

## GAME SESSION 95: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE IN BORCA – 10

(This Ravenloft game was played Feb 19th, 2023. Everybody is present)

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..."

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*July 13, 748, night*

The heroes drag the body to a shadowy side street. They search the body: nothing of value and nothing interesting. Petrak casts *lesser restoration* on Austizel (+2 dex).

Back inside, Nostalia whispers in Ivana's ears, probably what just happened outside. Ivana shrugs and go back to the dice game.

They notice Ivana is really playing to win.

At 11p.m., they go back to Misericordia. Before leaving, Ivana asks to see the body. She recognizes him as being Clayton, a thug working for Ivan.

Clothilda gives the heroes the last part of her last day's work, a scroll of *cloudkill*.

At Misericordia, they notice one vistani man is watching outside, near a fire. The other vistani are inside the vardo.

*July 14, 748*

Macrazbunare uses this off day to scribe scrolls.

1 p.m. A voyager passes the Misericordia gate. He rides a horse, and the horse carries many travel bags. When closer, they see he is the Jongleur, Ivana's bodyguard!

After leaving his horse in the stable, the Jongleur observes the vardo from afar, and the vistani stare back at him. Then the Jongleur enters the Manor, and searches for Ivana to let her know of his return.

When the Jongleur is out of sight, the notice the vistani discussing forcefully between themselves...

Varadan shares a conversation he had a few days ago with Clothilda : “the Jongleur? But you have already seen him, I believe, at a ball at Misericordia? (*session 13, eons ago in real time* :)). He has served as Ivana's loyal bodyguard for about 10 years, and occasionally as a dance partner. He is very good at dancing, probably his vistani heritage. He's mute, or at least I've never heard him speak. He always dresses very colorfully, with bells and ribbons on his two-bladed sword. What little skin he shows is marked by hideous scars. I believe that for this reason there was never anything between him and Ivana. Nostalia thinks the same. Rumor has it that his vistani parents threw him into the fire *when he was born*, but he crawled out of the fire and fled from there... Tenacious! In any case, today he is an effective and stubborn bodyguard, who knows how to keep undesirables away from Ivana. I wonder what he will think of the Gargoyle affair and the fact that he was not there to protect her?”

Varadan: why did the vistani threw him in the fire when he was born? Did they think the Jongleur was evil?

Tora: is he a dukkar?

Exigu is inside the manor, not far from the salon where the Jongleur finds Ivana. He listens but the conversation is one way: he hears Ivana greets him, then ask him questions. Exigu do not hear the Jongleur's answers and finds all Ivana's questions are of the yes/no type. He understands the Jongleur is answering with signs. Exigu also hears tell him that there are six visitors who are free to walk inside Misericordia's *non restricted places*.



Then the Jongleur gets to his room and stays there about an hour. Then he is back downstairs and takes watch duty at the door of the salon where Ivana is reading.

At one point, Varadan wants to speak to Ivana, but the Jongleur blocks the entry until Ivana tells him “it’s all right, let him pass”.

6 p.m. Then it is dinner time. Going for the dining room, they overhear this conversation between Nostalia and Ivana:

Nostalia – we still don't know where he went?

Ivana – no, he leaves once every three years for family matters, but does not want to say anything more ...

The dining room is full, with Ivana, Nostalia, the heroes, the Jongleur, Clothilda and Cassandra Gide. Diner is lively, and Ivana officially introduce the heroes to the Jongleur, and she tells him about the Gargoyle’s story and the heroes’ role in her rescue. She doesn’t mention the statue project the Gargoyle had.

Some of the ermordenungs question the Jongleur about his whereabouts, but his yes/no answers with his head limits the investigation and the process do not reveal anything.

At one point Varadan asks the Jongleur “you are mute or is it because you do not have anything interesting to say?”

(Nostalia refrains a giggle)

The Jongleur watches him, without any expression on his face, and do not answer. After a moment, his attention is back to Ivana and his food. He has a good appetite by the way.

Nostalia asks the heroes about their intentions regarding Ivan's thugs? They answer that they will reply if needed, but without making provocations first. Nostalia approves.

Then the heroes leave Misericordia for their own manor. Varadan tells Ivana that he would like to stay. She agrees and adds, "But know that we are together when we are together".

The heroes reach their new manor in Levkarest and talk with the cook - Mabilia Robiquet; the maid - Adeliza Naudé; and the gardener - Herbertus Thibodeaux. Mabilia asks them if they are hungry, but the heroes tell her no.

Not sure of the place, they do turn of guard duty. They also see that Herbertus has two dogs roaming in the backyard.

They explore the manor again, and choose their room: F17 – Varadan, F11 Macrazbunare, F15: Tora, F4 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, between F12 and F6): Exigu, then Petrak and Austizel will share room F5 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor).

(basic description of all rooms at the end of this journal, recycled map from a Pathfinder adventure)

*July 15, 748*

The heroes reach the Cathedral for the Yakov celebrations. There are much more people than usual, and the church will surely be jam packed.

At the entrance, a young anchorite assigns them a pew on the second floor of the church, except Varadan, who has a place on Ivana's pew, first row. From their observations points, the heroes can see everything on the ground floor.

