

GAME SESSION SEVENTY-THREE : WHISPERED SECRETS UNFOLDING - 19

(played Feb 21th, 2016)

DM note: two new rules adopted 1) Raise dead will now work as per Pathfinder (no more a loss of experience when you die), but with two negative levels when they are raised. Restauration only gives back one level per week. Gaining new levels takes time in my game, so I agree it's not cool to lose them. 2) you die when your negative hit point number gets to your constitution.

Day twelve in strange new land, 9h45 am

In the aftermath of the deadly battle, after Rasputin fell down, the enormous purple energy sizzling in the room dies quickly, leaving just a couple residual sparks of electricity around the metallic coils. Varadan retrieve Macrazbunare's body from this area.

Then they notice Rasputin's body is moving! He moans with pain and gets up! But he look much more damaged than the damage he got would normally show. it seems like his skin is peeling off?

Varadan is quickly on him. Rasputin cast a spell which Austizel identifies as some kind of *Command (Murderous command)*. Petrak casts *silence* on him. Varadan hits the monk. He notices that a large chunk of flesh fell where Rasputin was hit!



Meanwhile, the confused guards are afraid of Rasputin and they climb the pew walls to run away.

During the battle, the church bells starts ringing!

Austizel casts *Shackle* on Rasputin and it works! The spells constricts the mad monk and large chunks of flesh fall on the ground, leaving the skeleton standing ... Rasputin is liquefying!? Some of the heroes think that this might be Tar-Baphon underneath?

Varadan and Tora hits the monk hard and soon it is dead. The lumps of flesh on the ground are disgusting. Tora destroys the skull.

They detect magic on Rasputin : a headband (moderate transmutation) and his clothing (strong transmutation).

They hear the bell crashing on the floor in the tower, as if its support no longer held it...

Frustrated by the wall of pews, they start dismantling it. They are nailed together and this will take about 15 minutes of collective efforts.

But after five minutes, a row of metallic coils falls on the ground! But they appeared strongly fixed to the rock wall a minute before ! Then, they hear something collapsing in a tower...

Thinking the whole church is in the process of colliding, they pass over the wall of pews and get in the entrance hall. They pour a vial of blood while reciting the tuning phrase that was told to them (*see game 65*) : a gate appears! They jump in it, feel like falling for a minute and reappear in Hunadora's main hall! Guards are surprised to see them appear and they call for Ardonk to come.

Cut scene : A polar bear is seated on the hill and watches the prison camp below. Suddenly, all corner towers explodes! The electric arcs from the towers to the church stops. And the church of light stops glowing, it appears solid and much more older now. Some parts of the tower collide. "Mmm, pridurki byli speshnymi!", it thinks.

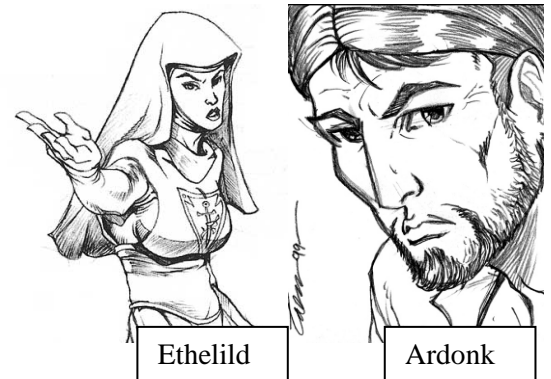
Then the church bells rings! Reacting to that, a large group (about 50) of well armed guards gather in three organized troops, and they enter the forbidden perimeter. "Oni ne mogut soprotivlyat'sya, sushchestvuyet slishkom mnogo boytsov !", the bear thinks.

They meet with eight other guards that are exiting the church. They talk for a moment, then the troops resume their walk toward the church. They enter in it... The polar bear is expecting to hear rifle shots but there is only silence... The troop exit quickly as the church collapse in ruins...

A few days later, the bear is walking alone in the ruins of the now deserted camp.

Upon arrival in Hunadora, the heroes ask for the date : May 7th. Time passed at the same rate here and in Siberia.

Ardonk and Ethelild are curious to hear the heroes' story. After that, Ardonk tells them that the siege of Hunadora is imminent! Their spies told them that Malocchio's mercenaries are gathered in Curriculo, about a day from Hunadora. They are gathering supplies on cart for an imminent departure. "The good news, " Ardonk adds, "is that there are no Falkovnians so far in Curriculo. Which is a good sign for us, as Falkovnians militaries are much more well trained than mercenaries. May be they couldn't reach for an agreement, or Malocchio wants to prove he can do it alone?"



Ethelild agrees to cast *raise dead* the next morning, at dawn, using the *Hands of the Dawn Healer* relic. Macrazbunare will get raised from the dead tomorrow. They cast *gentle repose* on Kendra and Exigu. Meanwhile, she offers healing to the party.

DM note : Ethelild is 7th, but I added a power to the relic: raise dead once a week.

Ardonk tells them that Vincenzo came to Hunadora yesterday to enquire about you.

They rest for the reminder of the day. They notice that the Gundarakites rebels are highly motivated, and their battle cry is "For Lady Gabrielle! We will stand"

At night, they learn that Mallocchio's troop will be delayed, as a Gundarakite spy successfully turned their food supplies to rot ! (using a mushroom powder from Borca). This sabotage will earn the Gundarakite at least a week.

DM note - diversion as the players were thinking of staying and help the gundarakites. But I have other plans for now!

May 8th, 748, dawn

Ethelild casts *Neutralize poison*, then *Raise dead* (with the relics) then *Restauration* on Macrazbunare.

They notice Gabrielle is watching with curiosity this ritual from afar. Her pregnant belly is showing (four months may be?). But she leaves without talking to the heroes.

The heroes identify some items. The *Headband of clear thoughts* give +4 wisdom bonus. Rasputin's clothes are extremely dirty from the liquefied flesh and they wash it. During so, they discover in a pocket a small firearm (revolver), with six cartridge.



The clothing is a *Cassock of the Black Monk*, giving a +4 bonus on armor class (luck). It does other things, but you have to be an oracle to use it...

DM note: Pathfinder #71, page 60

Taylor's wand (Whispering Way battle in Hunadora) is a *wand of command undead* (6 charges).

The battle axe found in Medraut's lab, on a table, is a *Vampiric axe*! It is a villainous item : an axe of wounding, but when the command word is said ("Medraut!"), it adds vampiric touch (3d6), which the axe wielder gains. A victim slain by the axe is raised as a vampire within a few days!

The heroes will keep it, but they will never use the command word to activate the evil power.

Insert DM grin here.

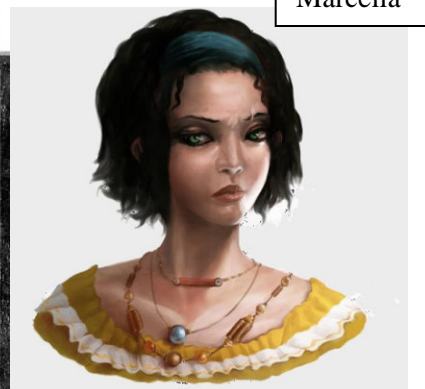
The heroes recover the chest they left to the care of Ethelild before jumping in the gate from Hunadora. They destroy what remains of Medraut's blood vials.

At noon, they travel toward Zeidenburg to meet the vistani, who said they might have a cure for Petrak (*game 66*). Vincenzo, Marcella and Mme Eva are curious to hear about the heroes' actions on the other side of the gate. But Petrak is under the impression the women knew it all already, and this is a pretext to study the heroes' reactions carefully.

Vincenzo then tells the group that Petrak alone is invited to stay for the ritual. The group has to leave. Tora tells something derisive about the famous sense of welcome of vistanis... Madame Eva points at Petrak's giogoto mark and replies "the one whose soul is deep do not feel the years pass."

The rest of the group returns to Hunadora. They use this time to try to help Tora stop being deadly afraid of Varadan's werewolf form. Ethelild suggests a stay in a sanatorium : "a few weeks of calm could do miracles for your troubles."

They cast epiphany on him, with guidance and prayer, but Tora keeps being afraid of Varadan...



May 11th, it is the full moon. Varadan exits the camp and goes hunting in the woods in this exhilarating wolf shape. But he notices he is not alone and there are many packs of wolfs in the woods. But they smell different ... Varadan thinks those might be wolfwere?

In the night of the 12th to the 13th, Exigu is on guard duty. Suddenly, it is very cold in the room, and his breath makes vapours! He wakes up Tora, then he sees something odd: in the dust on a table, there is a message being written by an invisible finger :

MY TWIN GIRLS NEED YOU IN MORDENT

They wonder who wrote the message. Is it the twin's mother, Alice ? She did that once in Mordent (session 27). After a few minutes, Tora tries *ghostsight* but sees nothing.

