

MISTS OF RAVENLOFT

An Adventure for Characters of 1st Level



A mysterious mist fills the forest, and the characters find themselves
in a land not their own—fighting alongside the Vistani
against the servants of the dread vampire Strahd von Zarovich.



Welcome to *Mists of Ravenloft*—an adventure that you can now play in either [Idle Champions of the Forgotten Realms](#), or in a game of Dungeons & Dragons with your friends! This tabletop version of *Mists of Ravenloft* is designed to be used as an introductory adventure for characters playing a *Curse of Strahd* campaign. The adventure sees a party of 1st-level characters drawn into the mysterious land of Barovia, setting them on a path that will see them eventually stand against the dread vampire Strahd von Zarovich.

The encounters in this adventure are balanced for five characters of 1st level. Each encounter offers instructions for running it with a 2nd-level party.

BACKGROUND

The dread land of Barovia is little more than legend even to the most learned sages of the world. A demiplane ruled by the immortal vampire Strahd von Zarovich, Barovia is a land teeming with evil, where hope withers and dies beneath a pale, muted sun. Whispered rumors speak of mortals plucked away from their own worlds and taken to Barovia, never to be seen again. But even against all the horrors they endure, some folk of that land believe that if the right group of heroes one day pass through the mists that mark the boundaries of Barovia, the dark rule of Strahd in his castle of Ravenloft might be challenged—and ended for good.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The *Curse of Strahd* adventure offers several scenarios for bringing the characters from the world into Barovia. This adventure adds to those options with a new starting scenario, suitable for the Forgotten Realms or any campaign setting, which sees the characters searching for a runaway owlbear in a remote forest. You can use either of the following hooks to get the characters into the adventure, or as inspiration for hooks of your own:

Currying Favor. The characters are in the right place at the right time to impress a noble, a reclusive wizard, or some other important NPC based in a remote wilderness location. The NPC's pet—a domesticated owlbear named Sedgewick—has broken out of her spacious enclosure and was last seen wandering into an area of wild woodland. The owlbear's owner makes it known that the tame creature is not a threat (mostly true), and that they will bestow rich favors on any characters who can retrieve her.

Murderous Hunters. As the party is passing through a stretch of uninhabited forest, the bodies of animals are seen along a game trail, killed for sport and left to rot. Reading the tracks along the trail suggests that a group of capricious bandits are moving through the forest on a killing spree, and are on the trail of a wounded owlbear. Hoping to save the creature and put an end to the bandits' depredations, the characters take up the chase. In this scenario, you might need to convince cautious players that their 1st-level characters aren't expected to fight an owlbear (mostly true).

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Our dedicated alpha and beta testers

Our friends and families!

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HOOT CUISINE

The adventure begins with the characters deep in a remote forest, hot on the trail of the owlbear. But when they track the creature down, they discover that a group of malevolent bandits are tormenting the poor owlbear in advance of killing and eating her. The characters must step up to help—and to encourage the frightened owlbear to attack the bandits, not them. But when the fight is done and the owlbear is safe, the rise of a mysterious mist in the woods presages an even greater danger.

BUSH WHACKER

The tracks of the owlbear (and the bandits if the characters are initially aware of them) are easy enough to follow at first, but disappear quickly when the creature plunges off the trail and into impenetrable forest. Have the characters make three DC 12 group ability checks to push through dense brush and watch for telltale signs of the owlbear's passage, using either Strength (Athletics), Intelligence (Nature), or Wisdom (Perception or Survival). For each failed group check, the characters take a wrong turn through iron-sharp brambles, with each character taking 2 (1d4) slashing damage. Each successful check gives the characters an easier time in the bandit fight that's coming.

If the characters started out unaware of the bandits, they spot the bandit tracks with their first successful group check, and realize that they are not the only ones in pursuit of the owlbear. If the characters fail all three

group checks, they discover the bandits only when they are seen below.

TARGET ACQUIRED

When the third group ability check has been resolved, the characters catch up to the owlbear—and to the bandits presently attacking her. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

As you press through the woods, the sound of jeering voices is heard from ahead, punctuated by an angry hooting. In a clearing, you see the owlbear—but the creature isn't alone.