Ivan is seated on his pew, but Lasonde or Rodjan are not with him. Instead, Ivan is surrounded by sycophants trying to get his attention and laughing too loud at his jokes.

The first pew (Ivana's) is the only one that isn't filled with full capacity: only Ivana, Varadan, Nostalia and the Jongleur fill the eight-seat pew.

The heroes notice that the Praesidius himself will lead the celebration mass. They also see that Nicoletta Ladubay will assist him; with another person they know: Tara Kolyana! All are dressed in white.

The mass itself is more a celebration of the progress of the Ezra church than a celebration of Yakov. This last part is sober, where the Praesidius tells Yakov's life story: his visions, his courage

to persevere to establish the church of Ezra as we know it now, without any mention of the cause of his death, of course.

At the end, for the communion, the Praesidius comes down of the choir podium to reach Ivana's pew. He gives the communion himself to Ivana and helps her going up from on her knees after by holding her hands. All this is extremely unusual for him, as other people perform this task.

Varadan hears the Praesidius whisper to Ivana: "we have a common problem. I'm sorry for this situation, but it was decided before me and I inherited it. We should have a discussion about this matter to see how we both can gain from this." Ivana nods, "Indeed, we both have interest in settling this quietly".

Petrak reaches the choir to talk with Tara. She is pleased to see him, and tell him that she came to Levkarest for the celebration. She tells him she is busy deciphering and understanding the heretic texts, and her main concern is to avoid another crisis, or another church schism.

Outside, everybody is commenting the celebration, and everybody compete in tributes and good comments about it. Many want to speak to Ivana, and she is patient and listens to many. She looks fragile, smiling and pure. When the person has said everything essential to Ivana and Ivana has responded, Ivana nods a farewell, and that person is gently pushed aside by the Jongleur. From the Jongleur's incessant moves around Ivana, the heroes understand they are trusted inside Ivana's safety bubble the Jongleur created.

After a while, when she has enough, Ivana looks at the Jongleur and from then on, only *restricted* people have access to this safety space.

It is lunch time. Before they leave the church's front, Exigu spots a group of people standing in the shadow on the other side of the main street, Crimson highway. He spots a group of eight persons who are discussing between themselves. However, Exigu notes that there is always one of them is watching the crowd, then back to the *discussion* as another takes his place watching. The group includes a tall woman and Exigu recognizes the red cloak she wears: could it be Jacqueline Montarri?

Exigu also see Garrett elsewhere in the crowd.

Petrak tells Ivana that Montarri is there, watching the crowd. Ivana answers she would not recognize her face as she never met her. She only knows her by reputation. "She is here seeking something, or tracking something, I wonder what it is".

Boldly, Tora decides to cross the street and talk to the woman. After some quick greetings, she asks him what brings Tora's group to Levkarest. Tora explains that they were Ivana's bodyguard for the last weeks, at Ivana's request. He asks her why she is in Levkarest: "it is an important celebration, which brought many nobles from everywhere, not just Borca. We just wanted to know who was present. Some of them could be clients of ours".

*DM note: a lie, but Tora doesn't score high in sense motive. Montarri is there to track Tara Kolyana as the Red Vardo Traders found Strahd would pay a fortune if Tara was brought to him...*

They walk toward the restaurant Mava, Ivana's preferred place. They find that Ivana also invited Tara Kolyana and Nicoletta Ladubay. Ivana and the ermordenungs girls are very glad to be in the presence of Tara, which they compliment and ask her details about her life and philosophy.

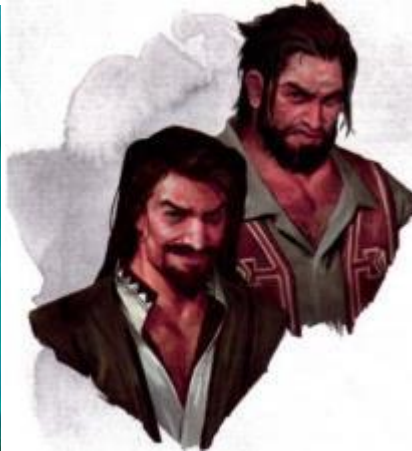
Unnoticed by the heroes, when Yakov is mentioned, Ivana watches Nicoletta closely for any sign of discomfort but she sees none (she isn't *in the know* for Yakov's body).

At 3p.m., Nicoletta and Tara leaves. Tara explains she has a meeting with the Praesidius.

The heroes ask Ivana how to get to Har'Akir. The girls nod and say they should introduce the vistani to the players now. At 3h45, they are in Misericordia and go meet the vistani.



(Dulcimae



Sergei, Marius



Tonio)

The men stare at you in stony silence. Their hostile gazes make a sharp contrast to their festive clothes.

The beautiful young girl talks with Nostalia. Garish jewelry adorns her hair, neck and fingers. But she is very young, not much older than 20 years? Nostalia introduces the heroes. "My name is Dulcimae," the vistani girl says. "We would be grateful to help you ... .. and Lady Nostalia."

Her face is innocent and trusting. She names her brothers, Sergei, Marius, Antonio, who are very distrusting. One of the men spits, mutters, and turns away. Sparing them a quick glance, she looks back at you and says, "Please! Don't mind my brothers. They distrust outsiders and worry that you would try to steal me from them. We will help you for your travel."