DM note: Alice Weathermay indeed. She escaped Mordent and Godefroy's control when she had the chance (session 30), but she still watches her girls from afar.

May 13th, 748, noon.

Petrak arrives in Hunadora. A large part of his loss was given back by the vistani's efforts.

Meanwhile, in the vistani camp...

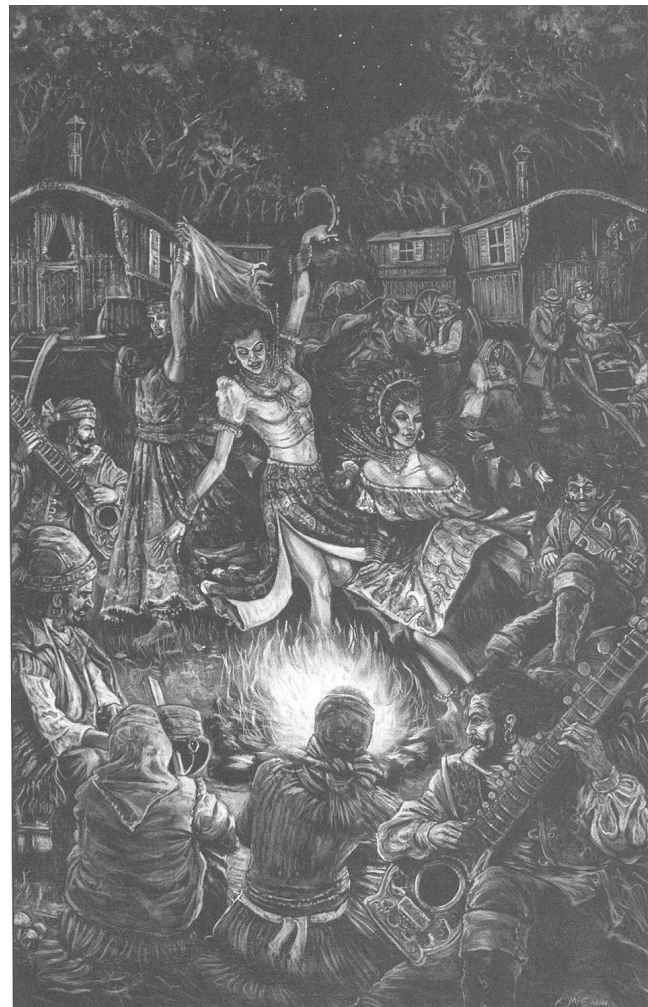
May 8th, 748

Marcella tells Petrak that the ritual will last five days. "However," she said, "May 11th is the full moon and this is a special ... time ... for us. We have something to do on this day of Lunadi and this will delay your ritual. After that, we have to go, we've been here already too long. Until the ritual, just after full moon, meditate on the event when Godefroy did hit you with his cane. I want you to remember every details".

The next days, he sees Marcella and Madame Eva busy with a wooden staff that she encrust with pearls, feathers and little rocks.

Petrak finds that during the day, the vistani mostly ignore him. They are busy gathering wood, or water, or food, take care the horses, or are mending things. When Petrak asks if he can do his part, he is given the task of gathering wood, a task done by children ...

But he has access to a fascinating culture ... their language is colorful, they use "Koorah" when they hear something true, they use "lunadi" as a way to say "yes, it will be done" ...they have small rituals for everything. For



example, when they cook, they put the spice in a triangle pattern. When Petrak asks, they says it's a symbol of the life cycle - from the ground to the plant to the body to the ground... They eat many things they find in the forest (dried fruits, mushrooms, roots, wild turnips, etc.), plus the occasional game (trap) or fish. But they do eat meat just once every two or three days...

In the tribe, while Vincenzo cares about the day to day, it is clear that woman have the moral authority. Petrak even learns that when vistani marries, the man takes the wive's family name!

... while they are mostly quiet during the day, doing their things with few talking, they truly come to life at night, smiling and talking and alive ...

... at night, their dance and stories are fascinating. The prastonata dance is in fact a metaphor of a person's life - ending in a last whirl, then the dancer falls on the ground ... Their stories have many things to say about Dukkars, this evil man with vistani blood that has the *Sight*. Usually, only woman have the *Sight*. They speak about two Dukkars in recent years, one being a man called Hyskosa, the other Mallochio, whose evil deeds are told endlessly. Petrak notices that their own actions with the *Sphere of Binding* (Evil Eye) is now incorporated in the stories ... They keep on telling stories and dancing well after midnight ...

They also ask Petrak to tell stories. Over the different nights, he starts by telling the story of the Effigy of Ivan Szimin, then all their troubles with werewolf Nathan Timothy. He tells the vistani they have Nathan's heart and that the heroes wonder what to do with it. They learned that this heart is the center of a bloody power struggle between werewolf clans in Verbrek. The vistani are not sure, but they suggest giving it to a werewolf tribe that is not war oriented, to minimize the troubles to neighbour lands?

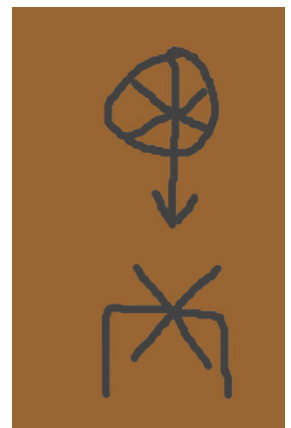
Another night, he recounts the tale of Ashington Manor. This one really captivate Petrak's audience, as a young vistani is involved (Rozaleen). They recoil in horror over the bad treatments she received. At the end, Marcella tells the tribe that they do have Rozaleen's tarokka deck. Many want to see it, and Marcella shows it to the tribe. Men do not touch it.

Another night, it's the story of Burton Westcote's curse, and the Doppelganger plant from Delmunster. Then it's Azenrath's story, and then the tragic end of Virevan in Martira Bay. Over the last story, Madame Eva says "that was a sudden transformation, certainly induced... But there was nothing else to do, they give themselves to the beast, one day or another, it's inevitable ..."

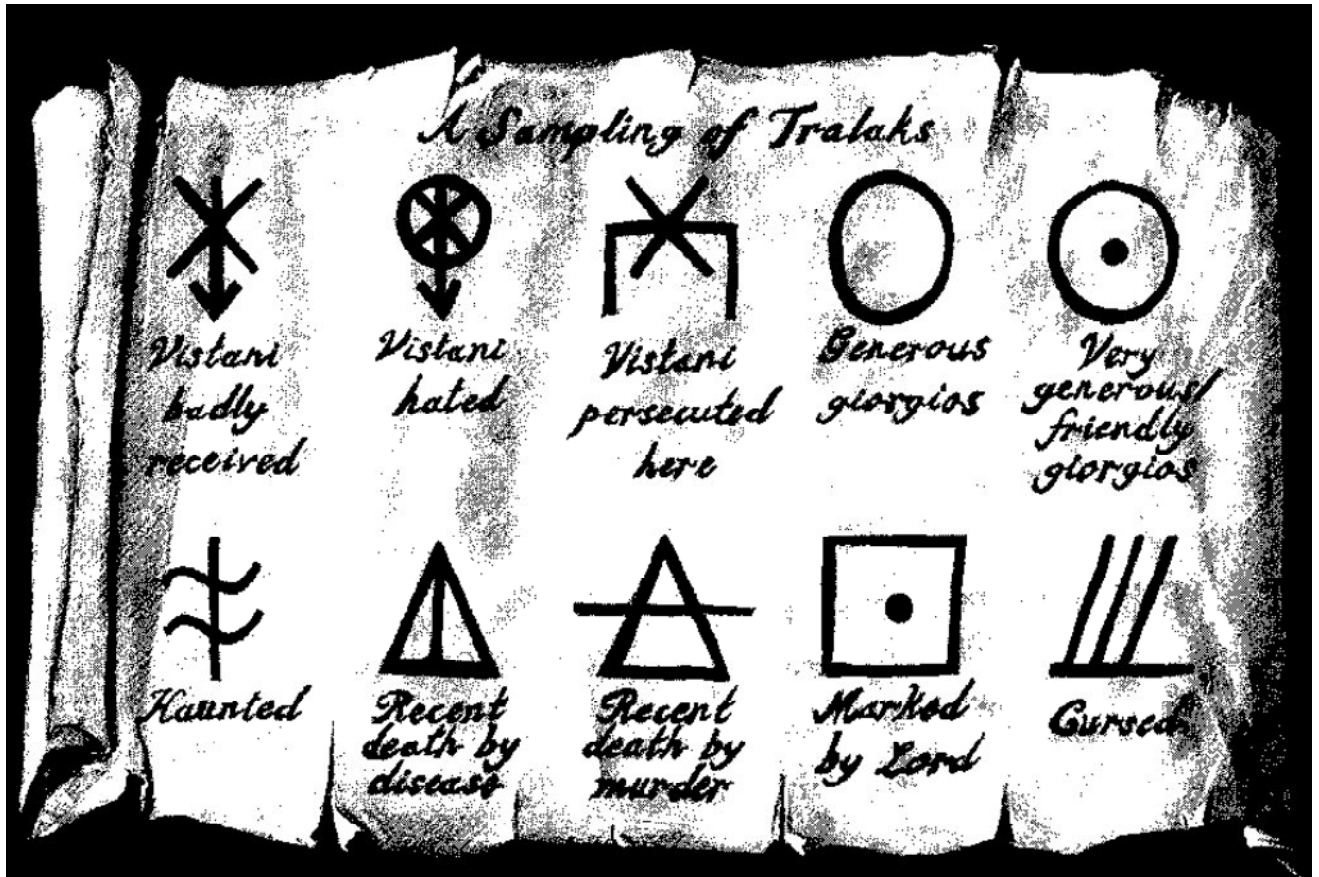
Petrak also asks about the mists that brought them from Zeidenburg to Invidia with Raul and Nikko (*start of Evil Eye*). "Who controled these?", Petrak asks. "Who knows?", answers Vincenzo with a smile...