The owlbear is frantically shifting back and forth across the clearing, while a group of rough-looking bandits circle around her. The twang of crossbows is loud, as is the bandits' laughter. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check through the trees spots that the owlbear's movements are restricted by a net that's been thrown over her, and confirms that the bandits are firing crossbows to harry and wound the creature, whose fur is matted with blood. The same check also sees a large cooking fire across the clearing burning down to coals, with a massive owlbear-sized spit set across it. (If no one sees these details now, they become clear when the fight begins.)

FIRST UP

Roll initiative to get the fight going, but the starting conditions of the battle depend on the characters' success as they followed the owlbear:

- If the characters failed all three of the group ability checks, the bandits are watching for them, and the party comes under attack at once. The characters are surprised in the first round of combat.
- If the characters succeeded on just one group ability check, their approach to the clearing gives away their presence. Each bandit has advantage on attack rolls during the first round of combat.
- If the characters succeeded on just two group ability checks, their approach to the clearing catches the bandits off guard. Each character has advantage on attack rolls during the first round of combat.
- If the characters succeeded on all three ability checks, their approach to the clearing lets them get the drop on the bandits. The bandits are surprised in the first round of combat.



BANDIT BASH

Having had these woods to themselves as a hideout for some time now, these five **bandits** instinctively know that the characters are troublemakers. They cannot be bluffed or negotiated with, and attack as soon as the party is spotted.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forest clearing map for this fight.

The **owlbear** does nothing in the first round of combat except struggle to free herself from the net and watch the characters fearfully as they take the bandits on. In round 2, the owlbear frees herself, and then moves to strike out in a blind panic at the closest creatures. Have the owlbear target a bandit with her first attack, but make it clear to the characters that they are all potential targets.

The wounds the owlbear has suffered reduce her effectiveness in combat, making these changes to her statistics:

- She has 30 hit points.
- She cannot use her claws attack or her Multiattack action.
- Her beak attack is +4 to hit and deals a minimum 6 damage.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 2nd-level characters, use eight bandits.

LOADED FOR OWLBEAR

The owlbear is a wildcard in this fight, and can become either a great help or a potentially dangerous hindrance to the characters. The net has cut deeply into the creature's feet, leaving her in too much pain to run away, so she instead lashes out at the nearest target each round. On the owlbear's initiative, roll randomly to determine which bandit or character she attacks, and make sure the players are aware that as the bandits are knocked out of the fight, the characters' odds of being hit go up.

With a DC 11 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check made as an action, a character convinces the owlbear that the party is there to help her. A character who administers healing magic or offers food to the owlbear has advantage on this check. Thereafter, the owlbear exclusively targets bandits, and can be treated as an ally of the characters.

FINISHING UP

With the fight done, the characters can approach the owlbear to assess her wounds. These are not life threatening, thankfully, and can be treated with 10 minutes' work and a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or with magical healing. Either effort earns the owlbear's undying gratitude, and she cheerfully follows the characters (if they have been sent to retrieve her) or goes her own way (if they discovered her by chance).

If the bandits are left alive, each one groggily awakes a few minutes after the characters have helped the owlbear, or if any character shakes them awake. The bandits are defiant but not stupid, and they flee the woods for less hostile territory at the first opportunity.

TREASURE

In the aftermath of the fight, a search of the bandits turns up 375 gp in coins and small gems, as well as a *potion of healing*. (If the characters give this potion to the owlbear, a second bandit also carries a *potion of healing*.)

FOREBODING MIST

As the characters depart the clearing, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is the first to notice that the day is growing strangely dark under spreading clouds. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check, a character notes that the sky is not actually cloudy, and the sun is being obscured by a mist rising from the forest floor all around the party.


If the owlbear is still with the characters, she reacts strangely to the mist, first backing away from it, then letting out a muted hoot and fleeing. If the characters were retrieving the creature on behalf of an NPC, they can see that the course she takes through the woods will lead her directly back to her home. If the characters try to follow the owlbear, they quickly lose sight and sound of her.

The true nature of the dense, swirling mist—and the unexpected realm to which it has carried the characters—will be revealed in the next section.

MIST CONNECTIONS

Lost in the mysterious mists, the characters discover that they are not in the place where they started their journey. Every attempt to move forward seems only to get the





party even more turned around, until they stumble into a clearing—and witness an unkindness of ravens feasting on the bodies of four dead villagers. Even more disturbing, though, is what the characters discover about the dead bodies in the aftermath of the fight.

