

GAME SESSION 113: TEPEST -8

(This Ravenloft game was played December 7th, 2025. Everybody is present)

Cut scene sent before the game by email:

Wyan reread his own proclamation, and a shiver ran down his spine. He had just given the order to halt everything... but he knew very well that some of his followers would not listen.

They're probably already whispering. They think I'm weakening. The candles in his office cast distorted silhouettes against the walls, and Wyan cannot distinguish which were mere shadows, and which... were watching and judging him. *Fey, witches, illusions—all of them could seep into any corner of Tepest. Perhaps even into the corridors of the Inquisition.*

Or into his own thoughts. For what troubled Wyan most was not the possible disobedience of his men.

It was this doubt that had crept into him, insidious, like a splinter in the flesh: *What if the Inquisition had been wrong? What if the monsters had learned to pass themselves off as innocent? Or worse: what if innocent people had been mistaken for monsters?*

The thought gnaws at him. He thinks of the screams. The weeping. The charred bodies.

He remembers pleading looks he had interpreted as tricks from fairy creatures.

But what if they weren't tricks? What if it was truly human fear?

The worst part isn't the recent deaths. It's the old ones. The very first. Those whose names he has forgotten, but whose suffering remains etched in his memory.

The children suspected of being changelings.

The women accused of witchcraft because they knew plants too well.

The demented old men who spoke to trees.

All those the Inquisition captured, broke, consumed.

He remembers their cries.

With his eyes closed, he sees one of the victims, showing his twisted arm. The one they broke under duress. His bile rises.

And I thought I was unshakeable. Maybe I'm already corrupt. Maybe they're laughing at me, somewhere in the forest. He sits down, but the chair seems to give way beneath his weight, as if the ground itself is mocking his decision. A feeling of vertigo.

The moratorium isn't a reform. It isn't an act of justice. It's a desperate attempt to regain control of a machine that has become monstrous.

And behind it all, a dark, very dark thought, which he doesn't dare voice:

If the Inquisition was a weapon... who wielded it?

August 20th, 748, 9h30 am

They are discussing in the streets of Viktal, outside Wyan's house.

Macrazbunare – and if we brought the *Eye* to Loht? But this idea is abandoned as too risky.

How do we protect from the banshee wails? Petrak and Tora pool their knowledge on banshees, but all they have is that banshees are incorporeal undead.

DM note: and a cool post-punk name for a band ☺

Petrak – is Loht the master of the domain of Tepest?

Tora – He is a vampire!

Exigu - should we bring the baby as well as the *Eye*? This idea is also abandoned. The baby will stay in Viktal and Wyan will try to find a family for him.

What will happen to Wyan? Will the angry inquisitors eventually put him on the pyre?

They go back to Wyan and suggest he occupies the Inquisition with a meaningful task, in order to buy time with the angry inquisitorial faction.

They ask Wyan who could replace him if anything goes wrong. He suggests three names: Luther Vimus of Briggdarrow, and two others: Guillaume de Ravoire (fervent, incorruptible), and Pierre de Lancre (scholarly, austere, rigid). They are all well-known theologians of the faith and the inquisition.

DM nerd note – the last two names are real infamous Inquisitor's names from Europe (France, 15th century).

They also ask Wyan if the church could give them some vials of holy water. Wyan agrees and provides 5 vials.

Petrak tells Wyan that he will be making a *Sending* communication, in order to find out if one of the girls will be released by Loht, as promised by him.

In town, they buy a baby carrying basket, with linen. They plan to put the *Eye* in it when they meet Tristessa.

Petrak casts *magic vestment* on himself, and they leave Viktal. Varadan carries the *Eye* in his backpack.

Wyan explained that to reach Keening, they have to go along the northern shore of Lake Kronov until they reach the Crying River. Then north following this river until Keening. There will be a bridge at one point, over a branch of the Crying River, called Lynn Kathryn River. The whole trip should be about six to eight hours by horse.

At noon, they reach the Crying River and they head north. There, they notice the trail to be narrow and not as well maintained.

At one point, they hear a raven quacking, answered by another 300' to 400' farther, then another about the same distance farther.

They think it might be the feys looking at their progression, as they said they will release one of the girls when they know the players have left for the quest.

They continue.

About 500 feet further, they see that poles have been planted along the path: deer skulls, humans skulls, bottles clinking in the wind, and dolls hanging upside down.

They understand this marks the entrance to goblin territory.

Fearing traps, they bypass this area by going into the woods instead of following the trail.

They see things have been painted on the items hanging from the poles, with a red paint.

Varadan smells goblins' scent, and Exigu finds many goblin traces in the woods too.

They find a pit trap right *after* the poles.

They continue on the trail, watching for traps, for about 1000' – nothing. They resume their trip at normal speed.

Maybe 15 minutes later, they see a goblin exiting the forest and standing on the trail, a hundred feet from them. He has a bow and aims at Macrazbunare! The arrow hit but they found out it was not made for damage (1 hp), but to release a horribly stinking liquid!

They move toward the goblin in the woods as they fear there might be traps on the trail in front of him.

They also notice that the goblin is quite young. Austizel aims and hits the goblin with an arrow, and the goblin falls to the ground.

Then they see two goblins emerging from a bush, sticking out their tongues while making mocking noises, and then disappear back into the forest. Also young goblins. Is it a rite of passage?

They decide to pass and avoid fighting them if they can.

From the woods, they hear war drums as well as war songs. They notice the goblin voices seem to be frankly mocking instead of intimidating as war songs aim to do.

They ignore all this and leave the area. They see the goblins dragging their fallen comrade into the forest.

DM note: the powries have told the goblins not to interrupt the PCs going to Keening, but the younger ones could not resist bragging.

They continue their trip. Later, another set of poles, this time with skulls and boots. They pass the area slowly, watching for traps, but there is nothing.

At 3 pm, they pass the 50' bridge over the cascading Lynn Kathryn River, after having watched it for possible ambush. They saw nothing, and the passage on the bridge was uneventful.

Around 6 pm, the dense forests give way abruptly to sparse corpses of dying trees, black and gnarled. The chirps, buzzes and rustles of nature faded to silence, broken only by groaning winds. The air itself seemed thick with a pall of melancholy as the sunlight fades to a feeble wintry glow.

The heroes decide to camp in Tepest instead of Keening, so they go back a thousand feet on the trail, then a thousand feet in the woods. They camp there for the night.

They notice large traces of bears, but the traces were made many days ago.

Petrak cast *Sending* to Wyan: *We are at the frontier. What's new on your side?*

Wyan's answer – *No news from the girls. Some Inquisitors are angry with my edict, and impatient. I think I can control them.*

The night is quiet.

August 21th, 748, morning

Petrak casts *magic vestment* on himself, and Austizel does the same with *mage armor*.

They take back the route to Keening. They are again surprised by the way the dense tepestani forest quickly changes to dead trees and low bushes, and by the silence. No insects, no birds, nothing.

They move forward, but most of the horses panic and refuse to move forward, as well as Exigu's riding dog, Patu.

Maurice, the druid's wolf, tells him of a feeling of dread facing this strange land. They abandon the horses and the riding dog near the frontier.