Petrak learns the tralak when looking at a game the children play. They cast figures in the dust, and it seems these are symbols used by vistani tribes to communicate certain things while they travel. Petrak now remembers seeing one of these tralaks on a tree at the Invidia / Barovia frontier :

He now understands what it means.



What Petrak learned :



Petrak asks Vincenzo about a woman named Maekon. Vincenzo is shocked to hear her name. "What affair do you have with that woman?", he asks. "We met her a few tinmes during our adventures", Petrak answers, and he tells Vincenzo about Ashington Manor, Arcanus's traveling show (and the release of Gundar!) and the last time on the SS Bonnaville.

Vincenzo tells Petrak that Maekon do not like vistani, for a reason he do not know. He never met her personally, but he knows that she is trying hard to make vistani's life difficult. He knows that she is much older than she seems, and she is perhaps 100 years old or more. She avoids Barovia as Strahd wants her head, after she supposedly encouraged citizens of Vallaki to lynch a family of Vistani. She is also rumored to have been the mistress of one of Vlad Drakov's earliest and most brutal lieutenants — a human monster whose hunger for violence eventually claimed himself and his entire family. That last event was about 50 years ago. Vistani think she somehow feeds on anger and violence, in a way they can't explain...

On full moon day, it's Lunadi, and during the day, they are excited, and happy. This is a change from their usual quiet mood during the day. At night, they do stories and the prastonata as usual. But Petrak isn't asked for a story, and realize they are not talking to him, as if a little uneasy with his presence.

At 10 pm, the moon is full. They look very excited. At midnight, they run into the forest, all in a different direction ! Petrak notices they do not carry weapon or anything to protect them in the forest.

Before leaving, Marcella warns Petrak "Lunadi is a time for us that no giorgio, or giorgoto, might ever know or see. On pain of a deadly curse, you will stay in the camp tonight and you will never try to follow us". Petrak is left alone in the camp! He follows Marcella's order and never exits the camp. Sometimes, he hears terrifying howls in the forest, perhaps not all humanly ?

The next day, they wake up later than usual and look tired. At night, stories and dance as usual.

Mme Eva tells Petrak that his ritual will be tomorrow.

The next day, May 12th, at 1 pm, Petrak is invited by Vincenzo to enter Madame Eva's vardo! The vardo is crammed with many things and free space is very few. Things are also hanging from the ceiling. It has a small bed and a small table, with many cushions around it. The table holds a crystal ball and other knick knock. Madame Eva and Marcella are seated. Madame Eva hands Petrak a cup of tea.

Madame Eva lights a stick of incense. The vistani woman talk in their own language. After a moment, the heavy incense goes to Petrak's head, and combined to the swirling voice of the women, he feels sleepy...

Petrak is now in the mists. There is nothing else to see but his companion: Marcella. Petrak has his hand on Marcella's wrist. He notices Marcella is holding the encrusted staff with her other hand. "Follow me," she whispers, "and do not leave sight of me, ever."

The walk in the mists is terrifying as there are many strange, muffled noises at times. Petrak sees many things in the mists, most of it imagined but some he thinks are real. Marcella calmly walks the mists. At times, Marcella stops walking and makes a silence gesture at Petrak. A large wolfish creature pass about 30 feet in front of them. At another place, Marcella makes some kind of detour around a loud group of inebriated sounding men with clubs, shouting. At a third place, he sees a large humanoid creature, panting and walking heavily, it looks like it tries to follow Marcella and Petrak, but the vistani is able to put distance between them.

Petrak has no idea of how much time he did walk in the mists.

Then Petrak is in the salon of the Weathermay Foxgrove Manor ! Marcella isn't there but he can feel her presence. He knows he is reliving past history, when he was on guard duty (*session 30*). The other heroes are asleep. Petrak sees it all like if it was a dream.

Godefroy passes through the wall and enters the room! Godefroy is menacing Petrak with his cane: "My lovely wife and her brat will arrive soon. *You* will pass the halo through them to transform them." Petrak takes the halo. The others heroes wake up, surprised ...

After a short wait, Lilia and Estelle appear in the room! They ignore the heroes to focus their hate on Godefroy. Godefroy is menacing Petrak with his cane: "do it!". Petrak tries to pass Estelle through the halo but misses. Godefroy is angry at this "incompetence", but orders Petrak to try another time.

Petrak tries again to pass Estelle through the halo but fails again. Godefroy screams in frustration "try again!" Godefroy hits Petrak in rage with his cane *but Marcella's staff appears out of thin air and tries to block the blow!*

Then the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins open the door to the dormitory and run inside it! Then Lilia stops taunting her father and attacks him! Godefroy is powerless against her attacks and screams in pain.

Petrak uses this opportunity and tries to pass *Godefroy* through the halo! He succeeds, but it doesn't work – Godefroy seems immune to the halo's power! Godefroy hits Petrak in rage with his cane *but again Marcella's staff tries to block the mighty blow!*

Gennifer cast a *magic missile* at Godefroy! "You little whores stay out of this!" snarls an angry Godefroy. Then Estelle stops her cursing and she attacks Godefroy with all her fury.

Varadan then uses the halo on Estelle, who is transformed to flesh! She seems in shock and she stops her attack, batting her eyelids as if coming out of a trance. Then Varadan uses the halo to pass Lilia through it! She is also in shock of being flesh again, as her mother.

Surprisingly, Godefroy change attitude and tell her wife and child that he is sorry, and that he wishes they could pardon him... the heroes back down from Godefroy, and regroup away farther in the room. This is the opportunity Godefroy was waiting for: suddenly, he attacks Estelle with his cane! Lilia attack Godefroy to protect her mother but she is powerless against the ghost!

Virevan grabs Lilia and runs away with her, away from Godefroy! Godefroy attack Estelle a second time and Estelle dies under the heroes' unbelieving eyes! She falls on the ground where her carnatis flesh dissolves to nauseous flesh and blood. Laurie runs at Virevan's side to help him protect Lilia. Godefroy laugh in evil joy at the death of his wife!

Virevan runs away with Lilia in her hands, but Godefroy says "give me my daughter! She tortured me for too long!" while he laughs again. Virevan runs outside Foxgrove's manor. Confident, Godefroy walks in Virevan's direction, still laughing evilly.

Suddenly, from under Godefroy's feet, a pool of sick red ichor bubbles up through the floorboards! It quickly takes a shape very similar to Estelle's shape! Godefroy is stunned by this new apparition.

The sick bloody shape of Estelle suddenly enters the space where Godefroy's incorporeal body stands, and starts *melting* with him! The heroes can see the red substance run through Godefroy's veins and it enters his mouth. Godefroy screams in indescribable, as-yet-unmatched agony... After a moment, he vanishes along with the ectoplasm red monstrosity that was his wife...

Then Petrak wakes up suddenly in Madame Eva's vardo, as if exiting a nightmare!

Marcella watches Petrak, with the staff in hand. The staff has two marks on it!

Petrak asks "What just happened?"

Madame Eva answers "Whatever happened, it seems it happened ... differently... "

Marcella, with a rare smile : "People say time changes things, but in fact now and then time just passes, and we have to change things ourselves"

DM note: Did lose 6 charisma points during the fight with Godefroy, the ritual give him back 4 points

After, while talking with Madame Eva and Marcella with another cup of tea, Petrak understands the vistani made this rare ritual as Petrak is considered a rare friend of the tribe (using the Sphere of Binding on Malocchio and saving Gitana from an awful fate). Petrak also learns that Gitana is Marcella's younger sister.

When Petrak exits the vardo, he finds it is very late at night. The other vistani are asleep, so it must be somewhere between 2 and 4 am? He gets to his place near the fire and gets asleep too, exhausted...