«You have no right to promise them anything of ours! » hisses Sergei.

"I have the right since mother died. It's the vistani tradition. I lead this family now, and we will be paid for our efforts," Dulcimae says. « Well paid » while looking at Nostalia. Nostalia nods.

At one point, Antonio notices Petrak's giogoto mark, and asks him how he got it. Petrak tells him the story of Raul, his ghost wife and how they helped Madame Eva when they shackled Maloccio to Invidia. This completely changes Antonio's attitude toward the heroes, to a friendly one. The other two do not, however.

Turning back to you, Dulcimae asks, "So it seems we are going to Har Akir? Never been there. You?"

She tells them that a few gifted Vistani are able to travel the mists. Her mother, Madame Bodani, had the gift. Dulcimae too. The old woman died a few weeks ago. Among the Vistani, leadership is the right of the women because they are the ones who usually have the power of second sight and the ability to travel the mists.

After that, they go to Al-Wawat and tell him that they are leaving tomorrow morning for Har' Akir.

They ask him to let know more about this place. He describes a desertic sand place with a very long past history of glory, and tells them about the weather (high temperature from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and very high between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.), that water is needed (2 gallons per day per person) and that they should remove their armors and wear ample white clothes, unless they want to look like dried chickpeas within a few hours. He adds that many Akiri sleep during the day from noon to 4 p.m.

The heroes tell him they will have the protection of *endure elements* spells.

When the heroes ask, Al-Wawat adds that his country is surrounded by mists and is about 35 miles by 20.

At 4h30, they are back to Levkarest to rest and sleep in their new manor (except Varadan of course).

*July 16, 748*

At 9 a.m., the heroes are in Misericordia. They see the vistani have packed camp and are ready to leave. Ivana wishes them a safe trip, especially to Varadan.

Al-Wawat arrives and hangs his travel bags to the Vardo.

Dulcimae and Antonio continue to treat the heroes kindly while their other brothers give them the cold shoulder. Dulcimae and Antonio will lead the horses and the other brothers will be inside the vardo. The heroes are told by Antonio to follow close to the wagon.

They pass the Misericordia gate and head south on the road. The wagon lurches from side to side, bells and trinkets jangling softly. Dulcimae chant softly.

Suddenly, small patches of mist appear on the ground, around the vardo. The noise is oddly muted by the gathering mists. Then they are quickly surrounded by the dank, swirling fog. The mist is so thick they can barely see the wagon anymore. They can't see their feet! They get closer to the vardo.

As they wander through the mists, their sense of direction is completely lost!



At one point, they hear Dulcimae's voice, like if she was much closer to them as she is in reality. She whispers "Be quiet, we will stop for a moment, there is something in front of us. We will let it pass.". After a moment, a minute, an hour?, the vardo resume its voyage.

After what seems like hours passed, they notice the air is warming up. Then it is really hot. The mists are burning off from the heat. The dull red orb of the sun can be seen overhead through the evaporating fog.

As the last tendrils of the mists blow away in the hot, dry breeze, they see sand under their feet. The sudden heat is suffocating, and you find it difficult to breathe.



Al-Wawat "We are on a trail road in the desert" and shows the heroes and the vistani that the trail is marked by rocks regularly, every 100'. "Without them, we could be lost", he adds.



The heroes cast *endure elements* on themselves, Al-Wawat, Dulcimae and Antonio and the two horses.

Dulcimae's brothers Sergei and Marius are shouting at Dulcimae in a strange tongue. They are clearly upset, as is she, by this strange new land. Dulcimae turns to the heroes "Err... which direction are we going?" Al-Wawat says he lacks landmarks, so he does not know where they are.

Which direction should they follow the trail? Macrazbunare turns to eagle form and fly a thousand feet high. He sees a wall of mists on one side, and a dried river on the other side.

Al-Wawat : "A wall of mists? It's the walls of Ra! We should go in the other direction."

They reach the dried river bed. It is about 200' wide. While crossing it, they see a group of seven people appear, they are dressed as desert folks. They have bows in hand.

"You are in the territory of the great black dragon! And there is a toll to pass on his land!!!", shouts one of them in Akiri.

Varadan (wearing the scarab of Akiri translation) asks, "what is the toll?"

The leader answers, "one gold piece, ... or perhaps food?"

One of them adds, "or alcohol! Alcohol is fine too!" and the other desert people agree loudly.

The heroes agree to give them a bottle of wine. One of them, the youngest of the lot, come to the heroes, grab the bottle and runs back to his group. Then they walk away and disappear behind a dune.

From the air, Macrazbunare sees the group hide the bottle in the sand, then *turn* to jackals and run away to the south! He sees what look like a small oasis in this direction.

They resume their trip further north.



Close to 6 p.m., they arrive in sight of a village “Ah, here is Mudar!”, says Al-Wawat. They see a large spot of water in the middle of Mudar that sparkles, as well as a bigger lake to the north.

However, 2,000’ from the village, on the side of the road, they notice a brown weathered hand sticking out of the sand!

They investigate and unearth a human body. All that remains of the body is brown, shriveled flesh clinging tightly to the skeleton - as though every drop of water had been drained from it... There is a mark of a hand on the body’s neck, like if it has been strangled... Also, the members are broken and have stiffened in an odd position.

