While checking the bat, Tora sees something moving behind a stone altar, a black cat?

Then a woman dressed in black appear from behind the altar and casts a spell, *solid fog*! From now on, all their moves toward the second witch are tremendously slowed!

Meanwhile, Macrazbunare check the blonde witch on the floor. He sees the witch's neck: two punctured marks, the tell tale mark of vampires!

Petrak casts *Shield of Faith* and move toward the black witch.



DM note: music switch to Diamanda Gallas (Sono l'Antecristo, Hex and Wild women with kitchen knives). It is highly demonic and extremely different from the song I used for the first witch.

This cool witch image was from Deviantart but I do not find it anymore. Here is is on [Pinterest](#), slightly modified by me to change her cross pendant.

While they are inside the *solid fog*, they hear the witch cast again... and the casters are horrified, as she is casting a *cloudkill* spell inside the *solid fog*!

Petrak decides to let the *cloudkill* pass, and moves out of the *solid fog*, on the opposite side to the witch.

Macrazbunare hits the seemingly dead witch on the floor (-3 hp). She doesn't move.

The heroes fight the deadly green vapors and move either toward the black witch or try to exit the cloud if it will take too long. Exigu's dog, Patu, dies from the poisonous vapors!

Tora exits the fog, and the witch waves at him to come forward. She casts a spell on him. It is like a cold hand inside his chest, pressing his lungs to forbid him to breathe! He is staggered!

DM note : Suffocation, PF Advanced Players Guide.

Varadan reaches the witch and try to hit her with his staff, but misses. Her cloak then animates and attacks Varadan with a stored spell, *vampiric touch*!

DM note: the vampiress is now at her most powerful, having killed and drained her sister and having more hit points from the vampiric touch spell! She has 180 hp!

Petrak casts *divine flavor*.

Macrazbunare exists the fog and casts *magic missile*. His wolf attacks the black cat.

Austizel throws a *lightning bolt* at the witch (-15 hp).

The witch then casts a spells and a wicked black floating dagger appears in front of her.

Varadan tries to hit her again with his staff and one of three attacks succeeds.

Tora is still fighting the suffocation spell but he is able to attack the witch once (-15 hp).

Macrazbunare casts *scorching ray*. His wolf attacks the black witch.

Austizel throws two arrows at the witch. She attacks Varadan with a slam attack, and drains him of two levels! She is a vampire! It appears to heal her! Simultaneously, the floating dagger strikes Varadan, who falls on the ground, dead! (at -10 hp)

The *cloudkill* spell is completely passed, and Kendra enters the *solid fog* to battle the deadly witch. Petrak does the same.

Tora hits the witch with his sword (-16 hp). The witch replies with a *lightning bolt* spell, hitting Tora and Austizel.

Petrak charges the witch (with *Smite Power*, -18 hp), and Tora succeeds with two hits (*Smite power* too). Through his wolf, Macrazbunare sends a cure spell at Tora. Exigu hits the witch with an arrow.

But the witch attacks Tora, and drains him of two levels also, then the floating knife brings him unconscious!

Kendra casts *magic missile* on the witch. Petrak does power attack on the witch and poof! She becomes a cloud of grey gas!

But the black cat suddenly attacks unconscious Tora, trying to kill him! (it inflicts -2 hp but it is not enough to put him to -10 hp) The heroes finish the angry cat.



The vampiress's gaseous form enters the *solid fog* spell, becoming invisible inside it! The heroes posts themselves around the spell to check on her. Meanwhile, Kendra cuts Hetna's head.

DM note: since that vamp was young, she didn't have many contingency plans, otherwise there would have been an enter to a secret room hidden on the floor, somewhere inside the solid fog.

At one point, they see the cloud exiting and moving to a dusty room. Petrak follows but is struck with a glyph like spells, and he sleeps! Nothing can awake him! Austizel think it could be a powerful *symbol of sleep*.

The other heroes see the vampiress gas pass under a door...

They wait for Petrak to recover. Meanwhile, they kill the bat, and cast *detect magic* on Hetna: 4 potions, a dagger, a ring. They identify the potions as *Bear's Endurance*. She also wears a necklace with a Whispering Way pendant (a gagged skull).

At 11h45 pm, Petrak awakes.

They open the door where the gaseous cloud went. In this tomb room, a large, massive, stone coffin, ornate in the Hala way. It is very dusty. There is a pile of bones in one corner, like if they were thrown there recently. They think this might be the vampiress's coffin, and that she threw away the previous occupant.



Fearing there could be more traps, they let Petrak enters. Petrak is the strongest one of the lot, the others are badly wounded.

He moves the stone lid... and locks eyes with the vampiress! She *dominates* him!

DM note: cool part of the game here, and kudos to Petrak's player. I gave him the instruction that the vampiress witch wants them away from her coffin at all cost. The other players knew something was wrong, but their PC could not use that knowledge for a large moment. Also, all PCs were empty of spells and of hit points, while Petrak was full in both!

Petrak closes the stone lid (he was the only one in the room so the only one to see that the coffin was occupied) and says "there is nothing here, she is elsewhere, let's continue". While the others wonder what is going on, Petrak says "there is a secret door on this wall" (*something the vampiress told him to do, and indeed, there was one*).

Austizel opens the secret door, and it opens to a corridor. They discuss if they should continue or not.

Seeing they are uneasy at continuing, because the group is weak, Petrak says "I know that young vampires need to sleep in their coffin for 24 hours before healing, while an old vampire is healing the second he is resting in his coffin. We are weak and unable to continue since we can't face more serious dangers. Let's go back to rest in Karina and we'll be back within 24 hours to resume exploring and finish her".

Macrazbunare suddenly feels something is wrong with Petrak's attitude, and he notices Kendra is looking at the priest oddly too.

Midnight, April 18th, 748

Kendra let the other heroes talk between themselves and she leads Petrak away, "to investigate the bloody tracks in the main room". They find something about 3 feet wide was constructed inside the pantagram, with a lot of blood, flesh and bones, then dragged through the room to outside.

The heroes do not know what to do with controlled Petrak, since he is for the moment by far the strongest character in the group, and they are uneasy to continue play his game and exploring, fearing the vampiress could send them into deadly traps.

Meanwhile, Kendra and Petrak are back with the group. Kendra could not keep Petrak away for long, and Petrak wanted to come back to the group "as he felt for their security." They try to test Petrak: Macrazbunare talks of destroying the coffin with stoneshape, and Austizel advances toward the coffin with a mace.

Petrak is strongly against the idea of destroying the coffin, as it is the last repose of a priest of Hala, and they have nothing against this deity. He is becoming menacing toward Austizel.

Kendra takes this opportunity to talk with Macrazbunare. She fears that the group will get killed if they continue provoking Petrak. She suggests we instead open the secret door and resume exploration, sending Petrak first, then closing the secret door after him! "He is not very good at searching, so it will give us some time to open the coffin before he comes back in the room."

They try and her plan succeeds: Petrak is locked out of the room! The heroes use this time to open the stone lid, while avoiding to look inside. They open the coffin to the side opposed to the one Petrak opened. They see the witch's feet! She is resting in the coffin, surrounded by roses that secrete blood! They think this might some kind of witch's enchantment.

Meanwhile, the secret door opens! (*the vampiress told Petrak how to open it, something they didn't plan*). Some of the heroes use their strenght to try to keep this door closed.

Meanwhile, the others throw a blanket over the witch. Kendra searches and find the area where her heart should be. Kendra uses a hammer and she tries to plant a wooden stick in the witch's

heart. The vampiress starts trashing wildly inside her coffin. Kendra gives another blow with her hammer, and then it is over.

The heroes gasp. After a moment, from the other side of the secret door, Petrak asks "hey, what is going on?" The charm is finished.

In the tomb, seven magic aura: six potions and one cloak.

It is 1 am. They go sleep in the laboratory upstairs. Petrak does healing.

The next morning, Macrazbunare destroys the remaining of Oothi's bones into powder and throws it in the river.

They get downstairs and take Aisa's body for a walk in the sun. She instantly turns to ashes, quickly spread by the gentle winds... They do the same with Hetna, but nothing happens. They bury her, after stuffing her mouth with garlic.

DM note: they cut off her head too. Otherwise, she would turn vampire only in 1-4 days.

The druid check on the strange roses in Aisa's coffin. He thinks that could be some kind of bloodrose, with possibly an unknown witch enchantment. It's a plant that is repelled by salt.

They identify some items on the sisters: ring of protection +2, dagger +2, and the witch cloak is +5 (!) bonus on Will only, and something else that works only if you are a witch...

Petrak casts *dispel magic* on Exigu to dispel his polymorphing and it works!

Also, with Petrak's spell, about half of the charmed guards shakes off the charm. They are surprised to be tied, and ask where are the lovely sisters? The guard job for the sisters was very rewarding, but for now they are wondering where did they put their payroll...

They identify the potions: 2 *Bull Strength*, 2 *Eagle Splendor* and 2 *Inflict Serious Wounds*.

They exit the abbey and notice the talking wolves outside kept their horses safe.

Back to Karina, with Varadan wrapped in a carpet, they go meet Keith de Lalune and ask for his help. He is quite surprised of their story.

To help them, he offers to cast the needed spells (*raise dead* and *restauration*) "in exchange for a future good action for the local church", or pay for a scroll (*restauration* at 3 000 gp, or *raise dead* 4 500 gp).

They asks for a *restauration* scroll for Tora (3 000 gp), and a *restauration* spell tomorrow and a *raise dead* for Varadan.

Keith tells them "I heard that Jacqueline Montarri is in town" and then he asks "You told me you met her recently. By any chance, do you have an idea why she is in town?"

GAME SESSION SIXTY TWO: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 8

(played January 26th, 2014. JF plays Austizel)

I allowed some retraining so the players could make their sheet to their taste (I got complaints that they do not get new levels very quickly ;), which I found reasonable)

So Jean-Guy turned Varadan, his monk / sorcerer / moonchild2 into a monk4 / moonchild2. He died last game, and we ruled that the level he loss wasn't of moonchild, even if that was the last class he got. When you get at the end of moonchild, you can't lose these levels, so we ruled that all acquired Moonchild levels are the last to go. Otherwise, it's long and frustrating to play moonchild.

Philippe turned Austizel, his Ranger / wizard into a wizard 8.

Petrak did the same, turning his fighter levels into cleric levels.

April 18th, 748, 10 am

They thank Keith de Lalune and go see a Falkovnian armorer that Keith recommended, Helmut. Austizel (an elf) and Exigu (halfling) stays out.

The shop façade bears with pride a large Falkovnian flag (*DM note : flag created by MikesAdamis*). Helmut welcomes them, and his falkovnian eagle is kept well visible on his front head.



Tora buys a heavy shield for an expansive price, 25 gp (it is normally 20 gp). But seeing the proud man, when Tora asks for a Falkovnian eagle printed on it, the price lowers to 20 gp! Helmut is very happy that Tora is asking for an imperial eagle to be printed on his shield.

Helmut buys a great sword from the players (40 gp).

Now Helmut calls Tora his friend, reminding him that the Falkovnian boot will soon crush neighbouring countries, and particularly the *untermenshen*, the sub human lower races. He goes as far as to pour Tora a beer and, while completely ignoring the other heroes, invites Tora to a local brothel tonight! "Are you married? Do you want to go to a good brothel?" But Tora respectfully refuses.