WALKING IN FOG

As the characters try in vain to retrace the route that brought them into the woods, they push deeper into thick fog and increasingly dense forest. The fog reduces visibility to just a few feet around the characters, rendering even darkvision useless. Everything is strangely silent, and the characters' footsteps seem distant and muted.

Allow characters to make DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) or Wisdom (Perception or Survival) checks. You can reveal one of the following pieces of information on a successful check, as you determine:

- The mist has no obvious source. The local terrain isn't swampy, and there's been no drastic shift in the temperature of the air.
- The flora around the party has changed. The trees they passed through while searching for the owlbear have given way to twisted evergreens that seem to close in around them.
- Familiar tracks (the fleeing bandits, the owlbear's tracks if the party is following her, their own tracks if they are retracing the route they took earlier, and so on) have vanished.
- Signs of wolf tracks and bare humanoid feet are seen from time to time.
- The sounds of birds and small animals heard while the characters pursued the owlbear are gone, replaced by the distant croaking of ravens.

HOLDING THE TRAIL

The narrow trail that the characters follow through the misty forest begins to twist, turn, and fade from sight for long stretches. Holding to the trail requires a successful DC 14 group ability check using either Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Perception or Survival). With a successful group check, the characters manage to stick together and hold the trail, giving them full warning of the

fight that's coming. If the group check fails, the characters end up making several wrong turns, becoming separated more than once and forcing them to regroup. The noise of doing so alerts the foes in the following encounter.

RAZED BY WOLVES

As the group skill check is resolved, the characters hear the squawking of ravens growing louder ahead. Following the trail leads the characters to stumble suddenly into a broad clearing, where a thinning of the mist reveals a grim sight.

As a rising wind tears at the mist, the light of a wan sun filters in across the clearing, revealing four humanoid bodies clustered tightly together across the blood-soaked ground. The bodies have been ravaged, many with their eyes and fingers gone. A flock of squawking ravens feasts on entrails and gore.

Even as the characters take in the sight, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score hears a low growling in the adjacent trees, and the fight is on. Three **wolves** break out from the trees and race toward the characters, even as the ravens take flight to attack as a **swarm of ravens**. If the characters succeeded on the previous group ability check, the ravens are surprised in the first round of combat.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forest clearing for this fight. Characters who want to stay back from the clearing to fight within the trees can do so, but all areas of trees are difficult terrain.

WATCH YOUR STEP

Any character who glances to the bodies during the fight confirms that they are well and truly lifeless, and sees no sign that they might rise as undead. However, a character who moves too close to the bodies must contend with the slipperiness of the blood-and-gore-soaked ground. While moving at full speed within 10 feet of the bodies, a creature must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or slip and fall prone, covering themselves in mud and gore. Four-legged creatures have advantage on this check. A creature that treats the area within 10 feet of the bodies as difficult terrain does not need to make the check.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 2nd-level characters, use five wolves and two swarms of ravens.



WATCHER IN THE WOODS

The wolves and ravens fight to the death, which any character with even a passing knowledge of wild creatures recognizes as unusual behavior. Even odder, though, is the presence of an additional wolf that the characters see only after the fight.

As silence descends, the wind picks up, shredding the mist away to reveal the far side of the clearing. Another wolf stands there—a hulking brute with a malevolent glow in its eyes.

The wolf snarls as it watches you, its lips curling back in something resembling a leering grin. Then it turns and bolts away into the trees.

This watcher is one of the servants of the vampire Strahd von Zarovich—or it might even be Strahd himself, passing by and catching sight of the newest mortals claimed by his domain. (The *Curse of Strahd* adventure talks more about how Strahd can interact repeatedly with lower-level adventurers before taking full notice of them.)

EMPTY VESSELS

Any character who inspects the bodies, whether for clues as to what killed them or to respectfully inter them, identifies them as humans in the simple garb of village folk. Their wounds tell a sad tale of the wolves running them down, tormenting them for a time, then killing them. The wolves then seem to have dragged the bodies into their present cluster, making for more odd and unexplained behavior.

Any character with proficiency in Arcana or Religion who studies the bodies gets a strange and unsettling sensation from them. (If no one in the party has these proficiencies, or if the characters take no particular interest in the bodies, pick a character with a strong moral or spiritual bent who can intuit this strangeness.) A character who spends a few minutes with the bodies or who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check comes to the horrifying conclusion that these villagers are spiritually empty. It's not simply a matter that their souls left them upon their recent deaths. Rather, the character is filled with the chilling understanding that these poor folk had no souls to begin with.

