

GAME SESSION THIRTY ONE: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -8

(June 8th, 2008; All players are present)

Most of the PCs get a new level (where are the level draining vampires when you need them?)

MacRazbunare Druid 4 / Wizard 3

Petrak Cleric 5* / Fighter 2

Virevan Fighter 4 / Cleric 2 / Moonchild 1 (So afflicted Virevan goes for the big change**)

Austizel Wizard 3 / Ranger 4

Exigu Ranger 4 / Rogue 3

* *Ravenloft 3rd level priest spell list modification:*

1) **Daylight spell:** Although the light from this spell is as bright as sunlight, it is not considered to be true sunlight. Therefore, creatures affected by true sunlight (such as vampires) suffer no ill effects from *daylight* beyond those in the spell description.

2) **Bestow Curse:** Curses are very powerful in Ravenloft. Curses you invent may be of any severity but must include an escape clause (you have to put the curse into words). The curses in the spell listing are considered to be of dangerous severity. Casting *bestow curse* requires a powers check.

3) **Contagion:** Casting this spell requires a powers check.

4) **Continual Flame:** spell doesn't exist in Ravenloft. The darkness is too deep on this plane.

5) **Inflict (whatever) Wounds:** Casting this spell requires a powers check.

6) **Speak with Dead:** Casting this spell requires a powers check.

Note to my players: when you get new spells on your character sheet, check with me first if you do not want bad surprises with untimely effects (or no effect at all) next time you cast a spell!

** but Virevan missed his Savage blood roll! 1st roll a 5, second (luck domain) a 6 ... from chaotic good, he moves to chaotic neutral!

I have a player, MacRazbunare, affected by a form of Unwholesome Ichor^{CoD} (a consequence of using the transubstantial halo – see session 29): Any intelligent creature (Int 2 +) who succeeds in biting him needs to do a Will DC 13 to continue, as he does taste very repulsive. If they miss, they will choose to attack other target, or could decide to continue attacking MacRazbunare with other forms of attack (weapon, claws, ...). MacRazbunare smells strange to those with good scent who knew his odor before the change.

I thought of giving also a “curse” or negative consequence to balance: when confronted by things biting him, he becomes temporarily fascinated by this repulsive reaction, like Dazed (he is unable to act normally. He can take no actions, but has no penalty to AC. A dazed condition typically lasts 1 round.). Other ideas / comments ?

February 5th, 748, 8h15 am

The heroes decide to get rid of the halo and bring it back to the monks.

The Weathermay-Foxgrove twins announce they will keep Lilia with them. She is part of the family after all, technically a grand aunt. They will try to keep her safe, with her special needs.

At 11h am, they are at the monk's mill. Thelonious greets them warmly. He muses about the future of the halo – do they need to move it elsewhere, now that Godefroy knows about it?

The players ask if Lilia will have a normal childhood, and if her carnatis body is going to grow up normally? Thelonious says that she won't, as she is now in an artificial body similar to a construct (a golem). The monks will write them as soon as they reach a decision about the halo.

Back in Mordentshire, around 3h pm, they go see the Honorable James Martigan, head of the Ezra church in the county. They reveal to him that Godefroy is a ghost (!), and that his cane is deadly (charisma draining). Petrak asks if Martigan could cast a *restauration* on him, as he got hit twice by Godefroy's cane. Martigan agrees, when Petrak accept for the heroes about a future service to the church. Heroes note that it's the second time Martigan helps them in the promise of a future service or quest.

But the *restauration* spell has no effect of Petrak's loss of charisma. (*DM note: Godefroy's cane damage is permanent!*)

They talk with Tara Kolyana. She spends all of her time at the church reading secret and sacred text of Ezra. She thinks highly of it.

They go discuss with Van Richten. The multiple headed arrows (see session 17) are not ready yet. He hasn't found anything more on the Tales of Terror book, or Godefroy's cane, or a way to remove the charisma loss.

They sell a silvered masterwork dagger at Ambrose's merchant store for 20 gp.

February 6th, 748

At 4 am, when the heroes are asleep again at the Foxgrove's manor, Lord Godefroy appears in the room! He is readying to hit Petrak again with his cane! He tells him to wake his friends "quietly! I don't want to talk to all the people in this house, just you."

He first asks them "where is Lilia?" It surprises the hero that Godefroy isn't able to feel her presence somehow. The heroes say that she is upstairs, taken care by the twins and the maids. Godefroy then tells them to make sure Lilia is well fed (as a carnatis) and taken care of: "As long as she lives, she will not harass me. Do not pass her again in the halo. So you have ny word: as long as she lives, I won't seek revenge on you... or on the Weathermay or the Foxgrove. If you care about the Weathermays, you'll do as I say" and he disappears...

After discussion on this visit, the heroes go back to sleep.

This morning, the afflicted lycanthropes in the group find themselves very hungry! They decide to buy a pig each week for their hunger, and cast *gentle repose* on them so it doesn't stink. Among other thing this day, MacRazbunbare and Austizel learns new spells from the Weathermay heirloom spell book (Invisibility and Mount). To repay him for his hospitality, they give the chess board from Delmunster to Daniel Foxgrove (*60 gp value*). Exigu sells three silver tipped spears for 50 gp.

The heroes disclose to the twins what Godefroy told them this morning, i.e. that the fortune of the Weathermay-Foxgrove is now closely linked to that of Lilia. Lilia seems to be a normal little girl of ten years old. She is very well taken care of by the maids. She doesn't remember anything of her "ghost years", and wonders why she isn't living anymore with her mother Estelle and her father Godefroy. The twins lied to her and told about her parents having to leave for a trip.

The twins wonder how she will evolve psychologically as her body won't grow as she gets older.

The heroes notice Gennifer is reading a book named "Duties of a self respecting noble", written by François de Pénible. The book was released just a few days ago. The heroes recall meeting him in Karina, some kind of pedant noble, perhaps an anarchist?

At the end of the day, around 6h pm, with the twins they go watch the famous Professor's Arcanus traveling show in Mordentshire's market place. Already an audience of local people is gathering around his wagon. Arcanus is a large man, not overweight, but very muscular, barrel-chested. His hair and mustache is jet black, and oiled. He wears a monocle on his ugly face. His black suit has a cape with a blood red rose on it. In his hands is a black top hat, which he uses with brio for dramatic effects when he speaks. The head of his cane is an oversized red stone that sparkles like a ruby.



His large wagon is decorated by strange and sinister glyphs, as well as colorful runes and carven bones. The town people are awed by it, while the heroes are not impressed at all by this grotesque display. Arcanus is a however a master in theatrical stage magic, and his charisma makes him well appreciated by the town people, who often cheer him.

Then, under applauds, he starts opening the boxes in his wagon to now show the audience "truly magical and ghastly artifacts from all over the world!"

The first thing he exhibit is "the source of King Azalin's power! This is his sorcery phylactery!", while the town people appear not to know exactly what is a phylactery. The item is a silver and jeweled crown. Still, his charisma and voice makes it impressive.

While Arcanus is readying his next item, Exigu watches the crowd to see if Arcanus is working with a pickpocketing thief, and he notices a known face in the crowd: Maekon! (*a girl they met at Ashington Manor – session 12*). Maekon is smiling, not watching the show as looking at the crowd attracted to it. She notices the heroes's presence and nods a salute at them. She removes her hood to release her black hairs and makes small talk with Exigu.

The second item displayed by Arcanus is a large leather tome, with red letters Arcanus insist were written in blood. "This is the spellbook of Ar-Shickanus!, a powerful relic from a ruin in distant Hazlan. This spellbook is the key to magical necromantic powers so unique and frightening they could destroy a whole town by turning its people into brain eating zombies!"

Then a young man, dressed like an apprentice carpenter, and possibly drunk too, starts openly laughing at Arcanus, while his girlfriend tries to calm him. Arcanus ignores him and goes on with the show.

The next item is the brain of a murderer, in a glass water filled tank! This murderer, according to Arcanus, was extremely sadistic and killed dozens of people in many cities, before getting caught. It took 14 arrows to put him down, according to Arcanus, who describes in length the savage crimes of this murderer, while the carpenter now mock Arcanus by mimicking his tone and saying silly things. Other town people ask him to stop, as he is disturbing the show. Maekon watches the situation with delight.

Austizel and the twins notice the “murderer” sign on the water tank is a temporary one, covering the usual sign for this exhibit.

The next item is an aquarium covered by a drape. When Arcanus removes it, a living “hand” can be seen inside it, crawling around the glass box. The crowd stands back in fear. “This is the hand of Vecna, mightiest necromancer in the world! His island in the mist is said to be bursting with vampires and wizards undead under his control!” The spidery hand is clawing endlessly as if trying to get out.

While the audience is enspelled by Arcanus, MacRazbunare secretly cast *detect magic* on Arcanus’ wagon: strong abjuration, in the direction of a small red box.

They notice the twins are smirking at Arcanus’s “treasures”.

For the next artifact, Arcanus asks for silence. Then he ceremoniously pulls a large box from his wagon, and sets it on the side of the cart. He opens it to reveal a skeleton with a spike inside the rib cage, where the heart was! The skeleton is wearing old fashioned noble clothes. Arcanus says “Duke Nharov Gundar was a tyrant in Gundarak! This sadistic ruler delighted in crushing people’s throat with his bare hands! He ruled through the power of fear alone, and when word came of his death, he was not missed in Gundarak! It is said his children were even more abominable! Here’s the remains of this terrible *vampire lord!*”, he finishes, with a lot of emphasis on the last two words. The crowd is visibly shaken by this.

Virevan hears the Weathermay-Foxgrobe twins saying that Arcanus really got better in showmanship since his last visit to Mordentshire.

But then Arcanus is interrupted by the carpenter, who runs toward Arcanus, silencing him with insults and saying “this is all fakes”. Arcanus ignores the man, moving toward the next exhibition, a collection of vials with reddish liquids.

The carpenter tears off a banner. Austizel takes his sword and punch the carpenter with non lethal damage. The carpenter falls on the ground.

Suddenly, the crowds become very angry, and moves menacingly toward the fallen carpenter. Petrak tries to calm the crowd, but it doesn’t work. (*DM note – Maekon’s occult actions*)

Arcanus tries to get back all attention toward him “Never mind this lack of manners. I’m now going to show you rare samples of lycanthropic bloods: werewolf, wererat, werebat and...” but the rest is drowned by the angry crowd. The carpenter starts getting kicked by those nearby!

MacRazbunare puts a *Wall of gloom* spell between the crowd and the carpenter! The crowd moves back away from it. Maekon looks stunned by this, she is very surprised. On the other side, Austizel pulls the carpenter away. Arcanus is near panic, asking everybody to stay away from the

wagon, especially Petrak and Varadan heroes sneaking near it. They notice Arcanus is holding the vials rack so tight his fingers are white.

The heroes think that one of the magical artifact controlled people's reaction, controlling them toward anger?

Maekon moves some distance away, sitting down near a tree. At Exigu, she says "you know, human reactions are so interesting." Maekon takes her luth and starts plucking chords from it as she watches the crowd starting to disperse. Exigu sneakily tries to get her from playing by calling his large dog Patu very close to her, but she moves away from the dog's path and continues playing.

When all is cleared, including the magical wall, Arcanus closes his boxes and lock them on the wagon. The heroes, accompanied by the twins, talk with him. They give him 25 gp to indemnify him. Arcanus's cheerful mood is back, and he shows them the next thing he was going to show his audience, from the magic radiating box: a dagger with a twisted blade, with a 12 sided ruby on it. "This weapon, the Soul Blade!" says Arcanus as if showing to a large audience, "it steals the soul of anybody struck by it!" He says it's the only possession he always carry with him and never leaves in the wagon. Knowledge Arcana skills isn't adding anything to this information.

Maekon, quite calm, is still playing with her luth while seated near a tree. They also notice the carpenter going for a drink in a tavern, with his girlfriend.

They wish Arcanus good night. He takes the dagger in his backpack and goes toward the nearby Paisley Pink Kukri inn. They also find a few minutes later that Maekon also has a room at the same inn. They find it odd and decide to stay and spy on both of them.

They discuss Maekon's odd remark on human's reactions. They then wonder if there is something in the dagger that controlled the crowd. The twins estimate that about a third of the audience was suddenly very hostile to the carpenter.

Later this night, they see Arcanus eating at a table, the bag with the Soul Blade with him, and half an hour later they see Maekon inviting herself at his table, offering Arcanus drink in exchange of his "fabulous stories". The heroes fear Maekon wants to steal the blade...

So Virevan sits at the next table and says to Arcanus to keep an eye on his bag. Maekon frowns. Exigu cast a *delay poison* spell to relieve him of the alcohol effect. Arcanus finds Virevan's comments odd, but it's now time for him to go to bed and he leaves for his room.

Moments later, Maekon also leaves for her own room. She mentions "room number 2" to the heroes. Later, Varadan knocks at her door, saying he wants to speak to her. She refuses opening the door to a stranger, saying it's not a decent thing for a lonely woman to do.

However, they start talking through the door. She says she is coming back from Invidia. The pogrom against vistani in Invidia is at an end, as there are no more vistani to be hanged there. This caused border problems with Strahd's Barovia, where vistani are under his protection. "It's not a good idea", she adds, "that your friend Petrak shows his hands in Invidia."

She then proposes that she could bring back Rozaleen's tarokka deck to the vistani (*see session 12, Ashington Manor*), but Varadan refuses. "I'd be glad to help, even if I hate vistani, like Arcanus does too, by the way".

Last thing she says to Varadan is that she feels very insulted that they might think she is a petty thief. She says that if they change her mind about the tarokka deck, they should note she will leave in a few days to Darkon by boat, on the *S.S. Bonniville*. (*DM note – a wink to Dungeon mag “Sea Wolf”*)

They then knock at Arcanus’s door. He is drunk and a bottle of Invidia brandy on the table is nearly finished. He has already seen Maekon before, but he can’t remember where. The bag with the dagger is still in his possession.

Now outside, they meet the twins exiting a café. They discuss the strange events of the afternoon. They looked also concerned about a small village named Canondale, north of Mordent, because the taxes are three days late, which never happened before. The heroes escort the twins back to Foxgrove Manor, except Exigu who will stay in an alley near the inn to watch on Maekon.

But Maekon is quietly in her room. Exigu spies on her, watching her playing her luth all night. Oddly, nobody in the inn complains...

February 7th, 748

... even at 4 am, when the Mordentshire militia enters the inn to arrest Arcanus! Exigu hears that “Professor Arcanus is a prime suspect in the murder of the carpenter, the one causing trouble in the afternoon, and his wife to be. They were savagely bitten at the neck and drained from blood!”

But Exigu sees Arcanus hearing them and then leaving silently by the window. Exigu notices Arcanus left the bag with the Soul Blade behind. Exigu knows that Arcanus is most probably innocent: he never left the inn, and a quick check shows his bed is still warm.

Exigu watches the militias enter Arcanus’s room and quickly leave to search the other rooms for their suspect. Meanwhile, Maekon’s luth never stops...

Exigu stealthily goes in the market place and sees many people now surrounding Arcanus’s wagon. Two bodies lies on the floor, a man and a woman Exigu recognize as the carpenter and his girlfriend.

But his eyes are attracted to the large coffin-like box opened on the side of the wagon, the one with the “vampire” skeleton.

It is *empty* and the wooden spike is on the ground, in front of it...

GAME SESSION THIRTY TWO: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -9

(September 7th, 2008; JFL not present, Austizel played by Martin)

February 7th, 748, 4h30 am

Exigu stays hidden and watches the crime scene. The militia covers the bodies with large fabric sheets. Exigu hears them saying the male body, Lawrence Garrett has an arm torn off, and many broken ribs! The woman has been drained of all blood...

The militia is waiting for Sir Cosse, the head of the local militia, the Lamplighters. The heroes know Cosse reports directly to Daniel Foxgrove.

There are many blood drops on the crime scene, and Exigu guess the torn arm has been moved by the militia as to put this macabre arm under the fabric. Exigu runs to the Foxgrove manor to inform the other heroes of the situation, so they can plan for it when they wake up.

Exigu comes back to check on Arcanus. The traces under the window leads to the barn, and Exigu understand Arcanus left on a horse. The horse's trail goes through Mordentshire and then north.

At 5h30 am, MacRazbunare asks a servant to tell the twins something happened in Mordentshire, and that the heroes will go out at 6 to investigate.

The twins appear downstairs at 6 am sharp, and the heroes brief them.

The twins say what they know about vampires, and how to destroy them:

- They are sinister undead creature that feeds on the blood of the living.
- They often sleep during the day.
- Vampires speak the languages they knew in life.
- Vampires drain blood from victims they get in their clutches, and they drain life energy with their physical attacks.
- Victims they drain rise from the grave as new vampires several days after burial.
- It is said vampires do not cast a shadow and has no reflection in mirrors.
- A vampire is spiritually bound to the grave in which it was first buried, and must return to that coffin to replenish its unholy powers.
- Vampires are destroyed by exposure to sunlight or immersion in running water.
- Vampires cannot stand the presence of garlic, and they cannot approach a mirror or holy symbol presented with forceful conviction.
- Vampires cannot enter a house without being invited. That doesn't extend to "public" houses such as inns, stores or government offices where everybody is invited.
- To destroy a vampire, one must hammer a stake through its heart, but this is nearly impossible in direct combat (but removing this stake brings back the vampire to "life"). Or cut his head and fill it with holy wafers (definitive).

At the crime scene, they meet Sir Cosse, who salutes the twins and the heroes. He formally identifies the bodies as Lawrence Garrett and Bridget Reade. They were supposed to get married in a month.