The shield will be ready the next day, and they leave Helmut.

They notice that Keith de Lalune was right, there are much more falkovnian in the streets, as well as beer gardens now advertising falkovnian food.

They eat in one tavern and keep an ear open for rumours, but there is nothing more. They understand that Invidians now see the falkovnian occupation as some kind of protection against a war, and that all those troops in Karina are good for business.

2 pm. They look for Montarri but they do not find her.

Exigu goes in the woods and finds another dog (animal companion) to replace Patu II (who dies by Aisa's *cloudkill*). The other PCs join him and they spend a quiet night in the woods. Macrazbunare makes some *goodberries*.

April 19th, 748

They go at Keith's church and find the fat priest talking with Varadan, around a coffee. The priest is relieved that all went well (*DM note: there is always a risk with these spells ;)*)

The human heroes go at Helmut's shop to get the shield, and Tora is the new owner of a red heavy shield, with an large falkovnian eagle painted on it. There is an heavy coat of varnish protecting the paint.

Helmut tell Tora that he should have to the brothel with Helmut and his friends. The heroes' eyes open when Helmut tells that you should have been there: "In the brothel, there was that cute elf lady in one of the cells, but she didn't want to be nice. She got the beating she deserved and then we used her two or three times each. We had barovian palenka for drinks, that was fun, we had quite a laugh, my friend, you should have been there with us! You missed something!"

The heroes have a hard time keeping their emotions hidden, and they think that this disgusting armourer should be next on their hit list, and wonder if they should investigate this brothel.

10h00 am. The heroes regroup and they get to the Abbey by horse. They explore the rooms they haven't seen yet. They see that the guard's charm wore off and they fee them. The guards go back to Karina, confused.

The first room is an a ossuary. Carved stone columns resembling Hala as an angel with outstretched wings supporting the ceiling. Traces in the duste were made by a woman's shoe, less then a month old. Decayed bones of the ancient monks and half-rotten burial shrouds spill out of ten five-footwide alcoves in the chamber's walls, like if someone searched the room for something (the sisters?).

Elsewhere, another ossuary, but empty of bones. But the heroes find four metal cages, each containing one person! Two woman, one boy (10 year old) and a man. The heroes notice that all these persons bears the tell-tale marks of repeated vampire feeding!

One woman explains she was abducted on the main road, by guards. There she was kept in this cage, in the dark, and something entered the cage once in a while, to bite her neck. The other woman (sister of the boy) have a similar story. They think it might be a large bat.

The heroes understand they were Aisa's pantry stock. The woman are afraid of the man in the cage, saying he is deranged: he keeps talking to himself, mumbling sinister things. The heroes wonder if one of them is a vampire, but they can see everybody's reflection in a mirror. They free the prisoners, who are very weak.

They bring the prisoners to the kitchen on the main floor, and tell them to feed and wait.

One woman say they heard weird noises, like sinister chants, many days ago (they do not know how much time since they were completely in the dark). But something kept biting her once in a while, in the dark ...

The man looks like a fighter mercenary hired by the sisters. He is obviously insane, but he follows the others when asked to. Tora speaks to him and he starts whispering...

"The mad monk! ... He is coming back!... the mad monk ... Tar-Baphon is getting nearer!"

The heroes try to recall where have they learned this name... It was in Petros Lorrimer's notes on the Whispering Way! Tar-Baphon is the Lich Tyrant, that the Whispering Way is trying to revive!

They listen more closely to the man: "The evil! ... He is the most evil! ... He was gone! ... To another universe! ... but this was not enough for Tar-Baphon! The evil ! ... He was cruel and evil in this new world.... and it worked, he is back in the mists! ... The evil! ... So near ! The door will soon open to let him come back here ... The evil monk! Then he will get all his powers back ! ... Tar-Baphon will get back on his throne!... He will rule everything! ... So near!"

They let the former prisoners upstairs, and instruct the women to keep an eye on the insane man. They resume their exploration of the underground level.

There are four doors in the pentagram room (where the battle with Aisa happened). From the central pentagram, heavy with blood stains, a line of blood leads to a door. They open this door: it leads to a corridor, with a heavy stench of rotting meat.

They open the others. In a former wine rack, they notice scribbling on the walls...



The handwriting is the same as Aisa's (from the papers in Hetna's lab). The heroes think Aisa wanted to convert Hetna to vampirism?

There are many blood drops on the floor. Another room is a former wine rack, but it is empty.

In another, a heavy wooden chest, reinforced with iron bars. It is protected by a *fire trap* spell, which strikes Exigu. In it, they find two mummified



hands, linked by a velvet ribbon, like if the hands were praying. The heroes think those could be the stolen Morninglord relics of the *Hands of the Healer*!

Petrak casts *detect magic*, and it is outstanding! Petrak never detected something that strong!

The heroes return to the first door, and Varadan is sick from the heavy rotting stench. They find many opened coffins, piled on top of each other. They are filled with blood and meaty chunks. Two bloody machetes lie on the floor.

DM note: the Whispering way constructed a skull with bones and body parts. That is a step in their complicated ritual to bring back Tar-Baphon. Then they moved the skull by boat to a place close to Hunadora. They used the Hands relic and that is why they were left behind by the WW.

Following the bloody trail going outside, they find a storeroom, with empty (and clean) coffins.

Later, a cavern has luminous lichen that illuminates this natural cave. On the other side, they see the light from outside at the end of a short corridor.

While they are searching this room, they see six zombies entering the cavern. Their mouth and cheeks shows many sinister blood stains. (*image: The Walking Dead, monster stats: borrowed in part from Plague Zombie, in Pathfinder Classic Horror revisited*)



Macrazbunare cast *disrupt undead*. Varadan moves in the cavern, and the zombies surround him. Petrak casts *prayer*, and Kendra *magic missile*. Tora and Varadan hit the shambling monsters.

The zombies hit Varadan and Tora. Macrazbunare and Kendra cast *magic missile*.

At this point, another zombie-like monster appear behind the group ... and it casts a spell! It has magical flames floating over it (the arcane heroes identify it as *fire shield*). The spell the monster cast is a sinister globe of dark hellish fires!

DM note: this NPC is Cephal Lorentus, Wiz 8, from PF #33 (The Varnhold Vanishing).

DM campaign note: these Ravenloft heroes do not know the fireball spell. I banished from my campaign these three spells: fly, continual flame and fireball, as being too much on the fantasy side.

It is very easy to use fly and run away, or enter a keep from the top, ruining a DM's plan and game sequence.

Continual Flame? How can you make creepy description of something slithering in the dark and the shadows when a PC can say "Boring. I open continual flame, what do I see?" and ruin the atmosphere you are trying to create! Ungothic spell. The darkness is just too deep on this plane.



And fireball? A wizard with lightning bolt and fireball doesn't take something else on their third level list, when a battle is to be expected. I wanted my PCs to use their brain and do something else. OK, then how is it that this NPC had a fireball? It's my mistake as I took this NPC from Pathfinder and the spell slipped through my filters.

So I gave the spell an evil descriptor, as it opens a glimpse to a hellish plane. On the other side, to be fair with the players, it will be extremely uncommon that a NPC will throw a fireball at them.

Other banished spells from my campaign? Stonekin, among others!

Varadan falls on the floor (-1)! Macrazbunare casts a healing spell on Varadan, who tumbles to exit the zombie area. Austizel casts an *empowered magic missile* on the spelling zombie. Kendra cast the same spell on this creature.

At this point, all the first zombies are destroyed, either by the PC or by the hellish ball of fire.

Tora does self healing (lay on hand) and moves toward the new creature.

The creature casts another of these dark balls of fire. Varadan again falls, at -9! (*DM note: the player missed both fireball save*). Macrazbunare again heals the monk. Austizel and Petrak also cast healing spells. Kendra casts *shield* and she moves away from the creature.

The monster casts *magic missile* on a hero. Exigu throws three arrows at it. Kendra tries another *magic missile*. Then the monster casts *magic mirror* (there are 3 images).

Petrak moves and dispel an image with *spiritual weapon*. Kendra casts *magic missile* again and pops the remaining two images. The monster casts *magic missile* at Exigu. Then Macrazbunare replies with the same spell: the monster falls on the ground!

They use a magic detection spell and find a magical ring (abjuration). Exigu cuts the creature's head.

They go back to Karina, with the four freed persons, and leave the insane man to Keith de Lalune. The others thank the heroes and leave for their house in Karina.

They get a room at the Golden Fields Inn and rest until the next day.

April 20th, 748

They send their report to Clothilda Taroyan, through the Boritsi trade company (see session 43 and end of session 57)

The report is in annex of this session

They identify the magical ring as protection, +2.

They go back to the Abbey to explore the underground level with *detect magic* and *detect secret doors*. and Petrak cast *ethereal resonance* on the pentagram (where it looks something was constructed with bones, blood and meat). Petrak sees faces that hurl their pain, hammer breaking

bones and smells the odor of burning flesh. Petrak has a sudden weakness from this horrible sight, but he fights it off.

They find half a dozen secret door, in the ossuary (one of them leading to the well) and one in the cavern area (where the zombie caster was probably hidden). They explore the complex with a *detect secret door* and find nothing more.

Compte rendu d'activités pour la Boritsi Trading Co.

8 mars

We plan to get to Darkon leaving Mordentshire with the Black Pelican.

We meet a passenger named Viktor Hazan.

10 mars

Arrival à Martira Bay, Darkon

We meet a young woman, Kendra and Petros Lorrimer, her father.

Petros Lorimor is a well known archeologist and a retired archeology teacher from Martira Bay's university. He is about 70 years old, and in good physical shape. He knows Van Richten well.

11 mars

Virevan was seen walking in the inn corridor in lycanthrope hybrid shape! He Killed a young woman.

We handed Virevan to the local police. We met Lady Kazandra, exiting the police station, accompanied by four more guards. She was dressed in black and red velvet, and she wears a eye patch. She asks the guards to take Virevan inside. She is the head of the Martira Bay police force, she is bright, and extremely competent. Some of the cities have seen chaos when it was found that Azalin was dead, but not Martira Bay. She always has many guards with her for her protection.

Police told us later that Virevan tried to get away and had to be killed as he was transforming. We were told that his body had been cremated.

14 au 20 mars

We saw Viktor Hazan discussing with a young man, Aurélien Vrood, who was once Hazan's student at the Martira Bay University. But Vrood turned his magic focus on necromancy. Vrood seems to be a member of some evil organization, the Whispering Way. A statue has been stolen at the Martira Bay university. It's called the Souragne effigy. We think Vrood is linked in this.

We went to Grine's industry, a chemical shop, after hearing about the quality of their products and of a possible connection to Vrood. Later we found that Vorkstag and Grine, the chemical shop owners, were body snatchers, trafficking in body parts all over the world. We dismantled their traffic. Grines was killed but Vorkstag has disappeared.

17 mars

Tora Vimus, a friend of Petros Lorrimer, joined the team having been informed that the team recently lost a member. His vocation was inspired by Van Richten, who hired him in 740.

21 mars au 1er avril

We went to Petros Lorrimer's house and found out that Petros had been killed while investigating Harrowstone, a prison in ruins.