They put it in the vardo, with the two angry vistani brothers ;)

Then they enter Mudar:



The village is surrounded by a 5’ wall (more to cut the wind than to protect the village, explains Al-Wawat). This hamlet is mainly built with mud brick houses.

As the colorful Vistani wagon rolls into the village, the people of Mudar come out of their houses to stare. The villagers line the streets dressed in their long, flowing white robes. Their pinched brown faces peer steadily at the strangers. None of the villagers speak to the heroes or the Vistani, but they step aside to clear a path for the wagon, and then follow it, whispering between themselves. Many men and women wear a bow.

Al-Wawat suggest dropping the body at the temple. Al-Wawat leads them there. When the body is in plain view, a woman pushes through the crowd, wailing and shrieking with grief. It is obvious that this is the body of someone she knew. She attempts to drag it away with her.

Then a woman exits the temple. She wears white flowing robes trimmed with gold. A gold band circles her head with a snake. She wears a gold medallion around her neck and gold jewelry adorns her wrists and fingers. She carries a staff with a golden cobra's head on top of it.

Akiri clearly reveres her. "She is Isu Rehkotep, the priestess at the temple", say Al-Wawat.

She immediately moves to examine the body, then comfort the woman. The crying woman says, "I woke up yesterday morning and he was gone...". Isu ask people with the woman to carry the body inside. "After all, we do have a duty to give him a decent burial.", she said. People obey her out of respect: she commands the obedience and loyalty of many of the villagers.

After the dead villager has been taken care of, Isu welcomes the Vistani and the heroes to Mudar. She invites them to take a room at the temple, but Al-Wawat tells her that he has a house in town and will host the heroes.

She tells them of an important rule in Mudar: they may drink freely of the water, but are not allowed to fill their canteens or take any water away from it. Any attempt to take water from the spring is considered a serious crime. She adds that the heroes will be attacked by the villagers if they try to steal water from the oasis. "Strangers tried to do that a week ago and were nearly killed."

"Come see me at the Temple if you need anything", she says, and then leaves for the temple.



7h30 p.m. Al-Wawat goes for his scholar friend's house, named Amenhemoft. The vistani prefer to wait near Al-Wawat's house.

Amenhemoft and his wife Nabta are glad to see Al-Wawat.

He is very pleased to see his friend and ask Nabta to prepare a *mechoui* (roasted lamb), then asks for red wine!

Amenhemoft and his wife wants to know where Al-Wawat was during the last 18 months, and all about his wife and his daughter's health? They have many questions.

It takes the whole night for Al-Wawat to tell his friend and his wife about his life in the Falkovnian camp, and of his rescue by the heroes. Hearing this, Amenhemoft turns to the heroes "you are my friends!".

Al-Wawat explains that his wife and daughter stayed in Borca, but he will soon get them back here too.

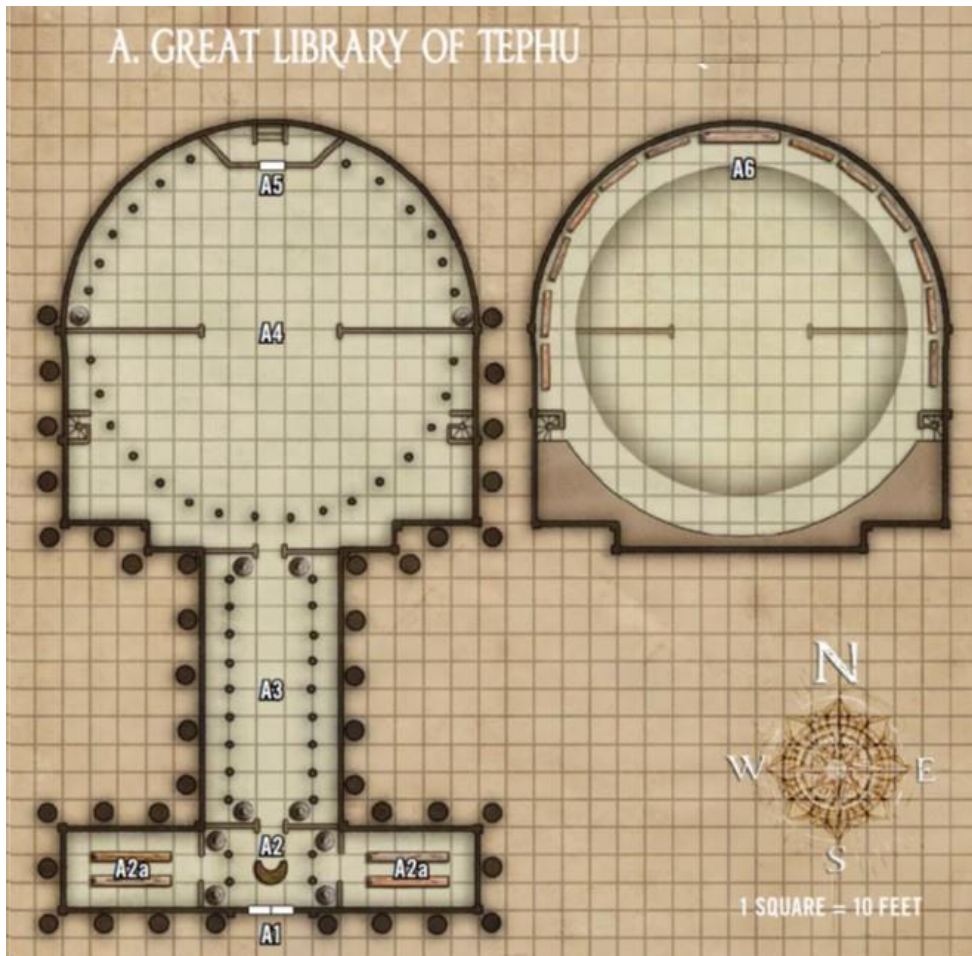
Al-Wawat also tells Amenhemoft that he came back to Har Akir to ask him about the hieroglyphs on an old stone, but that will be for tomorrow as it is now late.

