

GAME SESSION 94: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE IN BORCA – 9

(This Ravenloft game was played Feb 5th, 2023. Everybody is present)

July 9, 748, am

During the night, Varadan notes that Ivana often wakes up on shock as if from horrible nightmares.

Around 7 am, he awakes to find Ivana isn't there anymore. He waits for an hour, and, seeing she isn't coming back, he goes down to meet his friends.

The heroes learn their spells, and prepare some *identify* spells on Bernard Gui's cloak (resistance+1), his ring (prot +1), and his headband (of inspired wisdom +2). Later this morning, they sell the chain mail (+1) to Nostalia (1 000 gp).

Exigu checks on Al-Wawat's family. They are grateful to be out of Falkovnia and away from the underground prison. They were told to stay in their room until Ivana wanted to see them.

"Who is this Lady Ivana?", he asks, "is she the Queen here?"

When going for breakfast, Anne Claire Valloton, chief of staff at Misericordia, tells the heroes that Ivana is eating in a private salon, alone with Nostalia, as they have things to discuss. Also, Valloton passes a message: Ivana gives them the day off, they can do whatever they want.

At breakfast, when they are alone, Varadan asks if any other heroes remember what was the agreement with Ivana: they had to be bodyguards until when? When the Gargoyle's threat was eliminated? When the Jongleur comes back?

They notice that when servicing the heroes, the stern Valloton is watching the heroes with interrogating eyes. They try to talk to her and ask her if she knows what happened yesterday? She answers, "I've seen the look of my landlady this morning, and the fact she is drinking bottles of champagne that early. But no, I didn't ask what was going on, mind you. I just know she is extremely upset like I've rarely seen her".

In the middle of the *identify* spells, Nostalia checks on them "what are you doing today?". They ask her if the Boritsi Trading Company could be of use to get magic items? Nostalia answers that it's possible. "But other than you and Clothilda, they are no high-level wizards in Levkarest, as far as we know, if you were thinking of asking someone to craft a magic item."

She also thanks the heroes for what they did last night, saving Ivana. "Ivana is very grateful".

They decide to go to the Cathedral to see what's going on there since last night's events.

After the Caina-Levkarest ferry, they see a small crowd of people in the cemetery, near the Luna River. They go there and see Viktor Momeala of the Levkarest police forces. They learn that a

corpse was found here this morning, the corpse of a halfling woman, Viviane Rodier. *(DM note: the heroes remember she is the one who told Garrett about the secret meeting between Clothilda and Marcos Vedarrak! – session 89).*

Momeala: “It seems like an execution by the mob. She was tortured and she suffered a lot before she died. All her fingers were torn out, as well as half of her tongue. There were silver coins stuffed in her mouth and all other, ahem, holes. Her mouth has been sewn shut with a metal thread. Also, her skin was greenish in color like if she finally died by poison. *Someone* must have hated her a lot.”

DM note: Clothilda’s revenge. After the Gargoyle incident last night, she was free and the night wasn’t over. She knows Garrett is often their informant so she paid him triple the amount to find out what he said to the PCs, sending Rodier to her doomed end.

He adds, “it happened during the night, somewhere else, and the body was abandoned here early this morning”.

Around noon, they arrive at the Cathedral and find it is closed to the public. They meet Nicoletta Ladubay. They look at the hole in the roof being covered with a waterproof canvas. She thinks the hole repair could last three months.

She asks how is Mrs. Boritsi? Then she adds that “Mrs. Boritsi sent a message very early this morning to the office up there” while pointing at the sky, hinting the letter was sent to the Praesidius.

They discuss last night’s event. They agree that the Gargoyle was close to completing her mad project, and possibly for that reason it lowered its usual level of secrecy: hole in the roof, etc. Usually, it probably slowly moved *through* the Cathedral’s stone structure, she thinks.

She also reveals that the church thinks that if the Gargoyle had finished its project, all this unhallowed evil could have desecrated the whole Cathedral, which would have been a catastrophe. It wasn’t the gargoyle’s intention, as it was mad with Ezra fervor, but the killings had that evil side effect.

This morning the church is being cleaned, but otherwise, there won’t be any other lasting effect inside.

Exigu asks her if they could find a short bow +1 *flaming* (or other). Ladubay first says the policy that usually these requests are denied, but considering the heroes’ results, she promises to check what the church can do, considering their actions of last night.