The next morning, Petrak is alone near a burning fire! The vistani vanished without awaking Petrak. All traces of their passage are gone : no vardo wheel marks on the ground, no traces of where the horses were kept, not a scrap of food on the ground, nothing!

Petrak gets on his horse and travels to Hunadora...

May 13th, 748, noon

The heroes welcome Petrak and tell him what happened since his leave.

May 14th, 748, am

Petrak cast *sending* at Laurie - "We received a request to help you. What is the urgency? What can we do? We can't be there before six days". Laurie answers back "Surprised of this request. There is no urgency. Our uncle Van Richten went to a sanatorium in Dominia. We worry, he was supposed to write upon arrival."

Tora says that a stay at a sanatorium would be good for him too.

Macrazbunare knows that the Dominia sanatorium is famous. It's on an island on the Sea of Sorrows.

May 15th, 748, am

A week has passed and Ethelild is able to cast a second *raise dead*, then *restauration* spell on Exigu. Petrak casts *restauration* on Macrazbunare.

They travel to Ashington, where they are received as kings by the Vashon family. Nothing much is happening in this area, they say.

May 16th, 748, am

Day of travel, at 5pm, they arrive in Levkarest. They take a room at the Desfraya Manor.

They leave a report for Ivana at the Boritsi trading company.

Second Report of activities for the Boritsi Trading Co.

April 17, 748

Our pursuit of Vrood and his group (the Whispering Way) brings us to Karina to the Sainte-Lyrimin abbey near Karina. It is 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. Their wine is very good, and sells out quickly.

Madame Calivasso left this property to the care of the Dublesse sisters, Hetna and Aisa. We think those are witches of Hala.

Inside the abbey, after fighting the witches, we found:

- 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 ». We think these are 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!
- We learn that the Whispering Way wants to open a gate to bring back Tar-Baphon. We 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!

April 18, 748

Jacqueline Montarri is in town (Karina) but we were not able to find why?

April 20, 748

We depart for Hunadora, pursuing Vrood. We pass by Curriculo.

April 21, 748

Trip toward Barovia, with a stop in Zeidenburg.

April 22 to May 7, 748

In Hunadora, the castle is protected by Ardonk Szerieza and a troop of Gundarakites against the imminent attack from Malocchio. We find that Vrood and 8 other people invaded by force the basement of Hunadora, where infamous Medraut Gundar had his

laboratory. They sealed the door after them and nobody followed them before we arrived. These basements are known for being full of deadly traps.

We do succeed in stopping a ritual by attacking the Whispering Way. We have eliminated the whole group, including Vrood, except a fish-like person who fled by jumping through a gate that was opened by them.

It is a gate for an unknown land. However, Kendra, daughter of Petros Lorimor, was pushed in the gate so we followed, to save Kendra and eliminate Tar-Baphon.

We passed through the same gate a few hours after, and we took some precautions to make sure we can come back. We found ourselves in a snowy country where we found a military campground controlled by Tar-Baphon and another entity. We fought and won, but not easily, and we brought back Kendra.

Vrood and his group held prisoner a fey (a Red Cap), named Zail Zeenat, who was given to them by Jacqueline Montarri. Zail Zeenat held one of the things the WW needed for their ritual, the soul of a changeling (of Martha Ward, a young girl from Cannondale).

Martha had her sad soul removed by a Kind fey, put in a nacre button, but that soul was stolen by Zail Zeenat. The soul wasn't used by the Whispering Way. We were happy to get her soul back from the fey. We promised ourselves to go to Cannondale to give back her soul to Martha.

May 8-15, 748

We stay in Hunadora to help Ardonk and his troops to prepare against the invasion.

May 16, 748

We go to Levkarest.

End of report

Petrak goes to the Cathedral. He meets his superior Nicoletta Ladubay. They talk and Petrak learns that the disappearance of women has increased. It was one a month, and now it's more 2 or 3 a month. This starts to have an impact on the church. Petrak says they are on an inquiry in Mordent, but soon he promise they will come back to help. In exchange, she agrees to cast *raise dead* the next morning on Kendra Lorrimer (which she knows, as well as her late father).

Petrak casts sending at Van Richten "We heard that you vanished. The Weathermay-Foxgrove twins are worrying. Do you need help? Where are you?", and the answer is "Stop taunting me, I know this is not true" ! They understand something is going on...



Tora explains why he had to go to a sanatorium : he tells Van Richten's story (*basically what is in the intro of VRA*). Varadan has a hard time believing that vistani would ask a non vistani for help over healing. Petrak reminds him that some vistanis are simply entertainers, or animal breeders, and are not expert in healing.

May 17th, 748, am

At dawn, they go to the church but they find Nicoletta is with Clothilda Taroyan! She is pale as usual, and always very charming and convincing. She is in a better mood then the previous time. She welcomes the heroes to Levkarest and enquires about their report to Ivana, and they are quick to tell her it was left late last night at the Boritsi Trading Co!

For a moment, she looks at Kendra's dead body with feigned sadness. "Poor thing"

She tells Varadan that "Lady Ivana was talking about you, just the other day. Sometimes a diner at candlelight would be requested."

"Your last report told us that you met Viktor Hazan. What do you know about him? Is he a friend of yours?", she asks.

Petrak answers "We traveled with him by boat from Mordent to Martira Bay. He seems to know a lot, so we often chatted with him on the boat. He was a teacher to Vrood, one of the evil leader of the Whispering Way. Vrood tried to recruit Hazan and the old teacher said no."

She then asked "what do you know of the Fraternity of Shadows?"

DM note - first answer from the PCs was "a bunch of goofs on the Internet" ;)

They say they never heard that name. Clothilda : "it's an evil cabal of wizards, of which Hazan is an important member." (this surprises the heroes). "Vrood wanted the Fraternity to work with the Whispering Way? Interesting. Keep an eye on him. He likes to test things : strange things happens when he is near, but perhaps you already noticed?"

Petrak says that they would have a lot of information on the Whispering Way in their report, and that their activities are possibly ended because of the heroes' actions...

Clothilda nods at Nicoletta, and she leaves after saluting the heroes.

Nicoletta casts raise dead on Kendra. She is stunned of the developments since her *departure*. She thanks the heroes and Nicoletta.

May 18th, 748, am

Before leaving Levkarest, they sell some valuable and magical items they do not want (4 500 gp).

DM note - I usually make that kind of selling activity to the minimum during a game. Otherwise, the searching on PC sheets of things to sell can be long and boring. I said: before next game, make a list, and of its value. I will look through the list and let you know if there is a problem. You get 75 % of it in cash.

Back to travel. Sleep at night in Mortigny.



May 19th, 748, am

Sleep at night in Pont-a-Museau.

May 20th, 748, am

Sleep at night in the trail between Pont-a-Museau and Chateau noir.

May 21th, 748, am

Last day of travel. They are in Mordentshire at 6 pm. They go see the twins.

They are with a man, named Andrez Weissritter. He looks of noble origins and the heroes understand quickly that he is a paladin! Is is just over 6' tall, with dark hairs and eyes. He is muscular and wears well-made white clothing. It is clear Laurie has something for him.

Tora is surprised to see his old paladin friend (Andrez was a mentor to Tora), and Andrez is also happy to see Tora. They share a few stories of their own recent adventures.

DM : LotB NPC, from the Zarovich family! PCs might be able to make the connection as this names appears in the The Great Von Zarovich bloodline (see session)

The heroes explain more about the message received in the dust. The twins reveal that they think the message is from their ghost mother. "You are not the only one to receive such a message. We guess she continues her mother work from wherever she is."

The heroes asks "but is there a menace on you?", to which Gennifer answers : "not that we know of! But perhaps she sees things we cannot see."

On Van Richten, he needed calm and left on April 10th. He was supposed to write, but the twins received nothing. He first tried the Saulbridge sanitarium in Mordentshire, but the director there quickly refered him to Dominia. He embarked from Martira Bay to Dominia.

"We also wrote to Dominia on April 30th", says Laurie, "but we didn't have an answer yet".

Gennifer says that the SS Bonnaville to Martira Bay is set for May 23 in Mordentshire. The twins will not go to Dominia, they are on the track of a monstrous creature, the Glutton, and they will hunt him with Andrez.

Kendra says that since they are going to Martira Bay, she will stop there. She will go back to Harrowstone to think about the last month. She wanted to have an academic career, but she isn't so sure anymore. Adventuring for the cause of good is also very tempting and rewarding.



At night time, the heroes are left to sleep in the salon while Kendra and Weissritter sleep in private guestrooms! Laurie explains that Andrez is some kind of noble and expects this special treatment.

May 22nd, 748, am

They take this day to travel to Canondale. Before they leave, they ask what happened with Canondale's murderous mayor. Gennifer says that Daniel questioned him, but nothing came out of this, for the moment.

Kendra will stay to talk with the twins and Andrez.