Garrett has the forearm torn off from the body. On his arm, deep bruises are found, as if it was held solidly. He got many hits on the left ribs, and those probably killed him. His lung is deflated.

She got many savage bite marks on the throat, like if she was bitten more than one time by something with pointed teeth. Her body shows surprisingly few blood drops for this type of severe throat injury, as her body was drained completely of blood...

With the help of the *insight* spell, the heroes also find skeleton feet traces on the ground near the box. Those traces were nearly erased by the militia. Also, under the nails of Bridget is few bits of fabric very similar to the one worn by the skeleton (and same bits of old fabric are found in the coffin-like box).

Cosse says he suspect Arcanus to be the killer, as Garrett did trouble during his show yesterday. The heroes tell Cosse that they did watch the inn all night and do not think the murderer might be Arcanus.

For a moment, Cosse investigate Exigu and asks him what he was doing there during the night. Exigu says he was watching Maekon, as they met her through another adventure but never says he saw Arcanus leave the inn. At this moment, the inn owner tells Cosse that one of Arcanus's horses is missing.

Cosse orders the corpses to be brought to James Martigan, of the Ezra church. Martigan confirms the corpses will be treated as to prevent vampirism: both will have their head cut and the mouth filled with holy wafers. The coffins will be given to the family bolted close, to avoid unnecessary questions.

Around 8 in the morning, they go investigate on Maekon. The inn owner says he didn't see her this morning. The heroes ask him about what time did she stop playing her luth. The inn owner, surprised, says she didn't play last night or this morning... (which is very strange as Exigu saw (and heard) her play her luth all night).

There is no answer when they knock at Maekon's room. Exigu unlocks the door and enter. She is asleep but wakes up when Exigu opens the door. "Get out of my room", she says, annoyed. Exigu exits the room but stays at the door. "Close the door now", she asks. Exigu closes the door and tries to talk with Maekon. The only thing he hears is a chair pulled on the door knob, to prevent any further entry. All Exigu's questions about what she saw last night and pleas to discuss are ignored. The only thing she answers is that "her room wasn't searched yesterday by the militia", which is strange as Exigu heard the militia says they will search all the rooms in order to find Arcanus. Exigu is annoyingly stubborn and asks her questions through the door. At one point, he hears luth music. More questions are left unanswered. Then Exigu feels something tried to dominate and control him, but he was able to resist. He leaves the inn...

While they were planning to go on horse direction north to find Arcanus and talk to him, a Foxgrove manor servant gives them a letter brought to them a few dozens minutes ago by a fabric merchant coming from Dementlieu (from the north).

The letter says:

Friends,

You now have surely realized that Duke Gundar is back among us and is most probably a creature of the night. I didn't realize the skeleton was a real one, as I didn't believe the lady that sold it to me. We are all in danger.

As the militia is wrongly looking for me, I will try to find this Gundar and eliminate him.

Please ask that they keep my wagon and its content safe.

Arcanus

They go talk with the fabric merchant, Valère de Beaulieu. From him, they learn that he met Arcanus around 7h15 am on the road north of Mordentshire. "He looked like fleeing from something, but still his good manners convinced me to help him when he asked me to carry a letter to Mordentshire." He also asked for a pen and some paper.

Before leaving for the north, they go investigate for clues near Arcanus's wagon. They search for it but it doesn't reveal much more. The temporary sticker on the "murderer's brain" in a water tank is hiding "Van Richten's brain" (which he changed in Mordentshire as Van Richten lives there!) (*DM note: in the original entry, this story happens years after Van Richten has disappeared. So Arcanus plays on the monster hunter notoriety with this exhibit. Of course, I had to change it a bit in my game, since VR is still alive and well!*). They find another book which wasn't exhibited by Arcanus, the Book of the Dead, with hieroglyph-like characters from the Amber Wastes. The supposedly "spellbook of Ar-Shickanus" is in fact only gibberish.

At 9h30, they leave for the north on horses to pursue Arcanus. They check Arcanus's bag (the one he left in the inn when he left through the window). The mean looking dagger is there, plus Arcanus's underwear (clean) and a little red satin pouch. The pouch contains a white ribbon, one end likely ripped from something, and it has old brown stains, like blood?

Going north on horses, they eventually find Arcanus's horse wandering on the road, alone. They try to track Arcanus, but it's quite difficult as they found later that Arcanus erased his tracks (*DM note: and very bad survival dices*). However, the afflicted werewolves find the spot where he got down from his horse, and then MacRazbunare's wolf and Exigu's dog Patu find his trace in the woods, after the 10 feet that was erased by Arcanus. Then, quickly, Arcanus is found sleeping near the road.

He doesn't offer any resistance when the heroes surround him. First, Arcanus says he is extremely confused of the events and is ashamed it happened because of him. He wishes he could do anything to help. The heroes ask him who sold him the skeleton. Arcanus says it's Lady Gabrielle Aderre in Invidia! The heroes are shocked, as they met Aderre (Evil Eye adventure) last November!

Arcanus says he was coming back from Zeidenburg a month ago, and he was suddenly surrounded by Aderre's men, led by her lieutenant Matton Blanchard (another known name for the heroes!). They *asked* him to have a representation at Hunadora for their mistress, Lady Gabrielle. He felt he didn't have the choice. It's in this isolated place that he also met a man

named Ardonk Szerieza, who acted like if he was also a lieutenant to Gabrielle. The heroes do not mention they also know him from a long time (being former Gundarakite Freedom Fighters).

Arcanus says Lady Aderre was quite charming. She offered him the skeleton of the famous Duke Gundar for Arcanus's exhibition. Arcanus believed it to be a fake, and accepted buying it for 5 gp as it would replace another skeleton exhibition of lesser visual impact.

The heroes wonder at the cruelty of Gabrielle, who sold Arcanus something truly dangerous!

In Karina, Arcanus learned that Malloccio will soon order the assault of Hunadora: he is hiring a lot of mercenaries, and rumors of an alliance with Falkovnia are getting stronger each day. It is said that Marcos Vedarrak is now a close friend of Malloccio (the heroes saw Vedarrak first in Karina at the dog fight, then at Ivana's Ball in Misericordia).

They go back to Mordentshire with Arcanus, who agreed to give himself to the militia if the heroes would say they do not believe him to be the culprit. Cosse asks Arcanus why he ran away instead of staying and answering questions. Arcanus is evasive at first, then reveals he had trouble with justice in his past, as he was wrongly accused of a crime. He panicked as he thought it would happen again. The heroes think of the bloody ribbon but say nothing (*DM note: for those in the know of Arcanus past trouble with vistanis, good bluff here by Arcanus, his lies are not detected by anyone*).

But Cosse wants to confirm a point with the heroes: that Arcanus was found on the road leading north. After the heroes confirm it, Cosse says Arcanus is most probably innocent: an attack happened early this morning in a farm about 20 minutes south of Mordentshire. A strange man dressed in old bloody clothes entered a house to ask the terrified farmers "what is today's date?" then left howling like a madman after he got the answer.

The heroes choose to go meet the farmer and hear his tale. Cosse asks Arcanus to remain in Mordentshire until further notice by him. His wagon would remain guarded near the militia barrack.

The farmer is repairing his front door. He said a madman destroyed his front door and enter his house ("so long for the uninvited thing", think the players), very early in the morning. He was howling like crazy, and wanted to know the date !?! When he told him of the year 748, he yelled like crazy and ran outside, going south. The farmer heard him yell "748!" and "twelve years!" a few times.

He was wearing very old clothes, moth eaten. MacRazbunare draws a very good portrait of Duke Nharov Gundar (Son of a noble MacRazbunare saw him thrice when he was young). The farmer recognize him, "but he was much leaner, and had wild eyes", he adds.

Exigu follows the "madman's" traces going south but they stop after 400 feet, like if he volatilized. Bat or gaseous form, think the heroes.

The heroes ponder the question of whether or not to go to Hunadora to warn Gabrielle and Ardonk. Then they wonder if Maekon was on a mission from Gabrielle, as this woman is very strange and said she was in Invidia recently. Maybe she controlled the carpenter to remove the stake? Maybe the hostile reaction from the crowd at Arcanus's exhibition is Maekon's fault?

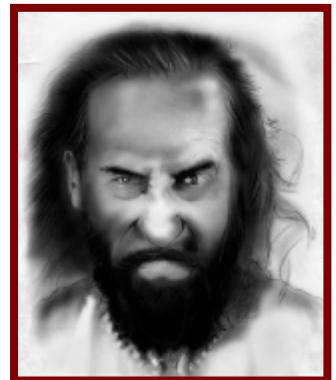


Image from Calling in Verbrek

Back in town, they go talk with Van Richten to inform him of the return of Gundar. The old herbalist is quite surprised of this turn of event. He expresses concern that Gundar won't attack people here in town for their blood, and also of Canondale where there are no news for a few days.

February 8th, 748

In the morning, they *identify* Arcanus's twisted dagger (*DM note: the dagger with the ruby domain Aggarath!*). MacRazbunare reads the following few informations from the dagger: anyone stabbed by it can (Will DC) be driven inside the ruby, in some kind of extraplanar place. It doesn't say how to bring back victims drawn into it, perhaps there is a command word. Using the item is evil as they could be lost forever? The reading isn't clear ...

(DM note: as you can see, I kept the info to a minimum. For the moment, the players do not plan to use it as they suspect a curse is also driving it. Well, I do not have any plans with Aggarath so far, but it could eventually be... if they overuse it, I could rethink it. Ideas welcomed to rethink Forgotten Terror!)

Even if this dagger is Arcanus's property, MacRazbunare will keep it in his backpack, while they ponder what to do with it.

Laurie come back from town, saying the militia displayed all over town saw anything strange last night... no sign of Gundar.

They ride their horses two hour on the road going north, before reaching the small trail in the woods going toward Canondale. This little hamlet is an hour drive inside the Forest of the Ancients. Quickly, they find the weather to be colder, and snow is falling softly. The snow on the evergreen restricts vision to about 50 feet inside the forest. There are traces of logging carts on the trail, as Canondale is mostly a logging community. The last cart traces are a few days old.

(DM note: now we switch to something foreshadowed since a few session ago, the Azenwrath adventure (CotN:C))

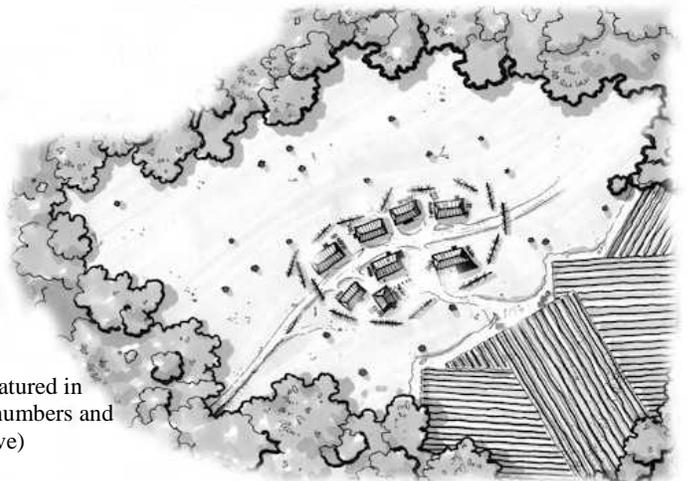
After half an hour, MacRazbunare spots a splash of blood on a tree, about 8 feet tall (about the height of their face while on their horse). In this area, MacRazbunare's wolf find a grisly thing: a leg buried in the snow! It is a male human's leg. No traces of the rest of the body are seen. Snow has erased most traces.

They watch the forest, and are under the impression something unseen is watching them... The atmosphere is somewhat heavy...

At noon, they arrive in a vast clearing.

They see a small village of seven homes. There are fields in the south, but they are not in use (we are in February). The houses are surrounded by barricades of felled trees, and the heroes see about two dozen people watching behind it. The heroes' arrival created a surprise.

Image from the Azenwrath adventure. It was once featured in WotC's map of the month. I edited it to remove the numbers and the cemetery (the heroes do not see it when they arrive)



The black dots on the map are tree stumps, freshly cut and burned in the ground. Some of them are still smoking.

When they come nearer to the village, they notice the villagers are far from welcoming, putting pitchforks between them and the heroes. But the heroes also notice the villagers are more fearful, than aggressive, and they keep looking at the forest with fear.

They look like Mordent people, but more rustic: the man wear beards and hats, while the woman dress very conservatively. One man appear very suspicious and shouts at them “Who are you?”, then “How come you’ve traveled through the forest without being attacked?”, “How do we know the hauntings are not ill-omen of your arrival?” and “How do we know it was not you who slew our rider?”

The heroes remain calm and Petrak tries to answer all the questions, trying to reassure them. He tells the villagers that they found part of a body near the road. Hearing this, one older man takes a woman in his arms, and weeps.

After that the man asking the questions says “We don’t need your help, go away!”

But at that moment a woman comes to the barricade. She has large blue eyes and long black hairs. “Good travelers, wait! I beg you to stay. Fright has changed the most courageous of us into unwelcoming hosts. As you can see” and she waves toward the barricades, “we are in peril, and would need the help of capable people like you seem to be. Please, will you help us?”

The heroes agree to help, and the man who greeted them leaves in a bad mood and walks away to enter a house.

“But it is noon, you must be hungry? Come, we will try our best to give you a meal”, and the women dispatch this task between themselves.

The woman says “welcome to Canondale, my name is Esvll Cramore. You will stay in my house during your stay, while I’ll go at my neighbor.”

Esvll’s house is small, having one room only. There are many Ezra signs on the fireplace mantle. The meal is simple but very good: wild rice, lamb and mint stew, and tea. The heroes notice many town people are watching through the open door or through the windows.

When Petrak is identified as an anchorite, the grimness leaves most of the people’s face, and they smile for the first time since the heroes’ arrival. “Ezra sends us help, we knew it”

Before the meal, the players notice these people are very religious and their worship of Ezra intense. Even Petrak is surprised. They often cite the Books of Ezra, punctuating their sentences with frequent sayings such as “Ezra sends you here to protect us”, “Ezra was a healer of the sick and the protector of the weak. Such was her lot in life, such was her role in the Grand Scheme.”

(DM note: I had the idea to make these people very religious, nearly in a creepy way. My goal was to make it harder later for them to think of giving their wooden Ezra icons back to Azenwrath!

Most of the Ezra sayings are of course from “Anchors of Faith - The Church of Ezra Revealed” article by John W. Mangrum.

Also, I plan to make something based on the Ezra schism soon (with the services they own to Martigan, and Tara Kolyana reading the heresies), so putting some emphasis on this church is for atmosphere ...)

During the meal, Esvyll tells the adventurers of the problems they had in the last days...

“Four days ago, the forest became haunted or cursed, we don’t know. First, the wildlife went quiet and vanished, except the birds, and the livestock panicked – we had to put them inside the barn. Also, trees attacked the hunters in the wood, with flailing branch and grabbing roots! It wasn’t deadly yet, as all hunters could come back to Canondale safely, if not for flailing marks and a great fear.

“Three days ago, the trees near the houses began moving as though uprooting themselves. They moved slowly but it was clear that after a time they would uproot themselves from the frozen ground, and then who knows what they would have done! So we cut down the trees and burned the stumps to prevent them from growing back. Since then, sometimes we see the trees at the clearing edge move strangely, but no attacks happened.

“Also three days ago, the villagers sent Serek, our best rider, to ride toward Mordentshire and ask Jules Weathermay to help us with the Lamplighters. We know Serek never made it. Not long after he entered the forest, we heard his scream! A small party of hunters, including me, braved the woods and found Serek’s horse running wild. We brought the animal back, but no traces of Serek... The horse had a large wound: something large had bitten its flanks, and there were sharp slivers of wood in the wounds!

"From the Mists of Death came the horrors of the night. They were the drinker of blood, the stealer of breath and the beast that rends. That was from the book of Ezra. Ezra, protect us.", she said at the end of her tale.

At the heroes’ question, the villagers say they are logging here in this area for the past 75 years, without any trouble of the sort. Exigu asks if they added a new territory for logging recently, but the answer is no. They try to be respectful of nature, not cutting every tree in the forest, even if it makes it harder for them.

"When the mists of Death sweep down, when darkness devours the land and consumes the wicked, Ezra shall stand vigil over those who have been true to her and nature", they added in unison.

MacRazbunare tells what he knows about treants and similar fey animated trees:

- Treants are extremely rare in this world. It is believed fey are animating these trees by giving them a spirit. Most treants are born good, and careful about the forest and nature in general, but irremediably they become more evil and selfish from feeding from corrupted soil. It is usually a question of a few decades maximum (a small part of a treant’s lifecycle) before a treant becomes evil.
- Treants are capable of animating other trees to fight on their behalf.
- If a treant sits immobile, it’s nearly indistinguishable from a regular tree.

- Treants are vulnerable to fire.
- Treants deal massive damage to inanimate objects or structures and can quickly reduce a hut to rubble.
- If treated with respect, treants can sometimes be convinced to reveal information about their forest.
- Treants speak Sylvan, along with a few phrases of other humanoid languages, typically to warn creatures away from their forest homes.

They question the villagers, but they do not find any clue of a sudden change in the forest, something that corrupted the soil or similar ecological change.

They plan to use a *detect animal and plants* on the next morning. They make an inventory of all oil supply they have.

Exigu has an idea, which is immediately executed by the villagers: they make a few bundles of dried wood just outside the barricades, as treants are vulnerable to fire. To which the villagers answers “Ezra spoke, saying what shall become of the pure of heart if they have no guardian in mists? Ezra sent you to guide us.”