We fought against ghosts in the Harrowstone Jail. It seems that this situation was a result of the Whispering Way. Vrood and Vorstag were seen in Harrowstone.

2 au 5 avril

Ship from Martira Bay to Mordentshire.

Two spies, possibly from Lady Kazandra, watch us as we board the ship. Lady Kazandra seems to be very powerful.

6 avril

We arrive in Mordentshire.

Tora was raised by James Martigan of the Ezra church.

We visited Van Richten.

We were led to the cemetery by a man named Clanartus to investigate something weird. It was a trap but we won the battle against the Whispering Way's assassins.

13 avril

Arrival in Kresk to investigate about the Red Vardo Traders who could be a competitor to the Boritsi Trading Co. The leader of that group, Mme Montarri, seems to be extremely wealthy. We hear rumors that profit isn't what she is after. She apparently lives under a Vistani curse.

We hear that Maloccio is a prisoner in his own lands. He can't leave his province. He is a dukkar.

We also learned about a theft at Morninglord's church. Sacred relics were stolen, among them a chalice and the mummified Hands of the Healer.

Mme Montari said also that some followers of the Whispering Way are now crafting some kind of skull made with the bones of a hundred slain innocents and that they negotiated a contract on Tara Kolyana's head, but then Vorkstag said it could wait.

16 avril

We went to Karina in order to stop the Whispering Way's plans.

We heard that Maloccio is gathering troupes, including many Falkovian militia, to attack Hunadora. It seems it's a question of weeks, perhaps days. Maloccio's war against the Vistani is also bringing him trouble with his neighbour to the South, Sithicus.

There is also a rumour that Lord Gundar is back. He was supposedly seen on the roads of Invidia, between Karina and Hunadora.

A rich woman, Mme Calivasso produces excellent wine which sells out quickly. Maybe there is a deal for the Boritsi Trading Co.

There are more and more Falkovnians in Karina: they were about 150 few months ago, now their number is close to 800!

Something happened in Verbrek recently. Tribes of werewolves are tearing each other apart.

FIN DU RAPPORT

GAME SESSION SIXTY THREE: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 9

(played April 6th, 2014. JF plays Austizel)

April 20th, 748, 2 pm

The heroes depart for Curriculo. At the port, they enquire about a possible sighting of the Whispering Way crew - none remembers seeing it. They also notice that more Falkovnians dwell in this city now. They stop at the Plowshare Inn, at night. There, they spot a man hidden by a cloak. He was quietly waiting in a corner.

However, he seems to get nervous when he sees the heroes enter the tavern. He walks toward the heroes and say to the cleric "Petrak, come outside"!

Petrak follows the man to an alley (followed by Tora for Petrak's safety) where he shows his face briefly. He is Vincenzo! Madame Eva's tribe's captain! (see session 8). He is of course hiding as being a vistani in Karina won't make you very popular with authorities.

"I'm so relieved to find you here. We need your help. One of ours, Gitana, 17 of age, was kidnapped by ogres and brought to Curriculo. Maloccio gives 100 gp for every vistani, dead or alive! We know the ogres sold her to the Falkovnians."

Petrak remembers Gitana, the young vistani dancer who danced with Exigu.

"They have an advance of about 24 hours", Vincenzo adds. Petrak agrees to help and find the girl's trace in Curriculo.

Petrak asks if Mme Eva received Rozaleen's tarokka deck, that they sent by vistani messengers while they were in Martira Bay (see session 45). "Yes", nods Vincenzo.

The heroes check the town's taverns and in one of them, the Lady's Veil, they spot a group, very inebriated, of three Falkovnians and one ogre. The heroes get to a nearby table. The drunken group talk about a soon to be "Grand Falkovnia". Then the heroes are lucky, they are able to make them talk. They understand the girl wasn't delivered to Maloccio, but sent to a place called the "Parlour" in Karina.

"We will have our fun with her, and deliver her to Maloccio for the bounty only when she will be good for nothing, and that should be about a week...", says one of the nasty Falkovnian, laughing like a pig. This Parlour seems to be the brothel where Helmut the armourer invited Tora.

Vincenzo and the heroes are horrified about the girl's fate. They plan to save her this very night! They take the next ferry and arrive at 11h15 at Karina's gate. The gates closed 15 minutes ago but a bribe of 5 gp by a hooded Vincenzo opens the gate, without questions.

They enter the Falkovnian enclave by night... They need to know quickly where is this "Parlour" place. The humans in the group enter a smoky bar called the Iron Cross. Many falkovnians are there. They cheer when they see Tora's shield (with the Falkovnian Eagle).



A wench sits on Tora's lap. "What it will be for you and your friends?", she asks. Tora asks here about the Parlour. "Oh, *that* is what you need. Go at 193 Purety Street. Ask for my friend Landa, she will be kind to you if you say you were sent by me. And don't forget to knock four times."

This address is uncomfortably close to a public square, in the middle of the Falkovnian enclave. The square is well lighted by torches, and full of cheering Falkovnians (about 60). They cheer at three impaled men, slowly descending in agony on a wooden pike, while their innards gets stuck on the wooden pole...

The heroes pass around the building called the Parlour. It is a two floors sturdy military type construction, in that the walls are solid and the windows few, all barred by wood panels.

While they check on the building, Austizel notices in horror that one of the impaled men just received an *healing* spell from an evil priest, to make him suffer longer!

Varadan climbs on the building, and do not find any entrance on the roof. One window is opened, and he sees two clients exiting the rooms section. Horrified, he sees a little boy, may be five years old, asleep, held in a cage... A woman standing at a desk in the middle of the room quietly resumes her reading. There is only one entrance to this building.

Tora and Varadan decide to enter through the main door, posing as clients. After four knocks at the door, it opens, by someone they do not see (hiding behind the door). The room is guarded by two guards, who are not extremely vigilant.

A flamboyant woman appear, dressed in green. "I am Madame Carole, please follow me and all your filthy little boy dreams will be answered."

She leads the two to a red velvet salon, with very low light. There are two clients, alone in their corner, and a group of three Falkovnians drinking beer. There are four girls in the room, scantily dressed, and one of them comes to Tora and Vadaran. She ask what are they drinking and she gets two beer at a bar counter. At this bar, Varadan recognize one of them as one of the barmaids working at the Dog Fight! (see session 8). But she does not really look at Varadan and he thinks she didn't identify him.



The prostitute is back at them with their drink, but they tell her Helmut sent them (the falkovnian armourer, session 62), and that he told them about something exotic, an elf?

"Oh," she says, mildly disgusted, "you have to ask Madame Carole for this kind of ... entertainment".

She leads them back to the first room and tells something at Madame Carole's ear, and she leaves.

"You are friends of Helmut?", Madame Carole says, "you should have told me before. Clara tells me you want something special? What kind of girl do you want? Or a little boy? Awoken or unconscious? Drugged? Chained? With a beating? With ..."

Varadan interrupts her horrible list of propositions. "No, just an elf woman".

"We have one," she smiles, "but she is a little bruised today. Your friend Helmut's group left her unfit for entertainment for at least a week. Something else would fit your exotic taste?"

"No elf?", pouts Varadan. He seems disappointed.

"Can a nicely fresh, untouched vistani girl satisfy you?", she asks. Tora answers positively. They pay her 20 gp each. She leads them through the red salon, and to a staircase to the second floor.

This room is empty except a desk and the cage with the little boy. The woman at the desk is extremely stern, and she wears a widows' veil.

Madame Carole introduce her to the heroes as "Madame Jolistina! She will take good care of you."

"Room 6", Madame Carole adds. And the two women exchange a questioning glance. Madame Carole nods.

April 21th, 748, midnight

Madame Jolistina gets up and take a set of keys in a drawer. They notice she has a bloody wooden club at her belt and a silver whistle at her neck. "Follow me", the stern woman say.

She opens a locked door that leads to a corridor of doors. They pass in front of some of the doors, one with heavy grunting and panting noise. She opens door number 6. She says "if she is trouble, or something goes wrong, call me," and she closes the door after them.

Inside the poorly light room, is a sordid unclean bed, with a young vistani girl sitting on it.

Just after the door was closed, she makes a quick gesture at Tora, with crooked fingers. Tora is paralysed! She just paralysed him with an *evil eye*!

Varadan whispers her to relax, calling her by her name, says that she has nothing to fear from them, and they are in fact sent by Vincenzo! She is visibly relieved. She says the *evil eye* effect won't last long. Indeed, before the minute has ended, Tora is free from the spell. However, she doesn't seem sorry for what she did to Tora.

She shows them the chain keeping her prisoner, and they use Grine's acid (session 49) to free her.



Suddenly, the door opens, and Helmut the falkovnian armourer is in the room! "Ah, my friend, you came! Madame Carole told me you were here!" He looks at the girl and says "and what have we selected here? Well this is nice!". Then he slaps her hard on the face! She tries *evil eye* at him, but it doesn't work. He sneers.

The heroes interfere, saying they would like to be alone, and they would perhaps share next time. After a moment, they convince him to leave the room. He leaves, disappointed.



They use again Grine's acid to cut the bars at Gitana window. Then they throw a rope down, and they descend to the street where the other heroes were waiting for them. They get on horses and leave. Gitana is riding with Vincenzo and she is also hidden by a cloak.

They hear a whistle in their back! Alarm! But they are able to reach the city gate safely, and they leave Karina.

At 3 pm, they take the ferry and they are back in Curriculo. But they do not stop there, and they ride two more hours toward Barovia. They sleep in the forest, about two hundred feet from the road. Gitana sleeps quickly.

Vincenzo is extremely relieved that Gitana was saved, and unharmed and he thanks the heroes. He offers them a meeting with Madame Eva.

At 8 am, Vincenzo awakes Petrak and Tora. "There were troops on the road at 6 am. About 20 of them. Falkovnians. But today is one of their Bleak Morning kind of holidays, we should be safe, they won't stay long on the road."

And he explains:

Bleak Morning is an unofficial day of mourning in Falkovnia. The dates remembered are those on which Vlad Drakov initiated attacks on Darkon, and horribly failed. Each day is regarded as a day of the dead, as almost every family in Falkovnia has lost at least one relative on the battlefields.

Drakov has forbidden his populace from any outward show of mourning on these days, as they remind him of his defeat. Most Falkovnians, however, hold short, somber sermons in the privacy of their homes or with families to venerate the dead, and pray, against all probability, that Vlad will not send their sons out to war again. (Kargatane's Book of Secrets)

At 11 am, they see the troop coming back toward Curriculo. They count 18 horsemen, three of them with heavy plate armours and lance, and three ogres on larger steeds.

At 2 pm, they take back the road and arrive safely in Zeidenburg, Barovia, at 7 pm. Vincenzo leads them to his vistani camp. The whole tribe hurl their joy at finding Gitana safe. Their shouts of ecstasy last a good five minutes. The heroes are offered the best wine and brandy the tribe can offer, as well as very tasty game plates.

Suddenly, they notice Madame Eva is right there, as if she just appeared in the middle of the crowd! The heroes find she looks much older than the last time they met her. Next to her is Marcella, the future raunie. They stare intensively at the heroes for a moment.

Madame Eva and Marcella go to them. They thanks them for saving Gitana. During the conversation she mentions that she knew what sad fate happened to Virevan.