MacRazbunare rests and learns spells.

At noon, they arrive in Canondale. They are warmly welcomed by the village.

Then they go toward Martha Ward's house (see game 33). Martha is a fey changeling, after having lost her fiancé William eight months ago (who died in the forest). They explain to Sarah (her mother) and little Faith (her sister) that Martha's soul is contained in this little button (session 66). They have the possibility to bring her back as she was!

Sarah is extremely surprised and isn't sure if she should believe the heroes. She thinks about this and asks "But you read her journal? She did this to herself because of a great sadness. How will she feel after?"

Faith : "mommy, mommy, please, you remember how joyful she was before?"

The heroes insist. Sarah Ward is reluctant but she finally agrees : "I guess that now that we know how she felt, we will be able to help her more..."

Faith goes in Martha's room and his back with her sister. Petrak puts the button on Martha's front head. There is a small light, and the button falls back in Petrak's hand.

"Who are you?", asks Martha at the heroes. Sarah and Faith talk to her, and it seems she remembers very few from her period as a changeling. Martha smiles, and this makes Sarah's eyes watery.

"Where is William?", asks Martha. "Oh, I remember, he is dead. It seems like a dream..."

Sarah thanks the heroes. They leave the button to Faith, who looks at it like if it was a treasure.

At 4pm, they are back to Mordentshire. They go to the sanatorium to talk to McClintock, the director. He remembers the heroes (they once asked for a locked cell for lycanthropes at full moon).

Dr. Sean McClintock received himself the famous Van Richten. Quickly, he recommended Dominia to Van Richten, as he got a letter just weeks before. He shows this letter to the heroes. They ask him if they know Heinfroth's handwriting, and it is the same handwriting with older letters. McClintock truly believes Dominia's high reputation. He showed the letter to Van Richten, who agreed for the trip to Dominia.

Dear Dr. Mc Clintock,

My colleague and friend, I hope everything is going well in Saulbridge? I regret not having found the time to visit you as you requested, but hopefully this letter will explain why I was very busy in the last months.

I write you today about an exiting new field in our humble asylum's vast range of treatments, in case you would have a patient suffering from anxiety and remorse coming from recurrent nightmares.

We have had advances in this type of nightmare-induced madness ~ and treatment is only one or two weeks long. We have succeeded so far with six patients out of six, a remarkable feat in our field, as you will surely agree !

To spread the news of our humble asylum's success in this field, I would be glad to take ~ at our costs, I insist ~ any new patients suffering from this trouble, that you could have in Saulbridge, now or in the future. It will be a pleasure for us to succeed once again with our new treatment.

Please advise me as to your further needs in this matter. I could have my caravel pickup this patient in Mordent in a short delay, should you request it. Write me or Dr. Herman Mudgett in Martira Bay for quicker service.

With best regards,

Dr. Daclaud Heinfroth

Your friend Daclaud !

Dominia has established clinics in many nearby domains, either by partnership with existing asylums or building their own clinics from scratch. McClintck says Heinfroth is highly advanced in these matters, he isn't a trepanning believer or lobotomy butcher or something you might find in a remote area. His analysis is based on oneirology (the secrets to unraveling the psyche is within the subconscious, accessed via hypnosis and dreams) and his very analytical (a lot of talking/interviewing the patient, to try to discover the cause of the trouble). Heinfroth also believes in rest, removal from stimuli, and medication to keep calm.

He is very professional and shy of discussing a private case however, and that is probably why he didn't answer the twins' letter.

Cut scene: on the next day, at noon, a woodcutter from Canondale brings them a drawing from Faith.



GAME SESSION SEVENTY-FOUR: BLEAK HOUSE - 1

(played March 6th, 2016)

May 22nd, 748, 5 pm

Petrak suspects the problems Van Richten is having are probably related to this cabal they recently heard of, the Fraternity of Shadows. They ask McClintock, but he never heard of Viktor Hazan.

They leave the asylum to go back to the Foxgrove manor. Near the gated entrance of the asylum, they meet a messenger who asks "Is any of you Sir Petrak of Zeidenburg?" Petrak says he is that person.

"I have a letter for you. I just found at Foxgrove manor that you were here, that is how I found you." and he gives a letter to Petrak. It is addressed to the four humans of the group (thus excluding halfling Exigu and elf Austizel). They give him a gold piece and he says he will now have a drink in one of Mordentshire's inn after this long road. Before he leaves, they ask him "Who is it from?" but the messenger do not know. "Where is from?", and he answers "Levkarest".

Quickly they try *detect magic* and *detect poison* on the letter. The latter is positive!

At the manor, Macrazbunare casts neutralize poison on the letter. They find their last report, annotated by Nostalia Romaine ! (see next pages). They are furious!

In the notes, Nostalia asks them to send all the notes they found in Sante-Lyrimin Abbey (the witches alchemical notes (how to get blood of a person from a body sample) and Aurélien Vrood's notes on eternal life) - see session 60. The heroes still have these notes but they wonder if they should send these to Levkarest.

They have diner in Foxgrove manor with the twins, Kendra and Andrez. The heroes enquire about Hazan, but they do not learn much. About the Fraternity of Shadows, Gennifer knows it's a secretive group of spell casters, but doesn't know more.

*Interesting reports so far. Lady Ivana is quite pleased of your kind cooperation.
It seems you are much more capable than what we had first guessed! Please be more precise with names.
And do not hide anything would be my friendly advice...*

Nostalia Romaine

Second Report of activities for the Boritsi Trading Co.

April 17, 748

Our pursuit of Vrood and his group (the Whispering Way) brings us to Karina to the Sainte-Lyrimin abbey near Karina. It is 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. Their wine is very good, and sells out quickly.

Madame Calivasso left this property to the care of the Dublesse sisters, Hetna and Aisa. We think those are witches of Hala.

Inside the abbey, after fighting the witches, we found:

- 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 ». We think these are 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!
- We learn that the Whispering Way wants to open a gate to bring back Tar-Baphon. We 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!

Interesting! Good that you stopped them.

April 18, 748

Jacqueline Montarri is in town (Karina) but we were not able to find why?

Who told you so?

April 20, 748

We depart for Hunadora, pursuing Vrood. We pass by Curriculo.

*We would appreciate to get all the information you have on these.
Send us everything you have through the usual mail. If you need to go back to Karina in order to retrieve them, please do it.
Quickly.*

April 21, 748

Trip toward Barovia, with a stop in Zeidenburg. *Ah, your home town. Anything new there?*

April 22 to May 7, 748

In Hunadora, the castle is protected by Ardonk Szerieza and a troop of Gundarakites against the imminent attack from Malocchio. We find that Vrood and 8 other peoples invaded by force the basement of Hunadora, where infamous Medraut Gundar had his laboratory. They sealed the door after them and nobody followed them before we arrived.

Did you learn their names!?

These basements are known for being full of deadly traps.

We do succeed in stopping a ritual by attacking the Whispering Way. We have eliminated the whole group, including Vrood, except a fish-like person who fled by jumping through a gate that was opened by them.

Where was that? That place had a known name?

It is a gate for an unknown land. However, Kendra, daughter of Petros Lorimor, was pushed in the gate so we followed, to save Kendra and eliminate Tar-Baphon.

We passed through the same gate a few hours after, and we took some precautions to make sure we can come back. We found ourselves in a snowy country where we found a military campground controlled by Tar-Baphon and another entity. We fought and won, but not easily, and we brought back Kendra.

Names!?

Vrood and his group held prisoner a fey (a Red Cap), named Zail Zeenat, who was given to them by Jacqueline Montarri. Zail Zeenat held one of the things the WW needed for their ritual, the soul of a changeling (of Martha Ward, a young girl from Cannondale).

Martha had her sad soul removed by a Kind fey, put in a nacre button, but that soul was stolen by Zail Zeenat. The soul wasn't used by the Whispering Way. We were happy to get her soul back from the fey. We promised ourselves to go to Cannondale to give back her soul to Martha.

May 8-15, 748

We stay in Hunadora to help Ardonk and his troops to prepare against the invasion.

Who else is there on the rebel side?

May 16, 748

We go to Levkarest.

The Aderre witch? Is she still pregnant?

Is it known who the father is?

Who else did you meet?

End of report

Next month, be much more precise with names!!!!

NR

POB: Left a little something as a reminder. Next time, I'll send it to other people you know

X

May 23rd, 748, am

They answer to Nostalia's question (giving more names, as requested) and add the witches notes, as well as Vrood's. They leave this package at the Boritsi trading Company office in Mordentshire.

DM note: a bit surprised they did cooperate this easily.

Petrak goes to the church to read.

They buy material to make scrolls. A second *restauration* is cast on Kendra (is now 6th level). They buy another riding dog for Exigu.

The *SS Bonnaville* arrives at 3 pm, and the heroes embark it. The boat's crew is friendly with the heroes (last time was with the woman werewolf murder affair).