At one point, Esvll provide excuses for their mayor, the man who welcomed them roughly. Mayor Seffirin has been quick to anger of late. But considering his wife's Laurina death three months ago and the recent hauntings, it's understandable.” The heroes ask of the cause of the death, and Esvll answers “she grew weaker over a period of several months, eventually falling into a sleep from which she never awoke...”

The heroes learn that a few people are somewhat capable of adventuring in Canondale: Esvll (ranger), Neville Bennett (fighter), his son Isaac (fighter) and Simon Lewis (ranger), but they are all very low level.

DM note, here's the village list of people I planned. There are 7 houses in Canondale, and 23 people. Adults's names are underlined:

A Mayor Seffirin Hezer (Ari2), wife: Laurina died three months ago

B Esvll Cramore (Ranger1)

C Alfred Golding, wife: Emily. Serek was their son (the slain rider). Other kids: Irving^{4 years old}, Cyrus⁸

D Benjamin Bennett, wife: Lilian. Kids: Samuel¹⁸, Mercy¹⁶

E Neville Bennett (Fighter2, cousin of Benjamin), wife: Prudence. Kids: Isaac¹⁹ (Fighter1), Juliane¹², Lucille¹⁴

F Simon Lewis (Ranger1), wife: Ruth. Kids: Giles^{6 month old}

G Hugh Ward, wife: Sarah. Kids: Martha²⁰, Faith⁸

At one point, a little girl comes to them and says “The forest is haunted. Mayor Seffirin says that the dead have come back to haunt the livings, and they manifest through the trees... I’m afraid...” but Exigu tells her that Petrak was sent to them by Ezra, which helps her feeling relieved. Her name is Faith.

To that the villagers say “Ezra sought for the pure heart in many lands, but never did she seek in vain. That you are here today is a proof of that.”

The heroes install themselves for the night at Esyll’s, while she will sleep at the Ward’s home.

The men will guard the town surrounding, with many torches planted in the soil to light the village’s surroundings.

February 9th, 748

Between midnight and 2 am, it is Petrak’s turn to be watchman. After a moment, he notices someone is murmuring something near Esyll’s house. Petrak goes to the window and sees Seffirin walking between the houses, like if he didn’t want to be seen from the town guards...

Then, Petrak also realize the murmurs come from *inside* the house... On the fireplace mantle, an iron box painted with Ezra figures is trembling slightly!

The mayor is able to pass through the barricades without being seen and walks toward the forest.

Petrak decides to awaken Virevan, who was the last to be on watch. Virevan really do not want to run after the mayor in the dark. Petrak is more for it. They decide to awaken all the other heroes to discuss it and vote.

While Virevan awakens the other, Petrak takes the trembling iron box in his hand: it stops moving! Even the murmurs have stopped. Inside the box is a small wooden statuette icon of Ezra.

The heroes discuss the situation and are not very warm to follow the mayor. However, one of them offers that it might be a sign from Ezra... and that shakes them into following the mayor.

They leave Canondale about five minutes after the mayor. His traces in the snow are easy to follow. They tell the guards to be on watch, and that they will be back shortly after going for an investigation in the woods.

After a long moment in the silent wood, the heroes are standing at the entrance of a small clearing which appear to be the village graveyard. Tombstone are upside down, and there are many dark holes in the ground.

Two large creatures are standing in the graveyard. The one closest to the heroes is using its stout and fluid roots to unearth dead bodies. Four of them already dangle from its branches. Behind it is a larger tree, with large yellow eyes and a wide mouth with splinters and sharpened bark. The players recognize the tree for being the one they met in the forest six days ago (see session 29).

Seffirin hangs in its grasp, paralyzed with fear! The massive tree opens its mouth when the heroes arrive. The heroes hear the crackling of wood as the massive tree says “Well well, cease your play with the corpses. Fresher meals await...” (it spoke in Sylvan)



GAME SESSION THIRTY THREE: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -10

(November 30th, 2008; Sylvain was not present, so Exigu played by Martin)

February 9th, 748, 1h00 am

The trees move to attack the heroes! The one holding the mayor stays behind. It is presumably the leader as it is much larger. The other tree attacks the heroes with its wooden brutal fury. But the heroes concentrate their spells (*magic missile*, *melf's magic arrow* and *produce flame*) at the leading one.

The heroes' attack is powerful. But the trees hit them hard with bark and wood blows (attacks making in the 16 – 17 hp each). The smaller one manages to put the monk unconscious.

But quickly, the leading one says in sylvan “Hold your fire, humans, I will let him go”, then briefly shakes the mayor, and then adds “I am not the monster you seek, something else is coming... Do you want to know?”

Under his command, the other tree backs off a little and stops attacking. In this show of power, a third tree uproots itself and moves between the leading one and the heroes. They didn't identify this tree as a treant before it started moving.

“We just came here to see our grandfather”, the larger tree says. In a goodwill gesture, it then drops the mayor, who runs toward the heroes for safety. The trees retreat and let the mayor reach the heroes.

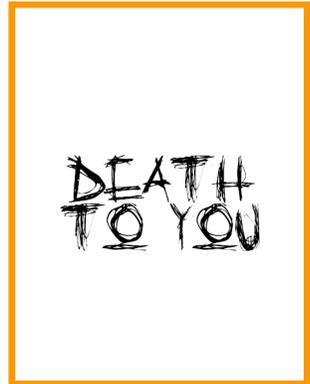
But the players resume their attack on the trees as soon as the mayor is with them! Varadan is nearly killed in one attack (two hits from the branches, 30 hp!). The mayor is also hit and falls unconscious. But the trees are killed one after the other in a rough battle.

(DM note: the treants do not animate trees, as they can't use this power while in the range of Azenwrath's items (the mayor had the scroll with him). This would have changed the course of the battle and could have resulted in a TPK! Anyway, this unexpected "no negotiation" mode by the players made them miss a lot of information the treants could have given them about Azenwrath...)

The heroes go back to the village to fetch some of the guarding villagers, to show them the fell treants. Meanwhile, the mayor is brought back to consciousness after healing spells.

"I am free! It wasn't her!", he says. The mayor explains he wanted to unearth the corpse of his wife and bury her at a crossroad. "This would confound her spirit, forcing her to stay there and thus preventing her from haunting us", he adds. The heroes know many similar crossroads legends, but believe most of them are false.

The heroes ask him why he wanted to do such a thing. The mayor then shows them a scroll. It shows a message scribbled madly, in black oily letters: "Death to you"! He explains this scroll wasn't always that ugly. It changed. It was previously showing an Ezra saying "Ezra set forth on a quest to find a guardian for her people. She sought the one pure heart who would assume her role". *(DM note: handouts created with the CrazyKiller font)*



But Virevan's sharp senses smell a faint odor of almond. Macrazbunare identifies this odor as possibly that of a poison, cyanide! The mayor seems genuinely surprised by this *(DM note: good Buff roll)*. The heroes think the mayor poisoned his wife little by little, as he also said this scroll was Laurina's preferred religious item.

Then the mayor takes the scroll out again and asks the heroes "Then who do you think wrote this?" while waving the scroll at them.

But the message on the scroll has changed! It now says "Kill you all"!

Puzzled by this, and not wanting to stay any much longer in a cemetery after midnight, the heroes walk back to the hamlet, after having piled woods under the treants and set fire to them.



Virevan discretely asks the villagers if there are any strange rumors about the death of Laurina. The guards, surprised, answer negatively. "No, she fell sick and died, that's it." But at least one them seems perplexed by the question.

In the same discussion, the guards say that all the villagers are very devoted to Ezra, except "poor Martha. She had great sufferings in her private life, but no longer prays Ezra. In fact, she now seems devoid of most emotions..."

Arrived in the village, they check the scroll again. Its message has again changed, to show another mad scribbling... "Die Die Die" Petrak thinks it might be a message from beyond the veil of life, perhaps the mayor's wife.

Before going to sleep, they use a last spell, *detect animal or plants*, and the result is that there are no other treants in the spell's range.



Easyll's Ezra wooden icon is trembling on the fireplace...

February 9th, 748, 10h00 am

The heroes learn spells.

The village's guards confirm the heroes that the felled treants burned completely. The villagers speak softly, as if not trying to raise fear in the other villagers. The village has an oppressive feel.

The mayor meet them, and after thanking them again from saving his life, says the leading treant said something to him last night in common. "This horrible carnivorous tree", he said, "told me that *Azenwrath is coming*. Does it mean anything to you?"

(DM note: I was trying to find a way to provide them the information they missed by killing the treants. I figured they could have run to Van Richten's library to find about this Azenwrath. But they again dismissed this information lead... Not even a knowledge check was made!)

Easyll then has a discussion with them. "No", she confirms, "the mayor's wife' death isn't suspect." But she says *all* Ezra icons in the village are trembling, and the heroes thus learn there are more than one of these statuettes. Easyll explains that these statuettes have been bought from vistani about a year ago. There are five other statuettes in the village. Easyll left her house vacant for the heroes while these help the villagers, and she is sleeping with the Ward's family. She confirms the wooden icon at the Wards is also shaking. In fact, she says *all of them* started shaking softly a week ago

The poor villagers offered food for the icons (Easyll paid with goat cheese), but the mayor made an expensive gift to her devout wife: the extremely pretty scroll. It was all golden and had nice illuminations around an excerpt from the holy Book of Ezra. He bought a wooden icon too.

This reminds the heroes to look for the scroll. Again, its message has changed... "I'm near"! It seems like the ink on the scroll becomes oily and exudes from the paper to form other letters in a dirty blackish oily ink...

The heroes decide to use the spell *See ethereal resonance* at the mayor's house. The mayor agrees, if somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of letting the heroes enter his house.

The spell reading is the following: a large block of dark ice is encasing a normal bed. A bottle drips a liquid on the ice, and it melts slowly, to reveal a now sumptuous red bed, with luxurious red velvet linen...



(DM note: the mayor killed his unloving wife to give way to Easyll, a much more interesting wife. That kind of ethereal reading is not easy to come with unprepared!).

The heroes guess that Laurina is the ice, the liquid is the poison, but they have no clue for the moment as to what the sumptuous bed means.

Near one of the shaking Ezra wooden icon, Varadan meanwhile finds an unsealed brick in the fireplace. Behind it, he finds a small almond scented vial...

Then, a *detect magic* spell shows that the Ezra wooden icon is magical and the scroll too. It lingers of “alteration” and “summoning” schools of magic. It seems that the scroll and the icon are from a magical source, but do not have identifiable magical properties. Easyll’s icon has the same reading.

At 1hpm, they go to see Martha Ward. When she opens the door, Martha’s mother, Sarah, tells them “Ezra saw that those who had been true to her were but few. A scattering of dim starts in a night of deepest black... We are so relieved to have you to protect us like you saved Sephirin!”

In the main room, the young girl named Faith (8 years old) is watching the icon tremble. She turns toward the heroes and tells “As Ezra would guide and protect her anchorites, her anchorites would stand vigil over those of good faith.”

Sarah tells them of Martha’s tragic past: “William Fisher, her lover, died in the forest three years ago, coming back from Mordentshire. He was presumably attacked by wolves while on the road coming here. Martha was devastated and never came out of her mourning black clothes, even a long time after his death. That is, until six month ago, when she ... changed. She suddenly left her black clothes to dress normally. But she showed apathy, like if nothing mattered anymore... She is still baking bread, as she did before, but shows no interest in anything...”

The heroes ask to see Martha. The twenty year old woman indeed has no emotion, speaking with a dull, emotionless voice. After the heroes’ question, she says she didn’t see anything special within the last week in the village, other than what the heroes already know. Asked specifically about the events of three years ago, she simply says “it’s all right, it doesn’t pain me anymore.”

The heroes use again the spell *See ethereal resonance* in Martha’s room. The reading shows an overcast sky over an old wedding cake, slowly crumbling to dust while the sound of a sobbing woman is heard. The heroes identify this reading as despair.

Exigu notice that the wooden icon seems to be shaking with a little more force since they arrived in the Ward’s house?

MacRazbunare checks the icon, and its wooden grain tells him of an old oak. It’s probably the same tree that was used for all wooden icons.

They gather all the wooden icons and put them on a tree stump in the middle of the village. They shake in unison. Looking at this, two women prayed: “Ezra spoke to the mist. Asked She, *The world is yours. You set its shape. Why do you allow its people to wander, lost and afraid?* But the mists did not answer.”

The scroll is now changing quickly to any of the four messages they previously saw, its oily ink moving on the paper to form new messages: *I’m near, kill you all, death to you and die die die !*

The villagers are now afraid and many women gather to start praying around the icons. The men are told by the heroes to continue to watch the forest.

Faith uses this confusion to discretely give a small book to Virevan. It is Martha’s private journal! The heroes retreat to a quiet place and start reading.

(DM note: following is adapted from VRGttFey)

Martha Ward's Journal

(all pages have been torn out before these last entries)

Today is the third anniversary of the day I buried my love, my William. I went to the cemetery in Mordent again, with flowers. People watch me with sad eyes but I do not care. It is them who forget too quickly. I lost my love, is that easy to understand?

There is nothing left for me now. I can continue to spin and sew and bake my bread, but for what reason? I have no life anymore. I would end my life myself, but I won't be buried beside William if I do it, suicide isn't permitted by Ezra.

I had a dream last night; at least I think it was a dream. A pretty little butterfly winged creature came by the window and looked at me. « Why are you sad? », she asked. Its face expression was that of intense curiosity.

« Because my love is gone and I have nothing to live for since », I said. I told her of William's death and of our plans to marry and the life that never was.

« Do you feel pain? », she asked.

« Pain, yes. Pain so deep in my heart that I think there is a great hole in it. I feel empty »

« Would you like the sadness to go away? », she asked again. « I can give you that gift, if you wish it »

« You can make it so I won't feel the terrible loneliness and the pain, the emptiness, the sorrow? »

« I can. It is not eternal death, don't worry, but an eternal life without suffering, without aging, without the pain of sorrow »

« What would you want in exchange? »

« Nothing you would be unwilling to give. You could keep doing your spinning and baking, and live at your parent's home. As much or as little as you please. And we would be cousins. You would not be able to feel love anymore, but neither sorrow. Would you like such a gift? ».

« It sounds like a fine gift, and I'm honored that you offer this to me. But I must think on it. Can you come back tomorrow for my answer? »

« I shall be here » said the little creature, and it flew through the window. Was it real? Was it a dream? Do I wish for this?

MacRazbunare identify the winged creature as probably being a fey.

But they are distracted: the icons are shaking with more force. Also, the wind stopped and there are no bird noises anymore! For a moment, the only noise in the village is the rattling noise of the icons on the stump, but soon the villagers resume their prayers.

A *detect animal and plants* fail to detect any treant in its range.

Exigu gets on the highest house to watch the forest. He sees nothing.

The heroes at this point discuss about destroying the scroll and the icons.

The scroll becomes an illegible garble, like if a child was coloring the paper in black, erasing it, and starting again.

The villagers are now extremely afraid. The women pray in unison “Ezra knew that Death would come for her, as it comes to all in time. When Ezra entered the Gray Land, there would be no guardian to fill Her role. There would be no one to stand between Her people and the Legions of the Night.” Young children are crying.

The heroes notice a young man, Samuel Bennett, is taking care of Martha, looking genuinely concerned for her safety.



At 4 pm, for a moment, they hear loud noise in the forest, in the cemetery direction. The noise was like if something was hitting a tree.

The scroll's ink is again showing the four messages alternatively... A woman shouts to the sky “Ezra, save us!”

They again hear the noise of a cracking tree in the cemetery direction. Then, while there is no wind, they notice the trees at the forest's edge are slowly moving, their branches moving like under a breeze...but none of these trees uproot itself.

Seeing this, villagers resume their prayers “Ezra spoke to the mist. Asked She, *The world is yours. You set its shape. Why do you allow its people to wander, lost and afraid?* But the mists did not answer. Again Ezra spoke. *Why have you filled your world with the Legions of the Night?* Yet the mists would not answer.”

Austizel suddenly hears a paper noise behind him, and then finds himself stuck in fog! He is able to walk out of it without other problem than impaired vision while within the cloud. The heroes identify this as a *fog cloud* spell. They *detect magic*: the cloud is magical, but another source of

magic is in the middle of the cloud. They think the culprit is still within the fog cloud. They run a long rope about three feet high through the cloud but do not catch anything with it ...

MacRazbunare gets on a house to watch. Suddenly, he also hears paper noise in his back and is then struck by a *hypnotic pattern* spell! MacRazbunare successfully resist the spell effect. Meanwhile, a scroll falls near Austizel (who was near the house on which MacRazbunare was standing). It's the paper noise that MacRazbunare heard. The scroll is magical. Austizel looks at it and sees a scroll half empty, the other half with the *spectral hand* spell?

By then the *fog cloud* has ended. In the middle where the cloud stood, Austizel finds another scroll in part empty, also with other spells: *Mending* and *Mordenkainen's Lucubration* !

(DM note: I'm having fun at gas lighting them a little. All of these strange phenomena are from Azenwrath, who can use any scroll within range. The players took a long time before realizing I'm using their own scrolls against them ☺).

Exigu decides to burn the holy scroll now blasphemous! The religious women, seeing this, grab the Ezra wooden icons so the players can't burn them.

Somewhere past 5pm, the sun is starting to decline. A man think he saw something moving in the forest, but it is probably a false alert. Exigu gets on his riding dog and patrols near the forest's edge, but taking care to remain out of each of the slowly flailing branches.

Around 6 pm, Exigu briefly sees the silhouette of a tall creature, about 13 feet high. It is extremely thin and doesn't look like a treant or a humanoid... It starts moving very quickly toward the village! Exigu barely manages to get out of its way.