Half a mile later, Maurice is also panicked and tells Macrazbunare that he cannot go further. The druid tells the wolf to go wait with the horses.

Then there are no more dead trees, only patches of thorny scrub, and not much farther, even the shrubs disappear as they go along, leaving only a land of grey rocks...



DM note: Iceland photo by me.

While on a hill, the central feature of Keening clearly rose into view, no longer a half-glimpsed shadow through the trees but a granite specter clad in mist. The tortured shape of Mount Lament: an eerie jagged ridge whose summit is close to the grey clouds.

Long, vertical black streaks mar the ashen stone, starting from the top, as though marking where rivulets of tears once streamed down the slopes...

As they first catch sight of the distant peak, a stiff wintry wind sweeps a chill of apprehension down their spine.

No doubt, they think grimly, the course they have chosen seems to lead to the heart of death itself...

DM note: mp3 of strong wind noises from now on.



As they continue, the dry, gritty soil beneath the traveler's feet vanishes, leaving a bleak tableland of stones. Scattered pebbles, cobbles and boulders abound in the wasteland that rings Mount Lament, and travel on foot is arduous on the ankles.



DM note: difficult terrain (move / 2)

The wind sweeping the land is strong and cold.

While traveling, they discuss – when we will meet Tristessa, we will put the *Eye* in the baby basket and then try to exchange this with the sword. Varadan is selected to do it, as he has the highest charisma.

Macrazbunare turns into a condor and watches the land and his friend's progression from the air.

They estimate that it will take 8 hours to get to the foot of the mountain. After a while, they can also estimate that Mount Lament is 4 700' tall.

Watching it closely, Exigu sees an opening in the mountain, some kind of cave, a little higher than 4 000 feet.

The trip is long and exhausting. The whole land is grey and bleak. Keening's weather is grey and featureless. The temperatures are chilly, the sky perpetually overcast. Miserable drizzles sometimes break through the clouds, but they are brief and by the time the heroes take their weatherproof clothes out, the drizzle is finished.



DM note: Iceland photo from <https://idiotphotographer.wordpress.com/2013/07/09/bleak-beauty/>

The only color in the bleak landscape is rare patches of lichens: pale yellow, green and blue encrust the stones, lending the region an otherworldly vividness amid the surrounding grey.

They discuss using Petrak's *air walk* to climb the mountain, but the strong winds make it unlikely to succeed.

At 5 pm, they arrived at the mountain's feet.

They find a large boulder making some protection from the wind, and get hidden from the mountain, and they decide to camp there for the night.

Macrazbunare again in condor form uses the last hour of light to fly around Mont Lament. He tries to spot a trail to the cavern entrance but sees none. He sees many cliffs and chasms on the mountain side, and that makes him think the ascension will be a difficult one. The overture that Exigu first spotted is the only entrance he can see. Also, he finds the winds are quite strong near the mountain, and all around it.

Again a Sending from Petrak to Wyan – *We are at the feet of the mountain, we will climb it tomorrow. Any hostage liberated?*

Wyan's – *Yes, Rowana Thornhill arrived in Viktal tonight. In bad shape. Good luck.*

Near midnight, Macrazbunare is on duty while the other sleeps. It is absolutely silent except for the eternal Keening wind noise, and this is quite boring.

Thus, it comes as a great surprise to Macrazbunare when a female voice in the darkness calls : « strangers! »

Macrazbunare quickly wakes the others.

They catch a sudden glimpse of movement in the darkness ahead. As if materializing from the night, a slender floating woman steps into view. She impresses the heroes with a sense of grace and beauty. Her fine features and slight stature resemble those of an elf maiden, though her skin is a shade of violet so dark that it might easily be called black and her white hair shines like spun silver.

But as they look closer, however, the heroes see she is also dreadful: her ghost flesh is taut and desiccated, stretched over her bones like a drum. In her eyes burns an ebon glow.

You are trespassing in the land of the dead, she says in a hollow, emotionless voice. *Your fate is sealed.*

Varadan – *are you Tristessa?*

The ghost woman – *Tristessa is our kind mistress to us all here*

Varadan – *We want to see Tristessa.*

The ghost woman – *You trespassed in the land of the dead, soon you will die too.*

Varadan – *We have her baby!*

The ghost woman looks at Varadan with curiosity – *Show it to me!*

Varadan – *I can't, he's hidden*

The ghost woman – *I do not see or hear or feel anything! I do not believe you!*

Varadan – ...

And she attacks! In a very quick move, she is in front of Varadan and she hits him three times! Two of the attacks touches Varadan, who suffers from cold damage.

Exigu throws an arrow at the ghost, but it misses. Another ghost suddenly appears near Exigu. It is a man, with the same otherworldly features. It casts *vampiric touch* and hits Exigu (-15).



Macrazbunare casts *magic missile* at the first ghost (-11), but then a third ghost appears and hits Macrazbunare with cold damage (-11).

Varadan turns into wolfman form and attacks but he misses.

Austizel uses the Warden Badge's power (*lesser ectoplasmic metamagic*, from Harrowstone prison), he cast *Lightning Bolt* at two of the ghosts.

A woman specter appears near Austizel and manifests a power – *aura of despair*! Only Tora misses his check, but Austizel recuperates it with *Fickle Finger of Faith* power – the second check by Tora is a success.

Tora hits a ghost but misses. Damn incorporeality!

A man specter appears near Tora and *vampiric touch* (-15).

Petrak tries to turn undead, but none are affected (feat: a free action), and then casts *Spiritual weapon* to hit a ghost (-4).

Another specter appears near Petrak and manifests an aura of fear – all succeed in shaking off this effect.

There is one specter for each hero.

More *vampiric touch*, *inflict serious wounds* and cold damage attacks from the ghosts.

The heroes reply with spells (*magic missiles*, *spiritual weapon*, and another ectoplasmic *lightning bolt* and a *scorching ray* from Austizel), as well as with weapons.

The battle turns in favor of the heroes when the first ghost is destroyed, then Petrak has success in turning two of them and cast *cure light wound mass* (for +24 for the heroes, -24 for the ghosts). The two other ghosts are destroyed one by one, even the one that was fleeing from the battle.

The heroes heal themselves, and, after a time when nothing else happens, go back to sleep.

August 22th, 748, morning

Three times during the night, the heroes hear pitiful wailing from a distance, a woman cry of deep sorrow and melancholy. Two times the sound comes from the mountain, but one time they hear it from another direction – the land. Tristessa is looking for her baby, they think. It all ends when the light of the days comes.

7 am the light comes, the weather is still overcast with rolling grey clouds.

They take their spell and prepare to ascend. They will be guided by Macrazbunare in condor form.

Macrazbunare guides them to the easier part to climb. He guides the others through steep slopes, scree and dense rubbles. He tries to avoid the many chasms on the side of the mountain, as well as the long cliffs or the smooth rock walls that are too high.

They use Austizel's *robe of climbing*, as well as Varadan's climbing skills.

At one point they have to retrace their steps going down, and they lose half an hour.

They pass a few of the darker streaks on the side of the mountain, to see that it's just a strange color of the rocks, but nothing else.

They eventually reach the entrance of the cavern, at 4 200'. The view on the valley from there is stunning in grey bleakness. The wind is quite strong.