At 1 pm, they go to Clothilda’s house. She is reading in front of a cup of coffee. “My master”, she says when Varadan enters, but he tells her to stop that. They talk about a spell exchange. She agrees to trade some spells and to scribe a scroll for them, understanding this time spent would quickly bring her to the end of her week of servitude to Varadan.

She visibly lies about not having *See Invisible*, raising the auction level. Final results of the negotiation: the heroes offer: *Mordenkainen's Lucubration* (a scroll the heroes have), *Levitate*, *Insight* and *Ethereal resonance*. She offers *See Invisible*, *Gaseous form*, and *Cloudkill* (that last one will be in scroll form, as the heroes do not have 5th level spells access yet).

DM note: in my game, it's a bit gritty for casters – they do not get new spells when they get a new level. Every spell in their spellbook has to be found. So that is why I sometimes give them the opportunity to trade spells or similar (the spellbook in Mordentshire, the access to the University in Martira Bay, etc.), in addition to spellbooks of defeated foes. I find it more realistic that way.

Clothilda starts working right away, while Austizel and MacRazbunare copy spells from her spellbook.

Late at night (10 pm), they are back to Misericordia. Nostalia asks them about their daily occupations, then Ivana goes to sleep with Varadan.

July 10, 748, am

The next day, they take their breakfast with Ivana and Nostalia. Ivana is calm and she is happy to see the heroes. She announces they will check on the Death Stone this morning.

They try reading the hieroglyphs on the Death Stone using Al Wawat's scarab (that enables the wearer to read Akiri) but most of it remains gibberish to them.

Ivana asks Nostalia to fetch Al-Wawat *and his family*. Nostalia is back minutes later, holding the little girl's hand in her own (gloved) hand. Nuzha-Nek gently follows Nostalia but she appears like if fearing her a little. Al-Wawat's wife, Layali-Nek, follows them closely, her eyes on Nostalia's neck, with Al-Wawat at her side.



Al-Wawat inspects the Death Stone. He explains it's difficult to understand as it is a very old form of Akiri. "I don't understand everything, but ... it seems necromantic. There are too many *ankh*, the symbol of life. And back then, they feared putting death symbols on something, so instead they did add the reverse in specific combinations, which I think is the case with this. But I know a friend in Har Akir that surely could translate everything. If you want, I could copy the hieroglyphs on the stone to show him?"

Then Al-Wawat is questioned by Nostalia about the Falkovnians' super soldier project. Al-Wawat reassures her : according to him, the Falkovnians have no chance of restarting this project, without Al-Wawat's help, and all the notes have been destroyed by Antunia and the heroes.

Nostalia then questions him about his role. Al-Wawat explains that he came to Falkovnia under false pretenses (that he would be paid) and that he was forced instead to collaborate with them, as they had my family in hostage. They traveled from Har Akir to Falkovnia through the mists with someone from Nebta-Khufre's group that knew how to navigate these.

Nostalia then asks him about Antunia Papiècù, and Al-Wawat tells her story:

Antunia Papiècu was born in Lekar's southern slum and raised in poverty. But even as a young adult, she was stronger than many men, and hard-working. Few people picked on her because she would mercilessly fight back with anger.

When she got older, she knew that to become a Falkovnian soldier was her goal in life. It would raise her above poverty and she could use the strong physical abilities nature gave her when she was born.

Antunia enrolled in the military and liked it from the start. She quickly became a dedicated Falkovnian soldier. Even in the chauvinistic Falkovnia army, she was able to fight for her place in the sun with a lot of determination. There again, those soldiers that picked on her because she was a woman, or tried to force themselves on her, were found unconscious and with blood on their face from her angry pummeling.

Born in poverty, Antunia wasn't as cruel with the commoners as the other Falkovnian soldiers, but she fought savagely for the state, twice as hard as a man, and her reputation grew as a tough woman. Her superiors truly esteemed her fighting skills and her will to fight for Falkovnia, but her advancement in the military was always slowed because of her gender.

When her place in the army was secured, she complied with the duty of a woman in Falkovnia and gave two children to the state. Both fathers were soldiers whom Antonia did not care for, but were chosen for their physical strength. From then on, her life was divided between the military and raising her two boys, Léopold-Passmoilé and Jean-Niapud, to become future Falkovnian fighters. When she was on military duty, Antunia's mother helped raise the boys. The years went on and the boys were soon young men.