Now they can see the nature of the hideous thing. It seems like a monstrosity of wood and paper. Its limbs and torso are bundle of branches covered by a "skin" of torn papers, who look. A web of root spreads over and under the paper, holding everything as one. Its disproportionate head is a fan of branches. On its body hang many wooden objects: spoons, toys, etc.



Moving fast, it runs past MacRazbunare without hurting him, or any villagers. But the villagers panic, and one woman grabs two icons before running for cover. Exigu grabs the remaining three icons. The heroes bombard the creature with spells but it ignores the damage done as it runs toward the stump.

Now at the tree stump, it passes its long wooden fingers through the ashes that were previously the scroll... Its head turns toward MacRazbunare as if he was the source of this destruction. But the creature soon turns its attention toward a halfling on its riding dog, Exigu, who has in his hand three wooden statuettes.

A crossbow hit by Varadan makes no damage at all. While MacRazbunare runs away from Azenwrath, it attacks him brutally before running toward Exigu. It stops in front of the halfling and opens a large wooden hand toward the statuettes. Exigu refuses, and suddenly a *lighting bolt* starts from the creature toward Exigu, who escapes with his evasion rogue ability. But farther, a woman and a child were not so lucky and fell from the spell...

While *magic missiles* fall on him, and Varadan and Virevan are hitting him with all they got, Azenwrath manages to attack the halfling physically this time, hurting him bad with his two arms (44 hp!). Exigu hands it the statuettes.

The monster then starts running toward the woman who took the two statuettes, but before it goes, all gets a last attack on it. It notices the heroes are following it, and hurling spells too. Azenwrath stops and send them a large ball of fire. Without looking at the results, it resumes its course toward the other statuettes.

But the *fireball* spell hit the heroes hard. Exigu and his riding dog are killed, while Petrak falls unconscious. MacRazbunare's wolf is badly wounded too.

Austizel throws oil at the creature but misses. MacRazbunare throws *produce flame* while Petrak gets healing by Virevan. The heroes yell "drop the statuettes" to the religious woman. Looking back at the hideous creature running after her, her fear is bigger than her religious feelings and she let the statuettes fall on the ground, and she flees.

Azenwrath gets to the statuettes and takes them. Meanwhile, the heroes also reach him. More *produce flame* are thrown, as well as *magic missiles*. Austizel, Varadan and Virevan try to keep it from fleeing now that it got the statuettes. It attacks Austizel, but Virevan has the last word: the creature falls on its knees, and let go its statuettes in front of it. Its last move before it falls on the ground is to try to grab the statuettes back...

After a moment, they notice the creature is twitching, so they whack it while others pour oil on its wooden frame. They set it on fire.

DM note : So it is with great surprise that they managed to kill Azenwrath! For a party averaging 5th level, a 133 hp behemot, with amazing spell resistance! But they kept him on the run with the statuettes, instead of having him kill a defending party one by one to reach the icons. One of the PC was killed, and another went very close. I really didn't expect this, but they REALLY wanted Azenwrath to be destroyed and threw all they had.

GAME SESSION THIRTY FOUR: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDEN† -11

(played January 18th, 2009, Sylvain was not present, so Exigu was played by JF Hétu (after he was raised from the dead. Before that, he wasn't that much talkative). JF Lévesque wasn't present either, and Austizel was played by Martin)

Varadan, afflicted lycanthrope, gets a new level and advance to Moonchild 2.

February 9th, 748, 6h30 pm

After the battle, the heroes heal themselves.

The villagers get together and mourn the death of Ruth Lewis and her six month baby Giles. They were killed by Azenwrath's lightning bolt.

Early, the heroes go to sleep. Those doing watch hear the villagers mourn their death, and pray Ezra.

DM note: but not all that is dead in RL remains. Azenwrath is too cool. I sent them by email a cut scene info, a dream. Soon they will learn anyway of the backstory of this golem – i.e. what they could have learned from the treants or Van Richten's library.

This very night, in a lonely village way north of Canondale, a small wooden house stands outside the field limits. This house is inhabited by an old woman, who is not seeing much since a few years. Her sharp eyes went darker and darker with the passing years.

When she hears noise in her kitchen, she assumed it was that mouse again. But somehow, the noise was different. It was like an object was slowly vacillating, like a beating heart or a trembling hand. "The poor mouse is stuck somewhere", she thought, "and is shaking from fear."

She then found the origin of the noise to be her kitchen tools drawer. "The poor little thing", she thought, "got stuck in the drawer while foraging for food."

She was to open the drawer when a loud electric storm bang was heard in the distance. She waited in anticipation. Another bang was heard seconds later, but nearby. The old woman went quickly outside before the incoming storm to get the linens she had displayed for drying.

This night, during the storm, no one heard her screams of pain.

So the door is left open for an Azenwrath's sequel. Suggestions welcomed.

February 10th, 748, am

The heroes learn their spells, and cast *preserve* on Exigu's body.

In the morning, the Mayor asks Petrak if he can preside over the funerals, being an anchorite. Again, during the ceremony, the heroes find the villagers extremely pious. At the end of the ceremony, Simon Lewis, husband and father of the deceased, thanks Petrak.

10h00 am

The heroes will soon leave for Mordentshire. The villagers are extremely thankful. The Mayor says a few words about the courage of the heroes. Varadan notices the mayor is often glancing toward Easyll's, like if looking for her approbation. She ignores him.

DM note: fun players thought, for those in the know about Azenwrath's adventure – "Easyll must be with him in this wife poisoning scheme" :) The mayor in fact poisoned his wife to give way to showing his love of Easyll, but Easyll has nothing to do with the poisoning.

Faith is holding her older sister's hand, Martha, and watches the heroes leave with a look of hope...

1h30 pm

Upon their arrival in Mordentshire, they go to the Ezran church and ask for James Martigan, head of this church. He agrees to cast the *raise dead* spell on Exigu, again in exchange of a future service (it's the third time (the third service) they owe him). He says he might have something for them in return.

But the spell has to be cast with a diamond worth 5 000 g.p., a fortune for the heroes. They only have about half that sum... Martigan is a decent person, but he can't use the church's money to raise Exigu, otherwise he would be buried under an avalanche of demands from his flocks.

The heroes visit the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins. The heroes tell them what happened in Canondale, first the Azenwrath adventure. The ladies are impressed, as Azenwrath is a kind of legend.

Azenwrath, Laurie explains, was perhaps the first treant in the lands of the mists. But when the region of Forlorn was snatched from where it stood and it entered the land of the mists, Azenwrath soon went insane from the newly corruption in the land. He even attacked druids, as he believed humans were the cause of this earth corruption. From his roots grew monster trees and aberrations that now plague the land. Then a wizard by the name of Kyall hunted Azenwrath and destroyed him. The hunt lasted a few years, and to repay himself, Kyall crafted scroll papers and velum from the treant's body, as well as wooden toys and trinkets. Yet, Azenwrath was too strong willed to die, and a magical scroll animated itself and the spell killed the wizard. Then, Azenwrath recreated itself from the leftover branches, and started hunting the core for its parts. That was centuries ago, and even vistani fears him and needed to strike a bargain with him. There are even rumors that Azenwrath is the head of the Black Grove, a coven of evil trees.

(DM note: from Gaz 1, The Black Grove)

The heroes also discuss Canondale's mayor wife poisoning case. They can testify that the scroll (now destroyed) was having a cyanide smell, and a cyanide bottle was found in his house. The twins say it isn't enough to convince Seffirin Hezer in court. They need more proofs to bring him

to justice, or to have the Lamplighters permit his wife's body to be examined for poison traces. They will ask their father, who is one of the hands of justice in Mordent.

Martha's fey case is then brought to the twins' attention. The twins read the last page of Martha's journal (*see last game session*). According to them, Martha is now a changeling – she is immortal, but cannot feel any emotion. In this case, she doesn't seem to be a servant of the fey. Why the feys do it is unknown, fey logic is often not easily understandable. They think changeling is a gift for humans.

The fey is probably a Carrot Top. What MacRazbunare can tell about these feys:

These feys goes by many names, including fire flits, carrot tops, and night sprites. These Seelie fey (good aligned) are master gardeners, but they are never seen by day. These sprites call themselves the alven. Like all shadow fey, they burn to ash in sunlight. The best way to impress alven is to compliment their gardens or offer a gift of seeds. An alven simply ignores most attacks, but weapons forged of cold iron can pierce its defenses. Never offer cut flowers to an alven; it's an inexcusable offense! They can take the form of butterflies.

(DM note: from JWM's knowledge nature notes in the Monster A-Z project)

The good thing, the twins say, is that the fey is from the Seelie Court, otherwise it would be much more difficult to ask for Martha's soul back.

Perhaps the Canondale folk know where the fey is. They could have noticed the place, without knowing it's a fey living there: a ring of mushroom, an especially healthy tree, or a rare one, an exquisite rose garden, etc.

After these stories, the twins say they agree to give the heroes 2 600 g.p. to help them pay for Exigu's *raise dead*. Laurie writes a letter for Martigan.

Meanwhile, Varadan scented Gennifer's lycanthropy, as per his new *scent of the blood* Moonchild ability! But it isn't as strong as what he can scent in Virevan (another Nathan Timothy afflicted lycanthrope). It means Natalia's bloodline is somehow mixed with that of Nathan Timothy's?

DM note: improvised on the spot when Varadan's player asked. Figured it was cool, and could provide future adventure hooks! Suggestions welcomed!

They go meet Martigan with the letter ("I see you have powerful friends", he says) and most of their own money. The heroes now have a meagre 100 g.p. for total cash fortune. Martigan agrees to do the spell on next morning.

Martigan asks the heroes for a service, in exchange of one of the three spell casting he did. It can be extremely delicate, and discretion is advised. A vault was recently discovered in Helbenik (Valachan, south of Mordent), following a small earthquake, in a small Ezra shrine. He says this Ezra shrine is small and has a very small following, since "Valachans are savages unsuited for the Ezra religion".

According to Martigan, the first reports from the priest in Helbenik are disturbing. He found a reliquary of ancient holy texts, supposedly on the fundamentals of the Ezra church and its

foundation. Oleg Milovan, the priest in Helbenik, is a friend, and a retired inquisitor of Ezra and Martigan respects his authority when he writes these texts are sacrilegious, heretic and dangerous. Martigan asks the heroes to travel to Helbenik and bring him back this reliquary. He will probably browse through them to see if they should be sent to Levkarest for the archive vault, or simply destroyed.

They then visit Van Richten and tell him about Gennifer's lycanthropic scent. He says he will think about it, but that's an interesting new fact about Natalia Vorishkova. Van Richten is impressed of Varadan's Moonchild abilities, and said he might suggest that to Gennifer. He reminds the heroes not to talk to Gennifer about this: she doesn't know for sure she is a lycanthrope, but however, he adds, she isn't dumb and must know of this dreadful possibility.

MacRazbunare goes in the forest to collect *goodberries*. The others buy a pony and a saddle for Exigu (40 g.p.).

At night, they are invited by the twins for diner. Daniel Foxgrove is there too. He is friendlier since the Godefroy event (*see game session 29, 30*). He asks the players to tell him all the details they know about the possible poisoning case in Canondale. He takes a lot of notes. At the end, Daniel says there is a Mordent mayor reunion on March the 1st. It could be an occasion to interrogate Seffirin Hezer on the matter.

The heroes sleep at the Weathermay-Foxgrove manor.

February 11th, 748, am

In the morning, Martigan raises Exigu from the dead.

At 10h00 am, they leave south, in the Helbenik direction. The travel time is six hours to get to Delmunster, half an hour more to get to the Valachani frontier, another hour and a half to get to Helbenik, and then about 20 minutes more to get to the shrine.

Near 3h00 pm, they travel a part of the land where the road is mucky. A small green creature is on the road, in front of them. It is naked, save for moss loincloth. It has long ears and a large grin. MacRazbunare identifies it as a Bog Imp, some kind of fey.

Knowledge nature: Despite the name, it is a fey spirit native to swamps, not a fiend. Bog imps speak Sylvan and Common. Bog imps torment anyone who passes through their territory, but it's mostly just malicious and harmless. However, with just a glance, a bog imp can will any foe who is standing on a soft surface (such as mud) to be sucked down into the mire. Any mundane liquids (not magic potions) that come near a bog imp immediately stagnate.

DM note: monster from Heroes of Horror. I have always liked these critters. Since they are eventually heading for the Martha fey adventure, I wanted to have them encounter another fey, and have them see what kind of alien logic these things have... This was a little comedy, but still dangerous!

The fey raises its hand and says in sylvan "Stop! Stop! I have to tell you about the dragon!" The heroes stop and MacRazbunare, who speaks sylvan, tell him to go on.

“But to tell you”, the Bog Imp said with a large smile, “I need all the bread you are carrying. All of it!”

MacRazbunare collects the bread from each hero, and hands the bag to the fey. It thanks the druid and moves on the side of the road to let the hero pass. Varadan asks him about the dragon, but the imp maliciously replies “he is not there today” and walks toward the swamp with the bag.

Shrugging, the heroes resume their travel but suddenly Austizel sees the mucky ground under him melt like fudge, and he starts drowning! One more imp is seen standing in the bushes, and he shouts “die, elf!” (*DM note: Austizel, and elf, was unseen from the imps until now, as the elf was standing at the end of the hero line when the imp discussed with the heroes in front*).

MacRazbunare tries to intervene “We are leaving, leave him alone, he is going away”, but the leading imp answers “No, he will stay with us... forever!”

Austizel grips the nearby horses’ harness and manages to stay out of the drowning mud.

More green imps are seen in the bushes! Petrak (*produce flame*) and MacRazbunare (*magic missile*) kill one of them, who was acting more aggressive. Seeing this, one of the imps throws a large rotten fish at MacRazbunare’s head! This imp mocks MacRazbunare by imitating the face of a fish and then pinching his nose in mock disgust (the imp itself smells of the swamp).

At one point, another rotten fish is thrown at Austizel’s head. From a distance, another fish is thrown, and misses lamentably, probably being out of range. But one of the imps suddenly uses a blowpipe and sends a tiny dart at Austizel. Austizel feels feeble for a moment, but manages to fight this effect.

Arrows and spells then start falling on the imps. They have some kind of protection from arrows, who do not seem to do much damage, if any at all. Exigu tries a silver arrow. The imp receiving it falls on the ground, with a comical theatrical effect. He probably wasn’t hurt at all.

MacRazbunare does *daze* at one of them, who blows on it like if it was a candle. Another one moons the heroes, while a new imp exits the swamp bushes with a blowpipe in hand...



The heroes decide to move on and exit the area instead of fighting the critters. A rain of rotten fish pieces falls after them ...

Farther on the road, they *detect poison* on the fish, negatively. It was just some rotten swamp fishes after all...

All their non magical liquids are brackish, like swamp water...

Mordent Map:

Mordent-Dementlieu border

Canondale (session 32)

Westcote Manor (session 17)

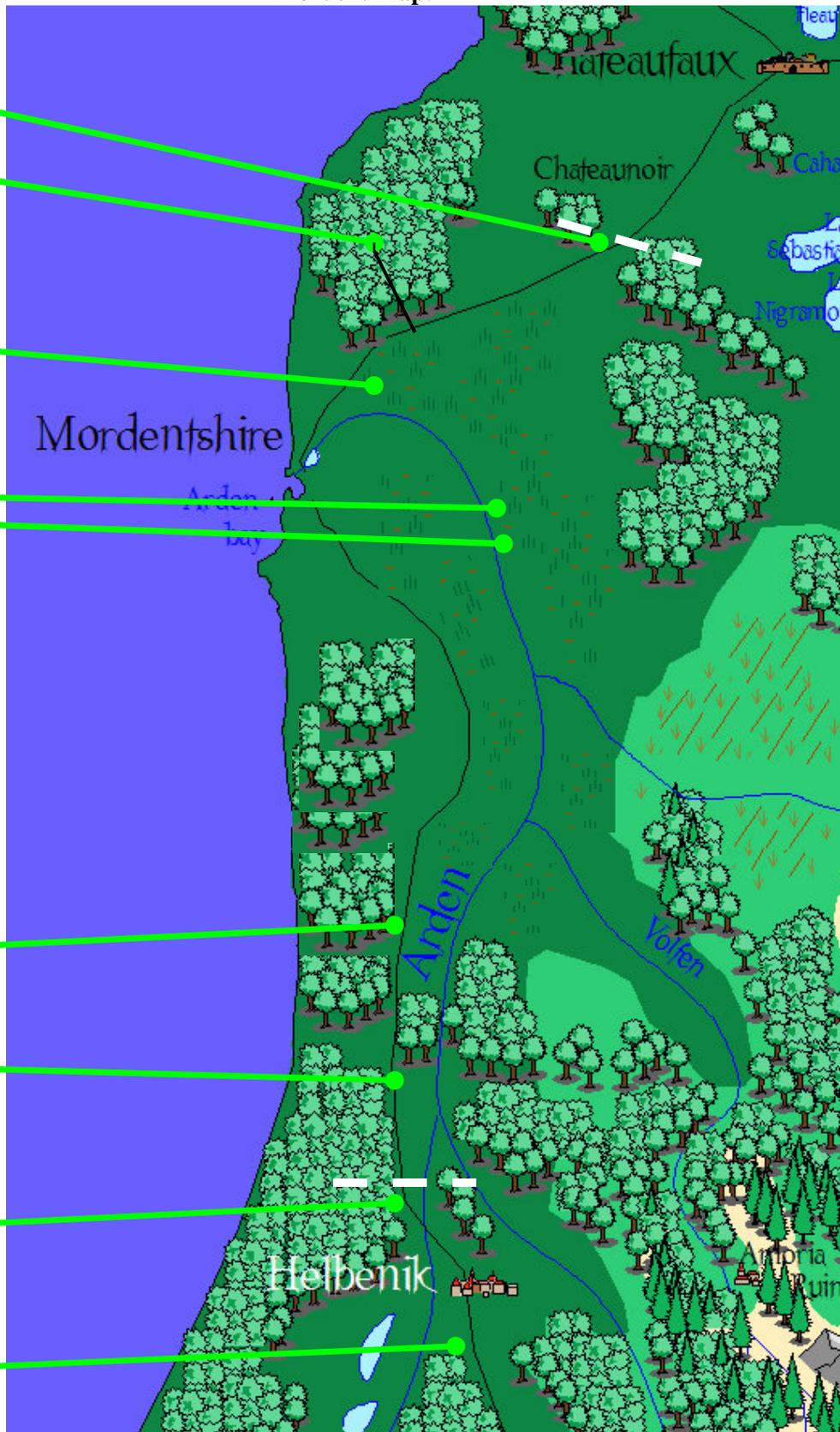
Boggy Downs
Monastery Order
Guardian (session 28)

Bog imp battle

Delmunster

Mordent-Valachan border

Ezra shrine



At 4h00 pm, they arrive in Delmunster. The heroes replenish their stock of drinking water. People there are happy to see them and they are treated as heroes. They go at the Giggling Gargoyle Inn, where the dwarf Luther treats them with free beers. The villagers praise the heroes and send them more beers.