DM note: image from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrbUTqaeqKE>

DM note: for the climb, I used the random table for mountain terrain, made it a bit harsher for Mont Lament, but still it wasn't that hard for PCs. Before the game, I made a few simulations to climb 4 200 feet, and they were about 3-4 hours. Helped by the flying druid, and some luck, they made it quicker.

0-40 %	Steep Slopes length: d4 x 100', move /2
41-50 %	Cliff Height: 2d6x10', move /4+prep
51-60 %	Chasm. 2d8x10 feet deep, at least 200 feet long, and anywhere from 5 feet to 20 feet wide.
61-75 %	Scree length: 1d6x 100', move /4
76-90 %	Dense rubbles, length: 1d6x 50', move /2
91-100 %	Smooth Rock wall, height 2d8 x 10', move /4+prep

I made an excel file to calculate the climb in feet as well as the time it took.

Near the entrance, the druid sees a small chasm with something at the bottom. He flies there to see and he sees a pit whose bottom is filled with baby skeletons, maybe 50! They are very old, but some of the baby corpses are younger, maybe a couple of years old. He also sees some baby jewelry in it – a tiara, a chain or two.

The other heroes come to the bones pit. *Detect magic* – nothing. They do not investigate further.

Varadan is nauseated from looking at the bone pit (-2 Co).

DM note – horror check missed. RLCS p 68

They go back to the cavern entrance and prepare to enter.

Exigu searches for trap in the first 30' – nothing. They watch carefully the entrance: ceiling, floor, walls – they see nothing. Tora casts *Hide from undead* (40 minutes).

Macrazbunare turns back to human form. He says to the others that there is a place near the summit where the dark mountain streaks originate. They guess it is where Tristessa and her baby were empaled to die in the sunlight?

GAME SESSION 114: TEPEST -9

(This Ravenloft game was played Jan 25th, 2026. Everybody is present)

Sent before the game (FYI, Rowana is the girl that was released by Loht at the heroes' request):

Don't fall.

Don't fall. They laugh when I fall.

My wrist hurts... is it broken?

They're arguing again. Why are they always arguing?

Don't touch me.

I can't see anything because of the blindfold.

Ouch, another rock... They're laughing.

*It stings. Is my forehead bleeding?
Stay on your feet, Rowana. Stay on your feet.*

*Breathe through the blindfold.
They smell so bad. They shove me around like... like I'm a sack of filth.*

Why this path? Where are they taking me? They just laugh when I ask.

Oh no, another laugh. They're going to do their "game" again, the one where they push me just to see if I scream.

Stay silent. Don't give them that.

I'm cold. I'm not dressed enough to walk at night.

I think I'm going to faint. Keep walking. If they see me weaken... they'll do it again.

A rock thrown in my back... Stop... please...

No, don't speak. They love it when I beg.

Walk. One step. Then another.

They're saying something... I don't understand. They snicker.

Did I dream that they said "keep her alive"? Or am I just hoping?

I just want to sleep. Or fall. Stop moving.

No. Don't fall.

If I fall, they'll hit me again with their sticks "to get me up."

Please... let this nightmare end.

Another step.

And another.

Don't fall.

Don't fall...

August 22th, 748, 11h30 am

The heroes are at the feet of Mount Lament's only visible entrance. Austizel casts *Detect magic* on the first 60 feet of the entrance – nothing. Then a *Light* cantrip.

The corridor entering Mount Lament is about 10 to 15 feet wide, and about 12 feet high. The corridor is slowly descending and turns slowly, like a spiral going deeper and deeper in the entrails of the mountain.

They notice that the noise they make is echoing on the cavern walls.

After 30 minutes, they reach an opening in the corridor. They look in it: an empty cavernous room (60' x 120').

The ceiling vanishes into shadow, its existence guessed only by the slow drift of falling grey dust from above. The only feature of the room, eight columns, also very tall, spirals upward.

Petrak casts *detect magic* – nothing.

They search the room. The noise and talk they make seems to concentrate near the ceiling and it makes echoes that last for long minutes.

They watch the columns: their surfaces are carved with the likenesses of elves woman, standing one on top of the other. Their feeling is that it is malevolent in spirit, as the elves appear to be struggling to bear the weight of the others on top.

They notice the dust falling from the ceiling increases with the echo.

They leave the room and continue their slow descent in the mountain.

Ten minutes later, another opening, this time leading to a rectangular 40' x 80' room. It appears to be a dining hall, and tables of dark marble stand in perfect symmetry, each laid with silver cutlery now tarnished black.

Tora shakes the tapestries, to find they collapse in pieces from old age. At first, he only sees pastoral motifs (forest, rivers, gardens) but looking closer, he sees the décor infested with black spiders.

Exigu appraises the cutlery: maybe 2 000 gp worth, but with a weight of 200 pounds. They leave it there.

They leave this room and continue.

I could swear I smelled roasted meat in the last room, thinks Tora.

12h30 am

They find another opening: a laboratory, made of circular rooms partially embedded one in the other.

The rooms are mostly empty, except for cracked glass tubes, melted instruments, and fragments of bone cluttering the tables.

On one table lay a humanoid skeleton wrapped in fine black strands (they look closely and it appears to be black silk).

In one of the room an inscription in elfic: “Knowledge is obedience. Obedience is beauty.”

In one of the laboratory rooms, a single spider (the size of a hand) observes them, it’s size amplified from hiding behind a broken crystal jar, its many eyes glinting with intelligence — or mockery? After a moment, it leaves and passes through a hole in the ceiling.

1h05 pm Later, the corridor has dungeon cells in it. Six small 5’ x 5’ cells. Three dried human bodies hang from the ceiling, chained by their wrists. The iron bars had fused with the walls. There are no doors or key locks, like if they were put there forever?

About 50 feet later, another set of six cells, this time all filled with dried bodies.

1h35 pm A long corridor whose walls are covered with silver webs.

Tora removes a section of the web, and the sound of his sword scraping the wall is strongly amplified and echoes in the corridor. When he talks to other heroes, who are not in the web part of the corridor, his voice adds to the never-ending echo.

They try to burn the web, but it doesn’t burn rapidly and leaves an acrid smell in the air.

1h45 pm They decide to pass, slowly checking the walls for holes or alcoves. The corridor is 300 feet long and they find nothing. When they exit the section on the other side, the echo noise seems to fade.

2h00 pm Again the corridor enlarges, this time for a 20’ x 50’ room, with 20’ ceiling. Hundreds of eyes are embedded in the walls, the ceiling and the floor : some made of glass, others clearly alive (and glancing in various direction), and others dried and mummified. A clear thick liquid flows from the eyes in glistening rivulets, forming a pool in the middle of the room.

Then they suddenly hear a wail coming from far below, a feminine wail of intense sadness! *We know where **she** is*, the heroes say.

With their attention back to the room of eyes, Varadan decides to pass by walking only on the glass eyes on the floor. His weight crushes the eyes. One is filled with greenish gas and Tora, who was following close behind, is poisoned! (-3 Co).

He continues and another glass eye is filled with gas, but Varadan shakes off the poison.