The group introduce Kendra Lorrimer, and Eva tells her "I have traveled once with your father, he was a good man." The young girl is impressed, as her father probably told her who Madame Eva is.



Petrak asks her about the two tarokka decks sent to her by vistani messengers. Marcella answers that they received both. They kept Rozaleen, and the "witch Gabrielle Aderre's" was returned to her.

Petrak also asks Madame Eva about Jacqueline Montarri (after what they learned in session 58 - Montarri was cursed by Eva, after Montarri murdered the old raunie). "Yes, this woman Jacqueline Montarri belong to my past, if I can say. Be careful, she is much more ancient that what you can think just looking at her. We cursed her horribly - but justly - but she somehow manoeuvred through it to get wealthy. Very wealthy. But wealth isn't what she is after. She seeks a relief from our curse. Her basement should answer the questions you have about her. We do not plan to cease her curse, as seeing her suffer highly is extremely enjoyable... after what she did. But this is a very evil woman. If she was to be eliminated, I wouldn't blink."

"Is she too powerful for us?", Petrak asks. "Over the years, Montarri became very good at showing off", the raunie answers with a smile.

She knows few about the Whispering Way.

Petrak asks her if she can do something about his defective charisma, after he was hit by Wilfred Godefroy's cane (session 30). She nods. "I was expecting this. Come back in three days."

She adds, "also, your friend Raul should arrive in a days." She offers the heroes a place to sleep for the night.

Then it is story time around the fire for the vistani and Gitana tells a tale of freedom for her people. She seems very defiant after what could have happened to her, and they hear other vistani talking about her inner strenght.

Meanwhile, Marcella and Vincenzo talk in private to Petrak. "What are your plans with the Hands of the Dawn Healer? You can't forget these can cure lycanthropy? Are you waiting for Varadan to turn evil like Virevan? They all do! He's not safe! You have the tools to heal him." Petrak say he will think about it.

Petrak says to Vincenzo he noticed Mme Eva looks much older then the last time they saw her. Vincenzo is suprised, and his feeling on that matter is that for him Mme Eva never changes.

April 22nd, 748, 6 am

The heroes awoken, but the vistani are still asleep.

They get back on the road, toward Hunadora this time. On the road between the main Barovia - Curriculo road and Hunadora, they are stopped by nervous gundarakites. They ask them for the password, then the previous password. They do not know the answer to the last one.

What is your business here? *We want to talk to our friend Ardonk.*

What is Ardonk's complete name? *Ardonk Szerieza*

What is the name of Ardonk's sister? *Ethelild*

What is her trade? *Cleric*

What is her faith? *The Morninglord*

At Tora: Why do you wear a Falkovnian shield? Are you falkovnian? *No! We bought it in Karina.*

After more questions, they relax. "We're sorry, something happened at Hunadora and they told us to control more who come and goes. Don't ask us, we do not know what happened there, but the person above us are in a very bad mood."

They resume their trip toward Hunadora. They notice the forest thins out at the approach of the fortress, and the trees are dead, like if the very ground was corrupted and could not feed life anymore.



They finally arrive in front of Hunadora. The castle itself sits on top of a small hill, and this hill is surrounded by a tall stone wall, enclosing also a large part of flat land. This stone wall is again surrounded by a large moat, filled with dark, stagnant water. The only drawbridge to cross the moat is half in the air.

They notice that many dead trees around the moat were cut down in recent weeks, in a defensive maneuver.

The castle itself had four towers at each corner, but they all crumbled, except one, only partially crumbled.



They walk toward the drawbridge, and they recognize there one of the gundarakite as Hobert Mannon (the ranger mentor of Exigu). While the drawbridge is lowered, the heroes notice many creatures in the moat, slithering just under the dark surface. They remember these creatures are rumored to be leftovers from Medraut's necromantic experiments, or things that fled his laboratory, but thankfully none of them crawled out of the moat. So far.

Inside, the heroes see many tents. One of them is larger, and in front of it stands a shiny black horse carriage they saw before, Gabrielle Aderre's!

The heroes meet Ardonk, Ethelild, Mannon, Matton Blanchard and Betriu Vich (the son of Sako Vich, who is proud to tell the heroes his trade is now ranger (session 2)).

They notice Matton and Ardonk are somehow fighting verbally as to who will be presented as Gabrielle Aderre's representative.

But the greetings are kept short, and Ardonk leads the heroes inside the castle. He explains that one night, three days ago, a group of persons entered the basement level of the castle. We do not know anything about them as the two people who saw them were killed by club hits, and possibly poison too. These invaders magically locked the door after them, after drawing something on the door, a skull head. It frightens the guards and nobody wants to get down there.

Ardonk explains he is fully in charge of all the guards here, except Matton's troops, who only answers to him. "Gabrielle, ... Madame Aderre gave me all powers here. She is very preoccupied by her pregnancy. It shows already, you know."

He warns the heroes that Hunadora is not fully explored by the rebels, because of many deadly traps from the Gundar era.

Ardonk opens the castle's main door and leads the heroes inside a grand hall (room #1). A large and dusty grand hall, with a ceiling about 80 feet high, to intimidate visitors. There are large stained glass windows, dusty but mostly unbroken.



It is now a meeting room for the militia, with maps of the area and of Karina on the walls.

They also see two disabled traps: a large piece of stone fell from the ceiling to kill a man (its skeleton is partly seen under the block on the floor), and the northern stair leading to the balcony has collapsed on a pitfall with (bloodied) pike trap.

Ardonk says that it's in this hall that the spiked skeleton of Nharov Gundar was discovered by Gabrielle and her loyal troops.

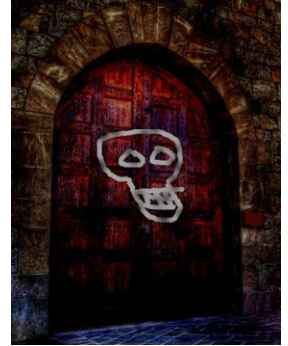
He then moves to the next room (#2 on the map). Its previous use isn't obvious but it is now used as a barrack, with armoury and prison cages (empty). A pitfall trap with spikes has been disabled, and is opened (evidently serve as a torture device by the gundarakite).

Ardonk leads them to a set of stairs to underground level, and shows them the drawing on the door. The door is made of wood and metal.

Detect magic? Yes, abjuration. Like arcane lock.

They decide to destroy the door, with four heavy blows with a mace. The process is however noisy.

Ardonk tells them he was told the basement's corridor is like that of a race track, some kind of circle.



Kendra will stay upstairs, as she feels she isn't powerful enough to fight the cultists. But she hopes the heroes will punish those responsible for her father's death.

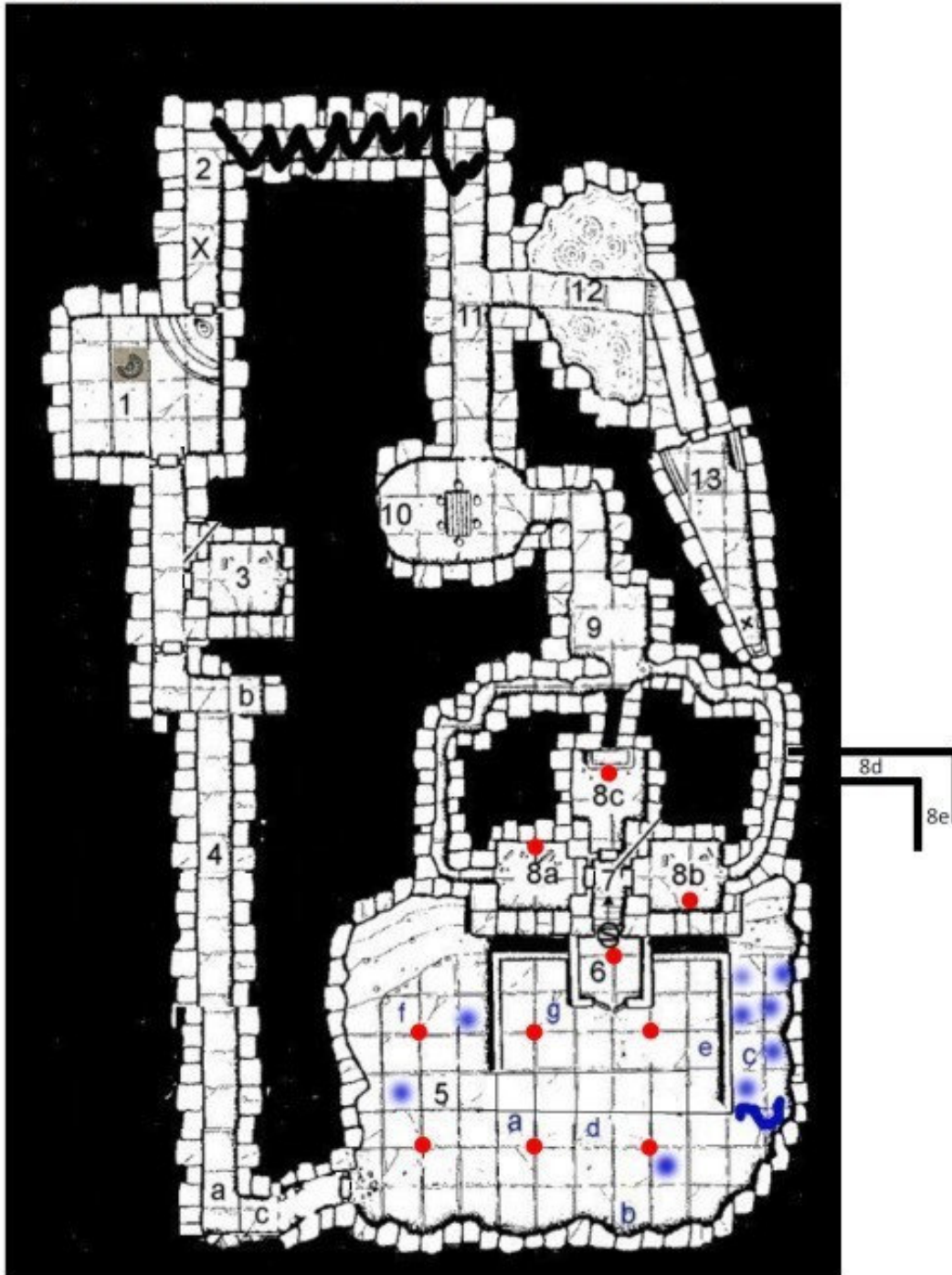
They descend a 60 feet spiral staircase, and get to a room (U1 on the DM's map) where another skull was drawn at the bottom of the staircase. There are traces in the dust: gundarakite guards coming down to check (before the door was locked), and more recently, of 9 people walking to the north (to area U2)!

They enter the corridor and see a trap with a giant axe that was recently activated. It killed a woman dressed in black, and her lower jaw dissolved. So she was with the Whispering Way! Nothing of value is found on her corpse.

They continue, but find the corridor had collapsed very recently. The heroes have no choice but to move the other way to get to the cultists, through the unexplored basement...