In the inn, two tables are occupied by people the heroes have never seen. One person, alone, is looking like a merchant. He watches the heroes having all this local people attention.

Another table has seven persons, six men (studded leather and mace) and a tall woman, in a red cloak. Her head is hidden by the hood, but long black are seen. She has a long sword at her belt.

DM note: Red Vardo Traders, headed (if I can say) by the lovely Jacqueline Montarri. You'll see I'm having DMish fun with her...

They ask Luther about this group of people. The innkeeper tells he doesn't know where they are from or where they are heading. The only thing he knows is that they are Barovians (like the heroes)!

During the meal, Exigu gets nearby to talk to villagers, and understands the group of Barovians is speaking in innuendos...

Exigu goes outside to the barn. He sees six horses with similar barovian saddles.

Inside, the heroes wonder who could be that hidden woman. Maekon? No, this woman is much taller, by a head. Gabrielle? No, Gabrielle is blond. Natalia? No, she is smaller and a brunette. Midnight Slasher? Yes, could be, same athletic size...

Luther tells them they made a toast "to the Traders". The heroes decide not to talk to them and go to sleep. Varadan stays downstairs until 10 pm, and the group of Barovians is still drinking.

February 12th, 748, am

They are awoken at 6h00 am by the innkeeper, as requested. They learn their spells and go downstairs. The Barovian group is there, finishing their meal. Petrak notices the woman, who's head is still hidden by the cloak, seems to have shorter hairs, and blond! They think she cut and died her hair and must be some kind of thief.

When they leave, one of them say "OK, let's go, if we want to arrive one day." They get on their horse and leave going north.

The heroes leave south, for Helbenik. At the border, a military barrack is seen, and guards wave them to stop. They are taller than people in Mordent, and have a strange dark skin. Two of them have impressive scars in the face and the arms. One of them has a whip with multiple bands, each incrustated with razor blades. It shows sinister brownish stains. Tough people.

This valachani ask them for their name, their origin and destination, the motive of their travel. The heroes answer with their real name, and say they need to talk to a priest in Helbenik. They do not take notes of the answers, like in Falkovnia. After a moment, he let them pass.

The forest quickly changes to evergreen. And at the same time it seems a little warmer than Mordent. MacRazbunare spots a few redwood trees that are known to be impervious to rot, and are prized even in Barovia. They hear a very large cat in the distance, roaring...

The road is extremely bad, often cut by small ravines from floods.

After an hour traveling south, they start seeing valachani people on the road, or fishing on the Arden river, or people looking like hunters in the woods.

Helbenik is seen in the distance. They notice none of the lands around the town are cultivated. It seems they ignore agriculture for a reason, perhaps the woods provide them enough food. A tall, burned stone tower is seen in the East side of Helbenik.

Just north of town, a branch of the road splits to the East. This old road is much better build, paved with stones, but seems to be rarely used. Many patches of herbs grow on it.

In Helbenik, they notice many gnomes are integrated into valachani society. Houses are small lodges made of logs, with roofs made of slate. Very few houses have more than one floor. They notice the windows are not set in the walls in order to maximise the sun during the day?

In the middle of the town, the central market place has many features. On one side, a large stone building is the church of Yutow the Peacebringer. Its symbol is a silver circle split by a vertical diamond.

A very large tree at the other side of the market place shows many coloured ribbons on its branches, even in the tallest ones. At its base, people offer food and handicrafts. MacRazbunare can't identify the tree specie.

South of the market place, two inns stand face to face, the Crispy Pickle and the Leaping Trout.

They cross the town and resume their trip. South of Helbenik Route, the road is difficult, with larger ravines cutting the road, forcing detours. After a while, at 9h30 am, they see a small shrine in the woods, with the Ezra icon on its doors.

A man is outside the church, dressed like an anchorite. But when he sees the group of heroes going toward the church, he runs to enter the church and locks the door! Through the door, they tell him they are sent by James Martigan. He replies "How do I know this is truth?" Petrak says he is an anchorite too, but the priest inside quizzes him with precise questions on the Books of Ezra. Petrak answers as best as he can (some of the questions are really difficult).

Relieved, the priest opens the door, and says his name, Oleg Milovan. He is sorry for being overcautious, but he says he was attacked yesterday afternoon. He went hunting and when he came back, he heard his dog howl. He hid himself and spied a group of people enter the church. One of them stayed outside and killed my horse! Those inside killed my dog! They would probably have me killed too if they caught me.

The heroes ask him about the ancient texts. He says they stole it, along with his notes. They were led by a tall woman, very pretty, with long black hairs... The heroes realize these are the Barovians they saw in Delmunster!

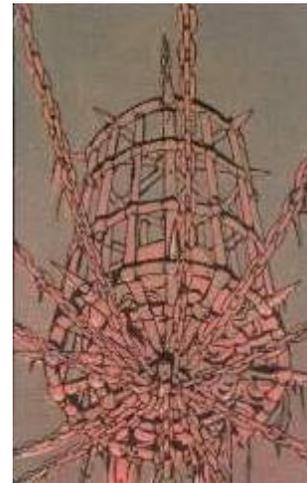
He shows them a bleak wooden reliquary, with Ezra icons. But a closer look shows these icons to be undead like! “Blaspheme!”, he says.



This wooden reliquary stood in a vault under the stone floor, near the altar. The sealed room was dusty and very old. He shows the room to the heroes, from a hole in the stone floor. The room is small, made of stone, about 10’x10’, but with a very high ceiling, about 25’. In the center of the room, hung by a chain, is a metal cage where the reliquary was found.

They investigate the sealed room. *Detect magic* shows nothing. The tall walls have a thick crust of black soot, like if many things burned in this room. They do not find hidden doors.

Oleg says he needs to talk to James Martigan about the stolen texts. He says he won’t say what he read in it, but that in bad hands, these could lead to a serious undermining of the Ezra church, up to a civil war between the main Ezra branches...



They close the sealed room and hide it under rugs. Oleg brings the wooden reliquary with him, and hides it in a sack.

At 10h00 am, the heroes decide to try to run after the mercenaries. Oleg embarks on Austizel’s horse until Helbenik. In Helbenik, Oleg buys a riding horse.

11h45 am At the Mordent border, the valachani guards want to see the content of the sack. Oleg bluffs them and shows it, by saying it’s just an old wooden box, empty.

12h45 pm. In Delmunster, they do not stop.

Farther, nothing happens where they were attacked by the bog imps, but 10 minutes after this place, Petrak suddenly stops riding, as he saw a cable across the road. The cable has many incrustated sharp rocks, with black stuff on it. Its height shows it was made to injure a horse. Many small foot traces reminds them of the imps, and they flee this area, not wanting any more confrontation with the swamp feys. Petrak takes the cable with him.

7h00 pm, they arrive in Mordentshire. Martigan asks a young priest to fetch a Lamplighter to investigate the three Mordentshire inns. After twenty minutes, a Mordent official is with them. Martigan explains him that thieves stole church property and that the heroes need official backup to find the thieves.

When they leave, they overhear Oleg saying to Martigan “It’s worse than we thought, James...”

But the heroes run to the inns with the law officer. At the second inn, Exigu finds the six horses inside the barn! But inside, the innkeeper said a group of seven persons came early afternoon, around 1h00 pm. They ate, and then traded their horses for fresh ones. They left about an hour after they arrived. They went north. The thieves have an advance of more than five hours...

The heroes go back to the church instead. They try to find why the mercenaries stole it, and how they learned from it. Oleg said he spoke to no one in Valachan about it. Martigan says only Tara Kolyana knows about it in Mordent – she can be trusted. He wrote of it to the priests in Levkarest, but “this letter to Borca was sent only two days ago, it’s probably not even arrived as we speak.”

They think the weak link could be the messenger’s guild. Oleg and Martigan exchanged four messages by messenger since the vault was discovered a month ago.

GAME SESSION THIRTY FIVE: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -12

(played April 26th, 2009, Sylvain was not present, so Exigu was played by Martin. JF Lévesque wasn’t present either, and Austizel was played by Jean-François H)

February 12th, 748, 8h30 pm

The heroes trade their horses for fresh ones at the Beached Mermaid, and then run north toward Chateau noir as fast as they can in the hope of finding the holy (unholy?) text thieves. The near full moon provides sufficient lighting.

At 10h pm however, since they haven’t slept for a while (*16 hours of being awoken, Will check*), they are struck by a sudden fatigue, but all of them are able to shaken it and continue the hunt.

Around 10h30 pm, they are now at the fork leading to Canondale, a village they know well by now. There are many horses tracks going in this direction, but the heroes ignore this and go north instead.

(DM note: don’t ask me why! They ignored the hint, and that led them to a headless chicken chase! ;) But I tried to make it interesting anyway, you’ll see)

(Players comments! : the heroes do not think those traces are those of the thieves, since what they know of Canondale have them believe it’s a dead-end.)

February 13th, 748

At 2h am (*20 hours of being awoken*), Mac Razbunare, Varadan and Exigu are fatigued.

At 2h30 am, they arrive in sight of Chateau noir. This small 7 houses hamlet is extremely dark and quiet, including a nameless inn. Exigu opens the lock of the stable and check for horses: only two horses are sleeping there. So the thieves are not in the area.

They resume their night trip north toward Chateaufaux. They arrive at 5h30 am. The heroes bribe a guard (1 gp), who tells that he didn't see in town a group of six foreign men and a woman, traveling on horses, or heard of such a group in the barracks. The guard recommends the Silver Coach Inn, but it will only opens at 7h am. But he suggests to avoid the Laughing Pig Inn.

The heroes walk around town, looking for signs of the thieves. At 6 am, Exigu is exhausted (*24 hours of being awoken*).

They find an open inn, the Laughing Pig. About 15 drunken men are playing dices. The thieves are not there. One of the men shouts "Hey, smelly peasants, come play dices with us!", but the heroes ignore him. There are about 10 horses in the stable.

At 7h am, they are at the Silver Coach Inn. They talk with the inn owner (and again tip him 1 gp) but no, he hasn't seen 6 men and a woman yesterday. They gather information among the inn patrons having breakfast. One merchant recalls seeing them, but that was 4 days ago! So the heroes understand the thieves came from north of Chateaufaux, but didn't come back this way.

They sleep at the Inn.

They think the thieves might have gone toward Pont-a-Museau by the fields south of Chateauoir (*see map session 18*).

Petrak takes a moment to go to Hochzeit Cathedral in Chateaufaux, to meet fellow anchorites. He is well received, but they frown a little when he mentions his faith is based in Levkarest (and not in Mordent).

They leave south for Chateauoir and arrive there at 7h30 pm. They gather information, but no one seems to recall seeing six men and a woman on horses recently. The heroes sleep in Chateauoir.

February 14th, 748

They leave the inn very early, 4h am, and take the fields south of Chateauoir, going south east.

At 8h30 am, they go by the Grotto (the mysterious druidic-like shrine – see session 16). MacRazbunare says hello in sylvan, but nobody answers. They resume their trip and arrive at Pont-a-Museau at noon.

They take a few hours to gather information, but nobody recalls seeing a group of person looking like the seven thieves. Where did they go to?

Petrak visits the Cathedrale de Ste-Shtshure, where he asks if there are documents an anchorite could eventually use in his research. But the priest tells him that "no, we don't. And I have an advice for you, son: do not read too much, it's dangerous what we can find in books..."

Petrak then goes to L'Archivée d'Ezra. It appears to be a monastery. The door is closed. He knocks and quickly a small wooden window opens. The monk looks at him a quick moment and say "no appointment!" and closes the window!

Petrak did see the man for a brief moment, but found him very ugly. Something about him was unsettling.

Petrak goes back to the first church and enquires about L'Archivée. The priest there are not surprised of Petrak's cold welcome, "They are very recluse, we never see them".

(By the way, all Ezra church names I use are from the article "Cathedrals of the Church of Ezra" by C.D. Nichols, from the lost Alanik Ray website).

Around diner time, they continue gathering information in the now crowded inns. One inn worker at the Smoking Tallow tavern recalls (1 gp) seeing a group similar to the thieves about two weeks ago at the Fat Black Rat Inn. And he tells the heroes important information, the name of this gang! He knows that they are called the "Red Vardo Traders"! The heroes recall the thieves making a toast "to the Traders" while in Canondale.

The heroes are barovians and they heard this name before, but never met any of them. They know that:

The renowned Red Vardo Traders, headed by Jacqueline Montarri, have made a reputation of ruthless "finders" who can recover lost and stolen cargo, objects, or even people. Their methods are closely guarded, and although most suspect them of underworld dealings, their services to the merchant communities in Krezk are so valued that objections are never raised (Gaz 1).

6h00 pm. They go at the 127 Place de la Museau Inn. The entrance fee is 9sp/person. The large place is crowded and lively, but nothing important happens for a while.

(By the way, many inns and taverns names I use are from "The Midway Haven tavern guide").

At 9h30 pm, Petrak sees a few ugly individuals, that reminds him of the man he saw at L'Archivée. They are really ugly and he thinks they have "rat" faces... The heroes have the intuition these guys might be wererats.

At 9h15, after a few ordinary drinks, Varadan orders the premium drink of the house, the Pyper's Last Drink (12sp/mug!). He has seen a few people drinking it, and it seems special...

He tries it, and it's quite good, with lots of spice, honey and hops aftertaste. But after his drink, he suddenly looks weirdly at the other heroes, then his eyes closes and he falls on the floor, drunken unconscious!

Seeing Varadan helpless gets the attention of mean looking ruffians, asking "if they help", but the other heroes get them to leave.

The heroes leave the inn, carrying still unconscious Varadan, and go to sleep.

February 15th, 748

8h00 am. Varadan is still drunk when the sun is out, but not unconscious. Varadan says that before passing out he saw Virevan as a manwolf-like creature and three patron inns as wererats (humans with rat features)!

The heroes rush the inn to buy more of that strange brew, but the beer ran out during the night. The brewer said he would have some more on the 22nd.

(DM note: OK, I told you this was a headless chicken chase that I tried to make interesting :) I didn't prepare any of this as I didn't expect the players to go that way, and that far. I decided to give them a few more hints on Richemulot, and used this fun alchemical brew I designed on the spot. So this brew can make you see shapechangers for what they are for 24 hours – but not as werewolf hybrid, but as man with odd animal features. There is a save DC 25 Fort, failed meaning you get drunk unconscious for d12+4 hours. And for the rest of the 24h, you're still drunk :) You can drink this brew a maximum of once a month (no effect if you drink it more often))

They travel back to Mordent during the day. When they arrive, at 8h15 pm, Varadan is still drunk (!) and still seeing Virevan as a werewolf-like creature! They decide to go see the twins to test Gennifer with this strange (but potent!) brew. They talk a few minutes with the twins about the Red Vardo Traders. They do not have a good reputation, say the twins.

Then the heroes go to the church to see Martigan. They pass near Maekon and Arcanus, talking on a bench.

8h30 pm. At the church, Martigan's servant says the old priest got a letter from Levkarest that summoned him there, so he left. Tara Koliana says Oleg is gone to the Order of Guardian on the Musarde *(the players have been there for the Insubstantial Halo adventure)*.

A little after 9h pm, Varadan shakes off the effect of the brew. He says he saw Virevan as a werewolf!

Gennifer as a woman / wolf, but somehow different than Virevan!

Maekon? Normal!

But Arcanus as some kind of man-gorilla!?!

9h30 pm. They go see Van Richten to discuss the visions had with the brew. The old herbalist is surprised of these effects. He is sad when he hears of Gennifer seen as a werewolf.

They discuss about the Hands of the Dawn Healer, a relic said to be in Kerzk's Morninglord's Temple. The relic is said to be curing lycanthropy! Van Richten is doubtful, but asks the heroes to enquire on this.

(DM note: the players read about these Hands because it was the paragraph just under the one about the red Vardo Traders in the pages of Gaz1 I gave them :))

Van Richten never formally met Maekon, so he knows nothing about her. Arcanus a weregorilla? Van Richten didn't know such a thing could exist.

They go back to Mordent's inn, and Varadan and Virevan ask to speak with Arcanus. Arcanus refuses, saying he has nothing to hide and that they can talk in the inn. The heroes insist and they go for a walk. They tell Arcanus they have a problem, that they have been bitten by werewolves. Arcanus is at unease. They tell him they know he is a weregorilla. He seems furious but doesn't answer. After a moment he says "I don't know what non sense you are talking about. I can't help you" and he leaves, looking sad...