May 24th, 748

Quiet on the boat. They identify the crystal they found in Hunadora in Vrood's traveling chest. It is a soul trapping crystal, now containing one soul (they guess it's the warden of the prison, as they know it was a component of the Whispering Way's ritual), and they can release it by smashing the crystal.

Another item they identify is the ivory needle found in Medraut's lab (10 charges of *gentle repose*, and can reattach body parts - *Taxidermy needle* (RL DM Guide p208).

The last thing they identify is the cage in which Zail Zeenat was kept. Medium Abjuration. It is a cage where a trapped fey can't use any of its supernatural or magical power. (*Home made*).

They destroy the sinister candles made of human fat, also found in Vrood's traveling chest.

The rest of the day is spent sharing spells and making scrolls.

Late afternoon, the boat stops an hour in Port-à-Lucine.

DM note: what I decided for the SS Bonnaville. Quick stop 1h in Ludendorf, Port-a-Lucine, then Mordentshire, then the reverse and two days stop in Martira Bay (supplies and crew rest). The whole circuit is a week long.

May 25th, 748

Quiet on the boat (sharing spells and making scrolls).

Late afternoon, the boat stops an hour in Ludendorf.

May 26th, 748

Quiet on the boat (sharing spells and making scrolls).

Late afternoon, the boat arrives in Martira Bay. At the port, they enquire for a boat going to Dominia. They learn that only one boat goes to Dominia, the *Mercy*, and it comes to Martira Bay



about every two weeks. They are referred to the Dominia asylum on Dark Tower Rd for more information and schedule.

They go there and meet a nurse. They tell her that they would like to do to Dominia to visit a friend there. She says the boat will be there in three or four days. She asks who they plan to visit, and they answer "Van Richten". She remembers the man, being very polite and all. They ask if everything is alright at Dominia, and she answers that she do not have any reason to believe otherwise.



DM note: all duly noted for the director of the clinic (Dr Herman Mudgett), who will pass this information to Heinfroth. This is the start of the Bleak House adventure, of course.

They take rooms at the Yawning Eddy.

May 27th, 748

They go at the Darkon university with Kendra. They meet Gloriana de Beauchamps, who is still saddened by the news of Petros Lorremor's death. They give her the Souragne Effigy (it was stolen at the University museum by Vrood and Grine).

In exchange, she gives them access to spells (normally, only Darkon students have access to this). Macrazbunare and Austizel ask for *haste* and *ice storm*.

Meanwhile, Tora, Varadan, Exigu, Petrak and Kendra go to Harrowstone, where they arrive late at night. They sleep at Lorremor's house.

Kendra removes the sheets covering the mirrors (after her father's death). "For what it was worth, anyway...", she murmurs sadly.

May 28th, 748

Those at Harrowstone go at the prison to smash the crystal. They go at the place where Vesorianna was kept and died. Tora watches with his *ghostsight*: before, there is nothing. Then, they smash the crystal and Tora *sees* a man appear. He is about 30 years old and has the warden badge on his neck. He looks around, look confused at the heroes, then pass through the floor (toward the underground level where his office was, the players think).

They depart for Martira Bay.

They cast Epiphany at Tora, to help him in his fears of Varadan's werewolf form. He feels better afterward.

May 29th, 748

Kendra goes to the university.

They let the day pass at the inn, and they are at the port at the end of the afternoon.

They see the Mercy. The captain is named Baykur. He is a very large man, but short (almost like a dwarf). He tells them the price to go to Dominia is 2 gp.



A little boy, about 15, helps them to go to their rooms. His name is Colin. He is in awe of the heroes, especially those with swords. He will often speak with the heroes to learn more of their adventures and what they can do.

DM note: Colin is a vampire too, and he is trying to learn what the PCs can do.

The crew is of about 18 total. Most speak a language they do not know, except Tora (Nova Vaasa).

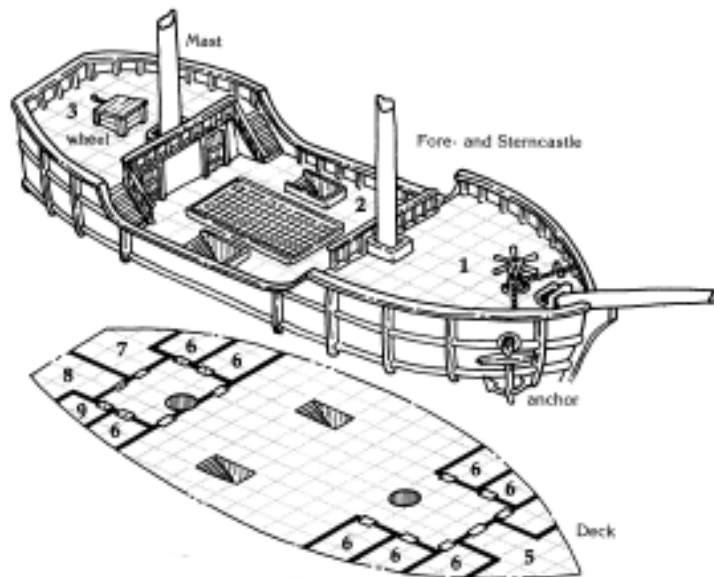
Just before the departure, Kendra appears at the dock and wishes them a good trip. She warmly thanks the heroes for what they have done for her. She is looking forward to their next visit.

The boat leaves Martira Bay, and quickly the coast line is but a line at the horizon. Baykur explains that they will travel about three days to Dominia. The cargo is of little value (supplies and food for the patients). He insists that the heroes stay out of the crew's way. He invites them to spend time on deck, but warns them to keep out of the crew's accommodation and the hold. The heroes have no business there. He's not above throwing trespassers overboard, he says!

Baykur tells them that Colin is at their service, should they need anything.

The heroes ask him more questions, and he tells them he just brought back six patients from Dominia to Martira Bay (*a lie*).

Later, Varadan, Exigu and Petrak are not feeling well (seasick). A meat stew is served for them.



Later, they go to sleep. Later, a storm is quickly on them! The wind is strong and the waves rock the boat. Sheets of rain fall on the ship. The heroes watch the crew taking care of the ship in this situation. Waves hammer the boat, but the heroes feel the situation is under control by the crew.

Storm and ship noises : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUQj8xxgdpA>

The ears of the players are numb from the endless thunder. It is very spectacular.

But as it is to be expected, the storm dies after an hour, and even the rain eventually ends. Sea and sky merge in a featureless black void ...

At 10 pm, the heroes go to sleep.

May 30th, 748

At 1 am, Austizel is on guard duty. He hears the crew calling at something far away? He awakes the others. On the deck, the crew points at them at one point, where they hear calls for help. The heroes expect something foul and Tora (*a paladin!*) ask Baykur if it is a good idea to do this rescue mission, as it could be a trap.

Baykur is impatient with the heroes and informs them of the brotherhood law of the sea. They have to help sailors in need, he says.

Some fifteen minutes later, the heroes see a group of sailors, barely hanging to planks and barrels from a sunken boat.

The crew rescue 10 sailors from the *Blue Dolphin*. These explain they were stuck hard by the storm and the waves went over the ship, drowning them. They are extremely relieved as the night would have been otherwise very look, with the cold water and the sharks.



They are calamari fishers from Dementlieu. The captain name is Alphonse. Baykur asks Colin to fetch the doctor. Dr Rehner appears and treats minor wounds. One of the sailor has a broken leg.

The rescued sailors will sleep in a room filled with crates.

In the morning, they find the rescued sailors on the deck, sitting around a mast. "The crew do not need us, they told us to stay out of the way", says Alphonse.

Baykur wishes the players good morning and ask how was their night of sleep. Macrazbunare is under the impression that Baykur is only making small talk because it is his duty, but he isn't really listening to the heroes' answers.

Dr Rehner fixes the splint on the sailor's broken leg. Macrazbunare cast *cure light wound*. Exigu catches a quick glimpse of anger from Rehner to Macrazbunare. Why?

Later, Petrak talks briefly to stern Dr Rehner:

- Why are you going to Dominia?, asks the Doctor.
- We are going to visit a patient, answers Petrak. May be you know him? Van Richten?
- I left Dominia for vacations when he arrived, so I didn't treat him personally. He is with good care in Dominia, it's the best place for his treatment.

June 1st, 748

Another quiet day at sea. At 4 pm, they see an island. It's a round island, with 250' high cliffs all around it. From this point, the ship will reach the island in about an hour.

DM note: so they never had the idea to explore the ship, interesting ;) Notice the timing to arrive late that day.

The heroes watch the sailors with the wrecked boat's refugees. "These sailors are truly excellent", observes Captain Alphonse.

Colin jumps around, eager to walk on land again. The heroes learn that he is an orphan from Martira Bay, recently hired as a cabin boy on the *Mercy*.