Among other projects, Falkfuhrer Vjorn Horstman, head of the Falkovnian Ministry of Science, conducted research on mummification in order to create a super soldier. He was counseled in this direction by an exotic foreign woman, named Nebtha-Khufre.

The year before, a temple of evil cultists was annihilated by the Falkovnian military near the Invidian border. But the cultists left behind undead minions that proved to be extremely ferocious, cunning, and atrociously dangerous. The elite Falkovnians troops had trouble dealing with these powerful creatures. In fact, using explosives, the entrance of the underground temple had to be buried under tons of rocks to seal this horrible place forever and its monsters.

Nebtha-Khufre then told the Minister of Science of a way to make similar ferocious unliving soldiers, and to make them fully obedient to the state. More importantly, their unliving state was not obvious to the eye as are most undead. So after many discussions, this unliving übersoldier project was approved by Vlad Drakov, even if the lord of the state had little hope. But soon the success of this project proved him wrong.

With information from Nebtha-Khufre, a select group of Talons, and other elite Falkovnian fighters, including Antunia, went to the Amber Waste, in the town of Muhad, to kidnap an embalming alchemical specialist, Rashid Al-Wawat. They also took his wife and his daughter, to help in persuading him to work for Falkovnia.

The Falkovnians established a secret research camp. The camp was in an abandoned vineyard in a deserted area of the Crumbling Hills. The area was secured by military and the only thing to enter the restricted area were controlled caravans bringing supplies to the camp.

The utopian "Teer Stahlmann" project had started. With the help provided by the Har'Akir specialist held against his will, many tests were made to create this übersoldier. Many Falkovian prisoners were killed during these experiments, but that might be because of zealous and cruel assistant Nebta-Khufre.

But after a little more than a year of work, al-Wawat, Nebta-Khufre and a dark necromantic priest, Bernard Gui, were ready to test the formula and creation process with a real Falkovnian soldier.

To create the one of the first Falkovnian mummy, Otto Klockar, the Talon in charge of the camp considered a soldier that has proven her dedication to Falkovnia: Antunia. Also, she was then told she was of the "expendable" gender. Antunia's last memories of life was the horror of being stripped of her armor and weapons, of being forced to drink a foul tasting brew, and of being drowned in the tar pit, under the cruel laughs of her former comrades...

More alchemical treatments were applied by al-Wawat, Gui and Nebtha-Khufre, and nearly a month after her immersion, she was raised to unlife with exhilarating new powers. She was still completely loyal to Falkovnia and her hate of the state's enemies was as immense as her new strength. Antunia remembered everything in her former life as in a dream. Her mind was now completely focused on destruction for the Falkovnian state's glory.

Her strength and obedience were tested in many ways, and she proved to be perfect according to her masters. One night, under direct supervision of Vjorn Horstman, they had her defeat easily 10 experienced Falkovnian soldiers. Falkfuhrer Horstman was extremely pleased by these preliminary results and was liberal with promotions for those in charge. His reports to Drakov explained that a small shock division of 40 to 60 of these

similarly obedient übersoldiers could easily seize a town, and then leave control to regular Falkovnian troops while these tireless shock troops went blitzkrieg elsewhere.

As the first of her kind, Antunia was charged with training new tar mummy “recruits” to their new powers and test their obedience. She appreciated this new role in serving in that secret division of the Falkovnia army. Her former comrades feared her new strength and she secretly delighted in this new status.

The newly created tar mummies were under her control during their training. They were similarly exhilarated about their new powers and their extreme loyalty to the state. After their training, their control word was passed to Otto Klockar, the Talon in charge of the research camp.

However, things went sour one day for Antunia when she saw her own sons taken out of the tar pit as new tar mummies recruits. Old forgotten emotions suddenly came back to her dried flesh. She felt something was very wrong. She felt pity for her sons, something her dried heart had not felt in a very long time. She also began to feel hate for the lack of concerns of her superiors. She realized the Falkovnia government had taken from her all that she had. From then on, she secretly hated the Ministry of Science and its leader, Vjorn Horstman.

One of her sons made it as an ubersoldier (Léopold) and the other son was destroyed in the process. When she trained him, she really hated their strong obedience to the state. His son had no feeling whatsoever about her, and it made her very sad. In her rebellion, she knows she can’t turn the other mummies to her side.