Meanwhile, Maekon speaks with MacRazbunare. As usual, she is smiling with confidence. In the conversation, she tells that “it’s not a good idea for your bitten friends to ask Arcanus for help. Never a good idea to get deeper in manure...”.

She says she is a bard, raised in Darkon. She was born 30 years ago. She speaks strangely of the time, like if she have an eternal time frame standing in front of her...

“Ah yes”, she adds, “your little friend. Tell him to stay quiet. I found his enthusiasm to speak to me funny last time, but know I’m not always in a playful mood.”

She asks if they got rid of Rozaleen’s tarokka deck. MacRazbunare says the heroes haven’t met any vistani since then, and he asks her why she seems to hate vistani. “The only thing they care about is money”, she says. And then she bows and leave for her room.

February 16th, 748

Tonight is the full moon, so afflicted Virevan and Varadan prepare themselves for a long night...

At noon, Van Richten comes to them to tell about a rumour in town “A horde of black knights was seen north of Mordent. They appear to avoid the main roads and travel only at night. The witness said their horses smell of death and decay...”

(DM note: from now I included a part of Pathfinder #2 adventure, the “skinsaw thief”, inside my campaign.)

At 2h pm, Daniel Foxgrove asks for the heroes. He is with Lamplighter Cosse and also Easyll, from Canondale! This is what she has to tell: “Something is going on Old Crade Hambley’s farm.” Daniel sighs and she says “Well, Hambley is wellknown among Sandpoint’s farmers for being a penny-pincher. His family dwells in poverty, even though his farms seems to make as much money (if not more) than those of his neighbors. He is certainly a greedy soul.

“Well, yesterday local farmers began talking about walking scarecrows that came out of the fields at night! This morning, a group of farmers armed with torches went to inspect the farm of Crade Hambley, and from a distance we saw an increase in scarecrows and one building is burned... We come here as we need help, we do not know what to do.”

Cosse asks the heroes if they could check this, “since you were there a few days ago only.” The heroes say they will get there tomorrow.

At 5h00 pm, they lock Virevan and Varadan in the asylum’s cells. Virevan is able to resist the full moon’s effect, but Varadan becomes a werewolf, howling until 5h00 am!

(DM note: check to change alignment succeeds)

February 17th, 748

5h00 am, Varadan is back to human form. The heroes get some sleep. They awoke at 1h pm to learn spells.

At 2h pm, they leave for Canondale, and arrive there near 5h30 pm. There, they notice many people looking like farmers, and the heroes know these people are not from Canondale. Those people look afraid.

Easyll explains they are refugees, and fled their farms when Hambley then Guffmin's farm was attacked by monsters. About a dozen isolated farmsteads dot the fields and vales north east of Canondale, about an hour and half away by horse. It is near the Sea of Sorrows. When trouble started, the farmers ran to Canondale, the nearest village.



The heroes are asked to meet Mr Guffmin. The farmer is in shock. Last night, his family was attacked by folk that looked like corpses but fed like starving animals. "They took my two sons after devouring my farm workers."

At this point in the telling, he shrieks "They even ate the dogs!" and then he concludes "Please save my children!"

From a quick report, 18 persons are missing.

Then after they see Faith (Changeling Martha's young sister). They ask the villagers about any fey signs in the forest. The villagers answer they will look closely for strange signs that could lead to fey activity.

But the villagers saw another unusual thing in recent days. They tell the heroes about a group of bad looking men led by a woman in red, who asked for Fordstone Manor, five days ago. "This is where the thieves went!", think the heroes.

One of the trail exiting Canondale in the forest leads to the farm area near the Sea of Sorrows. And north of this farm area is where Fordstone Manor is. The villagers tell that Fordstone Manor is about 80 years old, and has been the seat of the Fordstone family the whole time. Some sort of tragedy struck the family a few decades ago, and no one's lived there since. Common rumour holds that the place is haunted. The Fordstone were merchants, well traveled.

Another farmer said he heard noise two nights ago, of about a dozen large horses going at night toward the "drowning chapel" near the sea. When he looked, he saw no torches, as if the riders saw in the dark!

Petrak remembers reading something about this lost Ezra chapel. About 20 years ago, it was abandoned soon after heretic and blasphemous activity was found there. Some kind of corrupted priest, Petrak recalls. So the chapel was abandoned soon after, but because it was found to drown in a marsh. The place is believed cursed...

At 6h30, the heroes leave Canondale for the farm areas. Before they leave, they visit Canondale's cemetery but find nothing has changed here since their last visit.

After about an hour and a half of travel, after passing by two recently abandoned farms, they arrive in sight of the farmlands. Guffmin's farm is desolated, and nothing moves in this area. There are blood traces on the floor in front of the house. There are no traces on the frozen ground, and no farm animal is seen.

They walk toward Hambley's farm. Large desiccated corn fields surround the farm, and forbid clear view of the main buildings. They see smoke still coming out of one burned farm building.

There are many scarecrows in the field and suddenly one of them jumps from its post at Virevan! Virevan is hit and stops to move! The other heroes attack the creature, who is identified to be a ghoul.

The ghoul is a terrible sight to behold. It appears like a sickening humanoid, with dead gray flesh having the appearance of rotting meat. The skin is often covered with putrescent pimples and appears tightly drawn on the body. Their claws are long and sharp. Its eyes seem to be full of pure malignity, hatred and hunger...



Another ghoul attacks from the field, screaming madly! Exigu hears noise of people walking in the shrivelled corn, at many places in the field!

The heroes fight the ghouls. Petrak tries to cure Virevan. It fails to remove his paralysis but Petrak notices Virevan's face shows a state of shock and fear... After the battle ended, MacRazbunare hears cry of fear somewhere farther the trail. They heroes move in that direction to see another scarecrow. From it are heard pitiful cries of fear. Meanwhile, Virevan shakes off the paralysis.

The hood of the scarecrow is removed while the heroes prepare for battle. But the hood reveals a pale young teenage boy, in fear. The heroes detach him. They found one of Guffmin's kid, they guess.

GAME SESSION THIRTY SIX: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -13

(played May 24th, 2009. JF Lévesque wasn't present, and Austizel was played by Jean-François H)

February 17th, 748 – 9h15 pm

The young boy is Lotti Guffmin. He is about 13 years old. He thanks the heroes and asks for anything to drink. He is fearful for his brother, Hans.

While they take care of Lotti, Virevan hears a voice somewhere in the field that says "find them!"

They put Lotti on a horse as he is too feeble to walk. They continue in the dried corn field. They see a scarecrow! They approach, wary. But the scarecrow is well, just a scarecrow. Another scarecrow, normal. Another scarecrow, also normal...

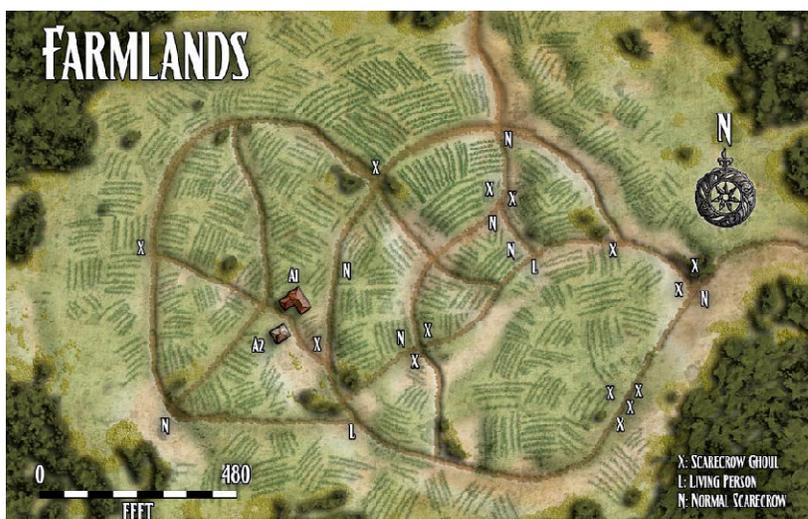
Then from the field six ghouls erupt from the corn field and attack! The heroes are surrounded! Varadan fights back with his sword. Exigu lets arrow after arrow off his bow, seldom missing. Petrak also fight hard the undead horrors. Austizel is paralysed, then Virevan! Three ghouls

attack Virevan and try to rip him to shreds! Another attack Austizel but Varadan saves him from being eaten alive.

Then a whistle is heard from the direction of the farm house. Soon after, the heroes smell smoke! The ghouls have lit a fire in the dried field! The battle continues, but the ghouls are superior in numbers.

The fire now is coming very close to the heroes, who have retreat the battle field because the ghouls are fighting too hard, but the horses start to panic! MacRazbunare has a hard time controlling his horse, which panics, as does Exigu's horse, who runs in the wrong direction toward the farm! MacRazbunare summons three wolves from the forest to help in the battle. Then Virevan shakes off this unearthly paralysis and fight back the undead.

The heroes are able to retreat, except Petrak, who is suddenly surrounded by five ghouls! But his faith in Ezra is strong and he is able to turn 4 of them. The other one is killed by arrows (Exigu) or sling bullet (Mac Razbunare).



The heroes run back toward Canondale. They arrive just after 11h pm. Mr Guffmin is extremely thankful for the heroes to save his son Lotti.

Austizel and Virevan have a disease identified as ghoul fever. The heroes do healing on Lotti, Austizel and Virevan, which seems to help.

February 18th, 748

The heroes go back to Hambley's farm. The field has been mostly cleaned of dried corn, thanks to the fire set by the ghouls. They walk toward the farm house. The farmhouse is in a terrible state. The door has been hacked down. There are traces of smoke on the walls. In the house, they find a cadaver of an old man in the farmhouse's kitchen. They think it must be Hambley. There are traces of a siege, Hambley and his family battled the creatures with pitchfork.

They then move toward the barn. The large wooden structure has only one door.

From outside, they hear feeble moaning. They move toward the barn, and Virevan opens the door and enter. The other enters the barn, cautiously. They notice the barn is dark, and has many piles of straw in it. They also notice it is devoid of any farm tools?

Then Exigu falls in a trap! There was some kind of fabric over a hole, carefully hidden with loose earth and straw. Exigu fell into a pit 15 feet deep. The bottom has many sharp farm tools set as spikes. But Exigu is able to avoid getting impaled while falling down. Exigu says he is fine and says to the others he will get up there by himself.

MacRazbunare makes *dancing light* to lighten a far and shadowy corner of the barn. Behind a straw pile, MacRazbunare sees a hidden ghoul. Near it is a person dressed as a scarecrow, with hands tied behind his back. The other son, they think. The heroes move toward this place. Virevan tries to turn undead, but misses.

Meanwhile, in the pit, while the other heroes' attention was elsewhere, a 4' by 4' panel of earth "opens" and two strong arms grab Exigu the halfling and drag him inside a tunnel! Exigu sees two mean looking ghouls. The other one closes the entrance with a wooden board over dirty fabric made to look like an earthen wall. Exigu uses his escape artist skill and escapes the ghoul's arms and yells. But he is swiftly grabbed again.

The other heroes above ground know now something happened to Exigu. Varadan gets in the pit, helped with a rope, quickly followed by Austizel, who finds another tunnel entrance. Exigu escapes again the grip of the ghoul but is again caught back. MacRazbunare is down there as well now.

They enter the tunnel where Exigu was kidnapped. *Magic Missiles* from Austizel and MacRazbunare on the ghoul holding Exigu. MacRazbunare's *Produce Flame* kills one of the ghoul. Then short after, the largest ghoul also falls.

Meanwhile, Petrak turns the undead near the "scarecrow", and moves to help the boy, but he hears the barn door close! He also hears something is put in front of the door. The heroes are trapped inside!

Short after, he smells oil, and sees someone outside pouring oil on the barn! Then another ghoul jumps from a mezzanine and attack!

Exigu retrieve the ghoul's items (they were no ordinary ghouls!) and start moving up a ladder leading to a trap door. It opens in the field about 50 feet from the barn. A ghoul tries to bite him when he exits but Exigu kills him with his arrows.

Austizel hacks at the barn door and it eventually opens. Quickly, all the heroes are safe outside.

The kid is indeed Guffmin's second son, Hans. They give him something to drink.

They examine the leading ghoul. Hans say he was called "Rogor". He isn't one of the six mercenaries of the Red Vardo Traders. He had a belt pouch where the heroes find a bag of human eyes! Rogor also had a wand (*magical - enchantment*) and a key bearing the Fordstone family crest.

Both kids have been rescued. It is 10h30 am.

GAME SESSION THIRTY SEVEN: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -14

(played Sept 13th, 2009. Exigu was played by Martin and Austizel was played by Jean-F H)

February 18th, 748 – 10h30 am

The heroes find Hans (the kid they just released from the ghouls) suffers ghoulish fever too.

The heroes remember one ghoul still hasn't been killed; it's the one that tried to light the barn with oil. They look for it. Exigu hears munching noise in Hambley's farm house. When they investigate, the ghoul exits the house and attacks. But this ghoul is quickly slain by arrows.

They check Hambley's house more carefully and Exigu finds a stout wooden chest under a loose board in the bedroom. This chest contains 3 400 silver pieces. They remember Hambley's reputation of being a skinflint.

11h00 am

They check for traces made by the ghouls. Many other traces enter the forest around Hambley's.

The recent ones go to Guffmin's farm, and back. There are many ghoul tracks at Guffmin's, as well as many blood spots.

1h30 pm

They investigate the third farm in this Farmland row, the Laydon's, which these farmers fled to get refuge in Canondale. There are no ghoul traces in this area. Being suddenly hungry at the sight of the farm animals, the lycanthropes take a pig in the barn and leave 20 silver pieces for the farmer.

They mount their horses and go back to Canondale.

2h00 pm

On the road, a giant owl attacks Petrak, the last in line on the road. Before the heroes can react, it does a wingover maneuver and tries to flee. But the heroes' arrows and sling bullets are deadly and the beast falls, mortally wounded.

Mac Razbunare knows (*knowledge nature*) that these large birds usually live in Darkon. They are intelligent and their actions are most often towards goodness.

They notice its talons are dirty from carrion, but it didn't eat rotten meat. The heroes think perhaps it was attacking the ghouls but didn't eat them?

They attach it! And cures it with a minor cure spell. They identify it as a giant owl, not a dire one. They think about keeping it and tame it as a pet. They make a stretcher to carry the large bird and bring it back with them to Canondale.

DM note: DM sweat here.



At 3h30 pm, they arrive in Canondale. Guffmin thanks the heroes for saving his son Hans. He also let them know Lotti is getting better by every passing hour.

They cast *lesser restoration* spells on the kids. Then they tell their ghoulish hunt story to the villagers in awe.

It has been a long day, so they go to bed very early...

But around 9h pm, they hear the villagers calling for Samuel. They remember Samuel Bennett being the young man who seemed to care for Martha Ward, the girl whose soul is now kept by a fey. Benjamin Bennett explains Samuel went out "for a smoke" an hour ago and didn't come back. They are worrying as he was looking after fey signs, to help Martha, after the heroes asked for fey signs in the area yesterday.

But the heroes want their full night of rest so they leave to investigate only at midnight.

February 19th, 748 – midnight

They try to find Samuel's traces but the light snow is complicating the search. There is nothing around the cemetery.

Then Exigu finds a trace that goes inside the forest. The traces follow a frozen brook. After half an hour, the heroes find themselves near a very old oak. The traces go in this direction. They stop and check it more carefully. The tree has a 2 feet wide hole in its trunk, about 12 feet high from the ground. Mac Razbunare knows the tree isn't dead, but it's very old, compared to the other trees in this area.

Coming closer, they see a pool of blood in the snow just in front of the trunk, and just below the hole. With a torch, they can also see a few lines of blood coming out of the hole too...

Then, when checking for threats around them, Virevan notices in the distance a blooming rhododendron! Of course, this plant has flowers only in the summer. Its flowers are scintillating under the moon light. Clearly, something supernatural is going on here, they think.

Thinking it might be feys at work, Mac Razbunare compliments loudly about the beauty of the flowers. The flowers smell good. He checks for a hole in the ground, or some kind of door, but doesn't see anything. The ground seems warmer under the bush. He says in sylvan "it's very nice here and well kept. We are looking for someone from the village. We don't know what he has done, but perhaps he wasn't nice and got what he deserved?" But he hasn't got answer to his questions.

They go back to investigate the oak more closely. Getting closer, they find bloodied fox's traces around the tree. Following the fox's traces, they find another blooming rhododendron, at about 70 feet from the oak. Then a hundred feet later, the traces get on the frozen brook and the heroes lose it.

Again, they go back to the oak. They check more carefully Samuel's traces. It seems he stopped about 20 feet from the oak, and stayed there for a few minutes, stamping on the earth for a long period. There are two half smoked cigarettes on the ground there.

Then from the traces it looks like he was grabbed by someone with naked feet in the snow, a person smaller than a human man, and pulled toward the tree. The traces stop where the blood pool stands.

Virevan throw a rope on the oak, and climbs it to check inside the hole. Looking in it, he finds the hole to be about one feet and a half deep. But it contains human bones! A pile of flayed, gnawed clean bones is neatly stacked in the hole, with a human skull standing on top of it, and on the skull, a bloody scalp of human hairs! The hair color matches that of Samuel's. The scalp was torn from the skull by a clawed hand.

Virevan puts the grisly remains inside a bag, and climbs down. They think it might be a werefox? It would explain the small foot print (werefox are always female).

Trying to get more clues, they make a spiral investigation around the tree. The only thing they find is a third scintillating rhododendron.

They walk back to Canondale and Petrak announces their macabre discovery to the Bennett. The heroes go back to sleep.