The others pass, following Varadan’s steps. When Austizel enters the room, all the eyes that appear alive turn to follow him while he passes into the room... Because he is an elf?

2h20 pm. They arrive at a deep chasm. With their limited light, they can't see on the other side of it, or up or down in the cliffs. A bridge passes on to the other side, but it is made of web! Its shape is loosely that of a long basket of U shape.

Just before the chasm, murals sculpted in obsidian depict female silhouettes. They scrub it to remove old dusty webs and under them, ashes that were deposited there a very long time ago. They can see all the details of the murals: the women are all pregnant and some are suspended in cocoons. Some appear to be giving birth to small fiendish spiders...

The suspension bridge moves to the rhythm of a slow, deep breath.

They hear something whispering in the depths of the chasm. They can't understand what it is but recognize the language to be abyssal...

Exigu throws a flaming arrow toward the other side of the cliff, and they see the other side is about 600' away.

They put a rope around Petrak's waist. He walks on the bridge. The bridge forms a cocoon tunnel around him and he has to walk on all fours. It means the bridge will be crossed at half move. He comes back to the other heroes.

Then Austizel tries, also tied with a rope in case something happens. For him, the bridge makes a V shape and he is able to walk at normal speed.

Varadan tries, and get the same result as Petrak. They guess the maximum weight to pass at normal move is the weight of an elf.

They hear again dark whisperings in the deep below...

2h45 pm Varadan crosses to the other side. He is not carrying a light source, and at some point on the bridge, he crawls over what appears to be a humanoid skeleton. He considers throwing it in the cliff but finally doesn't. Arrived on the other side, he lights a torch to signal the others of his arrival.

Then Austizel passes on the bridge. He sees the skeleton has a silver ring. He takes it, and reaches the other side of the cliff. When he arrives, he drinks a *tongues* potion.

Exigu, Macrazbunare, Tora, and Petrak cross the bridge, one by one.

Meanwhile, the whispering are again heard deep below, but this time Austizel understands:

*I pray to the spider goddess
to see my enemies disemboweled
and to meet a glorious death.*

They see the same obsidian murals on the other side of the bridge, with the same sculptures of pregnant elves.

They continue.

3h30 pm The corridor is blocked. The heroes catch a faint glimmer of green light. A lattice of thick strands, each glowing with a faint emerald light, stretches across the tunnel. The more they look at it, the more they recognize its similarities with thick spider's web.

They think about burning it and Exigu lights a torch and tries. As Exigu was starting to see the web isn't burning, a large spider drops from above and attacks! It bites Exigu (-3, with poison -1 Co).

The spider appears as vaguely formed dark spider shapes whose eight legs trail off into dark mist. It has no physical substance, being more shadow and mist than spider. Its body is circled with glowing red pinprick-eyes that look in all directions simultaneously.



Varadan attacks but he finds the contact with the web (where the spider is) very cold.

Austizel casts *magic missile* at the spider (-16). Petrak casts *spiritual weapon* but misses. Macrazbunare also casts a powerful *magic missile* at the spider (-23!). Exigu retreats 5' and sends arrows at the spider – 2 success, one miss due to incorporeality. But his second arrow kills the beast.

Exigu finds the venom in his blood to burn a long time, but succeeds in shaking off the additional poison effect.

Tora tries to cut the web with his sword, but he also feels the intense cold (-4 hp). Holy water on the web has no effect.

Petrak finds his *spiritual weapon* is able to cut the webs. He opens the blocked corridor using the spell.

They see three openings before them, as well as a hole in the ceiling, filled with the same greenish web.

Macrazbunare casts *detect magic* and first scans the ring found on the skeleton on the bridge: it is magical, moderate strength, but no school.

The spider's dead body isn't magical, and nothing is in the corridor.

However, he detects something magical in the spider hole in the ceiling, of moderate strength.

The next room has walls covered with webs. Two bodies are caught suspended in the webs between two columns. One body is dried and dusty, but the other is newer, and the woman's body seems to twitch as if she was still alive! Nothing is magical in this room.

Petrak enters the room. The room is very cold and Petrak's breath produces swirling clouds of glistening white. When he gets near the woman, three spiders exit from the web in the walls and attack!

At the same time, another 3 other spiders exit from the hole in the ceiling and attack those heroes in the back!

Another spider exits the web on the wall and splits the woman's body in half! Petrak understands in horror that the woman was dead and the spider behind it made it twitch to make her appear alive...

The heroes fight back, Varadan with his fists, Tora with his sword, Exigu with his bow, and the others with spells. The fight is more difficult because of the incorporeal state of the spiders and many attacks miss.

The spiders' venom is painful, and Austizel, Macrazbunare and Petrak loose vitality.

DM note: this damage lasts a week before it is healed. So at the end of this battle, Exigu, Austizel, Macrazbunare and Petrak have -1 Co each. The spiders are only 25 % incorporeal but they have bad dices.

Petrak identifies these as undead and he turns two spiders away with his religious Ezra sign. Austizel's *scorching ray* does high damage to one spider. Exigu's arrows slay one of the horrors. Macrazbunare hits one with *magic missile* (-20). Tora kills one. Petrak casts *prayer*. Macrazbunare's missiles kills another. The last ones are killed swiftly, at last.

They scan the walls of this room and find two tunnels filled with web.

A room is an old armory: collapsing racks, each holding a crumbling assortment of armor and swords, stands in one corner of room. The bitter smell of rust mingles with dust particles to tickle their nose with each breath. A body lies on the floor, one so long dead that it is little more than a skeleton. Nothing detects magical. They do not enter, fearing rust monsters.

The next room is a storage chamber, packed with stout barrels. Most have warped and split open, leaving no evidence of what they might once have held, but a few remain intact. Nothing detects magical. They do not enter either.



4h15 pm Petrak uses another *spiritual weapon* to hack the webs in the spider hole in the ceiling. Using the *rope of climbing*, he gets there and sees a back pack in the hole.

They examine it. It's a *Handy's Haversack*! There is a pearl (100 gp) in one of the pouches.

4h30 pm Following in the direction of the spiders that were previously turned away by Petrak, the heroes find another corridor, again filled with green web. They destroy the web.

They reach a hallway, rough and broken, as if shattered by an earthquake. The floor is dusted with splinters of stone, and the ceiling is so laced with fissures that it seems ready to collapse any second...

Later, cells. The walls of this stone chamber are adorned with a dozen pairs of shackles, four of which are still locked around the wrists and ankles of skeletal captives. The floor is covered with a jumble of bones, as if many people had been sealed in here and then left to die of starvation...

Another room. The purpose of this room cannot be mistaken, a torture room. At one end sits a large iron brazier filled with long-exhausted coals. Flanking this dark object are two racks of pokers, branding irons, thumbscrews, and other implements of torture. A rack and iron maiden, both rusted into uselessness, stand opposite each other along the walls.

Meanwhile, in Austizel's back, appears from thin air a large spider with the upper half body of a dark elf woman! She smiles wickedly and has her long sword pointed at Austizel's back and she hits him and assassinates him! Austizel is dead!



Petrak identify the monster as a wight drider. He casts *divine power*, and Macrazbunare *haste* for the group. Varadan moves toward the large horror but misses his attack. Tora too!