Antunia wanted to bring down this secret experiment camp and destroy those responsible for it, especially Otto Klockar, and Vjorn Horstman. Otto is dead, only Horstman remains alive.

DM note: background text adapted for my campaign from my QtR18 article.

During this tale, Ivana appears thoughtful. When it is finished, she tells the heroes, “Wawat has an excellent idea. You will travel with him to Har Akir to get more information about this stone. If someone asks, the official reason for your trip is a market analysis for the BTCo: population size and their needs in terms of trade.”

The heroes are surprised but none disagree. Ivana adds, “On the other hand, I keep Al-Wawat’s daughter and wife in Levkarest, to make sure that he fully cooperates...”

Exigu, swiftly : “no, the family will not be separated! We will be the guarantor of Al-Wawat during this time!”

Ivana ignores him and no other heroes speak. Al-Wawat is afraid, but he does not say anything either. In the heavy silence, Nostalia’s wide smile at the little girl is somewhat grating...

Then Ivana says, “All set then”, and she turns her back on the heroes and walks away. Nostalia invites the group to leave the cellar and go back on the main floor.

Al-Wawat is shocked: “Is she really serious? She will keep my wife and daughter?” The heroes try to reassure him.

Later, they catch up with Ivana and Nostalia in a cozy salon. Ivana is upset, as she just received a request for a donation from the church for Yakov’s celebrations...

The heroes discuss about the way to travel to Har Akir. Nostalia informs the heroes that “we just smuggled a group of vistani out of Invidia, saving them from death under Maloccio’s anti-vistani laws. They will surely collaborate with us in exchange.”

In the afternoon, they go check with Clothilda (always working as requested) and then they go to the Cathedral. Ladubay informs them that a special mass will be held in their honor on the 13th!

At night, they are back in Misericordia. They find their official invitation to the mass in their honor. The invitation also asks if Clothilda should be honored too, as she was there too during the end of the Gargoyle, but Ivana answers “no”.

Later this night, Varadan informs Ivana of the body found near the river this morning, and the gruesome details of her torture and death. He hints that he thinks Clothilda did it.

Ivana: “A snitch is a snitch, I would have done the same.”

Varadan, changing the subject “and for Al-Wawat. May I suggest you give him a gift when he returns?”

DM note: I was half expecting him to plead that his wife and child would travel with him!

Ivana: “yes, after his help, he will have a sum of money to travel back home and settle down there.”

Ivana asks him about Clothilda and her behavior of the last days, Varadan answers all is fine and Clothilda did as expected.

July 11 and 12, 748

Resting time, Clothilda finishes her work.

The heroes get from her the *cloudkill* scroll. It appears to be without setup malfunctions.

They talk with Al-Wawat, asking for information on Har Akir.

They think that having Ivana ask the church for a *regenerate* for Nuzha-Nek lost fingers could be adequate for payment of his services.

July 13, 748

At 9h30, they leave Misericordia for the Cathedral. They are sent to Severin, who then brings them inside the Praesidius's office! They will have a private audience with him! Severin is present.

Levin Postoya is a man around 65 years old, of stern appearance but he smiles when he meets the heroes. A servant serves sweet wine and cookies, then Postoya sends the servant away.

He expresses his sincere thanks for solving the riddle of the murders of women, and also fixing this huge problem for the church's image.

He then insists that it should never be said that Ivana was present at the end, and why she was a prisoner of the Gargoyle for that blasphemous statue project.



"Madame Boritsi insists a lot on this. Complete Silence".

"We'll say (and so will you) that you tracked, found, and destroyed this mad and cruel creature using Ezra as your guide. You must not talk about what this creature was doing in the foundations of the church. If this dark and terrible thing was to be known, we will have major crises of faith. It could be interpreted as how Ezra couldn't stop this evil inside her very church. I also bet other faiths elsewhere could spread false reports of the event to discredit us."

He tells them that the two girls found alive will go in a sanatorium, and the church will pay for everything, wishing for their mental recovery.

Then in a surprising move, Postoya sends Severin away, "to complete the preparation of the ceremony". Severin leaves but it is clear he would rather have stayed, and he seems uncomfortable to let the heroes alone with the Praesidius...

When Severin has closed the doors. Postoya: "he told you about our secret in the old church, didn't he?" The heroes confirm.

Postoya: "What a major judgment error! Why did he do that? It's one of the biggest secrets of the church and he's going to fan it to people close to the Boritsi", he says, while eyeing Varadan.