At 11h30 am, they awaken. They cure the owl, and try to befriend it with food. But the owl tries to bite him. He cast a spell to talk to the animal. "I can't deliver you, because you attacked one of my friend", he says. The owl answers "I attacked him because he smelled like the dead. And when it smells like the dead, I destroy it. But what is odd is that now your friend doesn't smell like the dead. I'm confused. I'm hungry." They bring Hans and the owl says this one smells like the dead (Hans is still very affected and weak by ghoulish fever).

After the discussion, they detach the animal and it flies away.

Guffmin asks the heroes if the farmers can go back to their farms. The heroes answer that they should wait until they have fully secured the area, in maybe a day or two. Guffmin also says Hans told him the creature that seemed in charge was named "Rogor", and he adds "Rogor is the caretaker at Fordstone manor". The heroes learn Rogor Craesby was paid by Borcans to come to Fordstone Manor once a week from Mordentshire to air the place out and make minor repairs.

DM note: those familiar with this Pathfinder adventure (The Skinsaw Murders) will notice I changed the Manor name. It was originally Foxglove, which was too close to the twin's name. I wanted it to be totally unrelated.

The farmers tell them Fordstone Manor is about 80 years old, and has been the seat of the Fordstone family the whole time. The Fordstone were merchants, and they are well traveled.

Fordstone Manor was built by Vorel Fordstone, a Borcan merchant 80 years ago. He and his family lived there for 20 years before the entire family perished from disease. The surviving Fordstones of Borca shunned the place for 40 years, until Traver Fordstone moved back in.

Some sort of tragedy struck the family in 727, and the place was again abandoned for a long time. A fire burned down the servant's building, Cyralie Fordstone was found dead—burnt and dashed on the rocks below the cliffs behind the house—and Traver Fordstone was found in his bedroom, dead by his own hand. The shocked children, including young Aldern Fordstone, were sent away to be raised in Borca by distant relations.

Common rumors hold that the place is haunted. It has a bad reputation—sightings of strange lights in the attic windows, weird howling and similar things.

Aldern Fordstone recently returned to live in the manor, but he had trouble hiring Mordent locals to aid him in the reconstruction and repair of the old building.

It is rumored Aldern got married a few months ago to a very beautiful woman from Darkon, named Iesha, but few have seen her. Aldern recently said she went away for business.

In this area, the farmers also say, there is the drowning chapel the heroes already heard about. It's now a ruin, without roof. A century ago, the monk in charge of a nunnery locked the door and killed all the nuns with an axe, before jumping off the cliff. This chapel is now believed cursed ground, as it is drowning in one of Mordent's marsh.

The heroes decide to investigate this area. They go back toward the farmlands, and then take the road going north for the Manor.

The manor is perched above the Sea of Sorrows. As the heroes near Fordstone Manor, they notice that nature becomes sick and twisted: strange thorny trees and bushes abound, and other trees are leafless and crooked.

Fordstone Manor's roof sags in many places, and mold and mildew cake the crumbling walls. Vines of diseased-looking gray wisteria strangle the structure in several places. The house is crooked, its gables angling sharply and breached in at least three places, hastily repaired by planks of wood.

In front of the Manor stands the ruin of a more modest house. Only the walls remain. Dark crows watch the heroes pass.

They notice the manor has many unbroken, dust-encrusted panes of glass for windows. Surprisingly, during all those years, no vandals have dared break them.

They attach the horses to a tree and walk to the entrance. They knock at the door. No answer. They listen for noise, and hear nothing but the shrill wind.

The doors are locked, but the heroes open it with the key carried by Rogors Craesby, and find themselves in the entrance hall. The general feel is of age and decay. The place smells damp and many patches of mold stain the wooden floor, walls, and furniture. Dusty and moldy animal hunt trophies hang on the wall to the northeast, but the main feature of the room is impressive: a 12 foot long creature with the body of a lion, a scorpion's tail, bat wings, and a deformed human face. Like the rest, the stuffed beast's has fallen away in places, allowing the sawdust filling it to sift out into tiny mounds on the platform below.

Austizel smells smoke, but he is the only one.

The next room is a dancing parlor. The magnificent carved wooden panels are in terrible shape, full of mold. A chandelier lies smashed on the floor. A grand piano leans in a corner.

Virevan touches the piano. Suddenly, the instrument launches a discordant, weird but quick dance song! The heroes see Petrak entranced by the music, dropping everything he had in hand to dance a waltz with an invisible partner. But the dance is dangerous and Petrak bounces on the walls!

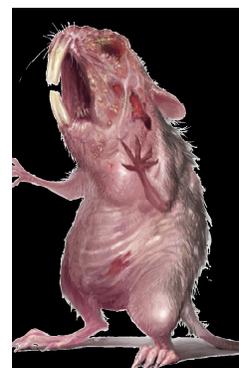
DM note: This dance effect is a haunt, and the first of many in this house. This is a pretty cool aspect of this adventure. The crazy organ song is from Siouxsie and the Banshees She's a Carnival (the small 12 seconds crazy organ waltz after the song itself).

The other heroes catch him and are able to stop this crazy dance. The music stops.

Petrak says he doesn't know why he started to dance, but while he was dancing, he could see the lady in his arms: a pretty dark long haired woman, with brown eyes. But her image changed as if she was strangled: marks appeared around her neck, her eyes went wild and she seemed to be suffocating. In the final round of the dance, she crumbled away into rot in Petrak's arms! Petrak is fatigued from this crazy dance, and he gets a *lesser restoration* spell.

The next room has a large metal washtub in it. The heroes hear scratching from inside the tub. They check in it and see a disgusting cat sized rat, but it is a horrible sight – it is hairless, and its skin is a mass of pus, purple and yellow ichor, blood, tumors and disease. They swiftly kill it with arrows, while the rat tries to exit the tub.

Next, a very dusty lounge with rotten and moldy furniture. There is dust moving in the center of the room. Careful examination shows it is as if an invisible person were pacing back and forth before the fireplace. They do not enter this lounge.



Then, they walk back to the entrance hall. Suddenly, Austizel acts like in panic, watching the stuffed monster in the middle of the room. The other heroes do not understand, as nothing is moving in the room, but they gape in horror when they see a burning wound appear on Austizel's chest! Austizel runs in the next room, and get calmer. He explains he saw the stuffed monster turn

to flame and attack him. He also saw the monstrous face change to that of a heinous young red haired woman, with striking blue eyes. Was it an illusion?

Virevan destroys the stuffed statue, and throws its head outside. Austizel still smells a faint odor of smoke, but he isn't sure if it's his imagination.

The main hall leads to a corridor that leads to a dining hall. This corridor has a mummified monkey head hanging on the wall. A rope hangs from the monkey's gaping mouth.

A dusty rug partially hides a large stain of mold on the floor. The heroes remove the rug, to find a large bluish mold stain, about ten feet wide. Petrak and Mac Razbunare see something in the mold pattern, like the drawing of a descending set of round stairs made of bones! But the others see nothing but a strange mold stain.

A small room near the corridor was a drawing room. Virevan opens the curtains to check the view outside and is startled by a brief glimpse of a woman's face reflected in the window like if the woman was just behind him. He turns quickly but sees nothing behind him. The reflection was of a dark haired woman, with an appearance of sadness to her face...

GAME SESSION THIRTY EIGHT: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -15

(played Oct 11th, 2009. Austizel was played by Sylvain)

February 19th, 748 – 5h00 pm

The heroes then enter a library. The books look old and are dusty. Two comfortable chairs, one of which lies on its side, are set before a stone fireplace. A brightly colored scarf, red and gold, contrasting with the rest of the dusty room, is draped over the side of the fallen chair. A book is on the floor near the chairs.

Suddenly, the scarf moves in the air like if someone invisible was using it to strangle Petrak! Varadan sees the scarf is being held like by an invisible person. He strikes but touches nothing. Virevan quickly cuts the scarf and it falls on the ground, lifeless. Petrak says he felt he was a woman strangled by her husband. He saw the man attacking him as a young man, blond hairs, wearing a blue and gold suit. Petrak thinks the suit could be of current Borcan fashion.

The book on the floor is in Darkonese. A splash of dried blood stains the back of a chair. The same thing is found on a book holder on the floor. Made like the statue of an angel, the book holder has a blood stain, with bits of hair. Part of one angel wing has been broken off and is missing.

They cast *Identify Spoor* on the blood, and get the vision of a 30 years old man, Mordentish working class man.

The rest of the books are not interesting.

They move to the dining room. A large table, covered by mold, and surrounded by decayed chairs, sits in this room. A chandelier filled with web hangs from the ceiling. There are three large stained glass windows filled with dust and smoke stains. When the heroes remove the dirt, they see strange drawings: each window shows a monster rising out of smoke pouring from a seven-sided box covered with strange runes. The first is a monstrous tree with an enraged face, the second a furious hook-beaked bird with sky-blue and gold plumage, and the third a winged centaur-like creature with a lion's lower body and a snarling woman's upper torso.

The heroes find odd that this view, the best view in the house on the sea, is hidden like this by these images.

Mac Razbunare examines the images more carefully. He thinks the runes on the drawing are necromantic, and the monsters are not emerging from the boxes but rather being drawn in! Also, perhaps their snarling faces aren't of rage, but of fear...

Under the table, they notice a fourth drawing in the tiles, this time of a blue squid-like creature with evil red eyes... It seems the table was recently moved, as if to hide this drawing.

They take a flight of stairs and get in the basement, and find a large kitchen. While they are exploring a nearby room, from cracks in the kitchen walls pours a myriad of sickly diseased rats! They form into swarms, and attack the heroes. Mac Razbunare's *Wall of Gloom* succeeds in blocking one of the swarm, which flees in the pantry. They are able to destroy a second rat swarm, but a second wave of rats gets Varadan and Austizel nauseated before the swarms are successfully pushed back, but not destroyed.

The kitchen and pantry are otherwise empty and uninteresting. They then get to a door that is locked and made of iron. Exigu succeeds in opening it. It is an arcane workshop, but all glassware is broken, and the jars contains only dust and more molds. There are three iron birdcages, each containing a dead diseased rat like the one they found upstairs in the tub. Two stained-glass windows loom on the sea side. The first depicts a man drinking a foul-looking brew of green fluid, and the other one shows the same man but in an advanced state of decay, with his arms raised in triumph. Near him is the seven-sided box with necromantic runes.

They understand the man in the drawing became some kind of lich, and Mac Razbunare thinks the box could be his phylactery. He checks one book that was left opened on a work table. Worm-eaten and crumbling, he realizes the book is about the transformation of mortal into undeath.

Exigu suddenly has the impression the dead man in the stained-glass window is watching them. The heroes move to watch the windows more carefully, but then Mac Razbunare flees the room and yell "I have to save them!" The other heroes run after him. Varadan the monk is quicker and in the kitchen gets in front of Mac Razbunare and tries to stop him. Mac Razbunare has fearful eyes when he shouts to Varadan "Vorel, I have to save our children, stay back!" and then he throws him a dagger, but not any dagger, the one that they found in Arcanus's traveling show! He misses!

Varadan trip him, but fails to grapple him. Austizel say “let him go, we’ll see where he goes and we’ll get hints on this”. But the other heroes decide to pin and grapple the biting and kicking Mac Razbunbare. It is complicated when Mac Razbunare’s wolf tries to protect his master, and a swarm of rats appear from the cracks in the walls! Many are hit by the bite of the awful rats while they were trying to tie Mac Razbunare! They exit the kitchen, with Mac Razbunare tied. Exigu gets the magical dagger before they leave the kitchen.

DM note: Petrak gets a disease from the rats bite (one day incubation).

Eventually, Mac Razbunare calms down and is back to himself. He said that when he looked at the book, he suddenly got visions as if he was a woman, understanding the various stages Vorel went through to try to become a lich, from researching old arcane tomes and the works of other liches, to gathering the components for the lich transformation potion, to building his phylactery, finally culminating in a vision of Vorel taking his potion and dying in agony.

Then Mac Razbunare was filled with blinding shame that a loved one would do this to himself, followed by a burning rage that he must be stopped before he finishes his ritual. Then he got terrorized about what could happen to their children and had the urgent goal to save them before ending the ritual. When Varadan tried to stop him, Mac Razbunare thought it was Vorel standing in front of him.

They continue exploring the basement. They get to a place that was once sealed, and then later opened. The wood and cement floor in the middle of the room has been torn up to reveal an ancient set of stone spiral stairs. A foul stink comes from it.

Virevan has the vision of a young blond man, digging away at the floor of this room with a pickaxe. As the vision ends, he breaks through to the staircase beyond, and a horde of shrieking ghouls rises up to pull him into the darkness below, before they turn their dead eyes to Virevan! But at this point, Virevan shakes off the horrible vision.

In a cellar, they find eight bottles of old vintages of borcan sweet wine (year 690, 692 and 695). Each is worth between 100 and 150 gold pieces. They bring the bottles with them.

It is getting late and they do not want to sleep here, so they get outside. Surprise, the horses are gone, except one, dead! It seems the other were able to flee.

Then from the ruin nearby, a swarm of ravens takes flight. But these are dead birds! Their eyes are lifeless and their wings are rotting. Bits of feather and bird flesh swarm around them. The disgusting swarm attacks Varadan! It is destroyed swiftly by the heroes.

They then find that it’s Virevan’s horse that was killed by the dead birds.

They follow the horses’ traces and are able to retrieve the mounts after one hour.



At 7h30 pm, they arrive at Hambley's farm and sleep there.

February 20th, 748 – am

They awake early. They *identify* Rogor's magical wand: *wand of hold person* (16 charges). Again with spells, they read the Darkonese book that was lying on the floor in the library: it's from the well known romance and adventure serie "Romance from beyond the grave". Nothing of interest.

At 8h30 am, they are back at Fordstone Manor. They go for the second floor. They find a dusty bedroom, with child-sized bed, and a toy box. After a moment in the room, Exigu and Austizel hear the sound of a sobbing child. Then Virevan suddenly becomes convinced he *is* a young kid, standing in a corner of the room. He watches his parents trying to kill each other, and he knows that whichever of them survives will surely be coming to kill him next. He has a vision of his mother, red haired and pale, wielding a torch, and his father, black haired, face festering with tumors and wielding a long knife, both struggling to kill each other.

The vision passes quickly, but Virevan is struck by the mind-numbing terror he just experienced (*loss of four wisdom points*).

The next room is a musicians' gallery. It contains many music instruments, all in poor shape. But after being cleaned of dust, the stained glass windows shows a ghostly scorpion, a gaunt man surrounded by bats, a moth with a strange skull-like pattern on its wings, a tangle of dull green plants with bell-shaped flowers (Mac Razbunare says it's belladonna), and a young maiden sitting in a forest while a large black spider descends along a string above her. Austizel quickly check identifies all five of the subjects in the windows as classic spell components for necromancy magic (scorpion venom, vampire's breath, tongues of deathwing moths, belladonna, and the heart of a maiden slain by poison).

The next room entered is a gallery of paintings. But the paintings are covered with a thick sheet of dusty cobwebs that obscures its subject from view. The heroes brush each painting, to see they bear the names of the person they represent.

The three on the north wall depict Vorel Fordstone, with his wife Kasanda and their daughter Lorey on each side. On the painting, Vorel is a tall, middle-aged man with long dark hair, a clean-shaven face, and dark blue noble's clothes, while Kasanda is a stern-faced brunette woman with wisps of gray in her shorthair and a flowing blue dress.

The five to the south show Traver (35 years old) and Cyralie Fordstone (30 years old), their son Aldern (when he was about 5 years old), and their two daughters Sendeli (4 years old) and Zeeva (8 years old). Traver, like Vorel, is tall and thin, but with an even narrower face and a thin mustache. Cyralie is a young woman, with long red hair and an impish smile.

When the heroes have wiped the last painting, the door slam shut! It is magically locked! Then, the temperature in the room drops quickly: the heroes' breaths frosts in the air! Petrak and Virevan hit a door to destroy it.

But the other heroes' eyes are then attracted to the paintings, who are shifting to painting of live people to painting of dead people! Kasanda and Lorey slump into misshapen tumor-ridden corpses. Traver grows sickly pale as a long cut opens in his throat and blood washes down over his chest. Cyralie blackens and chars, and her arms, legs, and back twist as if broken in dozens of places. Aldern's flesh darkens with rot, his hair falls out, and he deforms into a ghoulish monster. Both Sendeli and Zeeva's portraits frost over but otherwise remain unchanged.

Vorel's portrait is the last to change: its entire portrait, frame and all, erupts into a sudden explosion of fungus! This disgusting wave of fungus and disease washes over the entire room, getting in the heroes' face and skin, but within seconds the room suddenly reverts to normal... and the door opens.

DM note: Austizel, Virevan and Varadan have contracted a disease, Vorel's Phage.

They look inside the gallery and the room look like it was before they first entered it. The paintings are hidden by cobwebs.

A third bedroom. The furniture in this bedroom, is dusty but does not show the usual signs of water or mold. The one exception is a dark stain on a desk near the northern window. While they explore the room, Exigu suddenly takes a jagged piece of wood on the desk and gives himself a severe blow in the neck! He could have killed himself! The heroes stop him.

Exigu says he was suddenly overwhelmed with the conviction that he has just killed the person he loves most and wanted to end his days with a dagger.

DM note: this haunt was deadly. If he failed Will DC 15, the affected PC attempt a coup de grace action on himself with the jagged length of wood, dealing 2d4 (plus twice his Strength modifier) points of damage on himself. He must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the damage dealt) to avoid being slain by this suicide attempt!

They cast *Identify Spoor* on the dark stain on the desk. They see a man looking like Traver Fordstone, but he has awful diseased tumors in the face and his eyes are red...