The two spiders that fled come back to the fight, but Petrak turns them again, sending them fleeing. The drider resists the turning priest.

The drider casts *greater command* "flee" but all heroes resist the command.

Exigu hits it with one arrow, then attacks the drider with his divine powers and *haste*: -17, -12, -11! Macrazbunare casts *magic missiles* but it pitifully fades when it gets near the drider.

Varadan hits (-9), and Tora uses his *smite evil*: -17, -10!

The drider casts a spell at Petrak and tells him “die!” (*slay living!*) but Petrak resists the effect.

Exigu has three successes with his arrows: -8, -10, -9. Petrak retaliates again: -26, -16, -13.

Macrazbunare casts *lightning bolt* but it again fades to nothingness.

Varadan misses his three attacks, but Tora kills her! The large creature falls on its back, legs folded on its abdomen. They decide to cut its head, just to be sure...

Exigu finds a staircase going down, and takes it. He sees the walls of the staircase are filled with paintings, but he ignores them. After 60 feet going down, he sees it is going down much further so he gets back with his friends upstairs.

DM note: Tristessa was a priestess of Lolth in previous editions, so I added a few Lotlh-iness here and there in her lair. It is the only occasion a Ravenloft DM can use the Lolth spider cult in his game and the players know quite well that Lolth and her followers are quite dangerous :)

GAME SESSION 115: TEPEST -10

(This Ravenloft game was played Feb 8th, 2026. Everybody is present)

4h45 pm The heroes discuss the matter of raising Austizel from the dead (he was slain by a vicious wight drider). Petrak will have to sleep to learn the spell tomorrow, and they plan to do it in the morning sun, in case the spell turns wrong.

5 h45 p.m. Back to the dining hall room, close to the entrance. They figure it is the quietest place they have seen so far.

Macrazbunare does *detect poison* on Austizel: positive. So they have to negate that poison before casting *raise dead*. They cure themselves then sleep while one is on guard duty.

8 h40 p.m. Tora hears a wail coming from the belly of the mountain. Then, around 9 h15 p.m., another wail that is much closer. He wakes the others, but nothing more happens so they go back to sleep.

August 23th, 748

4h30 am another wail is heard, from down below.

They plan the raising of Austizel. They know that if it goes wrong, Austizel could be raised as an undead! They cast many spells to help their chances: *neutralize poison* to start, then *consecrate*, *guidance* as well as *bear's endurance* cast on Austizel in the middle of the *raise dead* casting.

At 6 a.m., in the sun, Austizel opens his eyes and says, “hello, what is going on?” The others tell him how he was hit in the back and assassinated swiftly by a half-spider monster.

DM note: here's my ruling on raise dead. The raise dead DC was 30 - 9th level for Austizel so DC 21. Austizel has +8 Fort, so that made a really good chance of missing! There was a lot of chance the PC was wasted : 60 %!

I did permit adding spells to help his chance, and even suggested bear's endurance. With these added spells (Consecrate +3, Guidance+1 and Bear's endurance (+4 Co) +2 Fort bonus), his total was +14, a much better odds. I rolled a 13 so it was successful. But still the risk was high, a 33 % mischance.

With the possibility to add spells to help the save, I think the odds are more fun for players that way – still risky and playable, but not nearly sure of a deadly end two times out of three.

By the way, in case the raise dead was to be held much later (for ex. later in Viktal), I had a plan with Austizel's player that he was going to play himself as some kind of ghost until he was raised. That way, he would play a character otherwise that session would have been boring for this player. He felt like he passed through the insubstantial halo again (session 28) and could manifest, fly, but there was one hindrance - he was bound to his cadaver – he couldn't go farther than 30 feet from it. That was never implemented in the game, as the other players chose to raise him quickly. And that was for when they were inside Mt Lament only, a weird side effect of the mountain. Austizel's incorporeal self would have vanished when exiting the mountain.

*While we are at it, also on the **things that never happened** side, here's something I had planned in case:*

The PCs will return to Viktal with a dead man—an elf. They will request a raise dead from Wyan and the Church of Belenus. Wyan faces a dilemma: the PCs have done good deeds and they will save my daughter, but she is an elf, almost a fey! How can he accept this raise dead?

Wyman to the players: "I accept. I will not judge today." He is haunted, exhausted, already cracked by the Inquisition's moratorium and his daughter's fate. He says something like: "Sometimes I have condemned too hastily. Today, I delay judgment. And we need you."

It is Luther who will make the raise dead, under the collective prayers of the assembled brothers to help the spell's success.

Doctrinal justification in the face of the Inquisition: "This is not an elf. It is a soul on borrowed time." "The Inquisition judges the living. The dead already belong to Belenus." He will judge whether to grant this elf a return to life. If his soul is impure, the spell will fail (proof of divine justice); if he returns, it will be under inquisitorial supervision.

Officially, the Church does not resurrect an elf, it resurrects a pilgrim, an auxiliary of the forces of Belenus who served the Light against the fey.

In the records, the raise dead will be noted as an "Exceptional Rite." but there are more and more disapproving whispering in the Inquisition ranks ...

Macrazbunare casts *identify* on the items found yesterday: the pearl is a *pearl of power* (3rd level) (Macrazbunare takes it), the drider black longsword is +2 (Petrak), and the Ring found on the skeleton is a *ring of wizardry I* (Austizel)

They rest for the remainder of the day.

August 24th, 748

The night is quiet, and a few pitiful wails of grief and pain are heard once in a while.

In the morning, they learn their spells and go back down.

Tora gets a *protection from cold* and *delay poison* and then he enters the spider's nest small tunnels (about 3 feet wide), cleaning them from the supernaturally cold webs. The tunnels twist in many directions then suddenly turn to pits (still full of web). Tora stops at the pits, refusing to go down in these.

9 h a.m. They take a 5' wide staircase going down. Tora is the first in front, with a torch.

After 30 feet, there is a bas-relief on a wall depicting an elven woman queen seated on a throne made of intertwined arachnids, their legs forming spiraling arabesques. Female figures (all bowing to the queen, either in adoration or fear) converge toward her in spirals, like a web the elven queen weaves over their souls. The spiders' eyes are inlaid with gleaming red or black gems, giving the illusion that they are watching the viewer when light hits them. The arabesques are quite complicated and just watching it for more than a moment give the heroes the start of a headache.

Seeing it, Exigu wants to appraise the jewels, but he is struck by fear! Varadan grabs him until the effect ends, about a minute.

DM note : confusion from watching the bas-relief. Exigu is the only one who missed his save.

150 feet below, another bas-relief: a half-elf woman, half-spider descending from her web to punish a rebellious elf in chains. Loyal elves are shown suspended in silver threads, while traitors fall into a chasm teeming with monstrous hungry spiders.

180' below, the staircase opens on a room (15' x 40'), with four columns. On the other side from them, another staircase is going down. The columns resemble large twisting giant spider legs, made of stone, with reliefs of spiraling webs, interspersed with faces (mostly elves but a few humans too) all twisted with fear or pain, as if the stone had captured their last cry. The faces are extremely well depicted, with fine details, like if they were petrified...