MUSIC IN THE MIST

When the characters have completed any rites they wish to perform for the dead villagers and are ready to think about their next moves, a sound is heard, faint through the still-lingering mist.

From far off in the distance comes the unexpected sound of music. A bright violin rises and falls, and the wind seems to carry the sounds of laughing voices. As you try to figure out which direction the sound comes from, the mist begins to lift. The forest spreads around you, a half-dozen paths visible suddenly. But the shifting echo of the song makes it unclear which path you should take.

BRIEF CELEBRATION

The characters follow the mysterious music through the forest, catching sight of strange happenings around them before arriving at a temporary stopping place of the folk known as the Vistani. The characters are welcomed to the impromptu camp and learn a little of who the Vistani are. But then a sudden attack by wolves and zombies sees the characters fleeing with the Vistani when the fight is done—knowing that the devil Strahd is watching them.

EXPLORING THE WOODS

As the characters attempt to follow the strange music heard at the end of the previous encounter, the flowing mist and the twisting intersecting pathways of the forest work against them. It takes three DC 14 group ability checks to find the correct path through the forest, using Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Perception or Survival). Regardless of the result, each check sees the characters stumble across a strange sight in the forest, chosen from or inspired by the options below. If a group check is failed, the characters also stumble across treacherous ground while trying to keep to the correct path, and each character takes 2 (1d4) slashing damage from sharp branches or 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage from a tumbling fall.

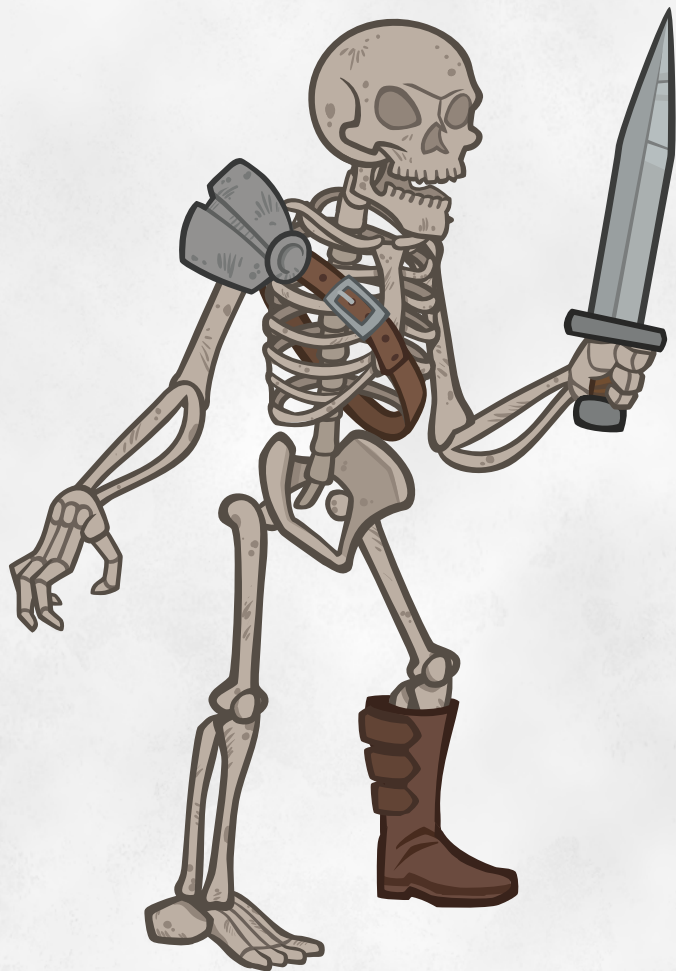
(If you want to expand the encounters in *Mists of Ravenloft*, considering using the following sights and events as starting points for a combat or hazard encounter. Level-appropriate creatures such as **crawling claws**, **skeletons**, **zombies**, **twig blights**, **needle blights**, and **awakened shrubs** make excellent random encounters in Barovia.)

SINGING SKULLS

The underbrush ahead is burned away to ash in a broad circle, at the center of which is a five-foot-high pile of humanoid skulls. As the characters approach, five of the skulls begin to sing in harmony. (For a sinister vibe, have the skulls singing an eerie dirge. For a lighter tone, including setting up the Vistani celebration the characters will stumble into shortly, have them sing a jaunty tune.)