GAME SESSION THIRTY NINE: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -16

(played January 31st, 2010. All six players present)

The players start the game by making a recap of who is who in the Fordstone family history, with the historical information they got from the farmers, plus the visions and other clues they got in the painting gallery.

A summary of their findings (and this summary was made by Yvon *after* the game so it contains findings from this session as well):

Vorel Fordstone built the manor and lived there 20 years with his wife Kasanda and one child, Lorey. Suddenly, for unknown purpose, Vorel started making research to become a lich. He read old books and tomes written by liches and gathered what was needed to build his phylactery. However, it seems the green brew he drank made him rot from disease and turn to mushroom and mold instead of becoming a lich. Kasanda surprised Vorel in his lab, and tried to stop the process (maybe she is the cause of the major problem Vorel got with the potion). Then, seeing the sorry state of her husband, she tried to save their children, but the disease was very contagious and all the family dies from it.

Sixty years later, another Fordstone settles in the manor: Travers with his wife Cyralie. They had three children: Zeeva (8 years old in the gallery painting), Aldern (5 years) et Sendeli (4 years). We still do not know the family link between Travers and Vorel. The Travers – Cyralie couple wasn't a happy one: Travers says his wife is a harpy, as she doesn't want Travers to travel for his business as much as he would like. Maybe Travers found Vorel's literature forgotten as well as his lab. But at one point, he got into a process where he became sick and pale (tumors and other disease marks). Maybe his temper became shorter with Cyralie because once they had a fight, him with a knife and her with a torch. Then, she started to burn, most probably by lighting her clothes herself and then ran through a window to find death when her bones cracked horribly after falling off the cliff. Travers then commits suicide by killing him from a dagger blow in the throat.

The kids were raised in Borca. Twenty years after the Travers-Cyralie drama, Aldern (son of Travers) come to settle in the Manor. He gets married to a pretty girl from Darkon, Iesha, but few in the area have seen her. Maybe Iesha didn't like the manor, so her sad expression in the vision at the window. It seems Aldern strangled Iesha, maybe because he found her cheating with a man from Mordent. Aldern killed this man with a book holder made of marble. Then Aldern said she was back in Darkon for family business. Then he got rid of the body, and tried to open a sealed cave. It seems he got attacked by ghouls when he opened the cave, then got contaminated by Goulsh Fever and became a ghoul. Did he contaminate his servant Rogor, or did Rogor was attacked at the same time, it is unsure, but Rogor was a transformed to a ghoul too.

Now the manor seems to be haunted by an evil spirit that leads the occupants to murderous rampages, or the manor itself is the evil entity.

DM note: at this point, they are mostly correct with the assumptions, but I added to this the end of some loose threads in the campaigns.

February 20th, 748 – 10 am

They open a door to find a bedroom, with large patches all over the walls – dark green, blue and black mold... Austizel and Exigu hears a light bump on the ceiling, like if something was moving in the room on the floor over them. They do not enter this room.

The next room is a bathing room. Exigu hears another bumping noise from the same direction. Petrak explores the room but when he comes near the bath, the floor collapses in the room below! Petrak is able to get a grip on a window to avoid falling.

The next room was a fine bedroom, but it has been destroyed by someone recently. The bed frame is smashed, the mattress torn apart, and the walls gouged as if by knives or the broken chairs on the floors. The paintings on the walls were torn to pieces, except one, but it is hanging backward, its unseen subject facing the wall. The heroes turn it to reveal a painting of a lovely dark haired woman. The heroes think this is Iesha.



Then MacRazbunare puts his hands on his hips and yells like a woman at the room “Would you tell me what are you doing downstairs?”, then he turns into a rage and walks toward the painting and put his fist through it! Quickly, he gets calmer but do not remember anything from the last minute.

Then they try to look at the other paintings, to try to guess what was painted on them. The first is the Levkarest Cathedral. The second is a boat on a beach. This seems like a Mordentish scenery. The third is unknown to them, some king of mountain landscape.

They climb up one floor to the third. A room only contains planks, cement and tools for a ceiling repair that was never finished. But nothing has been moved in this room for the last month, and may be two months.

Then a couple of storerooms, filled with crates or old linens.

A servant room they think could have been Rogor’s. Under the bed, a bag with 12 gp.

Then an observatory. It contains many chairs. Facing the sea, two intricate stained-glass windows are set into the wall. The northern window depicts a dark-haired woman with pale skin, large green eyes, and she is wearing an iron staff with both hands. The southern window has been broken on its lower half and is patched with canvas. What remains of the upper half windows depicts a handsome man dressed in regal finery, wearing a crown. They wonder who were these persons. The heroes notice small scorching marks on the wood near the broken window. They believe it’s from this area that Cyralie jumped through the window to her death. A rusty and dusty telescope lies under a trapdoor in the ceiling that has been tied shut with rope.

Austizel again smells a faint odor of smoke and tries to locate it in the room. He comes near the broken window but Varadan gets in front of it, to prevent him from foolish act. Then Austizel screams madly, like in pain, and jump through the other window! He falls on the roof. Then he can’t get a grip and find he is slipping on the tiles toward the 400 feet cliff! Exigu throws him a rope and the other grab the other end for him to secure its hold. Austizel has a choice: grab the rope or stop his fall by hanging on a gutter. Petrak cast *prayer* to help him. He chooses to try for

the rope and succeeds. He avoided a 400 feet fall! By using the rope, he tries to move upward and when he puts some pressure with his foot on the gutter, it falls off the building ...

It seems that Austizel was “playing” the emotions of Cyralie.

They carry on, getting closer to the area where two of them heard light bumping noise.

The next room is a private study. There are four gargoyle statues in each corner. One large shelf of books line one of the walls, and the book area interspaced with strange objects such as skulls fitted with stubs of candles, tribal fetishes, mummified pig foot, and decorative scroll cases. The heroes cast *detect magic* in the room but find nothing. The books are mainly old and useless travel books.

They are now in front of the room where they heard the bumping noise... but now what they hear is sobbing! Exigu can't open the door so Virevan and Petrak smash it open. The room is filled with wooden crates. The ceiling gets lower at the other end and the height at the other end of the room is 4 feet only. They hear a light bumping noise behind a crate. They move to look behind the crate, and see a human sized shape, wrapped in some kind of bed sheet. It is moving! Varadan comes in, followed by Virevan.

Virevan then tell the other heroes he felt something tried to control him. They move in, ready to react if the body gets unwrapped and attacks. But it doesn't. Then MacRazbunare feel the same thing: something tried to enter his mind to control it. Petrak unrolls the bed sheet and a mummified body appears! It moves feebly and is pitifully whining! The sight is horrifying (horror checks, all succeeded). Exigu tries to speak to it but doesn't get an answer. They decide to end its suffering. Varadan and Virevan hit it. Mac Razbunare cast *disrupt undead* and the thing is destroyed. Petrak cuts the head off.

Then Mac Razbunare feels another mind control try. They check in the crates, half expecting another body, but the only thing they find is kitchen utensils, as well as old kitchen linen.

Another mind attack on Austizel.... They decide to exit the room, quickly.

DM note: in the room, it was Iesha's mummified body, after Aldern strangled her. But her spirit lives and tried to control one of the heroes to fight for her. Darn those high Will saves!

They are back to the study. Varadan hears the sound of flipping pages, like if an invisible person was furiously flipping pages. They see Exigu is like possessed, looking at the books with anger. They talk with him, but all he answers is “but I could be visiting the marvellous swamps of Souragne, the endless hot sand deserts of Har' Akir! The exotic port of Rokushima Taiyoo! But that harpy doesn't want me to travel!” They think it is Travers “speaking” through Exigu.

Virevan *detect undead* in the crate room, but doesn't feel anything. But he knows intelligent undead have a chance to resist detection. They use the spell detection time to scan the manor, but do not find anything.

They get in the cellar and climb down the stairs. The air stinks of rotten meat.

The walk in the stairs is quite long, and the heroes estimate it to be close to the height of the cliff, 400 feet.

After this long descent, the stairs end in a humid limestone cavern. The stink of rotten meat is everywhere. The walls drip with moisture, and there are many spots of black and dark blue mold.

The heroes enter the room. They hear a strange buzzing noise. They keep watch and see three bugs flying from the darkness to the heroes. The first lands on Exigu's back. The second is able to land on the monk and it hovers over him. The third touches Virevan's skin and it burrows in his flesh!



Exigu is able to kill the one hovering over the monk with arrows. Then Petrak hits Virevan's bug and kills it, hitting Virevan too in the process. Exigu watches the ceiling and sees hundreds of bugs, skittering in the darkness!

Mac Razbunare exits the room and enters a corridor, to find himself in the cloud of a yellow mold! He succeeded in saving against its effects. The yellow mold is in some kind of concave angle, making it dangerous to approach without getting a whiff of the spores...

The monk returns Exigu's favour and kills the bug in his back with *magic missile*.

The heroes are now trapped in a corridor between the "bug" room and a yellow mold. Then Exigu notices the bugs seem to gather in some kind of swarm! He throws some arrows at it, without effect! Mac Razbunare casts *flaming sphere* against the swarm. Austizel casts *mage hand* to fetch a bulleye lantern left in the bug room. The flame seems to have no effect on the swarm.



Austizel destroys the yellow mold with *produce flame*. The swarm moves in and attacks Mac Razbunare, leaving him bloody. Even after Mac Razbunare moved out of the swarm, the myriad of bugs do move toward Mac Razbunare to finish the gathering of tiny pieces of flesh and blood, one at a time... Varadan notices the bugs gathering in the swarms are different than the flesh burrowing ones. They battle the swarm. To get away from the blood-thirsty beetle swarm, Mac Razbunare runs in the corridor where there was the patch of yellow mold. Then Mac Razbunare's wolf seems fearful of something he smelled in front of them, in the darkness...

A few moments later, three ghouls attack from behind, coming from the bug room. The heroes fight hard and dispatch the swarm and the ghouls.

Exigu watches in the bug room and notices another swarm is forming! They move on toward the caves' darkness.

DM note: a few RL Grave scarabs, mixed in a swarm of death scarab (Sandstorm). Fun mix, especially when one PC looks up and sees hundreds of scarabs crawling on the ceiling!

GAME SESSION FOURTY: AND MORE WEIRD THINGS IN MORDENT -17

(played Feb 14th, 2010. Exigu played by Martin, Austizel played by JF)

February 20th, 748 – 11h30 am

They start the game asking themselves what where those hungry beetles (*knowledge nature*). The larger one, the Grave Scarabs are normally from Har' Akir, and it's quite surprising to find them here in Mordent. They are inactive until warm flesh is in their sense's range. Its main attack is flesh burrowing, where it goes to the heart and kills the victim (*permanent* constitution damage each round).

The swarm of smaller scarabs is also from the desert lands. They can devour creatures in moments, leaving nothing but inorganic materials!

They continue toward the darkness. They feel the air moving in the corridor, like some kind of wet breathing on the back of their neck ...

Eventually the tunnel opens twice in front of them. From one of them comes a horrible rotting smell. The second one opens into a room made like a funnel, with a cathedral like cavern, and a roof arching thirty feet overhead and a pool of emerald water fifty feet below. A stone alley winds down, its slope glistening with moisture from narrow fissures into the rock face, rivulets of water dripping down from them. A stone door stands in the northern wall about halfway down the slope.

While they are watching this large room, three ghouls sneak out from the other smelly entrance and attack the heroes from behind! Petrak cast *produce flame* at one of them. One of them bites Exigu, who succeeds in resisting paralysis. Austizel cast *disrupt undead*. Mac Razbunare moves into the large room and falls on the floor, and slides on the slippery floor down into the water!

Petrak hits a sneaking ghoul. Another ghoul hits Varadan, who replies and kills it. Meanwhile, a ghoul comes out of the water and moves to attack Mac Razbunare! Exigu tries to hit it with arrows. Another ghoul exit the water, and then two more! Mac Razbunare *summons wolf* to put it between him and the ghouls. The wolf bites a ghoul and make it trip back into the water.

Meanwhile Virevan and Varadan manage to defeat the ghouls that attacked them from behind.

Petrak throws a rope down the slippery hole for Mac Razbunare to grab. Mac Razbunare moves slowly toward the rope, but the ghouls crawl toward him, everyone moving slowly on this very slippery surface. Varadan takes a grip on the rope to help Petrak haul Mac Razbunare up with them. Exigu hears the stone door close, but do not see anything else moving. A ghoul hits the summoned wolf and gets it paralyzed. Another ghoul hits it hard, putting its claws inside the wolf to remove innards from its chest!

Then Mac Razbunare finally arrives at the rope and ties it around his waist. The others begin to haul him up, but a ghoul arrives, hits him and Mac Razbunare is paralyzed! This ghoul has a funny disgusted air as he spits after he did bite the druid (*DM note: unwholesome ichor from the use of the transubstancial halo*).

The heroes handle the hauling of paralyzed Mac Razbunare back to safety while Austizel and Exigu throw arrows at the remaining ghoul. These ghouls quickly retreat to the safety of the water...

Petrak cast *remove paralysis* on Mac Razbunare. They realize that Varadan and Mac Razbunare have been bitten by ghouls, so they have to be checked later for ghoul fever.

They enter the room where the ghouls were hiding. The stench is awful. The western half of this cavern is heaped with bones, each scarred by the scraping of teeth. Most of the bones have been cracked open for the marrow within. There is a pile of body parts in a corner, mostly humanoid, some old, some recent, and pigs as well, probably from the nearby farms.

They need to exit the cavern to get some rest, but near the bug room, they hear flapping wing noise, and insect buzzing noise too! They retreat back to the smelling body room, but decide they do not want to sleep in this stink. So they have to pass through the bug room again. They try their luck by running as quickly as they can for the stairs for safety.

While they run to the safety of the stairs, they notice six or seven bats are moving in the room, as if exciting the bugs! There are four active swarms in the bug room! But the heroes run fast and avoid being stuck in a swarm.

One of the swarm attacks Virevan! Virevan plans to run as fast as he can on the next round but there is a surprise, as the bats move in a flyby attack and delivers a sonic paralyzing blast at Virevan! (*DM note: carrion bats from Denizens of Dread, a deadly combination with a swarm! These are controlled to act as such by an intelligent ghoul bat in a cavern*). If he is paralyzed in a beetle swarm, he will get devoured by the ravenous critters! Then another bat, and another! Until one of them succeeds, but Virevan uses his luck (luck domain, as a priest of the Morninglord) and succeeds. He runs up the stairs!

But another swarm attacks Petrak and the remaining bats focus on Petrak too! Petrak fails a save and is paralyzed inside a swarm! He will be devoured! Varadan is able to throw a rope at Petrak's neck and draw him out of the swarm that way. As soon as he is out, he takes Petrak's paralyzed (and bloody) body and runs with him in the stairs. The swarms do not follow them in the way up. They heal Petrak, who was near death...

They exit the Manor, and go toward the farms to get some needed rest. They spend the afternoon making healing checks.

February 21th, 748, morning

Petrak awakes and feels sick. His pale face is swollen with tumors! He got a disease similar to the one they saw in the gallery? He cast *remove disease* on himself. (*DM note: Vorel's Phage, a disease from Vorel's failed lich attempt*).

Mac Razbunare cast *goodberry*. They spend the day resting.

At 5 pm, Austizel, Virevan and Varadan have the same disease as Petrak!

At night, the night watch is doubled – one with disease watching with one without.

February 22th, 748, night

Exigu notices that Austizel, Virevan and Varadan look really sick. They are feverish (*they are losing charisma and constitution points*).

After learning spells, Petrak cast *remove disease* on Austizel, and Mac Razbunare *lesser restoration* spells on Austizel and Virevan. Petrak cast the same spell on Varadan.

They decide to travel to Mordentshire to get healing aid. On the road, a quick stop in Canondale to inform the farmers of their recent adventures. They advise them to stay here a few days more, as the area isn't fully secured.

Early morning, they arrive in Mordentshire. The head priest Martigan is still in Levkarest, but Tara Kolyana is glad to cast *remove disease* on Varadan. They shop for a grappling hook and nets.

They go talk with Van Richten. Rogor Craesby (who became a ghoul) was a solitary man from Mordentshire. He is surprised to hear the heroes' tale in Fordstone manor. Van Richten say the manor should be exorcised, and possibly destroyed too.

The heroes also tell him about their bones encounter in the woods (*when Samuel was killed and eaten, his bones stacked in an oak tree – session 37*). They tell the old scholar that the possible culprit would be a woman werefox, because of the fox traces they saw. Van Richten tells them that feys have an animal form and that some can be foxes too. He asks if the heroes tried to speak to the eerie blooming flowers, to get the fey's attention. Mac Razbunare says they did, but without results. Van Richten tells them to be patient, and try more than once. Van Richten also suggests bringing rare seeds as offering? And not cut flowers!

He also tells them that their "friend" Maekon has left Mordentshire.

At night, they sleep at the Ezra church.

February 23rd, 748, morning

Petrak cast *remove disease* on Mac Razbunare and Tara the same on Virevan.

Petrak and Mac Razbunare cast *lesser restoration* on the sick heroes.

At 8am, they travel back toward the farm lands, where they rest another day.

February 24th, 748, morning

They learn spells, and go back to the manor. They silently descend the stairs and there are no noises in the bug room. The druid cast *longstrider* and they run through the bug room, but nothing happens...

They are back to the room where there is a pile of corpses. Petrak notices the pile is smaller than the last time, meaning there are ghouls who fed on this.

Using nets to walk on the slippery surface, they descend the alley toward the stone door. The stink when they open the door is horrible, like rot and moisture mixed. They see crates in a curving alley...