DM Map (from a map suggested by Julien aka kottakinge, which I expanded for my own game)

Underground level: (1 square = 5 feet) (name of rooms starts with U)



● : globes of light (cf sparks of treachery U8c)

GAME SESSION SIXTY FOUR: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 10

(played May 4th, 2014. JF plays Austizel and Martin plays Exigu)

April 23rd, 748, 11h30 am

They resume their exploration of the basement. They ignore a door (to U3), and follow a corridor where Exigu finds a trap (U4b). Suddenly they see three archer skeletons at the other end of the corridor (U4a), but they recognize them as illusions.

Later, Varadan falls into a trap on the floor! (U4c). The trap closes after swallowing Varadan. The other heroes manage to reopen the trap, but it leads to a corridor going down with an angle of 45 degrees. Then this corridor narrows to a point where a human wouldn't pass, but Varadan is nowhere in sight.

DM note - fun reduce and teleport trap in a maze.

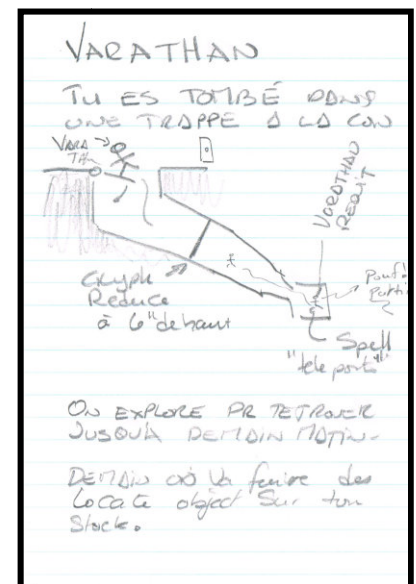
They call for Varadan, no answer. They *detect magic* in this corridor: yes, faint transmutation.

Meanwhile, Varadan (who doesn't realize what happened) finds himself in an eerie, dusty corridor of 30 feet high. It is like some kind of canyon, and the ceiling is much higher than the 30 feet walls. Varadan hears the noise of something flying, somewhere far in the air. He lights a torch, and finds the dusty skeleton of 6 foot long rat! He sees a gigantic bat, 60' wide, passing over the canyon where he stands! He takes a grapple and uses it to climb over the wall. While doing so, he finds the dungeon walls are like made of wood and covered with stucco? Now on the top of the wall, he finds he is at the center of a very large labyrinth, at least 250 feet in all directions. Further away from the labyrinth is a strange void.

Meanwhile, Exigu descends in the trapped corridor, while attached to a rope. Suddenly, he is reduced to a mere 4 inches! It is *reduce*. He reattaches himself and resume his descent toward the end of the corridor. Petrak casts *detect magic* and checks the bottom of the corridor: moderate conjuration.

Meanwhile, Varadan examine the labyrinth, from the top, and do not see an exit. He goes back to the bottom, and walks toward an area where he saw some kind of sliding portcullis. While doing so, he feels the earth trembling! He gets to the sliding gate, and sees a human skeleton. Again, it is very old and dusty. The gate doesn't have any mechanism, it appears to slide between to slides of metal. Varadan checks the skeleton: just rotten and dusty clothes, and a rusted short sword. Its leg appears to have been gnawed by a giant rat. He gets to the top of the wall again, to try to slide the portcullis, but it's stuck.

Meanwhile, the other heroes now understand the trap: *reduce* and *teleport*. They decide to sent Varadan a message attached to a turtle (*summon nature's ally*). The message explains the trap and tell him that they'll explore the rest of the basement to find him.



They open the next door, and find a laboratory, Medraut's laboratory! This is a very creepy place. It is lighted by some kind of metallic balls suspended in the air by chains (magical light appear when they open the door).

From the ceiling also hangs skeletons, and a few fresh bodies! Also in the air, half a dozen bat skeleton fly endlessly.

The ground is very dusty, as if nobody passed through the room since at least 20 years. Some small traces in the dust (rats?) Through the dust, the heroes can see many faded circle of demon summoning...



The room is filled with working tables, at least 20 of them, filled with dusty glass apparatus and other dusty things. On a table far from them, something moves...

One of these working table is some kind of labyrinth, and they see a miniature Varadan waving at them!

Tora's *detect undead* sees as many as 7 auras, all faint.

Austizel's *detect magic* sees 15 auras, mostly necromantics, of all strenght. Of them, the 7 globes of light and three chains hanging from the ceiling. A labyrinth (not the one where they found Varadan) is magical (moderate enchantment, transmutation). On other tables, other auras. A table shows a strong aura of necromancy. A confining table is also magic (moderate necromancy).

Petrak attacks a flying undead bat with a sling bullet, and it shatters in pieces. The bullet falls back on a table where it noisily shatter glasses.

Then a door opens and a monster crawls toward the heroes! It is necromantic, made from various creatures stitched at unnatural places.

Macrazbunare sends a *magic missile*: no effect! Austizel tries *shackle*: no effect! Tora attacks it with his sword. The golem releases a stench fouler then a mass grave. Macrazbunare is sick. He *summons nature's ally*: brown bears. Austizel is also sickened by the stench. His arrow strikes the creature. Petrak misses with his sword. The golem punches his two fists on Tora, who needs to retreat soon after. The brown bear attack the monster.



During the battle, from the top of the labyrinth, Varadan sees movement in a second labyrinth?

The monster strikes Petrak, while Macrazbunare heals Tora. Petrak hits the golem, but it hits back hard (critical hit). Meanwhile, Austizel and the bear fight the monster. Tora is back after a *lay on hand* and his first blow destroys the monster!

From where they are now, they now see the bloodied and fresh corpse of a woman, on a butcher's rack.

Petrak moves around the monster and is suddenly stopped in his tracks, as his head, cleanly decapitated, falls to the floor!

DM note: Headhunter's web are really deadly! I took the players apart and made him read DoD, and I told him I have a critical hit ... so do not roll 10! Guess what, he did! Dead! that was unexpected as it was the first encounter with a web, and zap, Petrak is dead.

Austizel cast *insight* and sees better all razor web area. He notice they break easily with his blade. He retrieves Petrak's head and mini-Varadan. In the labyrinth where Varadan saw movement, Austizel sees old and ugly straw dolls, and dead rat skeletons.

At noon, Varadan and Exigu retrieve their normal size.

The exit the basement. Ardonk is horrified to see Petrak decapitated. Ethelild offers to use the Hands of the Healer to do a *miracle*. She is from the same faith as the hands (Morninglord).

They see Gabrielle from afar, walking with her hand on her belly.

They rest until the next day.

April 24th, 748

In a sober ceremony, at the first light of the sun, Ethelild Szerieza uses the artifact to perform a miracle on Petrak. She offers to keep the hand and bring them back to Krezk's church when this adventure is finished.

7 am, they are back downstairs. In the laboratory, Tora is hurt by another razor web (-9 hp), in a place where they walked yesterday! They wonder if it is the thing Varadan heard while he was reduced in the maze?

They kill the five remaining undead bats and secure the place from webs.

Looking at the second maze, they realize it is more or less a map of the basement level! And there are six dolls (six PCs) and two rats (two animal companions). They think the maze is a replica of the basement, it is also showing its residents! They check on the Whispering Way and see five straw dolls and three dead rats! They make some test and find the maze is low to react and adjust the position of its residents (about 5 to 10 minutes). Maybe Medraut was able to make it work quicker?

In a glass dollhouse, 3 miniature human skeletons, dusty.

Austizel cast *insight* and sees better all razor web area.

Behind a blue curtain, they see bodies hanging in the air? Austizel's *detect magic*, nothing.

They hear something small moving in the dust.

DM call: initiative!

GAME SESSION SIXTY FIVE: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 11

(played Nov 2, 2014. JF plays Austizel)

April 24th, 748, 8h am

DM call: initiative!

The group hear scattering noises, like those of rats, in the far end of the room. They move toward it and cast protection spells.

Macrazbunare feels an attempt to control his mind (*suggestion*), but he is able to fight it.

Tora tries his *ghostsight* ability in Medraut's laboratory, and that is a mistake. He sees many pitiful spirits flying randomly in the room, and they all seem in fear, and somewhat broken... Some of them have faces screaming in pain... while they are followed by bits of broken bones, plat of blood and shards of glass... their red color is pulsating and extremely repulsive to look at... like that of diseased flesh or tortured flesh ...

Meanwhile, two ugly spider creatures with human heads appear from under a table and they spit poison at Exigu! They miss. Austizel cast *magic missile* at them and they are quickly destroyed.

Varadan spots something in a far corner that could be a nest for these creatures. It is made of dried clothings and fabrics.



Macrazbunare feels another attempt to control his mind (*suggestion* again), but he is again able to fight it. What is doing this since the spiders are dead? Something in the nest? He casts *dancing light* to see the nest better.

Tora is horrified by the ghost sight and is stuck by rage! He screams he wants to destroy this place and overthrows a table filled with laboratory things! With a loud noise, many bottles and glass tubes shatter on the ground, mixing on the ground, and there are powders and shards flying around the table and Tora!

Meanwhile Austizel spots that something is moving in a large bottle... on a table next to Macrazbunare!

Petrak tears off the curtains hiding the nest and Varadan throws an oil flask at it. They see the dry nest is burning quickly, and three spider-like creatures twisting in pain and burning.

The bottle where Austizel spotted movement explodes, spraying acid to Macrazbunare and his wolf, and something small and hideous attacks Macrazbunare! It is like a fetus preserved in alcohol but its small mouth is snapping! It is grabbing Macrazbunare's clothing and it tries to viciously bite the druid's neck!

Exigu throws an arrow at the creature but it hurts Macrazbunare too. Macrazbunare cast *magic missile* at the thing but it is still trying to bite!



Tora then overthrows another table, also filled with laboratory things! Among the broken things, one of them contains a human head whose mouth is endlessly and noisily trying to bite something... This is becoming dangerous!

Austizel casts *Shackle* at Tora and the thing grabbing Macrazbunare is destroyed. It dissolves into a repulsive puddle of green fleshy goo.

DM note: it was supposed to be a simple battle against a few Head Hunters but there is something else in the room (a pickled punk PF Bestiary 4), a missed horror check, and chaos ensued! The biting head in the jar was a zombie's (Walking Dead idea).

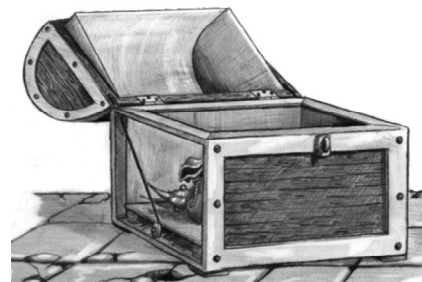
I love to pace battles like this, adding things in fast pace, like if the situation was aggravating every second, putting a lot of pressure for the players to keep on. Fun!

They cast *detect magic* and carefully explore the laboratory. On a table overthrown by Tora, a large sack is bloodied with fresh blood! They open it and see an axe (strong necromantic aura). They carry it in order to identify it later.

DM note: Vampiric Axe (RLDMG)

Another magic item is a three inch glass cube, with undulating tentacles inside? (moderate transmutation). They carry it. *DM note: Tentacle aquarium (RLDMG)*

A wooden chest also radiates magic (faint, necromancy). Exigu detects a trap on the lock but it is easily neutralized. He opens it. The chest contains a small mahogany box. He was going to reach for it when he felt something is wrong. The chest was double trapped! Removing the box triggers a vicious finger cutting trap that springs from the lid of the chest!