SINISTER SINKHOLE

Have all the characters make DC 13 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) checks. The character with the lowest check suddenly feels the ground open up beneath their feet as a sinkhole threatens to swallow them. Grasping roots wrap around the legs and feet of the character, who is restrained unless they succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Another character can also attempt



this check to haul the trapped character out. When the character emerges, they discover that the grasping roots have somehow swapped their shoes or boots for another never-before-seen pair.

SLAP HAPPY

A staccato thumping sound rises from ahead, resembling the feet of some sort of hundred-legged monster. When the characters get close, they see the mists part to reveal a huge mass of **crawling claws** engaged in an energetic slap fight with each other. If the characters get too close, one crawling claw per party member breaks off from the mass to climb up the characters and start slapping away, dealing bludgeoning damage with its claw attack. A claw can be attacked, or can be pulled off and thrown to a safe distance with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

CYCLING SKELETON

A creaking sound rises from ahead where another path crosses the path the characters are following. A **skeleton** appears, making a slow progress on an undersized unicycle and ignoring the characters. A small tattered tag trailing from the unicycle breaks off as it passes, or if the characters attack the skeleton. In fine script, the tag reads: "Is No Fun, Is No Blinsky!" (The characters will learn much more about Blinsky toys in the *Curse of Strahd* adventure.)

HOW DO YOU LIKE THEM APPLES?

A change in the foliage marks the presence of a close-growing grove of withered apple trees. As the characters pass, the branches of the trees begin to shift despite the absence of any wind. The trees then begin to hurl apples at the characters, each of whom must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save.

THE VISTANI CELEBRATION

When you've run the characters through as many exploration encounters as feels comfortable, they notice the sound of the violin growing louder as they follow a final trail. Voices rise through the mist as well, resolving as laughter and singing. As the characters enter a clearing, they see a sight whose warmth contrasts their gloomy, mist-filled journey so far.

Where a wide track crosses the trail you've been following, a temporary travelers' camp fills a clearing ahead. Brightly painted covered wagons pulled by draft horses are parked by a blazing campfire, around which a dozen figures are dancing to the music of a trio of violinists. Children play nearby, waiting excitedly while a puppet show is set up at a beautifully carved toy stage.

One of the dancers, an older woman, glances up to see you, clearly startled—and fearful for a moment. But as she assesses you, she smiles, then beckons you forward.

PLAYING THE VISTANI

The *Curse of Strahd* adventure talks about how many of the Vistani act as the servants of Strahd, having been corrupted by his evil so that they consider the vampire their lord and master. If you use these encounters as an introduction to that larger adventure, you have the option to focus your *Curse of Strahd* campaign on factions of the Vistani that are actively fighting Strahd, and whose folk can become allies and friends of the characters in their quest to overthrow the lord of Castle Ravenloft.

REST AND RESPITE

The leader of this two-dozen-strong group is the dancer who first spotted the characters—an older woman who introduces herself as Aisha. She invites the party to join the celebration, and the characters are able to take a much-needed respite, and a long rest. The Vistani share bread, wine, cheese, and dried meats, and allow the characters to warm themselves at the fire as they learn the following information:

- Aisha and the others are of the Vistani—the wandering folk of Barovia.
- Barovia is the land in which the characters now find themselves, a mountain valley realm occupied by hardy, hard-working people.
- The Vistani are crafters and artists, diviners and scholars, living as close-knit clans ruled by elders.

- Aisha's people are journeying to an encampment their people maintain at a site called Tser Pool, a half-day's journey away, and have stopped to take a meal and celebrate the birth that very morning of a child, Casius, to young parents Elana and Marnius.

Aisha and the others try to keep the conversation focused on the celebration, the newborn babe, and the child's doting parents—making the characters aware of the oddness of how none of the Vistani ask where the party has come from. If any of the characters try to talk about how they got there or ask for more information about Barovia, Aisha grows suddenly somber.

"This is not the time to speak of such things," she says. "The trees, the birds, the sky above all have ears for the stories of the Vistani. Nor should you speak your story. Not yet. But trust that I can guess at some of it. For I know that any strangers who step out of the mists in Barovia have journeyed far."

CAN WE KEEP HIM?