*July 17, 748*

They go meet Amenhemoft at the Library of Tephu. Amenhemoft shows them around.







source: Pathfinder

The library is protected against theft: if anything is taken from it, the 12 mummies of the old curators come to life, tracks the stolen documents and get them back! Amenhemoft says it will also be his duty after death: his mummy will also protect the library's content.

A1. Enormous bronze doors, etched with the images of rampant sphinxes, lead into the library's cavernous interior. Two library guards stand watch in front of the doors. The guards are quite lax.

A2. A large, ornate desk lit by a magnificent lantern stands in the center of this entrance hall. Statues of enigmatic sphinxes sit in each corner of the room, their gazes an impossible mixture of pleasure and defiance.

Amenhemoft explains that entry is free for Akiri, but access to the library requires a donation of 20 gp per day of research for strangers. Its surprisingly popular and it pays for the library's expenses. "But today it's free for you, you are my guests".

A2a rooms with long tables where people read or to discuss. Though study is often a solitary task, at times these academics come together to discuss complicated theories, share new

discoveries, and simply relax their eyes and backs between long bouts of reading ancient manuscripts.

A3. The Processional of Learning. Two rows of columns run down the sides of this long, high hall. The corridor terminates at each end with a wide archway flanked by statues of wise-looking sphinxes. As elsewhere in the library, shelves crammed with books and scrolls line the walls. The chamber drowns in books, ledgers, librams, scrolls, clay tablets, tomes, and other more obscure forms of record, held in countless shelves and cabinets. The smell of old books is almost overpowering.

A4. The Great Chamber of Knowledge. This breathtaking chamber is a vast, pillared hall soaring upward to a great dome overhead, 120' high, an airy vastness appropriately painted with stars and clouds.

A ring of columns runs around the perimeter, supporting a gallery at the base of the dome. Countless shelves 20' high divide the chamber, rising so high that ladders are needed to climb them. These shelves are in turn separated by a bewildering variety of boxes, cabinets, cases, and chests. There are also benches, reading tables, huge desks for spreading maps, and elaborate displays. The Great Chamber of Knowledge is almost mindboggling, a repository for many tens of thousands of books, maps, scrolls, tomes, and other objects.

In the southern portion of the chamber, two spiral staircases to the east and west climb to the gallery of the Upper Stacks (area A6). Although the Great Chamber is subdivided into approximate subject areas, it is very loosely catalogued, requiring time and patience to successfully navigate.

A5 bureau of curators (there are currently 3 in the library)

A6. Upper Stacks. The books in here are more precious, Amenhemoft says. The vaulted dome of the library rises like the heavens 60' above the floor of the main chamber. A broad balcony circles the base of the dome, lined with shelves and piles of books that loom like cliffs on the brink of collapse. A jumbling array of ladders climb to these teetering shelves, propped against the stacks, hung from ledges, dangling from wires overhanging the library far below, or fashioned from spikes hammered into the walls.

Amenhemoft explains that more than just the original texts fill the scrolls and books; the margins hold notes and marks from hundreds of sages who paged through these writings long before and recorded their thoughts. This marginalia is at least as valuable to scholars as the records' original text—and sometimes even more precious!

They get in one of the long tables room (a2a), that Amenhemoft had reserved for them to be alone. A girl is waiting there. She is half akiri and half elf! Her name is Kemat Tii and she is Amenhemoft's research assistant. She is quiet and look at the heroes with curiosity. "You come from outside? How is it?", she asks. The heroes answer her questions and describe Barovia and other places.

Then Al-Wawat describes the Death Stone and shows the scholars the drawings he made of the hieroglyphs on it. Amenhemoft's eyes widen as he listens to Al-Wawat's description.