DM note: Fool me twice trap (Legends and Lair - Traps and Treachery I, a cool book for evil traps!)

The mahogany box is without trap and contains a magic ivory needle. They take it.

DM note: Taxidermy Needle (RLDMG)

Another item is a restraining table, used by anatomists seeking to operate (or torture perhaps) people (moderate necromancy). The table includes solid, iron constraints designed to hold down the strongest of men. There are many dried blood marks on it. It is a large item so they leave it there.

DM note: restraining table of strength draining, making victims helpless while they get dissected

Another magic aura comes from a large iron butcher rack (moderate necromancy), but it bears the body of what appears to be a freshly slain young woman, with her throat slit and blood slowly dripping... They check her pulse but she is dead. They remove the body from the rack and after a few minutes it stops bleeding.

DM note: Repose rack (RLDMG)

They decide to carry on exploration and cast cure spells.

Suddenly, they hear a loud explosion noise, followed by the collapse of rocks! The floor shook too. They guess the center of the explosion is less than a hundred feet from where they stand.

(DM note: I made an explosion and rock collapse mp3 track for this)

They quickly resume their exploration toward the explosion site. They find three cold rooms, where bodies are kept. They all have water in them, about a foot when they test it with a pole. Each is lighted by a golden globe of light that shines when they open the door (similar to those in the laboratory).

They each carry body pieces (humans, humanoids, cows). One has a metal throne where a skeleton is kept there by retraining metal pieces. It bears a long white beard. It is magic (moderate, necromancy).

DM note: evil item inspired by the RL novels. Pikes of metal passes through the victims body, but the magic keeps him alive, making the torture endless. This person was forgotten there and actually dies of old age! They didn't check it as they were in a hurry.

I had a trap planned for one of the rooms (Sparks of Treachery, from the same trap book) but they didn't explore it.

Varadan checked back on the magical maze, to see where the Whispering Way people are: but they are no longer in the complex (their dolls have vanished), but there are two new dolls at the entrance of the underground level!

They decide to check on these and find two frightened gundarakite guards they have already met. They explain that "there was a big explosion minutes ago, followed by screams in the main hall. We tried to get to the hall from the guard room after putting our armor, but the door between the barracks and the hall was locked! We didn't know what to do so we decided to brave the dangerous underground level to inform you of what was happening in the castle."

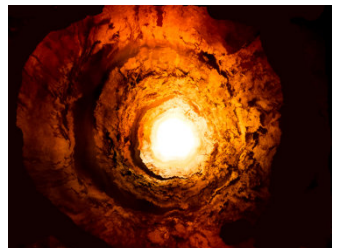
While the heroes hurries to the barracks, one of the guards tells them he heard Kendra scream in the Hall before the door was closed!

They run upstairs and they check the door to the main hall: it is magically locked (faint abjuration).

Macrazbunare listens through the door and hears something that sounds like an evil ritual chant going on! *(DM note: Ave Satani, from the Omen movie, great classic horror!)*

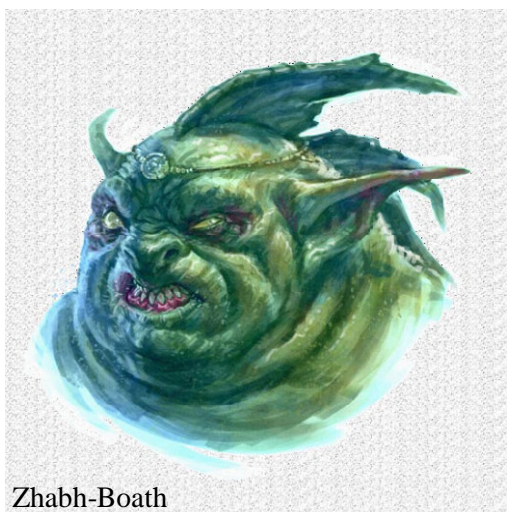
They cast *knock* on the door and Tora opens the door and moves in, to see the various features of the Hall under attack by the cultists! They see three zombies standing there, these are killed gundarakites! They spot a monk hiding behind one of the columns, and there are three wights near him.

At the opposite of the entrance, they see a magical rock tunnel opened above a large skeleton head (about 4 feet high)! It's a gate! The Whispering Way opened a gate! The skeleton head bears a gash like if an axe made a hole through the front. From that opening flows the gate! On the ground, in front of the head, a vial of Medraut's blood has been poured...



Near the gate are two people, one they recognize as Vrood! He appears changed since the last time they saw him, paler, closer to undeath perhaps ? ... There are spirit heads floating around him... (DM note: character from *Pathfinder Carrion Crown*)

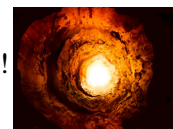
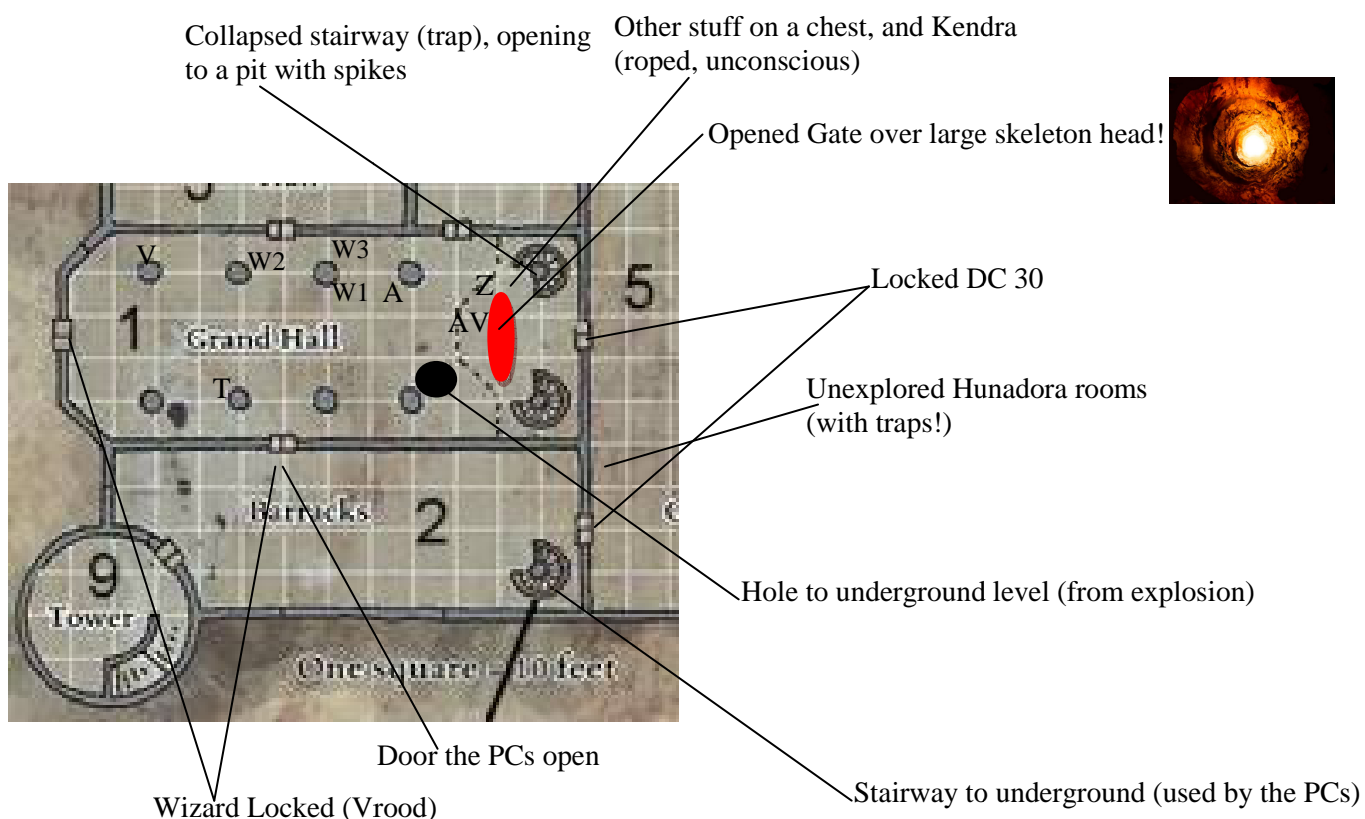
His companion is also a terrible sight, as it is a greenish half-fish half-man creature! This creature is the one chanting the evil ritual. (DM note: the infamous *Zhabh-Boath*, also borrowed from *Pathfinder Carrion Crown*)



Zhabh-Boath



Aurélien Vrood



A = Acrietia (wight monk), W123 = wights, Z = Zhabh-Boath, AV = Aurélien Vrood, T = Taylor, V = Vorkstag

DM note: this battle is the end of a long story arc, where the PCs ran after the Whispering Way in order to prevent the evil ritual to summon their legendary leader, Tar-Baphon. In short, the WW gathered many items to make this ritual and now have the blood of Medraut (made by the evil twin witches from a strand of Medraut's hair) to open a gate in Hunadora's hall (idea first seen in novel Knight of the Black Rose).

The idea was that the WW, through a combination of spells and items, were able to "tune" this portal to where they wanted: Tar-Baphon's soul location.

They will now attempt a ritual to summon this soul to Hunadora's hall ... Let's see how it goes :)

Varadan also enters the room after Tora and attacks the nearest zombie. The hidden monk moves and attacks. They see the monk is in fact a woman, and she is a wight! (*DM note: Acrietia, also a Carrion Crown NPC*). She attacks Tora - flurry of blows!

Macrazbunare sends a *magic missile* at Acrietia.

But Vrood then casts a spell, and a cloud of yellowish green vapors appear, that they know too well: a dangerous *cloudkill*! It separates the heroes in two group: those already inside the hall, and those who haven't entered yet.



Another cultist appears from behind a column: a large man, grinning, and he tries to stab Varadan in the back! His weapon has a sinister dark liquid coating it...

Meanwhile, the wights close on Tora and nearly surround him!

Austizel casts *Lightning bolt* and a wight and a zombie are destroyed.

Tora gives a smite evil at Acrietia but she seems very tough to kill. Varadan kills a wounded wight and then hurts the grinning assassin.

Vrood casts *magic missiles* at Tora.

Petrak casts *Spiritual Weapon* at Zhabh-Boath (but misses). They see the fishman look at Petrak with a cruel knowing smile. Is Zhabh-Boath a cleric too?

Another evil man appears from behind a column! This man is tall and very lean, and throws an acid bomb at Tora. Is it Vorkstag?

Then they hear a small voice, shouting near the collapsed gate: "free me, you ***** squid monster, or I will ***** find your ***** rectum and pull you inside out! ***** !"

DM note: this is the voice of a fey (Red Cap), Zail Zeenat, that the Whispering Way hold prisoner (they bought it from Montarri). This character holds one of the things the WW needs for their ritual, the soul of a changeling (Martha Ward, a NPC the PC have met - session 33. Martha had her sad soul removed by a kind fey, but that soul was stolen by Zail Zeenat).