While they rest, one of the characters of your choice is befriended by a **mastiff** named Walla, who Aisha describes as belonging to all the clan but having no real owner. Walla puts on an adorable display of imploring the characters for food, and he becomes especially chummy with whoever offers him the tastiest tidbits. (Walla's full

purpose in the encounter will be revealed during combat below.)

STORY TIME

As the characters enjoy Vistani hospitality, they are close enough to hear snippets from the puppet show, which tells a heroic tale of history. Characters who listen in learn the following details:

- A great king named Barov once ruled a land ravaged by warfare.
- Barov's son Strahd was a soldier and conqueror, who waged bloody wars against his family's enemies after his father's death.
- The land now known as Barovia was named by Strahd for his father, after a bloody battle in which he ran his enemies to ground in the remote valley, then destroyed them all.

STRAHD'S HUNTERS

When the characters have finished a long rest, the Vistani make ready to depart. But before the party's plans can be discussed, Aisha and the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score are the first to hear a rising howl coming from the woods—and getting closer. The Vistani immediately prepare for battle, getting the younger children into the wagons and setting up a defensive cordon. If three or more characters help them, have those characters make a DC 13 group Wisdom (Perception) check, with advantage for working alongside the Vistani. On a successful check, the characters spot the force of wolves and undead bearing down on the wagons and can shout out a warning. Those enemies have disadvantage on attack rolls in the first round of combat.



This fight assumes a large number of attackers, with the Vistani fighting their own battles alongside the characters. The characters can focus on three **wolves** and two **zombies** for their part in the fight. This is a tough fight for 1st-level characters, but these wolves are scouts of Strahd, and have no interest in fighting to the finish. Each wolf breaks off as soon as it takes any damage. Any character watching as a wolf flees can sense a malevolence in its gaze, almost as if it's taking stock of the characters before it goes.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forest clearing or wagon camp map for this fight.

WALLA IN ACTION

During the fight, whichever character got closest to Walla has the mastiff fight alongside them. Walla uses the Help action by peeing on his would-be opponents, distracting them to grant an ally advantage on their own attacks against that foe. The character who Walla fights alongside can verbally direct the mastiff to aid another character (no action required). Walla fights alongside the characters for the rest of the adventure (and can stick with them afterwards if you wish).

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 2nd-level characters, use five wolves and three zombies.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The Vistani deal with the last of their wolves and zombies at the same time the characters do. In the aftermath, Aisha orders the few wounded tended to, and is grateful for any assistance from characters with healing skill. The Vistani offer the party a *potion of healing* as thanks for the characters stepping up alongside them. Aisha personally expresses her gratitude, but deflects any questions about what might have been behind the attack.

"We will speak on all these things and more. But for now, know that the devil Strahd is watching you. Come with us, I urge you. Or I fear you will not survive to see tomorrow's dawn."

OLD TALES

As the characters travel with the Vistani to their encampment at Tser Pool, they learn more from Aisha of the strange realm they find themselves in—and about the dread vampire Strahd, whose evil sundered Barovia from the mortal world, and who now holds this realm in a fearsome grip.

ON THE ROAD

This encounter is mostly about traveling while the characters learn more about where they are. The Vistani

wagons make good time along the road to their camp at Tser Pool, with all but the oldest and youngest Vistani running alongside the wagons, and the horses pulling at a fast trot with a lighter load. Reaching Tser Pool will give the characters a chance to take some downtime in a place of relative safety.

During the journey, the characters can talk more to Aisha, who asks for the story of how they came to be in Barovia, and promises to answer the questions she wouldn't answer earlier. Based on what the characters ask her, use the following points to guide the conversation:

- Barovia is a demiplane—a world unto itself, separated from all other realms by a wall of impenetrable mist.
- From time to time, the mists break through into other worlds, seeking out and capturing the people of those worlds and drawing them into Barovia.
- The master of Barovia is the immortal vampire Strahd von Zarovich, whose great evil has come to define the realm, and whose murderous ambition broke Barovia off from the world centuries ago.
- Strahd rules Barovia as a despot of absolute evil from his home in Castle Ravenloft. The folk of this land are his subjects and servants, calling Strahd 'the devil,' and living dismal lives of fear and hardship. The normal folk of Barovia cannot pass through the mists, and so are doomed to dwell here forever.
- Many of the creatures of Barovia, including beasts, lycanthropes, and undead, serve Strahd. Undead and wolves routinely attack villages, whose people are often too terrified of the vampire to fight back.
- Barovians are living folk like the people of any other world. But their separation from the multiverse and its cosmology means that only one in ten Barovians possesses a soul. When a Barovian with a soul dies, that soul cannot pass beyond Barovia, but waits to be reincarnated in a newborn child.
- The Vistani are the only folk who can pass through the mists, effectively enabling them to move between worlds. This power is granted to them by an ancient and secret connection to Strahd.
- When a group of Vistani saved Strahd's life before he became undead, Strahd granted that folk the right to come and go from Barovia when it was part of a larger worldly realm. When Barovia became a demiplane, that right continued, enabling the Vistani to freely travel through the mists.
- Many Vistani have grown corrupted by Strahd's evil, and now serve the vampire. Characters dealing with Vistani in Barovia must be ever on their guard. (This warning is for other Vistani only. The players and the characters alike should understand that Aisha and her clan are on their side and can be trusted.)