"It's even worse than the heretical texts that you brought back of Vallachan. If it falls in the wrong ears, it may be something that can start a religious war, or another schism! We do not need that! Or perhaps a major political conflict. Imagine if Ivan Dilisnya finds out about this, how could he use this news?"

"We will have to make a decision about what to do with our first Praesidius. We may have to move him, or else, I don't know..."

Postoya then ask Varadan: "Well... I know you're close to Ivana. Did you tell her?" He confirms.

Postoya: "I really fear a conflict between Ivana and the church. That is the worst thing that could happen. We'll have to be very subtle - and be completely frank with her - from now on."

Varadan then tells him it wasn't a good idea in this context to ask her for a donation for Yakov's celebrations. Postoya agrees and believes the request was made by people who do not know the church's secret.

Varadan then offers that "Ivana appreciates total loyalty, and she prays Ezra everyday, if that can help you in the future".

Petrak excuses Severin "perhaps we did put too much pressure on Severin, we perhaps insisted too much"

Postoya answers "that is one interpretation of his motivations. I hope his real motivations are this pure".

Postoya: "we really appreciated the work you did for the church so far. Would it be possible to call for your help if another situation needed it?" The heroes accept.

Exigu "do you expect problems at Yakov's celebrations?" Postoya answers negatively, "nothing we can see."

Exigu "and from Ivan?" Postoya: "as far as I know, he knows nothing."

Then it is time for the celebration. They are dressed in white (an Ezra vestment of purity) and seated on comfortable chairs in the choir.

The church is quite full and Ivana occupies her pew in front, with Nostalia and other ermordenungs. Clothilda is there too, but she looks at the ceiling during the whole ceremony time.

Elsewhere, they see many familiar faces : Bevel Boritsi, Hellena Boritsi, the Dezuni couple, Lollar Boritsi, Sulo Boritsi, Beatrice Ritter, Victor Momeala, the Defraya couple, etc.

But they also see Ivan is there, with Brendig Lasonde. They are seated on the sixth pew from the start. They also notice a man seated next to Ivan. The man watches the heroes closely. Small and muscular, with curly blond hair and dark blue eyes. His face has something cruel and he wears dark clothing. Who is he?

But then the ceremony starts. Severin praises the heroes' prowess, fervor and their long investigation to flush out the killer of women, who was a deadly creature of the night. Guided by

Ezra, they defeated evil! They can now wear the title of Knight of Ezra (a silver medal is given to them. It is in the shape of the Ezra shield).

Severin then invites the church torets to join him near the altar: Nicoletta Ladubay (keeper of the healing faith), Johann Severin (administrator to the church), Sarlota Ostrava (keeper of the prayers), Oton Boritsi (leader of Ezra faith's geographical spread), Elias Nowlen (dwarf, commander of the Protectors) and Thierry Levasseur (in charge of the Annex, where young people from the world come to learn about Ezra).

One hero sees that Ostrava is possibly an ermordenung.

Then, Severin turns toward Petrak and announces that Petrak becomes Toret in the church hierarchy! Everybody applause (except the sixth pew).

Later, Severin explains Petrak this title is an honorary title, until Petrak is ready to stay in Levkarest and give time to the church.

After the ceremony, many come to meet the heroes and praise their fervor and courage.

They ask Ladubay who is the small man besides Ivan. She answers, "Oh, *he* is back in Borca! His name is Rodjan Dilisnya. He usually roams in the lawless portions of the land, with his mercenaries. Rodjan is popularly known as *the Demon*. It is said he loves to shed innocent blood, in large quantities..." She shivers.



They exit the church with Ivana and her friends. Clothilda says she has to go to finish her work for the heroes and she leaves.

Ivana congratulates the heroes and says she also has something to show them... She walks the streets of Levkarest, the heroes in tow. Nostalia is also with them. They turn on Lusat Street and walk all the way to the end. The street has many great looking mid-sized houses.

Ivana stops in front of one of these. "This house is my gift for you, as you saved me from a terrible fate, and I'm grateful."





DM note : map from Pathfinder 104

Nostalia gives the keys to a stunned Varadan. There are three servants coming with it: a cook - Mabilia Robiquet; a Maid - Adeliza Naudé; and a gardener - Herbertus Thibodeaux.