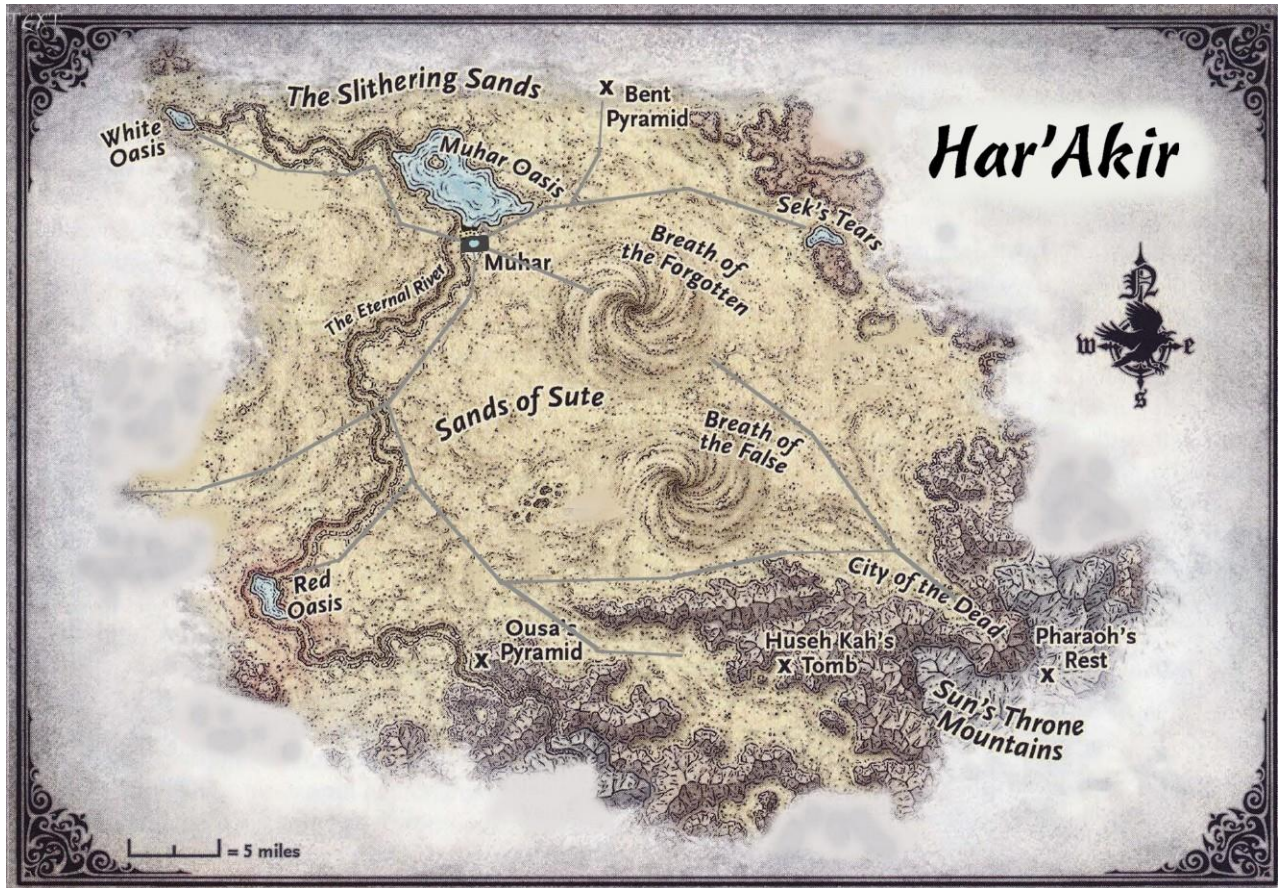
Amenhemoft – "I think this is a very old magic item! Made by long-dead mages! Necromantic! I think we will need about a day to search for it. Come back tomorrow!"

The heroes decide to stay at the library for the moment, they wander by themselves and look around. It is difficult, as most of the books (95 %) are in Akiri and only one of them has the scarab to read it.

Austizel cast *comprehend languages* and is looking for spells. Kemat Tii guides him and Austizel finds a book with many pages torn out, but at the end are *blink*, *deep slumber*, *hold person* and *shrink item*.

They find a map of Har'Akir:





Map modified from VRGtR

Kemat Tii tells Varadan that they are lucky to be strangers, as “strangers always have a lot of golden and silver pieces. Here, life is hard, and we are lucky if we own 5 gold pieces in our own life. We are poorer than you, but we do not miss on essentials”. There aren’t any hints of jealousy in this, just amazement from Kemat Tii about this fact.

The heroes ask her about the strangers that came here recently.

Varadan asks “do they have tattoos of an eagle on the front head?” and Kemat Tii answers “yes”.

The Falkovnians are here! They ask her for more information about them.

“They have been there for a month, they are looking for something in the desert. They hire people to dig, but we don't know what. There are no graves or other known things there, so they must know something we don't... But we have friends on their digging site, if they find something we will know. Their search leader is a girl named Nebta-Khufre. She came to do research at the library a few days ago but paid a lot of money (50 gp) *to be there alone* so we don't know what she worked on, she put everything back afterwards. She said she wanted to



meet me for other research but it hasn't happened yet. When they come to town, they are quite unfriendly..."

Exigu "like ... if they thought their race was superior?" and Kemat Tii agrees.

Kemat Tii adds "These are not the only stranger in town. There is a woman up there that came every day for the last two months to make research. She does not want to be helped. Do you imagine what is the cost of two months research for a stranger?". Her eyes open wide as she makes the calculus in her head.

Varadan decides to go meet her. He goes upstairs and see a woman alone at a table, a pile of books near her, reading. She is dressed in white, with a scarf over her head. She wears many jewels, silver and gold.

Varadan – hello, I was told you are here since a long time so perhaps you could help me? I'm looking for things about the ancient akiri language?

She look shy and doesn't look at Varadan.