Exigu enters the room to search for traps. From the first column, six thin tentacles of stone sprout from the first column and strike him! Four hits and Exigu then falls limp, held by the strands! Like if he was drained from all his strength! A large stone mouth opens on the column!

Varadan moves in to help Exigu. From the second column, six strands of stone attacks him, two hits! Varadan resists the strength draining effect.

Tora hits a strand holding Exigu and he cuts it. Macrazbunare casts *magic missiles* at the first column (-21). Petrak cast *spiritual weapon* but misses his attack.

The first column bites helpless Exigu (-11). Austizel casts *magic missiles* too (-14).

Varadan feels the second column's strands dragging him toward it (where a toothy maw opened) but he resists being dragged. Varadan severs another strand on Exigu.

Tora moves to attack but all his attacks miss. Another *magic missile* from Macrazbunare (-19). Petrak' *spiritual weapon* hits (-5) and the cleric casts *prayer*. Another bit at Exigu (-12). Austizel casts another *magic missile* (-15). Varadan hits the monster with a flurry of blows (-7, -12).

Tora hits the first column, who falls to the ground in a puddle of mud! Exigu falls to the ground, but he is free.

The third column enters the battle and hits Tora with 5 strands. He loses half of his strength!

More spells are thrown, *magic missiles*, *spiritual weapon*, *scorching rays* and *produce flame*. Varadan and Tora hit the monstrous creatures. The monsters bite hard. The second column is also destroyed.

The fourth column enters the battle and hits Petrak with 6 strands. Petrak loses half of his strength too. He is dragged toward that creature.

Varadan kills the third, and later, Macrazbunare's spell kills the fourth.

DM note: modified Ropers. The strand had only one hp and the monster has no spell resistance 30. Still, it was a risky fight. They let elves pass, by the way. And a victim's face is indeed added to the column.

Tora casts *restoration* on Exigu, who gets his strength back.

Petrak casts *detect magic* on the monsters – nothing. The bas reliefs in the stairs above are not magical either.

10 a.m.

While they wait to retrieve lost strength, they hear a wail, and its source is not far...

They take the stairs down.

100' below, another bas-relief, this time of a chaos cross surrounded by what appears to be an arachnid. The priest is disturbed by this combination of evil signs.

The stairs keep going deeper and deeper in the mountain. But in the next 100 feet, the staircase gets narrower and narrower, from 5' wide, to 4 feet... to 3 feet... then to 2 feet wide only. Also, all the cracks in the walls are now filled with spider webs... Their shoulders brush the walls of this narrow staircase and the webs, making them really uncomfortable ... They imagine a tough fight should a creature attacked them here.

They descend another hundred feet like that, and they get to a 10'x10' room, with a 5' wide corridor on the side facing them. On a wall, a masterpiece carved from obsidian depicts a creature, half-elf woman, half-spider, holding in her arms an elf man whose mouth is sewn shut. Under it, ancient elven runes proclaim that "silence is the first prayer to the queen"

This polished stone corridor is a hundred feet long and ends with a thick canvas, patterned with cobwebs.



They open it to look on the other side. They see a vast chamber, stretching more than a 100 long, with the same width. A series of stone pillars rise from floor to ceiling. A diffused greenish light is all over the place.

The walls and the 50' high ceiling are covered with thick webs. Clearly, this realm is given over to the care of spiders. Every crevice of every surface has been used to anchor the web of some hungry arachnid. Most webs are small, designed for catching flies and other insects, but a few webs are much larger, hinting at the presence of large spiders.

The room has a ten-foot-high podium, reached by an arched staircase. On the podium, an altar of black onyx, polished like a mirror, encircled by eight silver arms twisting towards the sky. Behind the altar, a 30 foot high statue of a creature half woman half-black widow. Between its legs, metal wires are stretched, forming a perfect geometric web. When the heroes look, the wires tighten, and in the darkness, eight red eyes open above the altar...

A black-bladed long sword is half sunk into the body of this gleaming monstrosity, as if it had been used to slay the gigantic spider monster.

An old wooden cradle is also on the main podium.

Two smaller podiums stand on each side of the larger central one. They are 5' high.

Gathered around the altar are three floating figures, all women. Two of them are these white elven-like ghosts they fought at the mountain's feet.





The third one, floating in the air above the spider statue is a spectral creature of mist and vapor. Large, filiform. Her skin is coal black and glitters like the midnight sky. She has pointed ears and angular features, but more pronounced than those of an elf, suggesting an otherworldly heritage. Her eyes and fingernails are both white. Her wild, long hair is white as bone and moves independently as though she was underwater.

Her delicate features are twisted in torment and agony, and black tears trickle down her slender cheeks. She wails and sobs continually. She clutches a bundle of bloody white cloth to her breast, at times rocking it gently or cooing and muttering to it as though it were a child.

Tristessa!

They see the two whitish elven ghost looking in their direction. Realizing they are deep in Tristessa' lair, and knowing the exchange they want is highly risky (trading Tristessa's baby - aka the *Eye of Vaerhaun* - against Arak's sword, as ordered by Loht's), they close the canvas and cast some protective spells – Exigu *longstrider*, Macrazbunare *barkskin* and *see invisibility* and Petrak *delay poison*.

They enter the large room, and see the two elven ghosts watching them with curiosity, but Tristessa doesn't acknowledge their presence. The plan is to let Varadan talk, as he is the one carrying the Eye of Vaerhaun (wrapped in a baby blanket, in a basket). He moves ahead

Tristessa hovers slowly in a circle over the central podium, and she gently rocks the bundle of white clothes. She sings with a pitiful voice:

I see him everywhere.

In shadows.

In flickers of light.

I reach out, and my fingers pass through smoke.

The Mists laugh. They always laugh.

If I could, I would trade every breath I ever wasted just to hold him once.

But I cannot. Only screams. Only grieve.

She pauses and adds with anger:

I will scream the scream that ends suns!



Sometimes, between two heartbeats, the heroes hear discreet rustling noises - the passage of many invisible presences crawling in the webs on the walls and the ceilings. Spiders! From the noise, they are numerous and some of them are quite large...

Suddenly, Tristessa emits a horrid wailing that pierces their ears, like the piteous sobbing of a grieving mother, with an echo of a demented scream.

One ghost elven woman turns toward the heroes and speaks, “Welcome, and a Good Death to you, mortal. You stand where few of your kind have stood before.”

And after a moment, “That place is not meant for your eyes, mortals. It is the unholy of unholies, the sanctuary of the Spider Queen.”

“Who are you?”, she asks.

Varadan – We want to talk with Tristessa to bargain, we have a gift for her, something she will like. Can I get nearer?

The ghost - She will take and eat those pretty eyes of yours, if you are to defile her altar with your presence.

Meanwhile, during this talk, Tristessa doesn't notice the heroes. She appears to be in conversation with unseen people in her head, murmuring “*They said I failed him...*” at an empty space in the room, then “*Why won't he answer me?*” at another unseen person elsewhere. Even when murmuring, her voice is loud and clear.

Varadan, now talking to Tristessa – we would like to make an exchange for the sword of Arak, we have something which will interest you, and ...

But Tristessa suddenly lets an angry wail that bites angrily at the heroes' very soul. The heroes' nerves are shattered, and some of them are staggered, the others are stunned!