Captain Baykur asks the heroes if they will carry their belongings, or if they want these to be carried along with the rest of the cargo? The heroes answer that they will carry their things themselves.

The boat lands at the bottom of a cliff, on a tiny wooden platform rocked by waves. Baykur gets a tin whistle and uses it, looking upward. Then a platform is seen from the top of the cliff, going down. It takes a good two minutes for it to reach the sea level. It is a large wooden platform, with fences around it. The heroes, Dr Rehner and Baykur climb in it. Another whistle, and the platform starts climbing.

From the rising platform, they see Captain Alphonse and his crew are helping the *Mercy* sailors emptying the cargo hold.

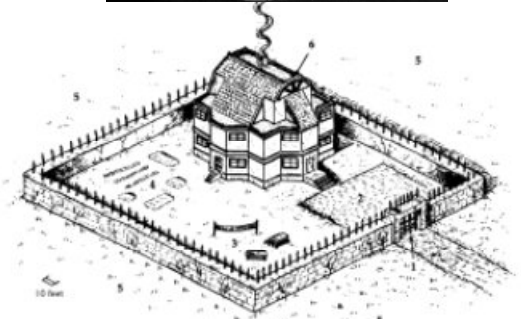
The platform reaches the top of the cliff and it is fixed solidly with bars to a fixed structure. Baykur exits the platform without a glance for the four burly men who just raised the platform with their efforts. He invites the heroes to get on an open wagon. Baykur takes the reins, cracks a whip and the wagon is underway. It follows the cliff for a short while then it follows a path inside an ancient forest of pine trees. So heavy and tall are these woods that it feels like night.

Macrazbunare's wolf tells him that there are other wolves in the forest, watching them.

After about a mile and a half of forest, the path widens and the heroes see a dark stone wall, 20 foot high, surrounded by a 100 foot wide clearing. Beyond the wall, they see an octagonal stone house, three floors high. Coming closer, they see the walls have spiked on them. Exigu notices the spikes are more threatening than really dangerous.

"Welcome to Dr Heinfroth's Home for the Mentally Ill", says Baykur, "I'm sure you'll find your stay a pleasant one."

The wagon approaches the gate and the iron gate opens, to show a thick green lawn spreaded around the asylum. They see rows of garden vegetable and of flowers. People are gathered in groups, working the lawn or tending the plants. But the most surprising sight is that all the people there, about thirty persons, are wearing the same monk-like robes, and they have masks!



Rehner explains that this is something Heinfroth is experimenting : to put all patients on the same anonymous level.

The wagon stops in front of the house and everybody exits. Dr Rehner walks toward a group of masked people. Baykur waves toward the house, and the front door opens before him.

The entrance hall has large black and white tiles. Their footfalls seem to echo endlessly. The emptiness of this room seems to give a new meaning on the word "featureless". Also, the heroes see themselves in black and white, colourless! They look at Baykur, puzzled, but he shrugs and continue without explaining.



The door opens to a large room, and hot air engulfs the heroes. The room is strongly heated by a large fireplace in the middle. The inferno in it is roaring. There are many chairs in the room, all empty. On the walls, there are many paintings of tranquil lands and seascapes.

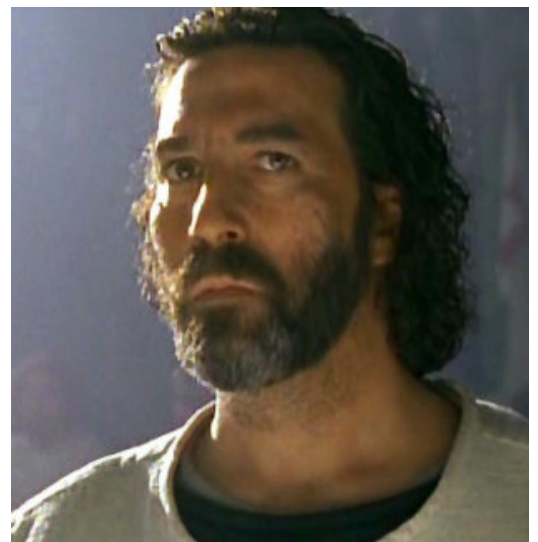
Then Baykur brings them to a "guest room" that isn't especially comfortable. It has ten bunks. Baykur let the heroes enter and opens a trunk that was behind the door. He gathers from it seven robes and masks. He asks that the players wear these. While putting the robe over his clothes, he says he is just a sailor and do not know or understand why Dr Heinfroth insists to wearing these. "Some kind of cultural uniformity", he thinks. Then he exist the room. The heroes put the robes and the masks.

Baykur is back after 15 minutes. He says they will meet Dr Heinfroth. They pass through the heated central room again, to get to a dining room. A large table is set with gray cloth. Dishes and cup made of clay are set in front of the dozen chairs. There is a massive chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Baykur takes a seat and the heroes follow him. Baykur claps his hands and six people enter the room, with the same robes and masks. Four of them carry trays with fruits, breads, cheeses and vegetables. Two more carry amphoraes filled with water, and they fill the pitchers on the table. Their task done, they move to from a line along a wall, always silent.

Varadan complains that there is no meat on the table. Baykur explains that Dr Heinfroth does not believe in eating of the flesh, a barbaric habit which can only be detrimental to the mind and body. And he helps himself with the food. The heroes imitate him. They find the masks have a hole at the mouth, enabling their wearer to eat (in small bites) and drink.

Suddenly a man enters the room, like a warm gust of wind. He is not masked. His clothes are plain but of obvious quality, and he has a gray cloak. He is tall and bearded. Judging by the air of mastery and keen intelligence in his bright eyes, the heroes cannot doubt that this is their host, Dr Daclaud Heinfroth!

"It is good that you have made this journey from Darkon safely, as I heard of the terrible storm you had to face."



"Captain, I know that you have much work to do on aboard the *Mercy*, so I free you. Thank you, and I will see to the comfort of our guests from now on." Without comments, Baykur nods and leaves the room.

Meanwhile, Macrazbunare realize that he already met Heinfroth before! He remembers that in Gundarak, Dr Heinfroth was then known as Dr Dominiani. Macrazbunare saw him twice at Lord Gundar's court, when Macrazbunare was accompanying his father. He was a well known physician in southern Gundarak. His expertise with lunatics and mad-men is well known. He voluntarily took these people to his keep in the hills toward Barovia for free treatment. As might be expected, his kindness has earned him a fair degree of popular support. He left Gundarak short after the Strahd invasion. Macrazbunare finds that Heinfroth hasn't changed since the last time he saw him, eight years ago.

Heinfroth is very friendly and invites the heroes to resume their meal. He explains that the asylum is opened here since about eight years. Captain Bakur told him of the island, and Heinfroth loved the calm and isolation of the place.

They ask Heinfroth on the health of Van Richten, the man they came here to visit. Heinfroth answers that Van Richten is a good guest. He is much calmer now and you will be able to see him tomorrow morning. Now it is too late, as guests patients go to bed early.

They ask why all patients were robes and masks. "The greatest difficulty in the treatment of mental illness is the overcoming of mental barriers by the psyche to protect the mind from harm", he answers, "and while these barriers are normally a sign of mental health, they are impediments to treatments in the case of those who have lost contact with reality. In order to breakdown these barriers, the patients must lose any sense of personal identity. When this is done, we can rebuilt healthy barriers with them for their return to society."

He adds that his treatments are discussions with a patients, and analysis of their past and what could have caused the mental illness. He do not believe in shock treatments that many other asylum uses, and think these methods are barbaric. He continues a long time on his methods, and while the heroes do not understand everything, they feel confident that Heinfroth is a professional.

"You will see everybody is asked to do a task, as it gives the patients a purpose for their day, and prevent them from being bored and think endlessly of their problems. "

"A treatment usually lasts for two or three weeks, after which patients are well enough to go back to their families to lead a normal life. In the case of your friend Van Richten, the great specialist of supernatural is a difficult case, but we believe that in about a couple of weeks more, he will be healed. You'll see tomorrow how his attitude toward life has improved."

Then they ask him why isn't he wearing a robe and a mask. He answers that "they have to identify me as an authority figure as well as the person that is here to help them. I display my so-called authority to them. Only with such a relationship in place can they accept my treatments and begin the road to recovery."

It is the same with the other doctors with me, "Dr Blue, Dr Green, Dr White, Dr Black and the new Dr Red. They do not wear masks so the patients can see them and accept their help. To make things simpler, they chose a colour instead of a name, and patients use these colour names."

"The Mercy is leaving again for Martira Bay in a few days, you'll be welcome by then to go back if you wishes to."

After an hour and a half, he gets up, wishes the heroes a good night, and leaves the room. The heroes go back to their guest room by themselves and get some sleep, after a turn of guard duty is set.

But Tora falls asleep during his turn of duty ... even the elf Austizel!