Her – I think you will find many things written in old akiri language, split in all sections of this library ...

Varadan – my name is Varadan by the way? And you?

Her – my name is Udjebet.

Varadan – you look akiri and you have an akiri name! I thought you were not from here?

Udjebet - ....

She looks nervous and appears eager to end this conversation soon. She attempts to go back to her reading, hoping Varadan will leave her alone.

Varadan – I'm from Barovia. Where are you from?

Udjebet – a place near Lamordia.

Varadan – what is it you are searching about?

Udjebet seems more interested by this conversation – I'm a collector of rings, and I'm here researching a legendary ring.

Varadan mentions the Falkovnians after he notices she looked quickly at his front head. "No, I do not have an eagle tattoo. Do you know what the Falkovnians are looking for?"



Udjebet – Those guys. They made me lose two days when they reserved the exclusive use of the library. I hate that, not as if there was much to do in Mudar...

With a gesture of impatience, she briefly shows a bracelet, which she quickly returns under her sleeve.

Udjebet – But I think might know what they're looking for...

In exchange of this information, she says she would trade for a ring.

Varadan say he'll check with his friends to see what could be done, and leaves.

Varadan tells his friends of the conversation and of the bracelet he saw quickly: it looked unique and expensive. The heroes check their inventory but there is nothing of worth. They decide to go to the market.

It starts badly: the two first people refuse to talk to Varadan!

The third woman is more friendly, and Varadan buys a basket from her. Then he asks her where he could buy jewelry.

Her, disappointed – Oh, I thought you were sent by the gods to solve the murders, not to buy jewelry!

Varadan asks her to explain: she means murdered people like the person the heroes found yesterday. It happened seven times in the last two months. Always at night.

He gives her one gp for the basket (value of 1/10 of it, perhaps even less).

She gives him the name and location of a jeweler, who makes expensive things bought mainly by rich people and priests: Horemheb, and the location of his house.

He goes there and asks to see the things he makes. The first jewels are trinkets, but Varadan asks to see more expensive jewels. He finds two could be of interest to Udjebet: a ring showing an ankh, with embedded agate stones found in the desert (100 gp), and a silver ring showing a biting snake (50 gp). He buys both for 100 gp.

Varadan returns to the library to meet Udjebet again. He gives her the jewels and she appreciated them.

Udjebet – I found a misplaced scroll the next day after we could not visit the library because of her. I think they are looking for the legendary pyramid of the four pharaohs. It's a well-known Akiri legend. According to this old scroll, the pyramid would be pretty much where they've been looking...

Varadan thanks her and leave.

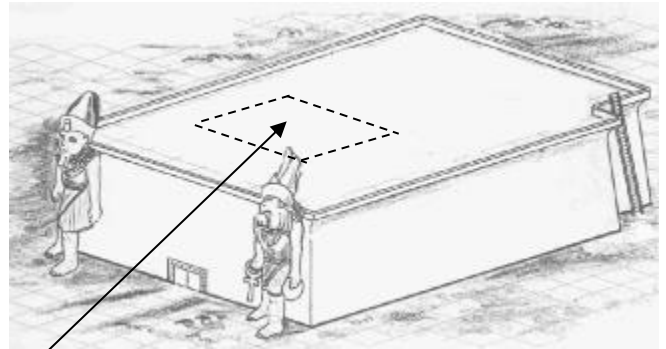


*DM note: Atrakta (Udjebet) is a new NPC, an added danger to Mudar as well as a source of useful information. She is a medusa with a ring of blending to appear as an akiri woman, a look that would not draw attention while in Mudar. While in Har Akir, she also chose a local name (Udjebet) but the ruse fell when Varadan learned that she is a stranger to Har Akir (but with an akiri look and akiri name?). She is an obsessive collector of rings, and Atrakta is here in the library researching a legendary artifact, the ring of Izmur (VRMHC II p.190), among other things.*

They go for the temple to ask Isu about the murders. The priestess Isu lives in the largest building in Mudar - the temple (130' x 90'). It is made of large sandstone bricks. The exterior is washed in white. The front of the temple has two large statues on the corners facing the rising sun.

When facing the temple, the statue on the right is of the god Ra. Ra is portrayed as a powerful male figure with the head of a hawk. His arms are at his sides, the left arm holds the sun and the right arm holds an ankh.

To the left is the statue of a man but the heroes do not know who it might represent.



The two massive doors are plated in bronze. They are decorated with relief sculptures of a rising sun over a funeral barge. They knock at the doors, but nobody answers. They find the door unlocked: they enter.

They enter a main hall to find a tribute to the main gods of Har Akir. It is extremely colorful. There is also a part of the roof that is open to the sky, over the main hall.



The center opened to the sky is surrounded by massive columns. Each of the columns is five feet thick and carved into a statue of one of the gods. Well sculpted and painted. Each god faces both into and out of the courtyard, so the backs of the gods are never depicted. There is no place inside this room that is not under the watchful eyes of the gods!

Reed mats are scattered on the floor for worshipers to kneel upon. Near each column is a basket with offerings (dried fruits, dried meat, arrows). They see the most popular god is Osiris (by far).

Those gods statues are shown on the next page.