Then she says angrily, “*Don't... lie... The living always lie... They're taking my child from me... They're taking him again...*”. She is in rage and flies randomly around the main podium.

DM note – I gave Tristessa a lesser wail, in addition to her big death wail. The lesser wail shatter the nerves of all who draw near. All creatures who are within a 60 ft. radius must make a Fortitude save (DC 21) or be stunned by grief for 2-8 rounds. Those who make the save are instead staggered for 1-4 rounds.

The rest of her stats were as the GazV version, with a few cool features from Ryan Naylor's version.



I had sound effect of wails ready on mp3 during the game, one for lesser wails, one for the Death one.

After a few minutes, she is back to talking to unseen persons – “*You're telling me I'm a good mother, huh?...*”, then she yells sharply at another empty corner, “*Not true! Don't you too lie to me !*”

Varadan – do you want to see my gift?

Tristessa ignores him.

Varadan – we have news of your baby?

Tristessa ignores him. Then she doubles over as if in pain. She cries out, “*I had him... in my arms... and then... and then... nothing...*” She tears out some of her hair. Then after a moment, she is back at gently rocking her bundle.

Varadan – I brought my gift in this basket, do you want to see it? (the basket carrying the Eye of Vaehraun wrapped in a baby blanket).

Seeing Varadan moving toward the podium to be closer to Tristessa, a ghost sternly says, “You will die soon, but if you want your heart to keep beating a few minutes more, stay away from the altar.”

Tristessa cradles her blanket bundle in her arms and pitifully murmurs, “*But he's too still... he's too cold... why is he cold? Why isn't he breathing? WHY?!*”

DM note – I took a broken, trembling voice when I was role playing Tristessa, and some of the players were moved by her grief.

Varadan at the ghost woman – can I bring the basket to show it to her?, but she ignores him too, watching him with cold eyes.

Varadan then slowly climbs one of the smaller podiums, under the watchful eyes of the white ghosts. He uncovers the *Eye*, making sure not to see it himself, and says, “I have your baby, look at it!”

Tristessa ignores him and cradles her own blanket bundle. She counts on her fingers, while chanting a nursery rhyme, “**1... 2... 3...**” as if checking something. When she reaches 4, she stops, sobbing: “***I’m missing one... I’m missing one... I had one... where is it?***”

Varadan – we have your baby!

Tristessa ignores him again.

The stunning and staggering effect of her wail ends.

Varadan at the other heroes – Turn backward, I will show her the stone.

The others do as he says and Varadan hold the *Eye* up in his arms above his head, not looking at it, but showing it to Tristessa.

Tristessa is speaking again at unseen people. At one point, she looks in Varadan’s direction, but she doesn’t appear to see him, or the *Eye*, she is deep in her world of grief.

Varadan – when the sun did hit the mountain, we saved your baby, here it is!

This hits Tristessa with pain and she again lets another angry wail. This sound shocks the heroes. Again, some heroes are staggered, the others are stunned!

“***Don’t remind me I faaaaaaiiiiled!***”, she yells.

(She is essentially a deadly landmine of grief wrapped in sound)

Varadan – I understand it gives you pain, but come to take your baby!

A ghost says, “she warned you twice, that’s enough. Your life will soon be up.”

At Austizel’s suggestion, Varadan tries another thing – he rocks his basket like he would calm a baby and says, “Shh shh, your mother is coming...”

Suddenly, Tristessa stops and listens. The empty wooden cradle on the podium starts rocking gently...

Tristessa floats to get above Varadan's basket, her feet not touching the ground. All skittering noises cease in the room, and the sudden lack of sound in this large room is oppressive. In the silence, the heroes hear their own heart beating.

Tristessa, pitiful, watching the *Eye* : *Please... please... Let this be my child. Let this be the end of my suffering. Let this be the moment the nightmare stops. I have been dead for so long. Let me live again.*

Then looking at the basket, she emits another loud scream, but this time of joy: **YOU REALLY BROUGHT MY CHILD!**

She drops the bundle she was holding, and Varadan sees it is containing skeletal baby bones with dried blood stains...

Tristessa approaches the basket slowly, trembling. She reaches out to the *Eye* and tenderly takes it in her arms, wrapped in the baby blanket.

Her voice changes, it becomes very soft.

My little one... my treasure... I've found you... finally... finally... I remember your warmth, your smell, your little heart beating.

He's so small... so... cold... I... I'm sorry... my love..."

He's warm... he's warm... he's warm... I remember this warmth. I lived for this warmth.

The world can't take him away now. I won't allow it.

Hush, my little one. Mama's here.

Mama's here.

The two elven ghosts look at each other, puzzled, but they say or do nothing.

Varadan waits a long ten minutes while Tristessa floats above him, rocking the *Eye* bundle.

After that time, Varadan says to Tristessa, pointing at the sword in the statue – we came here to give you back your baby, and if possible, we would like to take this sword?

She waves at Varadan "take it". Varadan gets on the main podium and the two ghosts move away to give him room. But when Varadan tries to take the sword, his hand passes through it, it is insubstantial!

Tristessa notices, and floats to the altar. Her hand passes over the black blade.

With a commanding voice quite different from her pitiful usual voice, she says:

You cannot take it. Not without my will. Not without my blessing. Not without my... consent.

The... this Sword... It is but a shadow. It means nothing to me anymore. You gave me my child... Take what you want... But let me... be a mother. My child has returned. I have what I lost.

She takes the sword by the pommel, and it becomes solid. She hands it to Varadan.

You, take what you came for. Now go...

You brought me, my child... So I will give you mercy. Leave this place alive.

Varadan nods a thank you gesture and swiftly descends the podium, with the sword.

And while the heroes are leaving the room, they hear her say to them, again with an assured voice used to give orders:

Do not look back.

Do not pity me.

Pity never saved anyone.

DM note – When I planned this part of the adventure, I wasn't keen on this part of the adventure as written, "here's your baby, give us the sword in exchange". I wanted to spice this up and use her personality more – insane and grief. And a battle with her will surely finish in TPK so that was out of the way.

So IMG the PCs have to get her attention first, as when they first see her, she is in her sad world of grief and anger, always talking about her baby, or rocking a dead baby in a bundle, or similar pitiful talk or song about her grief. Well, you saw how I portrayed her: insane from grief, but still dangerous as a deadly force of nature, unstable and unpredictable.

You have to talk her outside of her inner world if you want to interact with her. Otherwise, she ignores you and wail.

I thought of a few angles the PC could use:

- *Ex.1 use the empathy approach. "No mother should endure what you endured.", or similar "Your grievance is powerful—but so is your love."*
- *Ex.2 - talk about her motherly interactions with her baby. Bring up something tied to her life with the baby before undeath. Ex: "He still remembers the lullaby you*

sang.”, “Remember the day when he took his first breath”, “Your child clung to this specific blanket. It calmed him.”

- *Ex.3 - “Careful, Tristessa—your voice frightens your baby. You want him to feel safe in your presence, yes?”*

Tristessa (moaning) “...He...is...afraid of me?” » Effect: more self-control. She clamps down on her wail, trembling.

- *Ex4 – Have a soothing tone (like to a baby) can calm her.*

Only when you achieve that, you have her attention.