(This section is meant only to provide the characters with a quick introduction to Barovia and the evil of Strahd. Playing the *Curse of Strahd* adventure will fill in the many other parts of the vampire's story, along with the full history of this doomed land and its beleaguered folk.)

In addition to specific responses to the characters' questions, Aisha speaks of another who might be able to help them.

"Madam Eva awaits us at Tser Pool. A diviner of great power. Sometimes those who come from other worlds to Barovia do so with some purpose not even they know. If this is true of you, Madam Eva may well be able to see what your futures hold."

DOWN FOR REPAIRS

When the characters have had a chance to converse with Aisha, a shout from ahead rings out through the forest, and the lead wagon slews to a halt. The other wagons follow suit, and it is revealed that a wheel on the lead wagon has cracked and needs to be repaired. Some of the characters might want to join the Vistani as they patrol the woods to watch for Strahd's wolves and undead. Others might want to continue talking to Aisha.

During the brief rest stop, the puppeteer who performed at the celebration puts on an impromptu show for the restless children, who ride in the second wagon. Any characters who listen in hear a bit of foreshadowing of the dark tale that is the foundation of Strahd's evil.

The characters the puppeteer speaks of have no names, and the children's rapt attention suggests this is a cautionary story they know well. That story tells of an evil king who loved a young woman of good heart, but whose coldness and egotism drove her from him. When she fell in love with another in time, the king murdered this rival, hoping to show the woman that he would go to any lengths to win her devotion, even through fear. But she fled from him, leaping to her death from a high tower to thwart his immoral ambition.

If the characters ask Aisha or any of the other Vistani, they talk of the story being an old one, whose origins are unknown. (The story is actually an echo of Strahd's life, as the characters will discover in the *Curse of Strahd* adventure.)

SWARM WELCOME

As the repairs on the wagon near completion, the sound of something moving on the air heralds the arrival of more of Strahd's foul creatures. Allow any characters who went on patrol with the Vistani to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check with advantage. If any character succeeds, they and the Vistani hear the hissing sound of bat swarms on the wing and can shout out a warning, giving the bat swarms disadvantage on attack rolls in the first round of combat.

From the huge mass of ravenous bats that attack the Vistani, three **swarms of bats** focus in on the characters. The players can decide whether to have their characters fight the bats or assist the Vistani in completing repairs



to the lead wagon, allowing everyone to escape the fight more quickly (see "Lending a Hand" below).

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forested clearing for this fight.

LENDING A HAND

If the Vistani work alone to complete the repairs, it takes 4 rounds to get the new wheel attached, after which the wagons can get underway. Each round, a character who assists in the repairs can attempt a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or a DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom check using proficiency with land vehicles. A successful check reduces the length of time to get underway by 1 round. (This means that with two successful checks made in the first round, repairs are completed at the end of round 2).

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 2nd-level characters, use five swarms of bats.

FINISHING THE FIGHT

This combat ends either when the characters destroy the last of the three swarms they are faced with, or when repairs are done and the wagons get underway. In either event, the swarms become distracted by the forcefulness of the characters' and the Vistani's defense, and quickly scatter back to the trees.

FOREST FRENZY

In this last part of the adventure, the Vistani wagons near Tser Pool at last—but the servants of Strahd are everywhere. The forest seemingly comes to life as the wagons are seized and stopped by vicious blight creatures. But this is no simple assault. The creatures are intent on kidnapping the babe just recently born to Aisha's clan, and will steal the infant away unless the characters can stop them.

NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

This encounter is a climactic combat scenario, which takes place as the caravan draws close to Tser Pool.

Through breaks in the trees, a distant clearing can be seen. Glimpses of color suggest pavilions or tents, and



the dark surface of a small lake gleams even under a cloudy sky.

“Tser Pool,” Aisha says, pointing through the trees. “We’re nearly there.” But even as the elder speaks, shouts ring out from ahead and behind. The trees on both sides of the wagon track are in motion, roots and vines twisting up from the ground to wrap around the wagons’ wheels and drag them to a halt. The second wagon, in which the children ride, is inundated by a wave of plant creatures that tear through its canvas cover and reach inside.

All is chaos, with children running for their parents as the Vistani lay into the attacking creatures with axe and sword. Then a deep voice screams out in anguish—Marnius, the new father you met when the Vistani welcomed you to their celebration. “Casius! My child!”

The characters are the closest people to the wagon, in a perfect position to see the babe Casius clutched in the grasp of a creature resembling some horrid combination of plant and humanoid—one of the twig blights and vine blights that are throwing themselves against the wagons like an arboreal wave. Other Vistani immediately begin to fight their way in, but the blights are tossing the babe from one to another, stealing him away into the woods at speed, and the characters are the only ones close enough to give pursuit.

BLIGHT FIGHT

As with the previous encounters, the Vistani are all dealing with their own foes from the larger assault force while the characters focus on the six **twig blights** and one **vine blight** that have grabbed up Casius. The baby is swaddled tightly, and is in no danger of being injured as they’re tossed from blight to blight—as long as the characters can get the babe back.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forested area for this fight.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 2nd-level characters, use seven twig blights and two vine blights.

KIDS FLY FREE

Each round during the fight, whichever blight is holding Casius throws the babe to whichever blight is farthest away from any characters. As Casius sails through the air, they can be caught by any character within 5 feet of

their path of travel who succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If no one grabs Casius, a blight catches the babe and moves away from the characters.

Walla can play a part in this fight by jumping into the fray alongside the characters and trying to catch the baby in his massive but conveniently gentle jaws. An expert retriever, Walla has advantage on his Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to do so, if the player whose character the mastiff has attached himself to wants to use him in this way. Alternatively, if the characters don’t think to try to grab the babe initially, Walla can leap into the air to do so, then quickly toss Casius to someone else.

A character who manages to snag Casius from the air can hang on to them easily, but has disadvantage on weapon attack rolls while the babe is in hand, and cannot use two-handed weapons. The character is also mobbed by all surviving blights on the blights’ next turn. Any twig blight that hits the character with a melee attack can then make a Strength check to grab the babe, contested by the character’s Strength check. If the vine blight hits the character with its Constrict attack, it can forego grappling



the character to automatically yank Casius from the character's grasp.

Characters who want to play the blights' own game to avoid being mobbed can toss Casius from person to person with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, the babe is snatched in midair by a blight.

To keep things feeling realistic, you can bring in Casius's parents, Elana and Marnius, on the edge of the fight, along with additional blights harassing them. However, try to make the characters the focus of keeping Casius safe. When the blights faced by the characters are destroyed, Casius can be returned to their anxious parents. The characters can then see the Vistani routing the last of their own blights and freeing the wagons for the final dash to Tser Pool.

WRAPPING UP

With everyone safe and the blights retreating back into the forest, the Vistani wagons arrive at the camp at Tser Pool. You are now ready to carry on with the full adventure of *Curse of Strahd*. The characters' entry point is in chapter two of the adventure—the section “G. Tser Pool Encampment” in “Areas of Barovia.” To line up with this introductory adventure, the Vistani at Tser Pool are not in league with Strahd, but are a faction allied with Aisha's clan and secretly working against the vampire. You can look for other opportunities in the adventure for good factions of Vistani to work with the characters as they seek to end the terrible reign of the devil Strahd.

The details of why the blights focused in on Casius are left to your determination. You might want to develop a subplot in your *Curse of Strahd* campaign that Strahd is specifically seeking out newborns with souls, or that his servants are kidnapping infants from across Barovia. It might be the case that he plans to hold those kidnapped children hostage to threaten the folk of Barovia where they grow too bold, or to give them to the hags of Old Bonegrinder, or some other plot of your devising. The evil of Strahd is limited only by your imagination, and will challenge the players and the characters alike in that exciting adventure.