At the opposite of the entrance is an altar: a large flat stone is engraved and painted on the four sides with hieroglyphics of pharaohs and priests presenting gifts to the gods. The various symbols of all the gods line its sides.

After a moment, while the heroes watch the statues, Isu enters the main hall. “Welcome to the temple of Mudar”. With her enters a large cat. “and please meet Bashat”, she says.

Bashat hisses at Patu (Exigu’s dog), Macrazbunare’s wolf and Varadan. Isu doesn’t seem to notice. Isu treats it with special reverence. She talks to it and pretends that it answers her back like many pet owners do.

Isu wears the holy symbol of Osiris (god of nature and rebirth).

Petrak tells her they heard about the murders and wishes to know if Isu needs help in solving this. “Of course, all help is welcome”, she says, “if you find something. Many have tried, none found anything.”



Exigu asks her if there is such a thing as a desert vampire, and she is amused for a moment. “No, not that I know of”

She tells them all bodies are from people who vanished at night, and they were all found in the desert, near the village, and all bodies were shriveled like yesterday’s.

They ask if they could see last night’s body. She opens a door to a place she calls the Vault of Anubis: a place for mummification. On a slab, there is the dried body they found yesterday.

They search it for vampire marks or other marks but see nothing that could think of a vampire. There is only the mark of a hand on the body’s neck. The other bodies didn’t have that strangling mark, she said.

Isu hopes someone will soon end this abomination and hideous crimes.

Isu offers to heal the heroes if they need it during their stay. “I’m not a very powerful priest, but I would gladly do what I can!”

<i>A Anubis</i>	<i>B Neith</i>	<i>C Sekmet</i>	<i>D Horus</i>
			
<i>E Osiris</i>	<i>F Isis</i>	<i>G Set</i>	<i>H Bastet</i>
			
<i>I - RA</i>	<i>J Wadjet</i>		
			



## PCs' manor: Vaugrenard Manor



Address: 70 Lusat St

Land: narrow - about 120' facade on the street, but more deep : about 300' deep. A thick hedge surrounds the Manor. There is a garden in the back.

The manor house's exterior doors are strong wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 25); the interior doors are simple, made of lighter woods from the surrounding woods (hardness 5, hp 10, break DC 15). All windows are securely shuttered and locked (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 30). The ceilings within the manor are 10 feet high.

The building is richly furnished; paintings and wooden cabinets filled with display pieces line the walls, and the rooms and corridors feature similarly decorative furnishings.

Small torches and hanging chandeliers provide light in the halls and public rooms, while the bedrooms are equipped with traditional oil lamps. The storage areas are unlit.

F1. Entrance. Two entrances lead into the manor: the front door on the south side of the house, and a side door to the east (to a small alley). Each is accessible by a 5-foot-high flight of steps climbing to a stone landing.

F2. Foyer: A large couch sits to one side of this entry hall. Opposite the couch, a grand stairway climbs to the second floor and area F12. A storage closet under the stairs holds dozens of coats, cloaks, and other outerwear (small room in white dotted lines under the stairs).

F3. Hall Library. The walls of this hallway are lined with empty bookshelves.

F4. Storage: These areas contain barrels of water, foodstuffs, linens, tools, and other mundane items necessary for daily life.

F4 (2nd floor, between F12 and F6): **Exigu**

F5. Servants' Quarters: These rooms house the servants. They contain basic, worn furniture, but are otherwise empty.

F5 second floor: **Petrak** and **Austizel**

F6. Locked Stairwell. The doors to this area are locked (hardness 5, hp 10, break DC 15, Disable Device DC 25). This auxiliary staircase was designed for the use of servants so they could carry out their duties out of sight of the family.

F7. Privy: Each of these small chambers contains a commode, a sink, and a cast iron tub. (with hot/cold water)

F8. Lower Kitchen: The servants prepare breakfasts and casual lunches for guests in this kitchen, which serves the lower level of the house. A wood-burning stove stands against the western wall, and the cupboards around the walls store crockery, cooking implements, and dry goods.

F9. Breakfast Room, where wide glass windows in the northern wall fill the room with outside light. Elegantly carved chairs encircle the wide wooden table in the center of the room.

F10. Living Room: The family receives visitors in this chamber, or retired here after breakfast or lunch for casual conversation. A piano stands in one corner, a fireplace occupies another, and a couch stands along the east wall.

F11. Lower Bedroom: A large bed stands in the southeast corner, and empty bookshelves line the walls. (**MacRazbunare**)

F12. Second Floor Landing: The grand stairway from the manor's foyer (area F2) ends here, in an open area containing several glass trophy cases. The cases are empty, their contents taken away by the previous owners. From the landing, great 15-foot-tall windows look out over the manor's grounds and front entrance (area F1).

F13. Upper Kitchen: A close copy of its downstairs counterpart (area F8).

F14. Dining Room: Larger than its downstairs counterpart (area F9), this dining room hosts private dinners for privileged guests. Wide windows along the north wall illuminate a great table

in the center of the room, a cabinet displaying glossy red terra sigillata bowls, and a small table holding liqueurs on the eastern edge of the room.

F15. Sitting Room: This large room is bereft of any furniture, though a large fireplace fills the northeast corner. (**Tora**)

F16. Study. private study of the House.

F17. Bedroom. (**Varadan**)