RedCaps are extremely bad mouthed, so to play this character, I searched for a list of the meanest insults possible on the web, and the most vulgar too. So from now on, once in a while, he is going to shout mean and disgusting insults, especially later when the players will speak to him. No, I won't reproduce this list here :) And I'll use only the mildest ones in this journal. But the players were surprised and amused by the bad temper and foul mouth of this fey ;) I used a high pitch voice and it was a fun character to play :)

Tora is now near death so he uses *Lay on hands* on himself.

Zhabh-Boath then reaches for something heavy near him, and when he gets up, the heroes see he has Kendra in his arms! She is barely conscious. He smiles viciously and drops her in the gate! The heroes watches helplessly while they see Kendra falling in the gate! The fishman shouts at the heroes: "and the funniest thing is I don't even know where she is gone!"

Facing the gate, he shouts "Tar-Baphon, take this offering of soft flesh!"

Meanwhile, the combat continues and the *cloudkill* has passed and the other heroes stuck behind can help the first ones to enter the Hall. Macrazbunare sends a *Cure Moderate Wound* to Tora via his wolf. Seconds later, Vrood casts *magic missile* at Tora and the paladin falls to the ground! Petrak does a smithe power on Acrietia, but receives an acid bomb thrown by Vorkstag!

Austizel casts another *Lightning bolt* and a wight is destroyed. Vorkstag and Zhabh-Boath are hurt too. Exigu throws arrows at Taylor and Vorkstag.

Acrietia is now focusing on bringing Petrak down, but Macrazbunare kills her with a *magic missile*. He orders his wolf to pull Tora toward him. Vrood attacks Petrak with a *Vampiric touch* carried by one of the floating ghostly head.

Austizel casts a cure spell on Tora, who is back in battle.

Varadan is finally able to kill Taylor, who falls on the ground. Moments later, his lower jaw dissolves into an acidic foam (*DM note: a Whispering Way cult particularity, preventing speak with the dead*).

Marazbunare will then turn the odds of the battle, with two *Summoning Nature's Ally*: two wolves and one dire wolf. They attack Vrood and are able to trip him.

Vorkstag attacks Petrak. Exigu throws more arrows at Vorkstag, who looks more and more like a hedgehog!

Zhabh-Boath stops the casting of the ritual and casts *Flame Strike* on the wolves - and Vrood who isn't affected). Petrak sends a *Scorching Ray* at Zhabh-Boath.

Vorkstag drinks a potion of *Displacement* to avoid some of Exigu's arrows. Austizel casts *Magic Missile* to Zhabh-Boath, mais without effect!

Tora moves toward Vrood and hits him with Smite power: Vrood falls! Moments later, his lower jaw also dissolves. The heroes savour this moment!

Varadan gets closer to the fishman and sees an opened chest. He recognize a few items needed for the evil ritual: an ugly green squid headed statuette, a rack of blood vials similar to those they

found at the witches, some kind of crystal on a stand, and two or three sacks. He throws it in the collapsed staircase to prevent Zhabh-Boath from taking an item in it.

Near the chest stands a cage with a small fey in it "Hey, you! *****! Get me out of this ***** cage, you creepy old butt leakage!"

Macrazbunare casts *Magic Missile* to Vorkstag. The wolves move to surround Zhabh-Boath, mais then the fishman jumps in the gate! "Tar-Baphon, I am coming to free you!".

Petrak and Exigu finishes Vorkstag... and the place would be quiet (if not for Zail-Zeenat's insults).



DM note: 8 rounds only, but a very cool and rough battle :)

The battle is finished. From his cage, Zail-Zeenat resumes his insults and request that someone opens the cage...

They think they should close the gate. They use one of Vorkstag's acid vials to dissolve the blood in front of the skeleton head, but the gate remains open.

They cast detect magic on the Whispering Way members and loot them. They find Vrood's personal journal.

In brief, this is its content (*sent to the players by email before the next game*) :

Long discussions on how to become a lich. Some parts are missing to finish the ritual and he doesn't know what is missing, writes the "books are incomplete". Frustrations. He counts on asking his Master to give him this eternal life.

Is somewhat pathetic in his thoughts about his Master: Vrood is like a teenager talking about an impossible love, very idealized and filled with simplistic thoughts and wishful thinking made in his twisted mind.

Mentions of the Barovians on their trail, but he is confident that the two witches should destroy them swiftly.

At Hunadora, for the summoning, they will be only five: the necromancer Aurélien Vrood, the master planner of the operation, Vorkstag, Taylor - a junior and expandable member of the expedition (in case deadly risks should be taken, and which will be eliminated anyway at the end of the operation), the monk Acrietia for protection (and her three brothers she converted to wight), and this operation is led by the great Zhabh-Boath, priest of the sunken city of Xalot.

The Master is now close to our universe, in the body of a mad monk. He is once again the premier evil in this foreign world where his mind had been driven. So much so that Those Who Watches brought him back into the mists after a long exile. The Way believes He is on an island hidden in the mist?

It is thought the Master will gain his strength faster when He is in the presence of the items collected in the cabal of recent month: souls and heart to consume. This ritual will boost

his magical powers close to what they were in the days of His glory. Vrood dreams to see him rule the world. He will be proud of our actions to return Him to His glory. I hope He will try to become again an immortal lich, and I hope to finalize the process with Him ...

In this project, there are major opinion differences between Vrood and ZB. ZB insists on going in the gate to look for the mad monk. Others (including Vrood and Vorkstag) want to summon Tar-Baphon to Invidia through the gate. Both may be right, we do not know. We do not know if He will hear the calling through the gate, the writings about the ritual are not obvious. Otherwise, the Way will have to go in the gate to bring Him back.

The spells say there is no immediate danger on the other side of the gate.

The writings also say that in the lobby of the mad monk Cathedral, wherever it lies, blood vials from Medraut's should open a gate to the castle of Hunadora, if the following ritual words are said while pouring the blood:

*Young Tar-Baphon was considered an ally
A friend of Nharov Gundar's family
Our families are linked by the blood
Sealed by our immortality and our alliance*

DM note: after the game, the players wanted to close the gate, as they thought it as crazy to run after Zhabh-Boath, and unfortunately forget Kendra to her fate. So I send them Vrood's journal, with clues that this trip wasn't as crazy as first thought (that was my plan for the next adventure). What's a little subtle railroading when the players think it's their own decision? :)

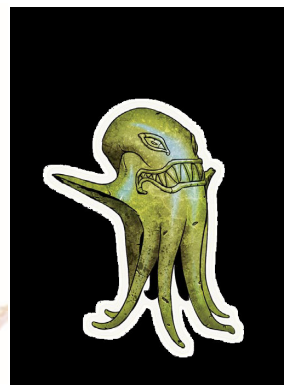
GAME SESSION SIXTY SIX: WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 12

(played Nov 16, 2014. JF plays Austizel)

April 24th, 748, 10h am

The heroes retrieve the items that were in the chest Varadan threw in the staircase pit:

- the green stone statuette of a squid headed creature (the Souragne Effigy). Moderate transmutation aura.
- a sort of crystal rock, about 6 inches tall, mounted on a cast iron rack. There is some kind of light inside it. Strong Necromantic aura.
- two black velvet sacks.
- a large sack containing a book and other things.
- four vials of Medraut's blood (two of them are broken).



Meanwhile, Zail Zeenat insults them and requests them to open the cage to free him. He is extremely vulgar and insulting.

They open the bags from the chest. The first one contains a large heart, that pulsate softly... The stolen heart of Nathan Timothy! Something considered a relic in Verbrek.

The second includes sinister candles, made from human fat...

The large bag includes Kendra's personal items, including her spell book.

Meanwhile, Macrazbunare skins off the skin thief Vorkstag, to look at the "naked" creature. They know it wearing skins of his victims. They fey is like just muscles and bones, elf-sized, with a big brain. Its intestines are full of some kind of blood pudding... *(DM note: a Skin Stealer, from PF)*

They also take a look at Vrood's spellbook:

6th—circle of death, eyebite, guards and wards, chain lightning

5th—cloudkill, telekinesis, waves of fatigue, hold monster, persistent image

4th—animate dead, enervation, phantasmal killer, enervation

3rd—dispel magic, protection from energy, ray of exhaustion, vampiric touch, tongues, gentle repose

2nd—acid arrow, command undead, false life, ghoul touch, spectral hand, mirror image, blindness

1st—alarm, chill touch, mage armor, protection from good, ray of enfeeblement, shield, identify, burning hands, disguise self

0—bleed, detect magic, mage hand, read magic, detect poison, message

Then Taylor's:

2nd—acid arrow, false life, scorching ray, command undead, knock, spider climb

1st—chill touch, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, expeditious retreat, jump

0—bleed, detect magic, ray of frost, read magic, touch of fatigue, detect poison, ghost sound

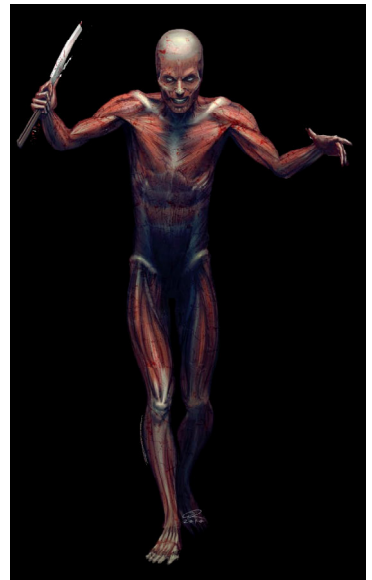
DM note: spellbooks are extremely rare in my Ravenloft! Since magic is rare, players do not automatically get spells each time they get a new level. What they can cast is what they find! I helped them early in the campaign when they got access to the Weathermay's spell book.

And finally, Vrood's spellbook was a bit weak, too much in the "Oh, I am sooooo evil, I cast only evil spells" but it had finally just a few effective ones in battle... Thing to remember.

They then hear a ram, from outside, trying to get in through the front door! Probably the gundarakites. Petrak gets out by an opening in the collapsed tower, and tells them to wait.

He sees four black creatures on the ground, dead, and the bodies of a dozen dead gundarakite. Something happened on the outside too, during the Hall attack. Possibly a diversion by the Whispering Way?

They go see Ardonk and explain him what just happened inside the castle. Ardonk tells them that after the explosion, they wanted to open the Castle's front door when four eel-like creatures came out of the moat and attacked us, while a fire started in the armoury. They killed the creatures, but only after a dozen gundarakites died.



Petrak then travels back to Mme Eva's camp, as she promised him a way to relieve him of the charisma loss under Godefroy's cane (*see session 30*). Raul is there with his son. After the reunion, Vincenzo tells Petrak that it is Marcella that will do the ritual, not Madame Eva, since "she is more potent ... for these things"... They talk about what happened in Hunadora and about Gabrielle. Vincenzo say "she seeks happiness through motherhood, but in a way happiness will never happen".

Marcella tells Petrak that the ritual will take about a week. Petrak was hoping it could be done shortly, so he tells her it will be for another time, as they have to go through the gate to finish their mission and save Kendra. He explains Marcella about their plans, and of his anxiety of not be able to come back. Marcella tells the giogoto that in 15 days, they will look for him. If so, they will need a vial of Medraut's blood and access to Hunadora. He thanks her.

Petrak is back at Hunadora at 6 pm.