And there was also a list of what NOT to do when talking to her:

- *Any tone of command : instantly triggers an angry lesser wail! The Death Wail if tone is insulting too.*
- *Any mention of the death of her baby, of her failure at protecting her baby : pain + grief wail!*
- *Any mention of the Sword too early, she thinks it's a threat (ex. she assumes they want to kill the baby with the sword): wail!*
- *Saying they “found” her child (reminding her she lost him = shame spiral + rage + yes, wail!)*

After two lesser wails, she is annoyed: the big Death Wail!

11h30 am

The heroes move up to the exit on the mountain side, as fast as they can. They move fast as they fear Tristessa will eventually understand that she was tricked and they do not want to fight her!

1h45 pm

They are safe in the sun again, and start climbing down Mount Lament. The groaning winds of Keening are very light.

4 pm

They are at the feet of the mountain. They know they have 9 hours to walk to reach the border of Tepest. They decide to do it now with no stopping for rest, even if a large part of the trip will be in darkness.

When darkness comes, it is all quiet, they do not hear any wail and even the wind is much quieter.

August 25th, 748

At one pm, they are back in Tepest and they find the horses as well as Macrazbunare's wolf and Exigu' riding dog. Relief!

They travel an hour more and find a safe place to sleep in Tepest's forest.

Nothing happens during the night.

10 a.m.

After they learned their spells, Macrazbunare casts *detect magic* on Arak's sword.

The longsword is very light and very sharp, forged from black mithril. The hilt is cut from ivory and carved to resemble a wailing banshee.

The spell detects strong magic, with necromantic, abjuration, conjuration, enchantment and divination auras.

He then casts identify – the sword is a *vorpal* +2! The wielder of the sword also gets *darkvision* 90 feet. He also tells the others that it can do spells too, without saying more.

DM note – I also told Macrazbunare's player the following in private: you see Varadan (who carried the sword) keeping his eye on the sword as you manipulate it, never staying very far from it.

That is perhaps the reason Macrazbunare kept the following information for himself!? Once per day, the bearer of the Sword can cast the following spells upon uttering their command words: antiplant shell, cure critical wounds, dominate monster, irresistible dance, lesser globe of invulnerability, raise dead, summon monster IV, summon nature's ally IV, true seeing. The spells function as though cast by a 14th-level cleric or wizard.

Macrazbunare suggests that they put the sword wrapped in a blanket, in Exigu's new magical *haversack*.

Varadan agrees, but he says, "I will carry this bag."

The others questioned his motivations and feared he might be cursed or something.

Varadan – Listen , I'm a monk, I can't use this sword. So it's not dangerous that I'm the one carrying it.

Petrak – It's true that the fewer of us carrying it, the fewer the risks of others being affected by it. To keep the number of people have a dependence to the sword to one is a good idea.

Varadan – Indeed, we should not increase the number of people with a link to the sword, just in case.

They resume their trip in Viktal's direction. They can't unnoticed that Varadan keeps talking about the sword – conjecturing on its possible history, the metal that it is made of, the reasons Loht wants it, who was Arak, etc. They keep an eye on him.

DM note: at 11 a.m., I told Varadan he saw a change in his body: + 1 to all physical characteristics (Force, Dex, Con) while -1 on all mental characteristics. He keeps it for himself. This is Arak's sword's effect on non shadow feys carrying it (Gaz V).

At 2 p.m., passing in goblin territory, they find six small rag dolls on the side of the road: 2 in armor with big ears, 2 in linen clothes with big feet and silly mustache, 1 elf with a big round nose, and 1 much smaller, as fat as he is tall. They recognize themselves, and ignore this goblin joke.

5 p.m.

Arrival in Viktal. They go at their cabin near the water and wait there. (Loht told them: *When you return with my sword, leave a wreath of flowers at your door. We will see it and pay you a visit.*)

Half an hour later, they get the visit of Wyan and Luther.

Wyan – do you have his sword?

Heroes – yes.

Wyan – then what next?

Heroes – they will contact us during the night.

Wyan tells them of his discussion with Rowena (the freed hostage). She said the goblins were cruel and vicious goblins – the girls were often beaten. They did not have much to eat or drink. When she was freed, they walked at night, it lasted about 8 hours (hard to estimate, she was exhausted). She said it felt like they were walking alongside a river for a long stretch (she heard cascading water).

Wyan finds the heroes not talkative so they leave the heroes to wait in their cabin.

Varadan shares the impression that the sword's link is getting stronger with passing time.

August 26th, 748

The night passes quietly, no knocking at their door.

The last guard duty is Varadan. He is alone with Austizel (an elf not needing much sleep). Austizel sees Varadan opening the bag, and taking the sword out. Varadan manipulates it a few minutes, then put it back in the bag.

DM note – I gave that player the information of what the sword can do. Varadan is pleased by these powers. Varadan also knows the sword has a special nemesis, on which it does higher damage (+4) and double damage. The sword cannot talk to communicate the identity of that designated enemy. When Varadan thinks about it, holding the sword, he just has disturbing mental images of chaos and tentacles. So he quickly stops thinking about it!

In the morning, Tora asks Varadan if he can have the sword, but Varadan answers, “Why, you already have one.”

9 h a.m. – Petrak cast *status* on a few other heroes, one of which is Varadan. But the spell doesn't tell him anything special about Varadan.

Petrak then casts *break enchantment*, after which Varadan says, “I feel the link with the sword has been broken, if anybody wants to carry it, go on”. They are relieved, but an hour and a half later, he grabs the bag back and says, “thinking of it, I will carry it”. The relief is temporary!

Petrak casts *remove curse* – same thing, a temporary relief of about 90 minutes.

DM note: at 1 pm, I told Varadan he saw again a change in his body: it is now + 2 to all physical characteristics (Force, Dex, Con) while -2 on all mental characteristics. He keeps it for himself, but at first he thinks that it's a good thing that he gets more powerful.

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The night passes again quietly, no knocking at their door...

DM note: at 11 a.m., I told Varadan the update: + 3 to all physical characteristics (Force, Dex, Con) while -3 on all mental characteristics. Having his judgement diminished, his character is happy about the change, but Varadan's player is not!

*Email discussion after the game, Varadan's player send me questions. **My answers follows***

*1. MacRazbunare didn't tell Varadan everything; he's hiding things! Based on Varadan's knowledge of the Identify spell, does he think Mac had this information? **YES. It's definitely puzzling for you that he didn't reveal all of this.***

*2. Does Varadan know the command words, and does Mac know them too? **YES, you learn them by wielding the sword for a while, or by using Identify.***

3. *The last time the link to the sword was severed (Remove Curse, I think), did Varadan immediately feel "normal" (relative to his base stats)? If so, when the link is restored 90 minutes later, is it a memory Varadan retains, or does the link erase that memory? (Actually, I wonder if Varadan is aware that his body and abilities are changing, if he feels any regret, and if he might even want to go back...) **For now, even though this bond worries him a little, he's very happy that his monk is becoming more powerful. He remembers everything, before, during, and after the enchantment break.***
4. *Varadan is Lawful Neutral. Did he notice any change in his moral compass during the stat changes? **No***