Nostalia explains that it was before the property of Henri Vaugrenard, a minor noble who moved to Dementlieu. It is all furnished. Nostalia also says that the property is tax free for ten years, and during this time, all staff salaries are paid by Ivana.

When they have finished touring the house with Ivana and Nostalia, Nostalia adds that her proposition of an honorary position in the Boritsi Trading Co still stands. Their role would be like "counselors" or "auditors" – they can audit any branch of the BtCo and report on BtCo growth opportunities. "I know you are of the adventurer type, and won't stay for long in the same place. So that position in the BtCo suits both parts. You report directly to me when you are outside Borca, and you get a wage of 100 gp/month."

Then Ivana waves at her coach, who followed them in the streets. "Tonight, we are going to the Dark Maiden. Come at Misericordia for 6". Ivana and Nostalia enter the coach and leave.

When they are gone, the heroes wonder if Ivan will attack her tonight, and what kind of protection they need.

They spend the afternoon exploring their new house.

At 6pm, they are back in Misericordia. On the front lawn, they see a vistani vardo, and four people around a fire. Petrak salutes them from afar, but only a woman answers back.

They find Ivana and Nostalia drinking champagne and eating delightful petits fours. The heroes join them.

At 7 pm, the coach leaves for Levkarest, and they arrive at the Dark Maiden a little before 8 pm.

As the other time, a table with white cloth is set for this illustrious guest. Ivana is all smiles and people of the slums are very happy to see her. They start a dice game with other gamers.

They spot Garrett the halfling at his usual table in the back. Exigu goes to talk to him. After some small chat, Exigu tells him "It's crazy what happened to Viviane Rodier, no?"

Garrett "sometimes, one should not ask too many questions..." . Exigu switches back to small talk. After a while, he joins Ivana's table.

At 9pm, Clothilda arrives at the tavern. She looks at Ivana's table, then takes a seat alone at the bar. Some time after, Ivana nods at Nostalia and Nostalia goes to see Clothilda and they talk. After long minutes, both girls come back to Ivana's table. It seems Clothilda is reintegrated within Ivana's entourage.

Austizel *detects magic* in the tavern: all heroes (of course), Ivana, Nostalia, Clothilda, Garrett, as well as a merchant seated with a group of merchants.

Then Austizel goes outside to watch. He sees a tall man, with leather armor and heavy mace, entering an alley when he sees Austizel. Austizel waves at other heroes and Varadan, Exigu and Tora exit the tavern. They walk toward the alley: it is empty. Exigu spots two persons hiding at the bottom of a staircase, hidden under an earthen canvas.

Austizel follows the first man and this one shoots a crossbow bolt at Austizel! Austizel is alone so he replies with a *shackle* spell. He sees two more thugs coming his way but they appear as surprised as him, and they run away.

They bring the shakled man to the front of the tavern. Seeing that, many people exit the tavern, looking for a fight, but the heroes send them back inside. They ask him why he was hanging around and the man replies, "I was here for the big fish inside. Not you. The merchants! Juicy pouches of gold!"

Exigu spots four more people retreating from the roof, when seeing that Exigu saw them.

At this moment, Nostalia is wondering what's happening outside. She gets outside in the streets, joins the heroes and listens to the shackled man's story: "let me go! I know nothing! I was looking to rob the merchants, not you!" .

Then Varadan threatens to enter the tavern with him and deliver him to Ivana herself. Nostalia removes one of her gloves. Eyeing Nostalia and Varadan, he then changes his story "we were paid by the Demon, if anybody could capture one of you, he would be very well paid! Let me go, I know nothing more!"

At one point, Nostalia has enough. She takes him by the neck and lift him from the floor. The heroes are surprised at how strong she is. The man dies in seconds, poisoned.

“Pathetic wretch”, she says when she let the man falls to the ground...

CUT SCENE (sent before game 95)

The day he received the full wrath of the Praesidius, Severin returns to the cathedral that night. He checks that he is alone, and when he is sure, he undresses in the choir, in front of the statue of Ezra. He pulls out a short whip studded with rocks, and he starts whipping his back, one lash every thirty seconds, while praying and cursing his weak flesh. He asks Ezra to be stronger and to help him not to repeat that kind of mistake over jealousy again. But after the tenth lash, Severin looks at the head of the statue of Ezra and whispers, “Ivana...” between two lashes. Blinded by the pain, Severin really feels the face of the statue is Ivana watching him suffer. “Oh, Ivana...”