DM note : Fun lies by Heinfroth, most of taken straight from Bleak House. I used Ryan Naylor's stats for Heinfroth. During the conversation, Heinfroth does diagnose madness on the PCs(mesmerist ability). He has decided that they are fun subjects for his special night treatments...

The wreck survivors are considered food for the vampiric staff and are kept in cells like animals to be fed upon. If the heroes see them again, they will dead or in very bad shape.

Tora sleeping is of course the magical sleep effect of the room, turned on by Heinfroth. The magical sleeping heroes are stripped of their belongings and put in a padded cell below... The druid's wolf and Exigu's dog were released in the woods (to be found later).

June 2nd, 748

The heroes are awake in a padded cell. There is a door but it is hidden behind a padded wall!

They wear masks and robes, and all their things are gone! Exigu's dog and MacRazbunare's wolf are missing too.

They can't remove the masks (magic?) and notice a number has been painted on each!

- 2a Varadan
- 2b Macrazbunare
- 2c Tora
- 2d Austizel
- 2e Exigu
- 2f Petrak



Short after the shock of this awakening, the door opens. Heinfroth is there, with 12 other peoples, wearing robes and masks.

"Good morning dear patients, ", says Heinfroth. "I hope you slept well? We received a letter telling us of your arrival. This letter informed me that your mental health needed to be restored, that you have little problem in your equilibrium. How unfortunate. But you are lucky to be in this asylum, we will treat you well. It is one of the most advanced: we will heal your wounds to your psyche. And when we will release you, in a few days hopefully, one week maximum, you'll be feeling good and you will be able to return to society."

"This is for your own good, and I cannot help but strongly suggest that you cooperate with us. If you don't, we have strong containment rooms, where you will be isolated for a very long time. We also suspect that some of you can cast magical spells. The use of magic by patients is strictly forbidden and will be strongly reprimanded."

"We believe that working greatly helps the therapy, and it will help you heal quicker. To do your share, it is not very difficult tasks that are required, do not worry, the goal is not to kill you with hard work. You will also have periods of pause and play outside."

"You will meet face to face the doctors once in a while during your stay, to monitor your progress. You should cooperate. Remember, it's for your good..."

"2a, 2b and 2c, come with him" (shows one masked men), "your task today is tending the rose garden. 2d, 2e and 2f, come with him" (shows another masked man), "your task today is cutting the grass outside the walls."

Heinfroth leaves. One of the masked men tell the PC to come. The heroes obey.

They walk through rows of other cells. Other cells are emptied and masked men take each a group of 5-8 patients. 2a, 2b and 2c are joined with 7a*, 2h and 7c. 2d, 2e and 2f are with 4a and 1b*. They are given an apple.

*DM note : * marks an orderly (a staff person of the asylum acting as a patient).*

They get to stairs going up and exit the house (the cells are in the basement). The man in charge brings their group to their daily task. They see other groups of patients doing other tasks : ex. sweeping the road, at the garden or washing the asylum's windows.

The heroes try to speak with the other people in their group but conversation is not easy... 7a (man) is aloof, 2h is a woman (they understand she is fearful, but after a while she gets more friendly), 7c (halfling woman, looks paranoid and looks behind her all the time as if fearing something).

In the other group, 4a is an old man, often hallucinating (waving his arms often to chase something only he can see), and 1b (woman, doesn't talk much)...

During the morning, the group 2a / 2b / 2c / 7a / 2h / 7c have the visit of a doctor, and the heroes understand this is Dr White. He watches the group for half an hour, taking notes. Varadan tries to appear normal.

At noon, they are gathered in one big group and they are served a vegetable soup. The bowls and the spoons are made of wood.

Petrak uses this opportunity to look for Van Richten. There are at least five people that could have the same physique as their friend, but none answers Petrak's calling when he is near one of them.

After an hour, they reform the small group and go back to their tasks. Varadan looks for field mices to eat! He is hungry!



During the morning, the group 2d / 2e / 2f / 4a / 1b also have the visit of a doctor, and the heroes understand this is Dr Black. He watches the group for half an hour, taking notes.

At four pm, it's the end of the daily work. They are gathered again into one group, and are shown exterior games : jump rope, balls, badminton, darts and croquet. They find most (3/4) of the patients do not play, and sit or lie in the grass field in silence.

Varadan plays croquet with a masked woman.

Dr White and Dr Black are there too, talking between them and watching the patients.

At 6pm, end of game time, and the patients are served a vegetable stew with rice. Again, the bowls and spoons are made of wood.

Then the guards reform their groups and the heroes are again in their padded cell. They hear the door locked after they are inside. They talk of what they should do. They sometimes hear patients in other room howling madly.

After an hour, sleep comes to all at the same time ... The rest of the night is filled with horrible nightmarish scenes...

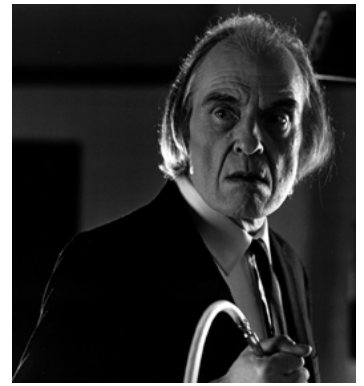
DM note : sleeping patients are searched every night, and then the heroes are subject to one special treatment room....

...2a (Varadan) awakens on a seat, in a room well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. The room's wall are polished like mirrors, and Varadan sees endless reflections of him. Every move he makes is echoed in infinity, creating a dizzying effect... Then he feels an extremely painful attack in his brain, like a lightning bolt entering in one hear and exiting by the other, and he passes out from the pain. He awake again in this room, to see two image echoes of himself now, now as a masked patient, the other as a werewolf in humanoid shape ... He gets asleep...

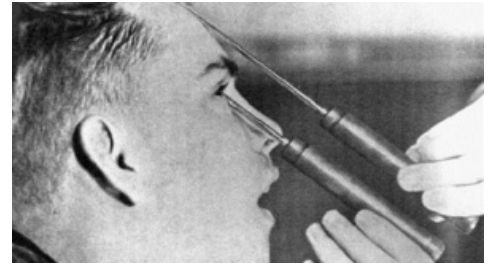
...2b (Macrazbunare) awakens on a black stone, in a room well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. The room's floor and ceiling and walls are also made of the same black stone material. Macrazbunare does nothing and waits... After an hour, he gets asleep...

DM note: he avoided doing anything, which was the trigger of that room :)

... 2c (Tora) awakens on a low metal table, with thick leather restraints holding him. The walls are silvery and the room is well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. The bitter smells of blood and sweat hangs in the air, despite the tinge of cleaning chemicals clearly intended to mask them... Suddenly Tora feels the area under his left arm to be very hot, like a stove top, burning him cruelly. He smells his own flesh burning, and passes out. He awakes in this room later, and the smell of blood and burnt flesh is horrible. But he panics when he sees his left arm cut at the elbow, on the floor! He has been amputated in his sleep! He passes out again...



...2d (Austizel) awakens strapped on a metal chair, in a room well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. The room's wall, ceiling and floor are made of black and white tiles, looking very much like a chess board. A large metallic globe hangs from the ceiling. Suddenly, two large metallic needles appear from it and the globe gets nearer and nearer to Austizel until one of the needle enter his skull by an eye hole! He feels the needle scratching inside his skull, and then sucking a part of his brain! He passes out. When he awakes later, he do not remember any third level spells... He gets asleep...



...2e (Exigu) awakens in a white room, entirely made of alabaster tiles. The room is well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. It has a cleaning chemical odor, and a low humming is felt more than it is heard. All is quiet for a moment then he deep vibration that Exigu feels increase in intensity, to become a bass rumbling that makes him move and shakes uncontrollably. If it continues, he feels it threatens to rattle his teeth loose! Then the light flares to painful brightness and he feels a powerful psychic probe hammering his brain... He passes out. He awakes in this room, persuaded that Varadan is the cause of all of his problems. Exigu feels the sting of jealousy for Varadan. He gets asleep...

...2f (Petrak) awakens in a glowing crystal glass sphere, in a white room filled with other glass sphere of the same size. The room is well lit, although he cannot pinpoint the source of lighting. The sphere is just large enough for Petrak to curls in fetal position ... There is a faint sound in the air, like a dozen whispering voices, but it is impossible to concentrate on only one to hear what it says... After ten minutes, the buzzing becomes a painful droning noise, that hammers the inside of Petrak's head. After a moment, Petrak passes out. He awakes in this room, persuaded that he is Count Strahd ! He gets asleep...

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Petrak awakens, learn his clerical spells, then awoke the other sleeping heroes.

They are all looking like if they had a sleepless night, and Tora is holding his left arm with tearful and crazed eyes. They ask him what is going on, and he spites back "can't you see! my arm was amputated last night!"... but the others see his arm complete ...