Meanwhile, in Hunadora, at noon, the gate suddenly closed, in a loud air sucking noise. They try to sleep but Zail Zeenat tries to forbid them to sleep with his shouting. They put him in the kitchen and they close the door. They still hear him through the wall, but they are able to sleep.

That night, at 11pm, Tora is on guard duty in the Hall. He is suddenly extremely surprised to see Gabrielle Aderre walking in the Hall. She salutes him politely, and walk toward the staircase to the second floor (it was where she had her room before Hunadora was invaded by the Whispering Way). Tora asks her what she wants and she replies that she needs something in her room. Tora protest that it could be dangerous. She says "Do your own thing, I need something in my room". And she ignores him, walking to her room. After a few minutes, she exits the castle, with a few clothes under her arms...

April 25th, 748, 10h am

Ethelild Szerieza casts *restauration* on Tora (wight's lost level).

They decide to talk to Zail Zeenat. The range of his sexual and excrements-based insults seems to be endlessly creative and colourful.

They try to give it alcohol, but he agrees only if a hero is taking the same amount, and eventually they only find that Zail Zeenat is seemingly immune to alcohol, while Varadan isn't!

Macrazbunare cast *Siren Song*, and the fey is now friendly with Macrazbunare. But still very insulting to the rest of the group. When another than Macrazbunare tries to speak to him, he replies with insults ("when they distributed brains, you were away pooping, you *****?")

The fey explains that if the rest is untouched, he think adding more blood will open the gate to the same place, as the cultist spend a lot of time "tuning" the skeleton head to the right plane.

They ask him for Martha's soul, which he agrees to give back if they free him. But they need to open the cage first as the magical cage forbids any fey to use its powers while inside.

DM note: fey cage. It forbids exits and all fey powers (otherwise the RedCap would have turned to a wasp and flee).

The group takes a moment away from the cage to discuss Zeenat's fate? Should they kill him afterward?

Back to the cage, Zeenat explains Macrazbunare that he was caught by Montarri... by ruse. The heroes understand there was some kind of illusion of a charming creature Zeenat suddenly wanted to have intercourse with. That is how Montarri trapped him inside the fey cage.

"That ***** Montarri, the ***** ***** ***** !!! You know she keeps young women in her basement? Very nice ones too. Good ones for ***** I don't get it, do you, *****?"

They agree to let him out. They open the cage. He exits, and then look like he is going to be sick. He vomits green goo and points to a nacre button. "Stick this to her ***** forehead for a minute, while you ***** her. It will stitch her ***** soul back. See you, *****". And he flies away to the ceiling of Hunadora, and the heroes lose sight of him.

They identify the magic items found on the Whispering Way. One of the item is a Lesser Rod of Silent Metamagic (silently cast three spells per day, of level 1-3).

The Souragne Effigy grants *water breathing* to anyone carrying it, as well as a *commune* to an unknown water god, once a week...

They wonder if they should use poison, does it gets the attention of Those Who Watches? (power check) The answer is yes.

Petrak notices that the crystal rock on a stand has the same kind of runes that the ones written on Harrowstone. Does it contain the Warden's spirit?

Exigu gets a nasty bee sting on his buttocks, and they assume Zeenat is again trying to be funny in his way.

Through the gate, they will carry Kendra's possessions, and four vial of Medraut's blood (carried by Tora).

In a chest, at the care of Ethelild, they leave the Souragne Effigy, Timothy's heart, the crystal, the button spit by Zeenat, one vial of blood (as per Marcella's request) and the magical fey cage.

At 10 am, they put Medraut's blood in the Hall, where the cultist did pour the vial: the gate opens in a sick windy noise, like that of an squeezed wind pipe!

They enter the gate one after the other and they have the sensation they are falling endlessly in a pit... to find themselves knee-deep in the snow!

It is a crisp and cold morning and the smell is of something burning. They are on a hilltop overlooking a wide, ice-choked river. Below lies a devastated village, about a dozen houses, all burned to the ground to black piles of charred timber.

There are many splashes of bright crimson among the ruins that contrast with the heavy dirty white snowdrifts blanketing the ground...

A fire in the middle of the village burns, giving a dark, sinister oily smoke.

Crows squawk from perches atop the nearby trees. *DM note: mp3 of crows and wind.*



They do not see the gate from which they appeared.

It is freezing cold so they cover themselves as they can with blankets.

They walk toward the burned village. At one point, Tora walks on an exploding glyph!

At this noise, a group of men appear inside one of the rubble. They look like soldiers in uniforms. They are carrying some kind of rod that makes a lot of noise, and make some kind of magic missiles! They hit Petrak, Tora and Virevan.

The heroes first assume those are the remaining villagers. Varadan moves toward them and say "we do not want to hurt you!" Petrak tries "Can we discuss ?" Exigu shows a white flag.

But the soldiers resume their rod of magic missile deadly attack. They seem to never miss! They are about two hundred feet, and the snow slows them. It will be long before they can reach them and the soldiers' attacks are powerful (and surprisingly noisy, like many explosions).

Also, the soldiers are hiding behind a crumbled wall, giving them protection.

The heroes attack the soldiers with spells, and arrows. Varadan is moving faster in the snow and gets eventually closer to have a better look at the soldiers.

They eventually succeed in defeating the soldiers, seeing the remainder of them run on the road...

DM note: a new PF mechanic, called a Troop. It works like a swarm, but it is large, and is composed of about 20 soldiers that uses one attack roll, one save, etc. When you "kill" it, you assume most are dead, the rest fleeing.



They wonder what is going on when Petrak sees that a villager is watching them from the woods.

They strip the soldiers for their warm uniforms, but put them backward, so they are not identified as soldiers. They find about 200 gp worth of gold medals.

Their weapons are strange, like metal tubes with strange asperities. They have no idea on how to use them safely...

DM note: mines (the "exploding glyph"), riffles and guns :) The PCs never saw these before and it was a surprise. At first, the description I used was with D&D terms, but the players eventually understood what type of weapon was attacking them! I showed them the picture of soldiers only when they had realised they were shot at with guns.

And for the fear of them using it, for the moment, they got the hint that using those alien guns without knowing is potentially dangerous for themselves ;)

They see again a woman watching them from the woods. They wave at her and after a moment, she gets out of the woods. She is a mature woman, somewhat Barovian looking.



She is at first afraid of the heroes, but somehow relieved that they defeated the soldiers. She spits on their corpses.

She shows them the burning village and shout something they do not understand while looking very sad : Problem! Problem! She shows each burned house and shout names in front of each! Nastya! Dima! Max! Vladimir! Nikita! Anna! Artem! Julia! Alina! Polina ! Katya! Andrew! Roman ! It was her village.



She is extremely devastated when she gets in front of the burning pyre, where she sees the villagers remains are burning with the help of a kind of stinking oil.

The heroes try to speak to her, but it is extremely difficult as she doesn't understand them and the heroes what she is saying. They understand her name is Nadja. They get to understand a few words, one of them is for the soldiers that destroyed her village (Ubistsia!).

She misunderstand a request of the heroes, and she leads them to a cabin in the woods, near the river. It is filled with dried fish. She starts a fire.

Exigu tries to speak to her, and slowly, he understands a few words of her tongue. He knows where the soldiers (Ubistsia!) came from: "monastir Akuvskaya". The name of the village ("derevnia" = village) seems to be Akuvskaya too. On the other direction are two other derevnias: Moscovskaya and then Stolishnaya. She asks them a question they do not understand "Vay izz tzirka?"

She serves tea and a white strong alcohol. Again, the question they do not understand: "Vay izz tzirka?", but this time while miming a juggler. They understand she is asking if they belong to a circus...

They decide to get to the next village, hoping they will find someone who speaks their language, or a scholar that will tell more.

On the road, Tora tries to summon his paladin horse, and it works. They were wondering if they were in a new world.

After six hours of walking in the snowy trail, they arrive to the village of Moscovskaya. The villagers quickly gather on the public square. The villagers know Nadja well, but they are sad when she explains what happened at Akuvskaya: they understand she explains the soldiers came and killed everyone. The villagers are horrified. She then explains that the "circus" (waving at the heroes ;)) appeared and decimated the soldiers. She also explain many more things. The villagers look at the heroes in a puzzling way, but a few of them say something that seems like thank you, or some kind of an approval.

It is late at night. A village elder shows the player the local chapel, where they will sleep tonight. He shows them where the logs are for the fire, as well as blankets. Other people bring them food and again this strong alcohol.

The villagers leave the heroes alone in the chapel for the night. The religious symbol is an unknown one... Where are they?

DM note: I did put many hints here and there, that the players didn't put together as I write this.

Tar-Baphon's spirit was banished from the land of the mists centuries ago. The heroes that killed him banished his spirit out of the mists, instead of destroying it fully. So this evil lich spirit that was too strong to be destroyed wandered strange planes of the multiverse until it saw a planet it decided to check: Earth. Tar-Baphon thus arrived in Russia, 1912, and used the body of a wandering spiritual monk to spread evil, and he got very close to the Russian royal family. Guess who?

He got enemies and he was killed in a grotesque manner: poisoned, gunned and drowned... There were at the time rumors he was unkillable, and that his corpse was still moving when they retrieved it from the river.

What differs from our own Earth story is that Tar-Baphon's spirit was too strong, and the mad monk indeed came back ... In Siberia, he lead a faction of supporters in a bloody war against soldiers of the people (the "Reds") and gained control of a secret prison camp.

So mean and ruthless were his orders that soon Tar-Baphon was snatched back in the mists, in the form of an island in the mists made to look like Russia...

That is the domain where the players are now, Siberia, in February 1918 (local time)!

What's next? Rasputin must die! Yes, this is the mad monk's identity, and Tar-Baphon's current vessel. The players should learn that in the next session.

I adapted the Rasputin Must Die PF # 71 adventure (Reign of Winter cycle), changing many many things for my campaign, in fact only to keep the setting and intro, and merging it in the Whispering Way story arc.

For the foreign language discussion with Nadja, I had made a quick sheet of French-Russian phrases, that I thought Nadja was going to be using, and having Google translate as a quick on the spot complement. So I was speaking gibberish through the mouth of Nadja, until they learned a few words.*

** ex: Help! (pomogite!), assassin (ubiytsa), do not kill me (ne ubivay menya!), are you from a circus?(Vy iz tsirka ?), etc.*

I loved the circus question :)

I changed the Russian spelling in this journal, because with the journal in hand (without the DM notes of course), I do not want the players to check these words on the web to confirm its Russian provenance. They guessed it by now, but they are not sure.

It worked very well! I'm always worrying that the language barrier will slow the game (my core RL has a kind of "common", plus local languages), but once in a while, used like this, this is great. Many players loved the challenge and tried hard to understand Nadja and be understood.

Sure, the players will try to get guns! Now they didn't try hard as I told them it was too alien for them and they didn't know how to use it, but if they ask any Russian, they will be able to get a gun or two, but they will find these limitations with time:

- 1) riffles are bulky and ammunition is limited (and not all ammunition they find will be compatible with the guns they have)*
- 2) since it is an "alien" technology, they will be slow to reload*
- 3) no way they can reproduce gun powder with what they know*
- 4) back to the core, by the time they become proficient with it, ammunition will be soon all used.*

Rasputin Must Die has interesting gun rules by the way, including machine gun, flamethrowers and grenades :)